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THE USE OF HUMOR IN INTERNATIONAL PROPAGANDA

by

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Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

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## PREFACE

I said in mine heart, "go to now, I will prove thee with mirth" . . . I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of mirth, "what doeth it?" - Ecclesiastes.

This paper deals with international propaganda programs and humor's place in them. Concern is not so much with policy as with technique, for, as will be shown, humor can be adapted to any propaganda strategy. No particular effort has been made to catalog either the humor in propaganda or the propaganda in humor; it is hoped this paper will be one of ideas, not statistics.

The communication process--with its complex structure involving attention, perception and orientation, values and evaluation, goal-seeking and decision-making--has become strategic in international politics. The present trend in international communication appears to be one emphasizing positive measures which, in the broadest sphere, aim at reducing world tensions that could result in crisis--measures using socio-psychiatric means. It is indeed urgent to develop such international communication, concerned with the reduction of international confusion and irritation. In such an effort, technique counts for much. The avenues of approach are many. This research paper explores one. Others are suggested by the Smiths who note that in the period following World War Two there seemed to be a marked tendency to assume that,

sloganezed mass propaganda, if only repeated often enough and if not neutralized by equally repetitious counter-slogans would sooner or later get the results the propagandist wanted. Important theoretical advances have come with the realization that communication effects depend on a great many other variables. One new tendency

is to look more intently at such variables as the coordination of propaganda with social context, with economic inducement or threat, and with coercion or relief from coercion. The central purpose of communication research theory and methodology is to enable us to view as clearly as possible a given communicator-communication-reaction process from beginning to end in the frame of reference of general socio-psychological (behavioral) theory. A new theory . . . is of interest if it enables us to probe more deeply into the aims and perspectives (conscious and unconscious) of a communicator; to express in a relatively terse but accurate formula the main psychological, cultural and social referents (to all those involved in the communication process) of the content of his communication; to state unambiguously what audiences . . . he reached; how they reacted . . . on the psychological, cultural and social levels; and what the effects of feedbacks of these reactions were upon the communicator . . .<sup>1</sup>

The major research problem involved in this paper is the investigation, from historical and editorial standpoints, of humor in international propaganda programs. Supporting problems of research include: survey of the uses made of humor in international propaganda programs by various nations, especially the United States; determining the basic textual and mechanistic devices involved in the employment of humor in international propaganda output; isolating the positive and negative factors involved in using humor in international propaganda including psychological considerations, and investigating new ways of employing humor in international propaganda programs.

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce Lannes Smith and Chita M. Smith, International Communication and Political Opinion, (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 15-18.

The use of humor in international propaganda is a relatively unexplored field of research. The author found no published material encompassing the entire subject, and only a limited amount of material of lesser scope; even the latter was confined to consideration of cartoons, which are not always humorous nor intended to be, or the so-called "black" joke, such as the anti-Hitler jokes planted on the continent by underground agents during World War Two.

It is hoped that this study will have value and significance for working personnel in the United States Information Agency, for those in advertising, public relations and other endeavors involving persuasion-type messages, and for students looking for research problems.

Although this paper deals with humor, it is, unfortunately, not funny.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE OVERVIEW

The world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel--Walpole.

## I. PROPAGANDA IS MOTIVE

Professional propagandists tend to coalesce into separate schools of thought--reach islands of secular stagnation as one of them expressed it--resulting in a marked lack of agreement on a common definition, as well as the true scope, of the activity we call international propaganda. The Madison Avenue School, or what Edward Barrett called the Sky-writer, regards the propaganda effort as promotional, requiring salesmen or at least propagandists with a salesman's mentality. The Psychological Warfare School, and its paler cousin, the Political Warfare School, hold the propaganda effort to be, in essence, combat, requiring strategy and tactics of a military cast, with campaigns structured to the enemy's weaknesses and vulnerabilities and conducted by soldiers in mufti. The Missionary, or Ugly American, School speaks of communicating human values and demonstrating good will, usually on a personal level by dedicated doctrinaires. Further, there is an inter as well as an intra controversy. Endless debate rages over the differences between propaganda and education, between propaganda and publicity and between propaganda and information. Education, of course, is not propaganda, although a good deal of teaching--especially in totalitarian societies--is a process of indoctrinating children, teaching them what, not how to think, with the teacher ignoring

the scientific method and presenting only selected facts and conclusions ready for absorption. The difference between publicity and propaganda is largely one of kind--publicity being more elemental, uni-leveled. The difference between news and propaganda should be obvious; the former is goal-less, the latter biased, directional.<sup>1</sup>

Before turning to a definition of propaganda, let us take note of the phrase, psychological warfare, currently used to mean propaganda designed to achieve national policy goals in the world political arena but with "hard" usage overtones; the British use the term political warfare. Psywar's basis is that the manipulation of the symbolic environment can itself produce major events in the political life of the world. Linebarger says "Psywar in the broad sense consists of the application of parts of the science called psychology to the conduct of war; in the narrow sense, psywar comprises the use of propaganda against an enemy, together with such military operational measures as may supplement the propaganda."<sup>2</sup> Propaganda, he says, is organized persuasion by non-violent means. The job of a psywar soldier

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Friedrich in his excellent work, The New Belief In the Common Man, (Brattleboro, Vermont: Vermont Printing Co., 1945) discusses at length the differences between propaganda and information and propaganda and education. See chapter 3, "Independence of Thought and Propaganda."

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Lerner, ed. Propaganda in War and Crisis (New York: George W. Steward, Inc., 1951) p. 267.

is to convert lust into resentment, individual resourcefulness into mass cowardice, friction into distrust, prejudice into fury. This is fruitful only in terms of shortrange goals. Psywar is ideal for shooting wars, but irrelevant in cold wars.

Psychological warfare merging into political warfare and political warfare into international communication blurs the lines of demarcation. Perhaps, as some argue, since a country's external propaganda is always contradicted by internal developments, we must regard all outfacing activity as a seamless web.<sup>3</sup>

In essence, propaganda is social control. Lasswell defines it as "the attempt to influence attitudes of large numbers of people on controversial issues of relevance to a group."<sup>4</sup> This is too broad a definition for the purposes of this paper, concerned as it is with international propaganda. The Linebarger definition cited earlier raises methodological problems for this paper, especially in respect to his use of the word persuasion. The Communists, living in their own semantic world, consider propaganda the process of thorough theoretical indoctrination which arms party members

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<sup>3</sup>For a sophisticated consideration of political warfare see Murray Dyer's The Weapon on the Wall (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959)

<sup>4</sup>Lerner, op. cit., p. 267.

with the necessary knowledge of the laws which govern society. The importance given to the agi-prop activities derives from the view that according to Marxism-Leninism the party, if it is to carry out its role as leader of the masses, must train all party members in the semantics of the movement. The special semantics of communism is one of the cements that holds the organization together across the world, giving members in distant lands a common bond, often the only real bond they have. Agitation, as used by communists is closer to the non communist's word, propaganda, that is a few ideas to the many. Propaganda, on the other hand, means agitating the select few, such as intellectuals and other educated persons in meetings and organized gatherings.<sup>5</sup> Other definitions of propaganda involve such phrases as pre-determined private ends...veiled promotions...manipulation of representations so as to influence human action... altering the picture to which men respond...substituting one social pattern for another.

The author defines international propaganda as any systematic effort the motive of which is to propagate a doctrine, or contribute to the eliciting of a policy decision or a course of action, or to create a climate of opinion.

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<sup>5</sup> From Notes on the Language of Communism, an unpublished paper, July 1956, by the United States Information Agency.

The key word is motive--propaganda is motive. This working definition should suffice for this paper, concerned chiefly with propaganda techniques, that is, propaganda at the shirt sleeve rather than the theoretical level.

Several assumptions underly this paper: that human behavior properly is to be thought of in terms of a transaction, an action across from past experiences; that propaganda is not a science but an art; that international propaganda is an inevitable and necessary part of the international communication system in both war and peace; that public opinion no longer is formed by the traditional "shared experience" but is stimulated by propaganda; that propaganda activity is meaningful only when coordinated with other instruments of effecting national interests.

## II. PERSUASION--THE STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

The state of public or individual opinion at any moment, as this paper shall note repeatedly, is determined by many factors and influences beyond those consciously attempting to manage opinion. Basic factors are human, cultural and institutional.

The first is often decisive in importance. Early political writings were often punctuated by shrewd and in some cases sage observations regarding human nature. Most later valid generalizations came from psychologists. A

satisfactory understanding of public opinion is predicated upon knowledge of the individual in a society, his physical equipment, his fundamental patterns of response, his habits, his emotional and mental characteristics. The structural framework, relating psychology to mass persuasion, employed in this paper is based on Cartwright's findings. He outlined four basic principles: 1) Total stimulus situations are accepted or rejected on the basis of perception of their general characteristics. The categories employed by a person in characterizing stimulus situations tend to protect him from unwanted changes in his cognitive structure. 2) Having reached the sense organs the message must be accepted as part of the person's cognitive structure. Once a message is received it will tend to be accepted or rejected on the basis of more general categories to which it appears to belong. The categories employed in characterizing these messages tend to protect the person from unwanted changes in his cognitive structure. When a message is inconsistent with this cognitive structure it will be rejected, distorted to fit or will produce changes in the cognitive structure. 3) To induce a given action by mass persuasion this action must be seen by the person as a path to some goal that he has; the action will be accepted only if it fits the person's larger cognitive structure. The more goals seen attainable by a single path the more likely that path will be taken; but if the



action is seen as not leading to the goal or leading to an undesirable end, it will not be chosen. If an action is seen leading to a desired goal it will tend not to be chosen to the extent that easier, cheaper or otherwise more desirable actions are also seen as leading to the same goal. 4) To induce a given action an appropriate cognitive and motivational system must gain control of the person's behavior at a particular point in time. The more specifically defined the path of action to a goal (in an accepted motivational structure) the more likely it is that the structure will gain control of behavior. The more specifically a path of action is located in time the more likely it is that the structure will gain control of behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Culture, especially its ideational content, is our second primary influence on public opinion. An opinion is no simple product of conscious choice between two or more alternatives, but is a verbalization based on often obscure and complex origins. Custom, fashion, tradition, folkways, mores, beliefs and social attitudes are stimuli continually modifying and conditioning individual responses.

In recent years a great deal of attention has been paid to our third factor, institutions and their part in molding individual attitudes and opinions. Although the

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<sup>6</sup> Dorwin Cartwright, Human Relations (New York: McGraw Hill, 1949) pp. 253-67.

institution cannot be separated from the individuals that comprise it nor from the cultural milieu in which it exists, there is an advantage in keeping in mind the more persistent groupings which follow crystallized patterns of behavior. This is particularly true in the case of international propaganda program operators.

Finally, as we conclude this brief overview of propaganda, a word on the moral dimension. All nations command the same instruments of foreign policy: war, diplomacy, economics and propaganda. There are basic differences, however, between democratic and totalitarian propaganda. A totalitarian society is monolithic, with one public point of view and this is reflected in its propaganda; a democratic society assumes the existence of a contrary point of view. Democratic propaganda relies on the sanction of argument; the totalitarian on force. The totalitarian is more efficient than the democrat in propaganda.<sup>7</sup>

Propaganda is a good word gone wrong. Originally meaning to propagate the faith of the Roman Catholic Church it became stigmatized after World War One. Propaganda does not deserve the deep rooted fear displayed by many people who know little about it. In its most elemental form it is merely the

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<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of this question see Ian Harvey, The Techniques of Persuasion (London: Falcon Press, 1951). Harvey presents a fine defense of the use of propaganda by a democratic society.

propagation of an idea. It is not the fact of propagation but the idea involved that is of fundamental moral importance. Since the beginning of civilization men of honor have sought to persuade, convince, activate, dissuade and, in general, motivate others. On the roll are Demosthenes, Cicero, Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill.

### III. VISION--TRAGIC, COMIC

Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps, for he is the only animal that is struck with the differences between what things are and what they might be. Thus William Hazlitt begins his famous essay on wit and humor. To explain the nature of laughter and tears, he tells us, is to account for the condition of human life, for life is in a manner compounded of these two. Although we are concerned here with propaganda humor, it is proper that we first survey humor in general.

Laughter, it has often been observed, is one of the unsolved problems of philosophy--not one of the mightier problems like Determinism or Beauty, but troublesome enough. Further, few subjects of everyday interest are as little understood as humor. This misinformation and ignorance is of long standing. Since Plato and Aristotle, the main tradition in the study of comedy has been philosophic; only in recent times has it turned scientific and then usually tangential to some other study. Nor have world comedy patterns ever been charted.

Games of the world have been compared, sports typed, folk-tales classified, but no such work has ever been attempted in the field of comedy. Yet it represents a mine richer in cultural significance than any of these others.

The dovetailing of comedy and tragedy has long intrigued inquiring minds. At the heart of any comic perception is a tragic potential and all great tragedy has elements of comedy about it. Aristotle observed that tragedy depicts men as better than they are, comedy depicts them as worse.<sup>8</sup> Swift, when asked why he wrote in that bitter, satirical style, replied that he sought to portray the ridiculous tragedy of life. Both tragedy and comedy share a concern for man and his limitations, but tragedy presents those limitations as disastrous, part of life's ultimate configuration. This theme runs through Marcus Aurelius' works, and, specifically, he praises tragedy for reminding men of things which happen to them along with the tacit reminder that this is in keeping with the nature of things; comedy on the other hand was to him useful in reminding men to beware of insolence. Melville tended to blur the line between tragedy and comedy. In *Moby Dick* he wrote

Though many aspects of this visible world seem formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright . . .

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<sup>8</sup>Aristotle, *On Poetics*; trans. Ingram Bywater; *Great Books of the Western World* ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1952) vol. 11, p. 683.

there are certain queer times and occasions when a man takes this universe for a vast practical joke.<sup>9</sup>

In the slow evolution of man and his thought the line dividing comedy and tragedy continually shifts, enlarging the area of tragedy. Things previously comic become tragic. Mere vindictiveness, for example, expressing itself in mockery, is no longer considered humor. The author knew a well-educated, sensitive Hindu who said nothing was consistently funnier to Indians than seeing a man fall off a bicycle. Most present day Americans would not find this particularly funny. Nor is it any longer amusing to watch a man drown, although Lucretius thought it entertaining. Mister Winkle in Pickwick Papers took a tumble on ice skates, to everyone's merriment. Some Americans today might still find this humorous, others not. So the line shifts. The Romans were amused to see a chariot and its occupant smashed in the circus. We laugh when a clown falls off a trapeze. This represents evolution--from laughter in true cruelty to laughter in make-believe cruelty.

The tragic and the comic are also contrasted in the pride of the tragic hero and the wit of the comic hero which serves to introduce the division of wit from humor. The general use of the term humor in this paper means all that

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<sup>9</sup>Herman Melville, Moby Dick (Great Books of the Western World ed., Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1942) p. 108.

is comic, and this includes wit. However in this section, and in Chapter IV, the definition of humor is narrowed and humor is differentiated from wit.

Fowler compares humor with wit thus: **the** motive or aim of humor is discovery, of wit, throwing light. The province of humor is human nature, of wit, words and ideas. The method of humor is observation, of wit, surprise. The audience of humor is the sympathetic, of wit, the intelligent.<sup>10</sup> The differentiation is important, as we shall see in discussing propaganda humor, tailored to specific target audiences. Hazlitt writes that humor is the growth of nature and accident and wit the product of art and fancy. Freud said that wit is made, the comical or humorous is found. Wit is the arrow, humor the target. Wit is fast, humor slow; wit is subjective, humor objective; wit is intensive; humor expansive. Wit flows from the mind, humor from the heart. Humor is usually kindly and sympathetic, tender and tolerant, containing a measure of affection or love. Wit is often cruel and cutting, bitter and biting; wit that is kindly is usually not very witty. Much of the world's best wit does not even cause laughter. Wit may or may not be hostile--but humor may not contain hostility.

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<sup>10</sup>H. W. Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern English Usage (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), p. 240-1.

Freud held wit a subconscious protest against censorship and humor, the comical, a subconscious release of inhibitions. Wit's most characteristic element was "a compressing or to be more exact, an economic tendency" as opposed to the economy of feeling in the case of humor.<sup>11</sup> Since wit is artificial and deliberate, a witty person tends to be characterized by vanity, narcissism, extroversion, intellectual skill, verbal skill and sadism. The humorist, on the other hand, tends to display an affectionate attitude toward others, is tolerant of their sins and weaknesses; he is inclined to be objective, mature, patient, masochistic. However, wit does not express--as does humor--the whole personality. Wit involves only a clever turn of mind and does not reflect the whole mind. Humor springs from the depth of being and expresses an attitude, a philosophy of life.

Below is a chart picturing the development of humor and wit--suggested by Monroe<sup>12</sup>--which should be consulted at this point.

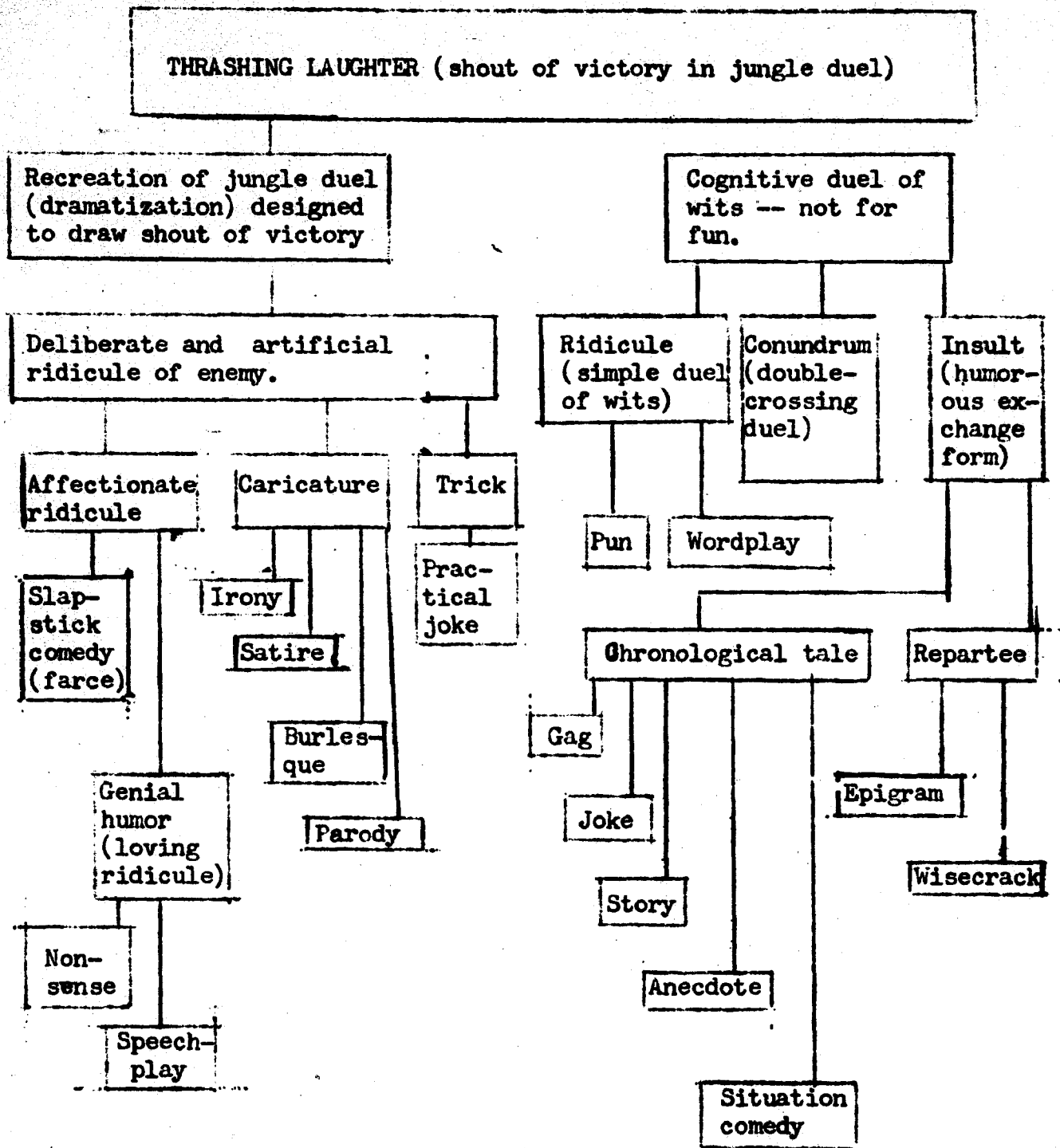
Wit and humor are related by a common ancestor, the dramatized action--direct in the case of humor, verbalized

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<sup>11</sup>Sigmund Freud, Basic Writings (trans. A. A. Brill), (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 50.

<sup>12</sup>D. H. Monroe, Argument of Laughter (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 152-3.

## Development of Wit and Humor Forms.





and shifted to the intellectual sphere in the case of wit. The first laughter--and admittedly this is all conjecture--was what Monro terms thrashing laughter, that is, the shout of victory in a jungle duel. It was not what we moderns would call funny, but was actually a form of release from restraint--a theme, incidentally, we shall encounter again. Later, the primitive sought to recreate his jungle duel around the camp fire; the dramatization involved ridicule of the jungle enemy. From this developed artificial ridicule of two-footed creatures, and from the elementary form of humor came the later and higher orders. Wit also stems from a duel--first a duel that was not for fun, then a cognitive duel, then a duel of wits. The riddle and the conundrum, ancient forms of humor, are examples of the cognitive duel; the exchange of insults is the grandfather of the witty exchange.

Let us now take a look at these various forms, beginning with humor and then turning to wit.

The Trick and Practical Joke. The trick or practical joke actually is a means of ridiculing one's enemy. Few would deny that overtones of sadism or revenge lurk behind the squirting flower, the sneezing powder, the dullard's errand for striped paint. The ridicule can be well hidden, as in verbal tricks:

"Why don't they hang a man with a mustache in China?"<sup>13</sup>

Other forms are the trick sign, as Barnum's famed To The Egress, the wheelbarrow ride the day after an election. In the same category is any humorous verbal device compelling attention: "It's hot in here. I think I'll take off my ring." Primitive, elementary--still very much with us today.

Nonsense. Ancient, honorable, the pride of Britain, nonsense today has lost its popularity in most countries. Nonsense is aimless humor, something that does not make sense yet somehow seems quite plausible. It is easily traceable back to the recreated jungle duel. We find a clear path from primitive supernaturalism to the modern nonsense symbol, as the path from the Haitian voodoo ritual to the Black Bottom dance, or from the savage wearing the lion skin to acquire leonine virtues to the teenager with a raccoon tail on his jalopy's aerial. Nonsense clothing has great importance, as clowns of all times and societies well know. The essence of nonsense--since it doesn't make fun of anything--is originality and spontaneity. Lewis Carroll's works are the classics, perhaps. One of the author's favorite bits of nonsense is the Pope's Swiss Guards:

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<sup>13</sup>Because they use a rope.

