

Caricatures as propaganda weapons during the First World War: a comparison of German, Austrian and Hungarian depictions

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Abstract

This study examines a specific segment of visual propaganda from the First World War, the caricatures of comic papers (German: Kladderadatsch; Austrian: Figaro, Kikieriki, Wiener Caricaturen and Die Muskete; Hungarian: Borsszem Jankó and Mátyás Diák). It focuses on the visual tools used by cartoonists to depict the enemy, how they employed visual propaganda, and whether this met the criteria of effective propaganda. By way of comparison, it also briefly discusses some elements of the self-image. The symbols of the First World War cartoons still closely followed 19th century trends: cartoonists commented on the events of the war by depicting and exaggerating ancient myths, biblical stories, women representing countries and men and animals representing nations. This study will attempt a systematic analysis of these motifs and symbols.

Keywords: First World War, comic paper, caricatures, enemy.

1. Caricatures as tools of propaganda

Although the word ‘propaganda’ with its institutionalised meaning of influencing opinion was used from the 17th century onwards (Pallas, 1897, p. 243), the First World War brought a decisive change in its size, intensity, scope and organisation (an important innovation: the states organised it with considerable financial resources). Although visual tools had been used from the beginning, new possibilities were opened up in this respect, too, as a result of the development of printing technology: a series of posters, leaflets, postcards and various objects (e. g. mugs, ashtrays) conveyed propaganda messages, and the press increasingly included visual material. Caricatures of comic papers belong to the latter group. The German scholar Gerhard Paul considers the First World War to be the first war which was significantly defined by the

images (“erster Bilderkrieg”) (Paul, 2016, p. 82) which underlines it is worth examining visual sources in the context of the First World War.¹

Contemporaries were firmly convinced that images were more effective propaganda tools than text, not least because they could be understood by those who could not read (for example, in the language concerned) and could be decoded quickly. Because of their humour and mockery, caricatures were thought to be particularly effective, especially in terms of turning public opinion against the enemy (Schuster, 1915, p. 5).² Today's research has raised serious doubts about the optimism of the contemporaries: especially in the case of humorous genres, it is questionable whether the viewers understood the punch line, whether they interpreted it as the message was intended. We know that prior knowledge, experiences and attitudes are important when interpreting images (Sipos, 2011, pp. 43-58). The cartoonists had this in mind: they built their caricatures on well-known motifs, because this was the best way to trust that the message would be understood by the readers.³ In the case of political cartoons, and not just those relating to the First World War, it is also worth pointing out that the aim of the cartoonists is not necessarily to amuse: the primary goal is to explain current events and influence opinion (within the limits of censorship). As Schuster put it: “Das Kriegszornbild ist das beste Aufklärungsmittel [The war cartoon is the best enlightener].” (Schuster, 1915, p. 3)

The journalists and researchers of the Central Powers were already intensively engaged in the search for the criteria of effective propaganda during the war and even after the defeat – in the hope that if they could uncover them, the next war would be won (e. g. Gesztesi, 1918). Researchers in later decades were also keenly concerned with effective propaganda. Harold D. Lasswell identifies the following “strategic aims of propaganda”: “(1) To mobilize hatred against the enemy; (2) To preserve the friendship of the allies; (3) To preserve the friendship and, if possible, to procure the cooperation of neutrals; (4) To demoralize the enemy” (Lasswell, 1971, p. 195). Lasswell also outlines the tools of propaganda, that is to say, the means by which these aims might be met. To mobilise hatred against the enemy, one has to present the enemy as a “menacing, murderous aggressor” (Lasswell, 1971, p. 195). To “preserve the friendship of the allies”, one has to demonstrate one’s respect and esteem for them. As far as the third aim is concerned, it is important to show “the unwillingness of the enemy to make peace” and to “reinforce pacifism, by portraying the horrors of war”. Last, “to demoralize the enemy”, one has to “substitute new hates for old” and spread discouragement and defeatism amongst the enemy populace (Lasswell, 1971, p. 196). All of these aims can be observed to a certain degree in the caricatures examined here (with the exception of “portraying the horrors of war”, which was achieved only through the use of allegory).

Later Alice Goldfarb Marquis lists eight categories of effective propaganda: (1) the use of stereotypes and (2) pejorative names, (3) the “selection and omission of facts”, (4) the telling of “atrocious stories”, (5) the use of slogans and (6) one-sided assertions, (7) “pinpointing the enemy” and (8) “the bandwagon effect” (Marquis, 1978, p. 486). The comic paper editors and the caricaturists in the comic papers analysed here used all of these tools of propaganda. The stereotypes used in these caricatures were visual and frequently reinforced, and the central message was quickly understandable – even if one did not (or could not) read the captions. The symbols used in the caricatures drew upon sixty- or seventy-year traditions, which made the decoding process easier. The authors employed many pejorative names and slogans in the comic

¹ In recent decades, often in the run-up to the anniversaries of the First World War, visual sources related to the war have been analysed by numerous researchers. Examples not cited in the study: Pető, 1995; Cornwall, 2000; Kunt, 2011; Takács, 2018.

² This is borne out by the fact that even contemporaries have collected World War cartoons: Fuchs, 1916. Later collection: Demm, 1988.

³ Similar considerations and the importance of the social and cultural context are highlighted in the analysis of caricatures from a few years later: Travlos, Akyüz, Mert-Travlos, 2023, p. 60.

papers because of the nature of the genre, and often, they had to select or omit facts owing to censorship. Lastly, they tried to encourage readers to take part in the war effort (by buying war bonds, for instance).

2. Source base of the analysis

This study examines the depiction of the enemy during the First World War in the caricatures of several comic papers: the German *Kladderadatsch*, a national-liberal comic; the Hungarian liberal comic *Borsszem Jankó* and the comic paper of the opposition during the dualist period, *Mátyás Diák* (about the Hungarian and Austrian comic papers see Tamás, 2014, pp. 59-96) and the Austrian comics *Figaro*, *Kikieriki*, *Wiener Caricaturen* and *Die Muskete*.⁴ The wartime caricatures in the two Hungarian comics do not differ noticeably. Both *Figaro* and *Wiener Caricaturen* were liberal comic papers published in Vienna, while *Kikeriki* took the German nationalist and anti-Semitic line. The liberal *Die Muskete* was founded to serve the interests of the military. All of the comics from the three capitals belonged to the national and/or liberal tradition (Schneider, 1972, p. 311; Castle, 1930, pp. 369-393, 899-904).

