

THE FIRST MOROCCAN CRISIS AND THE CARTOONISTS

8

Unit 8: The First Moroccan Crisis and the Cartoonists

As many International Baccalaureate students of History know, IB examinations on source analysis (Paper 1) frequently contain a cartoon. Political cartoons, as historical sources, can usefully be contrasted with written sources. Whereas written primary sources often contain excerpts from important documents or statements by leading politicians, political cartoons, taken from magazines and newspapers, reflect public opinion. Well known political cartoonists are able to express an opinion through their cartoons which finds widespread public approval. The cartoonist often makes politicians or other public figures appear ridiculous [funny and stupid] by drawing them as a caricature [funny exaggeration]. Public figures whose appearance is well known, such as Kaiser Wilhelm was at the beginning of the twentieth century, are favourite subjects for political cartoonists.

The cartoons in Unit 8 are taken from the British and German satirical [using irony and sarcasm] magazines *Punch* and *Simplicissimus*. Like all political cartoons, each of the cartoons in Unit 8 contain a political message [meaning]. Through the medium of the cartoon, the cartoonists comment on the big political events of the day. The time covered by the cartoons in Unit 8 is 1905 - 1906, when the first Moroccan crisis was straining [making tense] the relations between the great powers.

Both *Punch* and *Simplicissimus* were very well known in Britain and Germany. Both had reputations as respected, independent political voices. They reflected a section of public opinion in both countries which was educated and liberal. Bernhard von Bülow, chancellor of Germany at the time of the first Moroccan crisis, took the opinions expressed in *Punch* surprisingly seriously. Would British public opinion support Germany if she defended Moroccan independence against France? *Punch*, he wrote in February 1905, was 'recognized as having a good feeling for the British business world'¹.

Punch and *Simplicissimus* prided themselves on taking a critical, common sense point of view when commenting on political events. Through their famous cartoons, the two magazines were often able to make fun of politicians and monarchs in a way which would not have been possible through the written word.

The first Moroccan crisis was triggered by Germany's sudden, dramatic response in March 1905 to French moves to turn Morocco into a colony. The Anglo-French *entente cordiale* of 1904 had been based on a colonial agreement in which Morocco was recognized by Britain as belonging to the French sphere of influence. The Kaiser, then on a Mediterranean cruise, landed in March at Tangier and made a dramatic speech about Morocco's independence and the need for all nations to have an equal opportunity to trade there. The result was an international crisis, in which the possibility of war between France and Germany seemed very real.

German intentions were to isolate France, break up the Anglo-French *entente* and reduce France to a junior partner of Germany. The German government timed the diplomatic offensive to coincide with the sudden weakness of France's ally, Russia. In March 1905,

1. Fürst Bernhard von Bülow *Deutschland und die Mächte* Carl Reissner Verlag (Dresden, 1929) vol.1, p.219 Transl. G.A. Pope

Russia was experiencing a huge military defeat at the hands of Japan and the outbreak of revolution at home.