Michelangelo, highly irritated at being asked to use his talents in the design of a military uniform, rigged the guards in suits of red, black and yellow stripes--and thus they have dressed for four hundred years. Nonsense belongs, in the main, to the open society, to the individualist. The works of Gilbert and Sullivan would never have been considered correct socialist expression. Collectivist nonsense is usually mass produced, monotonous, superficial.

Nonsense involving words, what Esar calls tangletalk, is here termed speechplay. It differs from wordplay, considered below, in that it lacks intellectual content. The spoonerism--named after the good American pastor--came into existence when Reverend Spooner said of the deceased in a funeral oration, "He was truly a shoving leopard." Radio announcers are prone to such conversions as "Buy Hand's Hind Cream," or "Demand the Breast in Bed." Doubletalk, peculiarly American, came into vogue at the turn of the century when vaudevillians employed it against Broadway beat police in New York. It consists of skillfully blending sense and nonsense to produce a strong feeling of uncertainty in its victim, as this explanation of an electrical system:

"Remember that in this circuit the generator only operates when the fornstaff is generated by the dreelspail sparking the ruenfoil. Is that clear?" In the same family is what Lewis Carroll called partmanteau words. Other forms of

speechplay include: fuddletalk, the speech of drunks--"The drunker I sit her the longer I get"; the very common tongue twister--the one dealing with Suzy's sea shell sales or its more advanced form, "She sits and shells and shells and sits"; baby talk--as the pesky wabbit wascal in the refrigerator who declares, "This is a Westinghouse, isn't it? Well, I'm westing"; or Cockney talk--as the Cockney in the country hotel who heard a hoot and ran down stairs where the desk clerk told him it was nothing but an owl, he replying, "I know its an 'owl, but 'oo in 'ell is 'owlin?"

#### IV. SLAPSTICK COMEDY

Slapstick comedy--too well known to require any detailed consideration here--is what originally was termed farce. It is plotted, affectionate ridicule involving exaggerated effects and incidents. The staged, final results, of course, contain many forms of humor and wit other than simple slapstick. Traditionally the form involves a ridiculous procedure ending in absurd failure, although in today's commercial structure, especially as envisioned by Hollywood, redemption replaces failure and thus, technically, is not farce.

#### Burlesque, Caricature, Irony, Parody and Satire.

Essentially these are parasitic types of humor and their subdivisions are almost limitless. Five major categories

are differentiated here but the list could be extended to include sarcasm, lampooning, invective, mockery, travesty, mimicry, take-off, the sardonic. Since our purpose is to list the principal types of humor for use in a later chapter concerned with propaganda humor, we are considering only the major classifications.

The nature of burlesque, caricature, and irony are outlined in the chart below.<sup>14</sup>

	<u>Burlesque</u>	<u>Caricature</u>	<u>Irony</u>
<u>Motive:</u>	Deflation.	Inflicting pain through high-lighting of original.	Exclusiveness.
<u>Province:</u>	Unlimited.	Striking visual features.	Statements of fact.
<u>Method:</u>	Distortion.	Grotesque exaggeration.	Mystification (through inversion).
<u>Audience:</u>	The underdog, the dissidents.	The oriented victim and the bystander.	The inner circle.
<u>Example:</u>	Vaudeville, Punch. Troilus and Cressida.	Hogarth: the stereotype joke figure as hen-pecked husband, nagging wife, woman driver.	Anyone stating one thing and meaning another, generally the opposite.

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<sup>14</sup>Suggested by Fowler, op cit. Note: Troilus and Cressida is a burlesque on the Iliad in which demigods are transformed into Cockney types; the Warrior prince Troilus becomes a helpless cuckold, the tragic Cressida a Tudor strumpet and Diomet, the prototype of Greek manhood, a 16th

Parody has little place in propaganda humor. Its motive is the outlining of the characteristics of the original; its province is the peculiarities and foibles in the style of writing of others; its method is comic imitation and juxtaposition; and its audience is the informed. Like caricature, parody loses its effect unless the original object of attack is known. At best, in international propaganda, it could be used to discredit a writer.<sup>15</sup>

The fifth basic type, satire, deserves special treatment because of its extensive possibilities in propaganda. Satire is a weapon of offense, one forged by hate. Laughter is not the satirist's chief aim. He seeks amendment or reform, as testify the careers of Aristophanes; Juvenal, Swift, Rabelais, Goya, Cervantes, Moliere, Voltaire, Finley Peter Dunne and Mark Twain.

The neoclassic definition of satire tended to have a rather restricted meaning, closely identified with ridicule. With Swift, satire became a means of arousing moral action. He proved laughter a more forceful and effective instrument

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century Sam Weller. Note on chart's reference to irony: Irony, a most effective type of humor, is ambivalence reduced to a technique; there are many types--Socratic irony, dramatic irony, the irony of understatement. Sarcasm, a lower branch of irony, involves the direct address and the indirect insult.

<sup>15</sup>For an excellent account of parody, with examples, see Twentieth Century Parody, edited by Burling Lowrey (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960) 304 pp.

of moral reform than serious discussion. This moral utility of laughter presents the propagandist with great possibilities. However, a warning signal. Satire represents a mediation between two perceptions of mankind--what it is in truth and what it ought to be. It can be powerful, therefore, only with fairly widespread agreement as to what mankind ought to be. The propagandist using satire needs not only the conviction of fixed intellectual ideals or norms, but an audience sharing his basic philosophy. Further, the scratchy persuasiveness of satire comes far less from any desire on the part of the satirist to change the world than from the self-centered, arrogant and completely unsportsmanlike intensity of feeling he shows for the folly and pride of others. He moves from objective to technique and not visa versa. Finally the satirist-audience relationship is a most sensitive one. Unless he can involve his audience in his side of an issue, and make it share in his condemnation, the satirist fails and his failure is monumental. Unless he keeps a tight hold on his audience, the satirist may find it relaxing into uncritical laughter.

Of particular interest to us is the satire of the political cabaret found in Vienna cafes, on the Warsaw stages--censorship permitting--in the Paris Theater de Dix-Heures, and most especially in Federal Germany. The political cabaret sprang up in central Europe in the late

nineteenth century as part of the general effort to break some of the outdated but strongly rooted idées fixes about government and society. Never seeking a mass audience, it is the battleground for those choosing intellect as their weapon. On a postage stamp stage before an audience of perhaps one hundred, the artist runs through routines of songs and patter using as the base, fifteen or twenty skits. Always topical, the jokes spoof national and international politicians of all persuasions, big and little business, high society, greedy peasants, and anyone else who claims the right to be respected.<sup>16</sup>

#### V. WIT

Turning now to wit, we have twelve forms compressible into four categories: the riddle and the conundrum; word-play; chronological tale--the joke, anecdote, story and situation comedy; and four forms of verbal exchange.

Riddle. The riddle, Esar says, proves the scientific axiom that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, the history of the individual repeats the history of the species. During the childhood of the human race the riddle was the highest form of humor. Today its chief appeal is juvenile, although

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<sup>16</sup>Flora Lewis, "Germany's Cabarets Laugh at Politics," New York Times Sunday Magazine, June 14, 1959, pp. 15-17.



in some countries--the Arab world and Asia--the riddle is still an important type of humor. The most famous of all riddles perhaps is that one solved by Oedipus, thus freeing Thebes from the Muses' sea monster:

What goes on four feet, then on two feet and then on three feet? (Answer: Man.)

Later came the more sophisticated version:

What does a man do standing up, a woman sitting down and a dog on three legs? (Answer: Shake hands.)

The Conundrum. A conundrum is a puzzling question or riddle based on a fanciful or fancied resemblance of unlike things and often involving a pun. In actuality it is not solvable by the victim, or, if it is, the odds are thousands to one. Examples:

When is a joke not a joke? (Answer: Usually.)

What is the difference between a cat and a comma?

(Answer: A cat has its claws at the end of its paws, a comma has its pause at the end of a clause.)

The conundrum became popular in England in the 1700's and reached its peak a century later. It now has declined.

Wordplay. Wordplay is a generic term for wit involving words as opposed to ideas. It is one of the basic building blocks of humor. Most common is the pun (the lowest form of pastry), which is both ancient and modern:

"Golden lads and girls all must, as chimney sweepers, come to dust" - (the song in Cymbeline).

The dying Mercutio to Romeo: "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man."

"The first thing that strikes a stranger in New York is a cab."

The pun has many an enemy. Doctor Johnson declared that a man who will make a pun will pick a pocket. Lord Byron once remarked to Samuel Rogers, "Punning is the lowest species of wit," Rogers replying: "True, it is the foundation." When a pun fails one of three things has happened: the audience has failed to imagine the situation the pun hints at, the situation when imagined turns out to be not laughable, or too much effort was expended in picking up the similarity of sound on which the pun depended. A primary problem for the pun in the international arena is the matter of translation. Stephen Leacock cites a brilliant example of punning in French:

Thus on a famous occasion in the French Chamber of Deputies the announcement was made that the city Herat in Afghanistan had been taken and the question was asked, "What does the Shah of Persia say to it?" This isn't funny in English and there is no funny thought to it. But there was a burst of merriment, and the member speaking said he was afraid he had "aroused the smiles of the assembly"; and then they roared again. Why? Because in French the words were:

"Messieurs, on a pris l'Herat, (les rats)  
Que dit le Shah? (le chat) . . . Je crains

d'avoir éveillé les souris de la Chambre."<sup>17</sup>

Or consider the translation into French of the famed pun in poetry of Thomas Hood:

Ben Battle was a soldier bold  
And used to war's alarms  
But a cannon-ball took off his legs  
So he laid down his arms!

The only point here is that English allows a man to lay down his arms without taking them off--because arms mean two things. But in French:

Ayant perdu les jambes par un  
Coup de canon, il quitta le service.

There are other forms. The wellerism--coined from the Dickens character--in which a quoted phrase or remark illustrates a concrete instance:

"'Virtue in the middle,' said the devil, seating himself between two politicians."

Metathesis involves transposition of words to express a second idea as the African observation:

"First we had the land and the white man had the Bible; now we have the Bible and the white man has the land."

"The world is made of two groups: those who have more dinners than appetite, those who have more appetite than dinners."

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted by Stephen Leacock in Humor, Its Theory and Technique (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1935), p. 19.

The antonymism, the comic effect produced by antonyms, contrasts two words or phrases of opposite meanings:

"Alarmists always regard the rising generation as the falling one."

"There is no end to the laws and no beginning to the execution of them." - Twain.

Still another form is the verbal reiteration or echo verse:

"The hardest part of a colonial policy is to keep inferior peoples inferior."

"Public opinion is what people think other people think."

Finally, wordplay can simply be a play with words through combination. Time magazine and Walter Winchell contributed many wordplays, most of which was soon dropped from usage, as infanticipate or Reno-vate. Others stand, as smog (for smoke plus fog).

The Chronological Tale. This generic term covers the gag, the joke, the anecdote, the funny story and situation comedy--the differentiation being mainly one of complexity and length.

The gag is the shortest of chronological tales. It stands alone, does not depend on a recognized situation as do the longer forms. It began as comic dialogue in the early

American minstrel shows and reached its zenith, perhaps, with various who-was-that-lady routines of turn of the century American vaudeville. Its original form was question-answer, he-she, or Rastus-Sambo as these examples from the old Life magazine:

Q: Why do you drink so much whiskey?

A: What do you suggest I do with it?

He: He used such nautical terms.

She: Yes, sailors always talk dirty.

In both its original dialogue form and the later monologue form--that is a string of gags--it became the basis of radio humor during the heyday of half-hour comedy shows. Perhaps no one in the medium was more skilled in the use of gags strung together to build humor cumulatively than Bob Hope. The gag often can be used to make a salient point on a topical subject; in Jakarta this gag made the rounds in 1959: "Any one who is not totally confused is just very badly informed." Gags form the basis of a very large business in America; the sale of gags--figured on a dollar-return scale--is most lucrative. The Walt Disney organization, for example, has a gag file running to some five million entries.<sup>18</sup> In any propaganda humor program, such a library or file is essential.

The joke is a brief, single incident, a comic tale

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

stripped of its non-essentials. Unlike the gag, it must involve a situation. Its opening is descriptive and preparatory; its ending is always dialogue. A good joke is never extended nor ambiguous. A string of jokes, as used by a professional comic, becomes a routine. The joke specializes in current events and can be a highly sophisticated form of humor. In American television and night clubs there developed in the late 1950's a joke form involving social criticism plus a sort of verbal stream of consciousness. Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce, Don Adams, Tom Lehrer, Buddy Hackett, Bob Newhart, and Milt Kamen are some of the better known comics of this type. Theirs is wit rather than humor, and is mainly cerebral. In its extreme form, usually called sick humor, it becomes grim, as: "(on religion) They have missed the boat. 'Thou shalt not kill,' they say, and then one of them walks comfortably to the gas chamber with Caryl Chessman."<sup>19</sup>

Sicknik wit also sets special lyrics to well known musical numbers:

I ache for the touch of your lips, dear,  
 But much more for the touch of your whips, dear.  
 You can raise welts  
 Like nobody else.  
 As we dance the masochism tango.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>"The Sicniks", Time Magazine, July 13, 1959, pp. 42-3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

The anecdote at one time was an unpublished bit of gossip about the famous and today it still generally deals with the famous, the infamous or the personally known. It is now of two types. One type is biographical, an amusing narration or a detached incident of the famous:

An old friend once asked Abraham Lincoln, "How does it feel to be president of the United States?" And Lincoln replied, "You heard about the man tarred and feathered and ridden out of town on a rail; a man in the crowd asked him how he liked it, and his reply was that if it wasn't for the honor of the thing, he would much rather walk."<sup>21</sup>

The second type of anecdote is the moralistic point-maker, favorite of the after dinner speaker:

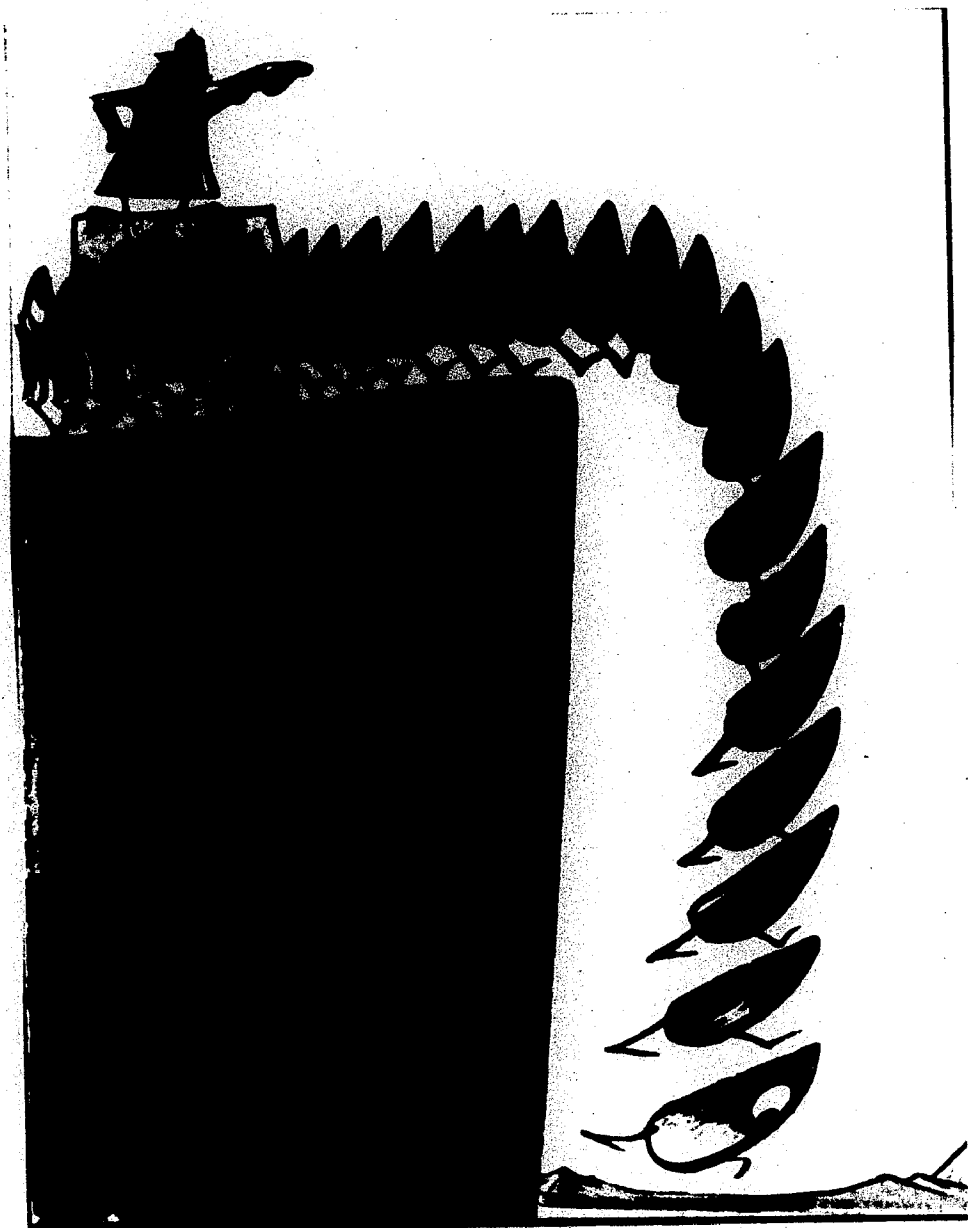
A man ran a mule college in which the rational approach was stressed. A farmer with a balky mule enrolled his animal in the school and stood by while instruction began. The college dean picked a heavy board and slammed the mule on the nose. Said the farmer: "I thought you stressed the rational approach here?" The dean replied: "Yes, I do--but first I have to get his attention."

The propagandist can use the anecdote to make a point--or to form a bond:

An Australian teacher was conducting a social studies class. The subject was marsupials--animals with built-in pouches. She stated that there are only three varieties of marsupials in the world. Two of these--the kangaroo and the koala bear--live in Australia. They have only one baby at a time and the koala bear has only one baby every two years. "Now the opossum," she said, "lives in America, and the mother may have as many as a dozen babies at one time. And she may have several litters of babies each year."

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<sup>21</sup> Carl Sandburg, "What Made Lincoln Laugh," Parade Magazine, Feb. 7, 1960, --3-4.



**PROPAGANDA**



As she paused, from far back in the room came the comment, "By jove, isn't that just like the Americans?"<sup>22</sup>

The funny story is characterized by type and manner of presentation. It includes as a subdivision, the fable, which Addison held to be the world's first wit form and which--as practiced by James Thurber--is still popular today. Other forms include the peculiarly American tall tale and the shaggy dog story, a cross between wit and humor. Much of the enjoyment derived from the funny story comes not from its matter but in its manner. Form is all. Master storytellers can make the mundane funny story hilarious using such techniques as animation and the building of suspense. There is an emotional contagion about a good story teller. In good story telling, incidental oddities and asides are treated enroute adding dimension and depth; suspense is built carefully, the denouement handled adroitly. America has produced a number of master storytellers--Irving . Cobb, Will Rogers and Mark Twain.

Situation comedy may be as short as the television sketch or as long as a five-act Shaw play. It began with three Greek forms: Old Comedy, which was mainly political satire, exemplified by Aristophanes; Middle Comedy, chiefly parodies of literature and travesties of myths and philosophies, typified by Antiphanes; and New Comedy, portraying

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<sup>22</sup>From Coronet Magazine, Oct., 1959, p. 47.

familiar life which was taken over by the Romans to reach an epitome in Terence and Menander. After a period of disuse this form of drama appeared in Europe as the comedy of manners, of which Molière was such a master. The most common form today is drawing room comedy.

The generic term, verbal exchange, includes repartee, the epigram and the wisecrack.

Repartee is that branch of wit covering clever replies and retorts. One of the contestants propounds a thesis which gives glory to himself or ignominy to his opponent; his opponent so manipulates the implications of the thesis that the propounder's glory disappears and his own appears in its place. This can continue until one of them cries enough. Repartee is or should be the most brilliant member of the wit family. It is a form of verbal fencing--a contest of expression. Originally it was less of a duel of wits and more of a duel of name calling, which sometimes can be almost pure wit, as in this charming classic from France:

Passerby: Good morning, mother of asses.

Peasant woman: Good morning, my son.

Another classic is abolitionist Charles Sumner's reply to the minister who asked impertinently why since slavery was in the South he did not go into the South with his anti-slavery speeches. Said Sumner: "You are trying to save

souls from Hell aren't you. Why don't you go there?"

Even when it seems polite and gloved this type of wit conceals a dirk, as this exchange exemplifies:

Paul Bourget: "When an American has nothing else to do he can always spend a few years trying to discover who his grandfather was."

Mark Twain: "Quite right, Monsieur Bourget. And when all other interests fail for a Frenchman, he can always try to find out who his father was."

And of course this, the most famous of all exchanges:

Gladstone (to Disraeli after one of their violent arguments): "Sir, you will end either upon the gallows or of a venereal disease."

Disraeli: "I suppose that depends upon whether I embrace your principles or your mistress."

In propaganda humor, repartee can be undeniably powerful. As Wright notes it scatters a man's adversaries with so utter rout that the most malicious and spiteful listener cannot restrain his voluntary applause.<sup>23</sup> Although in reality severe, repartee must appear to be courteous. It should be such that it is difficult even for its victim to resent. In propaganda humor it has its greatest use in programs involving face to face contact.

An epigram is a prose witticism, short, clever, referring to a general group of persons or things. It is usually quite formal and often satirical. It may involve

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<sup>23</sup>Milton Wright, What's Funny and Why (New York, McGraw-Hill Co., 1939), p. 47.

wordplay:

The world should make peace first and then make it last.

Or it may be thought play:

The best argument for everlasting peace is that it would enable us to finish paying for past wars.

Proverbs--which Soviet Premier Khrushchev during his 1959 visit to the United States raised to such a high art in propaganda humor--belongs in this classification:

One half the human race spends its time laughing at the other half and all are fools. (Japanese)

It is better to light one small candle than curse the darkness. (Confucius)

Wisecrack. Unlike the epigram, the wisecrack deals with specifics, a particular person or thing. It is informal, often delivered in sub-standard English, and seldom is subtle or folksy. It is the American answer to the Khrushchev proverb. The wisecrack is a hard-boiled epigram and usually most at home in the field of current events.

An Anglican church missionary arriving at his post was quoted by newsmen as saying: "I'm rather like a mosquito in a nudist camp. I know what I ought to do, but I don't know where to begin."<sup>24</sup>

Wisecracks are an excellent means of making a point

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<sup>24</sup>United Press International news story, January 14, 1960.

about a nation, a policy or an individual:

When Khrushchev was a boy on the farm he was such a liar that at feeding time someone else had to call the hogs.