In addition to caricatures, *Borsszem Jankó* and the Viennese comic papers published illustrations with scenes from the ordinary life of the in-group, whereas the German comic featured almost only caricatures. *Figaro*'s illustrations promoted pacifist messages above all. The other comic papers included scenes of soliders' lives (and later the harshness of life in the hinterland).

3. Methodology

If we look at the analytical aspects of war caricatures, apart from the chronological order and the stereotypes of the enemy, we can mention Demm's typology, who distinguished three types of war caricatures: (1) symbolic caricatures (Symbolkarikatur), which are characterised by the personification of countries through different symbols (e.g. animals, rulers, politicians), (2) social caricatures (Gesellschaftskarikatur), which depict the socio-economic problems of the hinterland, (3) soldier caricatures (Militärkarikatur), which illustrate the life of soldiers at the front (Demm, 1988, p. 7). Most of the caricatures I have analysed below fall into Demm's first category. War could be separated from reality, from cruelty, from bloodshed by the representation of abstract symbols (e.g. animals or figures symbolizing nations). The depiction of the problems of the hinterland was hindered by censorship, as it would have been demoralising both in the hinterland and at the front, just as it would have been demoralising if the reality of bloodshed had been depicted in the caricatures. Most of the illustrations fall into Demm's third category. Through a systematic comparative analysis, it is possible to observe which comic paper, which state, which tools considered effective, i.e. which occur most often.

In his study, Alexander Kozintsev examines the use of humour in war cartoons of the Second World War to depict enemies. He observes that during war humour appears in the propaganda when the aim is not mobilisation but entertainment. The humorous effect is created if (1) the enemy is pictured "as weak, absurd, or helpless", (2) the enemy "look canny", he is "a

⁴ Almost every volume of the German and Austrian comic papers are available online at <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kla> and http://anno.onb.ac.at/alph_list.htm, respectively. *Borsszem Jankó* is available online at: <https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/collection/BorsszemJanko/> (The use of this database is not free of charge). The titles of these periodicals will be abbreviated in citations as follows: *Borsszem Jankó* (BJ), *Mátyás Diák* (MD), *Kladderadatsch* (K), *Figaro* (F), *Die Muskete* (M), *Kikeriki* (Kik.) and *Wiener Caricaturen* (Wiener C.). The caricatures cited in each instance are examples; each comic papers contains further caricatures on each topic of the analysis.

folkloric trickster”, (3) of two hostile countries or leaders, one is clever and the other stupid, often playing off each other, (4) “comic degradation, implying reference to animalistic drives and bodily functions (mostly sexual or digestive)” (Kozintsev, 2015, pp. 87-89). However, whether the drawings produced by these methods were indeed humorous, whether they made the contemporaries smile or whether they focused on mockery, and whether their propaganda function was more important than making people laugh, we cannot say for sure for lack of sources, but the need to mobilise accompanied the wars throughout (during the war, efforts had to be made to maintain enthusiasm, to define the enemy, whether it was the enemy in the hinterland or the soldiers). It is worth analysing whether his categories are applicable to World War I material. Even if I cannot analyse the extent of the ridicule, one of the questions that this study will examine is the extent to which these propaganda caricatures affected comic paper readers.

Wartime caricatures, as is the case with all other political caricatures, reflected on political and military events very quickly and were limited by both propaganda aims and censorship. However, I will not be discussing these caricatures chronologically as my aim is to provide an overview of the array of methods used to mock the enemy during the First World War rather than reiterate the well-known events of the war. I have grouped the cartoons into thematic units. I tried to explore the symbolism, context and supposed or presumed propaganda message of the images. I will also show whether there were differences between the methods, strategies and themes of the German-language and the Hungarian-language comic papers. I will be highlighting the similarities and differences between the various means of mocking the enemy: the use of new versus old symbols; the differences between self-stereotypes (stereotypical depictions of the in-group and their allies) and stereotypes related to the enemy.

I looked through the comic papers, picked out the cartoons related to the war and grouped them. The main methodological procedure was the explanation of symbols and historical comparison. In this way, the reader can see the differences and similarities between the propaganda methods of the magazines (on historical comparison, see Kaelble, 1999). The symbols were familiar to contemporaries as a result of their education in classical mythology and languages, so I selected and drew a picture of the types of cartoons that contemporary readers were confronted with. Newspapers had been popular reading material for decades, and as a result the logic of caricatures was familiar to newspaper readers. An important finding of this comparative analysis is to show whether visual humour was used in the same way in the two countries of the Central Powers, and through which symbols messages were conveyed to readers. The comparison also focuses in which period of the war which symbol was more frequently used in humorous papers in each country.

My findings are that the caricaturists mocked the enemy using various methods: they depicted the enemy as ugly human beings, or as animals, and reinterpreted scenes from Roman, Greek and German mythology, as well as the Bible. Before I discuss these visual tools, however, I will show briefly the self-representations contained in these comic papers to illustrate the difference between the self-image and the representation of the enemy.

According to John Richard Moores analysing war time caricatures of the 18th century, the function of caricatures on war was to articulate “a triumphant national loyalism”, to celebrate victories and mock the enemies (Moores, 2011, p. 174). Let's see whether all of these features can be observed in 20th century caricatures.

4. Self-representations

One of the most important functions of the illustrations in *Borsszem Jankó* was the strengthening of a positive self-image and of faith. The pictures, by artist Ákos Garay, who also fought in the war, provide insights into the glories of military life (BJ 2 August 1914, 3). Garay also published his depictions of the lives of soldiers in *Die Muskete*. However, in these scenes of ordinary life, part of a genre that professes to represent ‘reality’, one aspect of the reality of war is conspicuously absent: that of suffering. Naturally, one cannot see either lost battles or dead soldiers in these images (the censorship would not have allowed), only hussars bearing their severe injuries heroically (BJ 20 September 1914, 7). The defeated enemy appears in only one context, in which the humanity of the Hungarians, depicted as helping their injured enemy on the Eastern front, can be accentuated.

