



# CREaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Please cite this publication as follows:

Davis, M. (2017) Review of War Map: Pictorial Conflict Maps 1900–1950. By Philip Curtis and Jakob Søndergård Pedersen. *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography*, 69 (2). pp. 267-268. ISSN 0308-5694.

Link to official URL (if available):

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03085694.2017.1312125>

This version is made available in accordance with publishers' policies. All material made available by CReaTE is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

Contact: [create.library@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:create.library@canterbury.ac.uk)



***War Map: Pictorial Conflict Maps 1900-1950.* By Philip Curtis and Jakob Søndergård Pedersen. London: Sifton, Praed and Co. Publishing, 2016. ISBN 978-0957149717. Pp. xix, 232, illus. STG £35.00 (cloth)**

If ever there were any doubt over the power of maps to argue, persuade and simultaneously inform and misinform their readers, 'War Map' comprises a convincing compendium of cartographic works which are exemplary in showcasing each of these qualities. Often thinly veiled behind playful, even juvenile façades, the pictorial propaganda maps of the first half of the twentieth century were foundational to the political discourse of the time and to the dissemination of geographical ideas to the masses. In this lavish 252-page volume, Philip Curtis and Jakob Søndergård Pedersen have selected a fascinating range of such maps that are as impressive for their artistic merit as much as their historical significance.

Among the maps included are some of the finest examples of the typifying cartographic techniques of this highly rhetorical medium, from the anthropomorphic characterisation of Europe in Arthur Kampf's *Gedrängte Frühjahrsübersicht von Europa* (1915) to Kimon Evan Marengo's zoomorphic portrayal of Hitler as an ill-fated spider in *Une a Une, on lui Brisera les Pattes* (1943). Also present is the innovative work of journalistic cartographer Richard Edes Harrison, including *The World Divided – The World Centrifuged* (1941) with its adoption of an azimuthal equidistant projection to cleverly convey global axes of alignment, with North America, Europe and the USSR falling in the geometric centre of the map.

The large format of the book (25 x 31 cm), along with its high-quality colour printing throughout, has facilitated outstanding reproductions of the maps, with even the finest details clearly legible. Burke's 1940 map *Italy Hopes War Will Bring New Roman Empire* demonstrates this, as the fine pictorial symbols and representations of relief would have been indistinct if reproduced in a smaller format. Postcards, such as *La France Accueille la Belgique* (1914), are reproduced at actual size, while larger maps have frequently been included as full-bleed double-page spreads. While similar volumes have sometimes prioritised quantity over quality, the layout of this book is refreshingly spacious, with more than one map rarely being included on a single page. Also helpful is the chronological ordering of the maps, with a small tab in the top-right corner of each page stating the relevant year. This gives the book a clear narrative and allows readers to trace the evolution of this type of mapping in what could otherwise have been a fragmented assortment.

The authors should be commended on their interesting and informative commentaries which accompany each map; elevating the book from a mere album to a wellspring of illuminating facts. Ranging from approximately 50 to 500 words in length, many of these go beyond basic descriptions of the maps to

incorporate aspects of their production contexts and the meanings of their (often) cryptic content. The inclusion of translations and metadata for each map add further value, while a comprehensive set of footnotes demonstrates the extensive research undertaken by the authors. In cases where maps exhibit particularly remarkable intricacies, or where a particular feature has been noted in the commentary, enlargements of the relevant areas have been thoughtfully incorporated. A good example of this is Ernest Dudley Chase's *Total War Battle Map* (1942). The elongated 2.3:1 format of the map, along with its inclusion of elaborate details, could have easily hampered legibility when reproduced in a book. Instead, the whole map is reproduced here across two pages, with a further two pages devoted to enlarged details. The removal of the backgrounds of some of the enlarged extracts also aids clarity.

Given the quantity of maps included, the absence of an index is unfortunate, and a missed opportunity to provide listings of the maps by author, theme or geographic coverage that may have proved helpful to those with a more specific interest within pictorial or conflict mapping. Perhaps the most striking omission in the book is the cartography of the German *Geopolitik* school; arguably one of the influential forces in advancing Hitler's desire to acquire territory after the under-bounding of the German state by the Treaty of Versailles. Despite this, the book does manage to encapsulate a variety of contrasting world-views. Given the complexity of global involvement in the various conflicts of the early twentieth century, this is essential if the book is to fully epitomize the sphere of cartography it seeks to represent.

In his foreword, Peter Barber (former Head of Map Collections at the British Library) concludes that 'this book presents some of the most striking images to be created in the first half of the twentieth century' (p.xvii). This high-quality anthology of these striking images will be popular with map historians, political geographers and those with broader interests in political and cultural histories of the twentieth century.

Martin Davis  
Canterbury Christ Church University

772 words