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# Caricatures

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**This article presents cartoonists as patriotic propagandists mobilizing their pens and brushes for the national cause during the war. It analyses their techniques for arousing emotions such as ridicule or hate. Their particular functions, to attack the enemy and to defend their own countries, are demonstrated in cartoons about the leading representatives, the soldiers, and the political and cultural conceptions of each war coalition. It also shows how the artists tried to tone down problems on the home front and blame various scapegoats such as war profiteers, strikers, shirkers, and pacifists. Two magazines are presented which succeeded in publishing anti-war cartoons, and finally, the difficult question of the impact of cartoon propaganda is discussed.**

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# 1. Introduction: The new Role of the Cartoonists During the War

The term “caricature”, is derived from the Old Italian word “caricare” which means “to exaggerate” and “to attack vehemently”.<sup>[1]</sup> Thus the normal task of a caricaturist is to attack and to ridicule society and government, usually in an exaggerated or distorted way.<sup>[2]</sup> Such caricatures are usually more aggressive than articles in the press.<sup>[3]</sup> The caricatures discussed in this article are in the form of satirical cartoons (simple drawings) rather than the written word.

Caricatures were popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[4]</sup> Newspapers not only contained cartoons but occasionally published weekly cartoon supplements; indeed, in all major countries, specialized cartoon and humour magazines competed for the favour of the public. In Germany the eight cartoon magazines had a total circulation of 986,000 copies, just a little less than the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (1,000,000)<sup>[5]</sup> and can thus rightly be considered a mass medium.<sup>[6]</sup> The contemporary German publicist [Maximilian Harden \(1861-1927\)](#) claimed that “no other sort of publication can have such an effect on public opinion as the illustrated satirical magazine”.<sup>[7]</sup>

Not the biggest, but the most famous and perhaps the most influential of them in Germany was the *Simplicissimus*, which especially attacked the *Junkers*, the Catholic [Church](#) and the military. Between 1903 and 1907 alone, the paper was confiscated twenty-seven times. The cartoonists frequently had to appear in court, and at least one of them, [Ludwig Thoma \(1867-1921\)](#), spent six weeks in the Stadelheim prison on the charge of *lèse-majesté*.<sup>[8]</sup>

When war broke out, the cartoonists faced a dilemma: should they continue to antagonize society and criticize the government? At a meeting with his colleagues, the editor-in-chief of *Simplicissimus*, Ludwig Thoma proposed that the paper should cease publication, because, while Germany was fighting for its existence, all satirical opposition to the government should stop. But [Thomas Theodor Heine \(1867-1948\)](#) refused and said that satirists now had a new task: to behave as good patriots and to support Germany’s war policy at home and abroad.<sup>[9]</sup> His point of view was accepted, and the other cartoon magazines took the same decision. On 8 August 1914 [Paul Warncke \(1866-1933\)](#), the editor-in-chief of the *Kladderadatsch*, explained to readers that his magazine would renounce all political satire and would instead fight against the disturbers of peace: and he put his trust in the victory of the German arms.<sup>[10]</sup>

Similar developments took place in other countries. [Owen Seaman \(1861-1936\)](#), editor-in-chief of the leading British humour and cartoon magazine *Punch*, also wondered if he should discontinue publishing, but finally decided to mobilize *Punch* for the national cause.<sup>[11]</sup> In France, in August 1914, the cartoon magazines halted publishing. *La Vie Parisienne* explained to its readers that its collaborators were at the front and the Germans at the doors of Paris.<sup>[12]</sup> When they were published

again, from November 1914,<sup>[13]</sup> some of them, such as *Le Rire*, renamed *Le Rire Rouge*, felt obliged to justify their decision:

In these horrible and tragic, but highly glorious hours [...] the Rire [literally “laughter”] is by no means inappropriate, but on the contrary necessary. [...] How many heroic deeds must be vaunted by the masters of satire and drawing? And is it not also necessary to mark the contemptuous and grotesque William II with the red iron of the caricature?<sup>[14]</sup>

Thus in all countries the cartoonists joined the **propaganda war** and enlisted in an “intellectual military service” [ **Thomas Mann (1875-1955)** ] transforming the cartoon into a “weapon of combat” as the French cartoonist **John Grand-Carteret (1850-1927)** put it.<sup>[15]</sup>

## 2. Cartoonists in the Service of Official Propaganda

Initially, the propaganda offices did not need to impose their views on the cartoonists because they shared them and had decided to put their pens and brushes at the service of their country. Even the **censors** remained rather discreet. In France, which usually applied the most severe censorship of all belligerent countries, only 1 percent of caricatures in the newspapers were suppressed, and in 1916, President **Raymond Poincaré (1860-1934)** congratulated the cartoonists “for their pro-French propaganda produced since the beginning of the war”.<sup>[16]</sup> In Germany, cartoonists could come to an arrangement: for instance, on the occasion of the papal peace offer, a caricature of the Pope was removed from the cartoon in order to obtain approval.<sup>[17]</sup>

Gradually, in Germany, Britain, and France the authorities tried to give cartoonists instructions and employed them especially for propaganda abroad. For instance, on 8 June 1915, the *Nachrichtenabteilung* (News Department) of the German Foreign Office asked the editors of the *Simplicissimus* not to satirize the death of the British minister of war, Lord **Herbert Horatio Kitchener (1850-1916)**, but they did not comply. The *Zentralstelle für Auslandsaufklärung* (Central Office for Propaganda Abroad) at the same Ministry asked Heine, his colleague **Olaf Gulbransson (1873-1958)**, and **Walter Trier (1890-1951)** of the *Lustige Blätter* to draw certain caricatures for them; ordered special editions of cartoon magazines in foreign languages; and had 12,000 copies per week distributed abroad.<sup>[18]</sup>

