



The portrait of Germans



Germans represented by French people.



Germans represented by themselves.

MAHAMOUD Aynouchka
&
DELACHER Émeline

Before the war

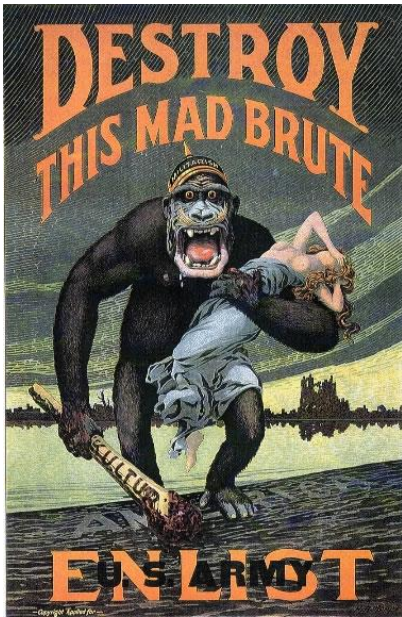
France and Germany have never been best friends. In fact, we could say they have hated each other as long as we could remember but this bad relationship between them became worst after the Franco-Prussian war in 1871. At the end of that war, the Germans were occupying two French departments (Alsace and Lorraine). That's why germanophobia and patriotism grew up in French people's heart: they wanted revenge. Therefore, they have learnt to hate Germans from their childhood, especially at school where it was taught how evil, cruel, bloody, inhumane and heartless Germans were. Some French people even thought Germans ate children. French people were very afraid of them because they had never met them. They believed in what the government said and which wasn't always true. The generation who lived through WWI had been educated with this horrible portrait, so they didn't hesitate to mobilize when the time to go to war came. They hated Germans even if they had no real reason to do so and, it was normal for them to go and fight against their enemy. Moreover, patriotism, which became a national feeling, favoured them to do it.



During the war



This awful vision was amplified by propaganda, which represented the foe as a wild beast. The government used also propaganda in order to enroll soldiers, collect bonds, motivate people to keep fighting, and to reassure people who stayed at home and give them some hope. All governments did that, in the triple Entente as well as in the triple Alliance,

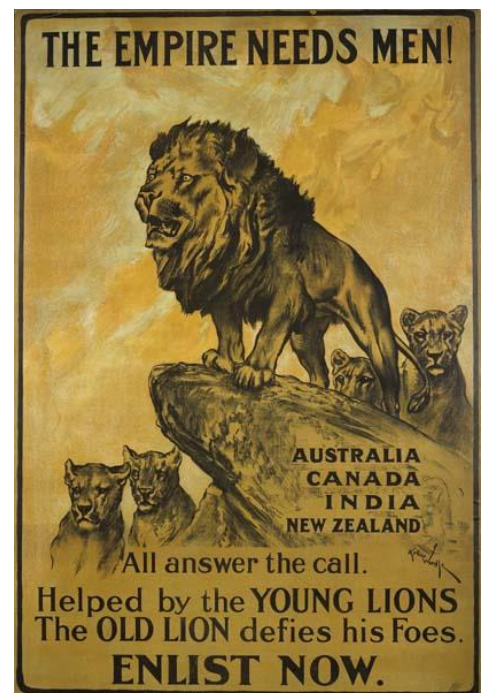


"This is not the time to play Games" (Lord Roberts)

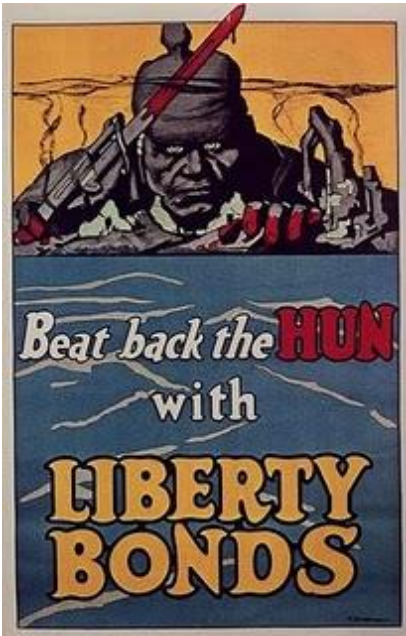
RUGBY UNION FOOTBALLERS
are
DOING THEIR DUTY
over 90% have enlisted

"Every player who represented England in Rugby international matches last year has joined the colours."—Extract from *The Times*, November 30, 1914.

BRITISH ATHLETES!
Will you follow this
GLORIOUS EXAMPLE?

