Enemy Images in War Propaganda

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SCHOLARS**

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ENEMY IMAGES AS INVERSIONS OF THE SELF

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Inventing an enemy begins, paradoxically, with the invention of the self. The inclusion of some into a limited-membership community, e.g. a national, political or an ethnic group, necessarily presupposes the exclusion of certain others. An in-group identity and an out-group identity therefore become understandable only in relation to one another.[1] The logic of opposites being best defined by one another does not necessarily imply an inequality, let alone open disrespect or acts of violence between the parties, but it can be used to motivate just that. Indeed, the human tendency to define the self as good and the opposing other as less so only too often leads to exactly such practices.

The idea of otherness is based on the social psychological concept of projection coined by Sigmund Freud. Projection begins with splitting what is considered evil, destructive, weak or otherwise faulty apart from the more acceptable psychological and cultural features, and continues by removing the unwanted features from the self by placing them into an other (usually someone who actually is slightly different) in order to mentally protect the self.

A famous illustration of this phenomenon is the 19th century notion of the Orient. Edward Said demonstrates that the historical Orient was created by colonialist Europeans as a counter-image of everything Western, holding the features the westerners did not wish or dare to include into their cherished self-image.[2]

Creating others is typically done by establishing stereotypes, based on convenient exaggeration of select features. A multiform reality is recast into few simple patterns. The resulting banal categories determine how people belonging to a stereotyped group are perceived. A vicious circle forms when negative presuppositions gain evidence through seemingly spontaneous, neutral observation, making them seem natural and eternal.

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[1] Wingfield, "Introduction".

[2] Said, *Orientalism.*

Every community has members whose behaviour is less than perfect; sometimes they even resemble the negative stereotype. This so-called kernel-of-truth argument provides ground for negative characterisation and makes the negative stereotypes appear partly true.

Enmity and otherness, two identity-creating, identity-reversing concepts of exclusion have a lot in common. Every enemy is an other, but all others are not enemies. The process of establishing an enemy-image through first creating an other can be illustrated by the following conceptual sequence.

In the beginning there is a perception of difference in comparison to the in-group self, producing a preliminary division into Us and Them. This is followed by a process of othering, i. e. projecting unwanted features away from the self and onto the out-group, preconceived as separate and different, which thus becomes a negation of the self. From then on they are everything that we don't wish, or dare, to be. A counter-image is formed when the self, in turn, gets to be defined more and more as the negation of the other – what is perceived or deemed typical for them cannot be included in the image of us anymore.

At this point the division into categories of Self and Other is complete. If the other it is perceived as threatening, at a certain historical moment, it can easily be formed to represent an Enemy. A long-established enemy-image may be developed into an Arch-enemy, a standing threat that seems to be always present.[3]

The starting point of any politics of hate necessarily is the definition of the self as good. As the idea about what's good varies but little, all in-groups tend to be imagined along fairly similar lines. Goodness, honesty, righteousness, purity, proper manners, hard work, right religion, high but not over-ripe culture and decency are the hallmarks of the Self, while the Other is accused of being evil, untruthful, crooked, impure, ill-mannered, lazy, superstitious, barbaric or decadent, and immoral. What is natural and normal, genuine and legitimate, are always 'our' qualities.[4] Correspondingly, the imagined others and enemies also resemble one another, as the available assortment of vices projected upon them is also universal.

The self-explanatory notion of placing the defining Self into the centre of things is susceptible to alterations vis-à-vis the location of its definitional opposite. The defining in-group is not actually quite as neutral a zero point as it likes to suggest: it is constantly re-moulded and shifted

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[3] Agnew, "Czechs, Germans, Bohemians? Images of Self and Other in Bohemia to 1848", 68; Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 75; Harle, *The enemy with a thousand faces: the tradition of the other in western political thought and history*, 9-21; Wingfield, ibid.

[4] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 65; Harle, ibid., 13.

about by the ideological opposites it creates for itself. In the end image and counter-image create one another: they make sense only in mutual relation. Enemy-images become inverse images of the Self.

The image of an enemy is essentially an image of threat. It represents an imminence of unwanted acts towards the Self, and motivates a subsequent need to remain vigilant, to plan defence or even to actively engage in a pre-emptive first attack. The main difference between Other and Enemy lies specifically in their respective activeness – an enemy is perceived, or imagined, to be actually menacing, while the other is deemed unthreatening.

When unwanted features are projected into an imagined faulty Other, the set of bad features is captivated into a separate form that is distant, passive and relatively stable, mentally located not only outside but also way below the Self. As a result the Other can be observed safely, and is rarely perceived as actively threatening.[5] An Enemy, however, cannot be trusted to keep its distance, but is suspected of – or, eminently worse, perceived as – approaching: drawing nearer and eventually closing in, presumably in order to conquer, kill, enslave, destroy, damage, and/or steal.

To discover an enemy one thus has to define where it is supposed to be situated, whether or not it is moving closer, how close by it currently is, and whether it operates openly or under cover.

