

The German Steamroller at the Gates of Paris: *Simplicissimus* Cover (September 15, 1914)

Abstract

This image titled “At the Gates of Paris” was the September 1914 cover of the German humor magazine *Simplicissimus*, showing a German infantryman merrily driving a steamroller (flying the German flag) over a protesting French soldier. A warning sign to the left reads “Caution! Steamroller!” The image caption reads: “The strategic position of the French army appears to us to be significantly more secure than that of the German.” (Clemenceau)

(Georges Clemenceau was a former French prime minister but worked as a journalist in 1914. He would become prime minister again in 1917.)

Before the war, satirical magazines like *Simplicissimus* had cast a critical eye on government policies and social issues, and often ran afoul of government censorship and legal prosecution. With the outbreak of war, however, the humor magazines leapt into support for the war effort without reservation, and they could be counted as one of the earliest disseminators of pro-war “propaganda” in Germany. The joke in the quotation lies in the multiple meanings of the German word *sicherer*, which can mean “more secure,” but also can mean “more certain” (i.e. inescapable), as we see in the image, which shows the fate of France being flattened by the German steamroller to be inescapable.

Source



Source: *Simplicissimus* (Jg. 19) Heft 50, September 15, 1914, cover.

http://www.simplicissimus.info/uploads/tx_lombksjournaldb/pdf/1/19/19_24.pdf

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