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THE CARTOON, THE NEW WEAPON OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Abstract

Radio, cinema, television, the internet… The mass media have evolved over the course of time, yet what remains unchanged has been governments 'or lobbies' interest in keeping them under their control, with a view to influencing society's thinking and ideology. In war and any other periods of conflict, this control over information has been a matter of national concern. In fact, during the Great War, despite limited media outreach capability when compared with the immediacy, capacity and penetration of today, governments realised the huge benefit that they could obtain from their use for propaganda purposes to support the war effort. One of the simplest means was the graphic publication, which may encompass comics, daily or regular strips, cartoons and posters. The objectives of this article are twofold: firstly, to analyse the real impact of graphic publications on society during World War I; and lastly, to provide a different viewpoint for the study of any war through its visual propaganda.

Keywords

Propaganda, World War One, First World War, Great War, comic, cartoon, strip, influence, information, ideology, media.

THE CARTOON, THE NEW WEAPON OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Shells eviscerated the land, inside of which thousands of men who had dug the ground and shelters hid themselves away. It was the war of the trenches[1].

INTRODUCTION

One hundred years may be a very short period of time in history yet a very long time given the brevity of human life. The images of the old veteran soldiers of the First World War, or as it was known at the time and how I prefer to refer to it, the Great War, have been left behind and it is only visual and written sources that allow us to remember it: old video footage without any sound, faded black and white photographs, letters sent by soldiers or official documents that have survived until the present day to ensure that we do not forget this armed conflict, hitherto the greatest in history. Since it is no longer possible to turn to oral sources, other records have gained in importance: magazines, newspapers and other contemporary publications.

In 1914, the comic or cartoon[2] was in an embryonic stage and had only been in existence for a few years (or for several decades if one accounts for certain European or Japanese forms of expression from the first half of the 19th Century) since Richard Felton published *The Yellow Kid* in the *New York Journal* in 1895. It could not yet be considered a mass medium as would be the case in the second half of the century.

The presence of the comic strip during the Great War was relatively weak, and it was not comics as such that were produced but rather caricatures, cartoons or humorous magazines to be read at the front, with the intention of boosting troop morale, or illustrated strips with a satirical and propaganda purpose such as cartoons[3].

Neither does it stand up to comparison with the circulation of the comic during the Second World War, when in the United States alone the number of copies of patriotic

1 TARDI, Jacques. C'était la Guerre des Tranchées [It was the War of the Trenches], Tournai: Casterman, 1993.

2 In Spanish I prefer the term *tebeo*, which is of a clearly Spanish nature and with more nostalgic overtones, despite this traditionally being associated with cartoons intended for children, yet I will use the terms cartoon or comic here in order to address a far broader concept. In addition, coincidentally, the publication from which it takes its name '*TBO*' came into existence during the war, in 1917.

3 The cartoon is a comic vignette (or strip of vignettes) published in a newspaper or magazine of a generally satirical nature about a character, incident or situation and which tends to convey a message (a political or critical one etc.). A precise translation does not exist in Spanish, but the closest terms would be *viñeta humorística* or *caricatura*.

superheroes amounted to 25 million per month in 1943, according to *History Channel* estimates[4]. The major publishers who were to dominate the cartoon market years after had not yet arrived on the scene, with certain exceptions such as W. Randolph Hearst's *King Feature Syndicate*, which emerged precisely during wartime, meaning that the usual means of dissemination were magazines, or, more commonly, newspapers, which published daily or weekly comic strips.

Given all of the above, can one state that these documents, mostly conceived for rapid consumption, to read and discard, can make a new contribution to an event studied an infinite amount of times? Could they have had any real impact on the population? I would dare to say that they did, as an exponent of and part of the society with which they coexisted. In a world without television, with cinema still in its infancy and where photography, although not extensively disseminated, was the main form of graphic evidence, cartoons filled a visual gap for the public, who experienced, for the first time, that war is not a distant prospect, but instead something real that they could appreciate more closely than ever before. This is where the British magazine *The Illustrated London News*[5] stepped in to offer a weekly chronicle of the war to its readers. *The Illustrated War News* was a combination of illustrations, photographs and diagrams that allowed readers to follow visually and to better understand the day-to-day aspects of the war, whereas rival magazines *The Tatler* and *The Bystander* also took on many different artists in order to depict the war as part of their visual chronicles. And of course, there were those who spied a business opportunity in the war: the company *Debenham and Freebody* used detailed illustrations to advertise the fact that they offered all different types of useful "*gifts for officers at the front*" (1914), which

Figure 1.

4 *Comic book superheroes unmasked*, The History Channel, documentary broadcast in 2003.

5 The Illustrated London News, London, 1842-2003.

ranged from khaki shirts or coats to sleeping bags and helmets[6], without forgetting the more famous *Burberry* and their coats to ward off the cold and damp.

This type of publications is where governments and powerful groups find another channel to disseminate their ideas and influence their citizens, both on the front and on the home front.

CARTOONS AND PROPAGANDA

Can we conflate the cartoon with propaganda, especially in these formative years of the 20th Century in which the comic as we know it today, or its predecessors, took its first steps? This may be subject to discussion; before advancing an answer we must analyse contemporary works and their repercussions. There are two basic prerequisites that I believe must be fulfilled in order for us to classify a medium as one able to indoctrinate and impose an ideology:

- Firstly, it has to be assured of a wide enough audience, a public into which the message sought to be instilled may penetrate. Without a receiving party, communication does not exist.
- Secondly, it is necessary for there to exist the will to disseminate certain ideas or doctrines by means of the work in question. It is not a matter of creating for the mere pleasure of the artist who is spreading his or her art to titillate the sensibilities of the receiver; these media are not limited to art for art's sake, but instead they seek a desired effect on the reader: they seek to convey doctrines, opinions, political or religious ideas etc. with a view to moulding and shaping a specific way of thinking.

If the two conditions above are fulfilled, especially the volitional act of exerting an influence over behaviour and thought, this categorises and distinguishes a work as propaganda. A review of various cartoon examples allows us to dispel any doubts. In the words of Esther MacCallum-Stewart: *"Comics have a long history of political expression and consciousness, much of which has been used to effectively exploit dominant ideas of the status quo[7]".*

The simplicity of the graphic story or the caricature, formed with just an iconic message (illustration or cartoon) and a linguistic message (text or speech bubble), facilitates the task of reaching even a public that whilst not illiterate, might not have the most extensive cultural background. Natalia Meléndez Malavé describes it thus: *"the combination of image and text – generally straightforward and to-the-point – within*

6 *The Illustrated First World War*, published by The Illustrated London News Ltd, London, 2014 (p. 70).

7 MacCallum-Stewart, Esther, *The First World War and British Comics*, University of Sussex- Journal of Contemporary History, August 2003. Available at www.sussex.ac.uk.

these messages made it possible from very early on to utilise these as an instrument for political influence and forming public opinion"[8].