Picture humor includes sketches, paintings, photographs, comic strips, cartoons and that distinctly American contribution to art: the animated cartoon. All are divisible into either humor or wit forms. The propaganda humorist is primarily concerned with the cartoon, both political or non-political, although not all cartoons are humorous nor intended to be. The cartoon has long been used in propaganda and psychological warfare campaigns--primarily because a picture is believed to have more impact than the printed text on the minds of the target audience, often composed of semi-illiterates. Lumlox in Propaganda Menace said:

We might write at length of the cartoon which is a very powerful propaganda medium . . . one of the most effective means of spreading propaganda that has ever been devised. The cartoon does something to you before you know it and you can't argue with it; its work is done before you can tear it to shreds.<sup>25</sup>

Max Eastman added: "A political cartoon or indeed any humor with a serious point, is like a play school-- putting over a certain amount of education." He then quotes J. N. Ding, the famed cartoonist, in defining a cartoon as

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<sup>25</sup>Albert Lumlox, The Propaganda Menace. (London: Esar House, 1924), p. 116.

a "humor-coated capsule by which the sober judgments of editorial minds may be surreptitiously gotten down the throats of an apathetic public. In other words . . . it is the apple sauce in which political pills are immersed and fed to unwilling children."<sup>26</sup>

The comic strip, long ago, ceased being purely comic. Little Orphan Annie, almost since her inception, has conducted a crypto campaign for unbridled free enterprise. USIA uses the comic strip as a vehicle for a propaganda message. Like the cartoon, however, the comic strip can be simply pictorial and not necessarily humorous. However, a number of American comic strips are both propagandistic and humorous; Pogo, Passionella and to some extent Peanuts, are examples. Humor magazines, such as Britain's Punch, have tended, in recent times, toward propaganda humor and away from humor-for-fun.

The summary of the change Muggeridge has made is that he took over Punch at a time when, on the whole, it made fun out of trivialities and in three years he has made it a paper which makes fun out of serious things.<sup>27</sup>

Certain themes and ideas are more expressible in pictorial form than are others--the test seems to be the

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<sup>26</sup> Max Eastman, The Enjoyment of Laughter (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936) p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> Gerard Fay, "New Punch in Punch," New York Times Sunday Magazine, (April 29, 1956), pp. 26-7.

degree of abstraction. Dr. Fredrick Redlich, Dr. Jacob Levine and Dr. Theodore Sohler studied 25,000 cartoons from New Yorker magazine, The Saturday Evening Post, Colliers and like magazines. They isolated eleven recurring themes:

(1) aggression against authority, (2) sexual aggression, (3) aggression between male and female, (4) homicide and suicide, (5) distortion of body image, (6) acquisition, (7) aggression against social institutions such as church, marriage, etc., (8) insanity, (9) sibling relationships, (10) parent-child relationships, (11) nonsense and omnipotence themes.<sup>28</sup> The index contains several examples of American cartoons and comic strip humor that makes a point in a propagandistic way. The reader will also find there examples of foreign political cartooning which, it must be stressed, were not designed to influence him, but persons within the country in which they appeared.

#### V. EPILOGUE

Finally an observation on the bitter-sweet dimension of our subject. Wit can be more than wit and humor can be greater than itself. There are outer limits that make no appeal to our comic sense, nor do they trigger laughter. Yet

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<sup>28</sup>"A Mirth Response Test," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry (vol. 21, no. 4, Oct., 1951), pp. 239-43.

in some mystical way they move us to the wonder and the pity of it all. The picture of Huck Finn, floating down the Mississippi on a raft discussing with Jim all the mysteries of the universe, or the pitiable dignity and the tawdry merriment of the poor as sketched by Dickens--such is the highest humor of all. Why this is we do not know. But to reverse an old cliché, it is possible to go from the ridiculous to the sublime.



## CHAPTER II

### PROPAGANDA AND HUMOR

Hungary declares war on the Allies, but the American official who receives the communication is not very well informed on European matters and hence poses several questions:

"Is Hungary a republic?" he asks.

"No, it is a kingdom."

"Then you have a king?"

"No, we have an admiral."

"Then you have a fleet?"

"No, we do not have any sea."

"Do you have claims then?"

"Yes."

"Against America?"

"No."

"Against England?"

"No."

"Against Russia?"

"No."

"But against whom do you have these claims?"

"Against Rumania."

"Then you will declare war on Rumania?"

"No sir, we are allies."

(Ascribed to Count Ciano of Italy)

One of the earliest examples of propaganda humor is this outburst by a young, freed slave reported by Petronius in The Satyricon. It not only demonstrates use of humor to deride an enemy but illustrates the "cognitive duel" theory of humor development considered in the previous chapter:

You there! Are you laughing at me, you curley headed onion. I'll show you that your father wasted his money even if you do go to school. Answer me this What part of us travels far, travels wide? Solve that and how about this one: What part of us runs and never moves from its place?... You see, you can't say a word. You're confused. You're stumped like the mouse that fell in the chamber pot. Then keep your mouth shut and don't bother people who are your superiors.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we shall survey what little has been done in the field of propaganda humor. The chapter is based almost exclusively on primary materials. An extensive--if not exhaustive--search of propaganda literature uncovered a few periodical articles but not a single book or portion of a book devoted to the subject. Indeed, the author could find no writer of propaganda who considered seriously the possibilities of humor in propaganda. Occasional mention was found of the "black joke" in psywar operations, of the political cartoon--which, as has been observed previously, is by no means always humorous--and of the functions and purposes of satire. Some propaganda humor, as shall be seen, has been employed by the United States Information Agency but

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<sup>1</sup>Answers: The foot, and the eye (or the nose).

as far as the author could determine these uses have never received any scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup>

This inattention is part of a larger deficiency of literature concerning editorial technique, writing problems and technical production of propaganda. Until very recently, works on propaganda were actually anti-propaganda in nature. They were exposés concerned not with teaching how to propagandize but how to identify propaganda techniques, with the tacit implication that the purpose of such identification was to blunt the effect. Mumford sensed the way in which value judgments boxed in the scholar:

In the interim between World War One and World War Two analysts of propaganda, exposing the rhetorical devices of persuasion themselves put over one of the biggest frauds of our time: namely, the conviction that the important part about a statement is not its truth or falsity, but the question whether someone wishes you to believe it.<sup>3</sup>

Later works, in the postwar period, were either sociologically oriented or were concerned with functional problems at the policy determination level. Again, production considerations were ignored. The behavioral scientist, correctly, is concerned with the effect of propaganda on

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<sup>2</sup>USIA does have an information or intelligence field reporting program which operates, by country, and includes the collection of such cultural material as bawdy jokes, latrine writing, etc. Most of it is classified.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis Mumford, Values For Survival, (New York: Hartcourt Brace, 1956), pp. 9-39.

public opinion and the ramifications of such propaganda for society. It is natural--since he is a scholar devoted to Truth, and lives in a climate where propaganda is considered a dirty business--that he should be concerned with the effect of propaganda, not its way. For the professional propagandist, however, this has worked a great hardship.

When the Nazis demonstrated the power of propaganda and the communists made its continued use inevitable, non-communist scholars of propaganda reluctantly turned their attention to production problems. Contributions began to arrive. But, since the field was dominated by the psychological warrior, research concentrated on hate themes and research concerned with propaganda humor was virtually non-existent.

Thus the propaganda student, searching for models, has been forced to rely largely on the ancient and standard techniques of persuasion. Not that this has been entirely bad, for what we are dealing with here is very old in human history. What the world calls propaganda was once called the rhetoric of persuasion (as opposed to the rhetoric in expository, speculative or poetic discourse). Aristotle's classic division of oratory stands the modern propagandist in good stead. His division of oratory, or, if you wish, propaganda:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Aristotle, Rhetoric (Great Books in Western World edition; Chicago, Great Books Inc., 1954), esp. Bk. I, ch. 1-4 and Bk. III, ch. 1.

Type	Time	Technique	Objective
political or deliberative	future	urges us either to do or not do something	establishing the expediency or harmfulness of a course of action.
forensic or legal	past	attacks or defends somebody	establishing the justice or injustice of some action.
ceremonial or epideictic	present	praises or censures somebody	proving the person worthy of the honor, or the reverse.

Early orators or propagandists frequently used what can roughly be termed propaganda humor. The approach generally was intuitive, but the result often brilliant.

Hence, the early years of modern propaganda employed elementary forms and a serious approach. As propaganda became institutionalized and as propagandists became sophisticated, an increasing dissatisfaction with simpler hate themes developed. The world now is tired of propaganda. This is the fundamental, all-embracing fact which every propagandist must face and the implication of which he must recognize, if he is to have even an entree into the minds of those who are not already emotionally on his side. The psychological resistances of a skeptical, propaganda-weary world must be respected and intelligently taken into account; they cannot be simply battered down. In the United States Information Agency in the 1955-60 period, psywar advocates fell into disrepute and influential theorists in the Agency argued that

the so-called "hard sell" could be used only in combat or semi-combat conditions in which the propagandist's objective was some specific action by the communicants.

USIA Director George Allen declared:

Let me emphasize that we try not to harangue or boast. We try to carry on a dignified, calm, self-reliant campaign--devoid of sensationalism and diatribes--to present as true-to-life a picture of Americans as possible--a democratic people of vastly mixed heritage, enjoying a good standard of living because of their own dynamic efforts, willing to share unselfishly with less fortunate nations, possessing a culture of a high order, strongly opposed to aggression anywhere--and, above all, dedicated to the principle of enduring peace.<sup>5</sup>

In the Soviet Union--at the internal propaganda level--similar thoughts have been expressed.

Soviet propagandists are trying hard to give their work a good name . . . Following the general evolution of Soviet life and politics, the Government and Communist Party and its indoctrinators in chief want the old propaganda cloth fashioned in a new style so that people will look and listen, believe and trust, work harder and like it . . . What the party is aiming for is more effective, more readable propaganda, more features that will attract young and women readers, fewer dull texts, at least some wit, if not humor.<sup>6</sup>

Albert Parry, in a lengthy article replete with examples and quotations from official Soviet Union sources,

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<sup>5</sup>George Allen, "The Image of America Which We Project"--Speech to Zonta International (June, 1958).

<sup>6</sup>Max Frankel, "Moscow Revamps It's Propaganda," New York Times (Mar. 6, 1960), p. 9. This news story dealt with the publication in January, 1960 of a 7,000 word Central Committee of the Communist Party, USSR decree titled "Problems of Party Propaganda in Contemporary Conditions."

reported that Soviet propaganda inside the Soviet Union has become a laughable failure.<sup>7</sup>

Part of the change, of course, is a reflection of the international scene itself, with increased evidence that rulers and leaders of almost all nations believe that if there is no international ~~rapprochement~~ the result will be a missile-nuclear holocaust that will leave only Cadmaeon victors. Propagandists move to accommodate.

Germany since early 1938 had been broadcasting to Britain in English from Radio Hamburg. But the strong German accents of the announcing staff plus the clumsy negative appeals struck such British as cared to listen as being almost a burlesque of the propaganda device. Then, on April 10, 1939, an authentic British voice spoke from Hamburg:

"To some I may seem a traitor, but hear me out . . ."

This was the beginning of the career of William Joyce, an Irish-American who was later dubbed Lard Haw Haw by a London columnist. He was, in the opinion of this writer, one of the most brilliant--and for a time the most effective--propagandists of modern times. Haw Haw read news and news commentary, produced short burlesque skits that depicted the average Englishman as a conceited, pompous, overbearing ass. He laid an appalling list of grievances at the door of the

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<sup>7</sup>Albert Parry, "Boredom Catches Up with the Comrades," Harpers Magazine, March, 1956, pp. 66-9.

British government, charging it with neglect and plutocratic indifference. He took the most successful of the British music hall jokes and gave them a twist that convulsed the British every night. By the Spring of 1940, it was estimated that half the radio sets in Britain were tuned in to hear his curious, metallic voice at least once a day.<sup>8</sup>

British newspapers became alarmed at his growing influence and urged the government to take action. In March of 1941 BBC began to program replies, first indirectly and then addressed directly to Haw Haw. **But** it was the changed mood of the British--engendered by the battle of Britain--and not BBC that ended the Haw Haw power. Times change and he could not and his name passed into history as a traitorous jokester. Haw Haw took a leaf from American radio comedy and introduced to his listeners his "family" of fellow comedians: Sir Izzy Ungeheimer who advised Britishers on evasion of tax laws, "Good old Bumbleby Mannering," a churchman who had invested heavily in munitions, and Foreign Office official Sir Jasper Murgatroyd. Of all the comic dialogues one of the most effective was between a German named Schmidt and a Britisher names Smith, played by Haw Haw himself. Haw Haw's best efforts involved satiric, ironic commentary of the current

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<sup>8</sup>Harold Graves and Ruth Durant, "Lord Haw Haw of Hamburg," Pub. Opin. Quart., IV, 3 (Sept., 1940), p. 429.



scene. Typical is this excerpt from an explanation of the class system in Britain:

Centuries of unwise breeding have left them (the British upper class) without energy. Their wealth simply amasses without the slightest effort on their part. They have given themselves the trouble to be born and there ends their value to the human race. If some Jew says to them, "Look here, your dividends are in danger; this National Socialism is imperiling the whole system by which you live," they first look blank and then gasp. Then they say, "Well look here Izzy, old chap, you know about it. We must do something, what?" And then they sing "God Save the King" and go to their nightclubs, their winter sports or whatever luxuries they find most attractive. . . That is the first estate of the British realm.<sup>9</sup>

The best allied propaganda humor strokes of World War Two were delivered by BBC whose following inside the Third Reich was enormous and whose careful programs often spoofed the Nazis with malicious skill. The British approach to humor was not one of "pure" jokes or chunks of humor but of a generally light touch. Irony, dry stout hearted wit permeated the broadcasts, and the effect was much enhanced by the background from which they emanated: Britain, alone and on her knees carrying on in an indomitable spirit of good cheer.

American propaganda humor--not as subtle as the British--was less effective. Each United States Army Group had assigned to it a psychological warfare section responsible for propaganda at the front-line level. In Europe anti-Nazi jokes were gathered from captured German prisoners--who couldn't resist passing along a good story even to

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp.431-2.

the enemy--and these were directed back to the enemy, mainly by radio. Robert T. Colwell, an Office of War Information planner described Allied programs broadcast by Radio Luxembourg after its capture in the summer of 1944:

Since Sept. 20 Radio Luxembourg, with its entree into virtually every home in Germany, no longer speaks for the Nazis but for the Allies. It relays news and features from OWI and the BBC and it also broadcasts various Army shows. But probably its most important and certainly its most interesting programs are the shows it originates and beams every day into the heart and mind of Germany. They are designed to sap German morale and lure German soldiers into surrendering.

One program consists of excerpts from letters captured from the Germans before they could be mailed or delivered. Another gives 'inside' news from Germany, stories of scandal and corruption. A third broadcasts recordings made by German prisoners describing how well they are treated. But the station's staff considers the jokes told on many of its programs as perhaps the most effective propaganda of all.

Sometimes the jokes are made up by staff writers to illustrate a propaganda point currently being stressed. Sometimes a joke may be one that new prisoners tell U.S. intelligence officers is currently making the rounds in Germany. One of the radio staff's greatest rewards has been to launch an original joke on the air and then have it return some weeks later on the lips of a prisoner, proof of its circulation in the Wehrmacht.

The quality of many of the jokes would make even Joe Miller cringe. However, they are designed to appeal to the heavy-handed German sense of humor. The staff learned that this one, for instance, laid the Germans in the aisles:

"We used to say to the Fuhrer, 'When you lead--look! We follow!'"<sup>10</sup> Now we say, 'When you lead, look what follows!'"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>"Life's Reports: Radio Luxembourg," Life Magazine, October 14, 1944, p. 12.

Colwell added that the lines are delivered in good colloquial German. The station's staff includes professors who had taught German in colleges, well-known German men of letters, advertising men, sons of emigrants, musicians, radio actors, former students in German universities.

Since its inception the Voice of America has used propaganda humor, perhaps with more success than the U. S. Army's psychological warfare operations.

The Voice's output . . . directed behind the Iron Curtain is made up of about half hard-hitting, well-selected news and about half commentary--material clearly reflecting the American point of view and labeled as such. Logic, irony, and plain cold economic facts each play their role in the commentaries. For example, the potential might of the free world as opposed to the potential strength of the Communist world is an important argument today. Humor, too, also plays a part from time to time. For example, we had a lot of fun and did an effective job, I believe, with the Communist allegation that we were dropping potato bugs behind the Iron Curtain. We had even more fun and effect, I believe, in later reporting the Czechoslovak wisecrack that the Americans were now finding it necessary to drop potatoes in order to keep the potato bugs alive.<sup>11</sup>

The Voice of America uses humor in both the first half, or news portion, and in the second, or feature-commentary, half of the standard broadcast. It uses less humor than does RIAS. One of the devices employed in the news portion--although not as frequently as at one time--is what is called a shirt-tail.

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<sup>11</sup>Edward W. Barrett, "Stressing Information Themes to Meet Changing World Conditions," Department of State Bulletin, 24, (Jan. 1, 1951), pp. 13-15.

Shirrtails are not intended as an opportunity for wisecracks or heavy-handed humor. They have a very simple purpose: to make a news story that lends itself to making a point and to make that point with a few simple observations from the writer.

A shirrtail is not a full-fledged commentary. It should be confined to one easily-grasped point. Satire is effective of course but it is not absolutely necessary. Sometimes two stories juxtaposed with a helping comment from the writer will do the trick. At any rate, shirrtails do depart from straight news reporting.

Here is an example of one type of effective shirrtail:

"Budapest: The Hungarian Communist regime has decided to strike a special 'hero' medal for presentation to workers who have distinguished themselves building the Budapest underground railway.

"With this announcement, a new conundrum began to make the rounds of workers on Budapest's subway:

"'If it takes five thousand Hungarian workers to build an underground railroad from Budapest to Vienna - how many "hero" medals would Rakosi have to strike to reward the heroes?'

"The answer is - none. For, once as far as Vienna, no 'hero' would ever think of returning, medal or no medal."<sup>12</sup>

This example, of recent origin, received a mixed reaction among editors of the Voice of America. The author is of the opinion this is an example of poor propaganda humor.

(Peiping) The bedbug has replaced the sparrow as a major enemy of the Chinese Communist regime.

Vice Premier Tan Chen-Line announced this yesterday (Wed) in Peiping to an audience of two thousand, including Premier Chou En-Lai.

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<sup>12</sup>From "This Is Your Job," Voice of America (IBS/rc) Style Book, (unpublished; Feb. 1, 1953), p. 69.

Tan told a meeting of the National Peoples Congress that destruction of millions of sparrows has cut their damage to grain crops. But he noted that sparrows are the natural enemies of many insect pests, and these pests have flourished as the sparrow population has been reduced. Now, he said, the bedbug must be wiped out. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Here is a later example of what is now called a closer, used as the final item in a news program:

Vienna: News dispatches from Vienna report these late developments at the Communist-sponsored festival there:

Some forty of the American delegates walked out, protesting incidents of violence and propaganda . . . one East German requested asylum in Austria . . . twenty Italians went home in disgust . . . splits appeared in the delegations from India, Brazil and Chile . . . there were fist fights between Arab and Israeli delegates, and between those from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union . . . an American girl was slapped in the face by a festival guard for distributing pamphlets about American farms . . .

The full name of the event is the World Youth Festival for Peace and Friendship.<sup>14</sup>

The English-language Panorama USA series carried an account of the annual Gridiron Club dinner in which political leaders in America are lampooned in skits by newsmen. Here is an excerpt from another feature or "back half" program on Abraham Lincoln and his noted humor:

(Narr.): Young Abe Lincoln was a part of these people--and had his roots where this new country was most active--in the great west. A place where the people had to fight to stay alive--where they worked

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<sup>13</sup>From Voice of America news broadcast, VOA 3, Four A.M. Roundup, April 7, 1960, item five.

<sup>14</sup>From Voice of America news broadcast, VOA 14, Afternoon Fareast Roundup, August 4, 1959, item eleven.

hard and played hard. There were quilting parties and shooting matches and corn husking parties. On special occasions there would be a gathering in somebody's barn or out of doors if the weather was good--and the fiddles would play and the settlers in their slicked up best would dance the night away.

Tape: SQUARE DANCE MUSIC UP FULL 20 SEC. FADE UNDER NARRATION AND LOSE.

(Annrcr): Lincoln danced, and Lincoln worked in this frontier community. Tough and raw-boned and tall--he measured six feet four inches when he was only seventeen--he was known as a hard worker. With his axe he chopped down trees, split fence rails, cut firewood. But he was known for his humorous side, too. He seemed to remember every entertaining story ever told him and would repeat an appropriate one whenever an occasion arose. As a young man in Illinois he picked up this tale:

(Voice): One John Moore was homeward bound driving a yoke of steers, at the same time emptying a jug into himself. One of the wheels of the cart hit a stump, and the steers ran away. Moore slept off the effects of the jug-full. The next morning he woke up in the cart, looked around, and said: "If my name is John Moore, I've lost a pair of steers; if my name ain't John Moore, I've found a cart."

(Annrcr): But underneath his humor was a more serious side. He was a voracious reader--reading anything he could get his hands on in a country with very few books. And folks talked about his honesty--one time he walked six miles to return six and one quarter cents to a woman who had overpaid him.<sup>15</sup>

Former Voice of America Director Edward Barrett described a piece of propaganda humor used during the early years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. American Embassy officials in Prague noted, one morning, that secret police

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<sup>15</sup>J. Moore, "Abe Lincoln Comes Out of the Wilderness," radio script produced by the Voice of America, Central Program Services, Talks and Features Branch, Feb. 6, 1958.

had been stationed outside the consulate. This fact was reported to Washington and Voice of America Czech broadcasts reported the surveillance in great detail--describing the men, their clothing, their actions. The broadcast suggested that anyone in the neighborhood might drop around and look at them, if curious as to how a secret policeman on the job behaves. The next day a steady procession of Czechs paraded past the supposedly secret operatives, looking carefully and smiling slyly. On the third day the agents moved the base of their operations across the street to a parked car, a fact duly reported by the Voice which also noted the agents carelessly dropped orange peelings on the sidewalk. This brought even more streams of citizens passing by with twinkling eyes.<sup>16</sup>

An example of later propaganda humor via radio is described by Peter Grothe:

I was having a pleasant dinner conversation in the East Berlin apartment of two friends. Suddenly, one of my friends glanced at his watch, jumped up and rushed for the radio, exclaiming, "It's time for Pinsel and Schnorchel."

Everything stopped as they listened to Pinsel and Schnorchel, two RIAS comedians who broadcast robust satires of communist life in DDR. The reception was weak and the two put their ears flush to the set in order to hear every word. When the program was over, my

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<sup>16</sup>Edward Barrett, Truth is Our Weapon (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1953), p. 149.

friends turned away from the radio, their faces wreathed in smiles. The smiles weren't those one sees after a bright joke. They were smiles of a deep, inner contentment. It was as if they had been refreshed after days on a blazing desert by the water of a cool, green oasis . . .

The two most popular political satire programs are the aforementioned Pinsel and Schnorchel, the two twenty-five per cent communists, and Insulaner, a political cabaret. Insulaner, which tops the West German version of the American Hooper ratings, hits the Communists at their most vulnerable point--lack of a sense of humor.<sup>17</sup>

Guenter Neumann and his Insulaner political cabaret troupe make lighthearted fun of stupidity, pompousness and corruption wherever they find them, but their sharpest barbs are directed at Communist officials and directives.

