

# Alfred and Friedrich Alfred Krupp as the Butt of Jokes?

The German Perception of the Economic Elite in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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AXEL HEIMSOOTH

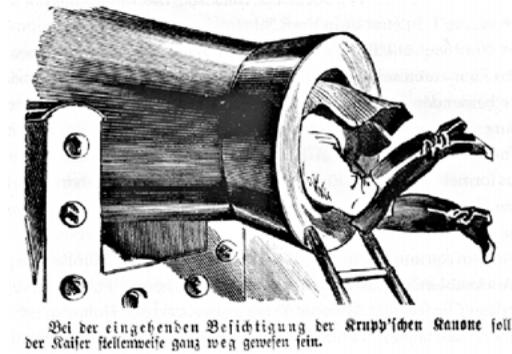
## THE BEGINNING

In the beginning there was admiration. The newspapers reported in a detailed way on the Krupp products. Along with the increasing interest of the press, the company from Essen also found its way into caricature. It was the cartoonist Wilhelm Scholz (1824-1893) who first humorously approached the Krupp cannon in the German journal *Kladderadatsch* in 1867. The occasion for that was the World Exhibition in Paris where the steel company presented the biggest piece of artillery ever produced out of cast steel<sup>2</sup> (cf. Krupp 2011). That gun, which weighed 47 tons, caused a great sensation in the metropolis. This was used by Scholz to convey the superiority of the German weapons to the German readers. However, in 1867 there still was uncertainty, especially among the public in Paris, concerning the functionality of the cannon. One French visitor reported that people wouldn't think too much of such a weapon and that they would probably regard it as attraction rather than as a danger. That fatal misjudgement should become clear in the German-French war of 1870/71, because the reviewers were put right afterwards. The Krupp weapons had a significant share in Germany's victory over France.

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1 I would like to thank Johanna Koczor und Dr. Stefan Siemer in Essen for the English translation of this article.

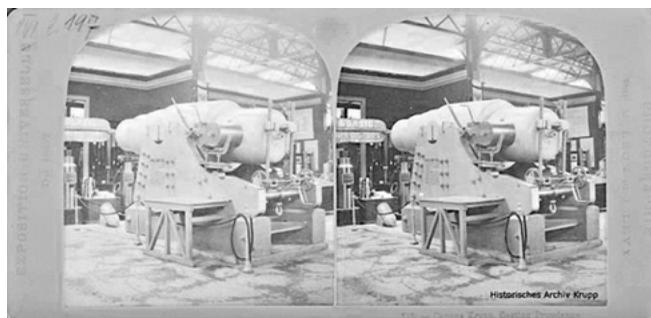
Figure 1: »On the occasion of the presentation of the Krupp cannon, the Kaiser [Napoleon III] is said to have been completely carried away at times.«



Source: Journal *Kladderadatsch* Nr. 27, 16.6.1867  
lithographic print, Dr. Stefan Siemer, Essen

In 1867 the signs certainly didn't point to a war between Germany and France, but there were some tensions, which heated up the atmosphere on the political level. This is why the fact that the magazine *Kladderadatsch* caricatured the Fried. Krupp Company depends less on the company itself than on the tense situation between the two nations. Scholz was also the one who established his reputation in *Kladderadatsch* in the course of the next years in illustrating the two big figures: the emperor Napoleon III of France and the Chancellor of the German Reich Otto von Bismarck. This is why Scholz's cartoon of 1867 should be judged as a political caricature: the political elite in France was satirised because of their inability to realise the progress of the weapon's technique and to undertake suitable measures in order to build up an efficient arms industry. The message is: The French emperor, Napoleon III would have ›lost‹ himself in the German gun. Only the German side would have been able to produce such technically outstanding and sophisticated weapons.

*Figure 2: Krupp cannon – World Exhibition in Paris stereoscopy, foto 1867*



Source: Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen

## THE REASONS

In the 1860s, the Fried. Krupp Company enjoyed recognition in the national as well as in the international press, because it caused a sensation with its new steel products – especially with the steel cannons (cf. Gall 2000; Gall (ed.) 2002; Beyer 2007; Grütter (ed.) 2012). That was the new and unusual thing about the Krupp products that determined the public perception. This »unique selling point« of technical advanced weapons was, in connection with the rising level of awareness, the reason why satirical magazines gave the company so much attention. Because only when the magazine readers were aware of the company Fried. Krupp from Essen, could the caricature react to a new theme relating to the upcoming steel company. It is important to the cartoonists to combine recent political events (scandals, grievances or the »big happenings«) with the famous persons, enterprises and geographical places. The moment of the news must be related to the everyday event in order not to overtax the audience. This is how Krupp found his entry into the caricature canon in the 1860s.