The command over information, on the other hand, has represented a constant concern throughout history for any government as a key factor for it to reach its strategic objectives. "*Both states and the most motley crew of public and private bodies utilised and do utilise information and propaganda for their own benefit*"[9]. If this control over information is properly used to serve their own interests, the desired effect is achieved of influencing the thinking and ideology of society within a country.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT

In times of war, the need to garner support amongst the population for the war effort leads to the utilisation of all means possible to achieve this aim. A clear example of this is the introduction of a war economy, in which the state takes on a heavily interventionist role in pursuit of the ultimate aim of victory, which has direct consequences such as gearing industrial activity towards supporting the war. For instance, shoe production is converted into military boot production, workers enlist as soldiers, heavy industry and arms production are intensified and measures aimed at maintaining citizens in good health are adopted. Timoteo Álvarez states that:

> *"The urgent need for war products would oblige states to direct production and establish a command economy, which promptly began to take care of not only army provisioning but also industry's workforce; to not only care for the war-wounded but also to protect the active or potential workforce from illnesses or physical decline. As a result, the British government, which found itself with considerable amounts of recruits who were unfit for active service due to malnutrition or inherited diseases, sought to limit alcoholism by imposing a beer of a lower alcohol content, 'Lloyd George's Beer'"*[10].

Numerous writers, especially British ones, thus worked enthusiastically and loyally in order to disseminate the ideas and myths that their government wanted to instil in the population.

8 Paper *Humor gráfico y cómic ante la guerra: entre la propaganda y la contestación* at the congress "Comunicación y guerra en la Historia". Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication of Vigo. April 2003.

Available at http://www.tebeosfera.com/1/Documento/Articulo/Academico/05/HumoryGuerra.htm.

9 Timoteo Álvarez, Jesús, *Elementos para una reinterpretación del siglo XX: el caso de la información-propaganda en Gran Bretaña, 1914-1918*, Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia, Volume 180, Book I, January-April, p. 184.

10 Ibid., p. 152.

"Shrewd and persistent propaganda had convinced the French population, and the British too, that the Germans would only be content, if they were to triumph, once they had enslaved the entire world. They were called the Huns, vandals, barbarians; it was recalled that their racial characteristic was the Teutonic Fury, a spontaneous emotion that periodically led them to break through border fences to demolish, destroy, burn and to rape the women of neighbouring nations."[11]

Nonetheless, according to Peter Buitenshis, once the war had ended, some of these authors questioned these propaganda techniques to the point that they believed that they had sacrificed their integrity as writers. The "*messages could contain truthful information, albeit incomplete and unproven, but could also be false; the only thing that was important was convincing public opinion*", states Jesús Hernández[12]. The first message that needed to be conveyed was that of the inevitability of war. A goal that, as Marc Ferro alleges, emerged as the result of the animosity towards enemies that each country promoted and which spread as an axiom or myth throughout the schools of all countries, linked to the patriotic propaganda that inundated the press. Yet the introduction to his work on the conflict questions whether this horrific slaughter was necessary. Plus, and in his own words, *"governments assured that this was indeed the case, but were these governments sincere?"*[13]

Likewise, the production of such graphics was generally put to the service of the state at war and thus played its part in the war effort: "*the cartoon is mightier than the sword*[14]" is what various governments have believed. This is why they have applied this principle in order to win the favour of their own people in critical situations such as war or dealing with the "miserable" enemy.

Any contribution to the homeland was to be appreciated, including having more children to feed into its own armies and navy. The pre-war French government even alerted to this fact (*"The homeland is in danger"*) due to a fear of being outnumbered by the Germans (five to every two). It was necessary to solve the problem in the only way possible.

What was most customary on the part of governments was the issuance of bonds to finance the conflict. Public spending increased by 500% between 1914-17 in countries such as Great Britain, Germany or France. War bonds became essential since "*no country was able to finance the war with taxes. Everything had to depend upon loans from*

11 Aa.Vv., Las Guerras Mundiales, Historia Universal, Barcelona: Salvat, 2004 (pp. 226-227).

12 Hernández, Jesús, Todo lo que debes saber sobre la Primera Guerra Mundial, 1914-1918. Las campañas, personajes y hechos claves del conflicto bélico que cambió la historia del siglo XX, Madrid: Editorial Nowtilus, 2007

13 Ferro, Marc, La Gran Guerra, 1914-1918, Paris: Gallimard, 1969

14 The actual expression, attributed to the English writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton, author, inter alia, of "*The Last Days of Pompeii*" was the following: "*The pen is mightier than the sword*".

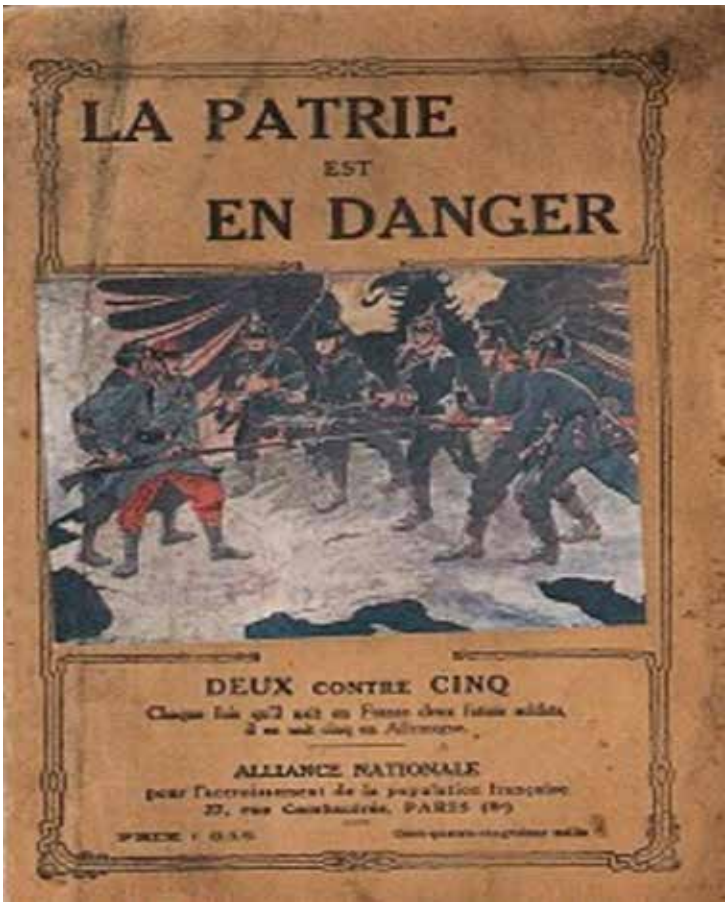

Figure 2.

other countries and from their own people, who were encouraged to support the war effort through the purchase of war bonds"[15].

