

Essential Reading

Japan and Russia
Three Centuries of Mutual Images

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Images in War and Peace - Japanese and Russian Mutual
Perceptions

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Introduction

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The year 2006 marked the fiftieth anniversary of a joint declaration signed by Japan and the then Soviet Union normalizing bilateral ties, but stopping short of signing an official peace treaty. The year 2005 marked other anniversaries: the 150th anniversary of a treaty of commerce and friendship between Russia and Japan, the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Portsmouth that brought the Russo-Japanese War to an end, and the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The visit by the then Russian President Vladimir Putin to Japan in November 2005 failed to take advantage of the symbolism of these events. Are Japan and Russia destined to remain 'distant neighbours', unable to come to terms with the history of their interactions and unable to imagine a future based on mutual understanding? Surely, the time has come to re-vision the history of Russian-Japanese relations.

This book is concerned with the role played by representations and visual images in Russian-Japanese relations over the past three hundred years. Representation is a relatively new word in the historian's vocabulary. Instead of the concrete and factual, scholars interested in understanding the past are turning to thought and images. Iconography has taken its place alongside the written word as a primary source for historical analysis. Indeed, some of the new histories place great importance on visual sources. According to Michael Ann Holly, 'the sources of the historian's work are to be found in just about every place but the archives'.¹ Contemporary trends in historical enquiry are less concerned about the distinction between fact and fiction or between reality and imagination. Literature, indeed fiction, can illustrate the past in ways that fact cannot. In the hands of a new generation of visually-oriented historians, high art (painting) and low art (cartoons), drawings, sculpture, architecture, advertising, photo-journalism, propaganda, film and photography also inform us about the past in ways that conventional

history committed to working with the written word little dreamed possible. Of course the use of visual materials does not mean that we can forget about the documents in the archives. The two go together and can be used in innovative ways to present new visions of the past.

The chapters in this book are united by the notion that visual information can and often does take precedence over words in imparting meaning. The visual, moreover, has an unusual capacity to mould public minds, and as such plays a powerful role in reflecting and creating images of 'self' and 'other'. What is seen by the eye appeals not only to the rational mind, but to the emotional self, and in cases of multiple recurrences encourages the creation of identifying icons. Research in iconography and iconology persuasively demonstrates that testimony presented by visual representations is indispensable in the study of stereotypes of 'others' because 'where writers can hide their attitudes behind an impersonal description, artists are forced by the *medium in which they work* [italics added] to take up a clear position, representing individuals from other cultures as either like or unlike themselves'.² At the same time, visual images are illusive and may be subject to multiple interpretations. For example, the concept of 'gaze' introduced by Jacques Lacan alerts us to the necessity of considering conscious and unconscious intentions of image creators and the differences in ways people perceive them. Graphic and other visual representations have a life of their own, influencing the mind of their beholders, and often not in conformity with the intentions of their creators. Moreover, visual narratives tend to hide the diversity of reality and contribute to the creation of stereotypes.

Recently, the study of images has become an important part of the study of Japanese international relations. Stimulated by the problem of identity formation and perception of 'others', especially by the seminal work of Akira Iriye, scholars have produced a substantial body of research analysing images of Japan held by people in the United States, Britain, Germany and other European countries. While some of these works tend to simply catalogue images and stereotypes of Japan existing in the West, others attempt to deconstruct them from the viewpoint of the Orientalist, post-colonialist and other modes of discourse or analyse them in the framework of mass-communication theory.³

Russian scholars also began to address the topic of images as they relate to Russian-Japanese relations. The book by Vassilii Molodiakov examines the 'yellow peril' image of Japan held by some Russian thinkers and writers at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.⁴ Boris Akunin, a popular writer with a background in Japanese studies, describes a variety of negative associations the Japanese bring to the Russian mind,⁵ while Barbara Heldt accentuates the ambivalence of those images.⁶ Semyon Verbitsky uses a collection of opinions on Japan expressed by journalists and members of the Soviet and Russian political and academic elite in order to explain what he calls 'misperceptions' of Japan conditioned by 'an ideological press and strict censorship'.⁷ Conversely, recent opinion polls conducted by the All-Russian

Central Institute of Public Opinion demonstrate that Russians in general hold a rather positive image of Japan.⁸

An acute interest in the perceptions of other countries exists in Japan. Newspaper and broadcasting companies regularly conduct surveys which serve as the foundation for subsequent research. According to recent polls, for example, America and China, joined by countries of Southeast Asia, feature most prominently as areas deemed important for Japan, with the United States enjoying the highest results. Russia and the former Soviet Union consistently rank at the bottom on the scale of preferences. Hasegawa Tsuyoshi attributes this to the success the United States has made in 'diverting the antagonism of Japanese nationalism from itself to the Soviet Union'.⁹ At the same time Wada Haruki, Akizuki Toshiyuki and some other scholars have noted that throughout history, the image of Russia in Japan had various permutations, ranging from that of enemy, to teacher and friend.¹⁰ By highlighting the emotional and often unconscious power of visual images, we hope to refine the results of these polls. Further, by demonstrating the historicity of images and delineating the context of their creation, we may be able to better appreciate how different understandings of 'self' and 'other' came into being.

'A picture is worth a thousand words.' This tired maxim provides the basis for much new scholarship on images, placing primacy on modes of seeing and on the enigma of visual experience. Stimulated by this paradigm shift from the discursive to the figural, the various essays in this volume take advantage, wherever possible, of visual representations, including illustrations and artwork of various forms, propaganda posters, postcards and newspaper cartoons, films and more recent mass media represented by television, manga and anime, and the internet, as well as direct visual perceptions of people and objects of other cultures.

