

RUSSIA IN *PUNCH* CARTOONS: 1914–1918

This article analyzes the dynamic of transformation of image of Russia in *Punch* cartoons during the First World War. The image is explored in the context of concept ‘us and them’, ‘the Other’, ‘the Stranger’ which were the key in British public discourse about Russia. In 1914–1916 British attitude to Russia was based on old stereotypes, but had in view the fact that Russia was the ally. The image of Russia can be characterized in the category of «the Strange among Us». The dominant symbol of Russia of this period was zoomorphic (bear).

The February Revolution of 1917 and the coming to power of the Provisional Government raised the expectations of the United Kingdom as to the liberalization of political régime in Russia. The image of Russia became close to category ‘ours own’ and ‘friend’. The real politicians, as well as an allegory of Mother Russia, were central in *Punch* cartoons.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the image of Russia was filled with negative sense. The signing of the separate peace in 1918 and Russia's withdrawal from the War became the point of greatest distancing between the two powers and transformed the image of Russia into «the Stranger».

Key words: cartoon, First World War, image, *Punch*, Russia, the Stranger, the Stranger among Us

In analyzing the history of the First World War it is worthwhile to explore not only the history of facts and events, but also the features of the mutual perception of the belligerents. In considering this problem we will focus on the characteristics of the representation of the image of Russia in *Punch* cartoons. In particular we would like to follow the dynamics of the transformation of the image of Russia in *Punch* cartoons according to the changing of the political circumstances in Russia itself. The image will be explored in the context of concepts ‘us and them’, ‘the Other’, ‘the Stranger’ which were the key in British public discourse about Russia.

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Some aspects of the perception of Russia in British public opinion and visual propaganda were explained by the researchers S. Baker, T. Clark, E. Demm, A. Gregory, G.S. Messenger [11; 12; 13; 14; 15]. The history of Punch magazine and cartoons as a part of visual culture and propaganda are the part of academic interests of the author of this article [2; 3; 4; 5; 6]. However, there is no complex research devoted to this subject. The main primary source of this article is Punch magazine 1914–1918.

The First World War which is often called in Britain simply the Great War had a profound affect on the collective consciousness of British society. Memory about this event is still alive today.

The Great War became the unprecedented conflict as to the scale of military actions, amount of victims, expenditures and challenges. It also launched information warfare. The Great powers started to use and manage the information and media in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent. National media had to struggle for the minds and consciousness of people. The press became the source of news, the tool for dissemination of information, as well as the manipulation of public opinion.

The Britons at home and abroad and the soldiers fighting on the battlefields were the main target groups of British propaganda. British enemies were another subject of it. A lot of effort has been made to persuade British potential allies (the United States of America) to enter the war. The most important aims of the propaganda machine were to create the image of the enemy regarding to the countries of the Triple Alliance and to produce the image of the Entente allies as attractive as possible. Almost all the press in Britain at that time, to a greater or lesser extent, performed those functions.

The Defense of the Realm Act which was passed in the United Kingdom on 8 August 1914 gave the government wide-ranging powers including the censorship of information during the war period. Its Regulations prohibited the disclosure of important military information about troop and

shipping movements; avoided spreading of false reports, reports that were likely to prejudice recruiting, undermine public confidence in banks or currency or cause disaffection to the King Georg V.

During the Great War the Great Britain had a wide ideological, genre and target group's spectrum of periodicals. The circulation of most of the newspapers and magazines during 1914–1919 increased several times, exceeding the mark of one million copies.

Punch was the oldest British weekly magazine of humor and satire. It was established in 1841 and had been publishing with a small break until 2002.

The generation of brilliant engravers and cartoonists was the one of the pillars in which *Punch* great popularity during so long period has been based. During the First World War it was John Partridge (1861–1945), Frederick Townsend (1868–1920), Leonard Raven-Hill (1867–1942), Ernest Shepard (1879–1976), Cyril Bird (better known under the pen name Fougasse) (1887–1965) and others.