As the in-group Self typically places itself into the mental centre of things, the different enemies accordingly find their places within concentric zones around the defining centre. The outer circle is inhabited by the geographic, military enemies of the state or nation; they are the *enemies from outside*. The outer zone can be further divided into neighbouring states and more distant ones, situated beyond the immediate neighbours or even further away. In the next circle inwards are the *intimate enemies*: those who live within the same society but outside the defining Self, e.g. 'the nation', a particular class, or some other ideologically self-conscious in-group. This type is easily discerned and therefore relatively easy to deal with. The most sinister case is the *enemy within*: an invisible threat hiding inside the in-group community, so far unidentified and therefore very dangerous as a potential source of aggression right in the midst of Us.[6]

When the location of evil has been firmly established, it becomes possible to act upon this knowledge. As Gaetano Mosca once ironically

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[5] Said, ibid.
[6] Harle ibid., 35.

put it, 'with the general perception of evil comes confidence in the possibility of promptly alleviating it'.[7]

Destroying an enemy that has been defined as essentially evil will soon appear rational, legitimate, and even honourable.[8] A situation when it is legitimate to attack, let alone systematically destroy other people must nevertheless be considered extreme, and thus exceptional. Ordinary peaceful societies function according to the opposite presupposition. The cultural programming of an average civilian is necessarily non-violent, to enable them to live in the society. To bypass this, the enemy must be redefined as inhuman. Immediately after a warlike period the threshold to resume killing is understandably lower than after a long peace.

When a passive enemy-image is activated and made into a motive for action, the situation is apt to escalate into conflict. Most elaborate enemy imagery is related to wars between nations, when propaganda is broadcast by both mass media and official state organs. Such imagery is often of international origin, circulated freely between allies.[9] Sometimes similar imagery is utilised, with minor revisions, by both sides. Internal conflicts of a civil war type rely less on planned, official propaganda and more on spontaneous, create-as-you-go type of ideological messages.

A plausible explanation for emergence and escalation of political violence within a society is a process of scapegoating that eventually leads to a witch-hunt. The progression of events, from the first becoming aware of a set of problems to a full-blown internal warfare has been brilliantly described by David Frankfurter. It starts with a situation that looks ordinary enough. A community faces problems, which are at first dealt with locally, looking for local explanations – until along comes someone, typically from outside, who brings with him a knowledge of the local situation being a part of a much larger economic, religious, political or ethnic conflict, allegedly caused by a conspiracy of evil people who greatly profit from the present order of things. The community is thus introduced to a complex, ready-made scheme, that seems to make sense, but actually just offers an easy explanation by renaming the original problem and giving it a universal label. When doing so it points out who are the victims and – more to the point – who is the guilty party, and provides a detailed programme about how to proceed to solve the problem for good. The newcomers offer to help the locals to destroy the guilty

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[7] Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 280.

[8] Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*, 33-4, 46-7, 87, 159-60, 176, 208-24; Schmitt, ibid., 6, 54, 79. Lippmann, ibid. 61.

[9] E.g. Hayward, *Myths & legends of the First World War*, 76, 80 and passim.

ones, in the bargain becoming their champions, perhaps even permanent leaders. A witch-hunt ensues, organised by these self-appointed, self-styled heroes.[10] Even non-violent political battles often resort to similar rhetoric, urging the followers to eradicate an opponent. Political uses of hate speech thus include the same hero factor as actual battles.

Political enemy images are particularly useful for upwardly mobile groups. Carl Schmitt went so far as to suggest that any political movement, to define itself, has to discover – perceive, define or imagine – an enemy, to know not only what they stand for but also, what they oppose. To know who we are, what we strife for, whom we protect and what we cherish, it is necessary also to know who doesn't belong, what will not be tolerated, who is to blame and who may have to be destroyed.[11]

Enemy images are the paragon of negative stereotyping. Universally, stereotypes need not necessarily be either negative or unchangeable. As cognitive structures they enable a relevant comparison between categories and make individuals understandable as average members of a group.[12]

Even though all stereotypes definitely are not enemy images, all enemy images are stereotypes in the most negative sense of the word. Imagined enemies are necessarily simplified and purpose-oriented images, put up to cover only such aspects of those who they are supposed to portray that motivate the aggression of the defining party. In them a multifaceted, changing reality is reduced into a few features blown out of proportion and presented as innate and permanent. To be convincing an enemy-image must be easily recognisable, openly threatening, rationally or at least pseudo-rationally justifiable, and emotionally touching.[13]

Discourses of enmity are created, maintained, negotiated and modified within the community. Enemy images can appear spontaneously whenever there is a crisis involving separate groups. However, the most powerful, clear-cut images of enmity usually come into the world as conscious creations of propaganda machinery, and are aggressively spread through available media. If they are internalised by the community, they may become a permanent feature of popular thought, continuously renewing themselves within a culture. Images that reinforce and unite the community by acting as a safety valve, relieving pressure e.g. by allowing

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[10] Frankfurter, ibid.
[11] Schmitt, ibid, 65.
[12] Oakes, Haslam and Turner, *Stereotyping and social reality*.
[13] Frankfurter, ibid., xii, 5, 31, 39, 76, 101, 208-24;. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 31-54. Hobsbawm, "Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914", 279, 291-2, 302.

the people to blame some obvious social evil on an uncontrollable outside force, tend to become the most popular.

The media plays a crucial role in the mobilisation of the masses. In the modern, democratic society where ideological power is wielded by way of persuasion, the media takes on a lion's share of both the creating and the broadcasting of propaganda. In the early days of the mass society this role was given to print media, newspapers and books of both fact and fiction, then to cinematic film and later on to radio and television. Latest innovation in the field of communications is the internet, differing from the previous in its disintegrated nature. It has recently shown its applicability for both political mobilisation and stirring up riots.[14]

New groups that rise into fame and power by surfing a revolutionary tidal waves typically end up defining themselves as those who overthrew an enemy of the people. For them the enemy, even when vanquished, still has its uses. By keeping up the memory of a former threat, allegedly still lurking in the shadows, they can by one stroke create a permanent mobilising myth, deny their own quest for power and at the same time legitimise it by referring to a greater evil that has to be kept constantly in check. And, as Anton Blok has pointed out, highlighting such differences is all the more vital when the actual differences between rival groups are small, even verging on nonexistent.[15]

The enemy categories discussed in this book are typically seen from outside, as instruments of negative identification: as others, who at a certain point of time have become somebody's enemies. What we are about to witness are thus essentially tendentious, distorted ways of thinking. In each case it remains with the reader to decide, whether the expressed threats were genuine or not. The in-groups are referred to as the holders of the defining centre, often representing a so-called ironic we: a self-identity that is imagined to be constant, but whose essence and position change as enmities change.

