

# CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

## NO 57 - JUNE 2020

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### PUBLICATION

'Was opa een held ?/ Papy était-un héros ?' To learn more about this book, discover the online presentation, the podcast and several media items. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/was-grandpa-hero) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/was-grandpa-hero>)

### TEMPORARY GOODBYE

After more than fifteen years at CegeSoma, Florence Gillet, responsible for digital access to our collections and digital humanities projects, will take a leave of absence for two years. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/farewell-%E2%80%A6) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/farewell-%E2%80%A6>)

### BELGIUM WWII

Discover important new aspects about the start of the war and the beginning of the occupation, through several new contributions. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/peculiar-summer-1940) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/peculiar-summer-1940>)

### RESEARCH

POSTWAREX is launched, a BRAIN-research project about the policy behind the death penalties for collaboration after the Second World War, based on the archives of the military justice system. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/project/brain-project-postwarex-started) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/project/brain-project-postwarex-started>)

### REFLECTION

Plea for more structural dialogue between archivists and historians at a time when scholarship is under increased pressure of growing distrust. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/science-and-truth-archives-and-research) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/science-and-truth-archives-and-research>)

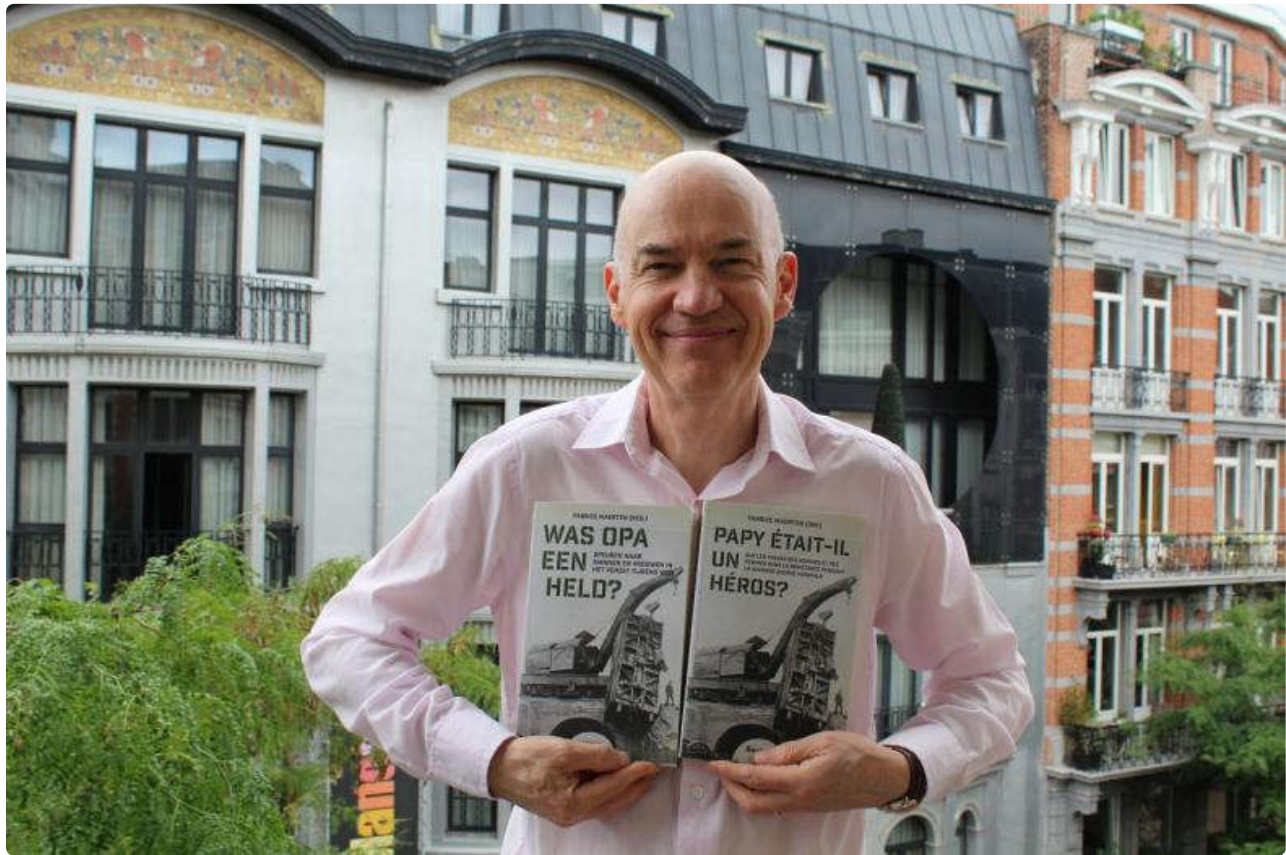
### THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The reopening strategy of the State Archives/Cegesoma and the practical arrangements for reservations to visit our reading room. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/exit-strategy-state-archivescegesoma) (<https://www.cegesoma.be/en/exit-strategy-state-archivescegesoma>)

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## Was grandpa a hero?



