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# Press/Journalism (Belgium)

By [Pierre Van Den Dungen](#)

The Belgian press world was turned upside down by the German occupation. Most of the editorial offices of the news dailies ceased all activity or went abroad. Yet a press under censorship did continue to appear when the Germans set up a “*Pressezentrale*” in 1915. This censored press underwent major transformations: Belgians were not dupes but wanted information at all costs. Meanwhile an underground press was established, of which *La Libre Belgique* was the most prestigious example. The Belgian newspapers in unoccupied Belgium disseminated a very patriotic discourse, particularly the French-speaking ones. This discourse had the effect of reawakening a Flemish press at the Front that was especially active in the trenches. Yet only a minority of the press was seduced by the German *Flamenpolitik*. On the Walloon side, a protest press appeared. By the end of the war, the dominant discourse was ultra-patriotic and stressed the role played by journalists themselves. Starting in the 1930s, different memories of the First World War appeared, depending on whether they came from north or south of the linguistic frontier.

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## Introduction

The founders of the Belgian nation in 1830 inscribed freedom of the press in its Constitution. By this gesture, Belgium became the most liberal state of continental Europe, and a series of regional and national newspapers quickly developed. Until 1914, the majority of the influential dailies appeared in French, the language of notables and power circles, the language of a culture with international influence. The belated recognition of Dutch as an official language (1898), although it was spoken by the majority of the population, would strengthen this French primacy - at least as much as the belated passage by Parliament of obligatory education act (1914) that penalised both the Flemish and Walloon working classes.

On 20 August 1914, the Germans arrived in [Brussels](#) and found the editorial offices of the major presses (*L'Indépendance Belge* and *Le XXe Siècle*) deserted. *L'Indépendance Belge*, or *The Belgian Independence* had withdrawn to Ghent and Ostend before crossing the Channel and finally settling in London. In November 1914, *Le XXe Siècle*, or the *20<sup>th</sup> century*, exiled to Le Havre, became the unofficial organ of the Catholic ministry *Moniteur Belge* (*The Belgian Monitor*) and *Le Courrier de l'Armée* (*The Army Courier*) were also published in Le Havre. Other Belgian publications would be published abroad - in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London and Paris.

For their part, journalists journeyed to Le Havre and London where in late 1914 they founded an "English section" of the Belgian Press Association (APB). The pre-eminence of APB, in particular its important Brussels section, was unequivocal. In November 1914, its members voted unanimously to condemn the practice of the profession under censorship conditions. Thus most of the dailies put their keys under the door; the overwhelming majority of journalists had "broken their pens" - as was said at the time.

However, the initial intention of the Germans was to allow the pre-war dailies to reappear, to convey the impression that Belgium remained a liberal state that was favourable to freedom of the press, despite the occupation. Thus starting on 10 September 1914, Arthur Bogaert-Vache, an experienced Brussels journalist, launched *Le Quotidien* (*The Daily*) with 12,000 copies. In fact, *Le Messager de Bruxelles* (*The Brussels Messenger*, which produced 15, 000 copies) was the only pre-war paper that continued to appear in the capital during hostilities. Despite these exceptions, the normalisation desired by the Germans did not occur.

## Press and journalists under censorship

### In occupied Belgium

Governor-General Moritz von Bissing (1844-1917) created the *Politische Abteilung* (Political Department) within the “*Generalgouvernement*” in December 1914 to include “the press”. A particular section – *Pressezentrale* (Press Service, or PZ) – was founded on the first day of 1915. The Brussels press solely benefitted from nationwide dissemination and a national audience – unlike a provincial press that suffered the most from [censorship](#). A specific censorship service for Belgian publications (*Presse Abteilung*) was incorporated into the PZ at the end of January 1915. Over the following months, the *Politische Abteilung* organised a sort of diplomatic department that incorporated the PZ.