As can be expected, the study of visual materials presents unique challenges. Hyden White, one of the few historians to raise philosophical and methodological issues related to the study of visual sources, points out: 'Modern historians ought to be aware that the analysis of visual images requires a manner of "reading" quite different from that developed for the study of written documents'.¹¹ New sorts of questions need to be raised. How do different cultures observe, understand and represent each other? A key objective of this book is to ask what images, especially visual images, Japanese and Russian people hold of each other. How have some images changed and other images persisted? How have mutual representations changed during the long history of cultural encounters between Japan and Russia? What role do more recent memories, deriving from the hot fires of war in 1945 and the Cold War years of the mid-to-late twentieth century, play in the current relationship? In what ways has the past been manipulated to serve the present? And finally, what can be done to improve mutual images: is a shared vision of the past possible?

On the one hand, the study of mutual images is the study of the 'other'. But at the same time, contact between cultures necessarily involves a selective understanding of the 'self'. Indeed, how one culture

observes another culture may tell us more about the observer than the observed. In other words, an implicit ethnography, a mental framework, exists on both sides of the encounter. One of the goals of this collection of essays is to recognize the existence of this mental framework and seek to understand its functioning. In doing so, our hope is that the book will demonstrate how mutual images, in particular visual materials, have served as an important reference point in the construction of Japanese and Russian national, social and cultural identities – a fact that has not been particularly well understood so far. It is also about strategies of representation. How does one culture turn the strange into the familiar, the different into the recognizable, the unintelligible into the understood? And how does the process of cultural representation contribute to intellectual changes within both cultures? Visions of otherness are not culturally determined, but exist as the product of historical change. Mutual images derive from prior understandings of 'self' and 'other' and these understandings change over time. The study of images is a messy and confusing process: images contribute to interactions which in turn transform images. Nonetheless, the study of the construction and deconstruction of visual representations is important; by doing so we hope to reveal some of the hidden mechanisms that have contributed to the processes of identity formation in Japan and Russia in over the past three hundred years.

There are, of course, limitations to 'imagining' the past. Images, including photographs, are not innocent. They contain the biases of their creator and of their audience, and these have to be recognized. Images are mediated representations of reality. Historians, moreover, need to ask the same questions of these visual sources as they do of their texts. Visual sources must be treated with respect – and suspicion. What information do they reveal? Why was the image produced? Images have histories and must be placed in context. What, if any, political purposes were involved in the creation of images? And for whom was the image produced and by whom was it consumed? What meanings do images have for the people who saw them at the time of their creation? Who looked at them and how were they received? Finally, we must realize that images may be revealing precisely for what they leave out – what is left un-seen as well as what is seen. Such omissions can be revealing about the values of a time and place. In other words, we must approach visual sources, just as we do textual sources, as critical historians, in order to use them to re-see and re-vision the past.

The essay by Michiko Ikuta points to the centrality of physical manifestations of Japanese castaways in Russia and of Russians in Japan in the exchange of old images for new. In the eighteenth century, physical stature, clothing, hairstyle and gesture served as main markers of ethnic identities and acted as channels of information even when words were lacking.¹² In particular, visual images of Japanese castaways dressed in European clothing and following the prescriptions of European etiquette were instrumental in changing the Japanese image of Russia from a 'land

of red barbarians' to a full-fledged member of the European community. Likewise, in St Petersburg, manifestations of the same castaways in traditional Japanese dress, but speaking fluent Russian, came to symbolize 'exotic Japan' but also presaged the outstanding abilities of the Japanese people. Ikuta's analysis of early Russian perceptions of Japan highlights the peculiarities of Russian Orientalism and shows the origins of core stereotypes about Japan.

In the late nineteenth century, many European artists, weary of traditional formulas, turned to the newly-discovered art of Japan as a source of inspiration.¹³ The *Japonisme* movement in Russia is the subject of Elena Diakonova's chapter. She attempts to show how Russian attraction to Japanese art differed from that of the French and other Europeans who saw the Oriental Japanese as complete outsiders or 'others'. Russians, according to Diakonova, deemed themselves, sometimes at least, as a part of the Orient, and therefore their interest in Japanese art was simultaneously an attempt to reveal Oriental aspects of Russian national identity. It seems more than simply coincidental that the most interesting works inspired by the encounter with Japanese art, such as those of Georgii Narbut, Ivan Bilibin or Vadim Falileev, can be seen equally as representations of Russian nativism. However, this fascination with Japan in the artistic field was short-lived and, as Diakonova concludes, had to compete with conflicting images of Japan inspired by the realities of war between Japan and Russia in the early years of the twentieth century.

Mass media played a major role in the ways images of the 'other' were constructed, represented and disseminated. Initially, catchpenny prints, broadsheets and postcards contributed to the emergence of national stereotypes, but the development of printing technologies and mass education in the second half of the nineteenth century revolutionized the spread of information. Newspapers and magazines for the general public, in Russia, Japan and the West, often included illustrations and cartoons. The chapter by Rotem Kowner shows how Japan attempted to manipulate world opinion during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) by courting the press and making skilful use of visual materials. He attributes the success of the Japanese propaganda to a combination of several factors: battlefield victories, humane treatment of its prisoners and a general suspicion of Russia in world opinion. As a result, Japan emerged from the war ennobled: its military strength was coupled with images of bravery and humaneness. However, as Kowner points out, these glory days were short-lived. Military might could just as easily inspire fear as it could respect.