In Britain, in the beginning of September 1914, **Charles Masterman (1873-1927)**, director of the secret War Propaganda Bureau under the direction of the Foreign Office, recruited twenty-five leading writers and journalists to produce propaganda pamphlets for abroad.<sup>[19]</sup> At the end of 1915 he published albums of the Dutch cartoonist **Louis Raemaekers (1869-1956)** in eighteen languages and had them distributed widely, including to each British soldier. In February 1916, he set up a pictorial department and commissioned artists to produce drawings and cartoons.<sup>[20]</sup> In February 1916, the military also created a special propaganda department, M17, and soon began recruiting writers and artists, amongst them the famous caricaturist **Bruce Bairnsfather (1887-1929)** who was sent to

France and [Italy](#) in order to draw caricatures at the front.<sup>[21]</sup> But it was again Masterman who started the most successful cartoon campaign launching Raemaekers in [the US](#) – an enterprise which, after some initial problems, led to the flooding of the [American press](#) with millions of representations of his cartoons.<sup>[22]</sup>

[George Creel \(1876-1953\)](#), the director of the American propaganda organization Committee on Public Information (CPI), also appreciated the work of cartoonists: “The world is much too busy to stop and listen to the orators, or even read all the story of the war [...] but your appeal is irresistible.” As American cartoonists had already been active during American [neutrality](#) with most of them advocating the war, he eventually set up an Office of Cartoons, which circulated a weekly bulletin for caricaturists with pertinent suggestions.<sup>[23]</sup>

French propaganda in neutral countries was less active than its British or German counterparts: however, the French were the first to target both German soldiers and civilians. One of their best propagandists was the Alsatian [Jean-Jacques Waltz \(1873-1951\)](#), called “Hansi”, who worked for the Service de la propagande aérienne (Service of Air Propaganda), founded in August 1915. He had cartoons produced as individual leaflets or inserted in his propaganda newspapers: *Die Feldpost* or *Kriegsblätter*. They were either dropped by plane over the German trenches or smuggled over the Swiss frontier to southern Germany.

One of the most important propaganda initiatives comprised the “[atrocities](#)” stories disseminated by military reports and backed up by government statements. For instance the propaganda lies that German soldiers had cut the hands off small children and torn apart the body a French officer, was told in Belgian army communiqués; the burning of the village of Triaucourt and the massacre of all its inhabitants was announced in a French army communiqué; and the crucifying of a Canadian soldier was reported in a British army communiqué. The latter story was gloomily reproduced ninety-nine years later by Russian television: this time the Germans were replaced by the Ukrainians, and the crucified person was a three-year-old boy.<sup>[24]</sup>

Cartoons are characterized by a “double-edged character” which [Sigmund Freud \(1856-1939\)](#) had emphasised in his book *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*: by attacking the enemy and showing him “as small, low, despicable, comic, ridiculous, we give ourselves the enjoyment of a victory”, but at the same time our laughter also gives us a certain release from constraint.<sup>[25]</sup> As the war exhausted soldiers and [civilians](#) alike it was not surprising that the production of humour and caricatures became a vast industry, especially in the first two years of the war.<sup>[26]</sup> For instance the percentage of cartoons in the French daily *Le Journal* rose from 0.3 in 1913, to 18.6 in 1914, and 22.6 in 1916/1917: and its circulation rose from 700,000 in 1913 to 1.4 million in 1915.<sup>[27]</sup> In Britain, the excellent caricatures by [William Kerridge Haselden \(1872-1953\)](#) helped to increase the circulation of the *Daily Mirror* from 630,000 in 1910 to 1.5 million in 1915.<sup>[28]</sup> Cartoon magazines sold much better as well: *Punch* increased its number of issues per week from 120,000 in 1913 to 150,000 in January 1915; *Lustige Blätter* from 60,000 to 125,000; and *Der Wahre Jakob* from 286,000 to 380,000. Only

magazines such as *Meggendorfer Blätter* and *Fliegende Blätter* which neglected the war somewhat declined a bit.<sup>[29]</sup> In view of the general boom, new cartoon magazines were founded in 1914/15: in Germany *Der Brummer*, in France *L'Europe Anti-Prussienne*, *L'Anti-Boche*, *A la Baionnette* and, last but not least, the only anti-war cartoon magazine *Le canard enchaîné*.<sup>[30]</sup> In the second half of the war circulation fell owing to the shortage of paper and the price increases, but also because some people had had enough of war propaganda; for instance, as *Der Wahre Jakob* continued to support the government, half of its readers, most of them socialist workers, contemptuously called it *Durchhalte-Jakob* (Jakob Hold On), and cancelled their subscriptions.<sup>[31]</sup> The authorities tried to stem the tide by organizing cartoon exhibitions at home and abroad, showing not only current popular caricatures, but also pre-war cartoons and even selected enemy ones.<sup>[32]</sup>

### 3. The Techniques of the Cartoonists

Normally one expects cartoons to be funny, and the majority of them are, but there are also cartoons with a serious intent, for instance “Dropping the pilot” by [John Tenniel \(1820-1914\)](#) after the dismissal of the German chancellor [Otto von Bismarck \(1815-1898\)](#) by [Wilhelm II, German Emperor \(1859-1941\)](#) in 1890.<sup>[33]</sup> Furthermore, in the overheated atmosphere of the war, certain cartoonists, for instance [Henri Zislin \(1875-1958\)](#) in France, and Raemaekers, preferred to present atrocity – and hate cartoons – in order to arouse fanatic hostility against the Germans all over the world.<sup>[34]</sup> Normally caricatures have to refer to actual events, but during the war actuality could span several years so that the same atrocities could be stirred up time and again.<sup>[35]</sup>