From the very beginning cartoons played an important role in *Punch*. They were devoted to the extremely wide range of topics and set the tone and general mood of each issue. Each issue had one or sometimes two big editorial cartoon, occupying a whole page; several smaller, typically in a quarter of the page, and a large number of small pictures illustrating other materials. According to the classification of Marion Speelman (1858–1948) who was one of the first historians of *Punch*, there were several large categories of magazine cartoons: 1) the political and social; 2) art; 3) educational and propagandistic; 4) historical [17, 169–170]. The first group of cartoons was always the most numerous.

The First World War was the time when the peak of *Punch's* circulation was achieved (approximately 150 thousands of copies per week) [10]. This fact demonstrates the possibility of mobilization of the weekly as an instrument of propaganda and counter-propaganda. Caricature gives us the background for understanding the vision of Britons on the Great War, their attitudes in respect of role and place of the Great Britain in it, their perception of enemies and allies.

Political cartoons played not only propagandistic role, they also were the reflection of a general political discourse in the United Kingdom about different countries at war, including, in particular, Russia. In this context, we considered cartoons as verbal, because most of them are accompanied by text labels, and as nonverbal (symbolic, semiotic) element of political discourse. Cartoons reflected both conscious and unconscious representations about the political reality by some segments of British society or society in general.

Exploring the images displayed in the cartoon, it is necessary to take into account the specifics of them as the historical source. Firstly, the canons of this genre allow, and even call for an exaggerated emphasis of the negative features of the object; the intentional or unintentional use of reception of distortion of news, in particular, their fragmentation, excessive personalization and dramatization with the purpose to provoke the necessary emotions of readers [1, 338–339].

Secondly, even in times of the War, the British press was not overburdened with the pressure of censorship. However cartoonists in their own realized the needs to consolidate public opinion against the Triple alliance propaganda. Therefore until 1917, the difference between categories «friend» and «enemy» regarding to the Entente and German alliance has been done consciously and clearly.

So it is not difficult to make a distinction between «us» and «them» while analyzing the images of the enemy of Britain. The enemy was a priori the object of criticism, ridicule, and satire. London allies' images were more ambiguous. Although the presence of common enemies made the Entente coalition partners closer, but not turned them into the friends.

Moral and emotional assessment of the objects shown in cartoons and also the frequency of their appearance were the important markers of British perception of them. The more dangerous enemy emerged at *Punch* pages much more often than the less dangerous. And vice versa the closer ally evoked fewer reflections of magazine's cartoonists. If public

opinion clearly understood the motives, goals and interests, as well as military and economic potential, the political situation in the partner countries, were no necessity to tell a lot about them in the media. The number of illustrations in the *Punch* magazine reflecting on the France as a partner was extremely small, not more than a dozen for the entire period of the War.

A quite different situation we can see analyzing the images of Russia. Firstly, contrary to the caricatures dedicated to France, Russian drawings are presented in large amount. Secondly, they aren't always unambiguous. Thirdly, they contain the greater emotional and semantic charge. Fourthly, they were responsive to the changing of political situation both in Russia and Europe.

During the Great War image of Russia in *Punch* cartoons has transformed dynamically, depending on whom they showed: the Tsarist Russia, the Provisional Government or the Bolsheviks.

In 1914–1916 *Punch* cartoons devoted to Russia revealed two trends. On the one hand, cartoons and cartoonists were under the clear influence of the stereotypes which existed in the British public opinion against Russia. On the other hand, *Punch* cartoonists had to fulfill the political order to create a positive image of Russia as the coalition ally. The first tendency was prevailing; and as a result the creation of the positive image of Russia for British public has been only partial successful. But cartoonist tried to explain to readers that Russia was a military and political partner of the Great Britain and therefore Russia was the «ours own». The image of Russia in cartons of *Punch* of these years could be described as «the Stranger among Us».

Projecting the images of Russia, *Punch* cartoonists – consciously or not – demonstrated civilizational distance, and even pure «strangerness » of their eastern ally. Stereotypes about Russia have been formed in the minds of the Albion inhabitants for centuries. Sometimes they changed, especially by integrating or estrangement of both countries. The nineteenth century period and Anglo-Russian hostility during the Crimean War (1853–1856) played

particularly important role in this process. The War stimulated exceptional interest of *Punch*, and has remained the top theme of the magazine for several years.