THE CARTOON DURING THE GREAT WAR

The Great War saw a change in the nature of the modern state, which had a bearing of the lives of its citizens like never before: mass mobilisations of millions of soldiers, with the resulting logistical problem of supply; important developments to scientific research at the service of the war; concerns about the welfare of combatants and the singularity of the involvement of the home front in the campaign, which, by way of consequence, would give rise to the essential role played by propaganda. In the words of Pizarroso Quintero: "*never before had the persuasion of the masses played this leading role, so decisive to the development of an armed conflict*"[16]. However, over the course of

15 Willmott, H. P., World War I, London: Dorling Kindersley, 2003, p. 123.

16 Pizarroso Quintero, Alejandro. *Historia de la propaganda: una aproximación metodológica*, Complutense University Madrid, Historia y Comunicación Social, no. 4, 1999, p. 169.

the Great War the art world went backwards to a certain degree, which affected forms of artistic expression[17]; *"what is peculiar is that the war did not produce any artistic talent, and even the writers and artists who enlisted as poilus or tommies lost all inspiration in the trenches*[18]*"*. As was already the case in other conflicts such as the Spanish-American War, we hardly find examples of comics in the form that we know them today. As I stated above, during this war it was caricatures, illustrations, cartoons or humorous magazines that prevailed and that sought to maintain or boost the morale of soldiers stationed at the front. In Italian, *giornali di trincea* such as, inter alia, *San Marco, La Ghirba, La Tradotta, Le fiamme, La Baionetta, La Trincea, Il Montello* proliferated. The term *giornali de trincea* encompasses a wide spectrum of publications and newspapers that emerged from the trenches themselves. They were not usually printed but instead lithographed, reproduced with a velocigraphe[19] or even copied by hand, and emerged from the summer of 1915 onwards, soon after Italy joined the war. Although some are newspapers that purely deal with news, there is a predominance of those of a humoristic and satirical nature, with a wealth of caricatures. As of 1917, the Italian

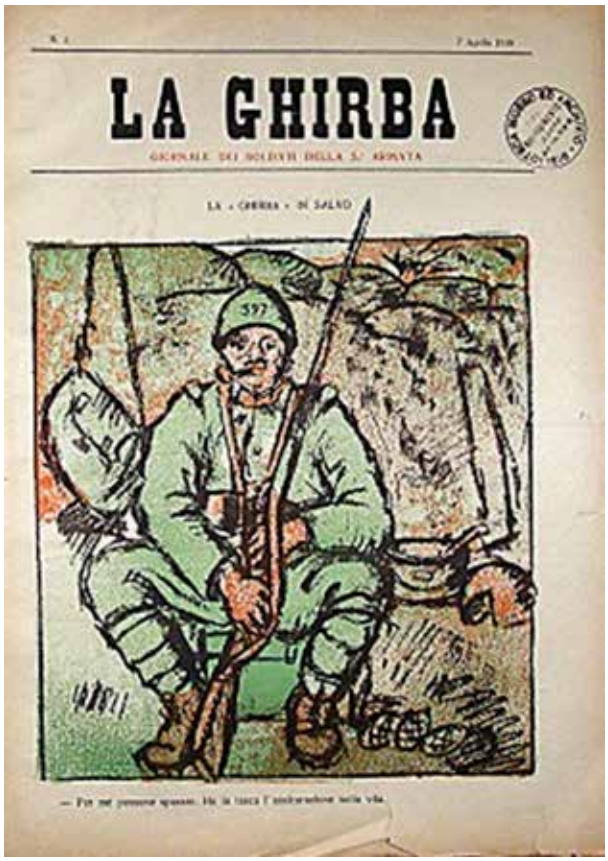

Figura 3.

17 *"During the First World War, apathy took hold of artists. Moreover, many magazines stopped being published."* Ballesteros, Antonio and Duée, Claude, Cuatro Lecciones sobre el cómic, Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2000, p. 103.

18 Aa.Vv., Las Guerras Mundiales, Historia Universal, Barcelona: Salvat, 2004 (p. 227).

19 Type of plate for the mechanical reproduction of multiple copies.

government started to take an interest in them, giving rise to the Propaganda Office, the "P" service, whose mission consisted of direct propaganda actions among the ranks of soldiers with a view to increasing their morale[20].

This major role can also be seen in countries which were less relevant in the conflict. The Portuguese magazine *Miau*, published in Porto in 1916, ridiculed the German victories at the start of the First World War and clearly positioned itself on the side of the allied forces: "*A humanidade tem soffrido varias epidemias: a lepra, o cholera, o tipho, etc. Agora soffre do militarismo allemão!*"[21], even managing to mock the Central European empires. Thus, following the declaration of war of Austria against Portugal (15 March 1916), issue 10 of the magazine, with publication date 24th March, shows the former Austrian emperor Franz Josef saying: "*This Wilhelm will force me to do preposterous things until the day I die*", whilst, walking stick in hand, he is supported by the German Kaiser in order to stay standing[22].

Figure 4.

20 Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea. Available at http://www.bsmc.it/grandeguerra.

21 "*Humanity has suffered various epidemics: leprosy, cholera, typhus etc. Now it suffers from German militarism*". *Revista Miau*, Porto, 25 February 1916 (front cover). Text accompanying an illustration

22 The Austrian emperor was to die at the end of the very same year.

Countries with an even lower profile in the conflict, such as neutral Spain, also aligned their sympathies with one side or the other. The weekly satirical paper *Don Quijote en guerra, edited* by Oliver Rigol in 1917, defended the German cause and took a belligerent stance against France and Britain. As a reflection of this more favourable attitude towards the Triple Alliance is clearly expressed on the back cover of its first edition, which compares the British and German blocks. The aim of the former was apparently "*to make the innocent, women, children and allies perish*", unlike the Germans whose purpose was peace, and there is irony regarding the idea spread by the *Entente* that their understanding was one of humanity whereas the German idea was to be considered a "*vile, inhumane piece of work*"[23].

