

## CEGESOMA - State Archives

## NEWSLETTER

No 92 - February 2024



## NEWS

## 'GOTO' IS GONE...

A tribute to a renowned historian, a pioneer in many respects, historically, methodologically and historiographically, but above all a pioneer of what became CegeSoma, which he led from 1989 to 2005.

► Read more

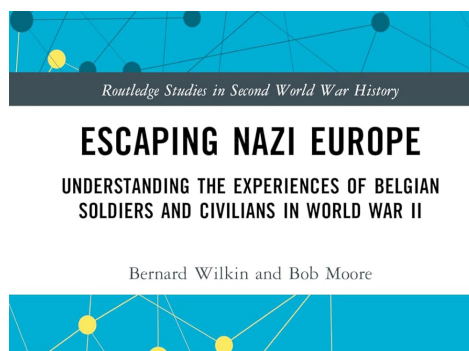


## ON THE AGENDA

## ESCAPING NAZI EUROPE

On Wednesday 13 March 2024, for its first Public History Meeting of the year, CegeSoma welcomes Bernard Wilkin and Bob Moore who will talk to us (in French & in Dutch) about escape attempts by Belgian soldiers and civilians in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II, with Pieter Lagrou as moderator.

► Read more



## ARCHIVES &amp; COLD WAR

Discover the program of the study afternoon on the economic aspects of the Cold War held at CegeSoma on Friday 15 March 2024.

► Read more



## TOWARDS A CANONIZED MORALITY?

On 15 March 2024, Nico Wouters will give a lecture (in Dutch) in Ghent entitled 'Towards a canonized morality? World War II in memory and historiography' as part of the Spring Conference of the *Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis*.



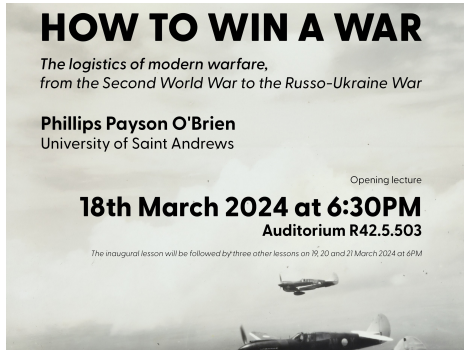


► [Read more](#)

## EXHIBITION 'WAR DAMAGES 1940-1945'

From 16 March to 8 September 2024, the Mons Memorial Museum presents an exhibition on World War II damages in five Hainaut cities.

► [Read more](#)



## HOW TO WIN A WAR?

The study of World War II can help us better understand the logistical challenges posed by the war in Ukraine. Phillips Payson O'Brien (University of Saint Andrews) will give several lectures on this topic within the framework of the International Chair for the History of the Second World War from March 18 to 21 at *ULB*.

► [Read more](#)

## SAVE THE DATE

On the morning of Friday March 29, 2024, Nico Wouters, together with a panel of experts, will present to the Senate the results of his research on the *NMBS/SNCB* during World War II. An invitation and program of the session will be sent to you shortly.



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[Home](#) » [News](#) » 'Goto' is gone...

## 'Goto' is gone...



There are some people we tend to think of as eternally young, because they are so lively, so quick-witted and so full of a sacred fire ....

But sad reality has caught up with us. José Gotovitch, 'Goto', left us on 16 February 2024.

Born on 12 April 1940 in Brussels, José and his family escape racial deportation. Hidden away with his sister in the province of Namur, he returns to his neighborhood and his parents in 1944, and begins his schooling in Brussels. Driven by a youthful enthusiasm for "the great light coming from the East", he publishes his first book reviews in the *Drapeau Rouge* under the pseudonym Michel Rivière.

While studying history at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, he joins the Communist student circle and becomes a party member. His licentiate thesis on the censored press during World War I proves to be highly innovative, enabling him to explore the press as a source, as well as censorship and, above all, German archives. After graduating from university in 1961, he is a co-founder of the Union Nationale des Étudiants Communistes (National Union of Communist Students) and becomes its national secretary. He also classifies the communist party's archives and discovers personal files relating to the 1940-1945 period.

