

## Andrée De Jongh, a remarkable woman !



Portrait of Andrée De Jongh, (photo 30.835 © CegeSoma)

Today is International Women's Day. As a centre for historical expertise we know all too well that the social position of women has dramatically improved in the last century. But much remains to be done! Historical role models are important to women, also today. This is why we want to pay attention to Andrée De Jonghe, female icone of the resistance. The resistance during WWII was not an exclusively male domain!

Andrée De Jongh was born on 30 November 1916 in a humble family in Schaerbeek. She was an advertising designer but also had a certificate as ambulance officer.

From the start of the occupation, she engaged herself in the care of soldiers who were nursed in Bruges after the Eighteen Days' Campaign.

In the summer of 1941, she founded an escape network together with a friend, who was arrested quite soon, that was called "Comète". With the help of her father and the British intelligence services in Spain, she worked for the repatriation of allied pilots whose plane had crashed above enemy territory.

At the risk of their own life, Andrée and the 3000 women and men of the network were able to repatriate 288 pilots to Great Britain. They also looked after some hundred war volunteers and exposed resistance fighters, and 368 allied pilots who had to wait in a safe place for the end of the hostilities. On 15 January 1943, just before her twenty third crossing of the Pyrenees, Andrée De Jongh was arrested. She survived the terrible Nazi repression which killed her father and at least 216 members of Comète.

Andrée's engagement with Comète left her traumatized. In 1950, she studied to be a nurse and, as a single women, left for Congo in 1954, and afterwards to other African countries to devote herself to the care of lepers. She remained committed and devoted to this cause until 1981. She died on 13 October 2007.

Marie-Pierre d'Udekem d'Acoz, historian and former researcher at CegeSoma, has written a beautiful book on Andrée entitled *Andrée De Jongh. Une vie de résistante* (Brussels, Racine, 2016, 269 pp.). Furthermore, CegeSoma keeps two transcriptions of interviews with her for the television series “Jours de guerre” (AA 1450 / 104) and for the BRT broadcasts of 1980 on the Resistance (AA 1825 / Verzet / Andrée De Jongh).

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