Even the most aggressive artist sometimes drew friendly cartoons. Such cases were usually reserved for valiant soldiers and confidence-inspiring generals and statesmen of the home country or one of its allies, of course.<sup>[36]</sup> In Germany, Field Marshal [Paul von Hindenburg \(1847-1934\)](#), the famous victor of the [Battle of Tannenberg](#) in autumn 1914 and commander-in-chief of the German armies from August 1916, was depicted as a father-figure guaranteeing victory. In the same way, cartoonists in France presented General [Joseph Joffre \(1852-1931\)](#), commander-in-chief of the French forces, after his victory on [the Marne](#).<sup>[37]</sup> Friendly caricatures were also devoted to patriotic women and [children](#), to historical personalities, and, not to forget, to [war bonds](#) and gold collecting.<sup>[38]</sup> Some scholars have calculated the relation between aggressive and friendly cartoons and arrived at five to one for the *Lustige Blätter*, and 10.5 to one concerning foreign powers in the war cartoons of the French artist [Jean-Louis Forain \(1852-1931\)](#).<sup>[39]</sup>

#### 3.1. Humorous Cartoons

One of the simplest techniques was punning, that is, producing a comical effect by misspelling words or using homophones and homonyms.<sup>[40]</sup> Examples are the transformation of the German “crown prince” into “clown prince”<sup>[41]</sup> or representing British Foreign Minister Sir [Edward Grey \(1862-](#)

1933) as Dorian Gray from the eponymous novel by [Oscar Wilde \(1854-1900\)](#): Grey's immoral war policy does not leave any visible marks on his face while his hidden portrait reveals his real nature: a depraved face and bloody hands, like the fictional Gray.<sup>[42]</sup>

The most common technique was exaggeration and distortion. Less important features were reduced and a characteristic trait was magnified in order to produce a humorous effect.<sup>[43]</sup> An example widely used in German propaganda was the small stature of [Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy \(1869-1947\)](#). In one cartoon he was even reduced to the size of a baby, sitting helplessly on the knees of his wife who consoles him after the [defeat at Caporetto](#) with the words: "Hushaby, what shall we do? We shall join grandpa Nikita."<sup>[44]</sup> [Nicholas I, King of Montenegro \(1841-1921\)](#), was her father who had already capitulated, and lived in exile in Lyon. The small king was the symbol of a country which was hopelessly overstrained by the war.

Association and incongruity created surprise out of the disparate and anomalous elements. In an Italian cartoon, German soldiers are paving a street in [occupied territory](#) using skulls instead of stones.<sup>[45]</sup> Transposition, alienation and disguise transfer persons into a new context, another social or historical setting. Examples are Austrian and British cartoons presenting the enemy's leaders as a circus variety troupe – a very appropriate picture because they had to perform ingenious tricks in order to have their peoples accept more and more privations and sacrifices. In the Austrian caricature one sees King [Peter I. Karadjordjević \(1844-1921\)](#) and Nicholas of Montenegro playing tragi-comic clowns; [Albert I, King of the Belgians \(1875-1934\)](#), falling from a ladder; and the Parisians, afraid of the German invasion, inventing the shaking dance. In 1917, the British, probably inspired by the Austrian model of 1914, had Kaiser Wilhelm dance on a revolving globe; his chancellor manipulate rationing cards; General Hindenburg swallow nails; and the Austrian *Kaiser* sing the "Rhapsodie hongroise". An example of a historical setting is Kaiser Wilhelm as a pirate menacing free shipping.<sup>[46]</sup>

Narration is realized in comic strips. An American cartoon shows a German setting a dog called Revolution on a Russian, but, after killing the Russian, the dog returns and attacks the German as well.<sup>[47]</sup> Contradiction twists things around, image and text do not coincide, metaphors are mixed, and the logic is displaced. After the declaration of war by [Romania](#) in August 1916 a caricature in the *Simplicissimus* shows the sinking ship of the Allies, full of ugly rats, with Romania as another rat climbing on the ship. The commentary says: "The last rat is jumping on the sinking ship of the Entente." When a ship sinks the rats normally leave, and this classic cliché has been used in a caricature of King Nicholas after his capitulation. In the Romanian case a ship sinks and the rats climb on it against all logic. With the help of a downright paradox a clear advantage of the Allies is being transformed into a catastrophe – a masterful example of psychological brainwashing. As the human sub-conscious also does not think logically and works with transferences – as demonstrated in many dreams – such an image can have a deep influence once it has passed the sphere of reason and established itself in the sub-conscious.<sup>[48]</sup>

Playing on contradictions between image and text was a favourite technique of some Russian cartoonists. In a narrative cartoon, German women demonstrating for bread and peace are beaten, dispersed by police and put in jail. In the text the women explain that their patriotic demonstration was welcomed by the *Kaiser* and that they now live very comfortably.<sup>[49]</sup>

Parody and satire are considered as a comic reference to human behaviour, conventions and beliefs. Parody makes fun by means of ironic imitation, whereas satire is more militant, ridiculing and shaming the vices, abuses and shortcomings of individuals and groups. German cartoonists presented the allied soldiers as incompetent or ridiculous, and especially enjoyed mocking the desperate recruiting efforts in Britain before the introduction of conscription. (See “[Propaganda at Home and Abroad](#)”, section “How was the enemy ridiculed?”).