What kind of company was it which emerged amid such publicity under the aegis of Krupp? In 1811 Friedrich Krupp established his company in Essen. At the beginning he had some partners. Later he managed to single-handedly invent the high-class cast steel anew. This discovery, that one could re-melt the »normal« steel and thus obtain top-quality cast steel, had already been made by the English in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They exported the premium quality but expensive semi-finished and finished

products (e.g. knives) to the European continent, but only until Napoleon's Continental Economic Blockade started. The French prohibition in 1806 of importing goods from England was the moment that many German producers making use of new production processes established successful new industries. Without the English competition between 1806 and 1813 they could fill the market niche on the continent. In Essen Friedrich Krupp found such a gap in the market for products made out of cast steel (cf. Köhne-Lindenlaub 1982; Heimsoth 2012a). His factory produced special tools, coiner's dies and semi-finished products (steel bars); however the initial difficulties were enormous. At his death in 1826 he bequeathed to his wife a company with only seven employees left and 10,000 thalers of debt (cf. Gall 2000: 40-45). In any case, Friedrich had gained control of the complicated production process of cast steel, which was an achievement that his wife could build on. Upon his father's death, 14-year-old Alfred joined the company and helped his mother to run it. This was the case for the coming years. The little enterprise to the west of Essen city centre produced special steel products for individual branches. The majority of the cast steel was still produced in England, the land that busily exported its products again after the Continental Economic Blockade was lifted (1813). Still, Krupp could hold steady in some business areas despite the English competition. The mints and the gold smiths (the Parisian Producer of Jewellery) obtained their special tools and machines in Essen. In the 1830s and 1840s the Krupp company gained much experience in fabrication of bigger workpieces of steel which they processed into rollers.

A new stage in the development of the enterprise started at the end of the 1840s. Responsible for this expansion was the owner of the company, Alfred Krupp, who carried out a new product and marketing strategy, led his firm out of the medium-sized special steel and machine production sector and entered the sector of ordinary steel fabrication. With the production of the railway material and cannons the sales figures exploded. To the railway companies Krupp sold rails, springs, wheels and sleepers. Alfred's invention of the seamless rail wheels in 1852/53 made him rich and famous (cf. Wuttke 2012; Heimsoth 2013). Sales of railway wheels were so successful that in 1875 Alfred Krupp chose three crossing rail wheels as his company logo, the Three-Rings-Symbol.

The production of the cast steel cannons developed into the second main pillar of the enterprise. In contrast to the railway material, the circle of customers buying armaments was rather limited. Only a few governmental units, including the chiefs of the state, were responsible for the purchase

decisions. But how could the company reach diverse clientele with its catalogue of goods? How could an unknown firm from Essen in the 1850s get absorbed into the circle of internationally competing steel producers and weapon manufacturers?

The company's expansion in the 1850s was based on a new advertising strategy. Alfred Krupp was a marketing genius who understood the worth and the potential of the new medium of photography. He was the first to establish a company photographic department and to have Krupp products and display-stands photographed for promotional reasons. Alfred Krupp participated in the great world and industry exhibitions because he appreciated the importance of publicity for his company. Internationally, the firm had its big breakthrough thanks to its participation in the first World Exhibition in 1851.

*Figure 3: Krupp cannon, World Exhibition in London, 1851 lithographic print*



Source: Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen

Corporations from around the world presented their products in London to the public and business clients. The companies let a jury evaluate their goods with respect to public opinion. Alfred Krupp could win one of the most desired great medals of merit. He was awarded the Council Medal for the biggest block of cast steel ever exhibited. That block of cast steel, as stated afterwards by the *Generalanzeiger für Crefeld und Umgebung* »[...] evoke[d] the world's amazement because nobody had seen anything like it

before« (cf. Wolbring 2000: 94; Heimsoth 2012b: 235). In London, the company also caused a great sensation with the first ever cast steel cannon presented in public. With his bigger and bigger blocks of cast steel and greater and greater guns, Krupp was able to fascinate the public and the press over and over again during the next world exhibitions. The tremendous Krupp cannon exhibited during the World Exhibition in Paris in 1867 belonged to the company's tradition: to show the biggest possible gun and the heaviest possible block of cast steel.