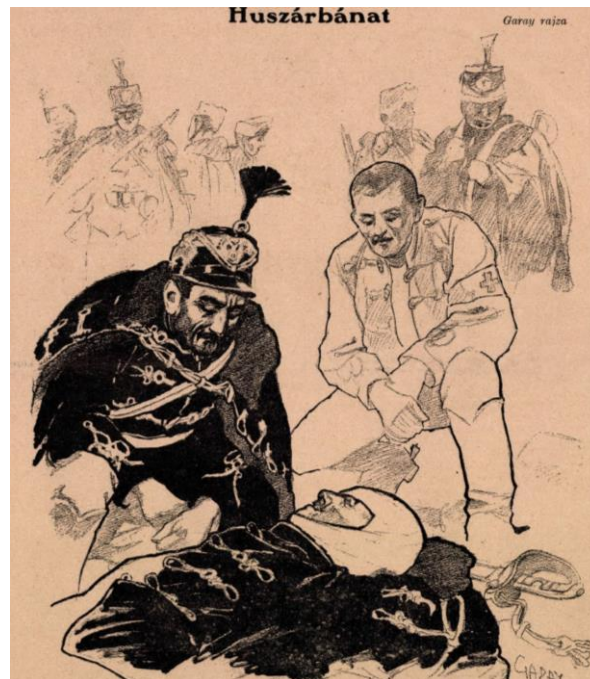


Figure 1. “Husar-sorrow”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 20 September 1914

The illustrations in the Viennese comic papers are broadly similar to their Hungarian counterparts, depicting the heroic lives of the Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) soldiers. In some cases, the allied German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers were featured fighting together, celebrating a victory or demonstrating their firm friendship (F 9 January 1915, 1; F 8 August 1914, 1). In the German comic paper, meanwhile, the national self-image was strengthened by heroic representations of German soldiers, exemplified in the successful general Paul von Hindenburg and his glorious predecessor, Otto von Bismarck (K 13 August 1916, 482).

5. Ancient gods and mythical figures fighting new wars

Following the traditions of the nineteenth century, caricaturists employed well-known symbols such as figures from ancient Roman, Greek and German mythology or biblical scenes. Until the end of the war, the style and design of the caricatures took after nineteenth-century artistic fashions. In this respect, the First World War did not bring change, it did not represent a caesura.

However, because the object of the present analysis is wartime caricatures, it is not surprising that we find a number of ancient personifications of war and peace in the caricatures examined here, such as Mars (Ares), the god of war; Pax, the goddess of peace and various Christian symbols of peace (including the angel of peace and the dove). Almost all of the comic papers discussed here featured Mars from the very beginning of the war in 1914. In *Figaro*, one can see a Mars who has become fat during the long years of talking peace with Venus on Mount Olympus (F 10 October 1914, 9) referring the fact that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had not taken part in military conflicts (except of the occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina) since decades. While in *Borsszem Jankó*, he is depicted as standing in front of the peace palace in The Hague, holding all of his weapons and smiling at the thought that the long period of peace will soon end (BJ 28 June 1914, 9).



Figure 2. “In front of the peace palace in The Hague”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 28 June 1914

The god also appears in *Kladderadatsch*, furious and strong in his armour, with blood dripping from his torch. The Western European powers are trying to hold him back, but their efforts are clearly in vain: Mars is enormous, while their soldiers are very small (K 2 August 1914, 507). Mars was very popular in the pages of *Kladderadatsch* in 1916–17 (see, for instance, the caricature in which an angry Mars bears down on the enemy with his bloody sword: K 11 July 1915, 441).

Representations of Pax are less common in the Viennese comic papers although one caricature highlights an important point for readers: the cartoon shows a Serb rolling the beweaponed globe on top of Pax, suggesting that Serbia, rather than Austria-Hungary, is responsible for the outbreak of the war (Kik. 23 August 1914, 1). Naturally, the propaganda of the enemy advertised that Austria-Hungary is responsible for the war (and for all of its consequences). This perspective that the Central Powers were responsible for the destruction also determined the process of the subsequent peace negotiations. The depiction of Pax became increasingly popular in *Kladderadatsch* between 1915 and 1918, which was inspired by the German peace offer (12 December 1916) and negotiations with Russia (from 1917 onwards);

however, no similar tendency can be observed in *Borsszem Jankó*. In *Mátyás Diák*, meanwhile, Pax featured only occasionally between 1917 and 1918. The symbols of peace appeared in two contexts in the analysed comic magazines: the enemy standing in the way of peace and wanting to continue the cruel war against Germany's will (BJ 13 February 1916, 1; K 2 January 1916, 1) and the United States, personified in the president Woodrow Wilson, as a false angel of peace (BJ 30 April 1916, 5; K 3 December 1916, 715). These caricatures show Wilson, armed with a great many weapons, loaning money to the entente states to prolong the war (thus proving that he had no desire to bring about peace), or linked to stereotypes about Americans, Wilson is shown as a businessman selling peace (BJ 4 February 1917, 1). Both types of images contained an important propaganda message: blaming the enemy for the continuation of the war, for the suffering, for the increasing death toll.



Figure 3. “In the European café”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 4 February 1917

Both German and Hungarian propaganda celebrated the peace of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918), claiming in their caricatures that the angel had found peace at long last (BJ 10 March 1918, 1; K 13 January 1918, 17). Nevertheless, at the end of the war Pax was depicted very differently in *Kladderadatsch*: in one caricature, published after the signing of the armistice at Compiègne, “the fair angel of peace” is shown trampling a German soldier to death. This personification of peace has lost its angelic features and more closely resembles a creature of hell (K 24 November 1918, 585).

