

Fig. 6 The Daily Mail Bird's Eye View of the British Front—Sect. 1, 1915. (IV 3.531, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

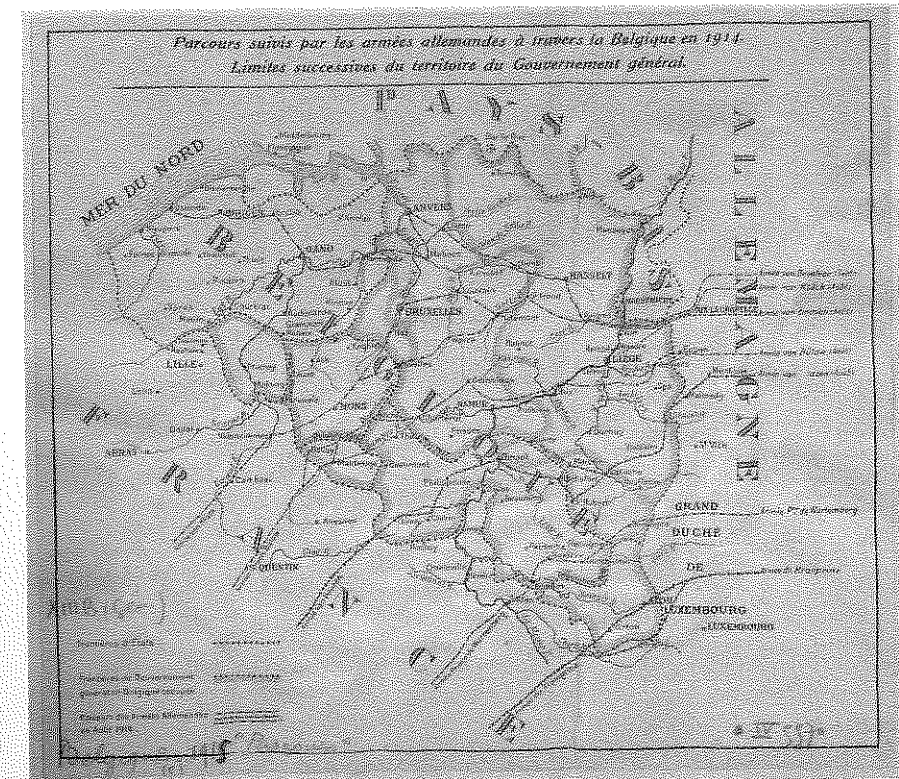


Fig. 7 The frontiers of the General government in time. (IV 5.577, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

on the contrary was in favour of a very short term strategy, and, supported in their plea by the big industries in Germany, asked for a severe repression of the Belgian people. When the ongoing war in 1916 asked for more labour than Germany could offer, the military lobby in Berlin asked and obtained that Belgium would be forced to deliver man power to work in the German war industry. Even if these deportations stopped rather quickly under national and international pressure, they only did in that part of Belgium that was governed by the General government (Fig. 7). In the *Etappengebiet*, roughly the western part of the country, where the military party held to its prerogatives, deportations went on until the very end of the war. Even if Belgian workers came back from Germany, they were often immediately sent to the Belgian front in the south, amongst other things to build the new Hindenburg line or the *Siegfried Stellung*, the new frontline 40 km behind the existing one.

The map (see Fig. 8) accompanying *Unser Belgisches Kriegsziel* by the medieval and Renaissance scholar and academic Aloys Meister illustrates the annexationist interests of the military staff in Berlin at the time as well as of Germany's industry magnates (Meister 1917). It shows Belgium divided in three parts: I is the