## THE KING OF THE GUNS

The sales of cast steel guns in the 1850s were developing slowly. Krupp promoted his weapons during the exhibitions and tried to convince the military administrations and commissions of the quality of his products. The firm invested much time and effort to make contact with the reigning princes and potentates worldwide in order to obtain armaments orders. Especially intensive relations were maintained by the company from Essen with the Prussian ruling house. In 1861 the Prussian king Wilhelm I visited the factory as the first Hohenzoller. His grandson, the emperor Wilhelm II intensified the contact to the Krupp company during his reign (1888-1918). In order to become familiarised with the present state of weapons technology, the German emperor visited the company in Essen ten times altogether and was also guest in Villa Hügél, the industrialist's family residence (cf. Kerner 2012: 210). The Krupp armaments concern was privileged by the state and provided critics with a target: now they could criticise the armaments orders of Friedrich Alfred Krupp as an illegitimate monopoly, although the orders had already been initiated under his father Alfred for the purposes of a »special relationship« (Epkenhans 2010: 82).

Alfred Krupp sold his cannons worldwide. Thanks to the big armaments orders in the 1860s, Krupp earned the title »The King of the Guns«. This favourable term can be found in the popular German entertainment magazine *Die Gartenlaube*, which in 1866 published the article »The King of the Guns«. That periodical praised the big armaments orders of the concern and the efficiency of its production facilities. The newspaper appreciated the military importance of Krupp cannons, but at that time it assumed that another weapon was more crucial for the Prussian victory in the Wars of German Unification. It was the needle rifle developed by Dreyse that was supposed to enable Prussia's victory in 1866. Throughout 1866, as emphasised

by the newspaper, the technically well-engineered rifle was decisive for the war's outcome. However, the importance of military technology shifted only a few years later to the artillery. During the Franco-German War (1870/71) it was the fire power of the Krupp guns that turned the balance of the battle of Sedan (1870). The artillery knocked out the French troops and forced them to surrender. The French emperor, Napoleon III was then imprisoned at Sedan. The success of his cannons consolidated Krupp's reputation as the King of the Guns. The international press praised the vigorous effect of the guns as well. After the battle of Sedan, the *Dublin Review* wrote in October 1870:

»Since the days of Tubal Cain, no State has had the services of such iron-masters as Herr Dreyse and Herr Krupp. But the great men who swayed the empires, whose very centre and sanctuary were to be the billet of their bullets, held them in light regard. [...] it was at a mere threat from the infernal lips of Herr Krupp's cannon that the French Empire succumbed at Sedan.« (*The Fall of the French Empire* 1870: 486)

In France in 1871, one cartoonist reacted to Alfred Krupp's importance for the international arms trade: The entrepreneur is the actual ruler, a king to whom the other kings and princes have to pay homage. For a throne the illustrator depicted the Krupp cannon from 1867. Maybe he even saw the gun in person during his visit to the exhibition in Paris. The French artist saw the approach of a new age. The technocrats in the form of the weapon producers would mount the throne, which would turn the centuries-old power structure upside down: The kings and the emperors would have to worship Alfred Krupp if they still wanted to obtain their weapons from him. Because only those who joined in the ›adoration‹ of the armament manufacturers – according to the illustrator – could be sure to obtain the most modern arms technology in the future and to maintain the throne by those means. While the »King of the Guns Krupp« became more powerful than ever after the victory over France in 1870/71, the emperor Napoleon III was ›flushed‹ away. The capitulation of his army and his own capture by the Germans were responsible for his defeat at Sedan, where the Krupp cannons were so destructive. As an insignia of Alfred Krupp's authority, the illustrator gave him not a sceptre or crown, but a grenade. At the moment of defeat in 1871, the pessimistic approach of the French press regarding the armament industry was pointed towards Germany. Critique of the arms system and of the social problems caused by the high armament budget was made a subject of

discussion a few years afterwards in Germany as well. The general public reacted with increasing criticism of the rising military budget.

*Figure 4: »Krupp et son Las Nor Prévu/La Force Primie/Le Droit« lithographic print, 1871, print: Caillot, Paris*



Source : Musée national du château de Compiègne

## THE CAPITALIST

Krupp provided all the countries with steel. The arms deals became increasingly complex and proceeded under the aegis of Friedrich Alfred Krupp (1887-1902). Friedrich Alfred, as the only son of the company's patriarch Alfred, took over the firm's management in 1887 and successfully continued to expand his enterprise. The concern from Essen absorbed the Gruson's plant in Magdeburg in 1893 and in 1896 acquired the Germania shipyard in Kiel. From now on Krupp could compete for naval contracts. The company both produced warships itself and delivered armour plates for the construction of further battleships. Decisions about the acquisition of the shipyard and about getting started in the construction of battleships were made by the company at the moment when Wilhelm II announced building up of his High

Seas Fleet in 1896. The emperor complimented Friedrich Alfred Krupp by telegraph on the acquisition of the shipyard in Kiel (cf. Stremmel 2010: 42).

