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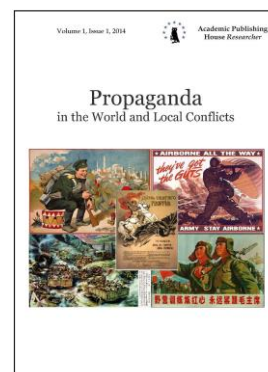
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## Articles and Statements

### Documentary Photography in the Don Periodical Press as an Element of Propaganda During World War I: the «Image of the Enemy» Visualization Features

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#### Abstract

The article studies the shaping and evolution of the “image of the enemy” in documentary photos on the pages of Don newspapers as an element of military propaganda during World War I. The author found certain indicators of the increased “demand” for documentary photography during World War I.

Photography was rarely seen as a historical source, despite the fact that this kind of documentary material was often used for illustrations. The potential of photography is quite wide and photographic material can serve as an independent source in the history of World War I research.

The author determined the role of documentary photography in the World War I coverage and making the “image of the enemy”, analyzed the selected photographic material and revealed its artistic potential. Photos from the Don newspapers of 1915–1917, such as “Priazovskiy krai”, “Yuzhnyi telegraf”, “Taganrogskiy vestnik”, “Donskie oblasntye vedomosti” and others were selected as the objects of analysis.

In the research she follows the shaping process of the “image of the enemy” and points out that such factors as public thoughts on war, mass historical stereotypes and its role in practice of the imperial discourse had a big impact on it.

**Keywords:** World War I, propaganda, documentary photography, image of the enemy, Don periodical press.

#### 1. Introduction

The period of World War I of 1914-1918 was a turning point for the history of war visualization. It was the time of rapid development of the photography and it became an independent form of art swiftly, joining the visual culture of the world. The art of photography was associated with a fundamentally new way of reflecting reality. A photo was seen as a representation of reality and became an independent document while being a form of folk art. Military photography helped to shape the image of war as it was seen by the contemporaries and gradually it evolved into a collective memory as the artifacts of the “Great War”.

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## 2. Materials and methods

Photography was rarely seen as a historical source, despite the fact that this kind of documentary material was often used for illustrations. The potential of photography is quite wide and photographic material can serve as an independent source in the history of World War I research.

We attempted to trace the “image of the enemy” visualization specifics in the newspaper documentary photography as well as to characterize the strategy of excluding “foes” from the Don periodical press as an element of military propaganda during World War I.

The author determined the role of documentary photography in the World War I coverage and making the “image of the enemy”, analyzed the selected photographic material and revealed its artistic potential. Photos from the Don newspapers of 1915–1917, such as “Priazovskiy krai”, “Yuzhnyi telegraf”, “Taganrogskiy vestnik”, “Donskie oblasntye vedomosti” and others were selected as the objects of our analysis.

## 3. Discussion

There is a plenty of publications on the history of World War I, but a number of subjects still remains insufficiently studied, for example, the newspaper documentary photography. Documentary photography only recently became an object of historical research. Historians rarely appeal to the theme of visual representation of World War I. Only several works are devoted to the study of specific historical periods (in particular, World War I) through the “mirror” of visual sources (Zherdeva, 2014; Kuptsova, 2008; Ryabov, 2006; Jahn, 1916; Nagornaya, 2008; Bratolyubova, Trut, 2017). The researches on photography that were published over the past decades are dedicated only to a small number of problems (Smorodina, 2000; Smorodina, 1999; Bratolyubova, 2017; Bratolyubova, 2017a; Legotina et al., 2015). The researchers of photography only mentioned some of the photographers of World War I in their studies (Turovtseva, 1995; Tukhendkholt, 1916) unlike the detailed studies of documentary photographs of the second half of the XIX century and World War II. This gap is not yet filled and the names of talented battlefield photographers were forgotten despite the fact that a huge number of photographic materials were saved after the war. There are practically no works that consider the variety of the “image of the enemy” demonstration in visual sources and its correspondence to reality.

## 4. Results

In the Don newspapers of 1914 – early 1915 one can find only a few battlefield photos due to the prevalence of the verbal information in the periodical press at the beginning of the war. Intense military actions of 1915 and the increased “information hunger” as well as the growing demand for a visual type of information led to an increase of photo publications, improvement of their quality, expansion of the covered topics and the filming types. The public’s attention shifted from the text to the photo. Photography became a valuable information tool that could replace the detailed verbal descriptions. Documentary photography in the newspaper not only illustrated the text, but became an independent source of information.