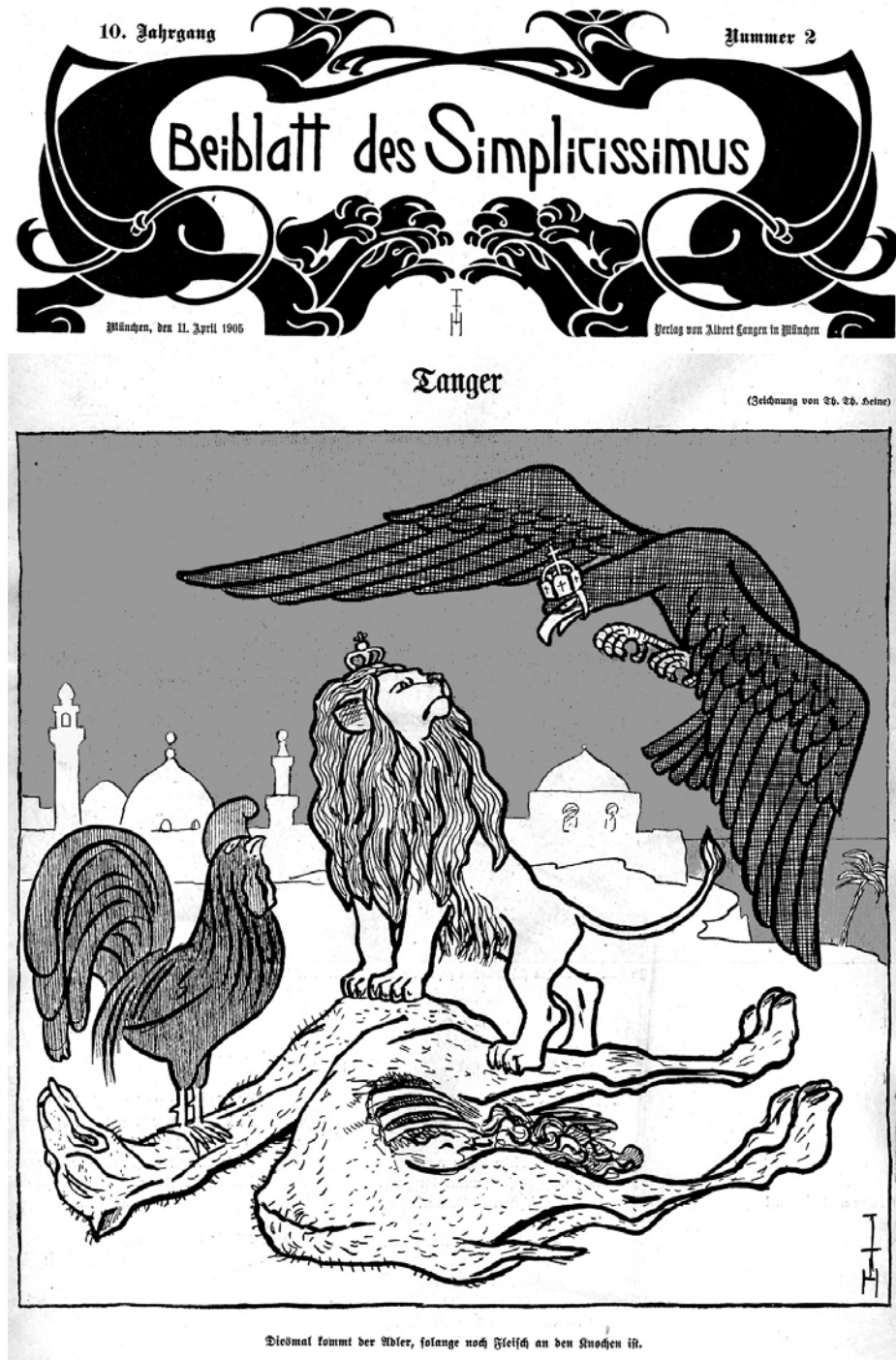
Britain supported France. The Anglo-French *entente cordiale* [friendly agreement] began to change from being a colonial deal, which it had been in 1904, into an informal alliance. Lord Lansdowne, the British foreign secretary [minister], authorized secret military talks to take place with France about cooperation in case of a war with Germany.

Delcassé, the French foreign minister, was encouraged by British support to take a tough line against Germany. However, other French cabinet [top government] ministers did not share his confidence in the ability of France and Britain together to stop Germany. France was not ready for war. Additionally, there was a French suspicion that Britain might be using France in Morocco to prevent Germany from getting a naval base on the Atlantic. (Morocco has both a Mediterranean and an Atlantic coast line.) Delcassé was forced to resign and France agreed to an international conference to settle the Moroccan question. The conference took place in the Spanish port of Algeciras. It began in January 1906 and ended in April.

The Algeciras conference turned out to be a diplomatic defeat for Germany. Both Russia and Britain supported France, whereas Germany got little support from its own allies, Austria-Hungary and Italy. The conference ended by confirming French rights in Morocco.

SOURCE A

Simplicissimus 11th April 1905



Title: 'Tanger' (Tangier)

Text: 'This time the eagle comes while there is still some meat on the bones.'

SOURCE B

Punch 12th July 1905



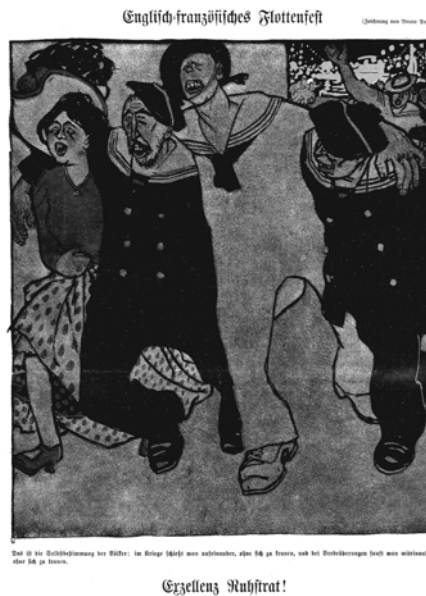
Title: 'Not in the Picture'

Text: 'Scene: On shore, during the visit of the British fleet to Brest.