Friedrich Alfred Krupp was the sole owner of the whole concern, which was unusual. Namely, in the meantime the other big German enterprises had been transformed into joint-stock corporations. Krupp was different. Alfred braced himself vehemently against such a restructuring, arguing that he did not want to be dependent on the financiers (bankers). Friedrich Alfred Krupp followed the example of his father and held on to the sole ownership of his company, which had its advantages and disadvantages. The slim company structure was convenient when it was important to make a decision. Also favourable was that due to such a legal form, any financial transactions could be disguised. A joint-stock company must be much more transparent than a private enterprise because it needs to report its benefits and the state of its property to the shareholders. Friedrich Alfred experienced the disadvantages of sole ownership much more harshly than his father: He became a target of caricature. The cartoonist identified the owner with his firm in order to discredit it. For example: There was a rumour that Krupp wanted to set up a weapons factory in Russia and the magazine *Ulk* used this rumour to illustrate Friedrich Alfred Krupp with a crown and waist scarf. On the scarf was written the company's name: »Fried. Krupp«. While Krupp pointed with his right hand towards the Russians, indicating the extraordinary quality of his weapons, his left hand held a bag of money – that should reveal him as a capitalist.

*Figure 5: »Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!« »Die Firma plant die Errichtung einer Fabrik in Rußland zur Herstellung von Geschützen für die russische Regierung (Zeitungsnachricht).« (»The company plans to build a factory which will provide the Russian government with cannons (notice in a newspaper).«)*



Source: Journal »Uluk« Nr. 7, 12.2.1897, lithographic print, Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen

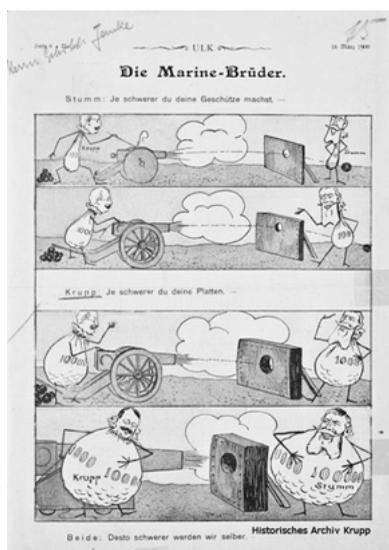
The export of weapons, however, was reported by the press more and more critically. One reprove questioned whether also the potentially hostile nations as France could and would obtain Krupp arms (cf. Wolbring 2000: 222-225). On the other hand one pressing question was: If the quantity of the exported cannons was so high, than wouldn't all warring parties finally be equipped with the same arms system? More and more nations bought Krupp guns and it was only a matter of time until two countries with the same weapon systems would wage war against each other. The attacks in the newspapers against the firm resulted from loss of confidence on the part of the general public. The satirical magazines represented the voice of those who inquired into the sense of the arms race. Alfred Krupp was not criticised till the 1880s, when he enjoyed the position of the »King of the Guns« and maintained his tight relations to the court and especially to the German Kai-

ser. That changed, however, in the 1890s under his son Friedrich Alfred Krupp. He had to fight in public against loss of credibility regarding both his company and his person. The reason was that the memories of the war of 1870/71 had faded away. The Krupp cannons lost their actual function because they were no longer applied. Germany conducted no wars until 1914, apart from minor military actions including the Boxer Rebellion in China (1900) and the Herero und Namaqua Genocide (1904-1908). The weapons served as a simple threatening gesture and were only numerical data for the politicians and military. The more weapons the others had, the more one had to invest in one's own military preparation. Based on this logic, the arms race was ›virtual‹. A threatening scenario of threat was articulated, the armaments budget was applied for; the weapons were bought and deposited in the barracks. The armaments costs were immense and the population had to bear the costs. Such a system was profitable only for the armaments manufacturers. The public opinion stated that the bigger guns one constructed, the thicker the armour plates the industry would build for the battleships. Only a small group of arms producers like Friedrich Alfred Krupp in Essen and Carl Ferdinand Stumm in the Saarland would get richer and richer this way. The consequences of the arms race were illustrated for example in the cartoon dated 16 March 1900 (cf. Zolper 2012: 37).

