

## Belgium

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### *Introduction*

When assessing the historiographical production on the Nazi occupation of Belgium one should take into account the institutional context of the historiography as well as the specific configuration of Belgian politics. In contrast to other countries, a specialized research centre was established only in 1970<sup>1</sup>.

One of the reasons for this late start is the fact that Nazi occupation generated conflicts and debates affecting the core of the Belgian state structure, or as political scientists put it: the 'cleavages' in the Belgian political system. Two conflicts should be mentioned: the position of the King and the tensions between the Flemish and the Walloons<sup>2</sup>. These conflicts have their origins in the interwar period. That is the reason why, from the late eighties, many authors adopted a long-term perspective when studying the Second World War. This long-term approach was also reflected in the new name the Centre for Research and Studies on the History of the Second World War adopted in 1996: Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (CEGES/SOMA). Changing perspectives in historiography also had an impact on the research concerning the Second World War<sup>3</sup>. The TV-series on the Second World War produced by the BRT (the Dutch-language public broadcasting company) journalist Maurice De Wilde also constituted an important impetus. The only Belgian synthesis on the Second World War was written by an employee of the public broadcasting corporation (320).

The first publications date back to the second half of the 1940s. These books and articles balance between primary sources and literature, but some of them remain valuable for research purposes. This is especially true for the economic history study of F. Baudhuin (4) and for the survey of the living conditions of the workers in the Walloon industrial area of the Brussels historian and sociologist G. Jacquemyns. The latter has recently been reprinted (275). This survey of the standard of living, the living conditions and mentality of the workers and their families in the industrial communities starts in 1941 and covers the years 1942, 1943 and 1944. The three volumes, based on the contemporary sociological methods and containing several monographs on workers' families, remain an invaluable source for the reconstruction of the daily life of the workers (146).

Starting in the second half of the 1960s, scholarly research no longer emphasized economic and social history. Political history and the history of organisations became privileged subjects. This emerged clearly in the book of A. De Jonghe on Hitler's policy towards Belgium and on the position of the King (65) and also in his series of articles on the struggle between the *Militärverwaltung* and the SS for the control over occupied Belgium (66-70). These articles were published in the *Cahiers/Bijdragen*, (later the *Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps Présent/Bijdragen tot the Eigentijdse Geschiedenis* CHTP/BEG), of the Centre for Research and Studies on the History of the Second World War (352-353), journals that should not be neglected by the scholar studying Belgian history of the Second World War. In 1975 M. Van den

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<sup>1</sup> In 1964 a 'Nationaal Centrum voor Wetenschappelijke Navorsing op het Gebied der Geschiedenis van Wereldoorlogen I en II'/'Centre National de l'Histoire des deux Guerres Mondiales' was established, but the financial means were rather limited and as the name indicates, the focus was on WWI and WWII J. Gotovitch, 'Problèmes de l'historiographie de la Belgique pendant la seconde guerre mondiale', in *Septentrion*, 1976, V, p. 5-15.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, an attempt to create a *Musée de la Guerre Mondiale et l'Office de documentation contemporaine* in Belgium was aborted. Pieter LAGROU, "Historiographie de guerre et historiographie du temps présent: cadres institutionnels en Europe occidentale (1945-2000)", in *The Second World War in the XXth century history. Bulletin du Comité international d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, 1999-2000, n° 30-31, p. 191-215 ; p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> For this approach see nr. 303

Wijngaert published his Ph. D. on the committee of secretaries-general, the supreme Belgian political authority during the occupation period (285). The history departments of the Military Academy focused on the organisations of the resistance movements (10).

Quite different was the path-breaking book *L'An 40*, published in 1971. It was an exceptional publication in that it placed the Second World War in a broader chronological framework and by studying the societal upheaval which was the result of the invasion and the occupation (117).

Scholarly research was further developed, including by foreign scholars. Initially, the accent was put on political history and the dichotomy 'resistance/collaboration' provided the research framework. As time went on, other aspects of war history were studied and the image became a more nuanced one, as is shown by the introduction of concepts as 'accommodation'. Since the second half of the 1980s, the perspective of the study of the war has widened, covering the period from the 1930s to the 1950s. The central question is to what extent the Second World War was a factor of continuity or change.

As this survey will illustrate, many aspects of the history of the Second World War still remain to be studied and the most obvious gap is a more extensive synthesis. Besides the aforementioned book of E. Verhoeyen and the English synthesis of Warmbrunn there are the volumes of *België in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, which accompanied the TV – series on the Second World War produced by the BRT, the Flemish broadcasting company (5, 339) and more recently *Jours de Guerre*, produced by the RTBF, the broadcasting company of the French-speaking community (3). Both series of books focus on different aspects of war history and do not offer a complete overview. Nevertheless, these books offer valuable information for the study of specific aspects of war history, e.g. the role of the police, and some articles are based on original research. An encyclopaedic study of Belgium and the Second World War does not exist. Scientific collaborators to the BRT-series on the Second World War drew up lexicons on the Resistance and the political and youth collaboration (313,315). A very useful work is the *Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging* (Encyclopaedia of the Flemish Movement), because a majority of the Flemish Movement supported the German occupier. The encyclopaedia comprises short articles on movements and persons, but also reference pieces, which give a good survey of a number of broader issues (e.g. anti-Semitism) and which also pay attention to the Second World War. The encyclopaedia also includes bibliographical overviews (222).

Another factor which did not advance the development of research is the often difficult access to certain sources. A goldmine for scholars of the German occupation are the files kept by the military justice, which organised the prosecution and punishment of collaboration with the Germans. These files are partly open for research, but the admission procedure is time-consuming.

This overview only lists the most important titles. Other references can be looked up in the Bibliography on Belgium and the Second World War which is published yearly by the CEGES-SOMA and previously by its predecessor (176, 211, 212).

## **I. The War for legitimacy in politics and culture**

As already pointed out, the research on Belgium and the Second World War had a political focus. We are well informed on the collaborationist parties. Bruno De Wever is the author of a book on the VNV (Vlaams Nationaal Verbond), the Flemish collaborationist party. The book dates from 1994 and adopts a long-term perspective. Bruno De Wever argues that the VNV was a fascist party the collaboration of which with the enemy was the outcome of the anti-democratic position of the VNV before the war. As far as the collaboration is concerned the author maps the 'Greep naar de macht' (seizure of power) of the VNV. In this process the takeover of key positions in the administrations on a national, provincial and local level was of vital importance (87). A. De Jonghe describes how the Germans pressured the Belgian decision-makers into integrating adherents of the New Order, among others members of the VNV, in the Belgian state administration and in the newly created institutions such as the NLVC (*Nationale Landbouw- en Voedingscorporatie* Corporation for Food and Agriculture) during the first months of the occupation (71). The Flemish nationalist political family has been thoroughly studied through biographies

of its leaders. In 1989 Bruno De Wever published a biography on Staf De Clercq, 'Leader' of the VNV until his death in 1942 (94). He is the author of a biographical article on De Clercq's successor Hendrik Elias (89). Evrard Raskin, historian and lawyer, wrote a biographical study on Gerard Romsée, the Flemish nationalist secretary general of the Ministry of the Interior, who played a central role in the appointment in key-positions of members of the collaborationist parties (235). There is also a biographical study of Reimond Tollenaere, the leader of the propaganda section of the VNV and wartime leader of the paramilitary formation of the movement and also of Dr. R. Speleers, a member of the *Raad van Leiding* (board of leaders) of the VNV (335, 61.). S. Jans published on the Dietsche Meisjesscharen, the VNV organisation for girls (147,148). The competitors of the VNV, the DEVLAGE and the *Algemene SS-Vlaanderen* have also been analysed by historians, as well as leaders of these movements (50,253,254). The Verdinaso movement presents a somewhat different picture. Its leader, Joris Van Severen, was shot by French soldiers shortly after the invasion. As a consequence, the Verdinaso remained a divided organisation after the capitulation. Part of its leadership, a minority, joined the Resistance and other members held positions in the newly created bureaucracies. The road to pro-German collaboration of a part of the Verdinaso was described by P. Vanhees (309). The militia and one of its leaders were studied (48,49).