Japan first attracted the attention of the Russian public *en masse* due to 'popular prints' and cartoons that appeared during the Russo-Japanese War.¹⁴ Publishers of 'popular prints' cared first and foremost about profits and reproduced images of foreign 'others' and Russian 'selves' that could easily sell. The national aspirations of journalists often coincided with official propaganda. This does not mean, however, that the public was easily swayed. Yulia Mikhailova's essay, 'Japan's Place in Russian and Soviet

National Identity', compares the effects of anti-Japanese propaganda on images of Japan that appeared in Russia during the Russo-Japanese War and in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. She argues that the presence of the Far East in the geographical consciousness of the Russians or lack of it, the degree of the unity of the population and its loyalty to the government, as well as the outcome of military conflicts themselves were factors that influenced the formation of images of Japan. Thus, anti-Japanese nationalistic propaganda spread by Russian 'popular prints' during the war with Japan was inefficient and led, in the end, to rejection by the people of their own government, rather than to hatred of the Japanese. It was only in the Soviet totalitarian state of the 1930s that propaganda succeeded in fomenting deep-seated animosity against Japan.

Kowner indicated that one way Japan used to enhance its image as a civilized state was the humane treatment of war prisoners. Nothing could be more contrary than the treatment afforded Japanese POWs in Soviet labour camps after the end of the Second World War. They were subject to harsh living and working conditions and some were not released until 1956, more than ten years after the end of the war. The personal experiences of these POWs, detailed in textual and visual sources, became a major source of negative stereotypes about the Soviet Union in postwar Japan. The chapter by Sergei Kuznetsov and Yulia Mikhailova, 'Memory and Identity – Japanese POWs in the Soviet Union', deals with visual representations of the memory of this horrific experience, looking at drawings, paintings, and cartoon illustrations, and other works of art created by the POWs after their return to Japanese soil. It demonstrates how works of art, museum exhibitions, and theatre performances have functioned in transforming the traumatic experiences of POWs into Japanese collective memory. Accommodating the needs of public discourse and attempts by POWs to make sense of their experience and fit into the postwar society, the representations highlight negative aspects of their experience, erasing some positive memories. The chapter's conclusion is provocative: the images began to take on a life of their own, while with the passage of time former POWs became nostalgic about life in Russia in their younger years, often remembering it in 'rosy colours'.

Irina Melnikova shows how the Japanese and Soviet film industry in the 1960s and 1970s imagined an ideal partnership between the two countries. Her chapter, entitled 'Constructing the Screen Image of an Ideal Partner', analyses the attempt to coordinate mass media, the film industry, and the artistic demands of film directors to produce a series of films that suggest a model of friendly relations between the Soviet Union and Japan. The chapter shows the fine line that exists between propaganda and art; the joint production films were designed to appeal to a mass audience in both countries, and therefore sought to visibly portray aspects of the two countries that audiences could accept without surprise. Access to materials in the archives of the State Cinematography Committee and Maxim Gorky Studio in Moscow enabled Melnikova to

unravel the dynamics of script-writing, film-production processes and intentions of each party hidden behind the silver screen. In the end, the dream of partnership failed to materialize and later joint-production films conveyed instead ideas of competition between the two countries. Keeping in mind that all cinematography in the Soviet Union was state sponsored, these films present a vision of Soviet-Japanese relations that existed at the official Soviet level, although it was shared by groups of artists and thinkers in both countries.

Gorbachev's commitment to perestroika and glasnost in the late 1980s initiated a series of dramatic events that spelled the end of the Soviet Union. On 26 December 1991, the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time. Kenji Inoue and Sergei Tolstoguzov have examined Japanese reactions in newspapers to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their findings show that while newspaper articles tended to address the historical significance of events, cartoons displayed much more inertia in representations, despite the dramatic changes that were actually taking place. Being illustrative in nature and concentrating on details, the cartoons repeated familiar stereotypes perpetuating either the image of a weak Russia (symbolized by Gorbachev) or of a frightening Russia (symbolized by Yeltsin). Most interestingly, they demonstrated that Russian weakness could cause feelings of sympathy. Japanese images of the new Russia were thus based on existing stereotypes. Such is the stubborn nature of images and stereotypes, but also revealed is the conservative nature of the genre of political cartoons in Japan.

Nonetheless, images remain a patchwork and by no means represent a uniform national view. The chapter by Tsuneo Akaha and Anna Vassilieva attempts to give some attention to regional variations of images. Basing their conclusions on a survey of actual encounters (or lack thereof) between Japanese and Russian 'neighbours' in provincial cities along the Sea of Japan (regions that have a history of Russian-Japanese contact), the authors attempt to analyse how Russians and Japanese 'see' each other in real-life situations. In other words, instead of seeing each other and creating images of each other through illustrations or the mass media, Akaha and Vassilieva are concerned to show how people create images through actual visual encounters. The rather sad but important conclusion they reach concerns the difficulties in overcoming stereotypes; direct encounters do not automatically produce better understanding.

Evgenii Torchinov and Yulia Mikhailova reach a similar and somewhat distressing conclusion. In the 1990s, when the new Russian state began to open up to a global media, groups of newly-liberated youth became fans of Japanese popular culture, especially anime and manga. This chapter, entitled 'Images at an Impasse', focuses on the activities of RANMa (Russian Anime and Manga Club). It questions Russian youth interest in anime and manga and explores their fascination with Japan in general. The chapter argues that in this age of global mass media and communications, Russian *otaku* have ironically perpetuated core

stereotypes of Japan: change is underfoot, but Japan remains for them fantastic, exotic and, hence, distant.

Finally, Leonid Smorgunov shows how images are manipulated by mass media and outlines three strategies of image creation. He argues that the increased importance of television and the internet as sources of information and a concordant decrease in the role of state-sponsored ideology has opened possibilities for the construction of a new space for political engagement, so that, for example, images of politicians that appear on television contain both aspects of performance and political discourse. These images are not fixed, but change according to the news frame in which they are placed. Moreover, frames for manipulation of public opinion are not strict, allowing television viewers or internet users to form their own opinions. In this sense, images of the 'other' (and of course images of 'self') are constructions that result from negotiations between the makers of the image and their consumers. According to Smorgunov, Russian television no longer presents Japanese politicians as an exotic or estranged 'other', but rather aims to establish a dialogue. This observation is significant as images, especially visual images, disseminated by mass media have become, in the early years of the twenty-first century, no less important than the activities of political leaders themselves in developing relations between countries or, on the contrary, in becoming obstacles to this development.