Mr. Punch (Photographer, to the Kaiser): "Just a little further back, please Sir. Your shadow still rather interferes with the group."'

SOURCE C

Simplicissimus, 9th August 1905

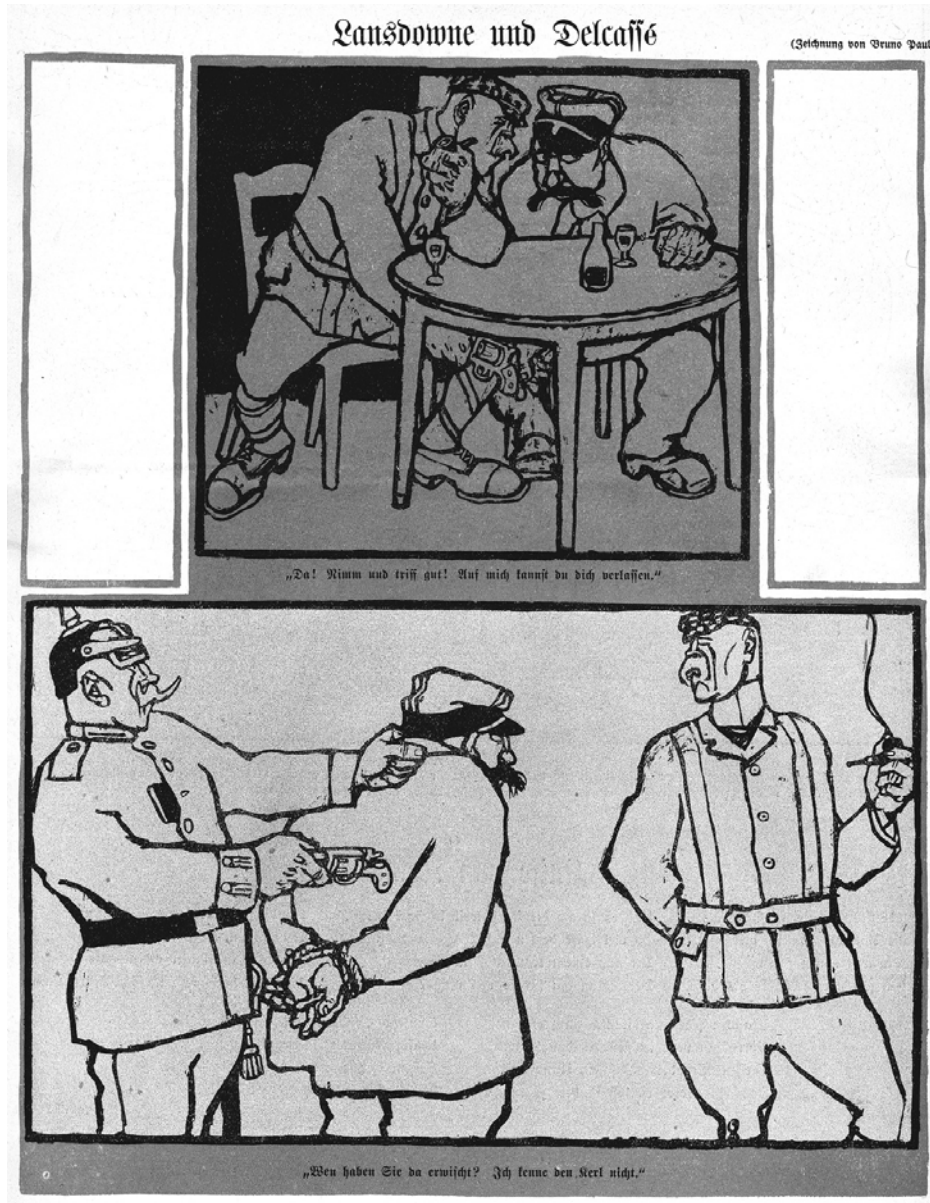


Title: 'English-French fleet festival'

Text: 'This is the fate of nations, which they have chosen themselves. In war people shoot at each other without knowing each other and in times of friendship they go drinking together without knowing each other.'