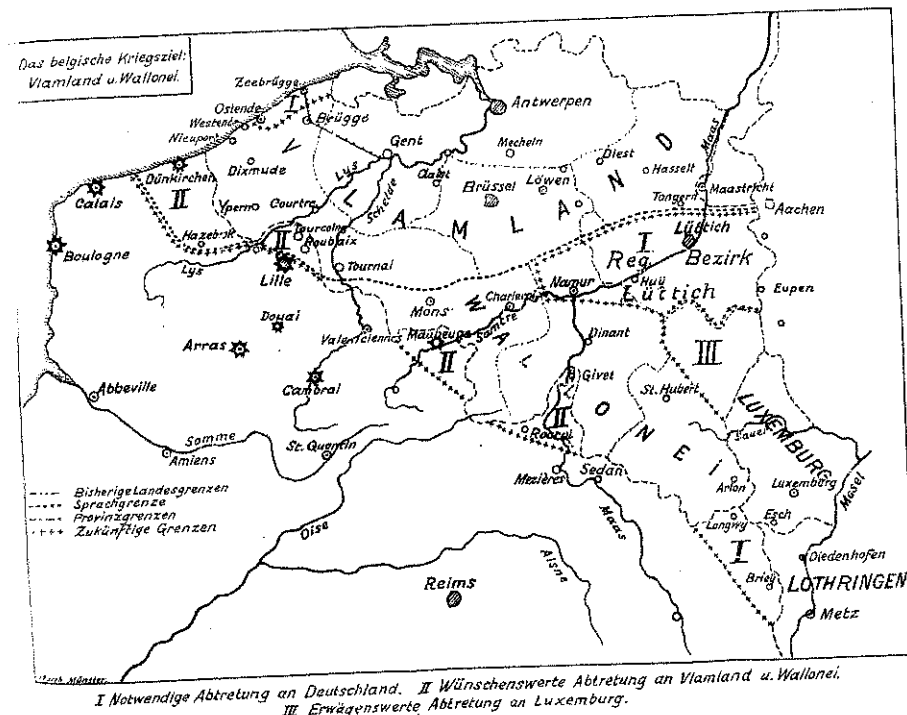


Fig. 8 *Vlamland and Wallonie, 1917.* (MIC IMP 539, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

territory that necessarily has to go to Germany, II the territory that would best go to the Flemish and the Walloons respectively, III the territory that perhaps should go to Luxemburg. The Liège basin with its metal industry logically had to be incorporated in the German empire (de Schaepdrijver 2005, p. 221). Interestingly the booklet is mentioned in the Belgian bibliography of 1917 under the heading history and geography (Bibliographie de Belgique 1917, p. 102). Its presence in Belgium clearly served propagandistic purposes. As a German product it also shows how intimately publications of certain professional historians and university professors mingled with politics. That this attitude was not always as obvious as in Meister's case is exemplified by the following map by Fischer and Schönebaum (see Fig. 9), where a similar, if less explicit, attitude towards Belgium can be detected. It has the looks of a school map and is indeed present in different German reviews on higher education. The *Monatschrift für Höhere Schulen* of 1916 (p. 381) comments on the map by saying that the history of the expansion of the different European states and their power since the Renaissance gives a nice insight into the evolution of contemporary Europe. The overview starts in 1556 and ends in 1916.

Dr. Hans Fischer probably is the geographer Fischer (1860–1941), pupil of the geo-politician Friedrich Ratzel, who worked as a cartographer for the important Leipzig map publisher Wagner & Debes. Herbert (Felix) Schönebaum