Figure 6:

»Die Marine-Brüder«

»Stumm: Je schwerer du deine Geschütze machst, / Krupp: Je schwerer deine Platten, / Beide: Desto schwerer werden wir selber.«  
 («Stumm: The bigger you make your cannons, / Krupp: The bigger your boards, / Both: The bigger we get ourselves.»)



Source: Journal »Ulk«, 16.3.1900, lithographic print  
 Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen

The occasion for the caricature »Die Marine-Brüder« in the satirical magazine was the rivalry in the construction of the Battle Fleet. During the Reichstag's budget commission sessions, the social democrat August Bebel and the liberal Eugen Richter attacked the armaments industry. They accused the steel producers Krupp and Stumm of maintaining a monopoly in the production of steel plates for the construction of warships (cf. Wolbring 2000: 283-284). One of the critical arguments was that they would offer the weapons at excessive prices – something definitely denied by the Fried. Krupp company. A few days after the publication of the caricature against Krupp and Stumm by the satirical magazine, the *Kölner Volkszeitung* on 22 March 1900 demanded a guarantee that »the ships and cannons did really have the real worth that should be paid for them otherwise maybe a few industrialists would earn enormous sums with their monopoly« (quoted after Wolbring 2000: 87). That difficult situation became worse and worse in the

coming years. The question as to who profited from the armaments, who gained from them, remained virulent.

## THE DEMON

Controversies about Krupp's armament production were eagerly attacked by the press. Moreover in the field of foreign affairs it became more and more evident how much the lobby of weapon dealers was based on international relations and policy. Things went wrong especially for Krupp as a producer of armaments during the Boxer Rebellion, when the firm got a disastrous bad press. In 1900 Chinese rebels besieged the diplomatic quarter in Beijing and fought back an army that had been set up in advance by the Europeans. Their success was based on some of Krupp's canons which they had got from the arsenal of the Chinese army. This was eagerly covered by the press, who was maintained that weapons had been delivered to the enemy by Krupp, which was in fact true. In the past Krupp had delivered some weapons to the Chinese army (cf. HA Krupp, D 22, Beziehungen, Ländereien und Städte). Some of them then were used by the Chinese rebels. The press picked up one message: The European army has been attacked by the Chinese using Krupp weapons. The satirical magazine *Ulk* reported on 13 July 1900 a stalemate: both parties possessed weapons made by Krupp. In the background Friedrich Alfred Krupp figured as »demon Krupp«, sat on his throne. It was the owner of the firm who profited from the war.

Figure 7: »Dämon Krupp«



Source: Journal »UlK« Nr. 28, 15.7.1900, lithographic print  
Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen

Meanwhile caricaturists questioned Krupp's patriotism – he was the »demon Krupp« who, while pretending to be a patriot, forced up his prices for weapons in order to get richer – he was confronted with new accusations. In 1900 the Kaiser himself accused the firm of gaining money by excessive prices. He was impulsive and erratic, especially in regard to foreign policy and foreign trade relations. Within a couple of years Wilhelm II changed his policy towards China. While in 1897 he had backed Krupp's intensive trade with China, in 1900 he judged the situation completely differently. In preparation of a punitive expedition against the Chinese rebels, the erratic monarch received information that Krupp took excessive revenues from his armament deals with the German army. On July 11 1900 he sent a telegram to Friedrich Alfred Krupp: »At this moment when I am about to send my soldiers into war against the Yellow Peril it is inappropriate to gain from it and would be condemned by the public.« (HA Krupp, FAH 3 B 35, published in: Epkenhans/Stremmel 2010: 325). After some efforts the firm was successful in removing these doubts, but nevertheless Friedrich Alfred was personally targeted by the monarch's accusations. The crucial point here is that Wil-

helm II played the public off against his loyal subject Friedrich Alfred Krupp. Suggesting that Krupp and his firm could compromise state interest in a public discussion about its »unscrupulous pricing policy« during a »patriotic war in China« made clear that the monarch was willing to apply pressure.