Visual representations pack power either by representing the officially sponsored imagery or working against it. Throughout history, images have played a role, sometimes constructive, sometimes destructive, in how nations relate to each other. The conclusions of many chapters in this volume note the difficulty in creating a shared understanding of past and present; images, as the recent rumpus caused by insensitive political cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed reminds us, have the power to divide as well as to unite. All authors stress the need to place visual sources within a particular time and place, releasing them from restrictive bonds of collective memory that supports some core stereotypes and defies history. Will it be possible for Japan to shed its exotic exterior or Russia to rid itself of the image of a bungling bear? Sadly, in the early years of the twenty-first century, time-worn images still define the parameters of Russian-Japanese relations.

Smorgunov points to more constructive possibilities. The media can manipulate images that engage rather than simply enchant their viewers. Moreover, as the chapters on anime and manga and POW's hint, the more benign power of popular culture has replaced political propaganda. In any case, strategies of representation matter. One image may be manipulated in multiple ways. The advance of new forms of mass visual media has opened up new possibilities of looking at 'self' and 'other'. This book is an attempt to re-vision the kaleidoscope of images that have governed Japanese and Russian relations over the past three hundred years; it also seeks strategies that envision new ways in which these close neighbours can see each other.

NOTES

- 1 Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: The Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image*, (Illinois: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 184. Quoted in Nicolas Kenny, 'Reading between the Brushstrokes: Art as a Primary Source in History', available online: www.library.uma.edu/khronikos/docs/papers/archive/kenny.pdf (accessed 29 December 2006).
- 2 P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 124.
- 3 Akira Iriye (ed.), *Mutual Images: Essays in Japanese-American Relations*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Richard H. Minear, 'Orientalism and the Study of Japan', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 39, 1980, no. 3, pp. 507–17; John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986); Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1996); Phil Hammond et. al., *Cultural Difference, Media Memories: Anglo-American Images of Japan*, (London: Cassell), 1997; Endymion Wilkinson, *Japan Versus the West. Image and Reality*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991); P.L. Pham, 'On the Edge of the Orient: English Representations of Japan, circa 1895–1910', *Japanese Studies*, vol. 19, 1999, no. 2, pp. 163–82; Catherine A. Luther, *Press Images, National Identity, and Foreign Policy. A Case Study of U.S.-Japan Relations from 1955–1995*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2001); David Wells (ed. and transl.), *Russian Views of Japan, 1792–1913. An Anthology of Travel Writing*, (Abingdon, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).
- 4 Vassilii Molodiakov, *Obraz Iaponii* (The Image of Japan), (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniya RAN, 1996).
- 5 Georgii Chkhartishvili, 'Obraz Iapontsa v russkoi literature' (The Image of the Japanese in Russian Literature), *Znamya*, 1996, no. 9, pp. 188–200.
- 6 Barbara Heldt, '"Japanese" in Russian Literature: Transforming Identities', in J. T. Rimer (ed.), *A Hidden Fire. Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868–1926*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, California and Woodrow Wilson Center Press: Washington, D.C., 1995).
- 7 Semyon Verbitsky, 'Factors Shaping the Formation of Views on Japan in the USSR in the Postwar Period', in G. Rozman (ed.), *Japan and Russia. The Tortuous Path to Normalization, 1949–1999*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 261–79.
- 8 According to the survey conducted in August 2005, 37 percent of Russians like Japan, 48 percent feel interest towards Japan and 32 percent trust Japan; see *Roshia ni okeru taiNichi yoron chōsa* (Russian Opinion Surveys on Japan) <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofa.area/russia/yoron05/index.html> (accessed 10 January 2007).
- 9 Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, 'Japanese Perceptions of Russia in the Post-War Period', in G. Rozman (ed.), *Japan and Russia. The Tortuous Path to Normalization, 1949–1999*, pp. 281–320.
- 10 Wada Haruki, 'Predstavleniia o Rossii v Iaponii' (Views on Russia in Japan: Teacher, Enemy and Brother-in-Sufferings), in *Rossia i Iaponiia v issledovaniakh sovetskikh i iaponskikh uchonykh* (Japan and Russia in the Works of Soviet and

Japanese Scholars), (Moscow: Nauka, 1986); Akizuki Toshiyuki, Edo jidai ni okeru Nihonjin no Roshia kan (Japanese Views on Russia in the Edo Period), in *Nihon to Roshia* (Japania i: Rossiia), (Tokyo: Nauka, 1990), pp. 1–12.

¹¹ Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', *American Historical Review*, 1988, no. 5, p. 1193.

¹² Michael Emmison, Philip Smith, *Researching the Visual*, (London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), p. xi.

¹³ Max Osborne, *Geschichte der Kunst: eine kurzgefasste Darstellung ihrer Hauptepoche*, Berlin: Ullstein, 1909.

¹⁴ Mikhailova, Yulia, 'Laughter in Russo-Japanese Relations: Comic Pictures of the Russo-Japanese War', in *Asian Cultural Studies* 27, 2001, pp. 59–76.

This is a helpful introduction into the topic.

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Japan in War and Peace

Selected essays

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Graphic Others/Graphic

Selves: Cartoons in War and
Peace



THE LITTLE PEOPLE

In war and peace, past and present, Anglo-American political cartoonists routinely resort to one of the most fundamental of all Western attitudes toward the Japanese and other Asians by portraying them as "little people" or "little yellow men," small not only in stature but also in accomplishments. Such condescension has contributed, among other things, to persistent underestimation of Japanese ambitions and capabilities.

