

in the issue of financial reparations than in an expanded Belgium-in-Europe. Auwers' conclusion, however, is by that time there was scarcely any real political debate on Belgian foreign policy or the position it should take at the Versailles peace talks, and that initiative had by now shifted mainly from politicians (and the King) to diplomats. Their 'coup', successful but short-lived and unable to deliver its intended results, was thus both a success and a failure.

Auwers' account often reads like an investigative report: exhaustive and formidably researched, but in constant danger of losing the plot. It adds to, rather than supplants, what we already know about Belgian international relations during the war, but largely fails to connect its narrative to a wider analysis of Sainte-Adresse political culture or the international environment in which these ideas operated and could be acted upon. But it does provide fascinating glimpses in the inner workings of Belgian international-relations-in-exile, and suggests that, in relative isolation in France, a small group of diplomats, press barons, ministers and governmental hangers-ons could slowly, but surely, gain an outsized influence on Belgium's disastrous political gamble at Versailles.

**Samuël Kruizinga**

MARYSA DEMOOR, CEDRIC VAN DIJCK AND  
BIRGIT VAN PUymbroeck (EDS.)

***The Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals***

Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023, 539 p.

Until about a decade and a half ago, the difficult to preserve collections of periodicals were equally difficult and very labour-intensive to consult. At best there were clunky microfilms, at worst large, fragile volumes but in both cases hundreds of pages had to be browsed in the hope of a harvest that was not at all guaranteed. One of the consequences was that newspapers and magazines were only used to a limited extent as source material. Extensive digitization projects in recent years have largely put an end to this: now one can often consult entire collections from behind one's desk at home and in some cases even search them by

keyword. Belgium has played an exemplary role in this, certainly as far as the First World War is concerned: via the umbrella website [belgianpress-fromthegreatwar.be](http://belgianpress-fromthegreatwar.be), almost 400,000 pages from Belgian newspapers and magazines are currently accessible. The variety is enormous: clandestine and censored magazines from the occupied country, refugee press from the Belgian communities in exile in the Netherlands, France or the United Kingdom, newspapers published in the unoccupied part of the country including trench papers of the Belgian army, and camp magazines of the Belgian prisoners of war in Germany.

That exemplary role in facilitating the use of First World War periodicals has been mirrored by academic research on the press of that period: the *Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals* is an achievement by Belgian academics Marysa Demoor, Cedric Van Dijck and Birgit Van Puymbroeck. They are not historians, but English-literature scholars, though all three have extensive experience in First World War research. For the contributions in their edited Companion, they called on both emerging and established scholars active in several academic disciplines: thus, in addition to historians and literary scholars, specialists in the arts also collaborated on this volume. It shows once again how First World studies has long since ceased to be the exclusive domain of historians (if it ever was), and this broadening of scholarly interest is a trend that the recent century has only reinforced.

This new Companion responds to a real need because whereas the press as a historical source for the study of the First World War is now well established, the same is much less true for periodicals as cultural artefacts in their own right. After all, the press not only played an important role in the war but also underwent many changes as a result of the conflict. It is on this rather than on the press as a source of information that the emphasis is placed. The first part of the book examines critical approaches ranging from 'materiality', through 'archives', to the role of the press in 'memory' and 'popular culture'. A second part focuses

on 'contributors' where, apart from the usual suspects such as 'authors' and 'war correspondents', attention is also paid to literally image-defining actors such as 'photographers' and (avant-garde) 'artists'. In his contribution on 'editors', Christophe Declercq elaborates on the case of the Belgian refugee press: how pre-war networks continued to function, and ultimately what the influence was on the post-war Belgian press landscape, including the foundation of the nation-wide Flemish-leaning newspaper *De Standaard*. 'Events' is the title of the third part. That pays attention to specific contexts such as 'battles', 'revolutions', 'alliances', but also the 'Armenian genocide' and the 'influenza pandemic'. The fourth part of the book looks at 'types of periodicals': besides newspapers, a very wide range of publications are considered: better-known types such as 'trench journals', 'prisoner-of-war camp journals' but also 'hospital journals', or activist magazines of the peace movement, trade unions or suffragettes. Of great importance is the book's global scope, which is particularly evident in the fifth part: with contributions on the Ottoman Empire, German colonial Africa, India, China, Canada and Australia and New Zealand, the five continents are represented. Because of its worldwide dimension and wider time frame, i.e. beyond the old geographical and chronological limitations of the West and '1914-1918' respectively, *The Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals* inscribes itself fully within current historiographical trends in the study of the First World War: that of 'the Greater War'. I want to point this out specifically because, particularly in terms of research on 'subaltern groups' during the First World War, the periodical press can compensate for the lack of official sources or personal records.

The division into five parts and thirty chapters with the very laconic titles I quoted above (that ultimately reveal little about the specific cases worked out) does not mean that other types of magazines (such as children's magazines), or other contexts (such as neutrality), or other contributors (such as printers) to which no separate contribution has been devoted have not been taking into consideration. An excellent index leads to these and many

other topics covered. At the same time, it goes without saying that such a wide-ranging book cannot possibly pay the attention due to all aspects. It mostly remains limited to presentations of admittedly inspiring cases: for instance, the chapter on 'artists' deals mainly with the then avant-garde and hardly at all with the much more widely spread academic artists who used a rather traditional form language, while the chapter on 'editors' deals only with the Belgian refugee press. Like any good Companion, this book is a hybrid (in the good sense of the word) in which the collected essays can be considered both a reference work and a monograph. Above all, it shows a gigantic wealth. It is thus an overview, a state of the art of current research, pointing to possible avenues and offering inspiration and, consequently, an impetus and a spur to further research into (the role of) the press during the First World War.

Unfortunately, I must once again end a review by pointing out the exuberant and therefore prohibitive price of this important book: £150. When will academic publishers understand that there is indeed a market for this kind of works outside university libraries and adjust their business model so that independent scholars, and smaller - specialised or non-specialised - libraries can also purchase the fruits of what was largely publicly funded research? The price of books such as this remains a shame, and the brake it places on its distribution is especially unfortunate for the excellent work done by editors and contributors. Nevertheless, I can only hope that many First World War scholars and specialists in press history will find their way to this book. For it deserves a wide readership.

**Dominiek Dendooven**

BETTY COLETTA, JULES PIRLOT, GEORGES SPRIET, THEUN VONCKX

***Camarades. Le Parti Communiste de Belgique par l'image 1921-1995 = Kameraden. De Kommunistische Partij van België in beeld 1921-1995***

Brussel, CARCoB /DACOB, 2021, 267 p.

De Kommunistische Partij van België (KPB): er zijn evidentere onderwerpen voor een fotoboek.