The British historian M. Conway has made a remarkable study of Rex, the francophone collaborationist party led by Léon Degrelle (46). A biographical study throws light on one of the intellectuals of the movement, J. Streel (74). The youth organisation of Rex is subject of a study. The same author studied the non-rexist new order youth organisation (259-260). L. Ben Djaffar did research on the women's organisations of the collaborationist movements in francophone Belgium, among others Rex (7).

In the political struggle for legitimacy between the collaborationist parties, the recruitment of volunteers for the Eastern Front played an important role. This field of research is well developed. As far as Flanders is concerned Bruno De Wever published a book and articles, often based on oral history (91-93). He is also the author of a recent historiographical overview (90). K. Carrein produced a social profile of the Flemish collaborators who fought on the Eastern Front (32). W. Massin focused on the volunteers of the province of Limburg (208). F. Seberechts published a synthesis (255). As far as Rex is concerned E. De Bruyne analysed the *Légion Wallonie* and its significance for Léon Degrelle (58). J.L. Roba wrote a biography of Lippert, a high-ranking officer of the *Légion* (239).

This kind of research primarily concerns itself with the national political level. Nazi rule also implied a regime change at the local level. Information on local politics can be found in studies on local history (56,95,283,349). How the local regime was adapted in Flanders as part of the takeover of power by the VNV has been the subject of research projects carried out at the University of Gent since the late 1980s. The results of this research have been summarized by Petra Gunst (131). W. Meyers studied the role of local government during the first year of the occupation (210). A. Colignon wrote a useful overview of the changes in local governments in important cities (37). For the province of Limburg we possess a study on changes within the local political elite (45). Dirk Martin published on the city of Antwerp (200,201).

The publications devoted to the way that collaborators took over administrations and newly created bureaucracies reflects the central role of the administrations during the war. The power of the administration grew as a result of the abolition of the democratic institutions and of the absence of the government which was in exile in London. The impact of the administration also increased because of the growing number of administrative bodies. One of the features of Nazism was a tendency towards *dirigisme*. This was the case where agriculture, industry, crafts and commerce were concerned. For publications on this subject we refer to the sections on economy. These new institutions were created along the Nazi model, often with the cooperation of the Belgian political elite. This type of Nazi institution was not what this elite would have opted for. Many of them would have preferred a New Order adapted to the Belgian situation. Different plans were made in the perspective of a German victory or a peace by compromise. The so-called Centre Lippens, a think-tank of Belgian conservative notables, illustrates this clearly. The Centre Lippens planned an authoritarian reform of the Belgian state. Although led by the conservative elite, the leaders of the VNV and the Verdinaso were also invited to participate.

Thus, the Centre can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the traditional political and administrative elite and the parties of the extreme right (177).

The creation of the Unie van Hand en Geestesarbeiders (UHGA), a united trade union, was part of another ambitious project of social as well as political reform. It was the outcome of a struggle for power between the Catholic trade union and the Catholic employers' organisation on the one side, and the socialist trade union leaders who followed Henri De Man, the President of the Socialist Party before the war, in his collaboration with the Germans, on the other. This struggle has been described by W. Steenhaut (263-265). An extensive literature, including a biography, exists on Henri De Man, which is partly the result of a scholarly controversy (27-29,34). The inspirator of these initiatives was often the King. After the capitulation of the Belgian army, he chose to remain in Belgium. He took initiatives with a political character, aimed at the continuation of the Belgian state, after the implementation of authoritarian reforms, in a continent dominated by Nazi Germany. This subject has been studied by J. Stengers for the year 1940 and by J. Velaers and H. Van Goethem for the whole period of the war (272,318). All of these projects were vetoed by the Germans, whose prime concern was the exploitation of the country and the maintenance of peace and order.

This policy of the *Militärverwaltung* resulted also in an increased role for the state bureaucracy. The *Militärverwaltung* was relatively small which made it imperative for it to rely on local institutions. The Belgian administrative elite was prepared to cooperate with the Germans. This 'policy of the lesser evil' was often problematic, since it involved an almost continuous process of negotiations, concessions and compromises with the occupier. This process became even more difficult as German popularity declined and the resistance movement grew stronger. An assessment of this policy also needs to take the German side into account. As far as structural aspects are concerned, one should refer to H. Umbreit (280). In the early 1970s W. Wagner studied the *Militärverwaltung* within the framework of the German occupation policy in Europe (338). He devotes attention to the creation of the *Militärverwaltung*, the background of its leaders, the impact of the Flemish question, the position of the King and the replacement of the *Militärverwaltung* by a *Zivilverwaltung*. The already mentioned articles of A. De Jonghe should not be neglected, nor his article on the emergence of a *Zivilverwaltung* (64). A. De Jonghe also paid attention to the German police. W. Weber studied the *Militärverwaltung* from the angle of its security policy (340). R. Van Doorslaer and E. Verhoeyen researched the relations between the German and Belgian police forces, focusing particularly on the anti-communist struggle (306). For Liège a regional study on the SIPO-SD exists (57). A short synthesis on the *Militärverwaltung* has been published in *Jours de Guerre* (128).

M. Welsh published a book of photographs illustrating how Belgium was represented by the German propaganda during the occupation (341). In the context of the question of the looting of cultural goods, the role of *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* has been mapped (175). For the other activities of the occupier there are a number of books and articles written by Belgian historians that deal with specific topics, such as the economy, forced labour or a more general study such as *L'an 40*. M. Beyen studied the cultural policy of the *Militärverwaltung* (17). R. Falter published on the *Flamenpolitik* in the context of the propaganda policy of the occupying authorities (106). Furthermore, studies on the archives of the occupying forces sometimes provide insights. J. Gotovitch gave an overview of the archives of the *Rüstungsinspektion* (127). The fact that the *Militärverwaltung* has never been the subject of a systematic analysis is a lacuna in the historiography of Belgium in World War II. There is sparse research on German institutions and organisations in Belgium, such as the *Auslandorganisation* of the NSDAP (76). As far as the SS is concerned, one should refer to the articles of A. De Jonghe.

The role of the police and the judiciary is relatively well documented. R. Van Doorslaer focused on the role of the police and the judiciary in maintaining public order (304). Major political crises resulted from judicial disputes concerning the legality of some institutions and procedures imposed by the Germans. The verdicts acquired a political dimension since the legitimacy of the structures of the occupation was put into question. These (and other) conflicts are treated by J. Gotovitch (124). A more comprehensive but factual account can be found in the article of C.L. Louveaux (172). He lists the magistrates who were removed by the Germans and describes the position of the judiciary in some bitter conflicts: the prosecution of the Jews, forced labour in Germany. An officer of the *Gendarmerie*, the state police, wrote

a book on the history of his employer during the war (307). The position of the police and the judiciary is also treated in some studies dealing with those aspects of the history of the occupation where force was widely applied, among others the persecution of the Jews as will be explained further on.