On the other hand, those who have successfully brought out and even put into action a violence-inducing hate speech are often themselves treated, by the posterity, as enemies of the public good. The in-group self can be pronounced rational and good, and the enemy respectively irrational and evil, but others may later reverse this judgement.

Yet the problem of evil concerns everybody. The issue simply cannot be boiled down to saying that evil people do evil deeds. Both good and bad things are done by ordinary people. Sometimes the worst evil is born

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[14] Most notably the so-called Arab Spring or the revolutionary wave of protests occurring in the Arab world from December 2010 onwards.

[15] Blok, *Honour and Violence*, 115-35.

out of what might be called goodness-gone-bad. A self-righteous motivation allowing someone to deal out allegedly justified punishments, in the name of a chosen group of suffering victims, may well lead to attacking relatively innocent parties as surrogate enemies. It is easier to point out scapegoats, to have someone to blame, instead of slowly and painfully working out how to actually solve a problem for the good of all. For scapegoats, when unjustly blamed, also eventually end up as victims.

A researcher, more than anybody else, must steer clear of the allure of taking sides. While events unfold, all involved parties typically believe that they are in possession of a right cause and a legitimate interest. In a conflict, and its ensuing historiography, there are winners and losers. Neither party is in themselves a reliable witness, regardless of their position on the post-conflict stage.

In an optimal situation we have access to tales told by each side and can eventually judge for ourselves. Historians possibly do best if they just describe what happened, letting the past events and attitudes speak for themselves. Even a modicum of what has been called *methodological empathy*, a willingness to try and understand a group typically cast as evildoers as they at their time understood themselves,[16] is recommendable for any student of enmity.

In a world where more and more people are concerned about the unchecked spread of hate speech, the old flippant definition of the ideological opponent as 'those whom we love to hate' may be about to be reversed. It is tempting to define those who think differently, e.g. those who criticize the current politics of multiculturalism, immigration or globalisation, as 'those who only hate', whereas the self-styled tolerant majority pronounces itself as 'those who choose to love' – the object of such an ideologically motivated love of course being those who, according to the defining party, truly deserve to be loved.[17]

The inclination to see one's opponent as being full of hate, not just as a political adversary with differing – opposing! – opinions, typically goes with a tendency to see one's own in-group as the epitome of love. This so-

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[16] The concept was coined by George Mosse. It has been applied particularly by the researchers of fascism, notably Roger Griffin. See Feldman, "Editorial introduction", xiv, xxiv and Griffin, *A Fascist Century,* 21, 99.

[17] This 'we love, they hate' definition of a national in-group was particularly striking in the Norwegian response to the mass murder committed by Anders Behring Brejvik in July 2011. See e.g.

http://interuwcmag.wordpress.com/2011/08/03/answer-hate-with-love-response-to-the-terrorist-attack-in-norway/

called sentimentalism is based on a moralistic notion that there is right and wrong kind of thinking and, respectively, good and bad people. It brings about an offhand division of social phenomena into acceptable and unacceptable, instead of seeing them as equally legitimate options, thus allowing people to be divided neatly into victims and oppressors. As such, it is liable to produce black-and-white thinking, particularly when it comes to tolerating – or, not tolerating – differences of political opinion. When the opponent is classified as evil from the outset, there is no need to negotiate, or even to listen to the other's point of view.[18] Truly democratic discourse, on the other hand, is based on the exact opposite: expressed differences of opinion are acceptable, necessary, even indispensable. The best possible solution can only be reached after a genuine and detailed argument, taking into consideration as many different sides of the matter as possible.

Even though they at a first glance seem immensely distant from one another, hate speech and love speech constitute the opposite ends of one and the same continuum. Both can be used equally for separating Us from Them. A good example of such practice is evident in the long history of nationalist ideologies: whom the nation is urged to love directly indicates whom it must hate. Most bluntly this mindset has been called, by theorists on fascism, the 'Gardening state': an inclination to try and dictate which groups, or ideologies, are allowed to grow within a certain state or society, and which must be uprooted.[19]

Research on hate speech in general suffers from a phenomenon that might be called the backwards path. A retrospective glance always reveals a preceding process. Every outbreak of violence can be followed back to its source: to the hate speech that appeared and developed, decades in the making, slowly gained momentum, and eventually sprouted a deadly bloom.

Yet, not all stereotypes are negative and not all discourses of hate ever result in actual violence. Hate speech can at times be a fairly safe way of letting out hot air in a social conflict. Born out of an initial friction, in a newly formed contact situation, it can peter out speedily enough without causing considerable damage. Opinions can and do change and differences can be settled without bloodshed.

On the other hand, history knows far too many developments in which vicious representations of enemies, either outside or inside a society, have

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[18] For an inspired, if also indignant, analysis of sentimentalism, see Dalrymple, *Spoilt Rotten: The Toxic Cult of Sentimentality.*
[19] The concept was originally introduced by Zygmunt Bauman; see Griffin, *A Fascist Century,* 43.

given momentum to escalation and led to acts of violence on either individual or mass scale. Too often a story has preceded a deed: a supposed knowledge of what some of Them have already done to some of Us has inspired and justified the first actual atrocities.