Figure 1, drawn by the widely syndicated cartoonist David Low in November 1941, on the eve of Pearl Harbor, mocked Japanese complaints that they were being encircled and economically strangled by the U.S.-led Western powers (Low's caption read, "Japan Protest against Encirclement! Yes-No?"). Figures 2 and 3 were reproduced in the *New York Times* on the occasions, respectively, of Japan's surrender in August 1945 and the end of the Occupation and the restoration of Japanese sovereignty in the spring of 1952. Both graphics are examples not merely of the perception of the Japanese as exotic little people, but also of the counter perception of oneself (America, the West) as transcendent and all-powerful—as literally, in the artist's rendering, the "hand of God."



Fig. 1

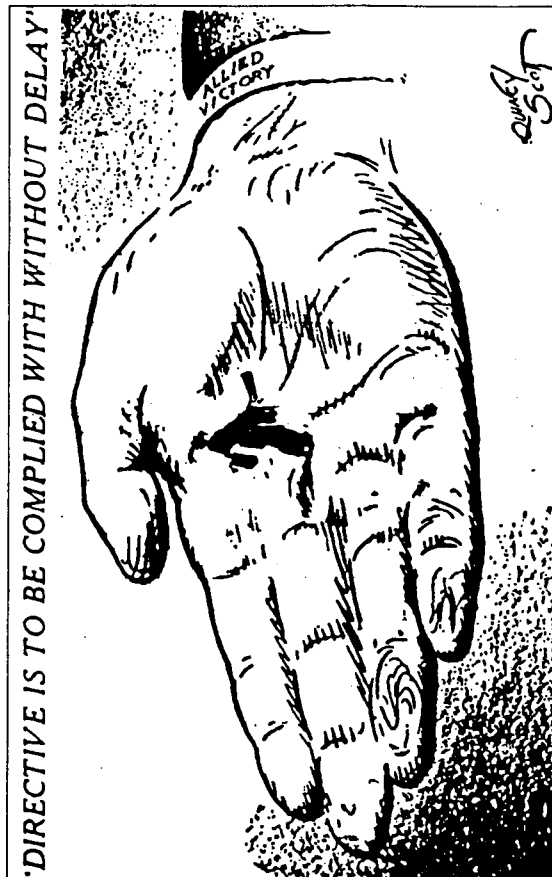


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

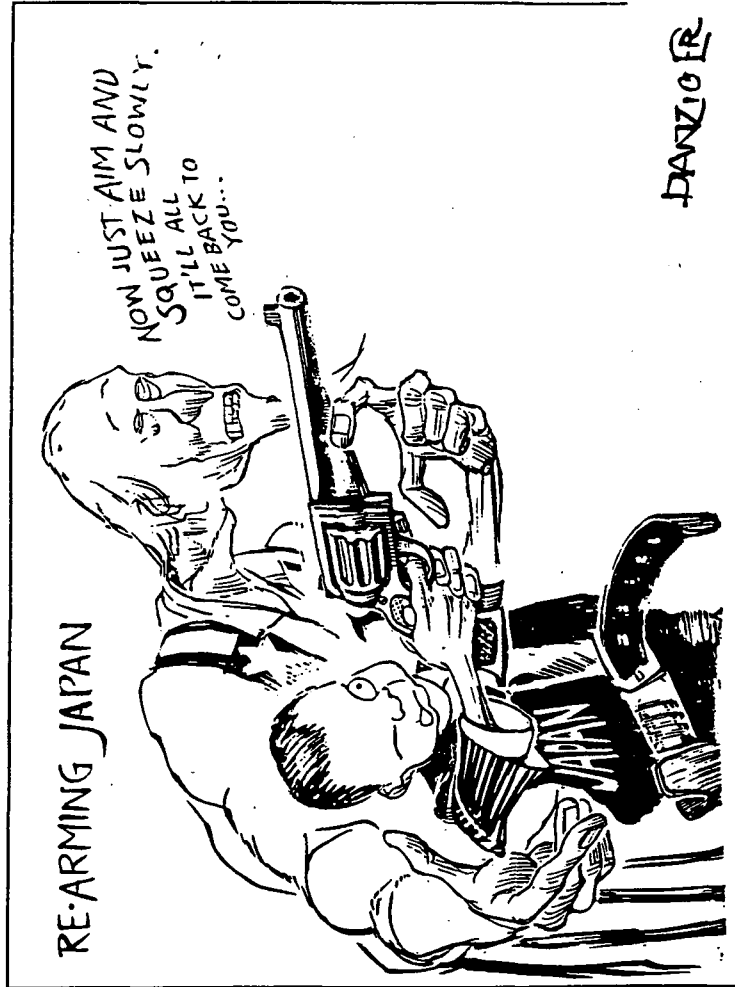


Fig. 4

THE LITTLE PEOPLE (continued)

Even Japan's emergence by the 1980s as the second-largest industrial economy in the world did not dispel the Western view of the Japanese as little men, an alien and lesser people. Danziger's March 1989 cartoon for the *Christian Science Monitor* about U.S. pressure on Japan to assume a larger military role is harsh on both sides, but relies on an archetypal depiction of the Japanese as childish and immature, perhaps even retarded (Figure 4). Oliphant's 1990 comment on corporate Japan's response to the Gulf War (Figure 5) was widely reproduced at the time, and nicely meshes the little men with another conventional Western image: the Japanese herd, devoid of individuality. The depersonalized, robotized, seen-one-seen-them-all image is captured in Figure 6 as well, which accompanied a feature story on Japanese white-collar workers in the *Washington Post* (September 1987) titled "Is It a Nerd? Is It a Brain? No, It's Salaryman!" The *Post*'s debunking of the myth of the Japanese superman, meant to be witty, tapped another familiar idiom of dehumanization.