In late May, the book “Papy était-il un héros ? Sur les traces des hommes et des femmes dans la Résistance pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale” (Was grandpa a hero? Tracing back the stories of men and women of the Resistance during the Second World War) was published. This is a must-have guide to trace back the stories of resistance fighters during the Second World War. Various media presentations illustrate the richness of this guide.

For example, this book, which was coordinated by [Fabrice Maerten](#), a member of the scientific staff of Cegesoma, and introduced by the director of the institution, [Nico Wouters](#), is the subject of [a one-hour online presentation](#) accessible until 31 august 2020 (in French).

Furthermore, an eight-minute [podcast](#) in French by Fabrice Maerten can be viewed online in the YouTube channel of the State Archives.

Finally, journalist Fabien Van Eeckhaut [has presented the book](#) on the website of French-speaking public broadcaster RTBF .

For our Dutch-speaking readers: The book was presented in an [article by Timmie van Diepen in the Flemish newspaper Het Belang van Limburg](#).

[The book](#) can be bought at CegeSoma.

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## Farewell ....



In early July, our colleague Florence Gillet, whom many of you already know, will take a career break, moving abroad with her family for two years.

For those who don't know her or never met her, here is a brief portrait ...

Florence got a Master's degree in History and another MA in Information and Communication Sciences and Technology, both from the Free University of Brussels (ULB). She has worked at CegeSoma for over 16 years, starting with a project on the social memory of Belgian "old colonials". Since 2007, she has been responsible for the development of our audiovisual department.

Her fields of research are the digitisation of archives, the impact of information and communication technologies on human sciences, data quality, the memory of colonisation, and iconographic analysis.

She will thus temporarily leave her present roles as person in charge of digital access to our collections and of our digital humanities projects, and also as assistant director of CegeSoma.

Florence, we thank you very much for these wonderful years we spent here with you ! Please know it makes us all so happy that you now have the opportunity to fully live your dreams ! We also look forward to seeing you come back to us, manifesting the same enthusiasm, inspiration and team spirit, these precious qualities that characterize you, among many others !

All the best!

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## The peculiar summer of 1940



We have availed ourselves of the lockdown to publish a whole range of articles on our website Belgium World War II. By browsing from page to page, you can now get an overview of some of the major issues that rose at the beginning of the war and the occupation... With this newsletter we invite you to discover some of the old and new articles about this period. The proposed journey on our website is neither mandatory nor exhaustive however. Feel free to browse through the website as you wish.

On 28 May 1940, the Belgian army surrendered. This marks the beginning of a long period of occupation that stretched over four years. For a better understanding of this period, it is essential to revisit the day of 10 May 1940. When browsing through the timeline on the website (under the events heading accessible via the menu: <https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/evenements.html>), you will find that it was on this date that the so-called "suspects of 10 May 1940" were arrested while tens of thousands of Belgians fled – among which public officers and politicians. The issue of what was later qualified as an abandonment of post (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/evenements/1940-05-10-abandon-de-poste.html>) would have a major impact on the manner in which the Belgian public administration works. In the long term, this would also become a motive for the exclusion of a number of local officials who would then be replaced by others who championed the new order (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/bourgmestres-de-guerre.html>).

However, before the implementation of this policy, i.e. the events of May, the Battle of Belgium (the 18 Day's Campaign) (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/campagne-des-18-jours-la-une-guerre-de-retard.html>) took place and the massive exodus of Belgians whose minds were still haunted by the massacres of civilians in summer 1914 (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/exode-de-1940-l-la-debacle-d-un-etat.html>). This period also marks the onset of a profound rift between King Leopold III (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/personnalites/leopold-iii.html>) and the Belgian government before the famous meeting of the Belgian parliament in Limoges on 31 May 1940 (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/limoges-mai-40-la-colere-impuissante-d-un-parlement-dans-la-debacle.html>).

The summer of 1940 shall forever remain a peculiar moment in history. The German military administration got established (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/administration-militaire-allemande-militarverwaltung.html>). Various key players attempted to form a government, while elsewhere the college of secretary-generals held its first meeting (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/secretaires-generaux.html>) and the economic recovery was on the agenda (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/doctrine-galopin.html>).

The Resistance was still at its inception stage (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/resistance.html>), yet here and there, initiatives were undertaken (<https://www.belgiumwwii.be/belgique-en-guerre/articles/wallonie-libre-la.html>). But this is another story...

We will get back to you in fall with new interesting suggestions. Enjoy summer!