### 3.2. Atrocity and Hate Cartoons

The technique of these cartoons was quite simple: they depicted real or invented [atrocities](#) by German soldiers or drew up hate cartoons with ugly Germans in disgusting postures, both in a very expressive style. A typical example by Raemaekers is a scene in a French or Belgian village where a visibly insane woman bemoans her dead baby while in the background two old men lie slain on the ground. No text is necessary, because the message was clear: they were killed by the German “Huns”.<sup>[50]</sup> This cartoonist was very skilled in depicting in the faces emotions such as hatred, anger or in this case despair.<sup>[51]</sup> However, he was not able to differentiate: in one of his cartoons Allied soldiers marching over dead bodies look as cruel and fanatical as their German counterparts.<sup>[52]</sup> Furthermore, he presented sadistic violence even in cases which did not really fit. When, in March 1916, a German submarine sank nine neutral ships he commented on this break of neutrality with a gorilla called “The German beast” sitting on the corpses of two violated women.<sup>[53]</sup> While British cartoonists very rarely depicted atrocities, their Italian and French colleagues, especially in the first two years of the war, presented numerous atrocity cartoons as well. In its Christmas edition of 1915 the Italian cartoon magazine *Asino* depicted the nativity attacked by German soldiers who were spearing Jesus, murdering Mary, strangling Joseph and robbing the donkey of their belongings.<sup>[54]</sup>

Even more deceitful than the well-known propaganda lie of the German corpse-conversion-factory<sup>[55]</sup> was a cartoon by Zislin with the title “The Imperial shambles” showing a cruel-looking German butcher selling corpses, hands, feet and heads of German soldiers “directly imported from Verdun” accompanied by the cynical commentary: “No more meat shortage in Germany”.<sup>[56]</sup>

## 4. The Principal Types of Cartoon Caricatures

### 4.1. The Symbolic Caricatures

Not only John Bull and Marianne were used as symbols, but also kings, statesmen, and generals.<sup>[57]</sup>

The cartoonists depicted them as ridiculous or horrid, and then, through this personification, the emotion could be transferred against the people as such. The principal symbol of Germany in the Allied cartoons was not the traditional German “Michel”, who is far too peaceful, but rather Kaiser Wilhelm II, very popular with cartoonists even before the war. In Manichean tendency, caricatures associated him with the negative symbols of devil and death. When he goes to Hell, the devil greets him with the words: “Welcome, Sir, all my personnel are German”, and little monsters with Prussian spiked helmets are flying around. He also shudders because the gallows awaits him.<sup>[58]</sup> The German and Austrian cartoonists responded in similar fashion. [Nikolai Nikolaevich, Grand Duke of Russia \(1856-1929\)](#), the Supreme Commander of the Russian armies, wades in blood, like Macbeth. John Bull, symbol of Britain, ruthlessly oppresses small nations and, by his total blockade of the Central Powers, violates [international law](#). Another symbol is the shopkeeper: “War is a business like any other,” says Sir Edward Grey coldly, with two piles of skulls lying in front of him on the counter.<sup>[59]</sup>

The cartoons of the enemy coalition always differentiate between the principal enemy – England or Germany – and their respective allies, who appear as totally oppressed. For example, the French Prime Minister [Georges Clemenceau \(1841-1929\)](#) is depicted as a jack-in-the-box, chained to England, while [Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria \(1830-1916\)](#) listens like an obedient dog to his German master’s voice.<sup>[60]</sup> Sometimes even the themes are similar: England or Germany are portrayed sitting in a cart being pulled by their respective allies.<sup>[61]</sup>

#### 4.2. The Ideological Cartoon Caricatures

The propaganda war between “*Kultur*” and “Civilization” seems to reveal a real “clash of civilizations” between Germany and the western Allies. No wonder that some researchers also recognize a “clash of humour” between them. It has been claimed that German humourists tried to present a certain superiority over the other peoples and that British cartoons were less combative and more humorous than the German and the French ones.<sup>[62]</sup> However, in German cartoons I could not find such superiority tendencies: they were more characterized by the desperate desire to shake off the overwhelming French influence in fashion, refined food, and high-brow parlance.<sup>[63]</sup> I would, however, concede that the keynote of British cartoons was humour. While the French depicted the German invasion as a sequence of horrid atrocities, the British ridiculed a future German invasion of Britain. In a cartoon book called, “The Hun’s handbook for the Invasion of England” they depicted German soldiers as hopelessly incapable of accomplishing their task while the British calmly continued their usual life.<sup>[64]</sup> With one exception, in August 1914, the leading British satirical magazine *Punch* did not show atrocities:<sup>[65]</sup> many Englishmen refused Raemaekers’ hate cartoons as un-British and with the exception of [Edmund J. Sullivan \(1869-1933\)](#) no British cartoonist followed in his footsteps.<sup>[66]</sup> Likewise, German cartoonists did not present atrocities, and humorous cartoons of the French and the Italians were not that different from the British ones. The French magazine



*L'Europe anti-prussienne* published exclusively cartoons from allied and neutral countries and had no problem tying in with the French mentality.<sup>[67]</sup> Besides, all cartoonists used the same topics and in some cases even copied from each other. Some examples have already been discussed,<sup>[68]</sup> but there are many more, the most impressive being three caricatures on toys that even contained two exact replicas.<sup>[69]</sup>

I would suggest, however, that English humour is better than its German and French counterparts: as the German philosopher [Max Scheler \(1874-1928\)](#) put it: "Is there any humour outside Britain which has not been copied from the British? [...] Be that as it may English humour is the most humorous humour in the world."<sup>[70]</sup> It speaks volumes that this was the only compliment in a most hateful diatribe against Britain. No wonder that German soldiers at the front asked their British counterparts for copies of Haselden's cartoons.<sup>[71]</sup>