Amongst those countries with greatest weight in the conflict, the weak influence of the comic in Germany is of note, in line with the late development of the German cartoon. Amongst the few examples that exist, we can mention the daily paper *Ulk* that was critical on numerous occasions of the German government itself, which it blamed for having left the German people without resources or for having mismanaged these. There is also the magazine *Simplicissimus,* the result of collaboration between various illustrators – Karl Arnold, Thomas Heine, Olaf Gulbransson -, who despite not having supporting German foreign policy before the war and to opposing

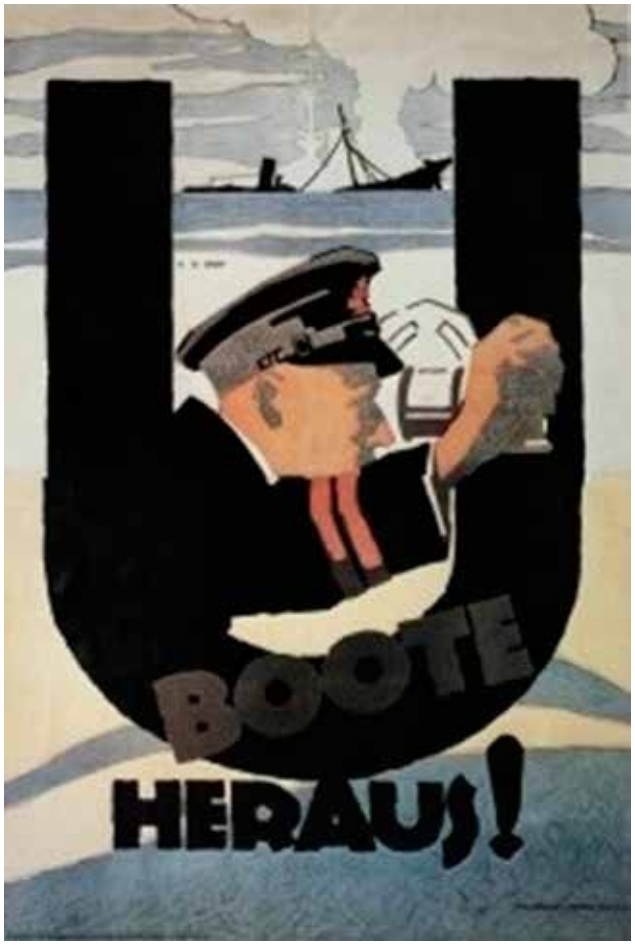

Figure 5.

23 *Don Quijote en guerra*, no. 1, Editor Oliver Rigol, prob. Galicia, 1917.

militarism and the privileges enjoyed by the higher German officials, offered their unconditional support to the war effort once hostilities began. Heine, as a result of the disagreement expressed by some of his colleagues at the magazine, argued that "*the motherland needed a magazine of international prestige to support the war effort*"[24]. The infrequent use of the cartoon or caricature as propaganda would remain a constant for Germany over the course of the 20th Century, as this situation repeated itself during World War II, a circumstance that is more than anecdotal given the abundant use of propaganda in the Third Reich[25]. Despite this, Germany published several posters to garner support for its submarine forces (here a film poster) or to publicise the successful offensives of March and April 1918 (although these did not achieve their objectives).

UTILISATION OF THE CARTOON BY THE ALLIES

Unlike what happened on the other side of the North Sea, during wartime in the United Kingdom, the most widely circulated British paper *The Daily Mirror* published a series of daily cartoon strips of a political and propaganda nature illustrated by William Kerridge Haselden. Some of them strike a patriotic chord, such as in the issue of 30 August 1914 where a wife appears not long after the declaration of war against Germany and urges her husband to enlist in the army: "*If I were a man, I'd be ashamed to stay at home". "I suppose you think that it's enough to sit and read about the war". "If I were married to another man, he would have enlisted"*. When she manages to get him to enlist, she exclaims: *"My brave husband! I knew you'd enlist."* It is worth pointing out that in Great Britain, unlike the other European powers, obligatory military service did not exist and that the *Military Service Act*[26] was not enacted until 1916. . The Military Service Act allowed for the conscription, with certain exceptions, of all men aged between 18 and 41 years old, this subsequently being extended to those aged between 17 and 51 years because "*the demand for human war material [was] apparently insatiable*"[27]. In order to alleviate this need for soldiers there was a proliferation of posters calling for people to enlist: "*Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?"* and "*The women of Britain say - "Go!"* were two of the most popular. Despite popular pressure, there were around 16,500 conscientious objectors (permitted by a clause in the law itself).

24 Simkin, John, *First World War Encyclopedia*, Spartacus Educational, 2012.

25 Hitler himself appreciated the need to control news and information at an unprecedented level during the Third Reich, recognising the valuable role that propaganda had played in the allied victory during the Great War.

26 This law remained in force until 1919 and it was not until World War II that obligatory military service was reintroduced. It disappeared in 1963.

27 http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/ukconscription.htm.

Figure 6.

In another cartoon Germany is swiftly demonised and all its culture presented as barbaric, whilst as the war progresses Haselden becomes increasingly more satirical when lecturing the population to scrimp and save (November 1915), to collaborate in the acquisition of patriotic flags (May 1917), or to stoically put up with the downsides of rationing (January 1918): "*even rationing queues have a pleasant side: something for grandfather to do*".

British women, who were forced to take on traditionally masculine roles due to the flow of men heading to the front, are praised for the work they are doing. "*What a nice, delicate knock she would give as a postman!*" or "*Instead of the notoriously heavy boots of the plumber, what a delightful change!*" are some of the captions published in one of Haselden's cartoons in *The Daily Mirror*. This was to be a historic moment, with the increasing rise of the British suffragette movement and with its culmination in 1918, whereby the end of the war coincided with women obtaining the vote (although this was restricted to those over 31). Women's role in the conflict went even further, as they also participated in groups such as the *Women's Land Army*, *Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps* or were incorporated into the war industry (approximately one million in France or 42% in the Austro-Hungarian Empire), e.g. the so-called *munitionettes -munition workers-* in Great Britain.

The long-running satirical-humorous British magazine *Punch* also published various cartoons relating to the First World War. These were ironical about the war itself and essentially ridiculed the Germans: their cultural superiority, which had only brought death and destruction (in November 1914 a cartoon showed the roof of a

Figure 7.

private house painted with "*This is not the British Museum*" and entitled "*The aerial threat*") or their lack of scruples (use of women as shields in a cartoon signed by B. Partridge, "*study of a German gentlemen entering into action*", September 1914). This magazine also had a Canadian version that helped to disseminate war propaganda in the North American country. British irony as to German superiority excelled itself in the magazine *The Bystander*, whose issue of 6 February 1915, entitled *A Few Hints for the Enemy*, published the names of various fortified coastal towns so that the Germans would not have any problems in finding them.

It would be another Briton, Bruce Bairnsfather, whose work was published in *The Bystander*, who was the most famous illustrator during the Great War. *The Bystander* was widely circulated amongst troops despite initial resistance from parliament, which described its pictures as "*vulgar caricatures of our heroes*", and finally established its popularity. Its characters, in particular the captain *Old Bill* – a grumpy yet tenacious officer - won over both the troops and the civil population due to their mix of irony and realism together with the people's will to resist. Their own experience in the trenches is reflected in his comic strips, which show us various Tommies[28], dissatisfied but who, like their Old Bill, remain stoic when faced with the constant bombardments. Then during the Second World War, Bairnsfather was assigned as an illustrator for US forces in Europe and published in the armed forces newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.

28 A popular name used in the war slang to describe rank and file British soldiers.

Figure 8.