To assess the impact of the war for legitimacy, the study of public opinion cannot be neglected. Although published in 1945, the book of Paul Struye remains a valuable source. This book is a collection of surveys organised during the war by this lawyer and journalist. The surveys are slightly biased since Struye bases his information primarily on upper and middle class sources (274). As far as the workers is concerned, one should refer to G. Jacquemyns.

M. Van den Wijngaert studied public opinion, focusing on the perception of the King. The book is based on a survey organised in the 1970s among parish priests who were active during the war (286). A previously published article by J. Gotovitch was primarily based on the clandestine press (125). The free expression of public opinion by the press did not exist during the occupation as the press was censored. The press under censorship and the German *Brüsseler Zeitung* were studied by E. De Bens and R. Falter (54, 105). D. Vanhees analysed the national press of the *VNV-Eenheidsbeweging* while P. Schrijvers focused on the local press of the VNV in the province of Limburg (308,252). The latter is of particular interest since the censorship was less strict here compared to the national press. For the province of Limburg W. Massin mapped public opinion in 1941 using a variety of sources (207). The francophone collaborationist press is considered from the perspective of two of the principal actors: Paul Colin (*Le Nouveau Journal*) and R. Poulet (*Le Nouveau Journal* and *Cassandra*) (75, 149). J. Putseys focused on the radio and A.M. Poels on film censorship (234,230).

Since Belgium is divided along linguistic lines, the politics of language imposed by the Germans and its significance for the collaborationist movements are of particular importance. The dominant linguistic cleavage was between Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) and Wallonia (the French-speaking part), Brussels being bilingual. Dutch and French had an unequal status, French being the high-status language. Since the XIXth century a language policy developed which resulted in the unilingualism of Flanders and Wallonia in 1932. The capital Brussels remained a problematic case. The policy of linguistic control was not always applied to the letter. This was a source of frustration and one of the reasons for the emergence of the Flemish movement. The Germans exploited this linguistic divide for their own political purposes. They favoured initiatives to control the application of the linguistic laws, especially in Brussels, the administration and along the language border (346, 96, 72). The community question was also apparent in specific professional groups. L. Vandeweyer studied the struggle for power between Flemish and Belgian organisations of physicians (296). In the special edition on nationalism of the *BEG-CHTP*, new aspects of the nationality question are highlighted from a long-term perspective. Attention is focused on the Communist movements, and the Great Netherlands aspirations within Flemish nationalism (129,88). Although the cleavage between Flemish and Walloons was the dominant one, Belgium had two other linguistic minorities, which played a role in the policy of the occupier.

After the First World War Belgium acquired a number of frontier territories to the disadvantage of Germany. In the east of the country some German-speaking districts became part of Belgian territory. These *Ostkantone*, as they were called, were reintegrated into the German *Reich* in 1940 and the inhabitants became German citizens. M. Schaerer analysed the policy of the occupier towards this region, the history of the territory and its society between 1940 and 1944 (247). Recently a study on the *Hitlerjugend* in this region was published (342). In the province of Luxembourg existed a small German-speaking minority. The occupier supported the *Deutsche Sprachverein* and pursued a policy of Germanisation (278).

The literature on educational policy is relatively well developed, especially concerning universities. D. Martin is the author of a synthesis, in which he looks at the relationship between the universities and the *Militärverwaltung*, focusing on the policy of the latter (205). The *Militärverwaltung* used the universities as a means to introduce German culture but remained keen to maintain a *modus vivendi* rather than seeking a confrontation. This was especially true as far as the Catholic University of Leuven was concerned. The university administration was in the hands of the powerful Catholic church, which was treated with care by the Germans. Conflicts arose in 1941, when the free-thinking *Université Libre de*

*Bruxelles* (ULB) (Free University of Brussels) was closed down following a conflict over the nomination of new members of the academic staff, when the Germans tried to impose their candidates. The outcome was the closure of the university. The second conflict concerned the introduction of forced labour in Germany in October 1942. This troubled the relations between the Germans and the universities.

The state of research differs from university to university. For the University of Gent a monograph deals with the university administration, professors as well as students (204). As far as Leuven is concerned, an official account was published in 1945, in which the ordeal of the University is the central theme (171). In 1991 a book was published to commemorate the closure of the ULB in 1941. It deals with the policy of the university authorities and the Germans before the closure, the consequences for the students and staff. It also covers the continuation of illegal courses, resistance, collaboration and accommodation, and the position of the Jews (83). G. Braive gives an account of the fate of the ULB-students who continued their studies at the Catholic *Facultés Universitaires St. Louis* in Brussels (26). In Marnix Beyen's book on how the past is dealt with in Belgium and the Netherlands, attention is paid to the universities in the framework of the government's policy towards the universities. The book also focuses on the history of education and what is called the 'demonstrative history politics': the different ways in which history is presented to the broad public, among others via exhibitions. The fourth part deals with politics of history conservation, including archives. Beyen also treats the policies of the occupier and the official history discourse of the national authorities. Here, too, the war is put in a long-term perspective (1938-1947). He also published on the role of the Catholic youth movements in the handing on of historical awareness in Flanders (15).

Concerning the history of education, research has been done on the revision of textbooks (82,107). Theories of education, especially Catholic contributions, are analysed in the a collection of articles on the history of education, in which attention is also paid to the propositions for educational reform, the changing views on technical education and the relationship between the Flemish Catholic and national-socialist doctrines (81). This volume is included in the proceedings of the symposium on cultural aspects and mentality of the history of the occupation which was organised by the CEGES/SOMA in 1995. Another volume, to which have contributed philologists and historians, is dedicated to literature (62,163). In this volume, the publishing companies as well as literary studies, literary criticism and the theatre are examined. A separate study has been published on the Flemish Catholic cultural review *Volk en Cultuur*, which appeared during the occupation period (63). The key question is how, in Flanders, prewar views on culture are connected with ideas inspired by national-socialism. B. Delcord published on the interface between politics and literature in literary salons, reviews, associations and cenacles in francophone Belgium (77).

The contributions on architecture, town and country planning of the symposium were published in a special edition of *Interbellum* (206). The *Commissariaat-generaal voor wederopbouw/Commissariat general à la Reconstruction du Pays* (the General Commissariat for Post-War Reconstruction), founded in 1940, had already been the subject of research on the impact of the modernist movement on the architectural and urban development projects of the General Commissariat (281).

From the second half of the 1990s, the interest in cultural history has grown considerably. Virginie Devillez studied government policies with respect to plastic arts. She draws attention to the corporatist and statist tendencies and to the way in which art politics contributed to the project that was to shape a Flemish and a Walloon identity. The author places the war in a long-term perspective, beginning in 1918, and in which the 1930s are a phase of acceleration in which new ideas take shape that will take on a definitive form only during the occupation period (84).

In her study of the *Brussels Palais des Beaux Arts/Paleis voor Schone Kunsten* (Palace of the Fine Arts), a prestigious culture and concert hall, Valérie Montens dedicates a chapter to the war period (215).

Marnix Beyen did research on the political use of traditional popular heroes. He studied the appropriation of the Flemish figure of Tjil Uilenspiegel by different groups, collaborationist groups as well as resistance movements(11). He takes a closer look at Flemish Catholic historical views and considered the way Walloon and German scientists integrated the Germanic component in Walloon history and culture(12,13). The political use of history to retraditionalise society is the subject of a separate article

(14). Other, new aspects of cultural history that are treated are Flemish Catholic film criticism and also popular art (225,243). T. Boudart studied the cultural impact of the seizing of the bells on the local communities (21).

