

Press Release

Censored Newspapers of the First World War Online

From 12 June 2014, it will be possible to read the censored newspapers of the First World War at home. They will be available on *The Belgian War Press* website, where the clandestine press of the two world wars is already accessible. This online publication, an initiative of CEGESOMA (Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society), will also enable new search methods.

Frontpage of censored newspaper "Le quotidien bruxellois", 19 September 1914. (Cegesoma, collection "The Belgian War Press")

In 1914, the Germans introduced press censorship. Yet, newspapers continued to appear. Despite the censorship, they are an interesting source of information on the First World War. They indeed covered a variety of topics such as daily life, the severe food shortage or the monetary chaos. The censored press also illustrates how the war was presented to the population.

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The Federal Digitisation Project

The digitisation of the censored press of the First World War, a project for which CEGESOMA closely collaborated with the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR), was financed by the Federal Science Policy (BELSPO). CEGESOMA and the Royal Library both hold important newspaper collections of the First World War, but in order to present as much titles as possible, a collaboration was set up with other depositary and heritage institutions. The added value is not only the online accessibility, but also the possibility to consult hardcopy collections spread among different institutions.

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OCR

A third advantage are the improved search possibilities. The reader can browse the newspapers on a day to day basis, the traditional method to read a newspaper. The digital data were OCR-ised to make the whole file searchable with keywords. For example, it is quite easy to quickly find information on events in a specific village or town during the Great War.

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The Belgian War Press

The digitised files can be consulted on The Belgian War Press website, where the clandestine press of the two world wars is already accessible. This website is not only a tool for accessibility and consultation, but also provides context information on the censored press during the First World war. CEGESOMA wants to introduce this unique collection to a wide audience and not just to specialized researchers. The success of the *Journaux de Guerre / Oorlogskranten*, published with the collaboration of CEGESOMA, shows that there is great public demand for information on the First World War.

Dirk Luyten

11 / 6 / 2014