Graham Simmons took it upon himself to present the different allies as comrades-in-arms in *The Bystander* (25 November 1914) in the cartoon *Allies arm in arm*, which shows soldiers marching shoulder to shoulder right from the far-away Japanese to the traditional tommies, passing through the French, Cossacks and Sikhs too. Among the allied countries, Australian participation was the most notable *("When the Empire is at war, so also is Australia"[29]),* with one of the highest fatality and casualty percentages (65%)[30] and a well-earned reputation for its actions, particularly in Gallipoli.

An even more significant example of the use of graphic cartoons in order to boost one of the sides were the cartoons published by the Dutchman Louis Raemaekers. His proactivity in denouncing Teutonic postwar ambitions led him to infiltrate occupied Belgium and step up his anti-German political discourse, whose soldiers he described as children murderers, mass murderers and rapists. The British government distributed his work, probably the harshest towards Germany, in a series of propaganda pamphlets, which were so effective that the Kaiser put a price to his head, which obliged him to move with his family to Great Britain from where he launched campaigns targeting various countries such as Canada or the United States[31], which substantially contributed to a

29 Australian Prime Minister Joseph Cook, 5 August 1914. Australian War Memorial, at https://www.awm.gov.au.

30 Australian War Memorial.

31 This dissemination was not limited to these countries; his cartoons where to be published in numerous magazines, such as in the aforementioned Portuguese magazine "Miau".

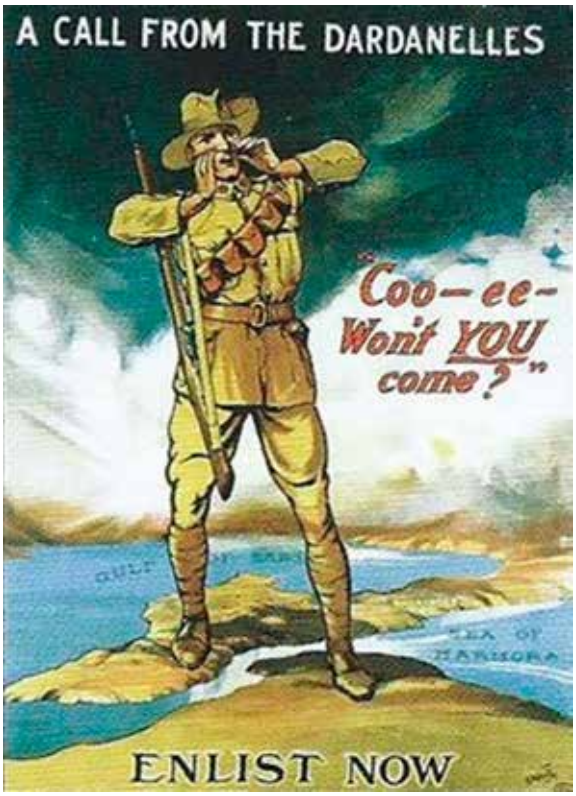

Figure 9.

climate conducive to the latter entering the war. In the words of President Theodore Roosevelt, Louis Raemaekers' cartoons *"rendered the most powerful of the honorable contributions by neutrals to the cause of civilization in the World War."*[32] The British always sought American support, aware of the importance of the transatlantic giant entering the war. "*The United States became the principal target of British propaganda*"[33].

With less emphasis on the propaganda side, but which without a doubt set apart in terms of art, was Italian artist Fortunino Matania, who primarily saw his career develop at the magazine *The Sphere*, where he impressed with his realistic depictions of war, some as an eye witness. Some of his most outstanding works of art would be *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (*The Sphere*, 15 May 1915) or the powerful *Goodbye, Old Man* (1916)[34], a poster drawn as part of the Red Cross campaign in defence of animals. We should not forget that the war came at a huge cost to horses. The number of horses that died during the conflict is estimated to have numbered between four and

32 *"I made the most powerful of contributions made by a neutral party to the civilisation cause in the (First) World War".* Raemaekers, Louis (compiled by J. Murray Allison), Raemaekers' Cartoon History of the War, Volume 1 The First Twelve Months of War, New York: The Century Co., 1918.

33 Buitenshis, Peter, The Great War of Words, British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1938, Vancouver: University of Columbia Press, 1987, p. XVIII (introduction).

34 Matania captures the intense emotion of a soldier bidding farewell to his moribund horse, who he has to abandon along the way in order to continue his march. It is displayed at *Victoria Blue Cross Animal Hospital* in London.

Figure 10.

Figure 11.

eight million. The German horses themselves had already suffered losses on German territory due to exhaustion and a lack of resources for their maintenance.

In France, the magazine *L'Épatant* edited the cartoon *Les Pieds Nickelés*, in which three rascals delighted young children with their adventures only just on the right side of the law who were constantly getting away from the police. The morale of the era and the advent of war led them to adopt a more patriotic dimension; without abandoning their subterfuge, they embodied the popular French values of ingenuity and an ability to make fun of the "boches" operating behind enemy lines. Another popular French character, Bécassine, a young Breton girl who came into existence in 1905 on the pages of the children's magazine *La Semaine de Suzette,* adopted a patriotic attitude during the conflict[35], even going so far as to become a 'wartime godmother' (*marraine de guerre*), a figure whose objective was to raise the morale of combatants to whom the godmother sent letters of encouragement so that they would know that their effort on the front was appreciated on the home front[36]. These *marraines* received a certificate from the French government (*brevet de marraine*) for the moral contribution they made. French newspapers, such as *Le Matin*, underscored the effectiveness of the French military strategy and boasted of the number of dead or imprisoned German soldiers.

Another satirical weekly paper, *La Baïonnette* (1915-1920), brought together the best humorous illustrators of France at the time. Exclusively dedicated to the conflict, in a similar way to the bayonet charges of the soldiers, the magazine launched attacks against the stupidity of the Germans or caricatured their major leaders with a view to boosting French morale; it had a varied subject matter: whilst one issue would be dedicated to praising the work of long-suffering French mothers, another honoured the injured of France or ridiculed German leaders.

By adopting patriotic sentiment, the company Zam-buk took advantage in order to publicise its star product of the same name (a cream for the skin), which was in high demand among soldiers. "*Our soldiers at the front urgently need more Zam-Buk*" proclaimed the advertising posters in London and Australia, which were accompanied by extracts of letters sent from the front[37]: "*I wish we had more Zam-Buk sent out from home instead of so much tobacco*", "*a pot of Zam-Buk out here is like a loaf of bread*"[38].

35 Of the 25 albums published between 1913 and 1955, three correspond to the participation of Bécassine in the Great War: *Bécassine pendant la Guerre* (1915), *Bécassine chez les alliés* (1917) and *Bécassine mobilisée* (1918). Source: Bedethèque, http://www.bedetheque.com.

36 See the article *Des marraines de guerre pour les soldats (1915),* Le Figaro, Paris, 19 June 1915. Available at http://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/centenaire-14-18.

37 *Our soldiers want more Zam-buk*, The Port Pirie Recorder, Adelaide, 6 March 1915. Available at National Library of Australia, http://trove.nla.gov.au.