In 1916, the Administration proposed the translation of about seventy German newspapers and periodicals that carried “authorised” content, with the goal of keeping the Belgian journalists in line at work. Moreover, various edicts and orders (in October, November and December 1914 and in June 1915) threatened fines and increasingly severe prison sentences for those who distributed forbidden (i.e. uncensored) newspapers, or simply for those who were in possession of them. Despite this situation, new papers appeared: *Le Bruxellois* (first published on 18 September) and *La Belgique* (first published on 5 November 1914) became authoritative sources under the occupation, both in the capital and across the country. In total, between August and December 1914, twenty-five to thirty newspapers arose in Belgium, of which seventeen were based in Brussels (including three Dutch ones). In Brussels there were six dailies in French, one in Flemish (*Gazet van Brussel*). In Ghent the Socialist *Vooruit* continued, modelled on the Catholic *Le Bien Public*.

The capital quickly recovered its status as the centre of Belgian publicity: In May 1915 Brussels accounted for 203,000 of the 475,000 papers sold each day throughout the country. *Le Bruxellois* alone boasted a daily circulation of 58,000 in 1916 which rose to 220,000 in early 1917 – an unprecedented figure in Belgium; *La Belgique* sold 40,000 copies in 1914 and 108,000 in 1917 (and even 120,000 to 130,000 for its Sunday edition, rising to 150,000 copies in 1917). The founders of *La Belgique*, Auguste and Aimé Hutt, stockbrokers of German origin but born in Brussels, considered censored journalism as a good commercial opportunity, as they were able to sell large numbers of newspapers, with almost no competition.

Studying the paper’s accounts shows how right they were: there was a profit of 800,000 francs in 1915.<sup>[1]</sup> Apart from sales revenue, the managers of the paper profited from printing abundant classified advertisements (350,000 francs in 1916 and 650,000 francs in 1918). By way of comparison, between 1880 and 1914, the circulation of Brussels dailies had fluctuated between 10,000 and 180,000 copies.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Contents of the press in occupied Belgium

The great majority of Belgians did not share the ideas and opinions developed in the [censored](#) press, but everybody felt a need to be informed, even if they had to rely on the daily papers whose journalists were “under orders”. Several of the latter were well known. For example, Ray Nyst (1864-1943), editor of *La Belgique*, was close to Charles Buls (1873-1914), former burgomaster of the city,

and to the Rossel family that owned the newspaper *Le Soir* (the best-selling Belgian paper before the war). Moreover, while these papers delivered a message that was generally favourable to the occupiers, they were not pan-Germanist.<sup>[3]</sup> The papers even erected themselves as the “true” guarantors of the Belgian nation, having chosen what they maintained was the best way to ensure that they would survive. They liked to designate the “true guilty ones,” whether in London or Paris.<sup>[4]</sup>

Small educated circles did go farther down the path of [collaboration](#). Principally these were partisans of literary [expressionism](#) in their journal *Résurrection* (1917-1918) and the directors of the “Flemish series” (the Insel publishing house), a venture to translate Belgian and Flemish books into German. This enterprise even positioned itself as a “tool of German cultural propaganda” in Belgium.<sup>[5]</sup>

### In prisoner-of-war camps

In February 1915, the *Pressezentrale* launched in Belgium *De Vlaamsch Post* (*The Flemish post*), a paper written by Jong Vlaanderen. This was the first rupture in the linguistic peace; it rained down abuse on the French-speaking Belgians. The content of the paper was so radical that most of the *flamingants* (Flemish nationalist) rejected it, nicknaming it the *Vlaamsche Pest* (the Flemish plague). In order to boost circulation, the German army had to buy most of the issues and send them to Flemish [prisoners in the camps](#).<sup>[6]</sup> Belgian “deportees” in [Germany](#) – between 40,000 and 46,000 from 1914 to 1918 – who were assigned to seventeen different camps thus received the press selected by the occupier.

However these “deportees” also wrote their own periodicals, or “camp press.” About one hundred periodicals published by prisoners-of-war in the camps have been counted. Among them, *Onze Taal* (*Our Language*), published from March 1915 to November 1918 in the camp in Göttingen, produced from 500 to 5,000 copies of each issue. Publications were also disseminated in other camps in Germany, in fact in all camps with Flemish prisoners. *Onze Taal* was also sent to nationalist milieus back in Belgium.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Underground Press and “Free” Press: in Belgium and Beyond