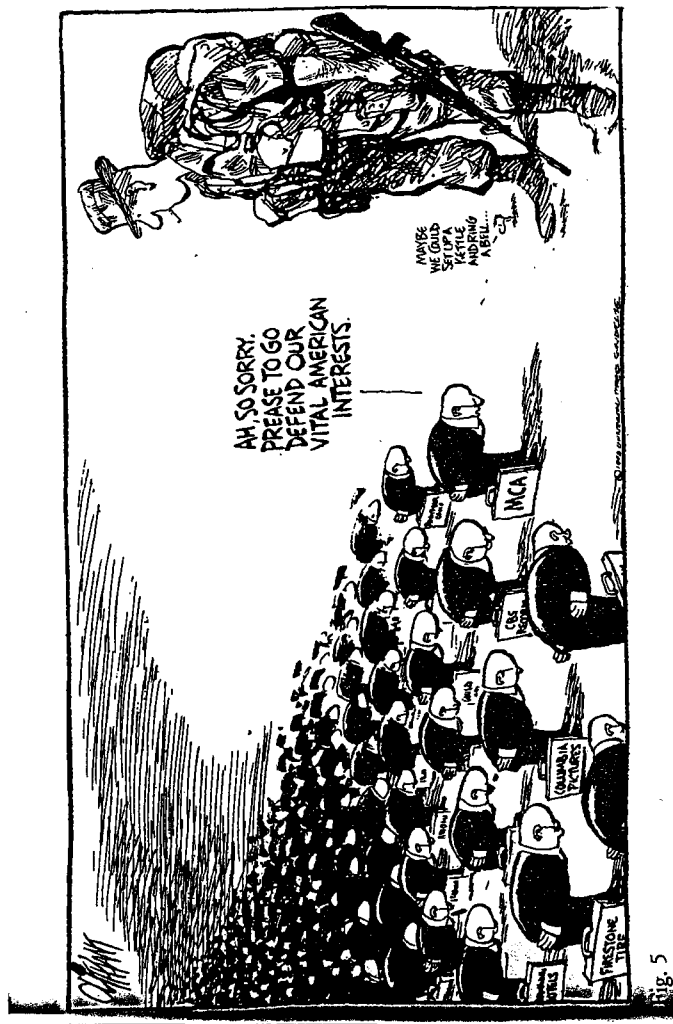


Fig. 5

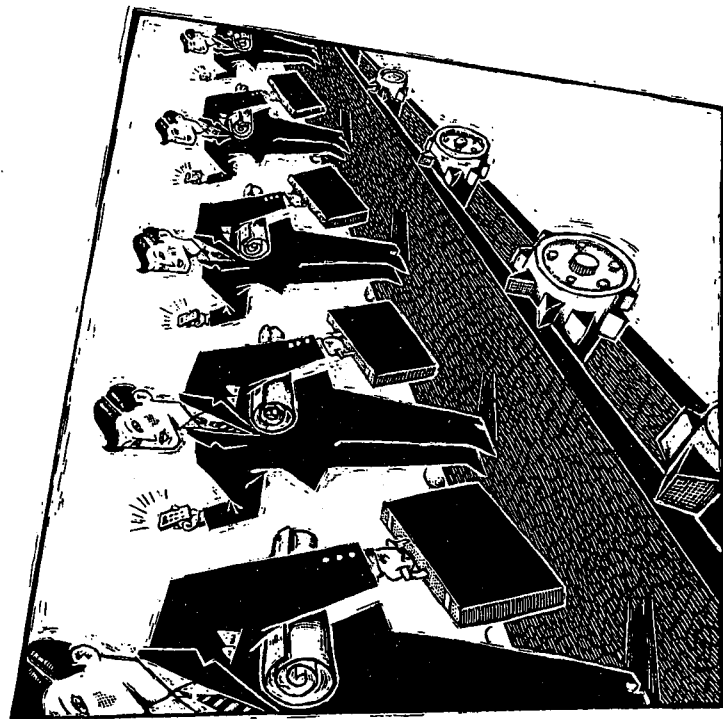


Fig. 6

THE JAPANESE SUPERMEN

Contempt for racially and culturally different peoples does not preclude fearing them, and thus racial stereotyping commonly involves contradictory images. Anglo-American depictions of the Japanese exhibit this with evocations of supermen—and the larger bogey of the “Yellow Peril”—alongside caricatures of a dwarfed, stunted, childlike people. “Little men” and “supermen” coexist in the Western imagination about the Japanese, and about Asians in general. What apparently is most difficult to imagine is a shared humanity.