38 Lomas, Scott, The Home Front: Sheffield in the First World War, London: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2014, p. 83.

Governments resorted to the same patriotic sentiment and called on their fellow citizens to reduce their consumption of meat and fish, products necessary on the front: "*mangez moins de viande*" or "*do your bit; save food*" were characteristic slogans on posters in all countries.

It seems strange that at the beginning of the conflict the United Kingdom did not allow its soldiers to draw in the trenches (probably out of fear that they would reveal strategies or technology to enemies), yet as the war went on, the British government appreciated the value of propaganda and even discharged artists so that they were able to collaborate in the war effort with their art.

THE UNITED STATES OR HOW TO "DESIGN" PATRIOTIC SENTIMENT

One of the countries that has most widely used the media at its disposal in order to spread its ideas, as it had already demonstrated during the Cuban War against Spain, has been the United States and, as a result, the impact of the Great War was felt there even before the country became immersed in the conflict. Before the entry of the emerging American power into the war – which was subject to discussion in its traditional isolation-, some magazines were championing the allied victory and advocating necessary US intervention. A cartoon from 1917, *The Sign in the Sky*, encourages this: a squadron of planes forms the word USA in the sky, whilst at the foot of the page it advises that "*when this sign appears above Germany, the war will be over*".

Publications such as the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* or *Harper's Weekly* adopted a proactive policy in favour of the war, even going so far as to force certain artists to tow the editorial line; this was the case for Kenneth Chamberlain, who submitted to the demands of his superiors despite his opposition to the war because, as he was subsequently to declare, he "*didn't want to lose his job as an illustrator*". This serves as an example of the artist as a mere instrument, dedicating his work to a specific purpose, one that is imposed and goes beyond the purely artistic and even differs from the artist's own line of thinking.

The US government, with greater intensity than in the war against Spain, brought pressure to bear on the media in order to gain public opinion. With this aim in mind, it created *The Committee on Public Information* (CPI) in 1917, which was part of the Ministry of Propaganda. The CPI's work comprised strict press regulation and indoctrination of the US public by means of the manipulation of news, pamphlets, books, newspapers, cartoons, advertising and films. Although joining the programme was initially "voluntary", the Espionage Act - which made it a crime to publish content that would weaken morale and that ran counter to the war effort -afforded the government extensive powers to suspend or seize publications. Once the country was at war, the control and censorship became total until the CPI was dismantled in 1919. It smacks, to a certain degree, of the future censorship that would be self-imposed by

US publishers in the 1950s (Comics Code Authority) and that was to last more than three decades.

Along the same line, one should note the work of various artists who created posters or bills– also very common in other countries-, which inundated the US territory, among which some of the most prominent would be Howard Christy (*Gee! I wish I were a man; I'd join the Navy*) or James Montgomery Flagg and Charles Dana Gibson, who, at the outset of war, created the group *Division of Pictorial Publicity*, which discussed how to supply posters so that there would be backing for its policy. Flagg produced 46, of which one salient example is the iconic Uncle Sam image with his index finger pointing to the reader saying "*I want you for U.S. Army*", which has endured over the course of history[39]. In the same vein, the US government called for people to buy war bonds in order to combat German "atrocities" by appealing to humanitarian sentiment. One example is a poster in which a German soldier abducts a girl from neutral Belgium. Plus, its target audience transcends its borders as it reaches other countries and peoples: "*Your Freedom Bonds will help put a stop to this*" states a poster in Spanish aimed at the Filipino population above the image of a Canadian soldier being crucified by the Germans, one of the most typical myths of the war and which, despite many different studies and publications, has never been fully proven to be true.

Figure 12.

39 Although propaganda posters may not be considered to be either comics or graphic cartoons, nor were they by absolutely no means an exclusively US phenomenon, I could not resist the temptation to mention them due to the significance that some of them have had, in particular the one mentioned showing Uncle Sam, which was reproduced and copied ad nauseam.

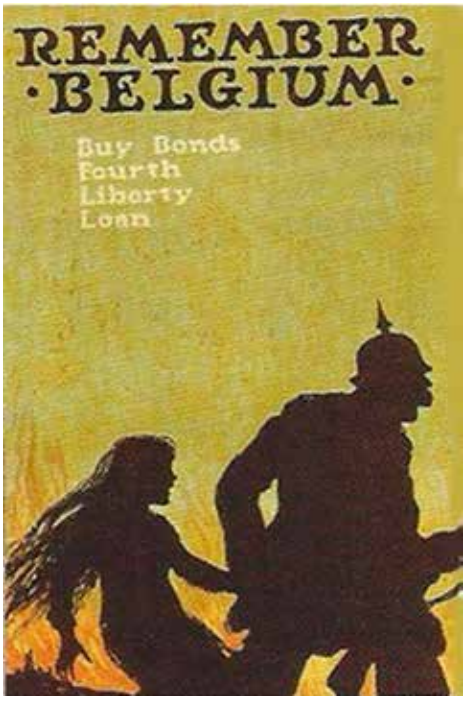

Figure 13.

Another significant fact from this period and one which clearly demonstrates the idea of how to utilise the media to propagate a message is the emergence in 1918 of the newspaper *The Stars and Stripes*, which was distributed amongst US troops on French soil. At this time, American forces were dispersed along the Western front, often mixed together with other British, French or Italian forces. The objective of the newspaper –which relied exclusively upon the contributions of soldiers themselves in France- was to provide these scattered troops with a sense of unity and a sense of collaborating in the war effort. Amongst other sections, it frequently included cartoons that are clearly aimed at maintaining troop morale. What is most surprising in that the impetus for the publication of the newspaper came from the soldiers themselves rather than the government and this is why its vision of the war was one far closer to that of the combatants. Although its intended purpose may match that of those in charge, the means used differed considerably; it was not a matter of simply following CPI instructions, but also of creating a sense of rapport amongst the soldiers, which, by dint of being entertaining, would increase morale. In the editorial of the first issue, it declared its intentions: "*It is your newspaper, and it has but one interest: the interest to ensure that Uncle Sam sharpens his knives to use them against the august necks of the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollern*"[40].

When considering the artistic side of the publication, we should mention illustrators such as Abian A. Wallgren (*Wally*) who gave advice to soldiers in a humorous way (why you should not sneeze whilst wearing your gas mask, to use the ostrich method to avoid projectiles etc.) or Leroy Baldridge, with a more patriotic message, such as in

40 *The Stars and Stripes*, Paris, 8 February 1918, p.1.

Figure 14.

his cartoon "*The first to come home*", in which we see two fallen soldiers about to be buried and which was intended as a reproach to those who asked to return after the Armistice.

Yet not all of American society supported the war. The socialist-leaning magazine *The Masses*, for which artists such as Art Young, Boardman Robinson and Glintemkamp drew, considered that the ultimate motive of war was the competitive imperialist system, which was why the United States should remain neutral. The stories published criticised the behaviour of those on both sides of the conflict. Once the country declared war in 1917, the government brought pressure to bear on *The Masses* for it change its policy. When it refused, various artists were taken to court for violating the Espionage Act and the magazine was closed down.