This volume documents actual instances of enemy imagery and historical cases of hate speech at their most destructive: as they appear in the context of war and preparation of war, paramilitary action and civil unrest. The cases discussed range from early 20th century revolutionary civil war setting to the ideologically explosive interwar period, and onwards, to the Second World War, the more recent Rwadan genocide and the ongoing conflict in the Middle-East. We even look into the near future: when enemies are about to become invisible, what is left of their images?

Tiina Lintunen tackles the moralist, judgemental treatment of Red female soldiers by the propagandists of the opposing side – the conservative, chauvinist, tradition-loving White male writers. The case in point is the Finnish Civil War of 1918 that broke out towards the end of the World War I, at least partly as a corollary of the Russian October Revolution.

The nationalist ideologues typically condemn 'our women' who have associated with the enemy socially or sexually, particularly in wartime conditions. The backlash follows closely after the end of hostilities, often in the form of public cutting of hair and other similar acts of personal shaming, thus making them run the gauntlet of indignant townspeople.

As Lintunen shows, in the cases of civil war the treatment of women enemy soldiers is considerably harder. The women in question have not only transgressed the boundaries, but gone completely over. They have co-opted the ideology of the opponent and consequently joined the ranks of the enemy. They are accordingly presented as monsters who by carrying arms and engaging in actual battle have violated not only the ideals of their nation but the very idea of 'normal' womanhood.

The article by Marja Vuorinen focuses on the enemy images presented in Adolf Hitler's one-time best-seller, *Mein Kampf* (My struggle, 1925-6), in which he outlined an early version of his political programme. *Mein Kampf* is a highly controversial, notorious book. With its flagrant racist and otherwise hateful content it has well earned its reputation as an 'evil' book. One of its main features is an assortment of perceived enemies: imagined counter-forces threatening to curb the success of the German nation.

The enemies listed in *Mein Kampf* include the Bolsheviks, the Jews, the Austrian royal house, German parliamentarians, (Jewish) Viennese

journalists and intellectuals, and speculating international (Jewish) capitalists. Most of these negative images were not created by Hitler, but came from a much older European stock.

Actually, Hitler's most effective innovation may well have been to bring the Good Self back to the foreground. Imagining the superior Aryan German race as the eventual historical winner, and himself as its messiah, was the recipe for his temporary success. The enemy-images were, at least to some extent, introduced specifically as inversions, to accentuate the heroic self-image. This did not prevent them from being lethal.

Vesa Vares' groundbreaking article focuses on the deliberate use of humour to convey comic aspects of the enemy. In general, the war-time propaganda has a tendency towards the pathetic. Representations of threatening military adversaries and suffering civilian victims are usually deadly serious, as fits their grim context.

Consequently, humoristic enemy images rarely appear as a topic of research. Humour is, after all, a mediating genre. No matter how crude or inane the humorous expressions may be, they nevertheless presents a more human face of the opponent – particularly when compared to the more traditional images of cruel, pillaging, murdering enemies.

The target enemy that Vares discusses is the Russian (Soviet) army of the World War II, as portrayed in the Finnish wartime newspaper causeries and short comic films intended for audiences on both the home and the fighting front, designed to keep up the morale of the nation. Vares' typology of fictional enemy characters, both in their deadly serious and more comic aspects, clearly has a potential of being applied to other similar cases of enemy imagery.

The images of the Soviet soldiers as stupid, lazy, greedy, and not particularly brave, constantly at war with their equally stupid superiors, drew upon older images of a more peaceful past. Their main function was not so much to show the enemy as human, but rather to remind, by showing the opposite, the fighting Finnish nation of its own superior qualities, such as intellect, work ethic, selflessness, acceptance of hierarchy and a courageous spirit. Presenting the enemy in a comic guise added pleasant new flavour to the basic message. The average reader no doubt felt empowered by the flattering comparison.

Sarah Gendron's article deals with one of the most recent and most striking cases of an ethnic conflict slowly reaching a critical point during the course of decades, culminating in a mass murder with a death toll rising up to an estimate of 800 000 people.

The genocide that took place in 1994 in the small East African nation of Rwanda over the course of approximately 100 days was the outcome of

a longstanding ethnic tension between two peoples, who had slowly grown politically and culturally more and more apart: the minority Tutsi, who had controlled power for centuries, and the majority Hutu, who had seized power in the rebellion of 1959–62 by overthrowing the earlier Tutsi monarcy.

Coming, as it seemed, out of nowhere, with the aid of a powerful media machine, the propaganda effort deliberately built up a racist hatred. It was conveyed to large, often illiterate audiences mainly via popular music and radio shows. The Rwandan case of mass murder clearly shows the frightening, and frighteningly speedy, power of the media. Furthermore, it illustrates the ability of seemingly harmless, music-based popular radio programmes, which normally seek mainly to entertain audiences, to induce people into horrendous acts, when deliberately used for such ends by unscrupulous individuals.

During the Rwandan genocide, cell-phones and the internet had not yet been introduced. Some lessons about the power of the most modern means of communication can nevertheless be learned from it. Was the Rwandan genocide perhaps a dress rehearsal for certain excesses of the so-called Arab Spring of 2010-11?

Ron Schleifer provides a fresh view on the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. The chapter deals with how Israelis and Arabs have been using propaganda since the Oslo Accords (1993) in order to further their political goals. Like Vares, Schleifer too uses 'humoristic' political cartoons and propaganda films as source materials, even though the humour they may contain is far more dismal in tone. The focus is on the imagery used by each side to project the blame away from the self by way of attaching it to the opponent.