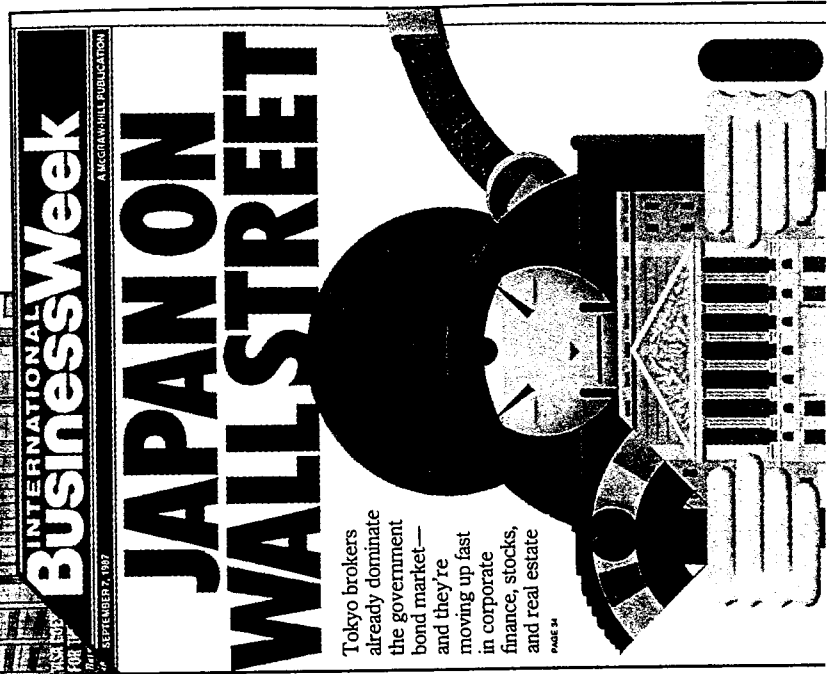
The image of the Japanese superman became immensely popular in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and Japan’s sensational early military victories in World War II. This is conveyed in Figure 7, a British graphic that was reproduced in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* in May 1943. Forty-four years later, the Sunday *Times* evoked a new Japanese Goliath in the form of a giant sumo wrestler looming over Wall Street (Figure 8). *Business Week’s* counterpart the very same month (September 1987) was a monster samurai seizing Wall Street. The superman comes and goes as Japan’s power waxes and wanes. However, Japanese capitalism almost invariably is portrayed by such unique, traditional, even precapitalist representations—even at the peak of economic expansion in the 1980s.



A British caricature on the Japanese soldier.



Fig. 8



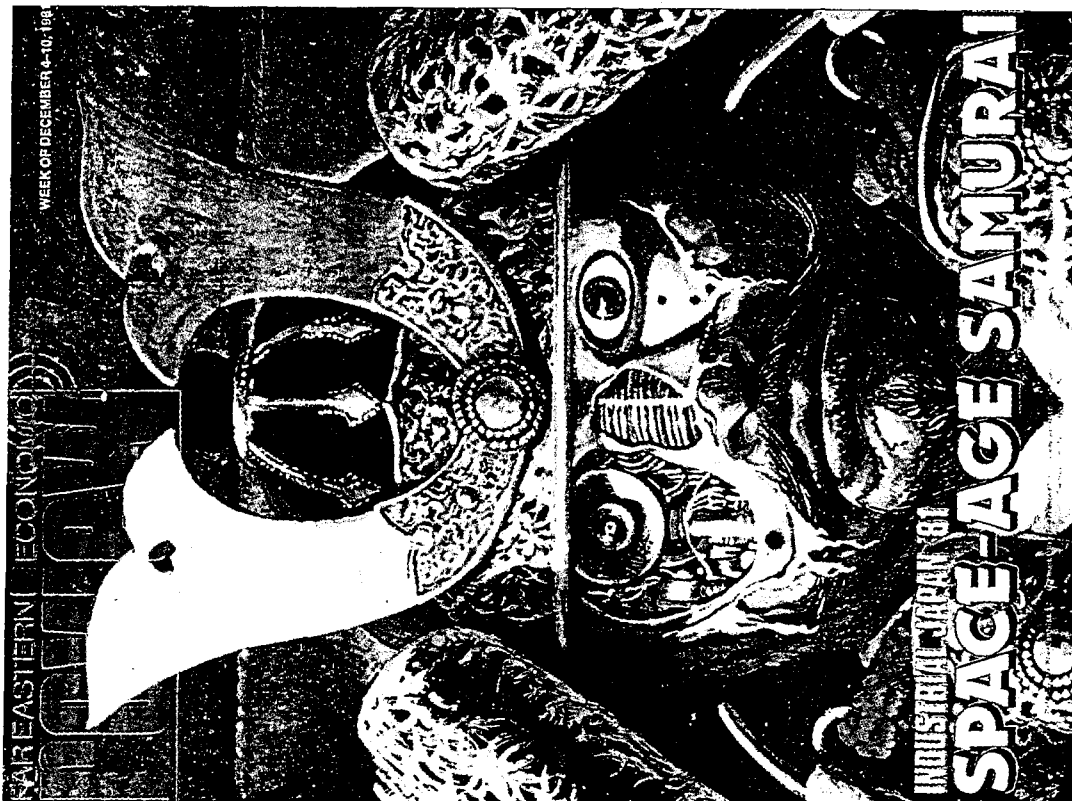


Fig. 10

HIGH-TECH YELLOW PERIL

Contemporary Western fears about Japan have historical roots in turn-of-the-century apprehensions concerning the "Yellow Peril" of Asian peoples, with their huge numbers and presumed occult secrets. Until Japan emerged as an economic superpower, however, it was assumed that Western mastery of science and technology would keep the Yellow Peril at bay.

The sophisticated economic and technological accomplishments of the Japanese, and of other Asian peoples close behind them, have shattered Western complacency and thereby effectively ended the half millennium of



Fig. 11

Western global hegemony. As Figures 10 and 11 illustrate, Asian mastery of science and technology has given rise not to perceptions of East-West convergence but rather to an apocalyptic new vision of a high-tech Yellow Peril. The stunning image of the robotic samurai is triply evocative in this regard: it simultaneously dehumanizes the Japanese, brands them as culturally unique and backward, and calls attention to their mastery of cutting-edge technologies, hitherto the exclusive province of Euro-Americans.

Fig. 12

THREATENING AMERICANS
As a "late developer" on the world scene, the Japanese characteristically have viewed Euro-Americans as the bearers of both gifts and threats. The threats—manifested as economic and military imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, unbridled capitalism, cultural inundation, and so on—came to a head in World War II. The militarized visage of President Franklin Roosevelt in Figure 12, which appeared in a January 1943 publication, illustrates the demonized image of the United States which prevailed in Japan during the war.