Russian poster art

With an agriculture-based, illiterate society and an emerging, yet extremely poor, proletarian class, tsarist Russia chose to garner popular support in a very different way, essentially through the use of posters, which were its principal exponent, and for which the advent of the Great War and the subsequent Russian Revolution saw it properly burst onto the scene as part of political propaganda.. Although it may not be considered a cartoon or comic as such, its affinity with these formats means that it merits inclusion in this overview. The poster art of the Russian Revolution, immersed in the war, became the main form of propaganda in the turbulent Russia of the first decades of the 20th Century. The Soviet vanguard adopted Constructivism, although Stalin's policy of purges and prisons, which did not spare the Constructivists,

Figure 15.

Figure 16.

practically led to their disappearance. Nonetheless, several posters were able to be rescued. These alluded to the need to resist, to continue the war (following the arrival of the Provisional Government in 1917) or encouraged the purchase of war bonds (whose investors would never to recover their money) as well as other later ones, with the country already submerged in the Russian civil war, such as that of Dimitri Moor, "*You have enlisted as a volunteer*" (1920), which are reminiscent of Flagg's style and his Uncle Sam.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The real incursion of the Great War into the comic world occurred, however, at a far later date, leaving us with the best works on the conflict being those with the perspective that comes with the passing of time. This work may be subdivided into two major groups. On the one hand, some very personal works, with a desire to express an anti-militarist ideal and to describe the horror to a society living a long time after those who experienced the war. On the other hand, we find some real adventure comics, with no other aim in mind than mere entertainment. We cannot infer what the intentions of the latter group may be, but for the former it can be affirmed that, whether consciously or unconsciously, they generally aim to denounce past events, to awaken the collective conscience of a society that may have neglected this part of its past having only ever heard about it.

Description of the Horror

The works in the first group clearly pursue an objective: showcasing their anti-militarism, to raise awareness amongst their readers of the senselessness that led half of Europe to face one another on the battlefield due to matters more related to honour than with necessity. Since "*the war that will end war*[41]" did not only not end all wars, but was instead transformed into a hotbed which bred the largest of all military conflict, the Second World War. The centenary of the start of this conflict has been accompanied by various works that rather than looking back incite us not to forget.

As part of this group we can place the exceptional and prize-winning collection of the Frenchman Jacques Tardi (*Adieu Brindavoine, C'était la guerre des tranchées, Putain de guerre*! [*The Astonishing Exploits of Lucien Brindavoine*, *It Was the War of the Trenches, Goddamn this War!*]), edited between the end of the 20th Century and the start of the 21st Century, a clearly anti-militarist set of work. One of its recurring themes is the atrocities of the First World War. Continuing with a new version of the so-called *ligne claire* style and considered to be the father of "new realism", Tardi attacks the time-worn patriotism of politicians and depicts the disillusion of war, the absurdity of the conflict and stories at the bottom of the trenches. He does not show one main character, but instead many different ones. He did not want to reflect the history of the war but rather "*a succession of non-chronological situations experienced by men who, manipulated and caught up in the war, are visibly unhappy to find themselves where they are and with the only hope of living for one more hour, hoping, above all, to*

41 Wells, H. G., The War That Will End War, London: F. & C. Palmer, 1914. Title of the work that brings together the articles in which the author of *The War of the Worlds* argues that only the total defeat of Germany would bring an end to the war. "*We fight not to destroy a nation, but a nest of evil ideas*", explained Wells (p. 90).

return home", explains the author himself. Tardi's aim is to strike the the conscience of the reader, meaning that they cannot remain indifferent to what they read: "*But how have we come to this… to this disaster, this disgrace, to this decline in civilisation?"*[42]. Based on oral history, such as stories told by his own grandfather, he constructs an anti-war argument, denouncing the use of soldiers as cannon fodder, and portrays the fear of death. The global recognition of this author makes it possible to assert that his message has been widely disseminated. The journalist Ricardo Ibáñez Salas asserts that "*Tardi is a monument to the "informative capacity of comics*"[43].

The Italian Hugo Pratt sets some of the adventures of Corto Maltés in the same period. However, his character, whilst still being antiwar, does not focus on the war itself, but instead on his personality, a mixture of a seducer and an adventure seeker, with a particular code of honour. The work in which Corto stars transmits the ideas of its creator: individualist, libertarian, anarchic etc. Unlike conventional wars, conceived as mere massacres in pursuit of greater power or territory, it justifies other wars, those that defend a cause, those that fight against an injustice to create a better world:"*these wars…I can't manage to fathom them. A revolutionary war yes, maybe... but not these wars".* Like Tardi, Pratt published in the last third of the 20th Century[44].

The personalist author finds in the Great War the ideal historical context to reveal to us the horror of the human condition in emotionally intense situations. An intimate, yet also antiwar, tone leads Charlie Adlard, the illustrator of the famous series *The Walking Dead*, to relate in *White Death* the fear of Italian soldiers in the transalpine mountain ranges of not only the enemy but also of the elements. The Italian Front extended along the mountainous border with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Italy was staking a claim to traditionally Austrian territory, which is why when the conflict broke out, it declared war on the empire with a view to annexing this territory. It was not expecting such Austrian resistance, or the harsh weather conditions, which were to be combined with fear of the White Death, treacherous avalanches provoked by shelling, which flattened everything in their path. This horror with fantastical overtones is seen once again in *La canción de los gusanos* [*The Worms' Song*]: two British soldiers discover their future through the ghost of a former army mate, but whilst one will go onto become a hero, the other will become a deserter. It deals with the horror of uncertainty, of the anguish suffered due to the unknown of the future alongside the horror of the pitiful life that they share in the trenches.

The fantasy reaches critical extremes in *Dix de Der,* by the Belgian Didier Comès, which provokes a startling effect on the reader by transforming the horror (or fear) of a new recruit into surprise at the equalising power of death that is forewarned when

42 Tardi, Jacques. *Op.cit.*

43 Ibáñez Salas, Ricardo, *Anatomía de la Historia, La Guerra de las Trincheras, olor a muerte y a miedo,* 7 November 2011. Available at http://anatomiadelahistoria.com/2011/11/la-guerra-de-las-trincheras-olor-a-muerte-y-a-miedo/.

44 "*La balada del mar Salado*" was published in "*Sgt, Kirk*" in Italy in 1967.

the ghosts of several fallen soldiers yearn for a fourth person with whom to finish their game of cards in a symbolic universe in which the shells and attacks on the trenches are nothing more than an irritating fellow player in the game of cards that is war.