What results is the basic technique of demonization, used by nations and armies systematically since World War I, in order to further their military and political goals. This is done either by way of crude humour, showing the opponents as grotesque or weak in cartoon caricatures, or by way of more straightforward propaganda films, evoking deep anguish by showing children as targets of terrorist marksmen's bullets. The Israeli and Palestinian media displays a classic arsenal of the rhetoric of blame, e.g. poison and illness metaphors, and portraying the personality of the leader of the opposite side in an unfavourable light.

According to Schleifer, the Palestinians have come out on top in the media war: they use propaganda that is more graphic, shamelessly recycling both ancient myths and the propagandistic creations of yesteryear.

Aki-Mauri Huhtinen looks at modern warfare from the point of view of a modern standing army. His perspective is exceptionally wide, ranging

from the deepest millennia-old tradition to the tentative, slowly materialising possibilities of the present, pointing towards the immediate future. The article carries the reader from the days of Sun Tzu to those of Achilles, and onwards to the present age of Al Qaida and Muammar Gaddafi, of botnet, Facebook and cyberspace, and even beyond, to the future military operations happening so fast that they completely evade the human eye – perhaps even the eye of a cyborg. The focus is on the future of warfare and its relation to the changing philosophy of war.

Huhtinen's article sheds light on the way how an enemy turns from a visible to an invisible enemy. This change is a corollary of the globalising of the economy, supported by the fast-developing information industry. In the western world speed is seen as a virtue. Speeding something up, or speed itself, makes things invisible. The human eye cannot see a missile flying in the sky, a virus advancing inside the human body or the information streams of a computer. Winning the struggles is more and more based on the ability to move faster than the opponent or adversary. Being slow one becomes visible, and at the same time vulnerable: a possible target for the enemy to strike.

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FILTHY WHORES AND BRAVE MOTHERS: WOMEN IN WAR PROPAGANDA

TIINA LINTUNEN

The beginning of the 20th century was a time of change in traditional gender roles. Women began to disobey the traditional norms regulating the relationship of the sexes particularly visibly in the many left-wing revolutionary operations across Europe. In Russia armed women participated in the First World War, as well as in the Russian revolution and the ensuing Civil War. Furthermore, women participated actively in the attempted leftist coups in Germany and Hungary in 1919 and in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. Also in Finland women joined the service troops and the Red Guard during the Civil War in 1918.

By supporting the revolution Red women undermine the *status quo*. These women challenged the traditional women's role. Their conservative opponents perceived such action as threatening, confusing and reprehensible. Thus the women provided their opponents a useful way to distance all Red (i.e. leftist) women and represent them as 'the others' who are threatening 'us'. During the war, the Whites (i.e. right wing) spread rumours and strengthened propagandistic stereotypes about the Red women, which affected the public opinion on the White side. Mythical stereotypes were applied to the Red Women, describing them as aggressive, unfeminine, indecent and unfit for motherhood.

Through a textual analysis of newspaper articles and contemporary literature this study argues that morality and conservative ideal of motherhood were the main in-group virtues used in the propaganda against the Red women. These virtues were associated with respectable women at the beginning of the 20th century and the Reds were, accordingly, accused of lacking them.

The defaming of female political opponents has been widely used in connection with civil wars and revolts. The Finnish case serves as an example of how politically active leftist women were stereotyped in the opponents propaganda. It is compared to similar tendencies in certain other European countries, such as Spain and Hungary. The ideal role of a

woman at the beginning of the 20th century and how it was reflected in these threat images shall also be discussed.

1. The images of a woman in war propaganda

Effective psychological war has always been a decisive part of successful warfare. Persuasion and propaganda have been its tools. Propaganda itself is a complex term and scholars have defined it in various ways. I have adopted here the definition by Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell: 'Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.'[1] During the 20th century, propaganda became an even more crucial instrument of warfare since the electronic media enabled its fast distribution to the masses.[2]

Creating brutal images of the enemy has for centuries been used in propaganda. Its main purpose has been to unify one's own front, to strengthen the national identity and to legitimate aggressive behaviour towards the enemy. The essential content of these images is negativity. The enemy is often described as aggressive, threatening or ridiculous. Old fears and prejudices are re-introduced while accumulating new hatred. These images are based on strong emotions and therefore laborious to disprove by rational arguments.[3]   Enemy images are seldom restricted to soldiers, or even to men alone. It is typical to stigmatize a whole nation or group as an enemy, including its women. This applies also to civil wars. A major function of propaganda is to alienate the enemy and create boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. Stereotyping the enemy negatively is one of the most used methods of war propaganda. According to Stuart Hall, stereotypes are used to create boundaries between the acceptable and

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[1] Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 7.
[2] Finch "Psychological Propaganda: The War of Ideas on Ideas During the First Half of the Twentieth Century", 370-1.
[3] Wunsch, "Lupa vihata – propaganda ja viholliskuvat mielipiteen muokkaajina konfliktitilanteissa" [License to hate – propaganda and enemy images moulding the opinion in a conflict], 264; Wunsch, *Punainen uhka. Neuvostoliiton kuva johtavassa suomalaisessa sanomalehdistössä maaliskuusta 1938 talvisodan päättymiseen maaliskuussa 1940.* [The Red Threat. Image of the Soviet Union in Finnish press from March 1938 til the End of the Winter war in March 1940], 18, 353; Luostarinen, *Perivihollinen* [Archenemy], 26; Knightley, *The first Casualty. The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker from the Crimea to Vietnam*, 82-4.

the unacceptable. This division strengthens a sense of solidarity between those who are 'normal' and further excludes the 'abnormal' from the society. According to Hall, stereotypes serve the strategy of splitting, because they clearly divide the members of a society into those who fulfil certain norms and those who do not. This grouping of people should, to a large extent, be seen as an act of exercising power. With the use of stereotypes the in-group also creates a clear impression of 'us'. By categorizing their environment, people create and maintain their own tangible world views.[4]

The aim of war propaganda is not merely to create a negative image of an enemy but also to strengthen one's own national identity. It is extremely important to create concordance among the ranks and evoke one's own superiority over the enemy. Women have an important part in the construction of a positive self-portrait. They often get to represent the purity of the nation. This sets great demands to the women's virtue. They are placed on a pedestal to be admired, but at the same time they are put under public control. As Nagel says, 'women are thought by traditionalists to embody family and national honour; women's shame is the family's shame, the nation's shame, the man's shame.'[5] In the propaganda the nation's women's virtue is typically emphasised, whereas the women of the opposite side are actively defamed.

