

Charles-Alcée Campan (1800-1877), an “orléaniste” pressman in Belgian exile during the Second Empire (Jeffrey Tyssens)

Abstract

It is a well-known fact that French journalists and press investors played an essential role in developing the 19th-century newspaper in Belgium, notably during the Second Empire. When studying French exile during that period, most attention is paid to radical journalists: the more moderate types are rarely part of the global picture. Nevertheless, some of the latter conflicted with Napoleon III's regime too, and fled France, like Charles-Alcée Campan did in 1852. A native of Bordeaux, Campan had been the secretary and friend of political publicist Henri Fonfrède (1788-1841), a major “*bordelais*” supporter of Louis-Philippe's constitutional monarchy. Campan was an “*orléaniste*” Liberal too, as well as a staunch free trade advocate (e.g. in the *Association pour la Liberté des Echanges*). Hostile to the Second Republic, but more timid towards the younger Bonaparte after the coup, his journalism in the *Courrier de la Gironde* nevertheless led him into exile in Brussels. Why the Belgian capital? Campan had been the Brussels representative of a Parisian editor some 20 years before and had married a daughter of the well-known Weissenbruch printers' family. He participated in major Belgian Liberal dailies before returning to Bordeaux to become the chamber of commerce's secretary and resuming his journalistic and publicist activities. Back in Belgium (he was never to return to France), he made an income as a wine salesman. However, behind the scenes, he was the delegate of the fallen Orléans family – then based in London – which controlled the (high print run) Liberal newspaper *L'Etoile Belge*. In the 1860s and early 1870s, writing under the pseudonym of “*Un vieux liberal*”, the aging Campan emerged a last time with his proper “*journalisme d'idées*” and became a sharp-minded – but now largely forgotten – opinion leader of “moderate” Liberalism, commenting on Belgian domestic issues (local autonomy, the secularizing of the judicial oath, etc.) and international developments (e.g. the Franco-Prussian war and the emergence of the Third Republic). Campan was among the last of the pre-professionalization generations of “*hommes de lettres*” that combined the writing of rather highbrow opinion pieces in newspapers with other occupations, in his case as an entrepreneur, an erudite member of learned societies, a Liberal publicist, and a book editor.

Bio

Jeffrey Tyssens obtained his PhD at the “Vrije Universiteit Brussel” where he currently teaches contemporary history. He is chair of the Secular Studies Association Brussels at the “Vrije Universiteit Brussel” and of the Brussels Center for Religious and Secular Studies (a joint research group of the “Vrije Universiteit Brussel” and the “Université Libre de Bruxelles”). He is member of the editorial board of the “*Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña*”, of “*BTNG-RBHC Journal of Belgian History*” and of the “*Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire - Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*”. In 2009, Jeffrey Tyssens was Pieter Paul Rubens professor in the Dutch Studies department of the University of California at Berkeley. In the spring of 2014, he was holder of the Verhaegen chair at the “Université Libre de Bruxelles”. In the spring of 2016, he was senior research fellow at the “Institut für Europäische Geschichte” in Mainz (Germany). In May 2024, Jeffrey Tyssens was “directeur d'études invité” at the “Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes” in Paris. Jeffrey Tyssens has written extensively on the history of secular movements in Belgium, on secular ways of dying and burying, on liberal leadership in Belgium, on political conflicts regarding education in several European countries, and on the history of Freemasonry and American fraternalism.