

CEGESOMA - State Archives

NEWSLETTER

No 74 - April 2022



NEWS

THREE QUESTIONS FOR...

One of our research colleagues talks about her profession as a historian as well as her research, and offers some advice to young people with similar plans.



► Read more



WIKIBASE RESISTANCE - A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

Take a look behind the scenes at the encoding of data on thousands of resistance fighters.

► Watch the video

ON THE CEGESOMA AGENDA

YOUNG HISTORIANS DAY

On 5 and 6 May, CegeSoma is organising two study days with recently graduated historians. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about the results of their Master's research about both World Wars and the Cold War.

► Read more



TEN YEARS OF THE NEW JBH

On 9 May, you are kindly invited to a study day celebrating ten years of the 'new' Journal of Belgian History. We will discuss national history and historiography, as well as the future of this historic journal in an ever-changing publishing landscape

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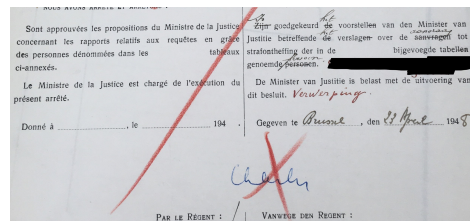
POSTWAREX PROJECT

On the afternoon of 24 May, we will present the results of research



into the role of the military justice system in the executions carried out after World War II in Belgium.

► Read more



EXTRÊME DROITE

L'histoire ne se répète pas...
de la même manière



PUBLIC HISTORY MEETING

On 25 May, we will host an interview with Vincent Scheltiens on the extreme right and the crisis of our democracy, moderated by Nico Wouters.

► Read more

ON THE EXTERNAL AGENDA

DAY OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

A national gathering in Eupen on 20 May about public history in Belgium, as well as and local and regional history.

► Read more

JOURNÉE DE L'HISTOIRE CONTEMPORAINE
DAG VAN DE NIEUWSTE GESCHIEDENIS
TAG DER ZEITGESCHICHTE
L'histoire publique en Belgique : bilans, enjeux et perspectives
Publieks- en lokale geschiedenis in België: stand van zaken, uitdagingen en perspectieven
Public History in Belgium: Ergebnisse, Herausforderungen und Perspektiven



PUBLICATION



OCCUPIED BELGIUM

Now available in the magazine Belgica, a special issue on the Second World War in Belgium produced in collaboration with CegeSoma/State Archives.

► Read more



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[Home](#) » [News](#) » THREE QUESTIONS TO ... Élise Rezsöhazy,

THREE QUESTIONS TO ... Élise Rezsöhazy,

scientific collaborator on the Postwarex research project (BRAIN)



Élise, you received your PhD in history from UCL in 2020 with a PhD dissertation on the German secret police forces in occupied France and Belgium during World War I. Soon after, you joined us to work on the Postwarex research project.

What appealed to you in this project, which relies on sources of military courts for its study of the death penalty and capital executions in the aftermath of World War II?



What immediately attracted me in this research topic are the exceptional, taboo and obviously somewhat dramatic characteristics of this period, the executions and their practice. I also like the institutional approach: by organising all these documents, we can understand the functioning, the changes, the practices, and the logic of an institution. And finally, what I also value in this project is that it will culminate in a book for the public, which will focus on the work of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office (*Auditorat général*) that carried out the repression of the collaboration. It will help us understand why some death row convicts were

executed and others were not. How does the decision-making process for royal pardons work? What are the issues surrounding the practice of execution, in terms of places, actors, etc.?

How did you imagine your profession as a historian when you started your studies, and did reality meet the dream?

When I started studying history, I had no real expectations. I chose history because I was interested in the discipline, the methodology and the science of history. In fact, I didn't really know what it meant to be a historian. When I was studying for my exams in high school, I thought that history was something which simply made sense. And then there were the skills of synthesis, writing, comparison, which called for a rigor I liked. Early on during my studies, I told myself I wanted to do research. After writing history papers and a thesis with pleasure, I started a PhD dissertation and I think it is great to be able to develop my skills as a historian. I have organized conferences, built networks and I tried to make the research process more dynamic so that it wouldn't just be "me in front of my computer".