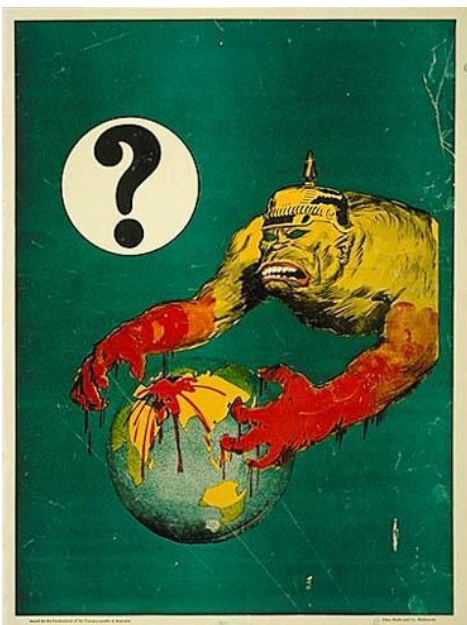


Propaganda was everywhere. Indeed, the government didn't just use posters to indoctrinate people; they also, organised exhibitions, made postcards, songs, cartoons, movies, comic strips, books, etc. Thanks to these numerous ways to say all they wanted to, people thought as them and did what they asked them to do. Propaganda ensured that the people only got to know what their governments wanted them to know. They believed the war they were about to start was clean; they would do the best thing by killing these wild beasts, so they never hesitated to go to war.



This poster was realized in 1918 by the American F.STROTHMANN. In the background, we can see a terrifying representation of the enemy, a big man with weapons and bloody hands. In the foreground, a slogan reads "Beat back the HUN (=Germans) with liberty bonds". The sea represents the Atlantic Ocean which is between America and Europe. The purpose of this poster was to frighten American people in order to collect bonds.

We can notice in this British Anti-German poster from the interwar years the government still spread a bad portrait of Germans in order to incline people to continue hating them. Indeed, they encouraged people to boycott German goods, compared German businessmen with German soldiers and used German soldier crimes during WWI in order to demonize them.



This is a picture of an Australian Anti-German cartoon created by Norman Lindsay and broadcasted between 1914 and 1918. So, as you can see, the German was again represented as a wild beast who is trying to destroy the world with his bloody hands.



This Australian badge, made in 1915, showed it could be a pride to hate Germans, and people who wore it were happy to divulge the anti-German sentiment.

This French advertisement called people to come to an exhibition about "The Germans' crimes". In this exhibition people could see documents, photographs, posters, paintings and drawings which encourage people to "remember" how evil Germans were. At the bottom is represented one of Germany's crime: Gerbéviller is a town of France where fifteen civilians were shot down by German soldiers. The government didn't want French people to forget the terrible crimes Germans did because if they did, no one would want to go to war anymore.

Souvenez-vous des crimes allemands! *Gerbéviller 1914*

Du 1^{er} au 30 Octobre 1917
de 10^h à Midi et de 2^h à 5^h
Chez GEORGES PETIT, 8, Rue de Sèze

EXPOSITION
de Documents, Photographies, Affiches, Tableaux, Dessins
relatifs aux

CRIMES ALLEMANDS
organisée par
LA LIGUE "SOUVENEZ-VOUS!"
(SIÈGE: 167, Rue Montmartre - PARIS)

LE PRÉSIDENT: JEAN RICHEPIN, de l'Académie française.
LES VICE-PRÉSIDENTS: CH. DELONCLE, Sénateur - PAUL ESCUDIER, Député - CHARLES GUERNIER, Député -
ADOLPHE BRISSON, Directeur des ANNALES POLITIQUES ET LITTÉRAIRES -
GEORGES LÉCOMTE, Président de la SOCIÉTÉ DES GENS DE LETTRES -
ROMAIN COOLUS, Président de la SOCIÉTÉ DES AUTEURS DRAMATIQUES

PRIX D'ENTRÉE: Semaine 1^{fr} - Dimanche 0^{fr} 50
au profit de l'Œuvre de Propagande de la Ligue

ROBERT A. C^o, PARIS - Tel. Nord 27-96 Visa 8309



This comic strip, published in 1917, proved the anti-German sentiment also existed in America. Indeed, we can see the man is angry because his wife bought a doll made by Germans, an act which was seen as anti-patriotic.

Reality on the front

“MAC
SS Manganui
Indian Ocean
November 1914

Mac tapped the end of a cigarette on the side of his silver case and coughed ‘Cigarette?’

The ship’s sole Hun was sitting, as usual, in amongst the green canvas crates, staring out to sea. He turned, startled.

‘Bitte?’

Like everyone else Mac had been glued to the ship’s radio for news of the most memorable incident of their whole voyage so far. Half way to India, there was a proper naval battle. A German raider, the Emden, spotted lurking off Cocos Island had, after a short battle, been driven onto an island reef and sunk.

A transport ship, diverted to pick up survivors, had divided them up amongst the whole convoy during the short stopover in Ceylon.

Major Hart told Mac that they were to be transported as prisoners of war onwards as far as Egypt.

The Manganui’s Hun was a young naval ensign.

Mac gestured his open cigarette case forward towards him. ‘Would you like one?’

‘Ach yah yah.’ The Hun smiled, grasping Mac’s intent.

‘Ach Ya... danke...danke,’ he said accepting the offering with a nod.

Hart said he’d heard that the Hun was asked for his word as a gentleman not to interfere with the running of the ship and after that he was to be left pretty much to himself.

The Hun cupped his hands around the cigarette as Mac lit it.

The newspaper back home in Wellington painted a grim picture of the damnable Hun but this one was a surprisingly ordinary looking fellow, as tall as himself with a long drawn face, dirty blonde hair, and toothy with big lonely eyes.