The claustrophobic and suffocating atmosphere in which combatants lived during the battle of the Somme, one of the bloodiest battles of the whole war (more than a million losses and causalities across both sides) is depicted in all its rawness by Joe Sacco, author of comics relating to conflict in the Balkans or Palestine, in *The Great War*, a work which reads like a great tapestry of more than seven metres. It describes the horror of the first day of the battle, also the bloodiest, beginning with the initial optimism of the British soldiers marching into battle and moving onto the unease that overcomes them as they count the multiple bodies at the end of the day[45]. Words are not required –they are in fact absent from the work- to denounce the barbarity of the combat that sought to relieve other fronts (Verdun)[46] and which itself became a bloodbath.

Adlard sets aside this horror and explores a far more pleasant emotion, that of hope for the future, which overtakes the reader of *Curse of the Wendigo* with text written by Frenchman Missofe. During the cruel clashes in a trench, both sides agree upon a curious alliance with a view to pursuing a stranger who is wreaking terror (and there could be more) among the sentinels, after continuous and unexplainable disappearances affecting all sides of the conflict equally. Apparently irreconcilable enemies were able to set aside their differences when common sense prevailed. There is reminiscence of the outset of an almost sought-after war, which began as a romantic exploit, where combatants made truces in order to toast the New Year or to which they enlisted hoping to gain glory and returned horrified to even inconceivable extremes.

Adventure comics

Other works, like those previously mentioned and which were not published during wartime, took on a less personalist nature and can be classified as adventure war comics. The weekly magazine *The Victor* (1961-1992) or *Commando* of the same era (which is still published today) narrate stories from the First (or Second) World War in which British or allied heroes fight cowardly and insidious Germans. Pat Mills (with illustrations by Joe Colquhoun) describes the war in a more complicated manner in

45 It is estimated that the British Army suffered casualties to the tune of more than 50,000 on only the first day of combat, 1 July 1916, of whom almost 20,000 perished.

46 "*The enemy is already too exhausted to be able to resist another push applied elsewhere. Joffre has a premonition. He knows that the offensive on the Somme must be combined with another effort, which would destabilise the Germans. The new push forward would take place in Verdun.*" Wedelman, P., La Gran Guerra, Verdún, Madrid: Círculo de Amigos de la Historia, 1971 (pp. 248-249).

the series *Charlie's War*, published in the magazine *Battle* between 1979 and 1986, and which focuses more on moral aspects rather than on extolling one side or another.

The perspective of war from the enemy side is offered by *Enemy Ace,* published over the course of various decades by DC Comics. Despite the fact that the magazine hails from the US, the protagonist is an expert German fighter pilot, who could indeed be called a whizz, a character clearly inspired by the notorious Red Baron, who, unlike in other publications, is not portrayed as a coward or a traitor, but instead as a man primarily guided by his significant sense of honour: *"Before land, before fortune, before victory, comes honour"*.

A historicist's zest drove José Luis Povo to describe events relating to the conflict in *¡S.O.S. Zeppelin!* The Barcelona of *La ciudad de los prodigios* by Eduardo Mendoza, as it opens up fully to modernism, struggles to keep out of the war with spies, warships, clashes etc. This serves as an excuse to the author to take an interest in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to describe in a clear-cut style, yet one far-removed from that of Tardi, historical events such as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, as the pretext for starting the war.

CONCLUSION

In closing, after this brief visual overview of the events that marked a generation, it can be concluded that the dissemination of the works analysed varied widely. Over the course of the war, effective distribution methods had not yet been developed and hence these magazines had rather more modest print runs when compared to newspapers, whose penetration within society was more extensive. The low levels of education amongst the population also facilitated the relative success of cartoons and posters. As regards comics, in more recent times their outreach is now very diverse. With the exception of the authors mentioned in this paper, such as Joe Sacco or Jacques Tardi, their print runs tend to be short and their readership is limited, apart from the aforementioned exceptions, to relatively small circles of comic enthusiasts. What is beyond doubt is that they achieved the dissemination that they sought.

Most of the works analysed, whether published in wartime or subsequently, aim to provoke a reaction from their potential readers. There are those that do this by a pricking a collective conscience of rejection of the war (not only the First World War, but generally of any war) or a sense of unease and contrition faced with the cruelty of the human condition; there are others who, as a contribution to their country's war effort, feed into hate of the enemy and its own superiority and encourage the population to proffer and material or moral resources that might help the state to win the war.

The participation of the government during wartime varies from one country to another, spanning those who created bodies to watch over and control publications to those who merely paid attention to them. Yet in all cases we can observe a will on the part of governments to take advantage of the possibilities afforded to them by such a

straightforward and simple medium, accessible to all social classes irrespective of their cultural background.

Picking up once more on the question I put to the reader at the start, are we able to speak of cartoons of an ideological nature produced during the First World War? Categorically, yes. The pamphlets, posters, cartoons, comics etc. published during the conflict were undeniably ideologically charged and found a relatively broad and receptive audience. To a lesser degree, the revisionist works that saw the light of day after the war (most of these in recent years) contain a dominant desire to awaken feelings of rejection or blame in times long after the event.

For many years, the Great War had been relegated to an overlooked part of our history, partly as it was overshadowed by the attractive part that followed, which was to be more universal and which, in particular, grew to mythic proportions in cinema. Yet, it has also been confined to a corner of our memory due to its rawness, because of the horror that it awakens in our conscience. No explanation could be found as to the moral regress endured following a period in time in which humankind seemed to prosper in leaps and bounds. There has been an abundance of studies, treatises, books and also comics that have appeared around the centenary of the war to jolt us into remembrance.

Within a few years, our memory will tend to forget once more and the gap left by the Great War will be filled until a new event awakens us with another dramatic development to shake our conscience.

What could be of greater interest would be how governments might act given a repeat of a situation like that experienced a century ago. Today's society demands instantaneous real-time information, hence media such as the internet and its social networks, or television, have triumphed. Even conventional media, such as the press, have been forced to adapt so as not to lose this battle. And governments, or any group seeking notoriety, do not think twice before making use of these media available to them. It is worth considering whether the most obsolete, such as those that we have analysed here (comic strips, cartoons, posters etc.) could find their place in a future crisis. The most rational logic would invite us to answer no, yet why pass up such a simple and cheap tool that -certainly in today's world- has achieved widespread dissemination? One only has to recall the uproar and consequences unleashed by the publication of several drawings of Mohammed in Norwegian and Danish weekly papers in 2006. Or how the PSYOPS section (Psychological Operations, part of Information Operations) of the US Department of Defense widely uses similar means, especially in countries which currently have lower levels of education.

This is why the cartoon and other similar publications will not fall into disuse if a new conflict or serious crisis situation is to break out, especially as a supplementary resource. All of this without accounting for the potential that they offer in the present day for shaping patriotic or nationalist ideologies. Owen Griffiths provides an example of this in his work *Militarizing Japan: Patriotism, Profit and Children's Print Media*, or current comics that seek the support of the public, usually a young audience, in order to create a climate of animosity against a rival country.

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