That fact that economic development of Russia was far behind the leading European countries, also objectively ensured the Britons that Russia had not been perceived as ally equal to France. To the outbreak of the Great War it has still remained the agrarian-industrial country, and referred to the countries with average level of development of capitalism.

The key stereotypes of British public opinion as to Russia included representations about the peculiarities of the Russian character, about the savagery of Russian manners, about backwardness and stagnation of the political system in Russia, about lack of political and personal rights and freedoms, about the unthinkable harsh of climate, about their «Asiatic» as to the territory and as to the type of civilization at all. All these connotations towards Russia are clearly seen in *Punch* cartoons during the Great War

These stereotypes were formed as a result of the comparison of the Britons themselves, their characteristics and signs as a nation, with Russians. And in the final result, Russian always had been considered as «other», «stranger» (ethnically, culturally, and mentally). The construct of « the stranger» had a big negative charge and assumed a negative attitude of the Britain and Russia towards each other.

The necessity to create a positive perception of Russia as an ally of the Great Britain in public opinion emerged since the signing of the Treaty in 1907. Prejudices against Russia in the early of twentieth century were spread not only in the public opinion, but also among the politicians and officials, particularly in the Foreign office. The legacy of the nineteenth century, full of repeated collision of two countries on the European continent and in the colonial sphere, mainly in Central Asia and the Middle East, was an inexhaustible source of Russophobia in Britain.

The connotation between symbols and images used in *Punch* are polysemantic, deep and creating the possibility of their multiple interpretations.

The main allegorical image used by cartoonist to show the image of Russia is a Bear. Notwithstanding that the allegories of beasts were usually used for marking the image of enemy we see Russia exactly in such representation. Russia was a «friend» but such strong, dangerous and cunning as an «enemy». For example one of L. Raven Hill cartoon is based on the habit of bear to choke its victim (Fig. 1). Cartoon expresses the pleasure over the continued offensive of Russian troops on the Eastern Front, but here we can see the irresistible power of the 'Russian bear' that can suffocate everybody in his arms.

Frequently using of the image of Russian bear as to the Tsarist Russia during the Great War indicates that until this time the Great Britain still had not realized what Russia was and who Russians were. Russians in cartoons have almost never appeared with the human faces, and are hidden under the guise of stereotypes. In cartoon of August 1914 we can see the self-confident German Kaiser Wilhelm II threatened by a powerful Russian army attacks. It's the anthropomorphic image of Russian militaries. They are also quite stereotyped – the ferocious Russian Cossacks (Fig. 2), whose shadow hanging over Germany, should evoke the awe by them. All the symbols, meanings and implications of the cartoons depicted Russia as unfriendly, incomprehensible, and possibly dangerous country.

1917 became a turning point in the process of transformation of the image of Russia in *Punch*. This was the year of ending of the period of Anglo-Russian relations, and beginning of the period of Anglo-Soviet one. This caused a large-scale change of British public opinion about Russia.

The February Revolution of 1917 and the coming to power of the Provisional Government raised the expectations of the United Kingdom as to the liberalization of political régime of its eastern ally. We can notice these new sentiments in the works of *Punch* artists. Russian bear had no longer been used by them as a symbol of Russia. On the cartoons of 1917 Russia appeared to readers in an entirely new way – the personification of Mother Russia. In contrast to the Russian bear, which was the symbol of barbarism,

savagery, brutality and violence [9, 87–104], Mother Russia became the epitome of morality, self-sacrifice and altruism, as well as physical force used for good [8, 7–36.].

The allegory of the Bear was usually used as an element of Western vision and representations of Russia, while Mother Russia was a symbol that was used extensively by Russian propaganda itself, especially during the First World War. It was an important change, which in artistic form showed the transformation of British attitude towards Russia at the inter-State level. British society accepted new Russian government and was ready to deal with such Russia as it was.