Differences between cartoon magazines did not depend on the country but more on the audience. The style of the *Simplicissimus* which addressed itself to the higher echelons of society had more in common with *Punch* than with *Der wahre Jakob*, the organ of the socialist workers, or with the *Meggendorfer Blätter* appealing to the lower middle class and to children.<sup>[72]</sup>

#### 4.3. The Social Cartoon Caricatures

In the most famous French cartoon of the war, drawn by Forain, one soldier says to another, "Let us hope that they will hold out. – Who? – The civilians of course."<sup>[73]</sup> The home front was indeed one of the major problems, and the social cartoons give us much information about which problems tormented the societies in war. The most important question, especially from 1916/1917 on, was the inadequate supply of commodities, especially food. Germany, Austria and Italy were hardest hit, and the cartoonists did not hesitate to criticize this shortage.<sup>[74]</sup> But usually the cartoonists had another function. It was their job to shift the responsibility for these problems from the real culprits – government and bureaucracy – to various scapegoats against whom the people could direct their hatred without calling into question the entire political system.<sup>[75]</sup> Thus, the cartoonists not only fought the enemy abroad, they also fought the enemy at home. I shall now present some of the pertinent caricatures.

In Germany, John Bull with his blockade is presented as responsible for the [food shortage](#) but the cartoonists console the population by claiming that German submarine warfare will starve him as well.<sup>[76]</sup> [War profiteers](#) were especially hated by the people because they pushed up the prices. In an Italian cartoon, Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph congratulates the Italian food speculator and says, "Bravo, you are working for the Austrian victory." In another, a fraudulent supplier dining with his mistress in a posh restaurant is asked, "What have you done for the fatherland"? He replies, "I have supplied the army with shoes." On top, one sees the soldiers' feet marching either with completely rotten shoes or with no shoes at all.<sup>[77]</sup> Many cartoons mock the *nouveau riche* and ridicule their

pretentiousness, vulgarity, and bad taste.<sup>[78]</sup> Hoarders were ridiculed as well, and in both cases the aim of the cartoonists was not only to disapprove of their behaviour but also to isolate them socially.<sup>[79]</sup> The strikers were accused of aiding and abetting the enemy. In *Punch*, a British striker tries to stab a soldier in the back and another obtains the German iron cross.<sup>[80]</sup> Pacifists, some of them of socialist leanings – such as members of the Italian Socialist Party, the Independent Social Democrats in Germany (USPD), and the British [Union of Democratic Control](#) (UDC) – were accused of high treason and collaboration with the enemy.<sup>[81]</sup> One of the greatest obstacles on the way to peace is depicted in *La Baïonnette*: a pacifist states that he wants peace on the basis of the status quo before the war, but the war invalid says, “OK, then give me back my lost leg.”<sup>[82]</sup> As compensation for all their losses and privations, the people wished to obtain something in return; they would not accept that they had suffered all those years for nothing. Cartoons also accused shirkers pretending to be sick, blind or mad,<sup>[83]</sup> but the real trick to avoid the trenches – well-placed connections – was not to be shown. In a war which did not seem to end there were more and more defeatists and pessimists, and the cartoonists had to fight them as well.<sup>[84]</sup>

Propaganda against [spies](#), a main topic at the beginning of the war, had led to so many errors that cartoonists, except in the United States, later preferred to deride the exaggerated fear of them. In Britain, [Alfred Leete \(1882-1933\)](#) created “Schmidt the Spy”, a ridiculous figure who misunderstands everything. When he sees women fighting each other during the sales he reports to Berlin that a revolution has broken out. In a French cartoon a wife says to her husband, “Can you imagine, our German nanny – that was General von Kluck!” And he replies, “Shocking! Imagine that I deceived you with her!”<sup>[85]</sup> With more and more men in the trenches women had to take their places at home, and the exclusively male cartoonists, feeling somewhat uneasy about these beginnings of emancipation, ridiculed [working women](#). In a British cartoon, they drive cars, construct houses or try to empty a post box against the fierce protest of an aggressive dog.<sup>[86]</sup> In *La Baïonnette* a man is mending socks, his wife is going to her office and tells him, “Once you have finished, go to the department store, today they have remnants.” A wife reproaches her husband about the expensive tailor’s bill, and he explains, “I hadn’t got a thing to wear any more.”<sup>[87]</sup> The *Canard enchaîné* mocks at women’s future political rights: a woman tells her husband, “If you are kind and buy me this hat I shall vote for your candidate.”<sup>[88]</sup>

#### **4.4. The Anti-war Cartoon Caricatures – *Le Canard Enchaîné* and *Glühlichter***

*Le Canard enchaîné* is the only satirical magazine of the war, which still exists to-day.<sup>[89]</sup> It was founded on 4 September 1915, suspended after five issues in November, re-founded on 5 July 1916 and could, one year later, boast a circulation of 40,000.<sup>[90]</sup> It had a very special strategy explained in the first issues of 1915 and 1916. Contrary to other newspapers it would only publish false news and “un-stuff the skulls”. In 1917, it invited its readers to elect the greatest skull-stuffer: they voted for [Gustave Hervé \(1871-1944\)](#), closely followed by [Maurice Barrès \(1862-1923\)](#).<sup>[91]</sup> The main aim of

this magazine was to ridicule [French war propaganda](#): it even dared to mock the atrocity stories and mostly succeeded in outwitting the censors.<sup>[92]</sup>