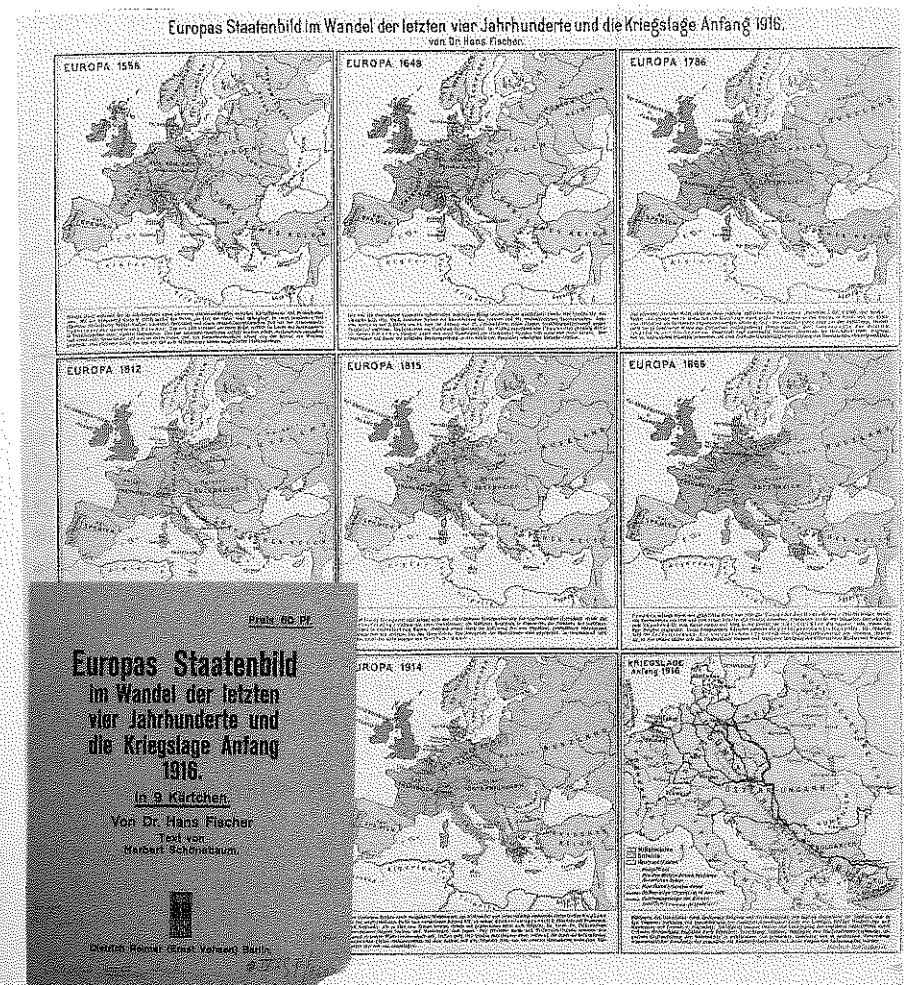


Fig. 9 Europe from 1556 to 1916. (IV 2.596–2.604, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

on the contrary is much better known. He was born in 1888 and died in 1967. He lived in Dresden and Leipzig, was a pedagogue and a historian. Interestingly, he was the last pupil of Karl Lamprecht, whose biography he wrote (Chickering 1993, p. xiv). More than a biography, the book was a kind of tribute to his former master. Karl Lamprecht is the key to understand this map. He was a well known historian in Germany, at the time often criticized by his fellow professors for his modernist, socio-economic approach to the subject. Being a friend of Henri Pirenne, he published his *History of Belgium* in Germany. The patriot university professor Lamprecht was firmly convinced of Germany's mission to

recover Belgium, and esp. its Flemish part. The Belgian identity was a vague idea to him, which could not be politically defended (Chickering 1993, p. 439). He visited the Belgian front in 1914 and the establishment of the political government under the direction of von der Lancken-Wakenitz actually goes back to his idea of a foreign policy of culture, whose ambassador he would have loved to become. He died on the 10th of May 1915. When comparing the Flemish and the Walloons during a conference in Dresden a couple of months before his death, he concluded that the first were in fact German and he tried to demonstrate that everything that had happened in the country's history (i.e. the history of the Netherlands) was in fact German (de Schaepdrijver 2005, pp. 142–143). This is more or less what this map tells us. In fact, it takes us back to the period of Charles V, when the German emperor governed the Netherlands and most parts of Europe. In a personal conversation with the German emperor, Lamprecht had deplored the fact that the German empire had abandoned the Netherlands in the sixteenth century. In the legend to the last map, the map of 1916, Schönebaum explicitly follows the official thesis of the German government as if the war was started by the Germans in self-defence: the aggression (by the English together with the French and the Russians), he writes, was countered thanks to the occupation of Belgium and Northern France.

The former maps are all clearly destined for propaganda policy only. They express ideas and do not care for geographic detail. For purchasing this latter kind of maps, one clearly had to buy or try to get hold of German products, although they were censored too before being put on the market and served propaganda policies. Figure 10 shows a map of July 1916, illustrating the war fronts in the East and in Italy at that time, but the map starts with showing the front line of Belgium.

At first sight, the curved lines seem to indicate a progressive movement of the German forces, but a closer look and reading of the information on the map makes us understand that it reflects the positions during the first months of the war in 1914. The full line (which would usually indicate the most recent front line) near Paris is the front line of the German army in September 1914. Two years had passed since the German army had come within 70 km (43 miles) of Paris, but was forced to retreat by the French and British troops at the First Battle of the Marne (6–12 September), north of the Aisne River. The map was exclusively distributed in Belgium and France by the Georg Stilke company. At the time, it was the founder's son who had taken over the business. His father had established the first railway station bookshop in Berlin in 1882, whereas Hermann (1870–1928) established bookshops on ships and in hotels, but above all created no less than 263 military bookshops during WWI. He had learned the tricks of the trade in America, England and France before entering his father's company (Haug 2007, p. 157 ff.). He was thus a good ally to the German government in developing its propaganda policy. The map was most probably intended for German soldiers, not so much for the Belgian population. The inventory of the Royal Library states it was found among the documents left by the enemy.