The newest member of the international propaganda club--Cuba's Radio Mambi--makes the most use of propaganda humor, but with questionable success. Its most common technique--dedicated as it is to the psywar approach--is burlesque of anti-Castro forces.

A commentary on the Republic of Korea began:

His majesty, Caesar Attila Eisenhower I, absolute emperor of the West and king of the putrid democracy, once appointed Mister Synghman Rhee viceroy of the South Korean colony. In reiterated declarations, his gracious majesty praised his vassal as one of the firmest pillars of the western empire...Now Mister Rhee has boarded a plane to leave the colony which he ruled for so many

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Grothe, To Win the Minds of Men, (Palo Alto, Pacific Books, 1958), p. 193.



years at the sacred orders of his majesty, Caesar Attila Napoleon Alexander Eisenhower I. And where is Mister Rhee going? You guessed it, he is going back to the seat of the empire, that is the Pentagon... We hope that when the plane carrying him to Washington passes over the statue of liberty, the noble lady will not blow on her torch and put it out...

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We will now give the speech made last evening by Eisenhower about his visit to Indian America: "Bla-bla-bla-bla." Eisenhower also said that, "bla-bla-bla-bla-bla-bla," and added: "bla-bla-bla-bla-bla." He was really expressive when he spoke of questions on our poor America.

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We offer a prize of one thousand pesos to anyone who can tell us on what day Arturo Artalejo has to go to pick up his monthly check at the U. S. Embassy.

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Here is another real easy puzzle: With what foot does Mister Herter limp? Give up? Well, Mister Herter limps on his imperialistic foot.<sup>18</sup>

Periodical and pamphlet propaganda humor can involve jokes, anecdotes, cartoons and full length articles; the article can be either one of pure humor, that is with no particular propaganda message involved, or it can be one in which the humor is used as the vehicle. The author surveyed the entire series of the Russian-language America Illustrated, 1956-1960; this magazine is distributed in the Soviet Union by the United States Information Agency. He also surveyed the Soviet counterpart, USSR, which is distributed in the United States. Much of the contents of America Illustrated is reprint non-fiction material from American mass circulation

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<sup>18</sup>Foreign Broadcast Information Service monitor report on Radio Mambi, in Spanish to Cuba, 2330 hours GMT, March 9, 1960.

magazines and is, of course, written in the style demanded by the magazines' editors. Common to this style is the interlacing of humorous anecdotes among the points the author wishes to make. A few of the articles were biographical, dealing with American humorists and comics and were therefore somewhat humorous in tone. The third type of humor was a sampling of American humor and humorous writing. In the period 1956 to 1960 only nine articles were found in America Illustrated that could be termed humorous in one of the above three categories.

- "James Thurber, Humorist," - March, 1957.
- "A Boy's Ambition," (by Mark Twain) March, 1957.
- "Danny Kaye," - March, 1957.
- "Tall Tales of Texas" by J. Frank Dobie - June, 1957.
- "Puppies Cause Joyful Uproar," (photos) - Dec., 1957.
- "Where Did You Go? Out. What Did You Do? Nothing," (from the book by Robert Paul Smith) - Dec., 1957.
- "Soviet Cartoons View America," - Nov., 1958.
- "America's Most Famous Clown," (Jack Benny) - March, 1959.
- "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," (James Thurber short story) - March, 1960.

Admitting that the purpose of America Illustrated is not to persuade so much as to show American life, one can still ask whether this magazine reflects, in balance and with perspective, the American scene. Does humor and laughter play as little a role in contemporary America as America Illustrated seems to indicate?

USSR, if anything, is even more serious than its American cousin. The first several issues of 1956 USSR contained a page of humorous cartoons, some political but mostly

non-political. Examples are contained in the index of this paper. This page was dropped, however, without explanation in 1957 issues. Issue number four<sup>19</sup> contained an article entitled, "All Kinds of Laughter," a biographical sketch of Arkadi Raikin, star of the Leningrad Variety Theater and one of the Soviet Union's most entertaining comedians. Issue number twenty-six contained a similar sketch of a Soviet political cartoonist. This was the only humor material contained in the 1956-60 period of USSR.

Crockodile, the Soviet satire magazine, is domestically oriented and not intended as international propaganda although its editors must be aware of its readership abroad and governed accordingly. Crockodile's humorous assault on western targets generally is quite heavy handed, but often is very effective. Consider this example of satire as reported by an American news service:

Moscow, March 21.--(UPI)--Russia's humor magazine Krokodil today laughed at the thought of Soviet ballerinas prancing in New York with secret radio transmitters tucked in their tights.

In an open letter addressed to New York Daily News publisher F. M. Flynn, the magazine said Flynn could keep his eyes peeled for shortwave radios near the skin-tight leotards of Bolshoi Ballet girls when they appear in New York next month.

The letter was prompted by an editorial in the Daily News Feb. 28.

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<sup>19</sup>The editions of USSR are not dated as are American magazines.

(The News editorial said "You can bet your hat the Bolshoi mob will be laced with Soviet spies and propagandists . . .")

Congratulating the U. S. publisher for "opening the eyes of millions of Americans to the danger threatening their country," the humor magazine recommended that Flynn pay particular attention to Prima Ballerina Galina Ulanova's ballet shoes.

"They secrete super-powerful radar," Krokodil said.

When Ulanova does a pas de deux, radar will scan Broadway locating all the neon light advertisements starting with Seagrams whiskey and ending with Haig whiskey, which of course is of enormous interest to Soviet intelligence, it said.

The magazine said electronic equipment in stage sets used by the ballet troupe in New York will measure applause "which will help determine the types of the newest American rockets."

Ulanova's movements in "Swan Lake" will relay "coded information on the price of hotdogs" and the death scene in Romeo and Juliet will "call on Americans to overthrow their capitalistic system," Krokodil said.

The magazine urged the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency to man the violins of the New York Philharmonic when that orchestra visits the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most effective example of propaganda humor in the magazine field is "Tarantel," edited by Heinrich Baer, printed in German in West Berlin and smuggled into East Germany. This clandestine anti-communist magazine, founded in 1950, is supported by anonymous private sources in western Europe. Since the first issue its content has stayed much the same: color cartoons, short skits, jokes and bogus

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<sup>20</sup>United Press International news story dated March 21, 1960.

biographies of party leaders. In addition to "Tarantel," Editor Baer puts out a daily, satiric cartoon-and-text press service for some 800 newspapers and magazines. Each month about half of "Tarantel's" press run of 250,000 - 300,000 goes to West Berliners; the remainder is slipped into East Germany. The size of a theater program, "Tarantel" can be concealed in a book, fits easily into a standard German envelope.

An excellent example of propaganda humor in book form is Morton Sontheimer's Attention Comrades.<sup>21</sup> It employs a format very popular in humor publications at the moment, the picture-plus-caption. The reader is probably familiar with the technique: virtually anything capable of human expression is photographed--babies, dogs, cats, monkeys, etc. Captions, usually very short, are presented beneath each photo--the humor being based generally on the incongruity of the juxtaposition. Attention Comrades is a picture story using the face of the refugee Czech comedian, Jara Kohout, and the captions are communist party slogans and communist cliches. A sample from the book is to be found in the index of this paper. An indication of the tone of the humor is the sub-title of the book: "The Party will hold an educational

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<sup>21</sup>Morton Sontheimer, Attention Comrades (New York: Viking Press, 1954) featuring the face of Jara Kohout, photographs by Wallace Litwin.

meeting tonight. Attendance is purely voluntary. THE PARTY will record the names of those absent for future reference."

The International Press Service of USIA has distributed several smaller booklets--usually about 3 by 5 inches--employing the same format. One uses photographs of babies; for example, a baby playing with a rattle is saying, "I don't know what it is, but it won a Stalin prize." Another booklet uses a photograph of an East European peasant and is titled "Escape from Paradise." (See index)

The book which is in itself humorous has, of course, long had a secondary propaganda value for the country claiming the author. Mark Twain, for example, has great popularity in the Soviet Union and undoubtedly has greatly influenced the image of America held by those who read his works.

Mark Twain is one of the most popular writers in the Soviet Union, where a twelve-volume edition of his works was begun in 1958 with a first printing of 300,000 copies. Great writers can be a bridge of understanding between peoples, and a bridge Mark Twain has undoubtedly been.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps the most common propaganda humor of all--and virtually the only one that comes to most minds when the subject is broached--is the cartoon. Cartoons are of two types, political and non-political; political cartoons may or may not be humorous by intent while non-political cartoons

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<sup>21</sup>Max Frankel, "What Makes Ivan Laugh," New York Times Sunday Magazine, Jan. 31, 1960, p. 14.

are almost always intended to be so.

The U. S. Information Agency supplies foreign newspaper editors with a steady supply of political cartoons from American newspapers, chosen for their application to the particular country involved. The Agency also distributes a four-panel propaganda cartoon strip, called "Little Moe-- His Life Behind the Iron Curtain."<sup>22</sup> It is all pantomime, contains no printed text and thus bypasses the language barrier. The cartoons are also reproduced in small booklets for distribution to individuals abroad.

The political cartoon--and the best of them involve humor--is an extremely powerful weapon of persuasion. The message is presented in a pleasant and easily understood way; very often the cartoon is an analogy or figure of speech in visual pictorial form. Most common humorous element is satire and the second most common is caricature although this second type has fallen somewhat into disrepute. Franklin Alexander wrote

Topics frequently determine the pictorial method. For example, war requires more strident tones. Elections ridicule the opposition with pictorial expressions of the campaign incongruities. World councils and efforts toward settling international differences arouse in me hope, and I always attempt to picture that attitude rather than a negative one. I confess that I turn out

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<sup>22</sup>The work of United States Information Agency cartoonist Millard Philip Brady.

a good many hands across the sea . . . bridges instead of fences . . . stepping stones . . . corner stones and other cartoon cliches, but now and then the theme of better things to come can be done with some humor and warmth.<sup>23</sup>

The joke is the second most common or perhaps the most common use of humor in propaganda. During World War Two, these were planted on the continent by underground and resistance forces. Called "Black Jokes," they had as their main object the lampooning of the enemy and as a secondary purpose the building of morale among the civilian population.

Anti-regime jokes are still common and popular in Eastern Europe. In many cases they are the anti-Nazi stories with a new victim, the Communist regime.

This story for example:

Three doctors who were arguing about which is the most difficult operation a surgeon is called upon to perform.

The American said he thought a brain operation is the most difficult. The English doctor said a heart operation is the toughest. But the Russian surgeon disagreed with both.

"For us," he said, "a tonsillectomy is the most difficult. The patient is afraid to open his mouth, and we have to take out his tonsils through his ear."

Back in the 30s, when Hitler ruled Germany with an iron hand, German dentists were supposed to be extracting teeth in similar fashion because Germans were afraid to open their mouths.

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<sup>23</sup>Kamins, op cit. From a letter from Philadelphia Evening Bulletin cartoonist, Franklin Alexander, p. 223.



Or this variation:

"An East German and a West German were fishing from opposite banks of the Elbe. The East German was catching nothing; the West German was hauling in fish one after the other. Fed up, the frustrated East German called out: 'What's your secret? How do you do it?'

"'There's no secret,' the West German shrugged. 'On this side of the border they're not afraid to open their mouths.'"

USIA has distributed this same joke attributing it to Rumania. Age means nothing in propaganda jokes. If it packs a charge, if it delivers a sufficient blast, if it jabs sharply enough under the skin of bureaucrat or Gauleiter or commissar, it will be repeated with relish and listened to with satisfaction.

"In Prague, the story goes, a Czech official came upon President Klement Gottwald carrying an open umbrella on a lovely summer day. 'Why the umbrella?' the friend asked in amazement, 'on such a beautiful day!' 'Haven't you heard?' Gottwald replied. 'It's raining in Moscow.'"

"In Rumania they tell this one: A thief broke into Party headquarters in Bucharest and got away with an unusually valuable haul. He made off with the election returns for the next three years."

The psychological base of these jokes, as we shall see in more detail, in the chapter on Psychology of Propaganda Humor, is a rejection of censorship. Deprived by iron control of ordinary outlets of expression, people turn instinctively to derogatory quips, stories and epigrams to vent their feelings. The jokes thus assume a significance far beyond their actual content. Communism with its inherent absurdities and its unbounded fakery, offers an endless series

of targets for the folk wits.

Political jokes began to circulate almost the first day of Hitler's assumption of power and continued to the end with every new event and political turn bringing a fresh batch of jibes. So prolific were the Germans at inventing those anti-Hitler jokes that Alexander Meir, at war's end had collected eight hundred of them which were subsequently published in the book, Geflusteretes: die Hitlerei im Volksmund.

Wright, a longtime amateur student of propaganda humor summarized the power and effect of the propaganda joke:

"The Third Reich did not, of course, collapse because people made irreverent cracks about it, and Communism will not be done in by unregenerate jesters, either. But there is no way of estimating how many deluded Nazis and Fascists had their eyes opened, how many blind believers had their faith shaken, how many timid dissenters were strengthened by hearing a satirical, searing story that cut through the pretensions of propaganda to the truth of the matter. . . The totalitarians and their stooges are right to fear this type of humor. Sydney Smith long ago observed that 'there are few who would not rather be hated than laughed at.' The commissars, like the Gauleiter before them, are content to be hated, but they are terrified of laughter, for no one who laughs at them can be wholly deceived, wholly subdued. If we had no other clue to the true feelings of the masses huddled behind the Curtain these jokes would be sufficient proof that not all the threats and thunders of Communism can smother the canny good sense of the people."<sup>24</sup>

The United States Information Agency made considerable use of the propaganda joke in the mid-1950's, less in later years. In 1957-8 the Agency made available to newspaper and magazine editors a series of eight special

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<sup>24</sup>Wright, op cit., p. 25.

anti-communist joke packages titled "Iron Curtain Humor." Each package contained from twenty-five to thirty short jokes of a hundred words or so each. Howard Oiseth<sup>25</sup> said the series was well received by editors in several countries. Radio Iran, he said, used the entire series and requested more. The Agency also produced a pocket-sized booklet of twenty-four pages titled "You Call This Living," which contained anti-communist jokes; these were distributed from USIS posts abroad and contained no USIA attribution. This particular booklet drew its title from the first joke, which is typical of the series:

"A communist census taker asked a grizzled Russian villager his age. 'I'm 27,' was the reply. This was so clearly false that the census official suggested the old man might have miscalculated his life span. 'Well,' said the old timer, 'I'm really 66, but these last 39 years since the revolution--you call this living?'"

Here are two other examples:

"A comrade called Grotebriht wrote a letter to a friend of his in Hamburg, West Germany, saying: 'You, too, must fight the warmongering imperialists in your country. Push the guns and tanks into the sea.'

"He wrote another letter to his Soviet friend Ivan Urievitch in Leningrad: 'Dear comrade, we rejoice with you at the great freedom and social progress in your country. We hope we'll have the same in ours, too, very shortly.'

"It was too bad Grotebriht changed the envelopes by mistake."

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<sup>25</sup>Howard Oiseth, Chief, Special Materials Branch, International Press Service, USIA, in an interview with the author.

"A Leipzig businessman wanted to open a bank account, so he went to the Communist People's Bank with 1,000 marks. But he had his doubts as to the bank's solvency and called on the manager.

"'Well,' the manager said, 'our institute is backed by the government.'

"This did not seem to satisfy the businessman. 'Just between you and me,' he said, 'it might happen that the government . . . .'

"The manager interrupted him. 'Now listen, surely that would be worth a measly thousand marks to you.'"

The pay-off in propaganda humor is its persuasive effect, a most difficult thing to determine. Given the complexities of the international communication pattern with its varying degrees of availability, its cultural blocks and national stereotypes it is difficult enough to measure any international communication. But when an additional dimension--the intangibility of humor--is added, measurement becomes virtually impossible. The problem, basically, is content analysis, what is said and with what effect. Lerner suggests four fundamental types of evidence that can be collected by the evaluator; roughly these can also apply to evaluation of propaganda humor:

1. Responsive action, i.e., behavior which plausibly can be attributed to the propaganda stimuli. A propaganda joke which the target audience takes up and retells, would be an example.

2. Participant reports by a member of the target audience.

3. Observer commentaries by outside witnesses on the scene.

4. Indirect indicators, such as a high correlation between the size of an audience to a propaganda source and increasing frequency of reference to this source in other channels of information.<sup>26</sup>

Where on-the-spot measurement is possible the evaluator can use such techniques as attitude scales, the historical-statistical method, institutional analysis, interrogation, panels, polling, pre-testing, situational and role analysis and small-group dynamics. The simple truth will remain however: there is no known sure method for evaluating the persuasive effect of propaganda humor.

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<sup>26</sup>Daniel Lerner, Sykewar (New York: George W. Stewart Co., 1949) pp. 289-301.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PROPAGANDA HUMOR

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears,  
never in the tongue of him that makes it--Shakespeare.

Our chapter title implies that humor is a science, which it is not. Humor is an art based on several accepted theories and some not so well accepted; some of these involve the science of psychology, some do not. In earlier days, humor theorizing was the domain of the philosopher, who has since turned it over to the psychologist, and, to some extent, the sociologist. This is unfortunate, for humor spills over the boundaries of these sciences into such areas as esthetics and literature, well beyond the scope of the psychologist and sociologist.

Although there is no dearth of material on the psychology of humor, the author found little literature on either the psychology of propaganda humor or the psychology of humor as a persuasive device. However, out of a mass of tangential material on the subject, three aspects emerge which seem relevant to our study:

1. In psychological terms, humor is an emotion akin to love.
2. Empirical test results, which might throw light on propaganda humor, are conflicting and inconclusive.
3. No one theory can explain all humor--or all laughter, as the psychologist prefers to call it. However, various theories and hypothesis--the author listed eighty-four before he stopped counting--fall into three major groupings, each explaining some humor, none explaining all. They are:

(a) The Broken Umbrella Theory--i.e., incongruity, machine-like behavior of living things, (b) Sudden Glory Theory--i.e., derision accompanied by a feeling of superiority, involving misfortune to others, (c) Descent into Nothing Theory--i.e., psychological-instinctual, economy of psychic expenditure, surprise followed by release from restraint. Perhaps someday some genius will synthesize these three--or these eighty-four--plus--into a field theory of humor. For our purposes, however, the triad suffices.

#### I. HUMOR AS AN EMOTION

Of the three bases of human reaction--emotional, habitual and intellectual--we are concerned primarily with the first. Humor is a type of emotion and propaganda humor is a form of emotional appeal. Robert Oliver says of emotion:

Emotion is a basic factor in human beings . . . emotion consists of perception of a situation, resulting in bodily stimulation that may be interpreted as pleasant or unpleasant . . . emotions are always personalized, tend to persist, extend to contiguous objects, tend to express themselves in action and are relatively similar among all normal individuals . . . emotional appeals are based on commonness or polarization . . . humor is one of the types of emotional appeals having a widespread and genuine persuasive utility.<sup>1</sup>

Humor and love appear congenial; certainly it seems reasonable that when we laugh we cease to hate. Perhaps this

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<sup>1</sup>Robert T. Oliver, Psychology of Persuasive Speech (New York: Longmans, 1957), pp. 292-3.



is why Boris Sidis in his Psychology of Laughter declared that "laughter is the beginning of love." Grieg, in his famous work, asserted, even more forcefully:

I have attempted to trace this double strain in laughter from its simplest to its most complex manifestations; from the smile of the infant in his cradle to the highest and most ethereal forms of adult wit and humor. At every turn we come on love associations; some of these are manifest and would be admitted even by the laughter; others not so certain are more or less unconscious and probably would be denied by the laughter. Nevertheless, . . . we accumulate evidence pointing to the intimate connection between love and laughter.<sup>2</sup>

Max Eastman wrote extensively of what he called benign humor which he considered essentially an expression of humaneness.

I regard humor as a form of "laughing-kindness." I maintain that we laugh because we love. Our laughter manifests a profound sympathy for man. Humor is an invention of which our race can be proud. It springs from the noblest thoughts of the Divine Being. For the God of Vengeance becomes a God of Love. Humor is kindly. It is sympathetic. It is inspired by a warm feeling of fellowship toward mankind. Its heart is heavy with pathos because of their woes. . . . Humor pities what it smiles at; it loves what it taunts. It is amused at weakness, but the amusement is tolerant, affectionate.<sup>3</sup>

Humor, of course, is not only love oriented; there is a dualism. Laughter is also akin to aggressiveness. Take

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<sup>2</sup> J.Y.T. Greig, The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1923), p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Albert Rapp in The Origins of Wit and Humor (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1951), p. 23.

for example the symbol of race conflict in humor.<sup>4</sup> Consider the jokes about suppers of stolen chicken by Negroes, or their sexual adventures; or the many other stereotypes of cultural humor. Laughter is born out of hatred and aggressiveness. It is basically and categorically savage. And it is not possible to understand propaganda humor's workings, its benefits and its dangers, its power for harm and its power for good until one begins realizing this fundamental fact. Laughter was born out of hostility. If there had been no hostility in man, there had been no laughter (and no need for laughter). This is one of the great paradoxes: while there is demonstrably something hostile and degraded in all laughter, at the very same time some types of laughter are full of charm and friendliness.

Creative handling of conflict, and humor is a creative means, represents one of the great social challenges of this century. Hostility and conflict are hardy perennials on the human scene; great potentiality for hatred and destruction lie dormant in each of us.<sup>5</sup> Moral responsibility rests heavily on the propagandist who taps this well of hate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See John H. Burma "Humor As a Technique in Race Conflict," Am.Soc.Rev. (11, Dec., 1946), pp. 710-11.

<sup>5</sup>The reader who doubts this is referred to Leo Saul's excellent work, The Hostile Mind (New York: Random House, 1960), 211 pp.

<sup>6</sup>As did the World War One propagandists. See Harold

Although such considerations are largely beyond the scope of this paper, note must be made that each propagandist owes it to himself to come to understand that his work, his output, can create tensions adversely affecting international understanding; that, especially from a longrange standpoint, his work tends to release dormant hate that can in turn lead to national aggressions.

Although humor is an emotion, it is not the type of emotion which impedes communication--a fact all too often ignored by propagandists. The tendency of the communicant to evaluate what others say from his own point of view and thus not attend with empathy, remains the final, and often insurmountable, gateway to communication. It is a problem central to all communication, all propaganda, one particularly relevant to the subject under consideration. Can humor, in any way, reduce the psychological blocks to communication? Carl Rodgers, a psychotherapist, in considering the tendency to evaluate in communication, writes:

Although the tendency to make evaluations is common in almost all interchange of language, it is very much heightened in those situations where feelings and emotions are deeply involved. So the stronger our feelings the more likely it is that there will be no mutual element in the communication. There will be just two

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Lasswell's classic, Propaganda Technique in the World War. (New York: Knopf, 1927) especially the chapter titled "Satanism."

ideas, two feelings, two judgments, missing each other in psychological space . . . and really nothing which could be called communication in any genuine sense. This tendency to react to any emotionally meaningful statement by forming an evaluation of it from our own point of view is, I repeat, the major barrier to interpersonal communication.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to suggest that humor is an automatic door-stop to the mind. But it is to suggest that since communication takes place when the evaluative tendency is least involved, humor can help engender a frame of mind least given to the evaluative tendency.