A great many studies have been published, from different approaches, on the Resistance. We will look at the different kinds of Resistance, the different organisations and finally the resistance activities. For a general survey we mention the reference work of Etienne Verhoeyen, the overviews of R. Van Doorslaer, E. Verhoeyen and H. Van de Vijver in the series of publications accompanying the BRT-emissions, which are referred to in the introduction and the book by H. Galle and Y. Thanassekos(320,294,112). The Resistance has been relatively better studied in Wallonia than in Flanders. A reference piece was published in the *NEVB* as well as in the *Encyclopédie du Mouvement Wallon*(78,222). F. Maerten and A. Colignon each have recently published an overview in the volume on the Resistance in Luxemburg (180, 40). Etienne Verhoeyen wrote an excellent historiographical introduction focusing on the sociology of the Resistance (330).

A first form of Resistance is the clandestine press, which was quickly organised in Belgium. A tradition going back to the First World War played a role in this: two important newspapers, the francophone *La Libre Belgique* and the Flemish *De Vrijshutter* have their roots in this war. Clandestine papers were often the mouthpiece of a resistance movement – some movements published several – or of a professional group (for example the magistrates). A study on the clandestine press during the four years of German occupation does not exist. There is however a survey for the year 1940 and for the newspapers of the Communist Party and the associated *Front de l'Indépendance/Onafhankelijkheidsfront* (Independence Front) in the province of East-Flanders (122,121). The clandestine press is however considered in the studies of resistance movements. It is often used as a source.

The intelligence services have been studied frequently. Etienne Verhoeyen has published several studies on the subject. He has highlighted different aspects, among others the social profile of the agents (325,328,331,332). Emmanuel Debruyne is the author of a monograph of the intelligence service *Tégal* (59). In a separate study he draws a sociological profile of the agents (60) J. Dujardin published on the intelligence services Boucle, Luc and Marc (100-103). F. Strubbe wrote an encyclopaedic reference work and J. Fosty is the author of a synthesis (273,109).

The *Armée Secrète/Geheim Leger* (Secret Army) and the Independence Front were the principal armed resistance organisations. The founders of the Secret Army were military men. Their opinions were of a conservative and even authoritarian nature. The resistance activities were undertaken as a preparation for the post-liberation keeping of the order. Victor Marquet and H. Bernard wrote the history of the Secret Army (193-199,8). G. Van Poucke published a factual account on the province of West-Flanders (316). T. Vuylsteke sketched the social profile of the organisation in the province of Limburg (337).

On the other side of the political spectrum we find the *Gewapende Partizanen/Partisans Armés* (Armed Partisans): they were the military branch of the clandestine Communist Party. J. Gotovitch dedicates many pages to them in his book on the Belgian Communist Party during the occupation (see further on). Studies have been made on specific regions sometimes by the actors themselves, thus lending them the character of memoirs (282,1).

Group G holds a somewhat special position. It was founded at the francophone Free University of Brussels (ULB) and was supported by the SOE. The group specialised in sabotage, especially of transport and communication networks. W. Ugeux wrote a monograph of the group, focusing on two leaders (279).

After the Soviet-Nazi Non-Aggression Pact, the Communist Party presented themselves as the party of the Resistance. R. Van Doorslaer studied the period before the pact (301) J. Gotovitch's book *Du Rouge au Tricolore* sheds light on all aspects of the Communist Party's resistance activities and of the associated Independence Front. Prosopography is the research method which is used, and here too, the war is considered in a long-term perspective, from 1939 till the Liberation (126).

One of the elements of the Communist resistance was the clandestine trade-union movement: the *Syndikale Strijdkomités/Comités de Lutte Syndicale* (Trade Union Combat Committees) were Communist orientated, but besides this group, other movements arose such as the *Mouvement Syndical Unifié* (Unified Trade Union Movement) of André Renard. In fact, these movements were dissidents from the pre-war

reformist trade union movement. The reference work on this subject is the book by R. Hemmerijckx on the history of the socialist trade union between 1940 and 1949 (141). He published many articles on the clandestine trade unions during the occupation (136-140). Chantal Kesteloot studied the Socialist resistance (150,154). The relatively unimportant Trotskyist Resistance is treated in the overview by M. Lorneau of Trotskyism between 1939 and 1964 (168).

The Walloon Movement, as opposed to the Flemish Movement, did not identify with collaboration. Chantal Kesteloot has published on this question (151,153,156). M.F. Gihousse has mapped the resistance movements and F. Moreau has studied their relation with the clandestine trade union (118,216). Alain Colignon has published on the rightwing resistance movement from the perspective of their anglophile sentiments (39).

If we consider the Resistance from the perspective of its actions, Etienne Verhoeyen has published on the subject of sabotage and escape lines (324,326,327,328). On Hotton, an intelligence service specialising in sabotage, a chronicle and a detailed sociological study have been published (110,111). Some authors consider the actions of the resistance movements as a form of terrorism. J. Bouveroux is the author of a study of the Flemish province of Limburg. He depicts the struggle between collaboration and Resistance as a kind of civil war (23).

This brings us to the studies carried out from a more regional and local perspective. In the proceedings of the symposium on the Second World War in Limburg, B. Boeckx treats the Resistance in Limburg from a prosopographical approach (in 45). Fabrice Maerten is the author of a detailed study on the political and ideological resistance in the industrialised province of Hainaut (184). He previously published on the Resistance in and around the small town of Mouscron (188).

In separate publications the same author focused on subsidiary aspects or studied the Resistance from other perspectives: the participation of women, youth and teachers and the impact of the memory of the First World War and also made a sociological profile of the armed resistance (182,185,186,187, 189). Monographs have been published on the Flemish cities of Roeselare and Brugge (319,236). Dirk Martin has studied the participation of Antwerp members of the Liberal Party in the Resistance (203). In the previously mentioned local history studies the Resistance is also a subject. On two Flemish communities, prosopographical studies were published in which the post-war conceptualisation of the resistance is also treated (104, 348).

The Resistance has also been studied from the point of view of a specific professional or social group. C. Lokker has written an account of the resistance activities of the railway personnel and Marie Pierre D'Udecem d'Acoz has done research on the participation of the nobility in the Resistance (166, 99). A. Morelli examined the participation of Italian immigrants in the Belgian Resistance (217). The cultural review *Rue des Usines* published a special edition on cultural resistance, focusing not only on poetry, but also on the graphic designs used in the clandestine press(238). A monograph was published on the public radio broadcasting company (19). F. Maerten published a reference piece on the relation between women and resistance (181).

The Resistance has also been considered from a biographical angle (9, 202,276).

E. Verhoeyen researched the sometimes difficult relation between the resistance movements and the British Intelligence Services and the government in London. He looked at a number of missions of secret agents and mapped the support of the service Socrates for forced labourers. This network took, in the name of the government in exile in London, loans from industrialists and bankers to support persons in hiding (322,328,329). B. Ducarme has published previously on the financing of the armed Resistance (98).

Chantal Kesteloot studied two specific aspects: the way in which the Spanish Civil War was presented in the clandestine press and the relation between the resistance in francophone Belgium and De Gaulle (152,155). Alain Colignon has mapped the activities of the Polish resistance in Belgium(38,41).