In the first years of the conflict, a sort of “patriotic religion” developed, particularly in [urban circles](#), and was well maintained by the uncensored underground press. Examples of this prose can be found in the forceful review by [Jean Massart \(1865-1925\)](#), former journalist of the underground press.<sup>[8]</sup> The first of the underground dailies published in occupied Belgium was *La Libre Belgique* which the Belgians awaited impatiently. This publication emanated from Catholic circles and was created by [Victor Jourdain \(1841-1918\)](#), [Eugène Van Doren \(1875-1956\)](#), director of the newspaper from 1915 to 1916. At this time, the Jourdain owned and managed the largest right-wing press group in the country, which until August 1914 published mainly *Le Patriote* and *Le National*. 171 issues of *La Libre Belgique* would appear between February 1915 and November 1918, in the

proclaimed desire to serve as antidote to the reigning demoralisation.

The paper benefited from a veritable Catholic network – notably thanks to the Jesuit fathers of Saint-Michel Church – that played an essential role in organising the distribution of the underground paper, despite the recurrent arrests carried out by the occupying power. Its team of collaborators was soon strengthened when Eugène Van Doren also launched *La Cravache*, an illustrated magazine that he said was produced in 10,000 copies. Until 1916 – when he had to flee from the German police - Van Doren claimed that a total of 1,250,000 copies of the seventy-one first issues of *La Libre Belgique* (of which he was the editor-in-chief) had been distributed in Brussels and across the country. Under his successors, Albert Leroux (editor-in-chief 1916-1917) and Abbé René-Gabriel Van den Hout (1886-1969), editor-in-chief (1917-1918) – who respectively published forty and sixty issues – *La Libre* had print-runs between 5,000 and 20,000.<sup>[9]</sup>

For citizens of Brussels – and Belgians in general – *La Libre Belgique* quickly asserted itself as the emblem of [resistance](#). Between 1915 and 1918, the many prosecutions of those who spread, sold, edited and even merely read the paper, ensured this reputation and guaranteed huge publicity for the enterprise. It willingly used *zwanze* – the humour typical of the capital, composed of mockery and jokes – that was immediately perceived as a manifestation of national patriotism. Conniving with complicit readers, its writers conveyed jibes from the street. As testimony of its anchorage in Brussels, *La Libre Belgium* resorted to disreputable conduct, for example by issuing a “dictionary of the streets of Brussels renamed for the use of tram conductors”.<sup>[10]</sup>

Other underground publications appeared: *La Vérité* (seven issues in May and June of 1915), *Le Belge* from September to November 1915, *De Vlaamsche Leeuw*, which has sometimes been characterised as the Dutch counterpart of *La Libre Belgique*. Nor should we forget anti-German propaganda conveyed in postcards, which showed images or photos of the Belgian King, Queen and Cardinal as well as of executed heroes.

There was also a free press in Belgium and abroad. 250,000 Belgians lived in the [United Kingdom](#) in November 1915 (later they would number 180,000). After the fall of Antwerp, approximately 1 million Belgians lived in [the Netherlands](#), though only 100,000 lived there permanently. In [France](#), the Belgian population constantly grew from 205 in 1915 to 290,000 in July 1918 (or even 325,000 according to figures from the official Belgian [Committee for the Relief of Refugees](#)). Therefore without exaggeration almost 600,000 Belgians, or a little less than 10 percent of the Belgian population at the time, spent the war abroad.<sup>[11]</sup>

The *XXe Siècle* (108,601 copies in January 1917), the government’s official daily, benefited from favourable treatment in distribution, like its Dutch counterpart (46,466 at the same date), which railed especially against *flamignatisme* (Flemish [nationalism](#)). That same year, the principal dailies published abroad announced the following circulations: *Ons Vaderland* 26,162; *L’Indépendance belge* 14,993; *Belgische Dagblad* 14,896; *La Métropole* 2,474.

Three publications appeared in Belgium's unoccupied zone, for example *De Belgische Standaard*; twenty in France, including five in Dutch; twelve in Holland, of which seven in French. In Great Britain, there were thirteen newspapers, including two in Dutch and one in English. In Switzerland, three titles including one bilingual one (*Het Belfort-Le Belfroy*) for those interned and the Belgian colony in Switzerland. There was also a bilingual Socialist paper, *Le Socialiste belge-De Belgische Socialist* that was published in Holland starting in September 1916 as the organ of the *Internationale*. The "official" Belgian Workers' Party (*Parti Ouvrier Belge*) sued *Le Peuple* in Paris during the year 1917.