In 1962 -1963, he teaches at the Athénée d'Etterbeek, then does his military service. Next, he meets Jacques Willequet, historical advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, incidentally, one of his former professors at ULB. The two men are not on the same political wavelength, but they like each other. It's time for his first article on 'La Légation d'Allemagne et le mouvement flamand entre 1867 et 1914', published in the *Revue Belge de Philosophie et d'Histoire*. Little does he know, it's only the first of many...

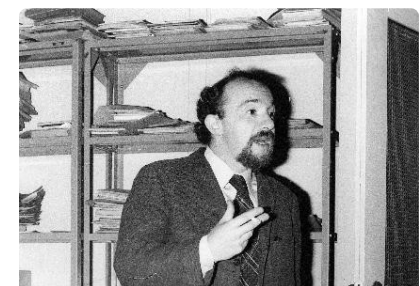
In 1964, aged 24, José Gotovitch joins the 'Centre National d'Histoire des deux Guerres mondiales'. With two young colleagues, he produces an inventory of the underground press from 1940 to 1944, and publishes extracts from SIPO-SD reports that he translated. He also writes a pioneering article on the history of deportation. And, not insignificantly, he launches a journal, the 'Cahiers d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale', of which only one issue goes to press in 1967.

But it's undoubtedly the book "L'an 40. La Belgique occupée", published in 1971 with Jules Gérard-Libois by the Editions du Crisp, which brings him into the public eye and establishes his reputation in the world of historians. The first edition sells out in a matter of days. With its 25,000 copies, it is the undisputed bestseller of Belgian historiography. The reputation of the book and its authors spreads beyond Belgium's borders. He is invited to appear on numerous television programs, although this is nothing new for him at the time. In fact, he already cooperated as historical advisor on the RTBF documentary series '1914-1918. Le Journal de la Grande Guerre' and the 'Télemémoires' series. He will continue to take part in numerous TV debates and in RTBF's famous 'Jours de Guerre' series.

In 1967, he is appointed assistant lecturer at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, a position he holds until 1988. He also teaches at the Institut Supérieur des Arts du Spectacle from 1973 to 1977.

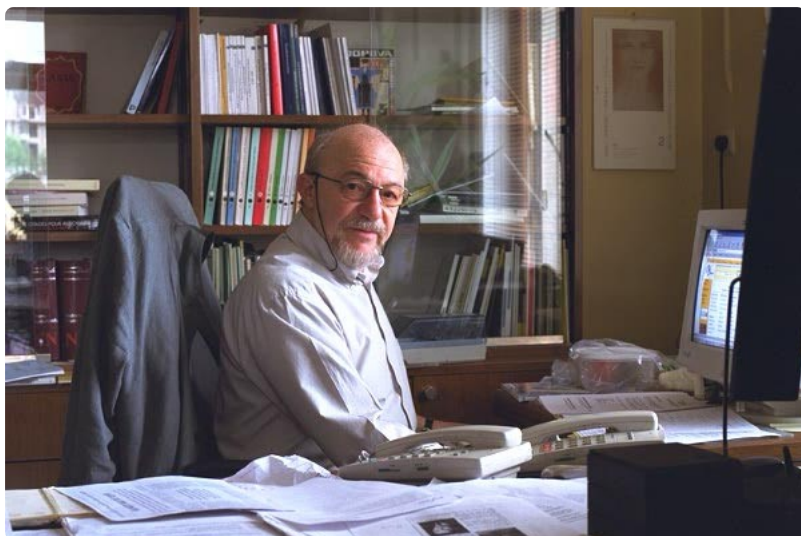
Meanwhile, in 1967, the 'Centre National d'Histoire des deux Guerres mondiales' has become the Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Historiques de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, and its team has expanded. He takes part in the development of the brand-new institution, conducting numerous interviews - the Centre plays a pioneering role in oral history. He also contributes to the collection and inventory of numerous archives, helping to build up an exceptional collection of private archives. Official archives are not easily accessible. His research and publications are therefore often based on alternative sources collected from private individuals. In 1985, he travels to Moscow, where he helps discover the Belgian archives stolen by the German occupiers and secretly stored in the Russian capital since 1945.