After I finished my PhD, I was undecided: opportunities were rare... I couldn't just tell myself, I am going to become a university professor... there are so many steps to take before getting a permanent position, which made me think, why not try something else... and then, the position at CegeSoma became available, an opportunity to do research in a different context, 'project-based'. The biggest difference between my dissertation and this project is that this time, I am not in control of the outcome. There are four of us collaborating on the project, and we only have two years to finalise it. We are required to make choices. Nevertheless, I have a lot of freedom in the way I proceed, in the way I decide to write, to highlight the results.

When I first arrived at the research centre, I was looking forward to the dynamic interaction and exchanges between researchers... In the end, this was less the case than I had imagined because of the pandemic. Fortunately, everything is now going in the right direction.

What advice would you give to young people who want to launch their career?



It's not that easy to answer because it's very individual. You need to be able to believe in yourself and not question yourself all the time, with the risk of limiting your imagination when looking for sources, in your ability to draw conclusions, etc. At the same time, I believe that good researchers must remain humble and know how to question their certainties. Because one day, everything we write will be questioned by others anyway: history is constantly in motion, and it is always easy to misinterpret something.

My advice to young people who are eager to get started, is first of all, to be passionate. To do research, you should first of all be curious. Have a passion. Not just for history, but a desire to understand the world. To be a good researcher, one must also have a good methodology and be organised. You need to be pragmatic too, avoid getting overwhelmed by your curiosity, by the temptation of always wanting to do more. You also need to be able to handle the frustrations that emerge and tell yourself that, just because you stop at one point doesn't mean you can't continue afterwards. You have to be able to tell yourself: "I have reached a point

where what I am going to postulate is coherent and not untrue. What I say is fully documented and if I have hypotheses, I formulate them as such and not as assertions".

P.S A find in the archives that really surprised you?

My archives are not particularly sexy: they include circular letters, exchanges between ministers and the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, they are institutional archives. On the other hand, in the archives of the General Prosecutor's Office itself, there is an entire series of archives on the operational functioning of the offices, which are a bit more light-hearted: conflicts between staff members, recommendations directed to the young female secretaries and typists, accused of interacting too closely with other employees! These sources allow us to understand the daily functioning and the difficulties of running such an administration. In a way, this illustrates the mentalities of the time.

Other news

[The 2021 Secret Army Foundation and Gérard Willemot Foundation prizes .](#)

[The Battle of the Bulge: A different perspective](#)

[EHRI-PP General Partner Meeting Prague 17 May 2022](#)

[THREE QUESTIONS FOR ... Gertjan Desmet,](#)

[New catalogue for the CegeSoma library](#)

[Publications from our associate researchers](#)

[Review of study day 'Young Historians' - Promotions of 2020- 2021](#)

[Belgium WWII, focus on the Resistance](#)

[Media and cultural life in German-occupied Western Europe \(1940-1945\)](#)

[Occupied Belgium](#)

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[Home](#) » [Event](#) » [Study day 'Young Historians'](#)

Study day 'Young Historians'

Promotions of 2020 – 2021

[CegeSoma in the spotlight](#) [World War I](#) [World War II](#)



The State Archives/CegeSoma is pleased to invite you on 5 and 6 May to the now 'famous' annual study days during which the floor is given to young and talented historians who recently graduated.

This year, we offer not one but two study days. This will be the occasion for students to present the results of their research. The subjects are – as usual – related to the two World Wars and this year also to the Cold War and international perspectives.

Topics shall include the history of the Resistance, through an analysis of their networks, the engagement of women, war victims, identity, remembrance and representations. Other issues such as anti-americanism, the Vietnam war, the Iranian revolution – all seen from a Belgian perspective – shall be discussed as well, just as individual life stories of people: an intelligence officer, or the last general of the Cold War.

This meeting is open to everyone: students, researchers, journalists, lay and enthusiast historians. Come and join us, because each year we discover new raw diamonds!

The full program of this study day can be found [here](#).



05/05/2022 - 09:00 to 06/05/2022 - 17:00

Practical information:

Venue: Conference room of CegeSoma, Square de l'Aviation 29 – 1070 Brussels

Date and time: Thursday 5 May and Friday 6 May 2022 (9.00 am – 5.00 pm)

Registration mandatory until 02 May 2022 at the latest: isabelle.ponteville@arch.be or **+32 (0)2.556.92.11** – please indicate if you wish to attend on 5 or 6 May or both and if you would like to have a small snack (sandwich, drink) at noon.