The caricaturists represented the choice between peace and war not only with Mars and Pax, but also with the two-faced Roman god, Janus. In one instance, John Bull, the fictional figure personifying the British, is drawn showing his “peaceful face” to Wilson so as to get American money and his “warlike face” to the German Michel (the equivalent national personification of the Germans) (K 18 June 1916, 359). This depiction suggested the duplicity and unreliability of the enemy.

Apart from the gods of war and peace, several mythological stories found their way into the caricatures. These stories and symbols were well known to contemporaries as a result of their schooling. At time when naval battles were raging, one could see depictions of Ägir, a German sea giant of great power, in *Kladderadatsch*, or caricatures of Neptune in *Borsszem Jankó* (K 10 January 1915, 29; BJ 13 August 1916, 5). Both figures also appeared in the Viennese comic

papers, with the British as Neptune (Kik. 4 October 1914, 7). Ägir was not only a mythological giant but also the name of a German battleship during the war. His depictions were often similar to those of Neptune, even down to the inclusion of a trident, which the Ägir of legend did not possess. In the caricatures, Ägir rejoiced when British battleships sank (Kik. 25 February 1917, 2; M 29 October 1914, 7). Other cartoons depicted John Bull, representing the British, in the guise of Neptune (or the Greek equivalent, Poseidon) but with ugly features. One such caricature shows the Turkish navy banishing the “English Poseidon” from the Dardanelles (K 16 May 1915, 320). In their own propaganda, the British frequently exaggerated their own power as “the Lord of the seas”. These caricatures made fun of this claim and tried to make their readers believe that the British could be defeated at sea.

Throughout the war, the comic papers also published caricatures with figures from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as various motifs of the Trojan War, in a theme that emphasised the necessity of persistence – after all, the Trojan War was also very long. The majority of the caricatures referring to these ancient battles appeared in 1915, with the caricaturists connecting the characters of the Trojan myths with the war in the Aegean Sea. One example has Trojan heroes greeting German soldiers with the exclamation “Zeus strafe England!” (‘Zeus punish England!’) on the Dardanelles (K 4 April 1915, 221).⁵ In another caricature, Zeus looks out at the modern battlefields of Troy and notes the difference between the ancient and modern wars: “Once the battle here was for the beautiful Helena, but now it is for John Bull’s dirty account-book” (K 2 May 1915, 279) – which is a satirical reference to British war aims and methods.

The Colossus of Rhodes was also depicted in connection with the fight for the Dardanelles. Germany’s ally, the Ottoman Empire, was presented as the Colossus, although in contrast to the last time this comparison was made – during the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, when the Turks lost a great deal of territory – this was not intended to dismiss the Empire as the “sick man of Europe”. On the contrary, the Ottoman Empire was depicted as the likely winner of the battles shown in these caricatures. The entente soldiers and naval forces appeared in miniature to underscore the difference in power between the two armies (K 4 April 1915, 260; BJ 2 May 1915, 1). One can see that, where possible, cartoonists have tried to link the characters of myths to geographical locations in order to increase the effectiveness of reception and imprinting.

As the war drew on, Cronus, the Titan symbolising time, appeared in the pages of *Kladderadatsch* and more rarely in the Viennese comic papers. In one German caricature, the leader of the British expeditionary forces, Douglas Haig, states of Cronus that the Titan formerly served them but is now serving the Germans (K 27 May 1917, 312). The implication is that the continuance of the war is unfavourable to the enemy, which means it is worth persevering and fighting. Similarly, the title of a caricature in *Die Musketee* asserts that “Time is Our Ally” (M 27 December 1917, 1), suggesting that a long war would be advantageous for the Central Powers. In another picture, Cronus stands in front of the gravestone of the German peace offer of December 1916, declaring that a year has passed, and yet, he continues to walk the land in the guise of “wartime” (K 9 December 1917, 684). The German peace offer was not accepted and there is no peace on earth, and for that, the caricature argues, one can blame only the entente.

Other ancient mythological figures (including Fortuna, Prometheus and Diogenes) appeared primarily in *Kladderadatsch* between 1915 and 1918, although most featured only in one or two caricatures in connection with a topical political or military event and always with the aim of using the original meaning of the myth in question to degrade the enemy (in addition to their visual impact). One such caricature presents Luigi Cadorna, the commander-in-chief of the Italian army, singing and playing music for Fortuna, the goddess of luck, although the goddess no longer hears him (K 18 November 1917, 635). The caricature commented that

⁵ The original form of this expression was coined by German poet Ernst Lissauer (“Gott strafe England!”, or ‘God punish England!’), who also wrote a hate song against England (*Brockhaus*, 1970, p. 507).

Cadorna was dismissed in October 1917, after the successful breakthrough by the Central Powers in Caporetto. In the Viennese comic papers, the Laocoön statue was a returning motif, with a range of different politicians or groups being beset by the serpents. In one example, with the caption “submarine”, Wilson, David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom) and Georges Clemenceau (Prime Minister of France) are suffering attacks from the snakes, in a scene suggesting that the Central Powers will ultimately win the naval war (Wiener C. 20 June 1918, 1). The ancient philosopher Diogenes, known for seeking virtuous people with a lantern, also appeared more than once in both the Viennese comics and *Mátyás Diák*. In one caricature, Diogenes is searching for bread in the streets of Budapest, illustrating the food shortages in the Hungarian capital (MD 18 February 1915, 5) showing the suffering of the hinterland.