In the context of this article I cannot analyse all the sophisticated techniques employed by the *Canard*,<sup>[93]</sup> but shall concentrate on cartoons only. In the category of the false reports an anonymous cartoon shows a whole battalion of German soldiers with a white flag going to surrender. This event is explained in a story about the murder of a man in Paris. Allegedly the *poilus* in the trenches were so shattered by this news that they could not sleep at night and had only one desire: to know more details. Even the Germans on the other side were infected by this curiosity. Finally, a whole battalion displayed a white flag and came over to the French lines. Why? Did they want bread? Not at all! They wanted to know if the killers had been arrested.<sup>[94]</sup> By spreading this false news the [press](#) was criticized for putting too much attention on a single murder in Paris, while ignoring or at least toning down the hecatombs of French *poilus* dying every day in the trenches.

Under the title of each issue of the *Canard* a small duck says to huge scissors, the symbol of censorship, "You will have my feathers, but not my skin." Surprisingly, the Parisian censors passed quite a few cartoons criticizing them. In one, a charwoman tells her employer, "The wife of the censor, you know, of this guy who makes the white spaces, has just produced a black baby."<sup>[95]</sup> And when in autumn 1916 the Prime Minister [Alexandre Ribot \(1842-1923\)](#) promised the abolition of political censorship, a cartoon depicts the censor of the *Canard* committing suicide.<sup>[96]</sup> Other cartoons ridicule the frequent promises of government propaganda that victory is near: two little boys foresee that as adults they will join their papas in the trenches, and, under the title "Don't worry", one *poilu* says to another, "During the Hundred Years War they all died of old age."<sup>[97]</sup> In its social cartoons the *Canard* ridiculed war profiteers, shirkers or food shortages and did not distinguish itself from other newspapers and magazines.

*Glühlichter* was an Austrian socialist cartoon magazine, comparable to *Der wahre Jakob* in Germany. In all of its texts and in some of its caricatures it closely followed German and Austrian war propaganda. For instance, it depicted [Francs-tireurs](#) on the gallows and German soldiers helping French farmers to plough.<sup>[98]</sup> On the other hand, *Glühlichter* was the only cartoon magazine that published cartoons severely condemning war and advocating peace. A few examples from 1915 will do: in a cartoon called "Mobilization" by the famous painter [Alfred Kubin \(1877-1959\)](#), a huge, terrifying man jumps over towns and villages.<sup>[99]</sup> In another, a grandfather tells his little grandson, "Yes, my boy, soon we both will be conscripted as well."<sup>[100]</sup>

War itself is represented in an [apocalyptic](#) cartoon as an armed monster driving a cart, accompanied by Furies called Murder, Fire, Pestilence, Hunger and Death (shown as the usual skeleton), with jackals, hyenas, and vultures following them. In another cartoon, a huge library is shown, which contains the lists of casualties.<sup>[101]</sup> In contrast, idyllic cartoons depict peace as the eternal bride whom nobody wants to marry or as two innocent children menaced by a huge hand rising from a

dark precipice, with a poem directly below with the title “Longing for peace”.<sup>[102]</sup> In a visionary cartoon about the future, “Alliance of the peoples”, workers are dancing around a globe with the title “Solidarity of Labour” and the words “freedom”, “equality” and “fraternity” beside it. A comment proudly maintains, “What will be despite of all that.”<sup>[103]</sup> Additionally, the *Glühlichter* published social cartoons sharply criticizing the lack of solidarity and the unequal distribution of commodities in Austrian society. Topics include the landlord who on 1 August 1914 embraces the departing soldier, but on 1 February 1915 evicts his widow and her small children; the delivery of huge sacks of coal to a stately mansion, angrily observed by a poor worker’s family obviously lacking this commodity; and two undernourished old men who look at the dining table through a magnifying glass and explain, “After all one wants to see what one eats.”<sup>[104]</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: How effective was Cartoon Propaganda?

The extraordinary success of the Allied atrocity cartoons has already been outlined and was acknowledged by the Germans as well. In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) heavily criticized the German propaganda approach of ridiculing the enemy and considered Allied hate cartoons as superior.<sup>[105]</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, Karl d’Ester (1881-1960), a German professor of journalism, supervised several doctoral dissertations about the Allied propaganda in World War I, perhaps in order to improve German propaganda for World War II. In 1935, one of his doctoral candidates wrote, “The cartoons of Raemaekers had more propaganda value than several volumes of English propaganda pamphlets put together.”<sup>[106]</sup>

One may wonder if humorous cartoons were really less effective. After all, they comprised the favourite reading matter of soldiers, who impatiently waited for the next issue of a cartoon magazine, and even actively contributed to it by sending jokes and cartoons to the editor. Soldiers and civilians, alike, copied famous cartoons on to house walls or cut and pasted them into scrap books; cartoonists copied and modified them, sometimes with a dedication to the original cartoonist.<sup>[107]</sup> Some cartoon texts even became dicta. The famous words of soldiers about the civilians, “Let us hope that they will hold out”, in the aforementioned cartoon by Forain was quoted approximately thirty times, applied to shoes or to beds.<sup>[108]</sup>

Famous cartoons were not only published in newspapers and magazines, but could multiply their propaganda effects on different visual aids: technically transformed, they were shown in cinemas, printed on cigarette packets and painted on shooting targets at *schützenfests*.<sup>[109]</sup>

One is, however, confronted with a methodological problem: cartoons form an integral part of propaganda; they cannot be isolated from other forms of it. Thus, one cannot distinguish precisely if it was a cartoon, a speech or a newspaper article which led to a certain reaction of the addressees. Under this reserve two striking examples about the dramatic results of Allied and German propaganda supported by cartoons will be given here.