## II. HUMOR IN THE LABORATORY

Empirical experimentation with humor is common and varied, ancient and modern, broad-scaled and narrow, simple and complex. Tests have dealt with the sick and the well, the young and the old, men and women, the humorless mind and the professional jokester. For the most part they prove little. The author agrees with Monro:

I have not, however, paid much attention to the large number of writers who have adopted an experimental laboratory approach to the subject. Sense of humor tests and the like may eventually throw light on the essential nature of humor, and some of the facts already discovered are no doubt valuable. But, so far as I know, the use of such tests has not yet resulted either in the developments of a new theory or the confirmation of an old one.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Carl Rogers, "Barriers to Communication," Harvard Business Review. (Summer, 1952).

<sup>8</sup>D.H. Monro, Argument of Laughter (Melbourne: Melbourne Univ. Press, 1951) p. 264.

Results of a few experiments are reported here for possible value to propaganda humorists.

A. Heim, at Cambridge University's psychological laboratory, tried to discover whether certain rules and tendencies operate when people laugh and what they are. He hoped to classify types of humor and types of people to whom they apply. He also attempted to test the assumption that there is at least one common element in humor and one experience common to all laugh situations. He experimented with 32 jokes on 50 persons--21 men and 29 women; 29 were English, 19 were Scottish, American, German, Italian, Indian and Japanese. Included in the 32 jokes were three pieces of prose not intended to be humorous. Each subject was told not to laugh if he could help it and to mention if he had heard any of the jokes before. Each subject was to explain why he laughed.

The results were disappointing. Every one of the jokes was judged by at least three persons as not funny; no joke invariably produced a laugh; every one was received in silence by at least one person and the average number of silences per joke was 2.4. There was no unanimity of opinion or explanation . . . when the subjects did laugh their explanations were far from satisfactory.<sup>9</sup>

Omwake attempted to determine what makes people laugh by asking six hundred college students to rate themselves on

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<sup>9</sup>Reported by Milton Wright, What's Funny and Why. (New York: McGraw-Hill and Co., 1939), p. 25.

their sense of humor; also to rank different jokes. In the jokes, Omwake included one joke which she and others considered pointless, and one off-color. Interestingly enough, not a single joke was consistently marked either funniest or poorest. There was no common agreement as to what the most humorous situation was.<sup>10</sup>

At Vassar College, some one hundred students were asked to record every laugh they had for a week. Their diaries recorded 4,217 different humorous situations. By classification, they are:<sup>11</sup>

Instances of laughter with no apparent cause	54
Inferiority involving a person	2,257
Direct attempt to make someone feel inferior	493
Incongruous situations	1,196
Incongruous ideas	217

Strickland at Johns Hopkins--using the hypothesis that careful manipulation of environmental factors should produce definite humor preferences--set out to discover which motivational influences can change appreciation of humor. He used as his material 33 humorous cartoons, 11 based on aggressive themes, 11 based on sex and 11 general in nature; as his subjects, he used three groups of students, 25 to a group.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Reported by Steuart Henderson Britt in Social Psychology of Modern Life (New York: Rinehart and Co., rev. ed. 1949), p. 364.

One by one he called into his office students from the first group. His attitude was pleasant and non-committal; he merely showed each student all 33 cartoons and asked him to rate the cartoons for their funniness. Next he called in 25 more students. To these Dr. Strickland acted differently. He insulted them, made them wait for 20 minutes despite their appointments, and generally made them feel unwelcome. Then he showed each of them the cartoons, which they rated. To the last group of students, Dr. Strickland explained that he was studying the relationship between art and sex and showed each student a group of cheese-cake photos of tantalizing females. Then he produced the cartoons. The results . . . The insulted young men thought the hostile and aggressive group of cartoons were the funniest. The students who had been shown the photographs of the girls thought the cartoons which depended upon sex were the funniest. The first group of students, whose attitudes hadn't been tampered with, showed no particular preferences. They thought all the cartoons were funny. Dr. Strickland concluded . . . the experiment demonstrates how sensitive the appreciation of humor is to situational influences. Second, it shows how by separately arousing different types of motivation, a person's response to humorous material can be controlled to a considerable extent.<sup>12</sup>

Jacob Levine and Frederick Redlich<sup>13</sup> spent ten years investigating the senses of humor among the normal, the neurotic and the psychotic. They report that failure to enjoy a joke or a cartoon does not usually mean a failure to understand it. Unless it is foreign to one's own culture or is too subtle, most popular humor is relatively easy to understand. When the point of the joke is missed it is because

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<sup>12</sup>From a special report, Johns Hopkins File Seven, dated March 13, 1960. These reports are mimeographed copies of the school's special television program scripts.

<sup>13</sup>Jacob Levine and Frederick Redlich, "Failure to Understand Humor," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly (Vol. 24, No. 4, 1955), pp. 560-572.

some essential detail is overlooked or is misperceived. This failure is really a hidden wish not to understand the humor. For a person to avoid understanding a simple joke or cartoon, some intellectual or perceptual blocking must occur. The simplest cause of such blocking is denial: an essential detail of the humor is simply overlooked and the point of the joke is missed. When misperception or distortion occurs, the subject both denies what he sees and projects upon the joker an idea not actually expressed in the joke.

### III. THE THEORETICAL COMPLEX

We consider now our three major groupings of humor theories. All humor, roughly speaking, produces laughter; however, not all laughter is the result of humor. Laughter, like a sigh of relief, can be a sign of termination of effort and take place without any joke or witticism. In the remainder of this chapter, the term laughter is used in a narrow sense, meaning that which is provoked by wit and humor.

Broken Umbrella Theories. The incongruity or broken umbrella theory of humor has adherents as ancient as Aristotle--who categorized the ridiculous as a species of the ugly--and as modern as the present editor of "Punch" magazine who declared that "sudden incongruities are what make people



laugh."<sup>14</sup> The differences between ancient and modern humor are not as great as many writers assume. In Aristophanes, for example, a dead man sits up in indignation at having to pay the toll of the Styx and says he would rather come to life again; Dionysus asks to see the wicked in hell and is answered by a gesture pointing to the audience. Do these not bring smiles today?

Socrates held that affectation is the source of the truly ridiculous, adding that the affectation most practiced is pretense to wisdom. The original Aristotelian concept held that the pleasure of comedy is due to the perception of a defect or a deformity, never painful or injurious. This is now broadened into a general concept of humor due to contrast, a disharmony between a thing and its setting, between its present and normal environment. A naked savage in a top hat. The basis of incongruity is analogy, plus an awareness of the imperfectness of that analogy. It can be the same aspect, structured in several ways, or it can be the clash of two obviously antithetical feelings, resolving themselves into a third new feeling. Hayakawa gives an example. Suppose, he said, that we are looking at an extremely ugly part of Saint Paul, Minnesota, so that our obvious feelings are those of distaste. Then we arouse with a Wordsworth

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted by Wright, op. cit., p. 6.

quotation the feeling of beauty and majesty. The result is a feeling suggested neither by the city alone nor the illusion alone but by one that is a product of the conflict of the two--a sharp sense of incongruity that compels us either to laugh or to weep.<sup>15</sup> It need not always be by comparison, sometimes proximity will suffice. As we descend the scale of incongruity, as it were, our attention passes from great to small things. At some point the thing occupying a definite place in a familiar category suddenly occupies some other--and the shock is laughter.

Incongruity explains many elementary forms of humor, such as slapstick, the antics of clowns, the comic drunk and the fool type. And it offers considerable insight into more primitive humor. Various accounts of humor in the Seventeenth Century, for example, describe how physical deformities were the subject of laughter to a far greater extent than in most parts of the world today. Somewhere near the end of the Nineteenth Century, as a number of writers have noted, there came a change in the attitude, in the conception of comedy, an evolution from raillery to humor in the modern sense of the word, from laughing at to laughing with. The sight of a crippled child has ceased to be funny and virtually the only type of deformity still considered legitimately funny is the

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<sup>15</sup>S.I. Hayakawa, Language in Action. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), pp. 199-200.

fat man, if obesity can be considered a deformity. No longer is emphasis on scorn, ridicule, and derision; no longer is humor closely associated with its ugly sister, vulgarity. This change is probably due to a general evolutionary trend. Amusement varies with the stage of civilization, it varies from class to class within a civilization and it varies among intellectual levels within a class. The result is that truth remains and humor passes as in the example from Schopenhauer:

The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation . . . (for example) . . . a guard of soldiers once allowed a man who was their prisoner to join them at a game of cards and because he cheated them, they kicked him out of the guardroom. (That is, they set him free.)<sup>16</sup>

Incongruity comes with the unexpected loosening or relaxing of stress from its usual pitch of intensity--an abrupt transposition of the order of our ideas. The mind, taken unaware, is thrown off guard and thus startled into pleasure leaving no time nor inclination for analysis or reflection. Incongruity not only sets one idea alongside another, it also disconnects two closely associated ideas, jostling one feeling against another. This form of incongruous humor is timeless and will not change; as man evolves, it will evolve with him.

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<sup>16</sup>Thomas Hobbes, Human Nature (Chicago: Great Books of the Western World, 1952)

But the laughter of the incongruous often contains the aspect of superiority, which leads us to our second clutch of theories.

The Sudden Glory Theories. Laughter, as we have observed, probably had its origin in cruelty, in the exultation over the pain or ignominy of an enemy--the roar of victory in the jungle duel. Some authors go so far as to maintain that from this single source all modern forms of wit and humor developed. Plato held that the pleasure we derive in laughing at the comic is an enjoyment of other people's misfortune due to a feeling of superiority or gratified vanity that we ourselves are not in like plight; the pleasure in the comic **scene** must involve only discomfiture and never grave misfortune or sorrow.

But it was Thomas Hobbes whose insight added so much to our knowledge of this concept of humor. In Human Nature he wrote:

There is a passion that hath no name; but the sign of it is that distortion of the countenance which we call laughter, which is always joy; but what joy, what we think, and wherein we triumph when we laugh, is not hitherto declared by any. That it consisteth in wit, or, as they call it, in the jest, experience confuteth: for men laugh at mischances and indecencies, wherein there lieth no wit or jest at all. And forasmuch as the same thing is no more ridiculous when it groweth stale or usual, whatsoever it be that moveth laughter, it must be new and unexpected. Men laugh often, especially such as are greedy of applause from every thing they do well, at their own actions performed never so little beyond their own expectations; as also at their own jests: and in this case it is manifest, that the passion of laughter

proceedeth from a sudden conception of some ability in himself that laugheth. Also men laugh at the infirmities of others, by comparison wherewith their own abilities are set off and illustrated. Also men laugh at jests, the wit whereof always consisteth in the elegant discovering and conveying to our minds some absurdity of another: and in this case also the passion of laughter proceedeth from the sudden imagination of our own eminency: for what is else the recommending of ourselves to our own good opinion, by comparison with another man's infirmity or absurdity? For when a jest is broken upon ourselves, or friends of whose dishonour we participate we never laugh thereat. I may therefore conclude, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly: for men laugh at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonour. It is no wonder therefore that men take heinously to be laughed at or derided, that is, triumphed over. Laughter without offence, must be at absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons, and when all the company may laugh together: for laughing to one's self putteth all the rest into jealousy and examination of themselves. Besides, it is vain glory, and an argument of little worth, to think the infirmity of another, sufficient matter for his triumph.<sup>17</sup>

Later in The Leviathan, he added:

Sudden glory, is the passion which maketh those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men. And therefore much laughter at the defects of others, is a sign of pusillanimity. For of great minds, one of the proper works is, to help and free others from scorn; and compare themselves only with the most able.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Chicago: Great Books of the Western World, 1952), p. 63.

Thus Hobbes did not contradict the broken umbrella theory but added to it. His great contribution was the concept that humor is more than reaction to outside stimuli--the basis of incongruity--it is subjective, arising from the inside. For example, he said that men not only laugh at the abilities of others when lesser than their own by comparison, but that they also laugh at their own actions when they perform beyond their own expectations. This explains most wit, political cartooning and those types of humor in which there is an absence of compassion.

Other writers of the near and distant past--Cicero, Spencer, Locke, Swift--also subscribed to the sudden glory theory, stressing various aspects as ridicule, derision, discomfiture. They used humor as a weapon. Swift used humor not only as a weapon but as a corrective. This is of particular interest to the propaganda humorist. Nations too can use derision or ridicule as a weapon. Soviet Premier Khrushchev used them in a masterful way in his propaganda assault on the United States following the May Day 1960 spy plane flight.

Bergson<sup>19</sup> refined the sudden glory theme in his investigation of the humor involved in machine-like behavior of living things. He said any manifestation in humans of

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<sup>19</sup>Henri Bergson, Laughter, An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic; trans. by Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: MacMillan Co., 1911).

either a tendency to be inelastic, rigid or mechanical, is laughable. He cited the example of a man who slips on a banana peel and falls down, to the amusement of onlookers. It is not simply the sudden change that causes the humor, said Bergson, but the involuntary element in the change, that is, the man's clumsiness. The man should have altered his steps to avoid the peel. Instead, through lack of elasticity, the muscles continued to perform the same movement when the circumstances of the case called for something else. On the non-physical side, Bergson held unconscious repetition or absence of attention, as revealed in an unintentional play on words, causes laughter. This is because the author of them is behaving like an automaton instead of like a living, thinking animal. A deliberate play on words, therefore, causes laughter because of its connection with involuntary play.

A modern, Ludovici,<sup>20</sup> added still another element to the sudden glory theory--developing the notion of superior adaption. We laugh, he said, because we feel our adaption to life is superior to others. This may come about in three ways: (a) the laughter may be subjective--the consciousness of freedom from restraint or physical well being is synonymous with this feeling of superior adaption; children in June

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<sup>20</sup>Anthony M. Ludovici, The Secret of Laughter (London: Constable Ltd., 1932).

leaving school for the year, for example; (b) superior adaptation through comparison, which is the underlying principle of the standard derision theory; (c) the comparison may be a bluff; Ludovici gives the example of a man losing his hat on a windy day, looking anxiously around and then laughing with those near him and continuing to laugh while he tries to recover his hat. Ludovici believes that he does this to show that, appearances to the contrary, he is still superiorly adapted to this irritating situation.

Descent Into Nothing Theories. According to this grouping, laughter is the sudden release of pent up energy. Kant, for example, described the comic as the result of a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing. Eastman explains it as holding out something: "When I arrived in this town ten years ago, I didn't have a dime to my name," and then pulling back that which is held out: "and now, I've got a dime."

Psychologists tell us that the child does not laugh until past the 40th day. Before laughter comes the smile, the result of first ruffling and then calming the flow of the love instinct. The laugh, a refinement of this process, becomes a channel of escape for psycho-physical energy momentarily in surplus, through the weakening or disappearance of the obstacle for which the energy was mobilized.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Grieg, op. cit., p. 70.



We are concerned now with the most modern of the theory groups, dealing with suppressive laughter, humor from impulse restrained, release from inhibition--all psychological. All turn on the idea of force, the central theme of modern psychology, whether masquerading under the term "wish," "libido," or "l'elan vital," all deeply indebted to Freud.

It was Kant, perhaps, who first grasped what can be called the modern psychological significance of humor. He wrote of the "strained expectation that is suddenly brought to nothing," that is, humor of disappointment; he felt it must be an absolute nothing into which our expectation is transformed--nothing, that is, from the standpoint of expectation. Eastman terms this a "reduction to absurdity."

In itself a sudden change can produce laughter, especially when it comes to nothing. Babies often respond with laughter when the gesture of throwing them into the air is started but not completed. Even if the event itself is not very humorous, sudden freedom from restraint or release from tension can make people laugh. Part of this involves the Freudian notion of pleasure derived compression, making something convey two different meanings, as for example with a sexual joke. Laughter is not always the result of hard thinking. It can be a means of mental relaxation and perhaps even temporary escape. To Eastman, however, this

process is less of a mental result than a reflex action, since it arises in the very act of perception, when the act is brought to nothing by two conflicting qualities of fact or feeling. To Eastman<sup>22</sup> the disappointment feeling arises when some habitual activity, suddenly obstructed, first appears in consciousness with an announcement of its own failure. The blockage of an instinct, a collision between two instincts, the interruption of a habit, a conflict of habit systems, a disturbed or misapplied reflex--these catastrophes, as well as the coming to nothing of an effort at conceptual thought, must enter into the meaning of the word disappointment to explain the whole field of practical humor. The strain in that expectation is what makes it capable of humorous collapse. It is an active expectation. The feelings are involved.

Sigmund Freud made some great and original contributions to our understanding of wit and humor but even this genius could not circumnavigate the field. Two of his works concern us here for what light they throw on propaganda humor. In Psychopathology of Everyday Life,<sup>23</sup> Freud virtually erases the line of demarcation between the neurotic and

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<sup>22</sup>Max Eastman, The Sense of Humor (New York: Charles Scribners, 1922).

<sup>23</sup>Sigmund Freud, Basic Writings; trans. by A.A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938).

the normal man. He sees free will as an illusion of those who fail to realize that so-called errors are purposeful acts perpetrated by unconscious desires. On the question of free will, of course, turns all propaganda theory; if Freud is right all rational appeal propaganda is wasted effort.

Parallel to this theme is Freud's Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious,<sup>24</sup> which is not a consideration of the psychology of humor so much as a consideration of humor as evidence of certain psychological truisms. In it, Freud strains badly to make all jokes and puns fit into his scheme of psychoanalysis. He robs wit of any intellectual content, seeing wit only as an emotional safety valve. Here again, if Freud is right, propaganda humor--if it can exist at all--has very limited use. Most of Freud's work in this field deals with wit, as opposed to humor. Wit, he said, provides man with a means of circumventing his repressions enabling him to attain the gratification of hidden desires by subterfuge. Freud distinguishes between two main species of wit--harmless wit and tendency wit. Harmless wit is enjoyed for its own sake. It manipulates words and thoughts for the pleasure from such manipulation. It is not aimed and serves no purpose beyond itself. Tendency wit--of three types: exhibitionistic or obscene wit, aggressive or hostile

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

wit and cynical wit directed against authority and social dogma--makes use of the same techniques as harmless wit although it is far more complex. It produces a similar pleasure but also serves sexual or hostile wishes or impulses. Thus tendency wit reaches deeper sources of pleasure than mere technical manipulation. It is always aimed at some person or group of persons. Tendency wit is either love behavior or hate behavior or a compound of the two.

Freud held that the most characteristic element of wit as well as two other laughter-producing activities--the comic and the humorous--is a compressing or economizing tendency. The pleasure of wit originates from an economy of expenditure in inhibition. This is because wit is a sudden revelation of similarities between things that apparently are quite dissimilar. Wit, being a contribution of the unconscious, permits us to speak in the absurd juxtaposition in which the unconscious always deals. The pleasure of the comic originates from an economy of expenditure in thought--for example, when we compare the wastefulness resulting from the awkwardness of a clown when we are more efficient. And thirdly, the pleasure of humor originates from an economy of expenditure in feeling. Humor is a contribution of the super-ego and as such is a defense mechanism. Humor involves what appears at first blush to be our deepest feelings. Then we discover that the matter to which we attend is actually

trivial and it is possible for us to conserve our deeper feelings. All three of these economies--wit, the comic and the humorous--take us back to the infantile beginnings of the mind with its state of unembarrassed and unconstrained pleasure where there was no need for artificial stimulation to produce laughter.

Thus Freud believed humor to be a release from inhibitions, while wit was a protest against inner and outer censorship. What a person laughs at determines what he is. Inability to laugh at wit is due to the id's censorship. Inability to laugh at a particular bit of humor means the hidden or forbidden has not been permitted; if laughter does take place, it means momentary reduction of anxiety, a release of tension. This is why sex and aggression are the main themes of humor for they are primary sources of most human conflicts and tensions. At the same time a basic element of all humor is anxiety. Thus the paradox that a joke seems funny only if it arouses anxiety and at the same time relieves it. Edmund Bergler,<sup>25</sup> a student of Freud, adds a third element. He maintains that laughter is an internal debunking process and therefore a reducing process directed, not at external powers, but at internal powers. It is a method of attacking one sector of the inner conscience (ego

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<sup>25</sup>Martin Grotjahn, Beyond Laughter (New York: McGraw Hill, 1957).

ideal). All forms of wit, humor and the comic, he says, are directed at one specific inner danger: the accusation by inner conscience that one is a lover of the pleasure-in-displeasure pattern, psychic masochism. In the same vein, he maintains that laughter is the only incorruptible human trait, largely because it is not under conscious control.

Since, according to psychoanalytic theory, humor and wit represent a compromise between the tendencies of the id and the super-ego, both can be used as a means of liberating inhibited impulses. In tapping this source, the propagandist must begin with the fact of the inhibition or suppression and not the humor itself; further, he must always direct it at one which is stronger, that is the inhibitor. This is especially true of humor. Wit, on the other hand, can afford a means of surmounting restrictions since it represents an outcry against stifling authority. The propagandist would be more likely to use humor in those settings in which the strengths of the regime or policy support tend to be from the bottom up, and wit in the case of situations in which the power is imposed from the top down; the difference, say between the Soviet Union itself and an East European occupied country.

Because it is normal for man to rebel against constraint, the fact of repression heightens humor; the converse of this is also true: any humor is improved when

suppressive content is added as Aristophanes, Rabalais, Shakespeare, Swift and all parlor car story tellers well knew.

The Comic Personality. Let us turn for a moment from the psychology of humor in theory to its manifestation in the comic personality, centering on American commercial humor. Excluding the writer of humor, four major categories can be isolated: the treadmill comic, the clown, the modernist, and the classicist.

The treadmill comic makes no philosophic promise. He and his programs dominate American television and motion pictures although not the American stage. The best example is that frighteningly popular television program, I Love Lucy. George Goebel, Red Buttons, Herb Shriner, Burns and Allen, Danny Thomas, all belong in this category as do the stars of most half-hour situation comedy television programs, such as Bachelor Father, Hennesey, Father Knows Best, the Many Loves of Dobie Gillis, the Gale Storm Show, the Donna Reed Show and Leave it to Beaver. These programs are surprisingly well liked by foreign visitors to these shores and probably do have some propaganda value as Americana.

The clown's popular appeal appears to be diminishing in America, but perhaps this is only transient. The pure clown--such as Emmett Kelly--has no real forum. Television, however, provides ample outlet for the physical comedy and

pantomime of Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, Lou Costello, Jerry Lewis, Bert Lahr and the indestructible Three Stooges. The clown takes a worm's eye view of life. He bases his appeal on masochism, seeking to win acceptance by suffering. The clown is not to be disparaged as a medium of expression. Like the medieval fool who was allowed to tell the truth to kings, clowns such as Danny Kaye can tell the truth to their audiences, even to the point of destroying its illusions.