In his (old but comprehensive) study, Marie Leroy examined all issues published between January and November 1918 and drew out the principal themes developed in several of the main publications of free Belgium. In *Le XX e siècle* and *La Nation Belge*, the theme of total peace predominated (44.4 percent). *La Nation* added the notion of guarantees and demanded indemnities. Both papers exaggerated Socialist initiatives. *Le XXe Siècle* was equally severe about any policy in favour of linguistic measures, even those defended by the "minimalists." Walloon activism, on the other hand, was rarely mentioned. Thus we note again that the voice of the official Belgian government – the *ancien regime*, as it were - was totally opposed to most Flemish aspirations.

In *L'Indépendance belge* (266 issues in 1918), likewise, peace was only envisaged as "total." The issue of international – hence anti-patriotic – socialism was treated in the tradition of the liberal daily or else by several correspondents, so its position was more nuanced. The activities of the largely Catholic government were unreservedly supported. It should be stressed that liberal Belgian opinion abroad had only this "old lady" – destined to a bourgeois milieu of industrialists and conservatives - to inform them. Like *Le XXe Siècle*, *L'Indépendance belge* completely opposed Flemish demands.

On the Flemish side there was *Ons Vaderland*, a Dutch daily that evolved, from the end of May 1915 into the organ of the *Frontbeweging* (Yser Front Mouvement). *Ons Vaderland* printed 9,000 copies and had 5,600 subscribers. Due to censorship, the paper could not express its ideas, generally speaking. But the reader could divine them from its slogan "Free Flanders in a Free Belgium." It wanted the war to end, knowing that any clear and firm victory was impossible. Here again the cleavage with the major Francophone press heralded the debates between the wars: the editors did not consider England or France as allies whose politics should be followed. The government was a frequent theme (40 percent), constantly criticised for its inaction over the Flemish Question (100 percent). However, *Ons Vaderland* has condemned activism unequivocally. The enemy remained Germany, which was making – especially Flemish – blood flow. Finally, the paper congratulated itself on the appearance of *Opinion wallonne*. In short, this daily demonstrates the structured existence of an educated "Flemish" opinion. Meanwhile, *De Belgische Socialist* was viewed critically by the government, which several times insisted that its Dutch homologue take measures against it. Even the arrival of two socialists in government did not attenuate the criticism.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Press in the Trenches

No other publication was published at the front before September 1915 except for *Le Courrier de l'Armée*, the official organ of the Ministry of War that had been created during the siege of Antwerp (at the same time as its equivalent in Flemish, *De Legerbode*). About 630 issues survived, each printed in about 10,000 copies on average. *Les Bonnes nouvelles*, *Le Clairon du Roi* (The King's Clarion), and *La Lettre du soldat à ceux du pays envahi* (Soldier's Letter to the Invaded Country) were also at the service of Belgian Army propaganda. Whether carrying news or else literary or religious humour, the trench press tried to inform combatants about life in [occupied Belgium](#). However, its perspective was deliberately regional and even local. There are even titles destined for former students from one school or another.<sup>[13]</sup>

The analysis of periodicals from the front reveals the vibrant presence of Walloon and Flemish dialects in Belgium at the end of the “long 19<sup>th</sup> century.” These publications – whose print runs rarely exceeded 700 – developed regional and even local coverage. This kind of press also wanted to serve as witness to life in occupied Belgium. The writers wore military uniforms but were often ecclesiastics (chaplains and stretcher-bearers). Often each title was the work of a single man who had his paper printed “behind the Front,” whether in Calais, Dunkirk, Le Havre or Paris. Some titles in the trench press were printed in unoccupied Belgium, elsewhere in France, and even in England.<sup>[14]</sup> Most often, the writers obtained information through letters arriving via the Netherlands or Great Britain, but on average there was two to three months' delay. At other times, news came from young Belgians who had crossed the frontier. However, criticism came from all sides against the *Messenger du Front*, or “the brainwasher” as it was called. The edition in their language *De Legerbode*, was called by the Flemish *De Leugenbode* (“The Lying Messenger”). In fact, as with *Le XXe Siècle*, also published in France, many Flemish intellectuals were disgusted by its extremism.<sup>[15]</sup>