In autumn 1917, the German cruiser SMS *Brummer* attacked a British convoy near the Shetland Islands and sank several British war- and commercial ships. When the cruiser wanted to take aboard surviving British sailors and passengers they panicked, preferred to swim away, and drowned.<sup>[110]</sup> The second example given here is Adolf Hitler.<sup>[111]</sup> After the American declaration of war, German propaganda attempted to inculcate in the German soldier the conviction that the Americans were incapable of intervening in any decisive way in the conflict. Ridiculing cartoons played an important role. According to them, Americans sent only tin soldiers, an incompetent regiment of billionaires and cowboys riding on sea horses. The last of these cartoons was of 14 July 1918, when already more than 500,000 US soldiers were fighting on the [Western Front](#). It is probable that Hitler who according to his own witness in *Mein Kampf* was familiar with caricatures<sup>[112]</sup> had seen them. In any case he was heavily influenced by anti-American propaganda in general.<sup>[113]</sup> Throughout his life, he held the Americans in very low esteem. [Albert Speer \(1905-1981\)](#), his architect and, during the war, minister of armaments, recalls Hitler making the following remarks in the 1930s:

The Americans had not played a very prominent part in the war of 1914-18, he thought, and moreover, had not made any great sacrifices of blood. They would certainly not withstand a great trial by fire, for their fighting qualities were low.<sup>[114]</sup>

As late as in 1942, after the Americans had launched their successful landing in North Africa, Hitler described the United States as a country “which did not have the necessary morale in order to win the fight for the new world order”<sup>[115]</sup>. Hitler’s ridiculing of [Woodrow Wilson \(1856-1924\)](#) as an “apostle of peace”<sup>[116]</sup> and his scoffing at American military utilities corresponds precisely to the line taken by [German propaganda in the First World War](#). No wonder that on 11 December 1941 he declared war on the US, with the disastrous consequences we all know.

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## Notes

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4. ↑ Ibid., p. 218.
5. ↑ Calculated after Schwalbe, Grundlagen 1937, p. 39; I have added the circulation of ULK (250,000), supplement of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the *Berliner Volks-Zeitung*.
6. ↑ Hewitson, Black Humour 2012, p. 218.
7. ↑ Quoted after Taylor Allen, Satire 1984, p. 11.
8. ↑ Demm, Propaganda 2014, pp. 30 f.
9. ↑ Ibid., p. 31.
10. ↑ Quoted after Weise, Niels: Der "lustige" Krieg. Propaganda in deutschen Witzblättern 1914-1918, Rahden 2004, p. 15.
11. ↑ Ibid., p. 29.
12. ↑ Schulte Strathaus, Ludwig: Das Bild als Waffe. Die französische Bildpropaganda im Weltkrieg, Würzburg 1938, p. 49.
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15. ↑ Grand-Carteret, John: Verdun, Paris 1916, p. 64, online: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k123135q> (retrieved: 14 December 2016) quoted after ibid., p. 3.
16. ↑ Navet, Françoise: Des journaux sanctionnés pour des dessins non échappés (1914-1919), in: Guerres mondiales et Conflits contemporains 173 (1994), pp. 35-51; eadem: Censure et dessin de presse en France pendant la Grande Guerre, in: ibid., 197 (2000), pp. 7-19, here p. 7 (quote).
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18. ↑ Weise, Krieg 2004, pp. 185ff.; Hartwagner, Siegfried: Der Kampf der deutschen Karikatur gegen England im Weltkrieg 1914-18 (thesis), Berlin 1942, pp. 62f.; Weber, Hellmuth: Die politische Karikatur im Dienst der imperialistischen Kriegsführung 1914-1918, in: Wiss. Zeitschrift der Universität Halle 30 (1981), pp. 73-82.
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22. ↑ Ranitz, Raemaekers 2014, pp. 181ff.
23. ↑ Ibid., p. 200, note 107 (quote).