The modernist humorist essentially is a sadist. Groucho Marx, for example, cannot open his mouth without spilling hostility. Milton Berle and Victor Borge are in this same general category. So are Jack Benny and Bob Hope, although both tend to emphasize wit rather than humor and to combine sadism with masochism, directing humor against their audience and against themselves. As such they are essentially a mixed type. The pure modernist is a self-devoted, anti-bourgeois egotist who presents himself as a member of a mystical brotherhood of inside humor. His brand of humor is based on generalized loves and hates, involving a safe political iconoclasm and sometimes a crypto anti-Americanism. Mort Sahl, Shelley Berman, Lenny Bruce, Bob Newhart are the elite; Dave King, Jonathan Winters, Jack Douglas and perhaps Jack Parr are on the fringes. For the most part their domain is the nightclub stage and the phonograph record. Some students of the subject maintain they are not humorists at



all--pointing out that they merely allude to humor without committing themselves to either action or idea.

The fourth group, classic humorists, is led by Sid Caesar and that alltime great, Charlie Chaplin. W. C. Fields, Ben Turpin and Will Rogers in some respects, can also be included. So can Jim Moran who pretends not to be a humorist. The classic humorist is universal, eternal, even a little mysterious. He is not simply intellectual, but ranges over the entire spectrum of humor from slapstick to whimsy. He is the boy and the superman in all of us. It is no accident that the classic humorist is basically a sad and depressed person; for him, humor serves as a defense against **anxieties** arising from relations with people. The feelings he generates find a response in all of us. We also see in him the individualist, pitifully attempting to defend himself from an overwhelming world. But we see even more than this. The classic comic appears to be a victim, not of just hostile forces, but also inanimate fates. W. C. Fields, for instance, would attempt to cross a large room, empty except for a chair in the middle. Yet somehow that journey would be frustrated. The chair in some way would become an insurmountable barrier. Yet, at the same time, Fields would perform outlandish and irreverent antics imperturbably, superior to even the laws of nature. Frequently the classic comic is an excellent propagandist, crusading with scorpion courage against out-

moded institutions and absurd popular conventions.

Those among us who are at times humorous--but do not make a profession of it also belong in the classic category. They may be writers--such as Henry Menken, Ring Lardner and Sinclair Lewis--or politicians, such as Adlai Stevenson. But they are not comic personalities in the sense of being dominated by practices of humor.

Cultural Influences and Humor. Sociologists and cultural anthropologists generally agree that humor has social functions. But there is little agreement as to what that function is. Some argue it is a form of social conflict and control and they cite the social uses of irony, sarcasm and forms of wit invective. In **majority-minority** group relations, for example, humor is a status gaining device.<sup>26</sup> This conflict-control theory is denied by others who point out that inter-group humor is not always malicious, that it may be accompanied by liking, even respect for the butt of the humor. Gunnar Myrdal, studying the United States, found other functions for inter-group humor. He maintained that:

When people are up against great inconsistencies in their creed and behavior which they cannot or do not want to account for rationally, humor is a way out. It gives a symbolic excuse for imperfections in their creed and behavior which they cannot or do not want to account for rationally . . . as well as compensation to the

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<sup>26</sup>See Burma discussion above.

sufferer. The understanding laugh is an intuitive absolution between sinners and sometimes also between the sinner and his victim. The main function of the joke is thus to create a collective surreptitious approbation for something which cannot be approved explicitly because of moral inhibitions.<sup>27</sup>

Humor and joking play a significant role in the social life of primitive societies, where it assumes the form of an institution. Working out of the unconscious, humor can provide an outlet for the release of libidinal, aggressive and infantile impulses which are never otherwise expressed except as deviant behavior. It thus becomes an instrument of social regulation.

Levine notes that:

The use of humor in primitive societies to perform the two functions of the gratification of tabooed urges and the relief of anxiety has been formalized into at least two types of institutions: the sacred or ritual clowns and the so-called "joking relationships." . . . In their laughter-provoking antics the (American Indian) ritual clowns permit the group to share freely in the violation of the most sacred taboos. As part of their clowning, these "delight makers" are able to regress to the most primitive behavioral levels. Under the cloak of humor they can openly violate nearly every sex taboo, including incest and perversion, and they can make fun of the most sacred figures, both god and man.<sup>28</sup>

Barron's<sup>29</sup> studies resulted in a number of interesting discoveries about intergroup humor. Unfortunately his

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<sup>27</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper and Bros., 1944), pp. 38-9.

<sup>28</sup>Jacob Levine, "Ego Controlled Regression in Primitive Clowning," an unpublished monograph supplied by the author.

<sup>29</sup>Results quoted here from Milton Barron's "A Content Analysis of Intergroup Humor," in Am. Soc. Rev. (11 Dec., 1946), pp. 710-11.

work raises more questions than it answers. From a study of Negro, Jewish and Irish jokes, Barron discovered that these minorities have specifically differentiated humor-based stereotypes. But he did not attempt to answer the question why the stereotypes should be more pronounced in the case of these three than in other minorities. He also discovered, for example, that the male figure appears more frequently than the female in intergroup humor, but again, no explanation as to why. Barron noted that a member of a minority group often invents a joke about his group but said it is unclear why this should be; he listed two possible explanations, either self-hatred or the result of subdivisions within the minority group itself. And he raises a very fundamental question, which may well be asked of humor in general: who invents jokes? The answer is that we have no scientific answer.

The point to be made here, in respect to propaganda humor, is that although the sociologist has not supplied us with any general theory of cultural humor based on an empirical body of scientifically gathered and measured data, such grouping of humor is technically possible. The above studies also indicate, to this author at least, that intergroup humor is a technique that--after proper study--could be tapped by the propagandist.

## PART TWO

### NATIONAL SENSES OF HUMOR

Just as humor dies away with the passage of time, it balks at national boundaries. Although he exaggerates, there is merit in John Palmer's observation:

Laughter is the real frontier between races and kinds of people . . . a joke cannot be transplanted or interpreted. A man is born to see a particular sort of a joke or he is not . . . You cannot educate him into seeing it. In the kingdom of comedy there are no papers of naturalization.<sup>30</sup>

A nation's spirit--and if it has no spirit it is not a nation--is reflected in its humor. Existence of this spirit--pattern of thought is a more appropriate term--does not mean a collective mentality entirely distinct and separate. But there is ample evidence, in the works of Ruth Benedict, Margaret Meade, Erich Fromm and others, to indicate nationalistic influence on personality. The nature of this influence is exceedingly complex and difficult to measure. Marxists hold the differences ascribable to the class struggle, class relations and industrial development. Other explanations for national behavior include the physical environment, racial or biological differences (rejected by most scientists), and the pattern of historical development.

What is involved basically is differing methods of

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<sup>30</sup>John Palmer, Comedy (London: 1913), p. 5.

forming fundamental concepts, differing methods of organizing coherent thinking.

According to Pribram<sup>31</sup>--to whom the author is indebted for this concept--the differences turn on the general question of whether the mind is capable of arriving directly at insight into the order of the universe. The affirmative answer to this question--founded on a belief that rules of human reasoning exactly correspond to, or exactly reflect, the rules underlying the order of the universe--are found in three patterns of thought: the universalistic, the institutional and the dialectical. The fourth pattern of thought, the nominalistic, rejects this principle; its adherents insist that human reasoning is governed by rules of its own and consequently, any attempt to grasp the order of the universe must proceed by way of assumption using purely hypothetical concepts whose validity cannot be postulated but whose usefulness must be demonstrated.

The universalistic pattern is based on a hierarchical system of rigid concepts believed to be inherent in the human mind or to be directly evident because of the mind's cognitive capacity; the middle ages of Europe, when the Catholic church exercised supreme authority, was a pattern of this type. The nominalistic pattern began with the

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<sup>31</sup>Carl Pribram, Conflicting Patterns of Thought, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1949).

Fifteenth Century and gradually gained ascendancy in Western Europe. The institutional pattern denies the existence of innate ideas but relies on the ability of the mind, plus a sort of inner light, to form concepts and judgments that provide direct insight into the order of the universe; it originated with 18th and 19th Century German philosophers and became the prevailing mode of thought in Central Europe through World War Two. The dialectical pattern also denies the existence of innate ideas, ascribing to the mind the ability to interpret all phenomena and events--but only in terms of an evolutionary process and understandable only when the fundamental concepts correspond to the trichotomous character of this process, thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Dialectical reasoning had its modern origin with the German philosophers led by Hegel.

Varying patterns of thought result in varying approaches and attitudes toward humor as well as varying patterns of humor. For example, Pribram notes that nominalistic reasoning has stimulated certain types of humor, particularly satire. He notes that the jesters at the courts of princes in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries played a role similar to that of minor Greek sophists.

No humor or wit could develop as long as the human mind was kept in chains by an array of rigid concepts, the meaning of which nobody dared to alter. Humor, a playing upon words or concepts without aggressive intentions,

was the genuine child of nominalistic reasoning.<sup>32</sup>

An example of adaption of humor types to patterns of thought can be found in respect to understatement and exaggeration--say Britain and Texas--a difference which C. Northcote Parkinson asserts is between a mature and an immature society. Humor does vary with geography even within the same pattern of thought. For example, the spectacle of a husband betrayed is humorous in Europe but not in the United States. However, it should be noted parenthetically that no test the author knows of indicates that one nation has a better developed sense of humor than another. What traveler has not encountered varying cultural patterns of humor? The English slip into understatement, the French are inclined to the saliency of the bon mot. In Japan it is customary for a servant to smile when he is scolded by his master.

Nationalistic humor character, however, becomes less pronounced as the world shrinks and communication increases. The unending voice of radio and the universal flicker of the motion picture moves the humor of the world toward standardization. The previous chapter indicated that humor involves a sympathetic contemplation of the incongruities of life, expressed artistically. With differing national characteristics such contemplation may not exist at all, in which case

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 93.



there is no communication of humor. Yet we know--or think we know--that humor can transcend national and cultural boundaries. We know, for example, that almost all peoples find Charlie Chaplin, Mickey Mouse and Mark Twain to be funny. Yet there remains the nagging doubt that a reader not brought up in America doesn't really understand Jim in Huckleberry Finn. We know that laughter is translated, because laughter is there. But is it the same original laughter? Or has something dropped out silently? This is of vital importance to the propaganda humorist whose audience must not only laugh, but laugh for the right reasons.

Perhaps the Marxist theoretician has an answer to these questions. No Marxist, as far as the author knows, has ever made a study of humor using dialectical reasoning. What is it then that makes the Soviet man laugh? For one thing, the Soviet government--which in early 1960 launched a campaign for more laughs, or at least smiles. A Pravada editorial declared:

A smile, fine, bright, welcoming . . . not only adorns a person but warms the soul of those for whom it is intended and those who see it. Every day going to work you enter a street car or a bus and a happy, welcoming conductress meets you like an old acquaintance . . . Please pass it along . . . And in the evening you drop into a shop . . . the article you need is not in stock but the salesman will explain to you in detail where to obtain it . . . a smile at times is so necessary to a person . . .<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Reported in an Associated Press story, datelined Moscow, March 29, 1960.

Soviet writers frequently observe that in pre-Soviet life, literature was full of comedy and laughter, humor and satire, but that under the communists, literature became hopelessly earnest and self-righteous and virtually without humor. Boris Gorbatov<sup>34</sup> declared that there is no place in Soviet literature for laughter for laughter's sake. He rejected reviving what he called the "Zoschenko type of slanderous hee-hawing at Soviet reality." Zoschenko at one time was the most popular humorist in the Soviet Union, a follower of the Chekhov tradition. Gorbatov declared that since the Soviet citizen lives in a heroic age there is little room for humor. However, the official attitude, as noted above, has modified somewhat. Newsman Preston Grover of the Associated Press reported this in early 1960:

For the first time that anybody here can remember actors have been doing satiric skits about government workers and regulations, and about the unending propaganda. And they went at it with a certain degree of official approval--so far.

There was a sort of revue which started in January full of jibes aimed at rich jobholders, bribe-takers, food queues and do-gooder propaganda.<sup>35</sup>

The Russians are convivial people and enjoy a joke for its own sake; they like to hear life's tense reality expressed

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<sup>34</sup>Quoted in an article by Alexander Werth, "Soviet Writing Today," Nation, April 1, 1950, p. 299.

<sup>35</sup>Associated Press news story appearing in the Washington Star, Feb. 21, 1960, p. F-2.

in a gentle jest. Russians like puns, especially bawdy ones, and have a host of their own limericks. These appear in literature, in theater skits and sometimes in daily conversation. The unprintable type of joke about sex and marriage is well received and animated cartoons in the theaters are applauded. Practical jokers are widely celebrated among the Russians mostly because they are so rare. Novelty gimmicks are almost unknown and the owner of a fake insect or a collapsible spoon can make an entire roomful of Russians, one by one, fall for his gag because the idea of such a joke, even in raucous surroundings, would not naturally occur to them.

The Russian is rather straitlaced in his choice of subjects for humor. Mother, children, country are too respectable to be the butt of jokes. Osgood Carruthers **said** Russians believe Americans are entirely too prone to joke about serious matters. He cited the Harlem Globetrotter basketball team's appearance in the Lenin Sports Palace in Moscow. Thousands of serious-minded Soviet basketball fans found the team's zany version of basketball an irreverence. They found hard to accept the American's boisterous pep-talking, their harrassment of their opponents, hazing of the referees--despite the finesse and skill apparent in their buffoonery. Carruthers reported that Izvestia in a bone dry editorial declared that "we in the

Soviet Union do take our sports serious and . . . we do not much like seeing a basket ball game turned into a vaudeville show."<sup>36</sup>

Max Frankel notes a changing sense of humor in the Soviet Union. When you hear laughter in the Soviet Union today, he said, it is generally the guffaw of the confident, the howl of the celebrant or the jeer of the social critic. Slapstick has its audience, but it is receiving less and less encouragement.<sup>37</sup>

Asian humor has suffered severely at the hands of western students. The general belief is that either Asians have no sense of humor at all--say the Japanese--or that it is juvenile and primitive--say the Chinese. Japanese author Kin-ichi Ishikawa appears to believe the no-humor canard, even going so far as to offer an explanation:

Perhaps during the Meiji era, when we were intent on catching up with various forms of western civilization, our scholars, businessmen, industrialists, army and navy officers and others in contact with foreigners were altogether too busy absorbing new knowledge to indulge in jokes and fun-making.<sup>38</sup>

Ludovichi and others characterize the Chinese as below

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<sup>36</sup>Reported by Osgood Carruthers, "When Russian Meets American, New York Times Sunday Magazine, (Sept. 6, 1959), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup>Max Frankel, "What Makes Ivan Laugh," New York Times Sunday Magazine (Sept. 6, 1959), p. 8.

<sup>38</sup>Kin-ishi Ishikawa, A Book of Thoughts (New York: Taplinger Co., 1958), p. 116.

Europeans in culture, prone to laugh uproariously at mere physical maladaptions, particularly those resulting from practical jokes. He quotes a host of travelers in China testifying that the Chinese sense of humor is hardly more elevated than that of the savage. Hardly a monograph on China, he notes, does not contain some example of cruelty, torture, death even, drawing unbounded laughter.

"Stating the case with the utmost moderation, therefore, it would seem fair to say that humour in China is still on the level of the practical joke."<sup>39</sup>

American humor, apart from the mother country, began at least with Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography and Poor Richard's Almanack. Some historians list Judge Haliburton (1796-1865), author of The Clockmaker, or Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick of Slickville, as the father of American humor. Other historians credit the honor to Seba Smith (1792-1868), a Portland, Maine, editor, author of Letters of Major Jack Downing, a satire on certain aspects of Jacksonian democracy. Some argue that the history of humor in any country is simply a history of that country's literature.

Among the early American propaganda humorists were Petroleum V. Nasby, the creation of David Ross Locke, and Artemus Ward, the creation of Charles Farrar Browne. Both were strong anti-slavery figures bent on molding public

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<sup>39</sup>Ludovici, op. cit., pp. 94-5.

opinion against that institution. Their vernacular may repel today's reader but it was an acceptable humor then and was immensely applauded as well as violently abhorred. Locke attacked slavery backhandedly, making Nasby--who was a Copperhead of glaring faults and ridiculous follies--speak in its defense. After slavery became a dead issue, Locke turned to attack the liquor business. Artemus Ward's inventor was given to satire--and to be sure no one missed that fact, gave warning: "N.B. This is rote Sarcastikul." Lincoln was a great admirer of both writers. It was Artemus Ward's High Handed Outrage at Utica that Lincoln insisted on reading to a cabinet meeting before turning to another matter, the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was during this same period that James Russell Lowell began his Biglow Papers series, using the device of rural dialect to comment and criticize; his first major target was the Mexican War. In the last half of the 19th Century there came a host of other American humorists with a propaganda or persuasion bent. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens, 1835-1910) is too well known to require space here, although the author would like to call the reader's attention to two propaganda humor classics, Chapter 33 of Connecticut Yankee and Chapter 14 of Huckleberry Finn. Later came Bret Harte, Josh Billings (Henry Shaw) and Bill Nye (Edgar Wilson Nye). Still later came Finley Peter Dunne, creator of Mister Dooley--and

Will Rogers, whom some insist was not a social critic as those listed above, but a comedian, more interested in getting a laugh than making a point. Yet when President Coolidge sent him as **ambassador** of goodwill to Europe, Rogers consistently pursued one aim: to make fun out of what was on top and spare the underdog.

Humor, in America, is held in high esteem. There is a general desire to laugh and be made to laugh and a sense of humor has great social value, which is not true in all other cultures. In America it is important to understand a joke when it is told--failure is a form of disgrace. And, unlike many other cultures, it is important that one be able to take a joke directed against himself no matter how baldly hostile it may be.

Among the more distinct characteristics of American humor is its generalized pattern. In older civilizations, jokes often are fully understood and appreciated only by class or regional groups. The span from the sophisticated wit of the New Yorker Magazine to the slapstick humor of American television is not too great for most Americans. Another characteristic is the function of sanction which American humor serves. For example, the ridicule of Hitler and Mussolini probably did more than all the rational critiques to make the average American contemptuous of fascism. Humor as sanction is qualified in two ways: first, as noted

above, there is a high value in deliberately inducing laughter at one's own expense and does not detract from a person's over-all respect; second, a hero may without loss unintentionally become the target of laughter as the stereotyped western hero in the American television program.

Besides its generalized nature and its role as sanction, American humor has other distinct characteristics. It is noted for its realism, shying away from nonsense and whimsy; it is characteristically exaggerated, as the Paul Bunyan tales and the myths of Texas. It is given to verbalisms, slang speech and dialect spelling. Twain noted:

To spring incongruities and absurdities together in a wandering and sometimes purposeless way and seem innocently unaware that they are absurdities is the basis of the American art (of humor).<sup>40</sup>

American humor tends to be irreverent of conventions and values, especially scholarship. Because much of it is based on anti-pompousness, it does not find universal welcome abroad. In many foreign countries, for example, the serious minded and educated person has a fixed ambition, to make his place in a higher social class. He automatically rejects, therefore, much American humor on the grounds that it belongs to a social level below the one with which he identifies himself.

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<sup>40</sup>Quoted by Max Eastman in Enjoyment of Laughter, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), p. 306.



American humor often **fails** to be incisive, rapier like. British cartoonist Ronald Searle, creator of the Saint Trinian belles, noted that America lacks sharp political cartooning. He attributed this to an American tendency to shy away from the all-out attack required by a cartoon which must sum up, "in nine or ten perfectly drawn lines a very complex situation, tearing off the masks and conventions with which public figures invariably conceal their enterprises."<sup>41</sup> Gordon explains this phenomenon, the almost excessive tolerance in American humor, in terms of humaneness:

Ours is the tender humor of humaneness. It is the compassionate humor of Abraham Lincoln. It is the rustic humor of Mark Twain. It is the gentle humor of Will Rogers. . . . The contemporary humorists and comedians on the American scene have a distinct aversion to cruel ridicule. Ring Lardner urged comedians not to poke fun at foreigners, so that they insult not their own grandparents. Eddie Cantor dislikes the humor of contempt. He prefers the humor of "tenderness and gentleness." Jimmy Durante has made it his policy not to invite laughter at the expense of the deformed and the crippled. All of them hate the humor of mockery and derision.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>"The Emasculation of American Humor," Sat. Rev., March 12, 1954.

<sup>42</sup>Julius Gordon, Your Sense of Humor (New York: Didier Co., 1950), p. 63.

## CHAPTER IV

### APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES

Hence it is apparent that, no matter what we wish to persuade of, we must consider the person concerned, whose mind and heart we must know, what principles he admits, what things he loves, and then observe in the thing in question what relations it has to these admitted principles or to these objects of delight. So that the art of persuasion consists as much in knowing how to please as in knowing how to convince, so much more do men follow caprice than reason--Pascal.

This chapter might be titled, "The Humor Propagandist's Handbook." The reader will find here a general theoretical framework for the use of humor in propaganda; this comes in the form of a discussion of what the author believes are the three major categories or uses of propaganda humor. The reader also will find a series of suggestions involving actual technique. The chapter is intended to be exploratory and suggestive rather than definitive. As has been evident from earlier chapters, a great deal of study and research must be done in this field before its full power can be known and put to use.

Before turning to approaches and techniques, however, it is appropriate that we array for consideration the major limitations and strengths of propaganda humor.

#### I. PRO AND CONTRA

Ohio Senator Thomas Corwin is quoted as saying, a century ago,

If you would succeed in life be solemn, solemn as an ass. All the great monuments of the earth have been built over solemn asses.<sup>1</sup>

There are propagandists, the majority, perhaps, who feel that solemnity is their only proper garb; they reject the entire concept of propaganda humor, arguing that humor

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by William L. Rivers, "Congress Still Has Its Wits," New York Times Sunday Magazine (May 17, 1959), p. 39.

is antithetical to persuasion. Christ and his followers, they note, never attempted the use of humor to persuade; the New Testament contains not a single joke yet it is an unparalleled persuasive effort. Further, they argue, humor cheapens the tone and quality of a message. In international propaganda, symbols usually are semi sacred--flag, God, home, humanity. Levity and wit directed against these are certain to be counter productive. One propagandist told the author that studies show a person meeting a humorous situation automatically feels superior to that situation and this attitude can lead him to minimize the importance or value of a message clothed in humor; you do not sell a Cadillac automobile, he said, by joking about it. Another argument against propaganda humor is that much propaganda deals with unfunny situations, as the Hungarian uprising, Communist slave labor camps, preparations for war (or, from the communist standpoint, colonialism, capitalist exploitation, plans for aggression) and that these can hardly be considered fit topics for humor. This we-must-be-serious theme marked early American propaganda efforts. In the newsroom of the U. S. Office of War Information during World War Two there hung a sign reading: "Will A Man Risk His Life to Hear the Words I'm Writing?" Says the critic of propaganda humor: "Would you ask a Voice of America listener in China to risk his life just to hear a joke?" Humor, the argument continues,

calls for a spirit of playfulness and if such a condition does not exist in the target audience member, the propaganda will fail. The above are not so much arguments against propaganda humor--or even against extensive use of propaganda humor--as **they** are arguments that such humor be carefully prepared and skillfully aimed.