The caricature of 6 June 1917 (Fig. 3) shows the Mother Russia who break the shackles of tyranny and is ready to fight for freedom all over the world shoulder to shoulder with her allies. Such image of Russia has the task to evoke in the readers the sympathy to Russia in its domestic dark hour, and on the other hand – to call the credibility to the new Russian government and its further domestic and foreign policy.

By using national allegory of Mother Russia *Punch* cartoonist displayed the very close stage of Anglo-Russian allied relations and that Russia was considered as maximum «ours own». The similarity of Mother Russia with Britannia – the traditional symbol of the British Empire was obvious. It was a kind of legitimization of Russia as an «ours own» and as a «friend». 'Russian' cartoons began to emphasize the moral irreproachability of Russia and its righteous goals at the War. During this period, Britain was very close to destruction of established stereotypes regarding Russia and to the realization of a new quality of mutual perception [7, 17–18].

Since February to October of 1917 cartoons of *Punch* often explained what the choice of the future of Russia would have depend on the fact of who would be the winner in the struggle between the forces of the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks. Cartoons clarified that Russia should make its choice and either develop as a democratic state, or be plunged into a chaos and revolution that would delay its progress for an indefinite period. In this context merit

attention two cartoons by L. Raven Hill with similar names 'The Liberators'. The first one of autumn of 1917 depicts the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos and the second Minister-Chairman of the Russian Provisional Government Alexander Kerensky as liberators of their countries from the shackles of tyranny (Fig. 4). The second one of February 1918 shows new Bolshevik 'liberators' who do not inspire optimism (Fig. 5). This image demonstrates the certain contrasts with the first one. Angry, insidious and crafty faces firearms and cold steel, smoke of conflagration in the background of picture – all this elements create an atmosphere of chaos and destruction in Russia. The second cartoon shows the image of the Bolshevik as unprincipled, cruel, and nothing will stop them to achieve their goals.

It should be noted that until October 1917 neither *Punch* nor other British media have not managed to create more or less attractive, intelligible, and acceptable for the British public image of Russian ally. Three years of war were too short term to change the public opinion. Being formally the ally of the Great Britain, Russia continued to be «the Stranger among Us».

The coming to power of the Bolsheviks radically changed the attitude of the creators of *Punch* to Russia. The specific weight of ideological hostility substantially outweighed the political expediency of preserving a positive image of an ally. The hopes of the United Kingdom to see the liberal democratic Russia as their partner at the War with Germany died simultaneously with the November Revolution of 1917. The Bolshevik regime and the prospects of its foreign policy caused the feelings of despair and frustration in British society, as well as fear before the spread of revolutionary ideas. Cartoon's images of the Bolsheviks were sharply negative. Portraying the Bolshevik government representatives, artists of the magazine often made them individually recognizable. We do not see any bears; the jokes were over, the masks were ripped off. *Punch* criticized the slogan «no war, no peace» and the subsequent conclusion of the Brest Treaty was regarded as treason (Fig. 6).

So, the transformation of the image of Russia in the cartoons of the *Punch* magazine displayed the perception of it by the British society. Russia was regarded as similar or different (civilizational, cultural, mental, politically) to the United Kingdom and, therefore, as «ours own», «the Other», «friend», or «stranger». Each of these images were dominating during the different years of the Great War depending on the domestic political circumstances in Russia itself. In 1914–1916 the most appropriate definition as to the image of Russia is «the Stranger among Us». During this period *Punch* attitude to Russia was based on the old stereotypes, prejudice, criticism of the policy of the autocracy, but it took into account the fact that Russia was British ally. It forced the cartoonist to endeavor to represent Russia in a positive light. However the results were not entirely successful. In this time the most used personification of Russia was Russian bear.

