



An 1884 satire featuring the famous Russian Octopus

GROSSI, Augusto.

Ricreazioni Politiche. Récréations Politiques.

Bologna: Il Papagallo, 1884. Chromolithograph. Sheet 425 x 610mm.

£800

An Italian satire commenting on relations between Germany and Russia during the 1880s. Personifications of Germany (drinking), Austria (baiting a hook), Italy (standing waiting) and Spain (smoking a Prussian cigar) lounge on a motor yacht called 'Alleanza' piloted to Otto van Bismarck, pointedly ignoring the Russian octopus floating by their stern, clutching a mine lettered 'Guerra'. On the left a fish marked Saloccico (Thessaloniki, still in the Ottoman Vilayet of Salonica) looks on in fright; on the right is a buoy with an English sailor's head, marked 'galleggiante' (floating). In the background a mermaid (France?) pulls herself up on a Chinese junk. After the victory of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 Bismarck was fearful that France would get its revenge by allying with Russia and attacking Germany from two sides. Therefore he did everything he could to stay on good terms with Russia, ignoring their continued southward push. Meanwhile France was extending its influence in the Far East. On the reverse of the card is another Papagallo satire, relating to the European powers preparing to feast on the Madagascan 'turkey'. 'Il Papagallo' was a satirical magazine founded in January 1873 by Augusto Grossi (1835-1919), which specialised in colour-printed caricatures like this one. At its peak circulation reached 50,000, and in 1878 a Parisian version, 'Le Perroquet', and London edition, 'The Parrot',



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were launched. 'Il Papagallo' closed in 1915, when Grossi was 70 years old. This example, with titles and text in both Italian and French was published in Bologna for editions in both countries.

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