Further, as we shall see, the choice of humor techniques varies greatly between a target audience behind the Curtain and audiences in neutralist nations. Beyond question, humor can be used in serious subjects, and in a covert way. A good, if backhanded, example is race conflict and humor's part as a technique of prejudice. It lends itself particularly well to use as a conflict device because of almost endless subject matter and because its nature is such that it often contains well-concealed malice. Who has not heard anti-Negro, anti-Jewish jokes?

It might be argued that "race conscious" humor is not actually a conflict technique, since much of it is humorous even if not racially applied, and that racial connotations are chiefly fortuitous. This may be true for a given bit of wit, but not for the totality. Any persons or groups who are the butt of jokes thereby suffer discriminatory treatment and are indirectly being relegated to an inferior status. This is, in turn, typical of conflict in general and gives additional support to the fact that humor is one of the mechanisms rather frequently pressed into use in the racial conflicts of America.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Burma, "Humor as a Technique in Race Conflict," The Am. Soc. Rev. (11 Dec., 1946), pp. 710-11.

The most serious argument raised against propaganda humor--in the author's opinion--involves that aspect of humor containing psychologically disturbing stimuli. An individual's temperament or mental make up or some psychological blockage may cause him to react to humor in an unexpected way. Levine and Abselon, after a lengthy study, concluded that there is hardly a joke or cartoon that is not disturbing to some. Because of individual differences--not cultural or national--the same humor evokes responses as separate as hilarity and revulsion.

It appears that humorous stimuli, whatever the mechanism of humor, may be and often are powerful instigators of affective responses, ranging from very pleasant to very unpleasant ones. The present study was designed to test one aspect of the assumed relationship between humor and anxiety. We make the prediction that the more anxiety a humor stimulus produces, the greater is the likelihood that it will evoke a painful rather than a gratifying response. We therefore predict that subjects, when presented with humorous stimuli which arouse great anxiety, will not respond as favorably to them as they will to cartoons arousing less anxiety, but will instead tend to reject them as not being gratifying or "funny." Furthermore, the tendency to reject anxiety-arousing cartoons will be greater among subjects less able to tolerate anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

When the humor is to be adapted to other languages, translation can certainly be a problem. It is all too often true that humor is what gets lost in translation. From our survey of national senses of humor we have seen that cultural

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<sup>3</sup>Jacob Levine and Robert Abelson, "Humor as a Disturbing Stimulus," *The Jour. of Gen. Psy.* (60, 1959), pp.191-200.

and geographic lines do represent a general barrier to humor--not insurmountable, but annoying. It is true that less is lost inside a language family. An American will probably get more out of a translation of the humor of Cicero--both Latin and English being in the Indo-European family--than from a translation of the wit of Confucius. Broad humor, the antics of Falstaff for example, translates more easily than the subtle, nuance-shaded humor of P. G. Wodehouse. Puns are untranslatable. Pantomime, as Charlie Chaplin's antics, is carried over directly. This tends to throw a great burden on the translator who becomes, as in the case of poetry translation, a creator in his own right. He must be not only artist, but judge. As observed earlier, nothing is laughable in itself--the laughable borrows its special quality from some group or person which does the laughing. Only those with the same social heritage laugh easily at the same kind of humor and wit. The propaganda humorist must not only be of the same nationality, but of the same social background as his target audience. Further, he must have humor talent. Propaganda humorists, generally speaking, are creative, imaginative, off-beat, ingenious, unorthodox types. They are unfettered souls, somewhat out of step with those around them. Recruiting them for government propaganda programs admittedly raises problems beyond simple availability.

Even with skilled translation we still face a perennial problem of all humorists--audience failing to understand or "get" the humor. This problem has been used as an argument against propaganda humor on the grounds that if the point of the humor is missed, the message is lost and the effort wasted. The same argument, however, can be made against any persuasive message that fails to hit home. Any argument keyed to a faulty theme will fail--for example, the Nazi appeal to the largely non-existent pro-German sympathies of German-Americans during World War Two or the Communist appeal to the exploited American factory worker. So the argument that propaganda humor may sometimes fail is no valid argument against the entire technique. Further, when propaganda humor fails, the results are seldom counter productive--the message is simply lost. When serious propaganda misfires, the propagandist usually is worse off than when he started.

Chakhotin<sup>4</sup> declared that propaganda to persuade should be used only on militants, to whom doctrine is all important. With the masses, employ mystic suggestion: myths, rites, symbols, slogans. What he is saying is that there is affective propaganda as well as logical. The rational approach--or perversion of it--has to now been the propagandist's chief vehicle. Action has been the goal. But other legitimate

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<sup>4</sup>Sergei Chakhotin, Rape of the Masses: The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda (New York: Alliance Book Corp., 1940), ch. 3.



goals are possible--for example, creation of a climate of opinion, a mood, a spirit, in which rationalism is largely irrelevant. Persuasion-to-action propaganda may some day appear unbelievably elementary and primitive.

One problem the propaganda humorist encounters in any programmed output is resistance at the policy level. The United States Information Agency makes considerable use of humor. However, one official in the Agency, who prefers to remain anonymous told the author, "We find that we have a good deal of trouble with the policy types who object to the use of humor or the light touch in our output. We also get cables from the field saying there is nothing funny about the situation there." This same official noted that politics remains the most effective, and at the same time the most difficult, realm for the humor propaganda--and that in the area where it is most needed, humor is least used. There has never been in USIA any sort of a coordinated use of humor; such effort as there has been, has been at the media level only. This is not to suggest that what USIA needs is an Office of Humor Coordination. Humor, to be effective, must be handled in a very decentralized manner, at the writing and language desk level. What the Agency really needs, in the author's opinion, is a greater awareness of the possibilities of propaganda humor. It has been the author's personal experience, from several years on the Voice of

America's Far East News Desk, that VOA output suffered from two shortcomings: too propagandistic and too heavy handed. The cure for too much propaganda--and the course on which the News Division has been embarked since about 1957--involves embracing the standard principles of objective reporting. Elimination of the heavy-handedness is another and more difficult matter. To say that the answer is to use a light touch is simply to restate the problem. At the core of the solution is the idea of humor, its possibilities and its applications.

Humor's first recommendation--perhaps because of its obviousness--is that it removes a major barrier to propaganda. Propaganda humor doesn't sound as propagandistic as its serious brother. Serious propaganda is inclined to be fanatically and hypnotically intense with little variation in mood. This intensity builds up a target audience resistance--no one likes being pushed to a conclusion. Humor can shift an audience from a posture of self defense to one of relaxed enjoyment of what is being expressed. A person thus disarmed and losing his suspicion becomes more receptive to the message. This Trojan Horse approach has worked in other forms of persuasion in recent years--for example, the so-called soft sell in American domestic advertising versus the George Washington Hill method. Through humor, propaganda can continue to be persuasive, or critical, without becoming

irritating. It soothes the world's weariness of blatant tub thumping. This is particularly true if the mood of the world at the moment happens to be low keyed. In a dynamic, changing situation--such as a tense cold war crisis--there would be less use for propaganda humor than during periods of more stable international relations.

Another advantage of propaganda humor is that it leaves little or no residue of hatred--a great advantage in a rapidly changing international scene where the target audience enemy of today may be the friend of tomorrow. Hate propaganda begets hate and, in turn, counter-hate propaganda which begets more hate, and so on. Humor acts as a soothing force; it is reasonableness, good naturedness. Naturally, there are programs in which the hate theme must be stressed. But in others--say an American program in neutralist **Asia**--propaganda humor would have a far higher degree of acceptance than a hate theme.

Related to the hate theme is the self-aggrandizement theme or what is sometimes called fear-arousing communication. Irving Janis<sup>5</sup> studied the effect of a message which developed fear or anxiety in a target audience. The subjects were Americans and the message involved dental hygiene. He concluded that the effectiveness of a persuasive communication

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<sup>5</sup>Irving Janis, "Fear Arousing Communication," Jour. of Abnormal and Soc. Psy. (48, Fall 1953), pp. 78-92.

tends to be reduced by use of a strong fear appeal. Further: (a) when a mass communication is designed to influence an audience to adopt specific ways and means of averting a threat, the use of a strong fear appeal increases the likelihood that the audience will be left in a state of emotional tension regardless of what recommendations the remainder of the message contains, and (b) when fear is strongly aroused and not relieved by reassurances in the communication, the audience tends to ignore or minimize the importance of the threat. This finding throws considerable doubt on the entire output of the psychological warrior.

From other sources comes supporting testimony. John Lear, editor of the Research Institute of America, reports receiving a letter from a friend in East Europe:

If you have any means of reaching the people who decide these things, John, urge them to take the hate out of the Voice of America. Persuade them, if you can, to use the Voice instead as a kind of correspondence school to teach the poor and helpless peoples of the earth how to better their naked, hungry lives . . . I know too that even the captive peoples listen by the thousands to any Voice broadcast that is something more than a hot harangue against communism, which they already hate.<sup>6</sup>

The central question of concern to us here is whether propaganda humor can do the job, whether it can make a serious point. Many masterful persuaders have believed it can. Lincoln, for example, is quoted as saying to Chauncey Depew:

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<sup>6</sup>John Lear, "School for Satellites," Sat. Rev. (Sept. 17, 1955), p. 18.

Depew, they say I tell a great many stories. I think I do. They say I lower the dignity of the presidential office by these broad anecdotes. Possibly that is true. But I have found, in the course of long experience, that the plain people of the country take them as they are, and are more easily reached and influenced and argued with through the medium of a humorous illustration than in any other way.<sup>7</sup>

Lincoln was capable of making a primarily entertaining talk that left his audience in a reflective mood. Or he would scatter bits of humor through the text of a serious discourse, not for humor's sake, but to direct attention to important points. Former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Vishinsky was a master of satiric scorn, especially in such forums as the United Nations. For example, he once told the Security Council that he could not sleep the night before, for laughing at the American-British-French disarmament proposals. The good propaganda humorist needs the ability, vital in public debate or at the person-to-person level, to get an audience to laugh along with him in approval of his mood, attitude or point of view and to join him in laughing at some object, person or point of view toward which he wishes to direct scorn. Further, he uses humor either to disarm opposition or potential critics by self-humor--a technique which Vishinsky did not have--but without surrendering his proper claim to prestige and respect. A master at this was New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. Or the propaganda

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<sup>7</sup>Quoted by Oliver, op. cit., p. 336.

humorist uses humor to develop antagonism, the triumphant laughter of aggressive wit, an echo of war. India's V. K. Krishna Menon comes quickly to mind as a master of this device.<sup>8</sup> Humor can be used to portray the superficial and the artificial as little else can. It can reveal the pose and pretense, the sham and show, the deception and dissimulation of an international policy--it can be an offensive weapon in diplomacy.

Because there is so precious little humor loose in the world, propaganda humor is bound to have a high interest level. It attracts attention to itself far out of proportion to the space it occupies. As an attention getting device it has no peer. People seek out humor. No propaganda item can influence a person unless it is brought before his stream of consciousness under favorable conditions. A communist in France, for example, receiving a piece of anti-communist literature in the mail may immediately throw it away. If it is wrapped in humor, he may at least peruse it. Further, humor holds attention once gained. Very few persons can begin reading a humorous anecdote without reading through to the punch line. Given good writing, it is harder to put down a humorously written article, or even a story, than one in

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<sup>8</sup>Menon is an authority on humor. His master's thesis from Oxford was published under the title A Theory of Laughter (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1931).

serious tone. The repeat level is also high, of great importance to the propagandist. During World War Two Allied agents, planting black anti-German jokes on the continent, were constantly amazed at the speed with which they would travel and the distance they would cover. A joke planted on a Calais bus in the morning would be heard by an Allied agent in a Berlin restaurant that evening. This is because humor has a social character about it. Solitary laughter--like solitary drinking--is generally a malign addiction. When a person finds humor he is eager to share it. Because of its essentially social nature, humor can also be used to develop group unity. Laughter has a pronounced unifying influence at the personal level. Humor, even in media use, can create a warm bond of fellowship, can energize support. It can serve as the fuel to stoke the flames of ardor and insure unity and vigor. American propagandists can use American humor in their explanation of American culture.

Finally, there is the moral dimension--the kind of propaganda used is important to a democracy. For a democracy, propaganda humor is the better approach. The technician or practitioner in mass opinion cannot escape the moral issues which permeate propaganda as a means of social control. It is not possible to settle this problem with any finality. For one thing, much more research is needed. For another, this is the sort of a problem which is never settled completely.

Any propaganda agency must operate on a number of assumptions which can be argued in two directions. The United States Information Agency, for example, operates on assumptions involving the end vs. the means, propaganda vs. information, the objective of being liked, known about or feared vs. manipulation of events, mass appeals vs. targeting to special audiences, selectivity vs. candor. Special programs require special decisions. It is seldom possible--nor is there any need--to establish great theoretical generalizations. This same attitude can be, and should be, employed in the case of propaganda humor.

## II. USES OF PROPAGANDA HUMOR

The author has stated elsewhere his belief that the most effective way to communicate is to say it with a smile. Almost nothing said cannot be said more effectively using the light touch. The New Yorker magazine's "Town Talk" section has for thirty years illustrated the power of the light touch to make points on heavy subjects. Humor can make truth palatable, can outline it, highlight it, emphasize it, as little else can. Humor can be an excellent vehicle for truth. Max Eastman once asked Charlie Chaplin why people laughed at him:

Because I am telling them the plain truth of things. It is bringing home to them by means of a shock the sanity of a situation which they think is insane. When



I walk up and slap a fine lady, for instance, because she gave me a contemptuous look, it is really right. They won't admit it, but it's right and that is why they laugh. I make them conscious of life. "You think this is it, don't you," I say, "Well, it isn't, but this is, see!" And then they laugh.<sup>9</sup>

Burlesque, caricature, satire, parody and irony are among the humor types that first suggest themselves as vehicles for direct propaganda humor. Basically these are commentaries with a moral purpose, forms of ridicule. Satire, for example, can most effectively highlight stupidity, folly and other vices. Consider this brilliant attack on war by that master satirist, George Bernard Shaw:

You may say that I am too old to be a soldier. If nations had any sense they would begin their wars by sending their oldest men into the trenches. They would not risk the lives of their young men, except in the last extremity. In 1914 it was a dreadful thing to see regiments of lads singing, "Tipperary," on their way to the slaughterhouse. But the spectacle of regiments of octogenarians hobbling up to the front waving their walking sticks and piping up to the tune of "We'll never come back no more, we'll never come back no more"-- wouldn't you cheer that enthusiastically? I should.<sup>10</sup>

Satire--most powerful of all persuasive humor--can be used not only to criticize, it can in itself be a forceful and effective instrument of moral reform. Irony, a close ally, achieves its effect through inversion--saying one thing and meaning something else. Other major types of humor

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<sup>9</sup>Quoted by Max Eastman, A Sense of Humor (New York: Charles Scribners, 1922), p. 46.

<sup>10</sup>Vital Speeches, (Nov. 15, 1937), p. 67.

applicable to the propaganda humor vehicle are the chronological tale, all forms of wit but especially the verbal exchange, and picture humor.<sup>11</sup> The press--that is the various print media--can and do use cartoons and comic strips to persuade; humorous fiction, humor columns and personal essays comprise another major type. The visual media already have tapped the humor source to a considerable degree. Animated cartoons, especially for illiterate audiences, are an extremely effective medium for propaganda. Stephen Becker<sup>12</sup> points out that a picture is easier to understand than words and more effective. He notes that, for some reason, a person finds a picture more believable and therefore more persuasive. In broadcasting, humor can and is used in both the news and commentary portions of the program as well as in special event type programs. In the cultural and exhibition fields many possibilities exist: the export of Broadway comedies and musical comedies, as My Fair Lady, which scored such a success in the Soviet Union in 1960, monologists such as Hal Holbrook, Mardi Gras events, parades, clowns, as well as ordinary exhibits with humor themes.

In economically well-developed nations, persuasion and influence must of necessity come mainly through mass

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<sup>11</sup>See chart on categories of humor, page 15.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Becker, Comic Art in America. (New York: Simon Schuster, 1959), p. 159.

media which means a public relations apparatus for propaganda work. In under-developed nations, media are weak and the role of the public relations man--or the USIS representative--alters drastically. The propagandist must work on the individual or representational level. Humor can stand him in good stead in several ways. He can use wit and humor to convey warmth of personality, to hold the attention of crowd or individual, to make a point, to create a sense of unity in attitude. Parenthetically, it should be noted that humor can also serve as a defense mechanism. When met by a serious thrust, if all else fails, one can return a frivolous and irrelevant reply. This is an ancient technique. The learned Doctor Johnson, for example, has been accused by more than one critic of getting behind a joke and ~~dis~~appearing. Communist orators--including Nikita Khrushchev--frequently employ the trick. Anastas Mikoyan, during his 1959 visit to the United States, frequently used humor to turn critical, and even hostile comment during luncheons and other public gatherings. That brilliant mocker, Cicero, advised his pupils of oratory that joking can be used to dispose of matters that will not bear the scrutiny of other proofs. He suggested that it is part of the orator's business to raise a laugh to lessen, confound, hamper and confuse the opponent. For the benefit of those who may find themselves on the receiving end of such humor--say a USIS representative making

personal contact abroad--here is Max Eastman's advice:

Do not try to match wits with the joker, for you are restrained and he is free; enjoy his joke in a perfectly frivolous pleasure and then return with a reluctant force to serious speech, reserving your own wit until you are again in command. You will thus rob him of the appearance of having parried and thrust when all he did was to jump out of the way of a wound.<sup>13</sup>

Use of humor to convey a propaganda message is the major approach in programmed propaganda. Essentially it is of this type to which we have been referring throughout this paper. Most of the arguments in favor of propaganda humor have this type in mind--the conveying of a message, aimed either at the mind or the emotion, clothed in humor, expressed with wit. Humor as a leavening agent, to offset heavier material in the propaganda message, has particular application in broadcasting and in the visual media. What is meant by humor here is pure humor, with no secondary or propaganda motives. It serves as a counterpoise, as a brief respite. It supplies the comic relief from emotional tension and serious concentration; it enhances the meaning of the message, making it more palatable. A prime example in broadcasting is the so-called kicker, or end-piece, which can be either an anecdote relating to a major story in the news or simply a bright news story of no consequence. Such a news item can help to maintain the semblance of perspective in

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<sup>13</sup>Quoted by Eastman in Sense of Humor, p. 113.

the news presentation. When the news of the day is unfavorable--from the broadcaster's viewpoint--such stories can convey the idea that things are not entirely serious and gloomy. In printed media the humorous article, the picture series, the cartoon and caption, the anecdote and witty squib can all help serve to balance the heavier output of the propaganda message itself. Slapstick comedy, nonsense, speech play and word play are the most common types of humor applicable to this second use. The aim should be, not to make a point, but to communicate laughter. In group contact--as in public speaking--the familiar warm up joke, if good or even if indifferent, can serve as evidence of the speaker's desire to be on friendly terms with his audience. In smaller, less formal gatherings, display of an educated sense of humor can attract people. There are few who do not admire a person skilled at banter or repartee. Humor for humor's sake can be an easy door opener to the minds of others. The United States Information Agency's foreign service selection panels could do well to test the sense of humor of prospective foreign service officers. Certainly an ability to parry verbal thrusts wittily, without giving offense, stands a foreign service officer in good stead. The writer-traveler Ben Lucien Burman reported this incident which he described as laughter unlocking a door:

Not long ago I was visiting a village in a rather primitive part of the world whose inhabitants I was

particularly anxious to investigate. I met a group of the leaders in the house of the richest citizen, but because of some unpleasant experiences with visitors, they all were very hostile. It was obvious the sooner I left the happier they would be. Electricity had been introduced a year or so before in the region and I noticed a washing machine standing near the door where a native woman proudly presided over the week's laundry. Suddenly I remembered a story I had heard in the back country of an American who had bought a washing machine, and after giving his dirty clothes to his servant happily went off to his work for the day. He returned to find his beautiful automatic washer in ruins. He examined the wreckage, then turned to the servant in despair.

"Why did you put rocks in my washing machine?" he demanded.

The servant looked at him unhappily.

"Oh sir, I always wash with rocks," he said.

I told this story to the grim figures seated near me. When I finished they roared with laughter. From that moment on I was among friends.<sup>14</sup>

The third category--humor as an ambassador of goodwill--involves tapping the vast humor resources of a country as a cultural value with the object of creating attitudes favorable to that country. Since this paper is oriented toward the United States, this would mean, specifically, use of humor as Americana. America could export the works of Twain, Ward, Thurber, and others--either in printed text or in the form of the impersonating monologist, as Hal Holbrook's recreation of Mark Twain. It could send abroad American

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted by Oliver, op. cit., p. 159.

comics, American comedy and musical comedy, theater, humorous motion pictures, and specially-edited packages of television comedy. Special editions of American humor, in book and pamphlet form, could be prepared for foreign audiences. An excellent example of this is American Humor,<sup>15</sup> published in both Japanese and English editions for sale in Japan. This particular book contains American humor classics which the authors--both experts on Japan, one of them being a native--feel will be understandable and laughable to the Japanese. Other sources of humor are manifold: the annual Gridiron Club roasting of political figures, the wit of Congress and the President. The day's news contains a wealth of raw material. American humor should be exported wherever it is found. Specific types include the trick, nonsense, speech play, slapstick comedy, the riddle and conundrum (especially for children and illiterates), wordplay, the chronological story and picture humor.

These then are the three major categories for propaganda humor: as a vehicle for the message, as a leavening agent within or between messages, and as a cultural value.

### III. TECHNIQUES

Although humor for opinion management has been practiced

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<sup>15</sup>Donald Richie and Yoshimori Harashima, American Humor (Tokyo: Holuseido Press, 1959).

since earliest times, neither the ancients nor the modern psychologist, advertising copy writer or politician has been able to set down firm rules of procedure. Fame and fortune await the person who can produce an infallible formula for humor. Critical literature contains little discussion of persuasion humor and that little is cautious and unproductive. Only too frequently the humorist is least able to transmit his power to others. Mere method does not guarantee success, for any specific example taken up for consideration always involves, as its final product, a multiplicity of factors, many of which escape conscious control. No single factor of propaganda humor can be isolated without sacrificing a degree of reality. Not specific technique, but unconscious and latent factors in certain combination yield effective propaganda humor. Hence the techniques involved are not capable of precise formulation. Its sphere of activity is wide and vague and the variable factors involved far outnumber the constants. This is true not only of propaganda humor-writing, but propaganda writing in general.

Our present state of knowledge is not sufficient for anything like a rigid formulation of rules . . . The techniques to be used in framing and drawing up the agency's messages fall largely into the category of art. There are few rules for the way something to be said or written should be prepared. The time has not yet arrived when we can speak of a doctrine for political communication. The requirement is for operational guides that are flexible and permit the creative instinct of a craftsman to flower.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Dyer, op. cit., pp. 144-6.