Recent studies have shown that despite the discrimination experienced by Flemish soldiers, the “*Frontbeweging*”, the main oppositional current in the trenches, remained a minority movement among the Belgian troops. On the contrary, correspondence and stories from soldiers reveal strong “national sentiment”. The ideas of the *Frontbeweging* movement retained an important place in Belgian political life (and in the Flemish press) during the interwar period. On the other hand, the writings of privates, both Francophone and Flemish, are full of criticism, often acerbic about the officers.<sup>[16]</sup>

## **Content of the trench press**

[Newspapers](#) at the front published lists of prices of food staples, which were often prohibitively high, even in rural areas where provisions existed. Many writers insisted on the excellent [morale of the people](#) and stressed the least act of resistance. Many newspaper columns were devoted to the organisation of relief in the countryside. The goal was to reassure soldiers about the fate of their friends and kin in occupied territory, about day-to-day life. Private efforts (soup kitchens for the poor) were also praised highly. Journalists readily stressed the people's excellent moral courage and their prowess at resistance. After 1916, however, fatigue followed. But the problem that most obsessed

people's minds was vexations due to the occupation. Details proliferated about German requisitions and exactions; stories of massacres and pillaging were omnipresent. Finally, there was the matter of the fate of deportees, and in August 1917 (during their repatriation) of their painful physical and moral condition. Newspapers at the Front reminded readers that even after this date, civilians continued to work under German constraint close to the lines.<sup>[17]</sup>

Other papers, principally the literary ones or those aimed at "veterans" of a specific educational institution, took cultural matters into account. Literary and philosophical criticism, and even reflection on the future of the two national communities, Flemish and Walloon, regularly appeared in a quality paper like *Le Claque à fond* that was literary, artistic, and witty.<sup>[18]</sup> However, the majority of papers tried simply to distract soldiers at the Front with the help of jokes (often told in local *patois*). As for religious observance, despite the large number of clergy writers, it was promoted merely as one form of the "moral life," of good conduct, and in praise of chastity.

## Flemish movement and Walloon movement

Of course, *Flamenpolitik* did have many concrete effects: on 4 February 1917, 'activists' or 'maximalists' such as Pieter Tack (1870-1943) and August Borms (1878-1946) created a *Raad van Vlaanderen* (*Conseil de Flandre* or Council of Flanders). On 22 December 1917, the autonomy of Flanders was proclaimed following the previous administrative separation between Flanders (and Brussels) and Wallonia in March 1917. But these decisions provoked anger in Flanders, where the "*flamingants*" (Flemish nationalists) who had dealt with the enemy were mostly considered as traitors.<sup>[19]</sup> In the eyes of [Flemish Movement](#) partisans like Frans van Cauwelaert (1880-1961), Cyriel Buysse (1859-1932) and Léo Van Puyvelde (1882-1965), the annexation of Belgium would be the ruin of the "Dutch language" and of "Flemish civilisation."

Nevertheless it developed an activist and aggressive press, notably in Holland with *De Toorts* (the Flame), *Dietsche Stemmen*, (Thiois Voices), but also in occupied Belgium with *De Vlaamsche Nieuws* (June 1915) edited by August Borms, a doctor in German philology who had been given almost a monopoly on the Antwerp press.<sup>[20]</sup> Apart from *Vlaamsche Post* (21 February 1915), a publication of Jong Vlaanderen, that was found throughout the county, the activists published in Brussels (as of 29 November 1914) the *Gazet van Brussel*. All of them were wagering on a German victory and wanted to profit from circumstances to create a Flemish nation-state. The Germans consulted all these *litterateurs* about the establishment of the *Flamenpolitik*.<sup>[21]</sup>