In Don liberal newspapers such as “Priazovskiy krai”, “Taganrogskiy vestnik” and “Yuzhnyi telegraf” one can find a complete visualization of disasters and horrors of the war. The problem of the consequences of the war was ignored on the pages of the official “Donskie oblastnye vedomosti”. There were no photo documents dedicated to the victims of World War I in the newspapers and one could only see photographs of the enemy losses in the official periodicals. “The Provisional Regulations on Military Censorship” of 1914 and government policy influenced this process. The new censorship restrictions concerned mainly the publication of various kinds of images and photography production.

Photo-documents that were reprinted from the central periodical press were special for the Don newspapers but had no references. The author’s name on the photographic documents was very rare to find. In our research, we found photographs taken by local photographers – A. Nordstein, P. V. Kalinin, P. A. Zolotaryov, M. Makeev and F. Politi.

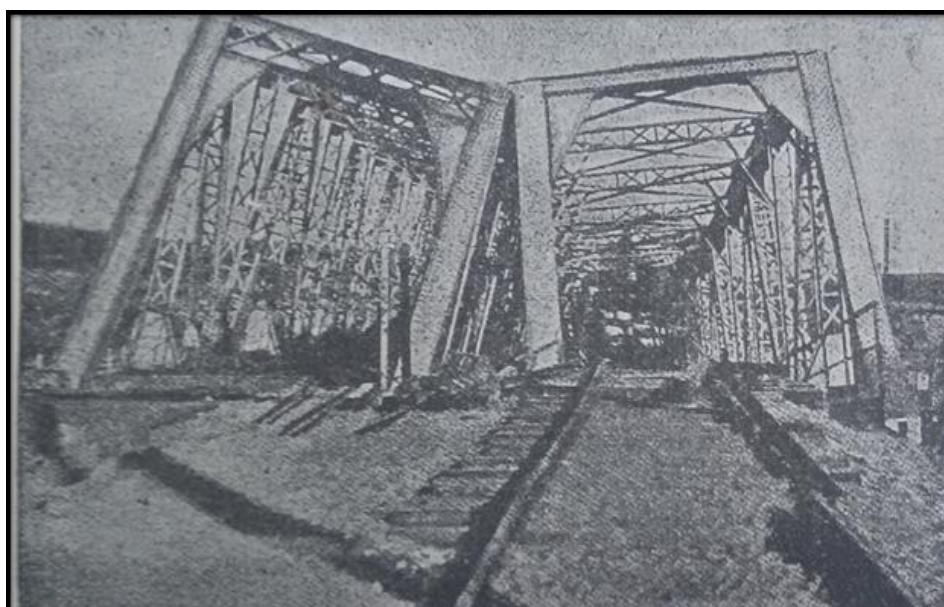
The process of shaping of the “friend” and “foe” images became an integral part of the war agitation propaganda. The “image of the enemy” visualization was a part of the general war information space, informing the rear about the events from the battlefield. The images of “friends” and “foes” were created through stereotypes and mythology of specific individuals and military

events. The formation of the “friends” group started with the designing of a heroic image of the Russian soldier in the Don region during World War I. Generally, “friends” had a strictly personalized character.

The image of a “friend” was opposed to the image of a “foe”. The appearance of this kind of publications during World War I is associated with a need to create a war information space, the need for self-identification and putting “friends” in a separate group through the method of opposition. One can distinguish several characteristic features of visual source groups of the “image of the enemy”: photo documents dedicated to the representatives of the Quadruple Union, leading military chiefs; publications of photos of destroyed buildings and cultural heritage; demonstration of human resources (photos of soldiers), as well as weapons and the publication of photo documents related to unconventional actions towards the deceased.

The goal of the information war was the embodiment of the “image of the enemy” - the topic that is most successfully represented by visual means. In the mass consciousness, the “image of the enemy” acquired more and more stereotyped and de-individualized features and was associated with such concepts as danger, threat and evil.

The Don periodicals widely used the method of the publication of pre-war images of places that were destroyed during the war. As a rule, they were accompanied by a text about the committed violence (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** “The railway bridge, blown up by the Germans during the retreat” (Priazovskiy krai. Newspaper supplement. № 16, 1915)