- ▶ Fee per day: € 5.00
- ▶ Fee per day including lunch: € 15.00

Please transfer the right amount beforehand to the account of CegeSoma: IBAN: BE12 6792 0045 0092 - BIC: PCHQBEBB + communication: 5 and/or 6 May 2022 + Last name and first name. Upon payment, you are automatically registered for the colloquium.

Feel free to bring someone with you!

Attention! Public health measures: a number of safety measures remain applicable at the premises of CegeSoma. Please disinfect your hands when arriving at CegeSoma. Proper ventilation shall be ensured in the meeting room before and after the speeches. We reserve the right to cancel this study day in case public health measures make it impossible to hold the conference at the scheduled date. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding!

Main language

Dutch

French

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[Home](#) » [Event](#) » Which future for the Journal of Belgian History?

Which future for the Journal of Belgian History?

Study day on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the JBH

Cegesoma in the spotlight

World War I

World War II

Colloquium



In spring 2012 was published the first issue of the new *Journal of Belgian History (JBH)*, which is a fusion of the predecessor of the current *JBH (Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis / Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine, 1969-2011, published by the Jan Dhondt Foundation of Ghent University)* and the *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis / Cahiers d'Histoire du temps Présent (BEG/CHTP, 1996-2011, published by Cegesoma)*. This fusion in 2012 was accompanied by a new layout, a new website with interactive content and the addition of colour illustrations.

Ten years later, it is clear that the journal is a real success. In the course of this period, 142 articles were published - 48 of which in thematic issues – as well as numerous proceedings, contributions to the “debates” column and summaries of doctoral theses. The quality and diversity of the content is indeed impressive, and the contents of the coming issues are already lined up: mission accomplished!

But despite its success in the scientific field, the *JBH* can be criticised for being somewhat of a dinosaur within the current editorial landscape. Are paper editions indeed still pertinent in an era of free online access to publications? Is a journal with a general editorial line still viable in these times of increased specialisation? To which extent a journal that has ‘Belgian contemporary history’ in its French and Dutch titles is actually still contemporary? Which

role can such a journal still play in these times of transnational historiography, of the predominance of English-language publishing and of federalised scientific landscape? On the other hand, could we consider that all of the above challenges could paradoxically let the *JBH* stand out in its uniqueness. On the occasion of this 'anniversary' conference, we shall have a look at the past, but even more turn towards the future. A panel of historians shall examine national history and historiography from various perspectives. The conference shall be rounded off with a debate about the future of the *JBH* within an editorial landscape undergoing deep transformations.

Program

9.30am: Welcome

10.00 am : *Tien jaar BTNG 2.0 : een evaluatie* - **Nico Wouters** (CegeSoma/State Archives)

10.20am : Reflecting on National and Transnational Histories - **Daniel Laqua** (Northumbria University, Newcastle)

10.45am : *L'histoire de Belgique dans les universités. Réflexion sur l'évolution des programmes, des approches et des attentes* - **Catherine Lanneau** (ULiège)

11.10am : Coffee break

11.35am : *Zin en onzin van nationale geschiedschrijving. En bij uitbreiding van een tijdschrift als het BTNG* - **Maarten Van Ginderachter** (UAntwerpen)

12.00 noon : Lunch break

1.00pm : *La culture et l'histoire belges au XXIème siècle: analoge en digitale studies van het Belgienzentrum en op het platform BelgienNet* - **Sabine Schmitz & Yves Huybrechts** (Belgienzentrum-BELZ, Universität Paderborn)

1.25pm : Musées. Lieux et représentations de l'histoire de la Belgique? - **Chantal Kesteloot** (CegeSoma/State Archives)

1.50pm : *Geschiedenisdidactiek over de taalgrens heen* - **Tom De Paepe** (UGent) (unconfirmed)

2.15pm : Round table : *Welke toekomst voor (een tijdschrift zoals) het BTNG ? / Quel avenir pour une revue d'Histoire contemporaine de Belgique? / Which future for a journal such as the Journal of Belgian History?*