2. Case Finland

Finland was declared independent on December 6th, 1917, in the aftermath of the Russian revolution. During the preceding months the nation had divided into Reds (revolutionary leftists) and Whites (government-supporting rightists). The Reds started a revolution[6] on January 27th, 1918, in the southern Finland. At the same time, the government-supporting Whites undertook actions in the northern Finland against the Red Guard and the Russian military troops still located in Finland. The bloody civil war only lasted for three and a half months, but approximately 36 000 Finns lay dead in its wake. Most of them were Reds, of the losing side.

On a propagandistic level, the Reds, as the citizens of one's own nation who had become enemies, were described by the winning White side as

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[4] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'", 258-9.
[5] Nagel, "Ethnicity and Sexuality", 254.
[6] The Reds called the uprising a Revolution, whereas the Whites afterwards labelled it a Rebellion. The historians are still arguing about the name of the event, but most prefer the neutral term of Civil War.

brutal creatures. The Whites were referring to them as monsters who had set their inner animal instincts free. This utterly stark image of the enemy included their women as well. The White propaganda utterly condemned the way how the Red women had participated in the war in civil and military tasks.

In civil wars the creation of enemy images is particularly difficult because the citizens, instead of attacking foreign enemies, rise against their own fellow citizens. Thus strong propaganda tools are needed to establish otherness, to create such a negative image of the opponents that warfare against them seems reasonable and acceptable. In the Finnish Civil War both sides aimed to represent the enemy as inhumanly cruel, devious and vile. Many old prejudices were re-established. During the war, newspapers published many articles in which anonymous 'eye-witnesses' told stories of the brutal actions of the enemy. The most negative terms were used to describe the torture that had happened before the actual killing. Nobody was answerable for the truth value of the articles. The responsibility was evaded by the use of passive forms: 'We have been informed by a reliable source'.[7]

Such published rumours facilitated the fine-tuning of the public opinion. The following two quotations from a well known and respected conservative newspaper, *Aamulehti*, published in April 1918 illustrate the common pattern:

> This time we shall tell a story of one eye-witness based on his own experiences: '*Everybody*[8] who is captured alive by these Red beasts is taken to a most awful theatre of torture that the imagination of a depraved diabolic mind can create. These creators of a hell on earth tear their victim's most sensitive body parts to pieces and rejoice at the prolongation of the agonies of the poor victims so that death would not put an end to this infernal performance too early'.[9]
>
> First their shoes were taken off, then they had to stand in the snow until their feet had been frozen and all their clothes were taken off except underwear. Then they had been pricked with bayonets all over their bodies. Even that was not enough, in order to make the bestiality complete

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[7] See Paavolainen, *Poliittisen väkivaltaisuudet Suomessa 1918 I: ´Punainen terrori'* [Political violence in Finland in 1918: 'Red terror'], 251-5; Turunen, *Veripello: Sisällissodan surmatyöt Pohjois-Kymenlaaksossa 1918* [Fields of Blood: Civil War Killings in Pohjois-Kymenlaakso in 1918], 271-2; Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet: Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* [Court-Martial without Law: Punitive Measures in the Finnish Civil War of 1918], 134.

[8] Emphasis added by the writer.

[9] Newspaper *Aamulehti* 9.4.1918.

had they all finally been – castrated. This disgusting 'pleasure' *is said to be quite usual*[10] for the Reds.[11]

These articles claim that the Reds tortured *all* of their prisoners and that the castration of the imprisoned male enemies was *quite usual* for them. In reality, most of these rumours of mutilations were based on no evidence. Some of the priests that were named as victims of this sort of violence continued their lives safe and sound.[12] Horror stories, similar to the ones quoted here, were used on both sides of the front, and people believed them at least to a certain extent.[13] For example, many of those Red women who fled to the east in the end of the war specifically explained that they were scared of the approaching White troops, who *had been said* to be revengeful and violent.[14]

3. Red women in myth and stereotype

For the purposes of this article, 'stereotypes' are defined as sweeping generalizations based on rumours or anecdotes. By 'myths' I refer to stories that at some point have been believed to be true. A myth in itself is a concept with several meanings. In the first place, myths are living and changing stories that fulfil a certain social function. In war propaganda, their obvious function is to glorify one's own troops and defame the opponents. Myths include connotations and, thus, as it were, reflect the contrast between the accepted and the excluded.[15] Thereby myths can be utilized to produce Otherness.[16]

Roland Barthes has stated that what is required of a myth is an immediate effect. Once the myth has spread as the accepted truth disentangling it later is hard because a myth is supposed to be stronger than any rational facts that might be brought up afterwards. Particularly in

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[10] Emphasis added by the writer.

[11] Newspaper *Aamulehti* 17.4.1918.

[12] Paavolainen, ibid., 251-2.