6. German myths and biblical motifs in new packaging

While caricaturists mocked the enemy with the help of ancient myths, they represented the grandeur of the German army with elements from German legends or tales. One popular figure from German mythology was Hermann, who led the Germanic tribes to victory against the Romans in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD. Various *Kladderadatsch* illustrations showed Hermann or other Germanic warriors urging the soldiers of the twentieth century to fight against their own enemies, while Lurlei, a nymph, helped the soldiers by misleading the enemy with her beauty (K 23 August 1914, 562; K 19 November 1916, 687). Germania, the personification of Germany,⁶ was sometimes shown holding the famous German general Paul von Hindenburg in front of herself as a shield (K 3 October 1915, 623). In another image glorifying Hindenburg, the Field Marshal appears as a bear ensuring success on the Eastern front (K 30 September 1917, 529). The title of the caricature is adopted from a Grimm fairy tale (“Der Bärenhäuter”) about a soldier whose courage is tested by the Devil. The soldier must kill a bear and wear its fur coat for seven years. The soldier manages this and gains his reward, living happily till the end of his life. The message is clear: with persistence, one can achieve everything, and this was equally applicable to the Eastern front, where military operations had been conducted since the beginning of the war. The association with the Eastern front is strengthened by the use of the bear, which, as one of the animals on the Russian coat of arms, had symbolised Russia for decades in the comic papers. The caricaturist evidently wanted to encourage the soldiers of the twentieth century, reassuring them that, with endurance, they would win the war on the Eastern front.

Caricatures depicted the fighting through biblical scenes as well. In the Hungarian, the German and one of the Austrian comics, the motif of crucifixion was used in connection with various events of the war. *Borsszem Jankó* published a caricature in which the personification of Belgium, a young woman, is crucified, while two soldiers stand by together with John Bull, styled as Pontius Pilate, washing his hands (BJ 18 October 1914, 1).

⁶ According to old caricature traditions, women personified countries.



Figure 4. “The crucified Belgium”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 18 October 1914

The caricature suggests that the enemy has no regard for its allies, or indeed for any of the small states of Europe – in contrast to its propaganda asserting Great Britain as the protector of small nations. The attack in the Holy Land was judged in a *Kladderadatsch* cartoon with a similar motif: Christ is being crucified, while bomb-shells slam into the ground around him (K 15 July 1917, 404). (The caricature refers to the British offensive from the direction of Egypt to the heart of the Ottoman Empire through the Middle East region.) The message of the picture is clear: the most holy place of Christianity is not spared by the enemy, the extent of their sins is equal to the crucifixion of Christ. In *Die Muskete*, the crucifixion motif was connected to the atheist Bolsheviks and the Russian revolution in a caricature featuring Christ, beheaded by Bolsheviks, lying on the ground near the cross (M 13 June 1918, 3). The caricature suggests that if Bolshevism triumphs, there will be no chance of resurgence. Anti-Bolshevik caricatures became common only after the First World War, however.

Depictions of Lucifer and of hell, as well as traditional representations of Death in the form of the scythe-wielding Grim Reaper, are linked to the horrors of war in many caricatures, albeit in contexts that suggested that these negative phenomena affected only the enemy (BJ 15 July 1917, 7; K 29 November 1914, 751). Death and its symbols (such as bones and skulls) appeared in caricatures in almost all humorous periodicals. The association of the entente powers with Death in *Die Muskete* was especially antipathetic. The entente leaders are shown playing roulette with Death. Death is the croupier and is calling on the players – Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary; King Victor Emanuel III of Italy; French president Raymond Poincaré; Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and King Ferdinand I of Romania – to place their bets. The group is playing on a special game table featuring a map of Europe, and the chips are model soldiers. The British and French have not placed any bet, but Death spins the roulette wheel nonetheless. The cowardly British and French refuse to take any risk, instead watching the other players (their allies) squander their soldiers. The title of the caricature (“*Va banque!*”, or ‘All or nothing!’) suggests that the game is very hazardous (M 26 October 1916, 1) and requires serious sacrifices.

The Devil appeared in *Kladderadatsch* in almost every year of the war. Edward Grey was depicted as Lucifer on several occasions in 1914, in caricatures questioning his professed intention to mediate a peace treaty (K 16 August 1914, 550; K 29 November 1914, 754). In a *Kikeriki* cartoon, meanwhile, Lucifer is shown preparing the fires of Hell for Antonio Salandra, the traitorous prime minister of Italy, who chose to fight not with Italy's allies, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Germany, but with the entente (Kik. 13 February 1916, 1). In another caricature, Lucifer is delighted at the death of Herbert Kitchener, a British military officer, who died on 5 June 1916 (Kik. 18 June 1916, 3).

Not only Hell, but also Paradise figured in a number of caricatures. In one example, Michel, the personification of Germany, and Eva, his Austro-Hungarian counterpart, arrive in Paradise just after Austria-Hungary has occupied a territory (K 12 August 1917, 452). The caricature suggests the occupation of territories in Romania during the fights in the summer of 1917, but in this time the Austro-Hungarian and German army was not successful, could not achieve a break-through in this area, but later, in December 1917 Romania signed the truce of Bucharest. In another caricature appearing in *Die Muskete*, Victor Emanuel III appears in Paradise as Adam. He attempts to pick the apples (labelled "Trieste, Pula, Gorizia, Trento") from the tree of knowledge, but is unable to reach them, suggesting that his military operations will not be successful. Italy, in the form of a naked woman, is sitting near the tree (M 30 September 1915, 2). One can observe with the help of these two examples that one motif, namely Paradise, could be used either to celebrate a victory or to mock the enemy.

7. Animals, coats of arms and national personifications

The various animal symbols have a long tradition dating back to antiquity (Baur, 1973). Animals from coats of arms also appeared in caricatures as alternative national symbols, through which the enemy was also mocked and derided. Animals – and not only the animals of coats of arms – symbolising various countries – the bear for Russia, the lion, the unicorn, and the bulldog for Britain, the rooster for France and the bald eagle for the US – had longstanding traditions. If the animals were depicted as injured or maimed, the caricaturist was attempting to convey that the enemy had lost its military or financial power or some of its territory. Caricatures in both the Hungarian and the German periodicals often incorporated these animal symbols – although the Hungarian caricaturists did not make very creative use of them.