One redeeming factor, however, is that humor is a token. It hardly matters whether it is good or bad. Propaganda humor is something that causes laughter-belief. If it works, it is good.

However, we may establish a propaganda humor hypothesis and, on the basis of it, enunciate a few rules to guide the propaganda humorist.

Our propaganda humor hypothesis is that forms and ideas arranged and combined according to certain unknown and mysterious laws cause laughter and through laughter, belief; and it is the business of the propaganda-humorist to combine and arrange these in such a manner as to cause not only laughter, but belief. This is neither exactly Comedy, nor Persuasion--as the response to Bob Hope and Johnathan Swift are not exactly the same.

Technique, in this case, begins with the technician. It cannot be stressed too strongly that production of propaganda humor is best accomplished by native members of the target audience familiar with the current scene in their homeland. The propaganda humorist must have an intimate knowledge of the target audience, its language, attitudes, myths, politics, and grievances. He must know the humor and wit tradition of the audience, its standard jokes and ploys, its humor taboos and sacred cows. Maloney notes:

I say that the writing of humor is all technique. Every humorist makes the same discovery. Every humorist

begins by thinking himself inspired and ends with the knowledge that he is a hack with a pitifully small bag of tricks.<sup>17</sup>

The first rule of propaganda humor then is: know thy audience. The propaganda humorist must analyze his audience, its cultural-social-political attitudes, its opinion of the communicator, the conditions under which the message will probably be received and the nature of the message itself. This requires perceptivity and art. In a face-to-face situation the problem is not so difficult--it is the same faced by every after-dinner speaker, who must take into account the listener's level of appreciation, his sense of propriety and the occasion.

In the case of mass media, analysis becomes infinitely more complex. Mass media are notorious for their mistreatment of humor. There appears to be a kind of Gresham's law at work in mass media, the bad humor driving out the good. The best humor tends to be specialized, appealing to small audiences, as the New Yorker magazine or the Sid Caesar television program. The larger the audience, the more humor seeks the lowest common denominator. Differences appear

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<sup>17</sup>Maloney, op. cit. However the matter need not be left completely to Dame Inspiration. For example, the National Association of Gagwriters operates a Comedy Workshop at 360 First Avenue, New York. Organized in 1944 the school offers instruction in what it calls the Seven Laffing Arts, radio-television, stage, films, music, dance, cartoons and literature. Classes are held the year around under former press agent George Q. Lewis.

involving age, level of education, cultural backgrounds. Take something as simple as the differences in the senses of humor of men and women. Men, by and large, are more interested in international politics than are women; women are more interested in domestic matters. It follows logically, therefore, that wit and humor referring to international politics will be found less humorous by women than by men; and men would find less funny than women, humor based on some domestic theme. Even if one got the point of the humor, he would not feel sufficiently and personally involved to care to laugh. Also important to technique is the exact nature of the relationship of the communicator to the communicant. Choice of propaganda humor obviously will depend on whether the target audience is friendly, hostile or neutral. Wit, for example, has more of a place in an offensive type of propaganda program in which the theme is attack. Humor, on the other hand, is more appropriate when one of the major objectives is creation of warm feelings. Wit is for the enemy, humor for allies and neutrals; wit plays on latent or hidden discontents, humor helps build a bridge of understanding and friendship. Wit is for use with the sophisticated, humor with the more elemental audiences. All these audience differences plus the various physical and temperamental variations involved, require adjustment by the propaganda humorist.

Humor must be infinitely well planned. It is the result of careful, precision-like effort and yet the result appears spontaneous. Only through extreme care, can propaganda humor achieve the neat, gem-like quality that gives such power. Only through planning, does the propaganda humorist achieve the pin point saliency, the exact appropriateness, both in tone and subject, that is so vital. This is not so difficult as it may first appear--because there is a tool available, the humor file. Maloney gives this advice, intended for the commercial humorist, but equally applicable to the propaganda humorist:

A gag-file is a gag-man's only real property, his sole estate when finally he succumbs to stomach ulcers. Filed away in one or more filing cabinets, every prosperous gag-writer has thousands of jokes. These jokes are filed under subject, with generous cross-references . . . Every gag printed in a newspaper or magazine, spoken in a movie or play, heard over the radio or in a smoking compartment is summarized and filed away by the careful gag-writer.<sup>18</sup>

Material for a humor file--and the backbone of any organized propaganda humor program--could originate from three major sources. First, it could come from government research offices. State Department, U.S.I.A., Defense Department, Library of Congress all have voluminous general information files, including a good deal on humor, iron curtain jokes, satire, etc. Parallel to this are humor files

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

in private hands throughout the country, whose owners might be persuaded, in the name of the national interest, to open their collections to government propagandists. The second major source would be in the field. The Department of State's Sino-Soviet Affairs magazine--a current review of bloc developments, issued monthly--contains in each issue a page of communist-land humor; U. S. Information Agency officers must file periodic country reports covering a host of cultural and sociological themes including humor (even latrine writing and popular dirty jokes are included). Field officers could cull local publications, monitor radio and television programs, stage productions, etc. Much of the material could be sent back to the originating country, or could be used in neighboring countries. The third, and probably the largest source, however, would be staff produced and original. The standard approach to the production of commercial humor in the lively arts in America is to hire a gag writer. These rare creatures are for the most part self trained, with experience serving as their master tutor. There are a few suggestions on the production of humor. One good rule is to study the great humorists of the world. Another is to observe and analyze the free and unrestrained laughter of children. A third would be constant and daily working at humor--especially in conjunction with fellow humorists. Generating humor commercially has traditionally been an individual effort. In

recent years in America the technique of the committee system has come into practice. Much condemned by humor writers, this group system has produced some of America's best commercial humor--for example the Sid Caesar television programs.

In a government propaganda program, USIA for example, propaganda humor for the mass media--press and publications, broadcasting, motion pictures--would probably be produced centrally. However, because much USIA activity is decentralized--and the field, that is the overseas post, is given a great deal of autonomy and latitude--considerable effort would be concentrated in the hands of the foreign service. The extent to which a foreign service officer or an overseas post would employ humor would depend on a multiplicity of factors--local conditions, the country plan, the personalities of Americans on the scene. A major use could well be in answering the critic of America abroad. USIA's training division<sup>19</sup> has outlined six basic rules for answering the critic: don't argue, answer with a "yes, but," find out what the critic really has in mind, draw on your own experience, get the discussion out of an exclusively American context, and be reasonable; it could well add a seventh: say it with a smile.

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<sup>19</sup>In an unpublished paper titled "Suggestions on Methods of Answering the Critic of the United States Abroad."

Any response to criticism, of course, must spring naturally out of the context of the situation. A criticism with overtones of satire, for example, may call for a serious answer or for a return in satiric kind, neither more nor less satiric than the original question. A baiting, rhetorical question may call for an anecdote, a that-reminds-me-of-a-story reply. A heckler in a crowd may require a squelch reply which divides him from the crowd. And in almost any event, the light touch throughout in replying to the American critic will serve a better stead than the totally-serious approach. Although no firm rules can be set down to cover all situations, these guidelines should be kept in mind:

1. Don't introduce humor until the critic does. This does not preclude the light touch.

2. Keep the humor impersonal. Direct it against the critic only if he is a total boor; even then, play for the audience and not the critic.

3. Convey--by your manner and your word--the importance you place on a sense of humor. Through the halo effect, this will serve either to isolate the grim, driving type of critic or to force him to do battle on your terms, on the field of good natured banter.

4. Work for humor, not for humor's sake, but to make a salient point; aim to express an idea in such a way that it will be remembered long afterwards.

5. Quit when you are ahead--and, if possible, leave them laughing.

The United States Information Agency could do well to consider publishing a handbook of humor for use in the field. It could include anecdotes, selected humorous quotations, jokes, amusing definitions, similies, colorful American phrases, rules for the preparation of a semi-humorous speech, as well as humor techniques for less formal situations.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the more informal the situation, the easier humor is to employ. As a single rule of thumb, remember the mild shock technique. If there is any one form of humor that is most certain of success this is it. At informal gatherings of strangers--where a certain amount of tension exists--the mild shock technique can be used as an ice breaker. It can be used to set the tone at a dinner. It can help establish a natural group leader at discussions and conferences. Its actual application, of course, depends on the nature and character of the audience. The shock may be quite strong--as in the case of, say, the Irish--or quite subtle, as in the case of most Asians. Basically it involves doing or saying something unexpected and results in a puzzle-ment-then-mild-shock-then-laughter reaction. An example,

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<sup>20</sup>In print and available are a number of public speaking handbooks which contain some material of value for such a program. Among the best is Herbert Prochnow's The Public Speaker's Treasure Chest (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960).



perhaps not the best, was supplied the author by one who maintains it is a sure-fire piece of humor; at least it illustrates the mild shock technique:

During a break in conversation excuse yourself and leave the room. When you re-enter, casually remove your coat and hang it on an imaginary nail on a blank section of the wall and walk away. The coat, of course, immediately makes a swift and undignified descent to the floor. The spectators react first with a startled gasp, followed a split second later by an uncontrollable burst of laughter.

Or so he reports. The trick sounds silly in the telling but the humorist insists it has never failed in dozens of performances.

All propaganda humor must be handled effortlessly and with artistic finesse.

Consider these two versions of the same anecdote, one handled poorly and the other skillfully:

A Bolshevik was asked what his job was and replied: "I sit in the highest tower of the Kremlin and watch for the World Revolution."

"And do they pay you well for that?" he was asked.

"Not too well; but then you see I've got the job for life."

Now consider Sandburg's poetic version of the same story:

In Moscow . . . a bugler every morning steps out in front of the Kremlin and blows a long powerful blast and they ask him what for and he says, "I am sounding the call for the international revolution of the united workers of the world who have nothing to lose but their chains and a world to gain," and they ask him what he gets paid for his daily bugle call and he says, "Not

much--but it's a permanent job."<sup>21</sup>

Satire, particularly, can easily be overdone. In 1954, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced a radio program titled, "The Investigator," a satire of the so-called McCarthy Committee. It is now available in album form and generally is considered a telling blow at the investigative excesses of the late senator. An experiment, using students as subjects, was conducted by the University of Illinois to see just what attitudinal changes the program could cause.<sup>22</sup> Experimenters found three major results: there was a marked change of attitude toward investigating committees and in a negative direction; there was a considerable change of attitude toward the concept of security clearance. These are changes that most persons would have predicted. However, the third result was a change in attitude toward Senator McCarthy and the change was toward the positive. Berlo and Hideya, in explaining this boomerang effect, believed it due to the fact that the broadcast called up the valuation of fair play and sympathy for the underdog.

Another firm rule is that propoganda humor must be fresh for it is a perishable commodity. As with repartee,

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<sup>21</sup>Carl Sandburg, The People Yes (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1936), p. 179.

<sup>22</sup>David K. Berlo and Hideya Kumata, "The Investigator: The Impact of a Satirical Radio Drama," Jour. Quart. (33, Summer 1956), pp. 287-98.

better never than late. Humorous topical comment is the most fast deteriorating of all humor. The barbed remark on an international event, for example, must come fast on the heels of the event or not at all. Also quickly perishable is the pun, the witty stroke or the joke whose original success depended on misleading or tricking our own mental judgment or expectation; such will not so well endure repetition because our subjective deception is no longer forthcoming. Not only must propaganda humor be fresh but--for maximum impact--it must be original and spontaneous.

Consider this classic example of propaganda humor at its best, the work of the French anti-Communist organization, Peace and Liberty:

As everyone knows a favorite Communist tactic is to get some party stalwart locked up by the police so that mass meetings can be held and France can be smeared with posters crying "Liberez Dupont," the current victim of "Fascist police." When Maurice Thorez became seriously ill and the Soviets rushed him off to Moscow, Peace and Liberty plastered the walls of Paris with posters reading, "Liberez Thorez."<sup>23</sup>

Good propaganda humor--like good humor, or good theater for that matter--must build. It begins by engaging the attention. This requires preparation and groundwork. It involves timing and spacing which is the mark of the master humorist. Propaganda humor, incidentally, should never be labeled as such.

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<sup>23</sup>Thomas W. Wilson, Jr., "Red Propaganda Can Be Beaten," Reporter Magazine, (March 31, 1953), p. 14.

A propaganda humorist must remember that the feelings he arouses must not be too strong or deep. When a joke is not a joke, it is a tragedy. The propaganda humorist must never regard playfully those subjects for which his audience cares firmly and passionately.

Propaganda humor must never seem far-fetched or forced. It must appear to flow naturally and not be dragged in for the sake of making a point. A corollary to this is that the humor in propaganda humor must be instantaneously recognizable. There is no time for explanation or even for thought. And, of course, it is never to be explained to the audience.

As for style, propaganda humor, in which the humor is the vehicle for the message--where the point is the thing--should be approached in a practical or matter of fact manner. In the case of propaganda humor as a leavening agent, or propaganda as a cultural value--where the telling is the thing--the handling should be poetic. It is the difference between forward motion to meaning and awakening interest in the qualities of a situation.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

Coming events will not be shaped by the deliberate acts of statesmen, but by the hidden currents, flowing continually beneath the surface of political history . . . In one way only can we influence these hidden currents--by setting in motion those forces of instruction and imagination which change opinion. The assertion of truth, the unveiling of illusion, the dissipation of hate, the enlargement and instruction of men's hearts and minds, must be the means.--John Maynard Keynes.

## I. THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

The propagandist attempts to impart information, change attitudes and beliefs and create climates of opinion. This paper has been an investigation of whether propaganda humor has any place in this attempt and, if so, to determine what that place is. The author has attempted to establish certain assumptions and suppositions involving propaganda in general; he has reviewed the basic categories of wit and humor; he has inspected use of propaganda humor in international programs; he has examined the psychological well-springs and sociological bases of propaganda humor; he has analyzed the positive and negative factors of propaganda humor; and he has attempted to list some of the ground rules for increased use of the technique.

Let us review and summarize what we have found.

The word propaganda must be defined in terms of motive. Humor is a term which in a sense boasts of being undefinable; it is, however, distinguishable from wit.

From a psychological standpoint, the propagandist cannot actually motivate, activate or even convince, because these are, in truth, beyond him. The way a communicant perceives an act, the significance he attaches to it, are the result of a transaction based on past experience and future expectation; experience plus hope yields behavior. The propagandist, at best, can make only a partial contribution

to this transaction.

Humor is part of, or is related to, the more elementary subject of laughter, long investigated by scientists and philosophers but without ever producing an adequate field theory. Both humor and laughter, therefore, remain unsolved problems.

Whether the form is psychological warfare, the strategy of news or the soft sell, propaganda humor can make a contribution to an international propaganda program. It can communicate virtually undisguised hostility, open ridicule or candid situations of triumph and revenge, to tap psychological warfare's traditional wellsprings. It can take its place in an objective propaganda program, the so-called campaign of truth employing gentler themes. It is in harmony with the United States Information Agency's current operating assumption that a communicant must be led to trust before interests involved can be communicated. It can act as a social corrective, which may be the propaganda form of the future. For propaganda humor can lay bare the contradictions and inconsistencies, the poor reasoning and the bad logic that becloud international problems and make possible the stupidity of war.

Propagandists have dimly recognized the value of propaganda humor, but actual use has been almost totally confined to the black (or planted) anti-regime joke and the political cartoon.

Propaganda humor is exceedingly complex. There are standard variables such as the time and situational elements. There are personal audience variables such as age, sex, type of education. There are individual factors which involve the emotional development of the personality. And there are cultural and national differences.

Propaganda humor, as far as it can be tested and verified, has a high degree of effectiveness. However, there is necessity for much study of the subject. What is badly needed is an empirical body of descriptive data, systematically classified, from which could be established basic principles and which, in turn, could lead to detailing specific techniques and methods.

Propaganda humor requires a high degree of knowledge of the target audience. The propaganda humorist must present his message so that his language, tonality, order, image, attitude and ideas identify with those of the audience. The most powerful instrument of propaganda humor probably is the human voice. Propaganda humor may take the form of a vehicle for the message, as a leavening agent to make the message more palatable, or as a cultural ambassador of goodwill. There is no infallible system of producing propaganda humor and probably never will be.

Among the aspects recommending propaganda humor are: its ability to disarm, the fact that it leaves little residue



of hatred, its high attention getting power, its high repeat value. It is a type of propaganda Americans can support without shame. - In some respects it is the Ultimate Weapon-- that weapon against which there is no defense and which the enemy can never possess. For humor goes with good sense. Men of humor are the sanest minds in the world.

It is not too late for humor. But in this sad and sorrowful world we cannot wait for brighter times and lighter hours. We must learn to use our wits before we lose them. . . For humor relieves strain and tension. Universal laughter is today the hope of the world. Indeed, if all men could laugh, they would find this world a haven of happiness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Julius Gordon, Your Sense of Humor (New York: Didier Co., 1950), p. ix.

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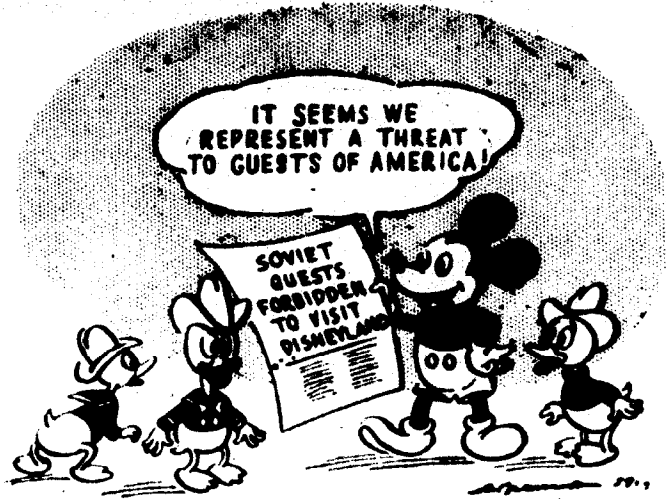


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**DISNEY HEROES SURPRISED**



Pravda, Moscow  
September 22, 1959

**THE HYPNOTIST**



Dulles to Chiang: "You are big, you are strong, you are powerful."

Ludas Matyi, Budapest  
November 6, 1958



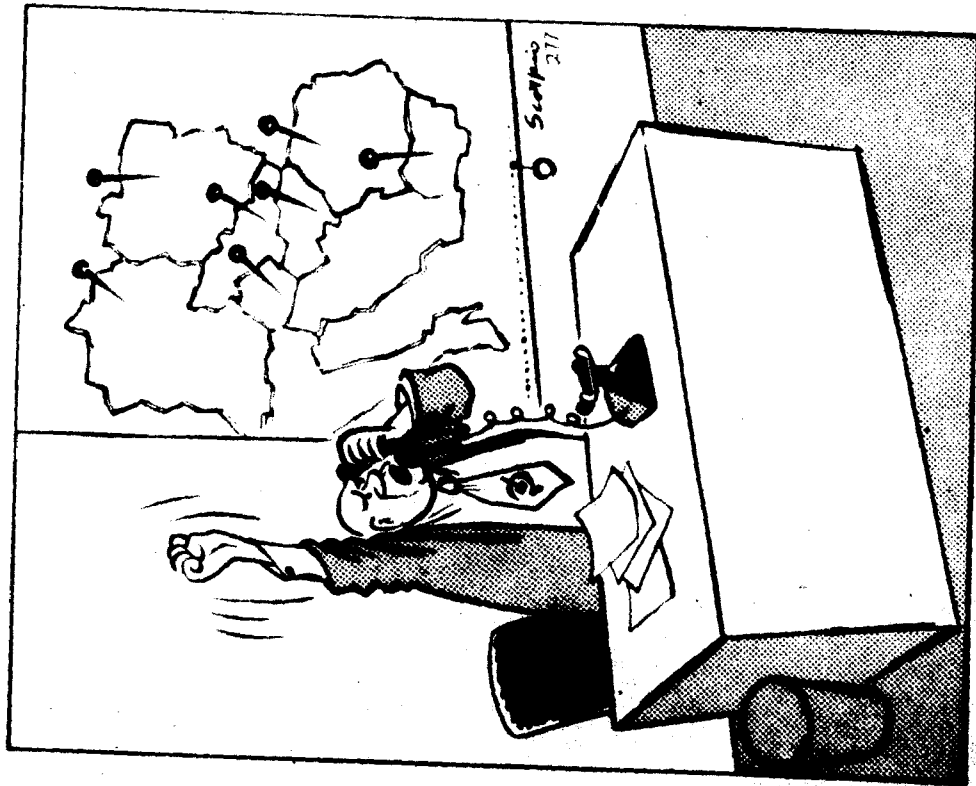
Jez, Belgrade  
February 26, 1960

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THE COMRADES

Humor

By Scorpio



"We insist all foreign troops be returned to their homes \* \* \*  
No! No! This does not include Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria \* \* \*"

The Cynic's Corner

YOU CAN ALWAYS  
SPOT AN AMERICAN  
TOURIST IN EUROPE....

WINS



... BY FLUZZY CLOTHES,  
AND THE EVER-PRESENT  
CAMERA....

WINS



IT'S DANGEROUS  
TO STEREOTYPE  
PEOPLE!



Scorpio

**"Look at It This Way—It's Great to Be Alive"**



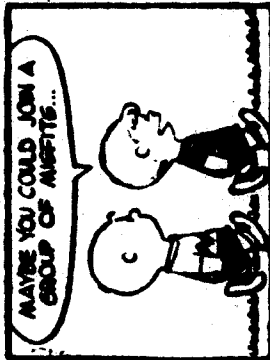
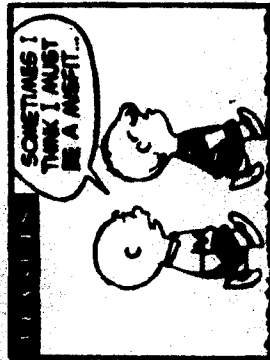
HERBLOCK  
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HERALD, WASHINGTON, D.C., USA 56-9501

LABEL BRIEFCASE OF FIGURE AT LEFT: "MOLOTOV"  
TEXT ON PAPER HELD BY CENTER FIGURE: "STALIN PLANNED  
TO PURGE ALL OLD BOLSHEVIKS"  
LABEL UPPER PART OF DOOR AT RIGHT: "FOREIGN MINISTER"  
LABEL DOOR DIRECTLY OVER PAINTER'S HAND: "SHEPILOV"



PEANUTS



By Schulz



One of the wildest adventures of World War II concerns this now rare Chinese Federal Reserve Bank one-dollar bill. The bank was a Japanese puppet outfit in Peiping. The Japanese had banknotes engraved by Chinese artists, and only after the new pro-Japanese banknotes had been issued all over the city did they notice what the "ancient scholar" was doing with his hands. The engraver had disappeared and the Chinese enjoyed a rare, morale-stimulating laugh. Propaganda gestures such as this—spontaneous, saucy, silly—achieve effects which planned operations rarely attain.