‘Thanking you very much please’, the German said.

‘Oh... eh...yes...ok’ Mac stuttered.

He hadn’t really expected a conversation. He nodded awkwardly, fixing his eyes at the deck.

It was the Hun who broke the impasse.

‘My name is Schall. Ernst Schall.’

He stood erect and with exaggerated stiffness bowed his head clicking his heels together.

He smiled, half mocking his own formality.

Mac liked him at once.

‘My name is Alex. Alex McColl... but everyone calls me Mac.’

‘It is for me... happy to meet you Alex McColl...Mac.’

They both laughed.

Later on Captain Cross, who spoke the lingo a bit, was able to act as interpreter.

Mac intended the longest of letters home.

Father would be thrilled to read all about Ernst Schall.”

The government represented Germans as inhuman and evil beasts, but what did the Allies find on the front? Here is proof that they weren't expecting to fight against 'normal' men. Indeed, the old boy called Mac didn't expect to see a German so "ordinary", "as tall as himself", with "dirty blond hair" and "lonely eyes". Propaganda represented the foe as a wild beast, therefore Ally soldiers were surprised to face ordinary and normal people when they arrived on the front.

After the war

"WILLIAMS
Cologne
Germany
Jan 1919

Williams watched from the kitchen door as little Klara Beitz hummed to herself as she scrubbed the meagre potato ration over the basin.

He could see a touch of Elsie in her in the way she accorded each tuber such singular careful attention. She sensed his gaze and smiled at him. Klara was devoid of any trace of hate or malice. Williams envied her that.

He prayed for it for his own boys.

'Ah Herr Williams so there you are.

You are ready to go then?'

Dr. Beitz has promised to take Williams across the bridge into the city.

They lingered a moment in silence, to watch her.

'She is the best child you know.'

Beitz's eyes seemed to brighten as he spoke of her. 'In those troubled times she is the very spine of our family. There is never a word of complaint from her.' Beitz gave her a smile as she glanced up.

'You are helping Mama, Liebe?'

'Yes Papa, I'm nearly finished.'

He beamed proudly. 'You have children yourself Herr Williams?'

'Yes. Elsie and I have four fine boys.'

'Our children are everything.' Beitz's voice tightened a little.

'With all we have seen and done they are maybe all that matter. You think perhaps they will make a better job of this world than we have?'

'I hope so. I do hope so.' Williams replied.

'In any case we must be going now Herr Williams.

The cathedral is best seen in daytime to appreciate it fully and it is quite a distance to walk. With my limp it will take time.'

The Beitz family had easily won a place in Williams' affections. On his first night with them the good doctor shared liqueurs and a cigar with him. He'd laid bare his wondrous little library. Fine leather bound volumes, Schiller and Goethe amongst them, in the original and English translation.

Williams hardly knew where to start.

Beitz has been an artillery captain for most of the war until a wound invalidated him home. Neither man broached the subject of the war. [...]"

Williams, another old boy, met a German after WW1, a German who became his ally since he helped him to leave the town. We can read in that extract they spoke about their children, who are everything for them and helped them to survive during the worst moments of the war. Therefore Williams can notice Germans are not necessarily wild beasts without family and incapable to have feelings. He even started to like them: "The Beitz family had easily won a place in Williams' affections." French and Germans realized, after the war, when they didn't go back home immediately, that they weren't so different: they had family, work, feelings, home, etc. The government had said Germans were horrible and inhumane, however the Allies could figure out they were just like them. Some of them were very nice, kind, helping and welcoming after the end of the war, even if they had been fighting against them two days before, as that could happen to Williams: Klara, Dr. Beitz's daughter, smiled at him as if he was her friend whereas he was her father's foe ("She sensed his gaze and smiled at him. Klara was devoid of any trace of hate or malice. Williams envied her that"). That means the representation of the foe before the Great War was a terrible lie, and the government used it in order to have the most of soldiers they could enroll. People thought they were going to kill beasts, not humans like them, so they were happy to go to war.

And yet, even if the Allies could see Germans were not the beasts that the government pretended they were, this indoctrination wasn't without consequences: twenty years after the end of the Great War, another war broke out and most of the old Triple Entente fought against Germany (for good reasons this time). However, wars are actually over, Germany couldn't remain in such inimical terms with its neighbours and this massacre could not be done one more time. To put an end to the tension between France and Germany, after three wars and many years of propaganda, a French president Charles de Gaulle (who played a big role during WW2) and a German chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed the treaty of Elisée, which said that France and Germany are now friends. Thanks to this collaboration named "Franco-German friendship", a lot of projects are done to bring together the old enemies, like a TV channel (Arte, which broadcasts the same shows at the same time), school linguistic exchanges, etc.

Even after all of these efforts, the main question is: "What about now?". A hundred years after WW1, despite the intentions they had during the war, both governments really wish to improve their relationship. It starts especially with children: we can learn German at French schools or French at German schools, to favour better relationships between the habitants of both countries. However, does it really work? Only 16% of teenagers learn German at school in France, so we can wonder if they still hate Germans, or if they are still prejudiced against them. After all, people don't forget history that easily and that quickly.