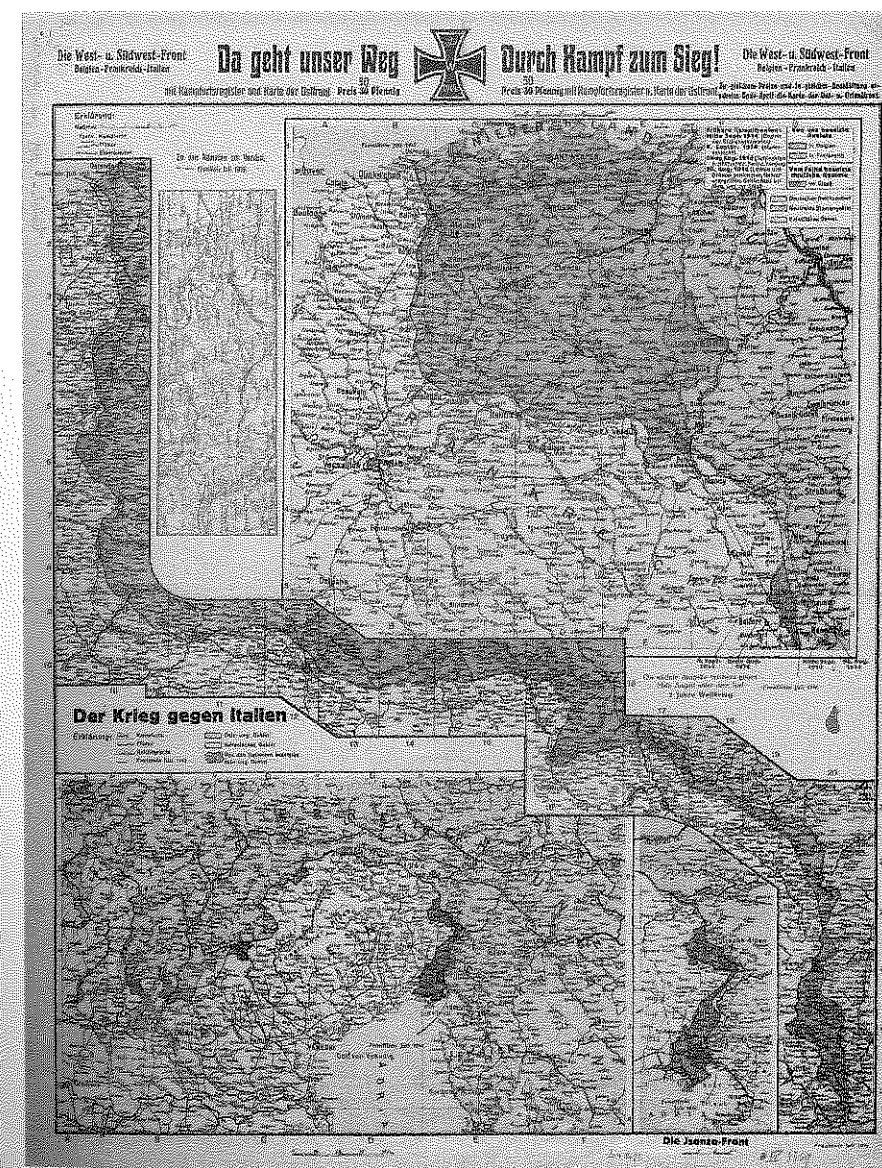


Fig. 10 The Belgian front, 1916. (IV 3.369, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

In March 1917, when Hindenburg could be convinced to stop the massive deportations from Belgium to Germany, the German government decided as part of its *Flamenpolitik* (by then taken out of the political department, as was censorship) to split the Belgian administration into two parts, a Flemish and a Walloon one, in order to eliminate every possible influence of the French speaking part of the country