As far as the resistance of Catholic organisations is concerned we refer to the publications dedicated to these organisations in the next section. A remarkable feature of the research on the Resistance is the strong sociological approach: for many organisations, the sociological profile of leaders and/or active members is available.



## II. The continuity of the churches<sup>4</sup>

The Catholic Church was by far the dominant one in Belgium. To understand its impact on political and social life, the concept of 'pillarization' is a useful analytical tool. A network of affiliated organisations was created based around the church. This process began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and it acquired a new impetus after the First World War, as a consequence of the democratisation of politics and of society. A separate 'Catholic world' was created with schools, youth movements, a trade union, employers' organisation, cultural organisations etc, etc. Each social group (farmers, workers, self-employed) had its specific set of organisations and political representation within the Catholic Party. The cement that held together these organisations was the Catholic religion. The Church was the central focus of this Catholic pillar. The network of organisations was considered to be an essential part of the Church and its infrastructure. As a consequence, assessing the role of the Church implies assessing the role of these different organisations. This is especially true as far as its political impact is concerned.

As has already been mentioned, the position of the King was a central political question. This 'Royal Question' was also linked to the political role of the Catholics. After the military defeat and roughly until the spring of 1941, plans were made in several political circles to reorganise the political system. The aim was to create a 'Belgian New Order', which would be in accordance with the expected dominance of Nazi Germany over the continent. Catholic organisations and their leaders played a central role in these political reorganisation plans. This was the case for the *Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond* (ACV), the catholic trade union and the Catholic Employers' Organisation. Both organisations were convinced that the time had come to reorganise state and society on a corporatist basis. Both organisations acted in close cooperation with the Archbishop. These attempts to reorganise politics and society are well-documented, although there is an ongoing discussion regarding certain aspects of the process which has been analysed by a number of authors (178, 179, 221, 53, 265, 318, 162). The political activity of Archbishop Van Roey is described by A. Dantoing, although the book focuses on the first year of the occupation (52). Church-historian R. Boudens' book covers the 4 years of the war, using the archives of the archbishopric. However, he focuses on the relation with the Flemish Movement (22). Already in 1945, E. Leclef, the secretary of Van Roey assembled a number of sources (161).

In 1999 the SOMA/CEGES published a volume in which different aspects of the Catholic Church under the occupation were treated. The articles were based on the papers presented at the 1995 conference on the Cultural History of the War. As introduction to the volume there are two useful syntheses by M. Van den Wijngaert and F. Maerten. The latter argues that the position of the ecclesiastical hierarchy has been well-studied, as has been the position of the leaders of the catholic organisations, especially of the labour movement (191). Indeed, as far as the Catholic labour movement is concerned, we dispose of, apart from the above-mentioned books and articles on the trade union, a synthesis dating from 1991 in which the history of all of the components of the Catholic labour movement are studied, including the period of the German occupation (115). L. Wils studied the *Davidfonds*, an important Flemish Catholic socio-cultural organisation (344).

The Catholic youth movements are another privileged field of research. In the 1999 volume attention is paid to the Catholic scouts movement (289) and the Chiro (2). The KAJ/JOC(F), the Catholic Workers Youth, led by J. Cardijn, is probably the best-studied Catholic youth movement. Many books and articles are devoted to the activities of the organisation in favour of youngsters forced to go to work in Germany, the position of Cardijn (145, 257) and the organisation itself in Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders (223, 336). Most of these studies however focus more on the organisation than on the war experience of the individual members. The Catholic church controlled a large number of schools. This field of research

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<sup>4</sup> Fabrice Maerten, 'La Seconde Guerre mondiale' in, Jean Pirotte et Guy Zelis, Baudouin Groessens, Thierry Scaillet (eds.), *Pour une histoire du monde catholique au 20e siècle, Wallonie-Bruxelles. Guide du chercheur*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Archives du monde catholique Eglise-Wallonie, 2003, 784 p. (Collection Sillages), p. 629-654.

remains underdeveloped, taking into account the dominance of the Catholic school network. A study has been published on daily life in a Catholic secondary school (240).

Historians also studied religious life as reflected by the activities of priests and monasteries. Research on religious life is more developed in Wallonia (169-170, 183, 190). These publications concentrate on the problems of collaboration and resistance and on daily life in the monasteries. The role of the Church as a place of refuge for persecuted Jews will be discussed later. Many of these books and articles make use of the survey 'Kerk/Eglise' conducted by the predecessor of the SOMA in the 1970s and 1980s. This survey consists of a set of interviews with parish priests and members of religious orders who were active during the war.

A common conclusion of this research is the reaffirmation of the role of the Church and the hierarchy in the Catholic world. This evolution can be explained by the fact that, as a result of the abolition of the democratic structures, the social and political organisations lost their reason for existence or were forced to limit themselves to clandestine activities. The importance of the pillar diminished while the Church itself manoeuvred carefully towards a *modus vivendi* with the *Militärverwaltung* which in its turn wished to avoid a sharp confrontation with this powerful institution, especially in Flanders. The Church preserved its position and was able to safeguard the autonomy of the youth organisations and the Catholic schools, which were essential for the apostolic mission of the Church. Moreover, the Church participated actively in charitable activities; this was also a means of reinforcing its position in society<sup>5</sup>. Yet, conflicts existed concerning forced labour in Germany, the seizing of the bells and the Sunday labour in the coalmines. The Catholic hierarchy, led by Cardinal Van Roey, did not allow the conflict to reach a momentum. The absence of public protest against the persecution of the Jews and the denunciation of physical violence towards German soldiers must also be seen in the context of a policy of accommodation. In the relatively late denunciation of collaboration (autumn 1940), the assessment of the geopolitical balance of power played a role: as many others, Van Roey took into account the possibility that Germany would win the war and that a New Order regime would be established in Belgium. His principal concern was to safeguard the Church's interests. The support for Leopold III and his policies must be seen in the same context. Mgr. Kerkhofs, bishop of Liège, gave a less emphatic message to his congregation by referring to the government in London which was continuing the fight against the occupier. He was more open to Christian democratic ideas.

A specific field of research concerns priests who collaborated actively with Nazi Germany. In this respect, the Flemish priest Cyriel Verschaeve should be mentioned. Verschaeve played a central role in cultural collaboration in Flanders. An extensive literature exists on Verschaeve, among others in the journal *Verschaeviana* (354). R. Vanlandschoot published many studies on him and also wrote a biography of him (314).

### **III. The nature and development of occupied economies**

The historiography concerning the economic history of Belgium during the Second World War focuses on the role and the position of the Galopin Committee. This committee of bankers, industrialists and leaders of the holding companies, which controlled large sections of the Belgian industry, was, as far as economic policy was concerned, a kind of shadow government. The committee elaborated a policy, the Galopin Doctrine, which constituted a code of conduct towards the German occupier. After the war, the policy of this committee was the subject of controversy in the context of the penalisation of economic collaboration. The major part of the historiography on economic history concerns the activities of the Galopin Committee and its policy.

A synthesis of the economic history of the occupation has been made as early as 1944. The author was F. Baudhuin, a distinguished economist. The book is based on research and private information(4). It must, however, be underlined that F. Baudhuin had close links with the economic elite and that the book

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 641.

presents a rather positive image of the policy of the Galopin Committee. Two years later, in the journal of the National Bank a series of articles was devoted to the Belgian industry between 1939 and 1945(6). The evolution in the main economic sectors was described accompanied by a statistical appendix. These articles are a useful source, be it that they have no critical distance from the events. The overview is however not complete since important sectors such as building and engineering are not included.