The February Revolution and the rise to power of the Provisional Government caused the British expectations as to the liberalization of the political regime in Russia, but generated the fears whether Russia would continue to perform his obligations as an ally. The image of Russia of that time was close to the category of «the Stranger among Us» and Mother Russia was dominant allegory of it.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 images of Russia were filled with more and more negative sense. In *Punch* cartoons the coming into power of Bolsheviks was uniquely associated with the German financial support. Cartoons presented the Bolshevik leaders in extremely negative light in the political, moral and ethical context. The Bolshevik Russia was stranger to the British public opinion than the Tsarist Russia. Chaos, anarchy, destruction, and betrayal were the dominant themes of *Punch* cartoons dedicated to the Bolsheviks. The signing of the separate peace in 1918 and Russia's withdrawal from the War transformed its image into «the Stranger».



Fig 1. Punch. 1914. Vol. 147. August 26. P. 177.



Fig 2. Punch. 1916. Vol. 151. August 11. P. 135.



Fig 3. Punch. 1917. Vol. 152. June 6. P. 369.

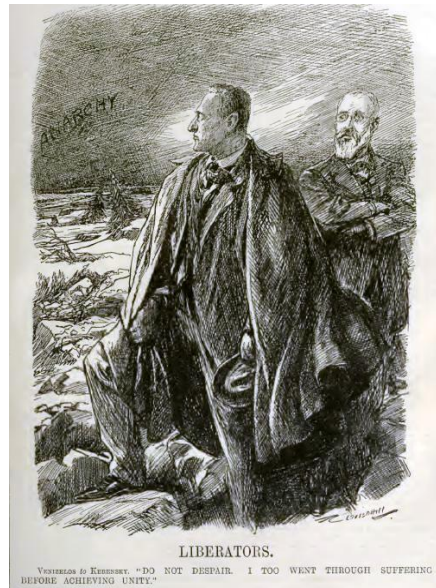


Fig 4. Punch. 1917. Vol. 153. September 5. P. 175.



Fig 5. Punch. 1918. Vol. 154. February 20. P. 155. Fig 6. Punch. 1917. Vol. 153. December 12. P. 399.

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Питльована Л.Ю.

РОСІЯ В КАРИКАТУРІ ЧАСОПИСУ «ПАНЧ» У 1914-1918 роках

У статті аналізується еволюція відображення Росії в карикатурах журналу «Панч» під час Першої світової війни. Образ досліджується в контексті концепту «свій – чужий», «інший» як ключових в британському суспільному дискурсі про Росію. У 1914-1916 рр. ставлення британців до Росії базувалося на старих стереотипах, але виходило з того, що вона – союзник. Образ Росії можна охарактеризувати в категорії «чужий серед своїх». Домінуючий символ Росії цього періоду – зооморфний (ведмідь).

Лютнева революція породила британські очікування щодо лібералізації політичного режиму в Росії. Образ Росії максимально наблизилося до категорії «свої», на карикатурах переважають реальні політики, а також алегорія Матінки Росії.

Після більшовицької революції 1917 р. образ Росії у карикатурі наповнюється негативним змістом. Односторонній вихід Росії з війни став точкою найбільшого віддалення двох держав, а образ Росії став максимально «чужим».

Ключові слова: карикатура, образ, «Панч», Перша світова війна, Росія, «чужий», «чужий серед своїх».

Питлѐваная Л.Ю.

РОССИЯ В КАРИКАТУРЕ ЖУРНАЛА «ПАНЧ» В 1914-1918 годах

В статье анализируется эволюция отображения России в карикатурах журнала «Панч» во время Первой мировой войны. Образ исследуется в контексте концепта «свой – чужой», «иной» как ключевых в британском общественном дискурсе о России. В 1914–1916 гг. отношение британцев к России базировалось на старых стереотипах, но исходило из того, что она – союзник. Образ России можно охарактеризовать в категории «чужой среди своих». Доминирующий символ России этого периода – зооморфный (медведь).

Февральская революция породила британские ожидания относительно либерализации политического режима в России. Образ России максимально приблизилось к категории «свои», на карикатурах преобладают реальные политики, а также аллегория Матушки России.

После большевистской революции 1917 г. образ России наполняется негативным смыслом. Односторонний выход России из войны стал точкой наибольшего отдаления двух государств, а образ России стал максимально «чужим».

Ключевые слова: карикатура, образ, «Панч», Первая мировая война, Россия, «чужой», «чужой среди своих».