Chantal Kesteloot

Other news

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## BRAIN project POSTWAREX started

World War II



*A couple of weeks ago, the new research project POSTWAREX was started. This joint two-year project by CegeSoma and the Royal Military Academy (Prof. S. Horvat and Dr. Dimitri Roden) is coordinated by Dirk Luyten (CegeSoma). It is an in-depth study of the significance of the death penalty as a sentence for acts of collaboration, based on military tribunal archives. For this project, CegeSoma recruited a new scientific collaborator, Elise Rezsöhazy, who recently earned her doctor's degree in history at Université catholique de Louvain (UCL).*

The project is funded by the BRAIN 2.0 programme ([Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks](#)) of the Federal Science Policy Office ([Belspo](#)); its purpose is to analyse the use of the death penalty after the Second World War by the military justice system as a means of repression against collaboration. This repression was one of the most extensive campaigns of legal action in Belgian history. Its impact on Belgian society lasts to this day.



The repression policy led to the execution of 242 persons who were sentenced to death between 1944 and 1950. It is the most extensive execution operation in the judicial history of Belgium. These 242 executions form an exception in the history of the Belgian judiciary, as no more executions took place after this time.

### Archives-based research

The executions led to intense debates in Belgian society. So far, only some aspects of the 'group of 242' have been studied based on available sources. The transfer of the military justice archives to the State Archives now opens the way for further research in the entire corpus and into new aspects, by associating different types of sources produced by the military courts.

Furthermore, it offers the opportunity to shed new light on the group itself by contextualising the individual profiles of the executed in comparison to the whole group of persons sentenced to death, and by analysing all steps of the decision-making process of the military justice system, from the first criminal investigations until the execution.

The project draws on new research into the death penalty and executions by the military justice during the First World War, which was followed by a long period during which capital punishment was not applied.

Based on this research, the modalities of the decision-making process shall be presented to the large public via the website [Belgium World War II](#), illustrated by couple of selected sources. All contextual elements shall also be factored in, so as to allow for a large societal debate.

The project shall also contribute to a better understanding of how the military judiciary archives are structured and shall provide an overview of all archival elements related to this group, serving as a pilot project for research into other groups.



01/06/2020 to 31/05/2022

### Project manager(s)



### Project member(s)



### Partners



### TAGS

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[Archives](#) [Repression of collaboration](#) [Judicial history](#)

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## Science and truth : archives and research



Today, science finds itself under increasing pressure. Populist parties stimulate distrust in scientists and academic institutions. Through social media, conspiracy theories are reinforced and 'alternative facts' are sold as truth. The dark pages of our history are also used in conscious manipulations and disinformation campaigns. In a preliminary publication of the series 'Miscellanea archivistica: studia', [Nico Wouters](#) (CegeSoma/State Archives) has published a small reflection about the cooperation between archivists and historians working with 'human rights archives'. You can find this paper [here](#).

Through collaboration, archivists and historians can play a bigger role in the diverse aspects of processes to deal with a collective trauma. Wouters arguments that the current pressure on 'scientific truth' might necessitate more structural forms of dialogue and collaboration between archivists and historians. As a research centre within a national archive, CegeSoma might serve as an interesting testcase, or even a model of how such a dialogue could take shape.

For more information about the online publications in this series, click [here](#).

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## The exit strategy of the State Archives/CegeSoma

The State Archives/CegeSoma shall of course take all necessary **precautions** to ensure the security of both visitors and staff. The number of available workspaces in the reading rooms depends on the individual configuration of the premises and shall be limited accordingly. In order to prepare your visit at best, please consult the [special preventive measures against Coronavirus/COVID-19](#).

The reading rooms of the State Archives/CegeSoma are accessible again for the larger public, upon appointment and under the condition that visitors wear a face mask. Reservation of workspace in the reading room must be made by e-mail to the State Archives in question at least 2 workdays before the visit. You can find the contact details of our services [here](#). The maximum amount of visitors per day is limited. You will therefore always receive a confirmation of the date of your visit by e-mail, that also counts as the confirmation of your reservation. Please reserve your documents in advance using [our online catalogue PALLAS](#). Please note that if you order larger volumes from our depot in the Belgrado Street, there might be some delay.

- In the meantime, we continue to provide **minimum service** to the maximum extent and to increase our online offer of [archives and finding aids](#).
- In order to somewhat alleviate the effects of the long closure of our reading rooms, all scheduled **repository inventorying activities** for 2020 are **cancelled**.
- **All public events**, such as colloquia, group visits, receptions, book presentations, training, etc. organised by the State Archives **until 31 August 2020 included** are cancelled.
- **Transports and deliveries** will progressively resume on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, provided that security distances can be respected.

During the period in which our reading room is closed, you can still carry out some research online via [our digital reading room](#), for instance:

- The general catalogue of PALLAS can be accessed [here](#).
- The content descriptions for a number of archive holdings and collections can be found [here](#).
- Some digitised documents [can be accessed online](#).
- Thematic help files for research can be accessed via ["How to start a search?"](#)

You can stay informed about further developments via our website and via [Facebook](#).

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