In the 1970s a more critical approach prevailed. J. Gotovitch and J. Gérard-Libois revived interest in the Galopin Committee, as an example of notables reconquering political power (117). In 1973, the American historian J. Gillingham published his Ph. D. on 'Belgian business in the Nazi new order'. Inspired by economic as well as political motivations, he labelled the Galopin Doctrine as a collaborationist doctrine. The book was controversial and subject to intense debate. Gillingham's assessment was judged too critical for the business elite (120). In 1986 E. Verhoeyen published a pathbreaking article on the Galopin Committee in that a more nuanced account of the policy of the Galopin Committee was given. E. Verhoeyen stressed the changes in the position of the Galopin Committee in response to military and political factors. Notwithstanding the fact that following more recent research some minor points of the article should be amended, E. Verhoeyen's contribution remains a mile-stone in the research on the Belgian economy and the question of collaboration/accommodation (323).

In 1990 M. Van den Wijngaert published his book on the Galopin Doctrine, based on the archives of the *Société Générale*, especially the dossier in defence of the policy of the holding company prepared after the war (287). Two authors studied the application of the Galopin Doctrine in two concrete cases. G. Hofmans analysed the way in which the group De Launoit (steel, engineering) put the Doctrine into practice while P. Nefors reconstructed the decision-making process for the delivery of toluol to the Germans (144,220). P. Nefors completed his research in his Ph. D. published as book. This book is a synthesis of Belgian economic history during the war. The author concentrates on the Galopin Doctrine, its application and its relationship to the *Emissiebank*. This institution organised the clearing between Nazi Germany and Belgium. The book furthermore analyses German exploitation of the coal, metal and textiles industries, in which the issue of collaboration looms large (219).

The economy during the war is analysed from an organisational angle as part of a study on corporatism in Belgium during the war. The Germans introduced a statutory trade organisation following the Nazi model (*Reichsstellen* and *Reichsgruppen*). In his book Luyten analyses the relationship between this network of organisations, the Galopin Committee and the pre-war trade organisations. In the key sectors of the economy the corporatist structures replaced the pre-war trade organisations. This was the result of a deliberate strategy of the economic elite. Their hope was to acquire a certain degree of control over the economy and participation was seen as a condition in order to put the Galopin Doctrine into practice. In this doctrine the 'preservation of the economic structure' of the country was the central element. The corporatist structures were important for this purpose as they organised a system of financial compensation in response to the policy of 'concentration' (the closing down of less productive firms) and enabled business men to build a united front. Moreover, since the economic elite held the leading positions in the corporatist organisations, adherents of collaborationist movements could be prevented from obtaining control over the economy. This was another goal of the Galopin Committee. The corporatist organisations contributed to maintaining the power of the traditional economic elite and reinforced its position vis à vis the state: in effect, the corporatist organisation took over economic regulation from the state (178).

As far as the sectors are concerned, we dispose of a study of the arms industry (85) and the diamond sector. The latter focuses on the German policy and the prosecution of the Jews: the diamond industry was concentrated in the city of Antwerp and many Jews earned their living in this sector (159). De Vlaminck presents a detailed account of the production of weapons and ammunition of all of the Belgian factories. In E. Verhoeyen's above-mentioned synthesis, the textile and the diamond sector are studied, as well as looting and the black market and *Kapitalverflechtung* and the *Emissiebank* (320,321). Information on the private banks during the war can be found in books published to celebrate the history of several banks (291-293, 116, 345). H. Willems and F. Buelens studied the Antwerp and Brussels stock exchange (343).

A. Henau reconstructed the official tobacco price during the war (142). K. Speelman studied one company, De Coene (262). Paul Van Heesvelde published a series of studies of the NMBS /SNCB (National Railway Company) (310-312). Economic history is a subject in some regional studies (237).

As in other countries, the Belgian government established a Commission to make a detailed survey of the expropriation of the Jewish population. The report of the Commission was published. The confiscation of bank accounts, insurance policies, real estate, diamonds, *Möbelaktion*, companies, works of art and objects of cultural value belonging to Jews are mapped, using German and Belgian archives; the latter often opened exclusively for researchers of the Commission (44). Although the angle is a specific one – the looting of a group of the population with a particular sociological profile – and consequently concentrated on these economic sectors in which Jews were active, the empirical findings and unraveling of the structures of looting are a step forward in the knowledge of German exploitation. A summary of the findings of the commission was published in the *CHTP* (305)

As far as the history of finance is concerned, the role of the *Emissiebank* is studied by E. Verhoeyen and P. Nefors. Verhoeyen analyses the constitution and the activities of the bank that organised the clearing between Germany and Belgium while P. Nefors discusses the relation between the bank and the secretary-general for Finance (321,218). K. Oosterlinck made a reconstruction of the financial markets focusing on the Belgian state loans of 1937 and 1943 (226). Also in the field of finance, the book of J.F. Crombois on the Belgian Minister of Finance, Camille Gutt, in London, should be mentioned. He pays attention to the relation between the London government and the Belgian economic elite and the differences in the assessment both made of the economic policy to be pursued during the occupation (51).

It can be concluded that, since the 1970s, the study of the economic history of Belgium in the Second World War has made considerable progress, leading to a more nuanced appreciation of the economic policy of the Belgian elite. Most of the research focusses on institutions, policy-making and the problem of ‘collaboration’. What is lacking is an analysis of the economy itself, at a macro-level as well as at the level of different sectors. The central question here must be the impact of the war on the Belgian economic structures. Profits, investments, rationalisation and modernisation should therefore be subject of research. In the absence of such a study, researchers must continue to rely on sources produced during the war or on postwar reports, written for legal purposes. An example is the source publication in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (31) and the report of the Commission established by the government to investigate the role of the *Emissiebank* (258). It has often been argued that this type of research is impossible due to a lack of sources. This problem should however not be overestimated. A combination of sources – some of them are printed and easily available – enable us to have a more nuanced view of the economic development during the war. The most fruitful approach would be one that is based on a more long-term study, covering the period from 1940 to 1950. In this way, the impact of the occupation can be measured, as well as the postwar purges.

#### **IV. The structuring of daily life**

Social history in Belgium focuses on organisations and structures. This is also true for the occupation: daily life has not been a privileged field of research, although there was a promising start. The studies that Jacquemyns published in 1950 and the synthesis written in 1946 remain a first-rate source for the study of the daily life of the workers in the industrial regions of the Walloon area. Jacquemyns not only gives a reconstruction of the standard of living, his approach, based also on monographs (interviews) sheds light on the mentality of the workers and their families. Jacquemyns’ survey, however, only covers the industrialised regions of the Walloon area and the Limburg coal basin (146). The workers he interviewed belonged to a well-paid group.

In 1993 Peter Scholliers made a reconstruction of the standard of living of the workers during the war. Here, he focuses on the prices, as in a previous study he already made clear that the Commission for Prices and Wages, a new institution created along the Nazi model, was not able to control prices, let alone block them, which was the official goal (248). His mixed price index (official and black-market prices)

reveals that the purchasing power of the workers was radically undermined. At the end of 1943, the purchasing power reached only 15% of the prewar level (249). Later Peter Scholliers and Isabelle Cassiers continued the same course by putting the development of purchasing power during the Second World War in the perspective of the post-war 'Belgian economic miracle' (fast economic recovery combined with high wages) (33).