SOURCE D

Simplicissimus, 31st October 1905



Title: 'Lansdowne and Delcassé'
[The French and British foreign ministers]

Text top picture: "There ! Take it [passing a gun under the table] and don't miss ! You can rely on me."

Text bottom picture: "Who have you caught there? I don't know the fellow."

SOURCE E

Punch, 6th December 1905



Title: 'Only William's Way'

Text:

Madame France: "What a very uppish [arrogant] person !"

Mr. John Bull [England]: "Oh, I suppose it's what he calls being 'correct'."

("In foreign policy the relations of the German Empire with all the Powers are correct, and with most Powers they are good and friendly.")

The Kaiser's speech at the Reichstag - Wednesday, November 29th)

SOURCE F

Punch, 19th July 1905



Title: 'L' amitie oblige' [For the Sake of Friendship]

Madame La France: (Looking at an invitation entitled 'His Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Morocco - At Home..... Conference') "You'll come and see me through this rather dull [boring] function [event], won't you?"

Mrs. Britannia: "Well, it's not much in my line [not to my taste], but anything to please you, my dear."

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SOURCE G

Simplicissimus, 8th January 1906

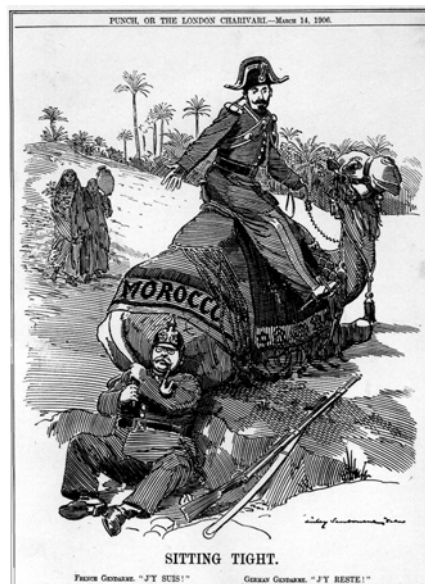


Title: 'The Morocco Conference'

Text: 'The conference was moved to Spain [the port of Algeiras] because there you can count on a cock fight which will do justice to the sport [which was illegal in other countries].'

SOURCE H

Punch, 14th March 1906



Title: 'Sitting tight'

Text:

French Gendarme [policeman]: "Here I am."

German Gendarme: "Here I stay."

SOURCE I

Simplicissimus, 19th March 1906

Der Dreibund in Algeciras

(Zeichnung von Bruno Paul)



Österreich und Italien sehen der Austragung des Streites mit großem Interesse zu.

Title: 'The Triple Alliance in Algeciras'