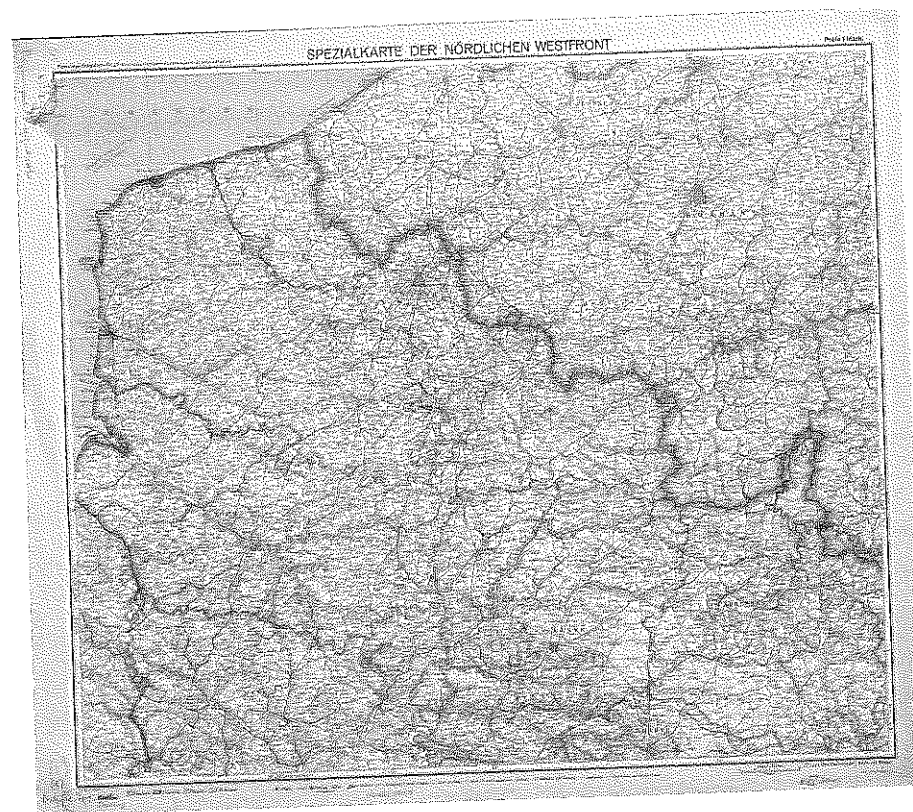


Fig. 11 Fleming's *Kriegskarte*, 1915. (IV 2.449, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

(de Schaepdrijver 2005, p. 254 ff.). Germany understood by then it could not win the war anymore and that even peace would not be negotiated on its own terms but rather on those of the Allies. In doing so, it therefore hoped that it would keep some political influence after the war or perhaps even get military guarantees in a politically divided Belgium. With the *Flamenpolitik* getting a more official character, it also had its impact on maps, or rather maps seem to have played a role in this policy too. If we compare two editions of the same map (nr. 23) of Fleming's *Kriegskarte* (see Figs. 11 and 12), the first dating from 1915 and the second from 1917, one major difference striking the eye are the changes of the front line in France between December 1916 (dotted red line) and June 1917 (full red line). Less obvious, but perhaps more significant, are the clearly evidenced borders of the areas where, as the map's legend reads, *Niederdeutsch* was spoken at that time (full yellow line) or where it had been spoken but was now *verwelscht* (dotted yellow line).