One of the most fundamental problems was the insufficient food supply. A. Henau and M. Van den Wijngaert analysed food supply, from an institutional perspective. The structures of the *Nationale Landbouw en Voedingscorporatie* (NLVC) the new bureaucracy which was to regulate and control the production, processing and distribution of food are described in detail. The policy of the NLVC is situated in a broader political context (the Committee of secretaries-general, the role of the *Militärverwaltung*, the role of secretary-general E. De Winter). Moreover, the official rationing policy is reconstructed in detail as well as the means to acquire substitutes, in the first place via the black market (143). In his comparative study on food supply in Western Europe during the war Hein Klemann argues that the main problem in Belgium was distribution of food. The NLVC met with the distrust of the farmers and was therefore less successful than its Dutch counterpart. As a consequence a larger part of the production was diverted to the black market (157).

The shortcomings in the food supply system explain the importance of additional food supplies provided by the factory owners. P. Scholliers estimates that wages increased by 60% between 1940 and 1944 (249). Wage increases were illegal, but the system of 'black wages' and additional food supplies was widespread and part of a strategy of the employers to reconquer the power they had lost to the trade unions after the First World War. The initiative remained with the employers' organisations and these social benefits fitted well with a social policy aimed at the reform of industrial relations after the war (178).

As in other occupied countries, the black market was a widespread phenomenon. In rough terms, a distinction can be made between the market in which the Germans participated and the black market for the Belgian consumers. As far as daily life is concerned, the latter is relevant. It not only had a material impact, its sociological consequences should not be underestimated either. The black market for food was initially an informal circuit; from 1941 onwards, an organised system developed in which professional figures, the so-called *smokkelaars* played a role. These often belonged to the lower social classes, while the consumers were richer people. The black market became a subject of study very soon after the war. Already in 1946, the economist R. Miry analysed the black market for food (214). This study is a more theoretical approach. The economist J. Colard, made an attempt to map the black market for food using a network of correspondents all over the country and he established a price index (35). The moral and sociological effect of the black market can be read in the survey of Jacquemyns (146).

In 1984 an exhibition catalogue was published on the subject of daily life under the occupation. This publication can be considered as a state of the art and an attempt to study war history inspired by the approach of *Alltagsgeschichte*. The black market, wage policies and trade-unionism, relief measures, religious life, employment and leisure are the main themes. Other aspects are illustrated by means of case-studies. This indicates that the field of research was being developed rather than studied in depth. The book remains however a point of reference for the study of daily life.

From the point of view of the structuring of daily life, the article of H. Van Dongen on *Winterhulp* and relief measures in general is especially relevant. Since the standard of living decreased and savings, if there were any, were exhausted, the lower social classes had to result to alternatives for their daily survival, such as relief measures and social support from the factory owners. Relief was centralised and organised along the Nazi model. *Winterhulp /Secours d'Hiver* was established in November 1940 and although it was conceived as a New Order-institution, the organisation was led by P. Heymans, a former Minister and banker. *Winterhulp/Secours d'Hiver* was based on local committees, led by notables (such as priests and teachers), in some cases members of the collaborationist parties VNV and Rex. *Winterhulp* cannot be considered as a pure New Order organisation. Some committees were involved in the resistance and the organisation itself had conflicts with the *Militärverwaltung*. Support was given in kind and focused on food and health care, often directed at specific groups within the population (such as children). Since the rations quota was often not met, *Winterhulp* filled the gaps left by the rationing system. This was

especially the case for those people who did not possess the financial means to resort to the black market (298).

Daily life can also be studied from the perspective of local history. Since the early 1980s, more attention was paid to this aspect of local history<sup>6</sup>. As examples we can refer to the case of Verviers and the volume on Charleroi during the Second World War. J. Wynants devoted several chapters to the way in which daily life was affected by the war in 1940: food supply, relief measures, the return of the refugees and the distress caused by the frustrated hope for the release of the prisoners of war (349). In a volume published in 1994 several authors study aspects of daily life in the industrial town Charleroi. The principal focus lies on structures and organisations, as appears from the contributions on the trade unions, the local authorities and a large firm, the metalworks ACEC (73). Less research was carried out on the countryside (20).

## V. The migration of the masses

In Belgium, the Second World War was the cause of several waves of migration or at least large-scale movements of people. The first one took place in May 1940 when thousands fled the German invaders. The memory of the First World War played a role in this collective panic. During the 18-day campaign, Belgian soldiers were taken prisoner and deported to Germany. The Flemish soldiers were released within the overall framework of the German nationality policy while the Walloon prisoners of war stayed in Germany till the end of the war. With the prospect of a long military campaign, young people from 16 years onwards had been drafted into the army reserve. They were placed in special centres in France, the CRABs (*Centres de recrutement de l'Armée belge*). The Germans recruited Belgian labourers for the war industry. As a contrast, contingents of Russian prisoners of war were put to work in the Belgian coal mines.

The civilian exodus has been mapped by Jean Vanwelkenhuyzen and J. Dumont (317). J. Gotovitch recently gave a compact overview of all Belgians who either fled or were deported to France. All those allegedly belonging to the Fifth Column (adherents of extreme-right parties and communists) were deported to France in May 1940 (123). It was the same logic of state security that led to the deportation of six to ten thousand Jews who had fled Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to camps in South-West France (209). Local studies (for example of Verviers) also pay attention to the exodus. L. Vandeweyer takes a close look at government policies. He focuses on the preparation for an expected refugee problem and looks at how the Ministry of Public Health assisted the refugees in Belgium and France (295). Organisations were set up to assist the refugees. These organisations were the subject of a recent study by J. Gotovitch (123). L. Vandeweyer carried out research on the CRABs, focusing on the politics of the government and the army (297).

Little attention has been paid to the prisoners of war. G. Hautecler published a general survey of this issue (132-133). He concentrates on the religious life of the prisoners, as does L. Papeleux (134-135, 227). E. Gillet limited his research to soldiers and non-commissioned officers (119). Other authors studied the language question (86) and the collaboration of a group of Flemish officers (302). A few years ago, a specific reference work about Walloon prisoners of war was published, which has the character of a commemorative volume. Its principal focus is on the experiences of the prisoners of war and daily life in the camps (42). The return of the prisoners of war and the political significance to this has been mapped by F. Sottiau and A. Colignon (261, 36).

Russian prisoners of war were put to work in Belgian coalmines in an attempt to increase production. This group has been studied remarkably well. J. Kohlbacher devoted many pages to them in his study on the camps near the Eisdien coalmine in Belgian Limburg (158). J. Put's book covers the whole of the Limburg coal basin. He has studied the living- and working conditions of these Russians and also takes a closer look at their resistance activities.(233)

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<sup>6</sup> Rudi Van Doorslaer, Antoon Vrints, 'De twee wereldoorlogen', in Jan Art, Eric Vanhaute (eds.), *Inleiding tot de lokale geschiedenis van de 19<sup>de</sup> en de 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw*, Gent, 2004, p. 381-406.