Until recently, [historiography](#) has underestimated the influence of the pro-Walloon press. It certainly remained a minority, but it expressed a current of thought that has been overly neglected, as Paul Delforge has brilliantly shown.<sup>[22]</sup> We find a small "*wallonisan*" diaspora in Belgium and in Paris. For example, in the French capital in February 1916 the bimonthly *La Wallonie* appeared; a sign of "the rallying of all Walloon refugees." The paper's agenda was simple: to grant autonomy to Wallonia



within the Belgian framework and with a Franco-Belgian alliance. Its publication was banned from the third issue – seemingly a unique case of such radical censorship. It was followed after 1 May 1916 by the *Opinion wallonne* of Raymond Colleye (1890-1963), which enjoyed eighty issues. *L'Opinion wallonne* denounced every kind of dealing with the Germans but expressed a Walloon and federalist programme that was favourable to military and political union with the French, with whom the Walloons shared “nationality.” In November 1916, it boasted 1,200 subscribers and in April 1918 was said to have 25,000 readers. The publication had around it a “cell” that organised Franco-Walloon dinners. It was not the only movement of the kind in France: there was also the *Union wallonne de France*, less political and without any organic link with the journal, whose members also collaborated willingly with *Opinion*.<sup>[23]</sup> The Union would also issue *La Nouvelle revue wallonne* starting in January 1918 with a view to defending Walloon interests, principally the victims and refugees in France. More radical still was (in November 1917) *France et Wallonie*, a monthly journal circulating in France with the goal of persuading readers of the need to remain attached to Belgium. *Opinion wallonne* was also circulated on the Front, as revealed by letters from young soldiers from Wallonia.<sup>[24]</sup>

Elsewhere in Belgium, *L'Avenir wallon*, by the liberal Franz Foulon (1862-1928) was a weekly that appeared in Brussels starting in November 1916. After February 1918, it was the Germans who encouraged a true Walloon paper, *Le Peuple wallon*, a daily appearing after the end of June 1918. ‘Wallon’-style articles helped justify the administrative separation and give it legitimacy when it referred to pamphlets and reports published before the war by the Walloon Movement (or reproduced long extracts from them). What else? In the province of Hainaut, about fifteen newspapers and periodicals appeared starting in 1916. In Liège, the great Walloon metropolis, nothing is found until June 1915, with the *Echo de Liège* (lasting three months), which was succeeded by *Le Télégraphe*. But these titles did not propagate an ideology favourable to the Walloon cause, like the à liberal *Echo de Sambre et Meuse*, starting in January 1915, and the Catholic *Ami de l'Ordre*. The Germans themselves noted that the Walloon movement was not “mass”, especially with respect to the thirty-some publications identified as *flamingant* (Flemish nationalist).<sup>[25]</sup>

## Conclusion

This study of the Belgian press has followed general bibliographic tendencies. We have gone from books (scholarly but still marked by patriotism) to arrive more recently at studies that encompass the whole interwar period. This was necessary as the discourse around the “Belgium as martyr” lasted until at least 1930 and served national political interests as a way of concealing the quarrels between linguistic communities that were becoming significant. In one sense, through the pens of *litterateurs* and journalists, the war continued; it is no exaggeration to speak of the establishment of a veritable “culture of war” that was deployed well after the Armistice.<sup>[26]</sup>

Note that in a general way the First World War saw the demise of most of the pre-war Belgian dailies, since ninety-two of them did not reappear after 1918 (out of a total estimated at about 110). More specifically, it also brought a new lustre to the profession of journalist. When the fighting was over,

and once the collaborationist publicists had been judged and condemned, the reigning view – within the profession and in official discourse, but also in public opinion – was of a press that had been entirely *resistant*. Journalists would forcefully underline those personalities as key as [Raymond Poincaré \(1860-1934\)](#), [Georges Clemenceau \(1841-1929\)](#), and the burgomaster [Adolphe Max \(1869-1939\)](#) had been members of the corporation.<sup>[27]</sup> In Belgium, journalists in the capital played a preponderant role in the construction of this discourse. In March 1919, in a climate of exalted patriotism, the general committee of the APB even pronounced in favour of purge of the profession. They struck off members of the association who had subjected their thought to enemy authorities, demonstrating a lack of dignity, those who had agreed to publish military or judicial communiqués and therefore had deceived public opinion.<sup>[28]</sup> The image of the writer in the service of the homeland – with all the questions that it raises about the independence of the press from sources of power – remained pertinent between the wars. It particularly seduced Belgian men of the press who were largely Francophone and partisans of a united Belgium – an idea henceforth contested, but what the leaders, élites and notables desired.