At this time Friedrich Alfred Krupp was a mere sport of the monarch's court, the state bureaucracy, competitive firms and the press. In the media any attack by the Social Democrats against »capitalist Krupp« was eagerly picked up. The board of directors was upset regarding this »incredible agitation« but did not strategically know how to react (cf. Wolbring 2000: 278-306). Friedrich Alfred Krupp, who became more and more the center of negative attention, drew his own conclusions and withdrew more and more from the public. In 1900 he moved to Capri for several months but nevertheless kept contact with the firm in Essen (cf. Richter 2010: 160). We can find an impression of this atmosphere heated by the press and political intrigues in Berlin in a letter by Admiral Friedrich Hollmann to Friedrich Alfred Krupp, who analyzed the situation at court and the erratic foreign policy of the Kaiser during the Boxer Rebellion:

»The relations between his Majesty and the state bureaucracy on one side and Friedrich Krupp on the other have come to a crisis, so that any new discussion should be handled very carefully. Regarding Krupp it has to be considered that any of his fierce enemies will take the slightest opportunity to forge a weapon for his Majesty to strike against Friedrich Krupp.« (HA Krupp, FAH 3 C 233, published in: Epkenhans/Stremmel 2010: 325-326)

## HIDEAWAY CAPRI

With his stay at Capri over several months Friedrich Alfred Krupp tried to evade the public eye. His health, not just the press attacks, was a concern. While living on this Mediterranean island he pursued deep sea research as a hobby and made friends with the island's inhabitants. But he also supported the local community. He became particularly famous for the construction of a road – the Via Krupp – which he commissioned between 1900 and 1902, a road that was, however, quite useless for the inhabitants. While Krupp occupied himself with marine research and enjoying his spare time, there was a domestic conflict brewing up in Essen. At the beginning of 1902 a strike took place at the firm's forges. It was caused by a quarrel about the duration

of the mid-day breaks and the calculation of the working hours. 600 workers declared their solidarity with some master-craftsmen who were transferred for disciplinary reasons. All of them left their workplace. Upon their return they received their discharge papers and were attended by two policemen. This homemade trouble was eagerly observed by the press. Friedrich Alfred felt himself compelled to reprimand his board of directors for this strict punishment. According to Krupp they made it easy for the agitators to show themselves, apparently legitimately, as the »representatives of my workforce« (Tenfelde 1994: 30). On 27 February 1902 the social democratic *Vorwärts* attacked Friedrich Alfred Krupp and accused him of being as »rich and splendid as Croesus« while neglecting to support his workers in Essen (Stremmel 2010: 59-60). Other papers joined in these accusations. Due to these attacks the workforce was tempted to declare its solidarity with the social democrats.

On 6 May 1902 the social democratic *Wahre Jacob* published a caricature in which it forged a bridge from the strike in the forge to Krupp's role as a benefactor on Capri. In his caricature the draughtsman Rata Langa (1865-1937) confronted the »two faces of capitalism«. In Essen he was a coldly calculating capitalist exploiting the workers; in Italy he was a benefactor throwing money into the crowd. While workers were squeezed to blood in dark workshops, in Capri lazy clergymen and clerks profited from Krupp the benefactor. Langa made his caricature a universal metaphor which everyone could understand. It is the story of good against evil; strong against weak. The press, with the *Wahre Jacob* spearheading the satirical magazines, focused deliberately on »Krupp and Capri« – all the more because no one really understood why Germany's wealthiest man retired from public for several months and rode his hobbyhorses on an Italian island. According to the logic of the social democratic press his money, which was squeezed out of protestant workers, was spent on catholics. This brought the affair to climax.

Figure 8: »Zwei Bilder aus dem Leben eines Wohltäters der Menschheit«



Source: Journal »Der wahre Jacob«, 6.5.1902, lithographic print  
 Institut für Zeitungsforschung, Dortmund

Until that time all the attacks had been aimed at the failures of the Krupp firm. The caricaturists had taken the owner as a personification of his firm. But at the moment when Krupp decided to withdraw from public life and move to a Mediterranean island, the public questioned his personal credibility. The integrity of Germany's wealthiest man grew worn. Therefore the caricaturists took up Capri as a new motive. It enabled them to discredit not only the firm, but its owner Krupp in a most personal way as well.

## THE CARICATURE AS A WEAPON

All satirical papers thought it decisive to attack Friedrich Alfred Krupp in his role as the company's owner. In contrast to his father Alfred – who was seen as an ascetic dedicated to his firm – his son was perceived as a model capitalist. In addition to that he had a different physiognomy. Germany's wealth-

iest man was fat and the caricaturists singled out this feature in order to describe his character as someone who never worked himself and let others work for him. In the eyes of the social democrats he was a born capitalist. The American historian Harold James comments on these accusations from 1902 as follows:

»In facing a long and vicious campaign with its whole range of scandal and sensation he proved in the end he appeared vulnerable, defenceless to the highest degree.«  
(James 2011: 129)