Another used method was opposing the enemy's destructive and atrocious activities to the allied forces' actions on the battlefield. Even the enemy's method of digging graves was the reason for pointing out the “atrociousness” of German military actions” (Zherdeva, 2014: 77). The “machine way” of burial became one of the main components in the negative “image of the enemy” shaping. Thus, “Priazovskiy krai” published an article with the title “Machinery war”: “The military correspondent of Daily Mail in Brussels saw a whole warehouse of all kinds of machines and devices used in the German army. There were even incendiary shells used by special teams of arsonists for destroying whole cities and villages. A trench digging machine shocked him most of all. The Germans use these to bury the dead and such automatic funeral makes a terrible impression. A plow-car goes ahead followed by a motor loaded with dead bodies, it throws the bodies into a moat dug by a plow; the third car covers the corpses with ground and the fourth car levels and rolls the ground... Thus, the mass grave, one verst long, is ready in a quarter of an hour” (Priazovskiy krai, 1914: 6 dekabrya) (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** “The mass grave in which the bodies of the Germans (killed in battle near Pyasechno, Warsaw Province) were buried using the “machine method” ([Priazovskiy krai. № 320. 1914](#))

The abuse of the human body was another topic of publications. “Priazovskiy krai” published an essay under the title “Bearers of culture” which stated: “In the city of Dubno, the Orthodox and Catholic cemeteries, as well as crypts, were destroyed by the Austrians who built their trenches there. Coffins and human bones were piled in a heap” ([Priazovskiy krai, 1916: 18 sentyabrya](#)). The publication was illustrated by two photos, vividly demonstrating atrocious and disrespectful abuse of the deceased ([Fig. 3, 4](#)).

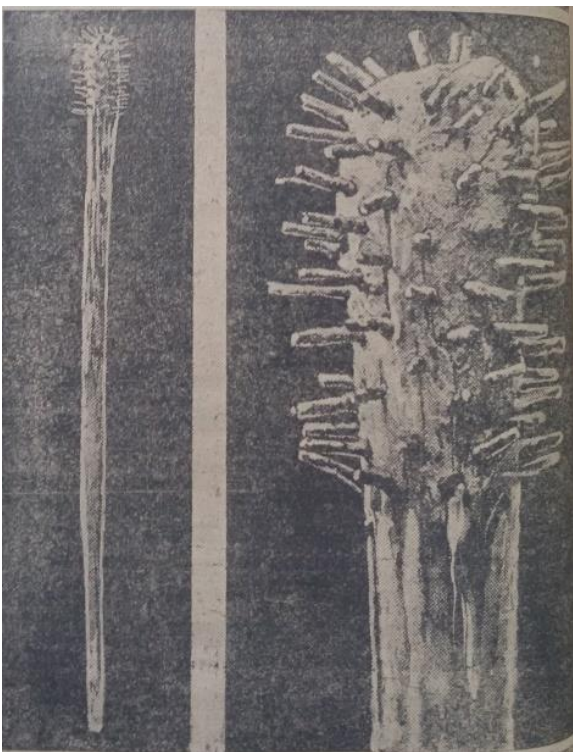


**Fig. 3.** “Zozul Coffin with the remains of a woman, taken from a crypt. One finger on the hand is cut off, possibly with a precious ring” ([Priazovskiy krai. № 246. 1916](#))



**Fig. 4.** “Corpses dug out by the Austrians stand exposed at the graveyard fence”  
(Priazovski krai. № 246. 1916)

The photos depicting actions of the Germans on the occupied territories were published, with a separate block of photo documents that illustrated the enemy’s weapons, their use of suffocating gases and electricity (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** “A German “club” used for killing people poisoned by the suffocating gases”  
(Priazovski krai. № 11. 1916)

Beneath one of these photographs there was a note stating that “the Germans destroy the ancient relics of Reims with shells and the local population - with suffocating gases” and that “even the children wear special masks to protect them from suffocating gases on their way to school” (Priazovskiy krai, 1916: 20 fevralya).

The images of the German soldiers were very rare on the pages of Don newspapers (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6.** “Germans in the trenches” (Priazovskiy krai. Newspaper supplement. № 16. 1915)

### 5. Conclusion

The “image of the enemy” was not canonical in the Russian visual culture. The artists of Don created a template for visual “ravaging” the enemy. After revealing the orientation of hostility rhetoric, it became clear that behind these processes there was, on the one hand, the intentional construction of phobias, and on the other the reproduction of the mass historical stereotypes. Those stereotypes affected the wartime “image of the enemy” as depicted through visual means.

In general, the Don press of this period was a collection of mythologies that corresponded to certain stereotypical ideas of the Russian Empire, as well as to the requests of the authorities. World War I documentary photography performed two main functions on the pages of the Don periodicals – propagandistic and informative. The authorities set the important goal of forming the image of “friends” and “foes”. The publication of photo documents didn’t always achieve the desired effect. The appearance of the increasing number of photos of casualties from both sides made the masses think about the inhumanity of war, its meaninglessness, about the possible defeat and greater losses to come.

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