

Advertisement for *Pebeco* Toothpaste (1911)

Abstract

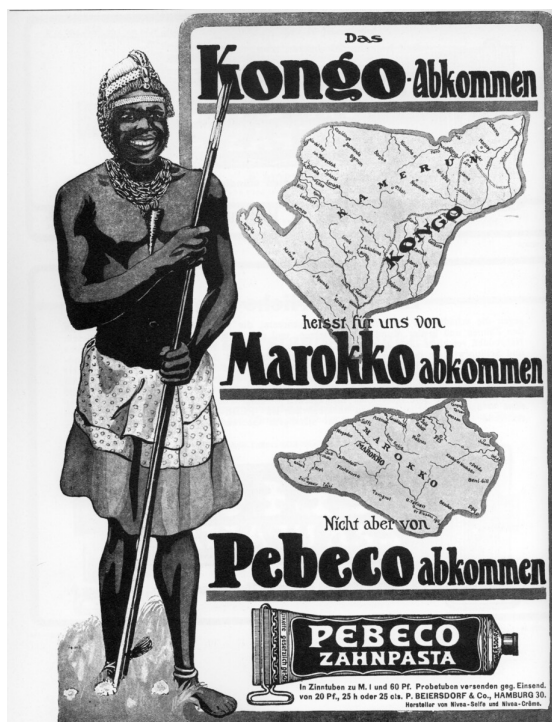
Pebeco was a toothpaste brand of the Hamburg firm Beiersdorf & Co., a company better known today for its globally marketed *Nivea* lotion. The firm invested heavily in advertising, much earlier than most other German companies, which certainly contributed to its growth. This ad for *Pebeco*, crafted in 1911, sought to attract attention by referencing the (second) Morocco crisis, which resulted in the Morocco-Congo agreement. In the agreement, Germany abandoned its interest in Morocco, recognizing French domination there, in return for gaining some territory from the French Congo (which became known as Neukamerun).

The Beiersdorf firm was not connected to colonialism either economically or politically; indeed, its owner, Oscar Trolowitz, who stemmed from an assimilated Jewish family in Silesia, was known to be socially minded and served as a left-wing member of the Center Party in the Hamburg Senate.

Instead, the ad merely seeks to tap into current events, hoping to capitalize on public interest. The text involves a pun in German: “Abkommen” means both an agreement and to abandon something.

The African native (with spear, bare feet, and headdress) had become a commercial stereotype by this time. The figure has perfectly white teeth, which was a legacy of American toothpaste advertising that often used Black figures to advertise toothpaste.

Source



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