Gradually, the institution grows and the historiography of the Second World War expands. José Gotovitch plays a major role in



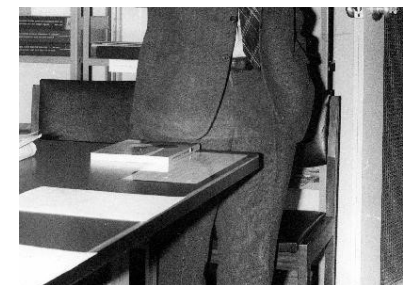


this. In 1988, he successfully completes his doctoral dissertation on the Communist Resistance and the Independence Front, under the supervision of Jean Stengers, whom he succeeds in teaching the contemporary history course, then the 'Enjeux et débat' course, at the ULB. His dissertation is published in 1992 under the title 'Du rouge au tricolore : Les communistes belges de 1939 à 1944. Un aspect de l'histoire de la Résistance en Belgique'.



In his office at the Résidence Palace in 1999

In 1989, he becomes director of the Centre, multiplying his contacts with the academic world in an eclectic way, while forging links with his French colleagues at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, playing an active role in the series of colloquia they organize under the generic title "La Résistance et les Français" (The Resistance and the French). One of these, "La Résistance et les Européens du Nord", is held in Brussels. Within the institution, his talents as a negotiator enable him to carry out the various projects with a sense of reality and moderation, combined with genuine respect for his intellectual partners. Within the institution, his negotiating skills enable him to successfully carry out various projects with realism and moderation, combined with a genuine respect for his intellectual partners. Under his leadership, the Centre reaches full maturity. In 1997, its chronological framework is expanded and its structures adapted.



At a press conference in 1973

that now runs [...] an exhilarating task that consisted in building an original scientific venue, which has become an obligatory and recognized point of passage for anyone interested in the history of 20th-century Belgium. A tool that often served, without the paternities always being recognized, as a model for a whole rich network of institutions born since then." And he proudly adds: "Pioneer of oral history, of the preservation of private archives, creator of a multi-based documentation center including a state-of-the-art library, designer of a computer system that a number of Belgian centers are eagerly waiting to acquire, director of a series of first-rate doctorates, publisher of a journal that has won over its audience in these times of budgetary restrictions and shrinking markets; organizer of numerous study days and seminars, participant in many international symposia and projects; inspirer and promoter of the publication of numerous works with various publishers - the CEGES was and remains all this. It can pride itself on having been one of the main catalysts for contemporary studies in Belgium. "

José Gotovitch shone far beyond Ceges. Generations of students remember the pleasure he took in teaching, and not only at ULB. In 1990, he was a visiting professor at Paris X Nanterre. He also held the prestigious Francqui Chair at the Facultés universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix in Namur (1994-1995), not forgetting his



many other commitments as administrator of Crisp, scientific director of the Centre des archives communistes en Belgique and founder, within the ULB Institute of Sociology, of the Centre d'histoire et de sociologie des gauches.

He also left an immense bibliography, from his first article in 1967 on " La Légation d'Allemagne et le mouvement flamand " (The German Legation and the Flemish movement) to his last work, published in 2023 and devoted to Jeunesses et étudiants communistes en Belgique (Communist Youth and Students in Belgium). In between, he published a whole range of works that have enriched the Belgian historiography of World War II, including the attitude of the Left under the Occupation, Belgium in London, the underground press, the Royal Question, Belgium and the Spanish War, and the many biographies he dedicated to labor activists.

He is the author of numerous scientific articles, as well as publications aimed at the general public, since he believed that the results of research should be transmitted, as shown by his countless appearances in the media, and by the Dictionnaire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (Dictionary of the Second World War), which he edited with Paul Aron in 2008.