Filmed and fictional stories of the hostilities began to appear in the 1920s: the *Libre Belgium* venture and the deeds of smugglers crossing borders were two subjects. Movie directors preferred “heroes” and “heroines” like [Gabrielle Petit \(1860-1952\)](#).<sup>[29]</sup> Who most contributed to “maintaining” the vivid memory of “national heroes?” By the evidence, it was the journalists, and in the front rank were the leading lights of the French-speaking press who stressed (correctly) that heroes are found in all the social classes. The Catholic publications were the most dynamic, especially with “front-page biographical articles to tell their readers about the ‘tragic history’ of the patriots of their region... who died for loving their homeland too much.”

After the Locarno Pact was signed in 1925, the Belgian authorities would prefer to exalt the [League of Nations](#) than past [atrocities](#). But one part of the Walloon press did not change course! In the eyes of its publicists, pacifism amounted to a denial of memory. In the 1930s “tensions over identity” arose in which Francophones brandished the memory of this war against the Flemish Movement. Thus an activist like August Borms was transformed into a martyr to the Flemish cause. Pilgrimages to the Yser Tower (inaugurated in 1928 to commemorate the battle in October 1914) assumed a Flemish character I (“*vlaams gevoel*”) in the 1930s. In summary, here too, the national memory of the First World War became fragmented, split between a Francophone memory and a Flemish memory. The cult of “national heroes” became a speciality of the former. <sup>[30]</sup>

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## Notes

1. † Niset, Jérôme: Le quotidien d'information "La Belgique", organe belge de collaboration, censuré par les autorités allemandes durant la Première Guerre mondiale, ULB History, 2002-2003.
2. † Van den Dungen, Pierre: Milieux de presse et journalistes en Belgique (1828-1914), Brussels 2005.
3. † Pan-germanism was movement born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which aimed for the unity of all German-speaking people in Europe, as well as those who identified themselves as "Germans." The stated goal was to create a "Greater Germany" (*Großdeutschland*).
4. † Nyst, Ray: Malgré tout! Complément et examen des débats du procès du journal La Belgique, Brussels 1920 p. 191; De Schaepdrijver, Sophie: La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale, Brussels 2004, pp. 122-146.
5. † Roland, Hubert: "Les avant-gardes internationalistes, la guerre et l'occupation," in Jaumain, Serge et al. Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale, Brussels 2005, pp. 301-313.
6. † De Schaepdrijver, La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale 2004, pp. 122-146.
7. † Pöppinghege, Rainer: "Belgian Life behind German Barbed Wire", in Jaumain et al., Une Guerre Totale? 2005, pp. 207-233.
8. † Massart, Jean: La presse clandestine dans la Belgique occupée, Paris-Nancy 1917.
9. † Van Doren, Eugène: Les tribulations du "manager" de la Libre Belgique clandestine 1914-1918, Brussels 1947, p. 187; Goemaere, Pierre: Histoire de la Libre Belgique clandestine, Brussels 1919; and Van de Kerckhove, Albert: L'histoire merveilleuse de La Libre Belgique, Brussels 1919.
10. † Van den Dungen, Pierre: Les milieux de presse bruxellois pendant la grande guerre, in: Les Cahiers de la Fonderie. Bruxelles en 14-18, la guerre au quotidien 32 (2005), pp. 15-20.
11. † Amara, Michael: Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'exil. Les réfugiés de la Première Guerre Mondiale, Brussels 2008.
12. † Leroy, Marie: La presse belge en Belgique libre et à l'étranger en 1918, Nauwelaerts 1971, p. 268.
13. † Bertrand, F.: La presse francophone de tranchée au front belge, 1914-1918, Brussels 1971, p. 27 ff.
14. † Ibid. The author analysed 110 Francophone periodicals (whole or in part) out of the 150 whose existence has been proved (even if there is no longer any trace).
15. † De Schaepdrijver, La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale 2004, p. 185.
16. † Benvindo, Bruno: Des hommes en guerre. Les soldats belges entre ténacité et désillusion, 1914-1918, Brussels 2005; Simoens, Tom: Het gezag onder vuur: over de conflicten tussen soldaten en hun oversten aan het IJzerfront, Brugge 2011.
17. † See especially Bertrand, La presse francophone de tranchée au front belge 1971, p. 27 ff, and 48-56.
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