Forty-nine years later, in the midst of "trade war" conflicts, the *Asahi Shimbun* ran the comparably mechanized rendering of U.S. President George Bush shown in Figure 13 (the caption, a takeoff on earlier postwar Euro-American denigration of Japan's leaders as transistor salesmen and the like, had the tiny Japanese prime minister stammering "Welcome, Mr. 'Car and Parts Salesman' President"). Figure 14, the cover of a pamphlet published during the Gulf War, evokes lingering Japanese perceptions of the demonic nature of "war-loving" America more explicitly. The title is "Scary America."

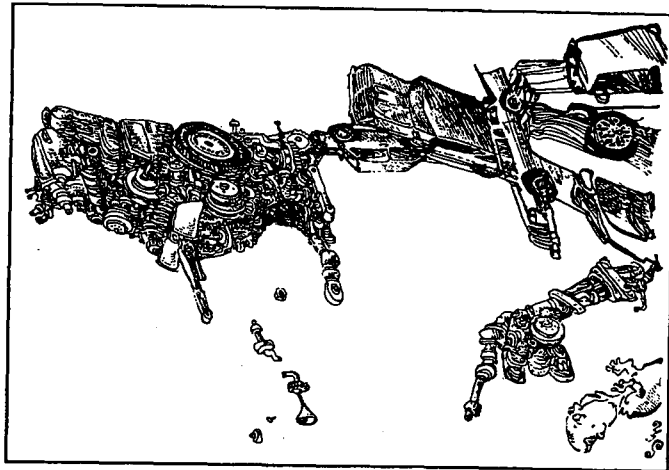
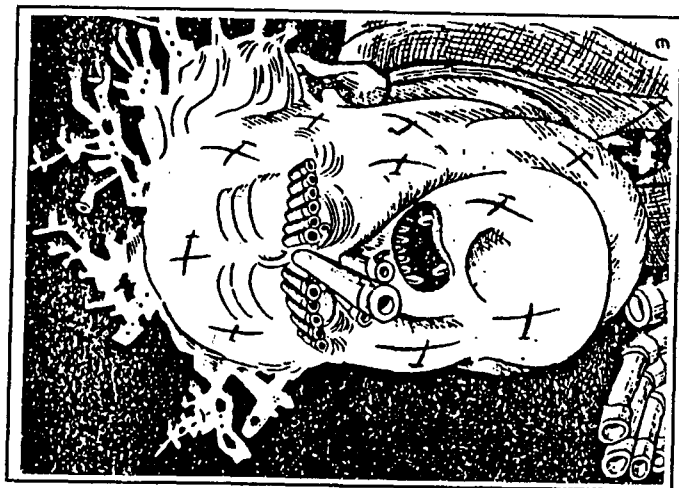


Fig. 13

特集・湾岸「元年」追いつめられる日本

空恐ろしい アメリカ

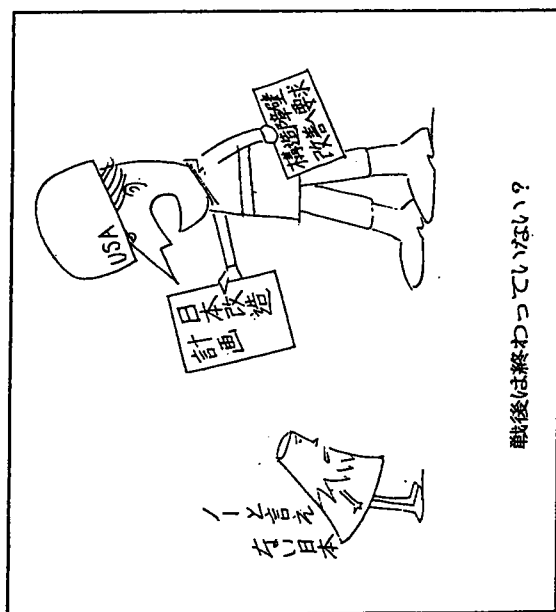
●大国の腹のつち

●「湾岸後」は日本が危ない!!



Fig. 14

Fig. 18



In Figure 18, a March 1990 cartoon by the *Asahi's* Yokoyama Taizō, a militant USA demands structural reform from poor little Japan, represented by Mount Fuji, the quintessential symbol of Japanese purity. In a witty takeoff on a best-seller titled *The Japan That Can Say No*, Fuji is labeled "The Japan That Cannot Say No." The caption, alluding to America's domineering posture vis-à-vis Japan ever since the Occupation, plaintively asks, "Isn't 'postwar' over?" Figure 19, by Yamanoi Norio, similarly conveys the sense of Japan being a small and vulnerable outsider in the community of militarized great powers, as the diminutive Japanese prime minister (Kaifu) gazes wistfully at the leaders of Germany, France, the United States, and Great Britain.

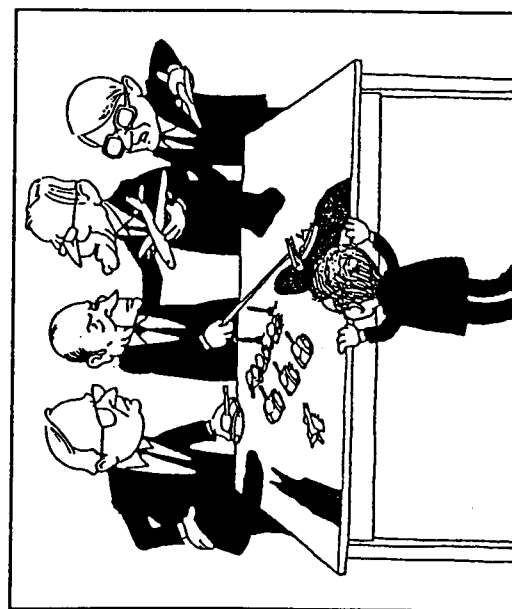


Fig. 19