To conclude, beyond the gratefulness we feel for having crossed and shared the path of a brilliant researcher, an outstanding orator, a renowned writer and an excellent teacher, we would like to express even more gratitude to the man we were able to rub shoulders with.

Whenever we evoke his name, it will be by remembering his sparkling, warm and sometimes somewhat mischievous gaze. It will be by remembering a captain, our captain, who fought against all odds to keep his ship and crew afloat and fulfil their missions.

It will be by remembering an endearing, humble personality, curious about everyone and everything, with a character all his own, who was able to pass on his passion and give positive impulses to his colleagues by valuing and trusting them - a priceless gift for many of us.

It will be by remembering a man who at the dawn of the great journey had doubts about what he had been able to achieve, and shared them with great humility. A man who understood that, in the end, nothing is more important than being able to share life's simple pleasures with those you love. And he wanted to share that too.

Thank you José, thank you 'Goto'!



New Year 2004 in Aviation Square



A festive farewell to the pension in 2005

#### Other news

[THREE QUESTIONS AND MORE TO ... Alain Colignon,](#)

[EHRI- Conny Kristel fellowship for Solange Manche](#)

[Contemporary History Day 2024. On the margins of history: current research, debates, challenges](#)

[New project funding for European Holocaust Research Infrastructure \(EHRI\)](#)

[The archives of star reporter Alain de Pille de la Nieppe at CegeSoma](#)

[New inventory!](#)

[Album Amicorum for Bruno De Wever, vice chairman of our scientific committee](#)

[Occupation and everyday life: a new resource portal on World War II](#)

[Two new inventories! 'Les Invalides Prévoyants' and 'Les Enfants de la Patrie/De Kinderen van het Vaderland'](#)

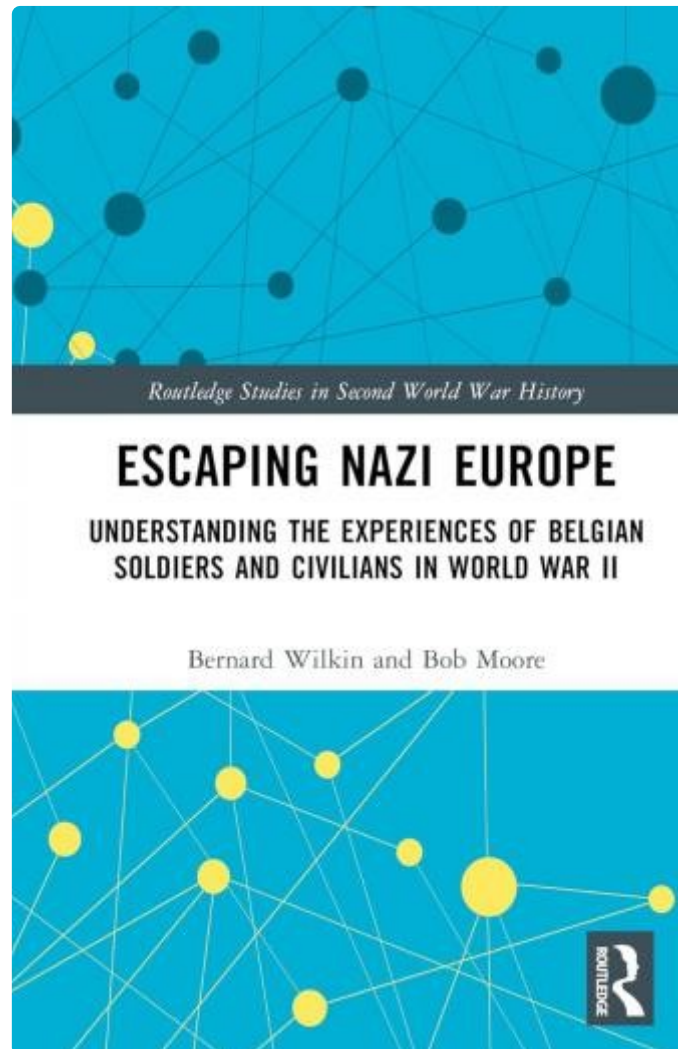
[The Great\(er\) War of Military Occupations in Europe](#)