Host : **Michael Auwers** (CegeSoma/State Archives)

Panel : **Sébastien Dubois** (State Archives), Jeffrey Tyssens (VUB), **Bruno De Wever** (UGent) et **Christoph Brüll** (C²DH - University of Luxembourg)

3.15-4.30 pm : Reception



09/05/2022 - 09:30 to 16:30

PRATICAL INFORMATION:

Venue: Conference room of CegeSoma, Square de l'Aviation 29 – 1070 Brussels

Date and time: Monday 9 May 2022 (9.30 am- 4.30 pm)

Languages: Dutch, French, English and German (each speaks his own language)

Registration mandatory until 3 May 2022 at the latest: isabelle.ponteville@arch.be or **+32 (0)2.556.92.11** – please indicate if you would like to have a small snack for lunch.

Fee: € 5.00

Fee with snack for lunch: € 15.00

Please transfer the right amount beforehand to the account of CegeSoma: IBAN: BE12 6792 0045 0092 - BIC: PCHQBEBB + communication: anniversary JBH 9.5.2022 + Last name and first name). **Upon payment, you are automatically registered for the colloquium.**

Feel free to bring someone with you!

Attention! Public health measures: a number of safety measures remain applicable at the premises of CegeSoma. Please disinfect your hands when arriving at CegeSoma. Proper ventilation shall be ensured in the meeting room before and after the conference. We reserve the right to cancel this conference in case public health measures make it impossible to hold the conference at the scheduled date. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding!

Main language

allemand
Dutch
English
French

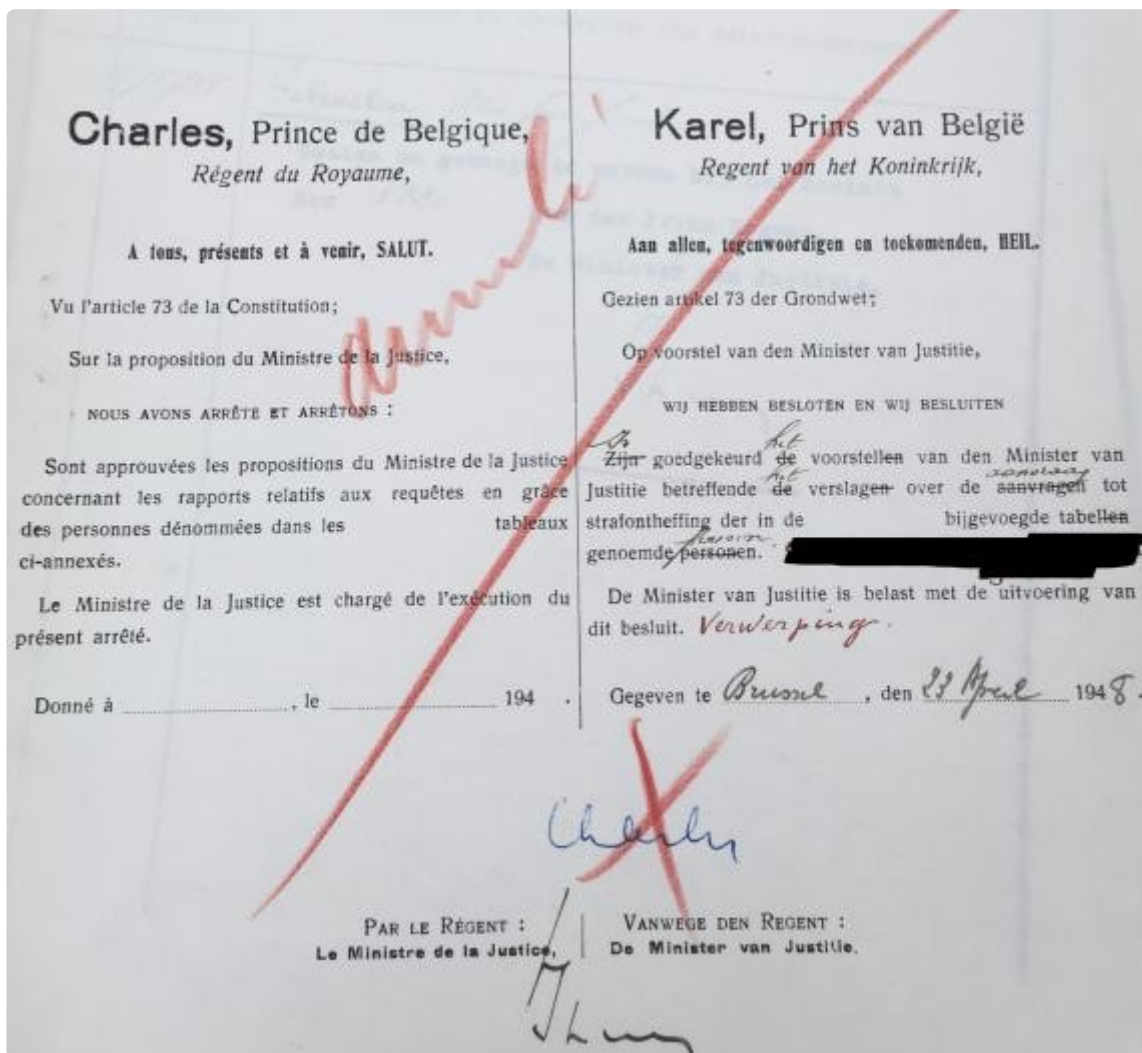
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[Home](#) » [Event](#) » Military justice and executions in the context of post-World War II repression in Belgium: the results of the Postwarex research project