The way in which the Russian bear was depicted illustrates the close connection between the caricatures and the political and military events of the war, too. Until the spring of 1915, the bear in the caricatures was shown fighting but without injuries. In May, the animal appeared with bandages and a torn coat. Later, during the period of the Russian retreat, it was shown bleeding heavily, hinting at the great number of Russian casualties. In November 1916, the bear was shown with injuries across its entire body, and the caricaturists continued to add new bandages and wounds up until the beginning of 1917. In the final period, before the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the bear was presented as unable to fight any longer. After the peace treaty, however, the bear appeared healthy and strong again, the caricaturists keen to show that, although the entente wanted it to rejoin the fight against Germany, the Russian bear was no longer dancing to the tune the entente was singing (K 19 November 1916, 689; K 21 January 1917, 33; K 25 March 1917, 176; K 25 August 1918, 417; MD 1 April 1917, 1; MD 2 December 1917, 1).

The animals representing Britain appeared in similar contexts to the bear: when the entente or Allied troops lost battles or resources on the continent, caricatures were published showing the lion injured, bleeding, with bandages, amputated or crying (very unheroic behaviour suggesting the weakness of the enemy). No respect is given to the king of the beasts, for instance,

in the caricature in which he begs before the Turkish pasha in Egypt (K 31 October 1915, 706). The unicorn appeared rarely and only in *Kladderadatsch*, with his most characteristic feature being his propensity to crash into things, such as a flag pole with the Turkish flag (K 3 January 1915, 9). Britain was also pictured as a sea-lion when the caricaturist wanted to refer to a naval battle (K 23 July 1916, 431). The last animal used in connection with Britain was a bulldog, generally drawn snarling next to Winston Churchill in a manner that emphasised British aggression. Sometimes more than one injured animal was included in a caricature, as in one picture featuring the bulldog and the Gallic rooster together (BJ 7 April 1918, 1).

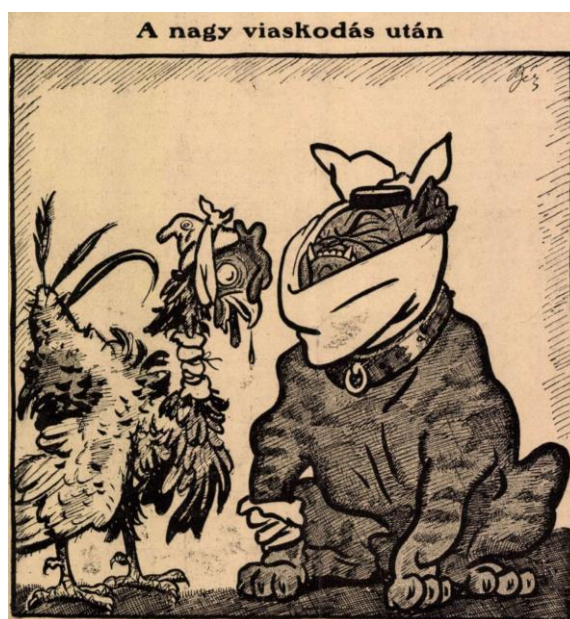


Figure 5. “After the big fight”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 7 April 1918

The depiction of France as a rooster wearing the Gallic cap had no connection to the French coat of arms, but to tradition: the Romans used the word ‘Gallic’ to refer to the territory of modern-day France, and the Latin word meant both ‘Gallic man’ and ‘rooster’. This animal was also depicted as wounded or with bandages (K 23 July 1916, 431).

The aim and the logic of caricatures containing symbolic representations of countries or nations – Marianne in the Gallic cap for France, Ivan the Cossack for Russia and the figures of Uncle Sam and John Bull – or leading politicians, who were also drawn injured, amputated or bleeding, were the same as those of caricatures containing animals. Throughout the war, caricatures featuring deformed humans were published in great numbers. These were in stark contrast to those caricatures or illustrations referring to the in-group, in which the German eagle soared over the battlefields, or brave and strong German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers were shown smiling. The artists changed the facial features and bodily proportions of the enemy; characters were often shown without clothing (a reference to their immorality) or in torn and patched clothes (hinting at their lack of financial resources, which would in turn leave them unable to continue the war for very long) and were often old and fat (while the Germans were shown as young and handsome). Depictions of them in the nude, as lovers or even as prostitutes (primarily Marianne), were intended to mock the enemy and make them unlikeable (K 11 November 1917, 621). If we think of Kozintsev's research, this is the category that, in his opinion, made readers laugh in certain circumstances. Their torn clothing was typical of contemporary representations of the kings of the Balkan states, such as Peter of Serbia or Nikola, the king of Montenegro. In some caricatures they also appear as beggars (BJ 15 August 1915, 1; BJ 14 November 1915, 1). The enemy was also discredited in scenes showing excessive

alcohol consumption. John Bull, for example, was often drawn as a drunkard with a bottle of whisky; in a similar vein, the Russian Ivan was shown with vodka and Marianne with absinthe. Instead of performing heroic actions, the entente states spent their time having fun and flirting (BJ 16 August 1914, 7; MD 12 December 1915, 1; Kik. 11 April 1915, 8; K 18 April 1915, 245).



Figure 6. “In the entente pub”. Source: *Borsszem Jankó*, 16 August 1914

These caricatures suggested that they were not a threat and that the Central Powers would win the war because they behaved ethically and were able to concentrate on the war effort. Other caricatures featured circus scenes, depicting the enemy as a clown or a puppet in order to diminish their power and make them seem ridiculous. The *Borsszem Jankó* caricaturists used these humorous tools more frequently than the artists of the other comic papers (BJ 21 February 1915, 5; BJ 24 June 1917, 1).

The scale of combat was frequently represented with sport in caricatures. Boxing was the most popular sport, as it allowed satirists to set two leaders, military officers or nations against each other in the ring. This made it simple to present the enemy as weaker, skinny, sweating, bleeding and close to collapsing under the pressure of the war. The enemy, these cartoons implied, would inevitably lose either the battle or the whole war; the Central Powers would win, possibly by a knockout, because their boxer was bigger, stronger and more muscular. One such caricature depicts the grand duke of Russia and head of the Russian army, Nikolay Nikolayevich, boxing with Hindenburg (K 27 December 1914, 807), while another pits Hindenburg against a French opponent (Ferdinand Foch). The Turkish soldier was also characterised as a boxing hero; in one caricature, he is shown knocking out the teeth of his British rival, which fall down in the ring like sinking battleships. The British, this cartoon makes clear, will lose the war on the seas (Wiener C. 10 March 1918, 1; BJ 28 March 1915, 7).