## Escaping Nazi Europe Understanding the experiences of Belgian soldiers and civilians in World War II

CegeSoma Public History Meeting (2024-1)

**World War II**   [Conference](#)



## Conference-debate (in French and Dutch) with guests Bernard Wilkin and Bob Moore.

### An interview directed by Pieter Lagrou.

In May 1940, Belgium's armed forces numbered 650,000 men. Soon afterwards, some 225,000 were taken prisoner of war, most of them sent to camps in Germany. While Flemish prisoners were quickly released on Hitler's direct orders, around 100,000 Walloon and French-speaking prisoners remained imprisoned. Their numbers were reduced over time by repatriations for medical or other reasons, as well as by escapes ...

This book recounts the escape attempts of Belgian soldiers and civilians from Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II. The authors have chosen to let the escapees speak for themselves, making extensive use of their testimonies preserved in Belgian and British archives.

The book begins with the stories of soldiers who managed to avoid capture in the summer of 1940 and returned home, as well as some who decided to continue the fight and joined the Allied forces in the UK. Next, it takes us on a journey through the lives of prisoners of war who managed to escape from camps or *Arbeitskommandos* inside the *Reich*. It analyzes their motivations for escaping, the choices they made about when and how to escape, and the many obstacles they encountered along the way, ...

At first, most escapees simply returned home. Some went on to join resistance movements, while a small minority tried to reach the Allies via Spain and Switzerland, encountering additional problems due to the neutral status of these countries.

Bob Moore and Bernard Wilkin will present these stories of escape, the punishments inflicted on recaptured POWs and the escapees' struggle for recognition in the post-war world. They will both be interviewed by Pieter Lagrou. CegeSoma and the association 'Les Amis du CegeSoma' will be delighted to welcome them on Wednesday 13 March 2024.

We look forward to seeing you there!



**Bernard Wilkin** is Senior Researcher at the State Archives. He has published several books and articles on the history of war in Belgium and France, including 'Aerial Propaganda and the Wartime Occupation of France, 1914-1918' (2016), 'French Soldiers' Morale in the Phoney War, 1939-1940' (with Maude Williams, 2017) and 'Fighting for Napoleon: French Soldier's Letters 1799-1815' (with René Wilkin, 2015).



**Bob Moore** is Emeritus Professor of European History at the University of Sheffield. He has published extensively on the history of Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century, including in this context 'The British





Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War 1940-1947' (with Kent Fedorowich, 2003), 'Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace' (edited with Barbara Hatley, 2005) and 'Prisoners of War: Europe 1939-1956' (2022).



**Pieter Lagrou** holds a PhD in History and teaches contemporary history at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*. He has published widely on contemporary conflicts, international justice and nationalism in Europe. He is notably the author of 'The Legacy of Nazi-occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965' (2000). He also published with Martin Conway and Henry Rousso, 'Europe's Postwar Periods: 1989, 1945, 1918 : Writing History Backwards' (2018).



**13/03/2024 - 12:30 to 14:00**

### Practical information

**Where:** CegeSoma conference room, Square de l'Aviation 29 - 1070 Brussels

**When:** Wednesday 13 March 2024 (12:30 - 14:00)

**Registration required:** [isabelle.ponteville@arch.be](mailto:isabelle.ponteville@arch.be) or 02.556.92.11

The book will be on sale for €166.29

Bernard Wilkin & Bob Moore, *Escaping Nazi Europe. Understanding the experiences of Belgian soldiers and civilians in World War II*, Routledge Studies in Second World War History, 2023, 194 p.

Don't hesitate to bring a friend!