Military justice and executions in the context of post-World War II repression in Belgium: the results of the Postwarex research project

Afternoon study session

World War II [Colloquium](#)



After World War II, 242 people who were sentenced to death by military courts for collaboration or war crimes were executed. This was an exceptional episode in the history of Belgian justice. Indeed, the death penalty was no longer enforced after 1950 and, with the exception of a few military personnel and suspected spies during World War I, it had been customary for the head of state to grant pardons to those condemned to death since 1863.

This group of 242, and certainly some emblematic figures, such as Irma Laplasse, José Streef, or Leo Vindevogel, has already been the subject of research, but mainly from the point of view of pardon policy. The military justice system, a key element in the process leading up to execution, has often remained in the shadows.

This system played an essential role in these executions: the military courts handed down death sentences and the auditorate-general the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office gave advice on the commutation or rejection of a pardon to the minister of justice.

As part of the BRAIN 2.0 research project "Postwarex", the State Archives/CegeSoma and the Royal Military Academy have collaborated for two years on a research project examining the military justice archives. This project

is currently in its final phase. During this afternoon study session, you will discover what the research uncovered on the role of the military justice system.

Program

Chair: Xavier Rousseaux (Université catholique de Louvain)

- 1.30 pm - 1.35 pm : Welcome – **Nico Wouters** (State Archives/CegeSoma)
- 1.35 pm - 1.45 pm : *Het project Postwarex – voorstelling en historiografisch kader* – **Dirk Luyten** (State Archives/CegeSoma)
- 1.45 pm - 2.05 pm : Les exécutions au cours de l'histoire de la justice belge – **Stanislas Horvat** (*École Royale Militaire*)
- 2.05 pm - 2.20 pm : *Bronnen voor de studie van de doodstraf* – **Dimitri Roden** (*Koninklijke Militaire School – War Heritage Institute*)
- 2.20 pm - 2.35 pm : *De gefusilleerden : een robotfoto* – **Dimitri Roden** (*Koninklijke Militaire School – War Heritage Institute*)
- 2.35 pm - 2.55 pm : Le rôle des parquets militaires dans la procédure de grâce – **Élise Rezsöhazi** (State Archives/CegeSoma)
- 2.55 pm - 3.30 pm : Discussion & coffee break
- 3.30 pm - 3.50 pm : La justice militaire et les exécutions capitales – **Élise Rezsöhazi** (State Archives/CegeSoma)
- 3.50 pm - 4.10 pm : *Cases* – **Dimitri Roden** (*Koninklijke Militaire School – War Heritage Institute*)
- 4.10 pm- 4.30 pm : Discussion
- 4.30 pm : Closing remarks



24/05/2022 - 13:30 to 17:00

PRATICAL INFORMATION

Where : In the conference room of CegeSoma, square de l'Aviation 29, 1070 Brussels

When : Tuesday 24 May from 13h30 to 17h00

Participation is free of charge, but places are limited and it is obligatory to register in advance (mentioning the number of persons) by sending an e-mail to isabelle.ponteville@arch.be.