[13] Recycled atrocity stories circulated e.g. during the World Wars. See Knighley ibid., 83 and Kranjc "'Long Live Our Honest Girls': The Image of Women in Slovene Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1942-1945", 61f.

[14] Lintunen, *Punaisen naisen kuvat. Vuonna 1918 tuomitut Porin seudun punaiset naiset.* [Images of Red women. The women who were sentenced in 1918 in the district of Pori], 85.

[15] Peltonen and Stenvall, "Johdanto. Myyttien ja symbolien tulkinnoista" [About Interpretations of Myths and Symbols], 11.

[16] Lindholm, "Introduction: A conceptual discussion", for *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Formation of Identity and Dynamics of Conflict in the 1990s*, 26.

war propaganda, a lot of exaggerated and even downright fabricated tales are told about the atrocities of the enemy. As Barthes has stated, it is too late to try to annul the effects of a story after it has been told, because the damage has already been done. When suspicion once has been thrown on somebody, it is hard to dispel it with new facts.[17]

In the war propaganda produced by the Finnish Whites, the Red enemies were described as animals and barbarians, who knew no higher values.[18] The following quotation illuminates how the Red women were correspondingly targeted:

> While a Red guardsman villain is called a human beast, this name is only too lenient for his feminine counterpart. Therefore any actions of elimination and punishment must with all intensity be applied also to women and especially to women, because otherwise we will never get this plague pulled out by its roots. So, let us kick the Red women soldiers, whores and Russian brides out of this society, away from the healthy people.
> Absolutely away! [19]

At the end of the war a purging of the nation of its disloyal members was demanded in the newspapers. The eliminating should also be applied to the women who were seen to have been depraved by the Red decay. In this stern metaphor, society is the living body in which the Reds are seen as an injurious abscess. In order to heal the society, this sick and evil part of the body should be cut off before the whole body will become contaminated. Accusations of enemies as destroyers of civilisation are typical of hate discourses and similar metaphors have also been used in several other contexts, e.g. in the World Wars.

In the White Finland, the images of the Red women were the result of efficient propaganda. On the basis of certain individuals, generalizations were made about all Red women. Women who served in the Red Guard were described as the unnatural deviations whose very existence threatened the White value system. 'The others' also included the wives and mothers of the Red guardians. They had not participated in the war, but were stigmatized due to their family ties.

Red women were labelled to fit four pejorative categories: women soldiers were called 'tigresses', mothers were seen as 'sources of evil', the nurses were 'sisters of love' and Russian soldiers' girlfriends were

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[17] Barthes *Mytologioita* [Mythologies], 183, 191.

[18] Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu, kansalaissota ja kapina* [War of liberation, civil war and rebellion], 155, 167, 221.

[19] Newspaper *Aamulehti* 24.4.1918.

defamed as 'Russian brides'.[20] With these stereotypes, the Whites stigmatized Red women as abnormal, vile creatures. The characterisations of these women and the stories about their actions gained ever more peculiar features while spreading during the course of the war.

These stereotypes uncover what the decent women of those days must *not* be like. At the same time, they tell about the ideal woman of the period.

3.1. Women's duties at the war

The women's attendance in the war was seen natural and acceptable when they worked in nursing and maintenance. However, all women were not satisfied with these traditional care tasks but wanted to go to the front to fight. In the Finnish Civil War women of both sides wanted to serve as armed. However, women's aim to fight next to men was strictly condemned by both the White and the Red administration, and military training for women was forbidden.[21] Defying these prohibitions some young women began to establish detachments by themselves, and eventually there were approximately 2000 armed women in the Red Guard. First they were kept in reserve but as the defeat drew closer, women were allowed first to participate in the patrolling duties and finally accepted to the front in arms.

The negative attitude towards women soldiers was connected to the wider ideas of the period of the ideal gender roles. According to a conservative view the women's natural environment was home, which was the basic unit of the society. As bearers of the home, women were granted a significant role in the building of the nation. With industrialisation the concept of family changed. The idea of the nuclear family was created when young couples started a family after they had migrated to towns in search of work. This was a loosened version of the old wider family model of the several generations' house communities. The nuclear family was a fostering unit to which only the parents and the children belonged. In this model, the woman was responsible both for the home and for the moral education of the children. Wider circles and participation in social activities was reserved for men. It was the woman's social and patriotic duty to raise their children into citizens.[22] A similar attitude was dominant

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[20] Paavolainen, *Poliittisen väkivaltaisuudet Suomessa 1918 II: 'Valkoinen terrori'* [Political violence in Finland in 1918: 'White terror'], 204-6.
[21] Lintunen, "Punaiset naiset aikansa naiskuvan haastajina" [Red women challenging the image of a woman], 116.
[22] Ibid.

also in the Southern Europe. In Catholic Spain an ideal woman was supposed to be a *perfecta casada*, i.e. a perfect housewife who devoted herself to the home and family.[23]

The myth of a woman as a being who gives birth and preserves life had been strong.[24] A woman was also supposed to maintain and support the *status quo*. Acting as a soldier and killing people was twice as bad when performed by a woman, because that was against the expectations set by her gender role.[25] For this reason women's participation in the masculine war was considered unaccepted, reprehensible and threatening. The Whites saw the arming of women in the Red Guard as a double fraud against the prevailing society: it was seen as an attack not only against the legal government but also against the whole gender system.