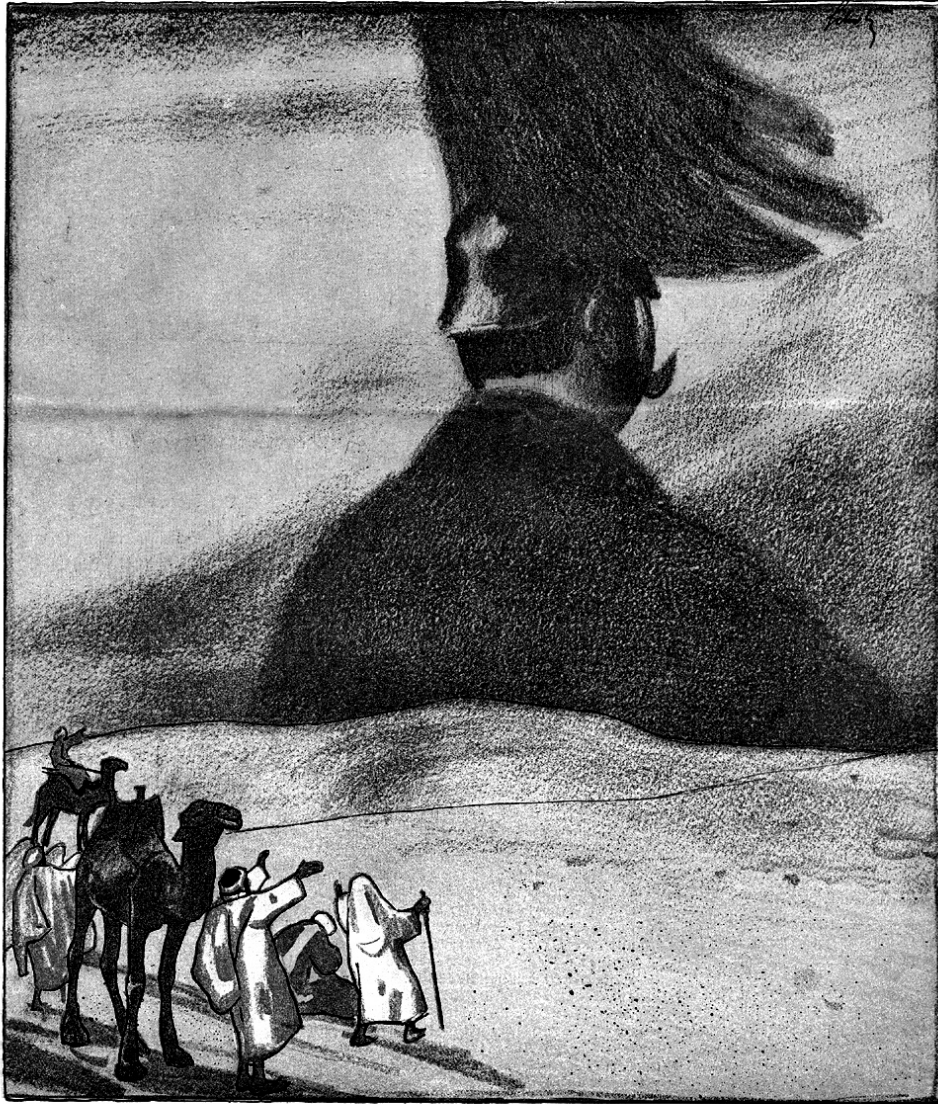
Text: 'Austria and Italy watch the fight going on with great interest.'

SOURCE J

Simplicissimus, 16th April 1906

Fata Morgana

(Zeichnung von Wilhelm Schuf)



— — — Da zeigte sich den Marokkanern in ihrer Not von weitem ein herrliches Bild, welches ihnen Schutz und Hilfe versprach. Aber als sie darauf zugingen, erwies es sich als trügerisches Luftgebilde.

Title: 'Fata Morgana' [a mirage, an optical illusion]

Text: 'Then a magnificent picture appeared to the desperate Moroccans. The picture offered protection and help. But when the Moroccans approached, it turned out to be an illusory [not real] image in the air.'

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1.
 - (i) **Source A** There are four animals in the cartoon. Which animal represents which country? Consult another history book or your teacher if you are not sure.
 - (ii) **Source G** Which countries do the cock and the eagle represent? Do the cock and the eagle represent the same countries as in Source A?
 - (iii) Using the cartoons in this Unit, the cartoon on page 107 in Unit 10 and **Source H** in Unit 1, make a list of great powers and the animals which are typically used to represent them. Why does the Austrian animal have two heads?
 - (iv) **Source B** Which countries do the three sailors represent?
 - (v) **Source D** Who is the third figure in the bottom picture?
 - (vi) **Source I** Which countries do the three figures in the foreground represent? Which countries do the four figures in the background represent?
 - (vii) **Source J** Who is the figure with his back to us in the cartoon?

comprehension

2.
 - (i) **Source A** Explain the significance [meaning] of the title and the text.
 - (ii) **Source D** Were there any secret agreements between Delcassé and Lansdowne which could justify the way they are shown in this cartoon?

application

3.
 - (i) **Sources A - J** Explain what the message is of each cartoon in this Unit.
 - (ii) **Sources B and C** Contrast the ways in which British and German observers saw the Anglo-French naval festival.
 - (iii) **Sources D and E** Contrast the ways in which German and British observers saw the continuing crisis.
 - (iv) **Sources F and G** Contrast the ways in which British and German observers saw the idea of solving the Morocco problem by holding an international conference.
 - (v) **Sources H and I** Contrast the ways in which British and German observers saw the Algeiras conference.

analysis

4. **Sources A - J** Taking into consideration all the cartoons in this Unit, which magazine, Punch or Simplicissimus, took a more objective view of the Moroccan crisis of 1905 - 06, in your opinion? Make sure you refer specifically to each cartoon in your answer.

evaluation