As owner of the firm Friedrich Alfred Krupp is last but not least described as a capitalist in order to point out conflicts between different classes. Readers of the social democratic papers were obliged to believe in two opposing truths: On one side the reckless capitalist feeding on the work of his labourers, on the other side the flawless labourer, who is too weak to oppose (cf. Hickethier 1979). These caricatures are based on this dichotomy. The more it highlights these extremes and the conflict of poor vs. rich, the more the public will laugh. It is, however, a laugh of despair which arises from a quite absurd situation. The exaggerated situation provokes emotions in the viewer, be it anger or disgust. The caricaturist has achieved his aim when he causes such a reaction. A political caricature never only aims at entertainment or making the viewer laugh. Its intention is to animate the public towards political action. According to this idea, the caricature of Krupp in the social democratic publication *Wahre Jacob* was like a call to join the unions and the social democrats in their aims and protests.

The attacks of the press against the Krupp company and its owner grew harder around 1900. The drawings and their impetus grew more and more aggressive. The grotesque allusions to characteristics became something really cutting. The aggressiveness of the satirical magazines competed with the growing influence of the new medium of photography. It forced the caricaturists to develop new perspectives and to be more offensive in regard to capitalism. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a change took place in regard to visual representation in the illustrated magazines. More and more »dynamic press-pictures« joined the serious press illustrations and took their place. The attacks of the social democratic press evoked no solidarity from the Krupp workers. Until the 1890s the firm was cautious to avoid the influence of the unions and their allies. These rigid measures were initiated by Alfred Krupp, who was very aware regarding his paternalistic regime. He wrote to his management on 10 October 1871:

»We want to have faithful workers, who are thankful in their hearts and in their actions, so we will give them bread and care for their families. Nobody should dare to oppose our benevolent regime.« (Gall 2000: 188-189)

It was Alfred who initiated draconian measures against readers of social democratic literature and papers. Parts of the press were critical of this rigid policy of the patriarch. The *Tremonia* wrote on 15 May 1877: »Mr. Krupp turns increasingly into a potentate.« (HA Krupp, WA 41/1.78). However, this was a paper from Dortmund, one of the towns with steel factories which stood in competition with Krupp. In Essen the press was less critical of – one could even say dependent on – the firm.

After criticism from within and from the press Friedrich Alfred took his own measures. The firm set up a bureau for public affairs and began to systematically collect articles and other related material in order to analyse them. To get nearer to his workforce, in 1897 Friedrich Alfred took a desk close to the workshops in the original company building. Here he read letters addressed to him by his employees and workers and could take care of their concerns and criticisms (cf. Stremmel 2010: 60). Friedrich Alfred massively improved the system of labour welfare and spent money to improve his workers' education. In order to bind devoted workers and employees to him he got a step further in 1902. In appreciation of their lifelong work he awarded a badge of honour (»Ehrennadel«). No later than during the lifetime of Friedrich Alfred Krupp the term »Kruppianer« took root within the core workforce (cf. Stremmel 2010: 60) – evidence for a kind of corporate identity. From birth to death the workforce had its own charity at their disposal. But to use it they had to abstain from any criticism. Friedrich Alfred stuck to his patriarchal point of view. He was the unquestioned leader of the firm.

## THE SHIELD OF THE EMPEROR

Friedrich Alfred Krupp died on 22 November 1902 in Essen. His sudden death is closely connected with a press affair and there was an ongoing rumour about a suicide. His doctors in contrast attested a crippling stroke: »Es bestanden die Symptome eines schweren Gehirnschlags... Nachmittags 3 Uhr trat der Tod ein«. An article published on 15 November by the social democratic magazine *Vorwärts* immediately grew into a scandal. The magazine openly questioned Krupp's immoral and luxurious lifestyle and claimed that he had sexual intercourse with young men in his villa on Capri (cf.

Wolbring 2000: 316). According to the moral standards of the Wilhelmian society this was no less than social death. But from our point of view we are only interested in the consequences of the press scandal, since the *Vorwärts* chose an article, not a caricature for its accusations. To publicly abuse Germany's richest man, with his close connections to the Emperor Wilhelm II, provoked specific reactions from conservatives. None other than Wilhelm II took the lead in defence and travelled to Essen in order to participate in the funeral. The whole court followed the coffin through the city, openly showing support of the Krupp family. Upon his departure at Essen railway station Wilhelm delivered a flamboyant speech. »The shield of the German Emperor will protect the family and the memory of the deceased.« (*Ansprachen anlässlich der Trauerfeier*; Grütter 2012, 31). He chose the metaphor deliberately in order to protect his subjects against press campaigns. At the same time he attacked the Social Democrats who had abused the entrepreneur in a most disgusting way. His speech reached a climax when he said: »Everyone who does not tear the tablecloth between himself and the attacking side makes himself guilty.« (*Ansprachen anlässlich der Trauerfeier*; Grütter 2012, 33). This so-called »Tablecloth-Speech« found great response in the press. It was the *Generalanzeiger* from Essen which condemned the attacks of the *Vorwärts*:

»The German Emperor himself has raised his shield over the Krupp family and its memory. All Germans stand at his side, he who has found in a deep crisis the right words for the incident. [...] His words make undoubtedly clear that we will never again allow the poisoning of public life as unfortunately happened at other places.« (Klein/Hehemann 1903: 70)

The »Vorwärts-affair« sheds light on the poisoned culture of discussion between the bourgeois right and the social democratic left. Articles and caricatures were regarded as an attack against public order and demagogic class struggle. For the conservatives this was somewhat crossing the line in public debate. Thus the burial in Essen was not only a family affair, but also a kind of public demonstration of state power. For the Kaiser as well as the trade associations it was an occasion to rally against the Social Democrats – who had actually set off the campaign in the *Vorwärts*. In any case the burial and its ceremonies in November 1902 can be seen as a political statement of conservatives and industrial leaders and their attempt to incite the labour force against the Social Democrats. Therefore the trade unions set up a pompous commemoration service for the Krupp family in Düsseldorf. The

Kaisersaal of the municipal Tonhalle was adorned with mourning band. For the memorial a tombstone was designed with a clear statement: It shows a knight holding a protective shield above the deceased. On its side the tombstone shows Friedrich Alfred Krupp himself in high relief together with the firm signet, the three rings. No matter that he was already buried in presence of Wilhelm II in Essen. What mattered was the message: to make it unmistakably clear to the public that it was the Emperor who had the privilege of bearing the shield. But in reality his protection came too late for Friedrich Alfred Krupp, one of his subjects. Wilhelm II failed in his role as a protector. Although he could not prevent the attack, he nevertheless offered his shield to the Krupp family and the »memory of the deceased«. This shield was a kind of »firewall«, a protection against the virtual attacks of articles or caricatures. However, this medieval concept of »shield« was outdated and the remarks of Wilhelm II were of no use in bridging the increasing gap between different social groups. On the contrary his aggressive speech at Essen even made the situation worse.

*Figure 9: Concept for a grave*



Source: Journal »Stahl und Eisen«, Düsseldorf 1902, lithographic print  
Dr. Stefan Siemer, Essen

## THE STOCK COMPANY

Friedrich Alfred Krupp had no male heirs and declared in his will that his firm should be changed into a joint-stock company. At her age of majority in 1903 his firstborn daughter Bertha inherited nearly all of the stock and became owner of the firm. Meanwhile her mother Margarethe acted as head of the family. Despite her marriage with Gustav von Bohlen und Halbach in 1906, Bertha remained the firm's owner. At this time all the newspapers were still interested in Krupp as Germany's biggest weapons manufacturer. But their caricaturists had no idea how to react to the new situation. Due to the new joint-stock structure, there was literally no head of the firm against whom they could launch their assaults. Shortly before the First World War only one incident put Krupp into the public light. In celebration of the company's centenary the English *Punch* published a caricature. Symbolized as an organ played by the Kaiser, the firm was a willing instrument for fulfilling his intentions. The 1912 centenary took place in Essen with participation of the Kaiser and his ministers and was held with all necessary pomp and circumstance. But only one year later the so-called Kornwalzer affair happened, a corruption scandal comprehensively covered by the press. The company was accused of having bribed clerks in the Ministry of Defence in order to gain secret information. Following that incident the press kept an eye on Krupp in order to attack the close relationship between politics (the military) and the economy (Krupp).

Figure 10: »Harmony«



Source: Journal »The Punch«, 16.8.1912, lithographic print  
Ruhr Museum, Essen

At the beginning of the First World War caricatures of Krupp took a different direction. New weapons like the »Krupp-42cm-Steilfeuergeschütz«, nicknamed »Dicke Berta«, achieved immediate success and led the public into a kind of collective hysteria. But during the war the propaganda used such stories deliberately differently. The rhetoric of warfare after 1914 was completely different from the papers' attacks at the turn of the century. These attacks culminated with the sudden death of Friedrich Alfred Krupp in 1902. None of the subsequent owners and directors would ever act as a target of satire in the papers in the same way as Alfred and especially Friedrich Alfred Krupp.

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