The women's exceptional military action was strictly condemned in the White propaganda. Three main themes were applied against women-in-arms: they were represented as threatening, ridiculous and immoral. The White propaganda created a brutal image in which women transformed into dreadful beasts when they emerged from their nursing roles and turned into warriors. The newspaper *Uusi Päivä* described how many women who had worked peacefully in the Red Guard in civil tasks at the beginning of the war, eventually fought like animals when the Reds started to withdraw. All members of the Red Guard, men and women, were considered traitors after the war, but women's participation in the rebellion was seen as the most shocking.[26]

The animalization of the Red women was not the only means to separate them from the Whites. In their speeches and writings, the Whites also tried to ridicule women soldiers. A favourite target of irony was their manly clothing. Female soldiers wore unconventional manly clothes and cut their hair short.[27]

> In their trousers and in other men's wear, wearing, nevertheless, women's shoes and lots of make-up on their faces these guardsmen looked very ridiculous while they stood guard with a rifle on their shoulders. Otherwise they were like little devils.[28]

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[23] Nash, *Defying male civilization: women in the Spanish civil war,* 10-4.

[24] Lähteenmäki, "Miehet, naiset ja sota" [Men, women and war], 43-5.

[25] Lintunen, ibid., 120f, 130.

[26] Newspaper *Uusi Päivä*, 16.4.1918.

[27] Hämäläinen, "Lahden työväen järjestyskaarti – punakaarti vv. 1917-1918 organisaationa ja sodankäyntivälineenä" [The Guard of the working class in Lahti – the Red Guard of 1917-1918 as an organization and a tool of warfare], 115.

[28] Newspaper *Ilkka* 12.4.1918.

The use of trousers indeed became the characteristic of the armed women, which attracted most attention and suspicion. In the early 1900s women wore only skirts and dresses in public; trousers on a woman were a clear signal of an exception. Deviation from tradition symbolised not only revolution and mutual female solidarity, but also the breaking of the limits previously confining their sex. With their mere clothes the women were able to declare to the surrounding world that they were on their way to search for a change in the system.[29]

Some Whites saw the arming of the women as the last and most pathetic deed of the Reds. The famous author Juhani Aho described the first woman soldier he saw as follows:

> This is now the last version of the Red guardsman, I think. It is melting away like last winter's snow. It really is the last version, it is not a boy, however, but a woman, a chubby little woman, fat and plump, a rifle on her shoulder, an ammunition belt on her waist, a yellow laced shoe on her feet, a woollen knitted skiing cap on her head – in short a woman in arms.[30]

According to Aho, it was a farce to send women to fight against the German soldiers who were currently landing into Finland in order to help the White Army. Aho's mockery was aimed at these women and, through them, at the whole Red Guard, with its 'pathetic' recourse to recruiting even the help of women. Despite the scorn, women soldiers were taken most seriously. This is evident in the light of the fact that more than 400 of the Red women were executed after the war, without proper trials.[31]

3.2. The role of a mother

'[W]omen's role in nationalism is most often that of a mother, the symbol of the national hearth and home.'[32] Mother's capacity as an educator was stressed in both good and bad terms. In the White propaganda the Red mothers were seen as sources of evil who had with their upbringing created Red beasts. The famous Finnish author Ilmari Kianto compared the Red women to she-wolves that produce one litter of

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[29] Lintunen, ibid., 125.

[30] Aho, *Hajamietteitä kapinaviikoilta III* [Reflections from the rebellious weeks III], 195.

[31] Tukkinen, *Naiskapinallisten henkilötappiot 1918* [The Losses of Female Rebels in 1918], 38-64. Paavolainen 1967, 200. Piiroinen-Honkanen 1995, 37.

[32] Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations", 256.

wolf cubs after another and therefore should be killed above all else. This remark did not exclusively refer to armed women but to all Red women who could bear and rear Red children:

> One should ask here why the war saves those women who are seen and known to represent the cruellest element in the Civil War: Should they be saved only because they are women? But is it not a prejudiced or even very short-sighted view not to punish those who with mere reproduction can strengthen the forces of the enemy.[33]

The White mothers were admired for their patriarchal spirit.[34] White women who had sacrificed their sons and husbands for 'the sacred war' were described as heroic, respectable mothers and wives.[35] Red mothers, on the other hand, were described as deceitful and cruel. The newspaper *Uusi Päivä* was severe towards all Red women and wished for their punishment, allowing no mercy nor help for them:

> You bourgeois people of Finland pity the helpless wives and families of Red guardsmen and at the same time those women bake guns into the breads they deliver to their captured husbands and at the same time those women in front of us threaten us with revenge by shaking their fists at us and insulting us. Are you seeking public mercy for those women who in the shape of hypocrisy and faked poverty, suddenly after throwing away their rifles, come back begging for food while carrying the mind of a snake? If this is the case, then why did the best of our boys die in the war, when you short-sighted support and tend the enemy. You feel sorry for these women but have you not seen that the cruelty of a woman is beyond that of a man. […] People have to see the consequences of the crime, otherwise the crime does not vanish but we will be laughed at behind our backs, which is now the case.[36]

The Red mothers, 'the vixens with malicious tongues' as they were called, were in the eyes of the Whites responsible for spreading socialism to the next generation. Some even blamed them for the whole war. A finger of reproach was especially pointed at the more mature, politically active women.[37] According to the conservatives, women's duty was to raise their children to become decent citizens. The mothers of the Reds

[33] Newspaper *Keskisuomalainen*, 12.4.1918.
[34] Olsson, *Myytti ja kokemus* [Myth and experience], 65.
[35] Kivijärvi, "Sankarittaret" [Heroines], 49-52.
[36] Newspaper *Uusi Päivä* 26.4.1918.
[37] Paavolainen, ibid., 204. Piiroinen-Honkanen, *Punakaartin aseelliset naiskomppaniat Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* [Red Guards armed troops of Women in the Finnish Civil War in 1918], 83.