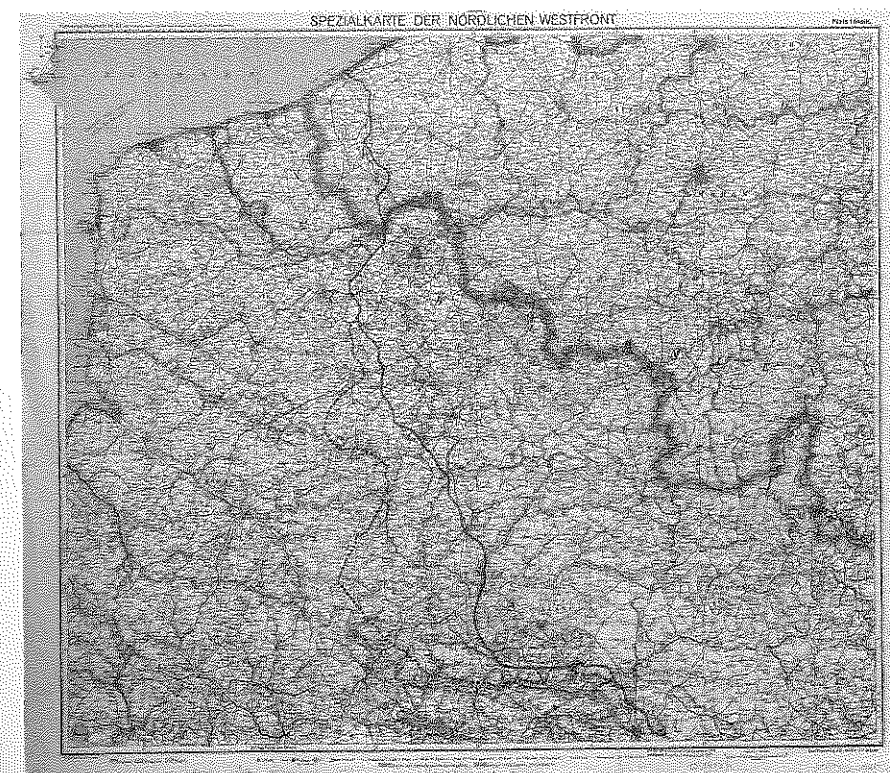


Fig. 12 Fleming's *Kriegskarte*, 1917. (IV 14.337, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

Of the several major offensives which took place from 1917 to 1918 on the Western front, those which concerned the Belgian territory were mostly concentrated in the Yser region. Best known is without doubt the Battle of Passchendaele (roughly 600,000 casualties) which started on 6 November 1917 and ended the Third Battle of Ypres. But there were two more major offensives to come. On 25 April 1918 the Kemmelberg was lost by the French to the Germans in what was called operation Georgette (which had started April 9), part of the final offensive of the German army directed to Hazebroek, an important railway junction. However, no maps of these offensives intended for the larger public, nor of the final campaigns by the Allies following them, are to be found in the digitized collection of the Royal Library. Because from August 1917 onwards all kinds of metal were confiscated for the war, most printing offices had to stop their activities. There was also a paper shortage which resulted in the remaining newspapers being limited to two pages. Even propaganda policy seems to have suffered from this lack of means.

After the war, little was left of the image of Brave Little Belgium and when Belgium asked for the expansion of its frontiers as compensation for the 4 years

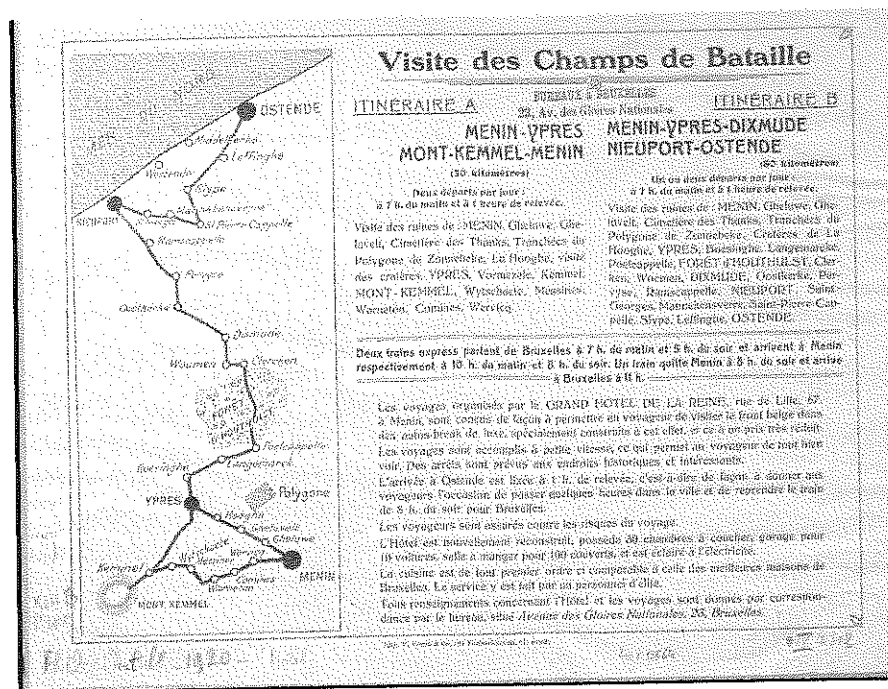


Fig. 13 Visiting the Yser front, 1920. (IV 4.312, Courtesy of the Royal Library of Belgium)

of suffering, the Allies could not appreciate what they considered as a very presumptuous request (de Schaepdrijver 2005, pp. 294–295). In the end, Belgium only received the region of Eupen-Malmédy. And the Yser front? It very quickly became a tourist attraction (see Fig. 13).

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