### Main language

Dutch

French



## Archival Research into the Economic Aspects of the Cold War

BELCOWAR Study Afternoon

[Cold War](#)   [Study day](#)



**KU LEUVEN**

**arch**  
**CEGESOMA**  
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Onderzoeksinstituut  
Geschiedenis van Nederland en Vlaanderen  
Kennis- en  
Onderzoeksinstituut  
Geschiedenis van Nederland en Vlaanderen  
Kennis- en

**FED-*t* WIN**

**BELCOWAR**

**15 MARCH 2024**  
**13:00-17:45 P.M.**

**CONFERENCE**

Archival Research  
into the  
Economic Aspects  
of the  
Cold War

Registration: [Isabelle.Ponteville@arch.be](mailto:Isabelle.Ponteville@arch.be)  
Conference to be held in Dutch/French/English

**CEGESOMA**  
**SQUARE DE L'AVIATION 29**  
**1070 ANDERLECHT**

Faced with international pressure and pressure from within, countries are trying to define their position around international issues. So it is today and so it was during the Cold War. The FED-tWIN project BELCOWAR examines this fact but with respect to the Belgian government in the context of the so-called Pax Americana and with a focus on Belgium's multilateral trade policy of the 1950s. With what domestic pressures and with what American were Belgium confronted during the period when the EEC was formed and when multilateral negotiations were conducted in the framework of the GATT, as well as in the OEEC? In what ways was this situation handled? Did Belgium behave as a compliant ally when it came to trade policy or was there room for its own emphases and even manifest counter-pressure or resistance? What (generalizable) factors played a part in this? Archival research on this is in full swing. With this work in the archives in Belgium and in the US, many questions arise concerning the use of archives, the impact of archives on research questions and the processing of archival material with a view to generalizable political-economic and geopolitical research findings.

With a **study afternoon on March 15, 2024** (organised by the State Archives (CegeSoma) and the KU Leuven), we try to highlight some of these archival-related questions. It will be an exploration of the fascinating interplay between research, archivist and archive, between historians and researchers from related disciplines, and between archival research in Belgium and archival research elsewhere. Each speaker will speak in his or her own language.

#### **Program :**

Chair: Widukind De Ridder

- 13.00 : Opening by Widukind De Ridder
- 13.10 : FED-tWIN Belcowar : a collaboration between a FSI (Federal Scientific Institutes) and a university : Dirk Luyten
- 13.30 : Belcowar and research on the Cold War and Belgium : perspectives, objectives and approach : Bart Kerremans
- 14.00 : Q&A

Chair: Dirk Luyten

Belcowar an archive-driven project : first findings of and challenges for the research, methodological aspects, embedding in existing historical and political science research

- 14.30 : Case - master's student : Mohammad Ramin
- 15.00 : Archival research in Belgium and the USA (Widukind De Ridder & Bart Kerremans)
- 15.30 : Q&A
- 16.00 : Coffee Break
- 16.15 : Panel discussion led by Bart Kerremans : How to get started with archives for researching the economic aspects of the Cold War ?

- Guy Coppieters (State Archives), Caroline Six (State Archives), Liam O'Sullivan & Didier Amaury (Archives FOD Foreign Affairs), Kristof Lowyck (FIT-agency), Kenneth Bertrams (*ULB*), Widukind De Ridder & Dirk Luyten (State Archives/CegeSoma).

- 17.15 : closing and drink
- 17.45 : end



**15/03/2024 - 13:00 to 17:45**

### **Practical information**

**Where:** CegeSoma conference room, Square de l'Aviation 29 - 1070 Brussels

**When:** Friday 15 March 2024 (13:00 - 17:45)

**Registration (free of charge) required:** [isabelle.ponteville@arch.be](mailto:isabelle.ponteville@arch.be) or 02.556.92.11

### **Main language**

Dutch  
English  
French



## **Towards a canonized morality? Historiography, memory and the Resistance during WWII.**

World War II   [Conference](#)



What is the social significance of World War II today? And what role can (or can't) historical research play? On 15 March in Ghent, Nico Wouters will give a short lecture entitled '*Towards a canonized morality? World War II in memory and historiography*'. The lecture is followed by a session on the history of the resistance during the Second World War, with Michèle Corthals (*UAntwerpen*), Babette Weyns (*UGent*) and Ruben Lateur (*UGent*) as speakers. They will present their new research findings and will also debate the tensions between memory and history as we see them increasingly emerging today around the theme of resistance.