8. Civilisation versus barbarism

Caricaturists used their cartoons not only to propagate the message that the enemy was less heroic and successful than their own side, but also to discredit and ridicule the propaganda of the enemy. Great Britain, together with France, proclaimed its commitment to the protection of

the smaller states and to the spreading of European civilisation, equality and freedom, while Germany claimed that it was disseminating a higher culture (Demm, 1988, pp. 175-176). Most analysed caricatures accentuated the barbarism and uncultured behaviour of the entente states. The entente was presented as the oppressor of the smaller states also implying that they were colonialists. These negative characteristics were contrasted with the achievements of German culture. The most common way of mocking the savagery of the enemy was by focusing on the non-European soldiers of the French army. This strategy was widespread in *Kladderadatsch*, whose artists depicted the French (and sometimes the British) troops as monkeys or cannibals. The French government stressed the fact that non-European soldiers from the French colonies were fighting in Europe as evidence of France's civilising role (Majoros, 2004, p. 51), a claim that was derided in these caricatures. The animalisation of the enemy, particularly their depiction as monkeys or worms, had been a popular tool of caricaturists since the second half of the nineteenth century. The non-humans, in the logic of these cartoons, belonged to a lower race, which made it easier to destroy them. To see the enemy as less than human was crucial in a long war with face-to-face combat. From 1917 onward, Wilson also featured as a monkey; other times he appeared – in another trope contrasting savagery with European civilisation – as a (mad) Indian (Wiener C. 20 January 1918, 1).

According to the caricatures thematising culture versus barbarism, those countries loudly professing to represent civilisation caused nothing but destruction, leaving countless dead in their wake. The caricaturists also suggested that the entente states were not equal. In contrast, the Austro-Hungarian and German soldiers were equal allies; they tended to the wounded; they were not cruel with their prisoners of war and they helped women and children on the Eastern front (K 11 October 1914, 648–9). These representations of the in-group and of the Allies repudiated the entente propaganda relating – primarily – to German soldiers. One *Kladderadatsch* cartoon depicts the carriers of culture (Marianne, John Bull, Ivan and a group of black soldiers) as pall bearers; in the coffin lies culture itself (K 13 December 1914, 777). In contrast, in the entente propaganda the Germans appeared as ancient Germanic tribes or as Huns, in reference to their uncivilised and barbaric way of life (Douglas, 1995, p. 78).

From 1915 onward, Great Britain was also associated with the idea of humanism. One caricature features John Bull preaching about the humanism of Europe, while at the same time treating those living in his colonies badly. A photograph in the caricature shows a monument to the 26,370 women and children who died in concentration camps in South Africa. Next to the photo one can observe John Bull holding a cross – like a hypocrite preacher – captioned 'humanity' (K 23 May 1915, 331).⁷ The photograph is a reminder of the cruelty of the British, but also a warning that it could happen again. Photographs were seen as a faithful representation of reality, so it is important that a photograph was used for the composition. During the Second Boer War (1899–1902), the British built concentration camps for the Boers and separate camps for the black people. Some 25,000–28,000 Boers and tens of thousands of black Africans, predominantly women and children, died in these camps. The European press published horrific photos of the camps, and the Dutch press in particular wrote about the extermination of the Boers as the central aim of the camps (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012, pp. 238-243). Likewise, in 1915 Wilson emerged as a propagator of humanist values, but a number of caricatures present him as another false preacher by showing him standing in front of a large collection of weapons; after all, one cannot spread humanity at the barrel of a gun (K 29 August 1915, 539).

John Bull also recurred in contexts designed to contradict British pretensions to be the defender of the smaller nations. One cartoon shows John Bull as a slave-driver in a horse-drawn carriage, with figures personifying the smaller nations taking the place of the horses (K 13

⁷ The sympathy for the Boers and the "civilized" nations also appeared earlier in the Russian and the Hungarian humorous press (Hoffman, 2020).

February 1916, 102). The carriage was a traditional symbol for the state, a state that in this case runs well as a result of exploitation of the smaller states. In other caricatures, John Bull was shown hurting the smaller nations: he beat and starved the Greeks and forced Hindus to fight at gunpoint (K 7 May 1916, 269). Still others emphasised the supposed absurdity of the reliance of the civilising forces of Europe on the cannibal French soldiers or Wilson's monkey-like, hairy black soldiers from Paraguay, Uruguay and Tahiti (K 8 July 1917, 389). Paraguay and Uruguay were neutral in the First World War, while Tahiti was a French colony; the caricatures therefore felt free to criticise non-white soldiers generally. Sexuality and culture were also intertwined on occasion. The caricature entitled "Culture", for instance, criticises the immorality and brutality of the enemy: the black cannibal soldiers are shown killing the Germans, while immodest French women bare their breasts to men who are paying for the amusement and French men torture German prisoners of war (K 17 February 1918, 81). Another caricature juxtaposes two peoples to represent the threat to European culture: a drunken Indian, preparing to rape Marianne, and Marianne herself (K 11 August 1918, 391). The implication of these German cartoons was that the culture of the Western states was in decline and that the continent's best hope was that the Germans would win the war and save European culture. The Anglo-Saxon propaganda was also strong against the enemy. Their primary aim was emotional mobilisation, and the Germans were also portrayed as brutal monkeys who raped women – inevitably in their typical military helmets. Harry Ryle Hopps' (US) 1917 poster "Destroy this mad brute" has become an iconic anti-German poster known worldwide (analysed by Kämpfer, 2009, pp. 214-219).

9. Propaganda in the spotlight

Some caricaturists also used their illustrations to comment on the nature of propaganda itself. One offering depicts the "enemy propaganda" in the form of Satan, who is shown disparaging Germany (K 15 September 1918, 464). In another caricature with the title "Propaganda", a British gentleman tries to influence (or "poison") the consciousness of the German people with his leaflets, but notices to his anger that his efforts have been ineffective: the German people are queueing up to subscribe to the 9th war bond (K 6 October 1918, 499). The picture suggests that the German people still have faith in their army. In the caricature "The Use of Propaganda", meanwhile, soldiers report that the enemy has printed on only one side of their propaganda leaflets and that they can therefore happily use the other side of the paper for more personal purposes to compensate for the paper shortage (M 3 October 1918, 5).