To complete the picture, the migration to Great Britain must be mentioned. However, this was not a large-scale phenomenon. An overview is given in the proceedings of the symposium “Europe in exile” (47)

The encouragement of the migration of labourers from occupied territories to Germany to work in the war industry was one of the foundations of Germany’s economic policy. In Belgium, the occupier treated the problem with greater care, because the memory of the First World War deportations was still vivid. At first there was an attempt to promote voluntary labour in Germany. A wage freeze in 1940 was used to make employment in Germany more attractive. In October 1942, forced labour in Germany was introduced. Labourers were mobilised by age groups. The number of labourers who went to work in Germany is estimated at 413.842 of which 224.300 served on a voluntary and 189.542 on a compulsory basis. A general survey of labour in Germany was published in *La Vie quotidienne en Belgique* (256). Shortly after the war, P. Potargent wrote a survey of the different measures leading up to forced labour. The publication has a strong legal and political focus (231). F. Selleslagh studied the activities of the clandestine Catholic Workers Youth Organisation (KAJ) among the deportees (145). In 1993, the proceedings of a symposium on forced labour were published. They do not attempt to give a general overview but strive to shed light on several aspects of the problem: the attitude of the trade unions, the Resistance, the employers... (333). In accordance with the dominant trend in Belgian historiography, the focus still lay predominantly on the organisations. For more in-depth insight on the experience of forced labour by the labourers and their families, and the ensuing social consequences, the study of Jacquemyns remains the standard reference work (146). In the aforementioned volume of 1993, an article looks at the experience of forced labour in the region of Brugge, based on oral history. E. Pertz looks at the impact of forced labour in the Kortrijk area (229). Finally, the administrative organisation of the recruitment is studied in an article by B. Brinckman on the Rijksarbeidsambt (employment exchange) (30). An article in the *Bijdragen/Cahiers* by M. Van den Wijngaert sheds light on the political aspects of the issue (288). In the same volume, E. De Bens studies the recruitment propaganda for labour in Germany (55).

## VI. The persecution and extermination of the Jews

In Belgium, the study of the persecution and extermination of the Jews began slowly<sup>7</sup>. The Commission for War Crimes dedicated a report to it (43). In 1965, a not very critical study was published, focusing on the Belgians (113). Lucien Steinberg chose the approach of the *Comité de Défense des Juifs (CDJ)*, a Jewish resistance movement, which had among others also tried to save Jewish children by hiding them (266). In a series of studies on Camille Huysmans, attention was paid to the initiatives of this socialist politician – who fled to London – on behalf of the persecuted Jews (114).

It was only in the 1980s that Maxime Steinberg would publish his pioneering work *La Traque des Juifs*, in which he mapped the persecution and extermination of the Jews (267-269). The same author had previously, in the context of the trial against SIPO-SD officer Kurt Assche in Kiel, published documents on the role of the SS in the persecution of the Jews (271).

In 1994, a reader was published, containing several articles on the Belgian Jews from 1925 to 1945. Concerning the war period, the attitude of the Catholics, the Resistance and the government in London towards the Jews is considered. D. Michman and E. Wagman-Eshkoli describe the Zionist youth movements and the contacts between the world centre of Hechalutz and the Zionist pioneer resistance in Belgium during the occupation (300). In his English-written volume, which was published a few years later, D. Michman highlights German politics, the attitude of the Belgians towards the Jews as well as the attitude of the Jews themselves. These are often specific contributions (for example on Jewish orphanages) (213). In both volumes, bibliographical overviews are included.

In Belgium, the Jewish population was predominantly concentrated in Antwerp. In 2000, Lieven Saerens published a detailed study on the persecution of the Jews in this city. He looked at the persecution from a

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed overview we refer to the historiographical introduction in nr. 246.

broad perspective, in time (from the end of the nineteenth century) and context: the focal point of his study is the relationship between the population of Antwerp and the Jews. He then takes a closer look at the anti-Semitic feelings among the different groups and whether this had an impact on the attitude of the Antwerp authorities towards the persecution of the Jews (246). Articles by the same author highlight specific aspects such as the cooperation of the police of Borgerhout to the deportations and the attitude of the legal world (244,245). The attitude of the barristers with respect to the ordinances that excluded the Jews from the profession was the subject of a more detailed, but also more apologetic study by Jan Verstraete (334). Specific studies were published on subsidiary subjects. L. Wouters studied, from the point of view of linguistics, the attitude of the neutral Antwerp newspaper *De Dag* towards the Jews from 1934 to 1944 (347).

Recently, research on the attitude of the authorities was extended to other cities, notably the capital Brussels, Schaarbeek and Liège (192, 79, 80, 242).

Increasingly, current research focuses not merely on the role of the authorities, but also on the resistance and the saving of Jews. The role of the Jewish resistance was studied in the volume dedicated to Hertz Jospa, founder of the C.D.J. and in the recent overview by J. Bloch (250, 18). The journalists J. Loncin and V. Teitelbaum Hirsch wrote about the hiding of Jewish children (167, 277). S. Brachfeld published a general overview of the different forms of help to Jews by the resistance and the population in general. He also looks at the role of the *Association des Juifs de Belgique (AJB)*, which was founded by the Germans (24-25). The support of the Catholic Church to the Jews threatened with persecution is relatively well studied. Although the Church hierarchy did not protest openly against the persecution of the Jews, individuals were helped by the priests and the Catholic faithful. Lieven Saerens in particular has mapped the subject. In the more industrialised Wallonia as well as in Brussels, relatively more help was offered than in Flanders, the more Catholic part of the country (191)

The research on the persecution of the Jews makes use of personal testimony-documents. G. Van den Berghe composed a detailed annotated bibliography concerning *the national-socialist camps and prisons, written or drawn by "Belgian" (ex)-prisoners* (284). As the title indicates, the study not only concerns Jews, but all the Belgians who were imprisoned in the national-socialist camps and prisons. The documents are not only described, they are also statistically processed. Among others, the production rates for each camp are being reconstructed and the evolution of the number of documents can be followed on a chronological basis. In this field of historiography, the audio-visual media also have a considerable impact. The book *De laatste getuigen* (The last witnesses) by C. Van der Taelen, is the result of an interview project by a commercial television station (290). Individual survivors or Jews who could escape persecution published their experiences (165,241,232). The book of the political scientist M. Liebman on the vicissitudes of his Polish relatives in Antwerp and Brussels has the character of a scientific study as well as of memoirs (164).

The historiography on the persecution of the Jews also pays attention to the phenomenon of "memory". It is the focal point in the *Les Cahiers de la Mémoire contemporaine/Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Herinnering* and the Journal of the Auschwitz Foundation, though more historical articles have also been published in these journals (350-351). The institutes publishing these journals also carry out interviews of survivors. The Auschwitz Foundation has published a collection of these (228)

For the economic aspects of the persecution, the looting and the spoliation of the Jews, we refer to the report mentioned in section III. Specifically for the diamond sector, there is the article by E. Laureys, who also mapped the Jewish diamond Diaspora and the escape and establishment of the Jewish diamond merchants abroad (160). Art historian Jacques Lust, a specialist on the subject of the looting of Jewish art, also published on the subject of Jewish artists specialising in plastic art and on anti-Semitism (173-174).

A rather exceptional phenomenon in Belgian historiography is the internationally comparative perspective on the persecution of the Jews. P. Griffioen and R. Zeller made a comparative study of Belgium and the Netherlands and M. Steinberg compared Belgium and France in a collection of previously published articles (130,270).

Finally, we refer to the biographical dictionary which was published under the supervision of J.P. Schreiber on the Belgian Jews and which also sheds light on the period of the Second World War. (251)



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## Abbreviations

BTNG ;Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis  
BEG : Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis  
BTFG : Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis  
RBPH: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire  
RBHC: Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine  
CHTP : Chaiers du Temps d'Histoire Présent