24. † Les atrocités allemandes: rapport officiel et in-extenso présenté à M. le Président du Conseil le 7 Janvier 1915, Paris 1915; Escudier, Paul and Richepin, Jean: Le livre rouge des atrocités allemandes d'après les rapports officiels des gouvernements français, anglais et belge par image, Paris 1916; Schulte Strathaus, Bild 1938, pp. 91ff.; Demm, Eberhard: Censorship and Propaganda in World War I and their Impact on Mass Indoctrination until To-day, in: Suchoples, Jaroslaw and James, Stephanie (eds.): Re-visiting the First World War: Memories and Perspectives, Frankfurt am Main et al. 2016, pp. 439-475, here p. 473.
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32. † Hartwagner, Kampf 1942, pp. 97ff.; Ranitz, Raemaekers 2014, pp. 130ff., 172f.
33. † Schneider, Karikatur 1988, pp. 22ff.; Topitsch, Greuel 2000, p. 55.
34. † The best collection of this type of cartoons is in Avenarius, Ferdinand: Das Bild als Narr. Die Karikatur in der Völkerverhetzung, Munich 1918.
35. † Schneider, Karikatur 1988, pp. 16ff.; Freud, Witz, 933/3; Schwalbe, Grundlagen 1937, p. 46.
36. † Schulte Strathaus, Bild 1938, pp. 84, 104.
37. † See images: "Le silencieux Joffre" by Léandre, in: Le Rire Rouge 19 December 1914 and "Hindenburg", in: Jugend no. 51, 1914, p. 1371, see Demm, Eberhard: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der internationalen Karikatur, Braunschweig 1988, no. 32.
38. † Krollpfeiffer, Blätter 1935, pp. 51ff., 85ff., 93; Schulte Strathaus, Bild 1938, pp.103ff., 109; see image: "Deutsche Kriegsanleihe" by G. J. von Hennig, in: Meggendorfer Blätter, 23 March 1916, no. 1317, p. 178, see Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, no. 242.
39. † Schwalbe, Grundlagen 1937, p. 15; Krollpfeiffer, Blätter 1935, pp. 53f.; Schulte Strathaus, Bild 1938, p. 86.
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43. † See also Freud, Witz 933/6; Schneider, Karikatur 1988, p. 32; Schwalbe, Grundlagen 1937, pp. 9ff.
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45. † Illustration “La grande civilisation allemande” by Musini, in: Numero, 29 November 1914, see Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, no. 329.
46. † “Variété-Saison 1914” by Willy Stieborsky, in: Muskete 17 December 1914, online: <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=mus&datum=19141217&seite=5> (retrieved 13 December 2016); See image “The Potsdam Variety troupe” by Bernard Partridge, in: Punch’s Almanach for 1917, p. 17f.; “The Bread-Winner” by L. Raven-Hill, in: Punch 3 March 1915, online: <https://archive.org/stream/punchvol148a149lemouoft#page/162/mode/2up> (retrieved: 14 December 2016) see Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, no. 1, p. 151.
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52. † Illustration “Le chemin de la victoire. Pour la France et pour la civilisation” by Raemaekers, F. Stopford, Raemaekers cartoons, New York 1916, p. 87; see image “Liberté! Liberté! Chérié!” by Raemaekers, Louis Raemaekers Foundation.
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56. † See image “La Boucherie Impériale” by Henri Zislin, Album vol. 1, Paris 1916, p. 3.
57. † See for the following Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, pp.7f.; idem, Caricature 2002, pp. 43ff.; idem, Propaganda 2014, pp. 336ff.
58. † See images “A Deal with the Devil”, “Dancing Partners” and “Lost in the Wood” by Edmund J. Sullivan (1869-1933), in: The Kaiser’s Garland, London 1915, pp. 27, 43, 83; “A la droite du diable” by A. Roubille, in: Le Rire, 25 November 1916, see Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, nos 17, 19, 20, 23.



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60. † See image “Clemenceau, l’homme enchainé” by Johannes Bahr, in: *Kladderadatsch*, 6 January 1918; illustration “La voix de son maître” by Merger, in: *Ruy Blas*, 18 July 1915, see Demm, *Weltkrieg* 1988, nos. 12, 13.
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63. † See images “Willkommen deutsche Mode. Auch diese Carrébildung hilft zum Siege” by August Hadjuk, in: *Ulk*, 11 February 1916; the British answer: “Fashions in the new Germany” by Frank Reynolds, in: *Punch’s Almanach* January 1917, both in Demm, *Weltkrieg* 1988, no. 370, 371.
64. † Hiley, *Cartoon book* 2007, p. 160.
65. † The exception: see image “The Triumph of Culture” by Bernard Partridge, in: *Punch*, 23 August 1915, see Topitsch, Greuel 2000, pp. 53f.
66. † Ranitz, Raemaekers 2014, pp. 126ff.; Hiley, *Cartoon book* 2007, pp. 168ff.
67. † See for instance image “Nouvelle Armée du Salut”, in: *Europe antiprussienne*, 20 February 1915 (reprint of an American cartoon), see Demm, *Weltkrieg* 1988, no. 335.
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69. † See images “Kamelotland” by Henriot, in: *La Baïonnette* 1916, p. 359 and “Aus unserer Spielzeugschachtel”, in: *Lustige Blätter* 1915, no. 49 and illustration “A few suggestions for new popular toys” by T. Maybank, in: *The Passing Show* 4 March 1916, p. 8, see Demm, *Weltkrieg*, nos. 203, 204, 205; further examples *ibid.*, no. 147, 148, 326, 328.
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86. ↑ Illustration “For men must fight and women must – work” by G. E. Studdy, in: Passing Show, 1 May 1915, p. 12, see Demm, Weltkrieg 1988, no. 185.
87. ↑ See image “Elles tiendront” by Léonnet, in: La Baïonnette no. 124, 15 November 1917, pp. 728-729.
88. ↑ Illustration “Les femmes aux urnes”, in: Le Canard enchaîné 2, no. 35, 28 February 1917.
89. ↑ I could only consult the editions of 1915-1917, online: <http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/suche?queryString=PPN783895224> (retrieved 15 August 2016), and I followed the excellent study by Douglas, Allen: War, Memory and the Politics of Humor. Le Canard Enchaîné and World War I, Berkeley et al. 2002.
90. ↑ Douglas, Canard 2002, pp. 15, 24.

91. † Coin!Coin!Coin!, in: Le Canard enchaîné 1/no. 1, 10 September 1915; La Rédaction: Re-Présentation, *ibid.*, 1 [sic], no. 1, 5 July 1916; Douglas, *Canard* 2002, pp. 51ff.
92. † For instance: La main coupée. Conte à dormir debout, in: Le Canard enchaîné 1, no. 4, 15 October 1915; sometimes censors intervened, but not more than in other magazines.
93. † See for this, Douglas, *Canard* 2002.
94. † Ville-d'Avray, Henry de la: Un homme est tué à Paris. Indescriptible émotion sur la ligne de feu, in: Le Canard Enchaîné 1, no. 10, 6 September 1916; see also Douglas, *Canard* 2002, p. 94.
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