The comic papers not only tried to discredit the propaganda and news outlets of the enemy, but also stigmatised them as liars using a variety of metaphors. Reuters, the *Daily Mail* and the *Times* appeared frequently as liars ("Reuter-[Lügen]-Nummer": K 31 March 1917). Slander and lies were represented by various animals: frogs, arthropods and ducks. The word "duck" has two meanings in German ("Ente") and in Hungarian ("kacsa"): along with the animal, it also means untrue news and fake news (K 31 March 1917, 177; K 25 August 1918, 424; Kik. 1 April 1917, 7). The German comic accused Reuters primarily of spreading a negative image of the Central Powers, presenting it as the embodiment of enemy propaganda. A number of caricatures also pointed the finger at Lloyd George, showing him speaking lies (in the form of snakes and frogs that he is spitting out) into a gramophone (K 18 August 1918, 412). *Borsszem Jankó* was similarly insistent that the enemy published false news (BJ 26 September 1915, 8).

These attacks on propaganda were more prevalent in the final year of the war than in its early phase. The caricaturists clearly saw it as increasingly necessary to discredit the enemy propaganda, which was itself becoming more and more forceful.

10. Conclusion

In this paper I have pointed out a range of methods used to mock the enemy using oppositions such as strong versus weak, beautiful versus ugly, young versus old and so on. Some of the cartoons based on these opposites may have served not only a propaganda purpose, according to Kozintsev's first category, but were even found humorous by the readers. Kozintsev's second and third categories do not characterise the material, while examples of the fourth can be found. The cruelty of war was depicted only with allegoric scenes, but war propaganda pervaded almost every caricature produced. The caricaturists employed established symbols with long traditions in new contexts, linking well-known characters or scenes to the war in order to interpret events and influence the opinions of their readers. Readers knew the traditional and conventional motifs and could therefore decode at least certain parts of the caricatures' messages.

The First World War was the first conflict to be experienced as a total war. Earlier caricatures of war had been different: in some respects comic papers could far more often publish cartoons on topics other than the war, such as domestic political conflicts; the enemy was not demonised; maps showing newly occupied territories frequently appeared, and symbolic depictions of the amputation of the enemy, representing territorial losses, were popular (Tamás, 2013). During the First World War, however, caricaturists avoided depicting the process of amputation, showing only its result on the body of the animalised or demonised enemy. The ridicule of an enemy depicted in human form was another new development of caricature during the war. However, there are not necessarily major differences in the functions of the cartoons. Moores' observations about 18th-century caricatures can be validated in the context of the First World War: many of the caricatures and illustrations proclaim national greatness, celebrate victories and mock the enemy (Moores, 2021).

Caricatures tried to incite hatred against the enemy, so that the inhabitants of the hinterland and the soldiers at the front could keep their war enthusiasm alive. The deadly enemy, the image of the mass murdering British, the revelling, immoral depictions of the Entente all served this purpose, and unlike the photographer, the caricaturist was limited only by pictorial conventions and his talent. One has also seen signs of respect for allies and goodwill towards neutral states. The enemy appeared as weak and defeatable according to Lasswell's categories. The enemy was presented building on old stereotypes: the soldiers of the Balkan states were cowards and poor, the inhabitants of the colonies were primitive, the colonialists were exploiters. The depictions were one-sided and selective: defeat could not be reported, and the enemy is clearly a cruel barbarian and evil.

It can be observed that the illustrators of the Hungarian and German-language magazines did not use the various symbols with the same frequency, and there were country-specific themes and characters (for example: German culture or Hermann in *Kladderadatsch*). Depictions of the enemy in the Hungarian and Austrian comic papers were more subdued in comparison with their German counterpart. Despite the strict censorship, *Borsszem Jankó* and *Mátyás Diák* was able to publish caricatures criticising the government or referring to the problems of the civilian population, including unfaithfulness, life without men, shortages and starvation – although pacifist ideas were completely banned in almost all of the publications.

The contemporaries and their immediate successors in the defeated states were very dissatisfied with the results of the (visual) propaganda of the First World War, so that in the 1920s and 1930s a series of state bureaus were set up to develop (and use) more effective propaganda – especially in a new war later on.

The question of success has been raised in previous research. Marquis concludes in her article that the British may have used propaganda tools most successfully in the First World War (Marquis, 1978, p. 486). In Demm's opinion, however, German propaganda was just as successful on the home front as British propaganda, if the measure of success is the extent to

which the elements implanted by propaganda are embedded in the subconscious, yet the UK proved more successful on the front and in winning neutral countries (Demm, 1993, pp. 181, 186). Examining Estonian cartoons from the Second World War, Liisi Laineste and Margus Lääne conclude that “towards the end of WWII, caricatures were considered not to have a visible outcome in changing people’s attitudes and behaviour. Secondly, some studies point out that sarcasm had lost its appeal to ordinary people, who preferred lighter humour than the biting and often unfunny political commentary of caricatures (Laineste & Lääne, 2015, p. 232).” With regard to the drawings of the First World War, propaganda may have been successful in the early days on a few subjects: During the war, the war loan appeared and the encouragement to take out a war loan, which was portrayed as an act of patriotism, as was service at the front. In the beginning, the underwriting of the war loan was very successful, possibly helped by visual propaganda (about the amount of the war loan see Hajdu & Pollmann, 2014, p. 113). Later, however, pacifism became more and more prevalent, even though it was not allowed to appear in the press. So, despite all the efforts, the propaganda was not as successful as it had been in the beginning.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the project nr. EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00007, titled Aspects on the development of intelligent, sustainable and inclusive society: social, technological, innovation networks in employment and digital economy. The project has been supported by the European Union, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the budget of Hungary.

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