All these lectures will take place within the framework of the 'Spring Meeting' of the *Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis*. Venue of the event is the KANTL in Ghent.

## **Programme of the Lentevergadering (Spring Meeting) 2024**



**15/03/2024 - 10:00 to 16:30**

### **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**Where:** Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal en letteren, Koningstraat 18, 9000 Gent

**When:** Friday 15 March from 10.00 to 16.30

**Free Entry**

**Main language**

Dutch

[Home](#) » [Event](#) » War Damages 1940-1945. The scale of destruction in five Hainaut cities.

## War Damages 1940-1945. The scale of destruction in five Hainaut cities.

An exhibition at the Mons Memorial Museum.

World War II [Exhibition](#)

**MONS MEMORIAL MUSEUM**

**EXPOSITION**

**DOMMAGES DE GUERRE 1940-1945**

**L'AMPLEUR DES DÉGÂTS DANS 5 VILLES DU HAINAUT**

**15.03**  
V  
**08.09**  
**2024**

**WWW.MONSMEMORIALMUSEUM.MONS.BE**



From 16 March to 8 September 2024, the Mons Memorial Museum will host an exhibition on the damage caused by World War II in Charleroi, La Louvière, Mons, Saint-Ghislain and Tournai.

This exhibition is organized in partnership with the State Archives of Belgium, the State Archives repositories in the Provinces, CegeSoma and the cities of La Louvière and Charleroi. It is based mainly on the very rich files on war damage to private property in Hainaut, recently transferred to the State Archives repository in Mons.

CegeSoma provided iconographic documents and, above all, contextualized these events, which destroyed or severely damaged thousands of buildings and cost the lives of hundreds of people.

**A study day (in French) entitled 'Dommages de guerre 1940-1945 et reconstruction. Problématique et valorisation des sources' will take place on 26 April 2024 at the Mons Memorial Museum. Practical information and the program can be found by following this link.**



**16/03/2024 - 10:00 to 08/09/2024 - 18:00**

#### **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**Where:** Mons Memorial Museum - Tucker Room - Boulevard Dolez, 51 - 7000 Mons

**When:** 16 March to 8 September 2024, Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (last entry at 5 p.m.).

**Contact:** <https://www.monsmemorialmuseum.mons.be/> - 065/40.53.25

#### **Main language**

English

French



# How to Win a War? The logistics of modern warfare, from the Second World War to the Russo-Ukraine War

[World War II](#) [Conference](#)





The Ukrainian retreat from Avdiivka this week dramatically illustrates the crucial role of logistics in modern warfare. No army can keep its lines if the ratio of artillery shells is 1-10. History hold no easy lessons for the present, but the return to large scale conventional warfare in Europe invites us to revisit the second World War and the logistical battle that stood at its heart.

Phillips O'Brien did just that with *How the War Was Won* in 2015 and he has revealed himself as one of the most knowledgeable analysts of the military confrontation in Ukraine since February 2022. He will explore the parallels between both wars in a series of 4 lectures, from Monday 18 March through Thursday 21 March.

These lectures are given within the framework of the International Chair for the History of the Second World War (2023-2024), organized for the eleventh time by *ULB's* Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, in memory of Jean Vanwelkenhuyzen, historian of WWII and first director of CegeSoma. The inaugural lecture is followed by a reception, so please register to allow for ... adequate logistics

**[For further information, click here.](#)**



**18/03/2024 - 18:30**

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**When:** Monday, 18 March 2024 at 6.30pm

**Where :** ULB, Campus du Solbosch, Auditorium R42.5.503 (DRION) - [Access map](#)

Admission is free, but [registration is strongly recommended via the online form](#).

## **Main language**

English