Please note the anti-coronavirus measures in place at the CegeSoma. Visitors are required to disinfect their hands when they arrive. The conference room will be properly ventilated before and after the event. We reserve the right to cancel this meeting if official health measures do not allow it to be held on the date announced. We thank you for your cooperation and understanding!

Main language

Dutch
French

Partners



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[Home](#) » [Event](#) » [The Far Right : Lessons from History](#)

The Far Right : Lessons from History

Public History Meetings of CegeSoma (2022-2)

CegeSoma in the spotlight [Conference](#)



Conference-debate (in Dutch) with Vincent Scheltiens (UAntwerpen) as guest speaker

A discussion led by Nico Wouters (CegeSoma/State Archives)

The book '*Extrême Droite. L'histoire ne se répète pas (de la même manière)*'**, co-authored by Vincent Scheltiens and Bruno Verlaeckt, has triggered an essential debate on the crisis currently enveloping our democracy. It would appear that anti-democratic, even post-fascist, ideas are becoming gradually 'normalised' in what has been described as the fourth wave of the far right. The participation of the far right in politics is no longer an exception in Europe. In Flanders, in particular, it goes far beyond theoretical discussion: the question is whether the 'Great Wall of China' between the *N-VA* and *Vlaams Belang* will hold in 2024. It is also worthwhile considering the long-term danger of the culture wars that are being waged concurrently online. Vincent Scheltiens will discuss with Nico Wouters the nature of the contemporary far right, possible remedies to its rise and the role that historians - and our

knowledge of the past - can or cannot play in this domain.

** This French version is a translation of the Original Dutch work published with us at ASP Editions (*Extreemrechts. De geschiedenis herhaalt zich niet (op dezelfde manier)*).



Vincent Scheltiens has a doctorate in history and works at the University of Antwerp at the Centre for Political History, 'Power in History', where he is also a visiting professor. He is the author of several books on nationalism and the construction of national identity, the political history of Belgium, the history of the left and the contemporary history of Spain. His latest publications include '*Met dank aan de overkant. Een politieke geschiedenis van België*' (2017) and '*De sociaaldemocratie is doodziek. Pleidooi voor een herpolitiserings van de politieke orde*' (2019).



Nico Wouters is a doctor of history, head of the CegeSoma (State Archives) and visiting professor at Ghent University. He is a specialist in the history of the Second World War and its historiography as well as post-war commemorative policy. He edited the book '*Transitional Justice and Memory in Europe (1945-2013)*' (2014) and is the author of '*De Führerstaat. Overheid en collaboratie in België (1940-1944)*' (2006), as well as a number of other works focusing

on the history of Belgium's occupation during the Second World War.



25/05/2022 - 12:30 to 14:00

Practical information:

Where ?: Conference room of CegeSoma, Square de l'Aviation/Luchtvaartsquare 29 – 1070 Brussels

When ?: Wednesday 25 May 2022 (12.30 pm – 2.00 pm)

Registration required: isabelle.ponteville@arch.be or by phone: 02.556.92.11

Feel free to ask other interested people to join in!

Attention! Measures to prevent COVID-19: A number of safety measures are in place at the building of CegeSoma. You must disinfect your hands when entering the building. The room will be aerated before and after the conference. We reserve the right to cancel this Second Public History Meeting in case new public health measures make it impossible to hold this kind of gathering at the planned date. We will of course keep you informed as soon as you have registered for the meeting. Thank you for your understanding and your cooperation!

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[Home](#) » [News](#) » Occupied Belgium

Occupied Belgium

The Second World War front and centre in the journal *Belgica*



In the autumn of 2021, the very first issue of *Belgica*, a French-language journal devoted to the "history and heritage of all the *Belgiums*", was published thanks to the work of Patrick Weber, who is its director. This first issue was, quite logically, devoted to the creation of the Belgian state in 1830.

The theme of the second issue, which has just been published, is '**The Second World War**', a special issue written in partnership with the CegeSoma/State Archives. In their introductory article '*Que reste-t-il de la Seconde Guerre mondiale?*', Chantal Kesteloot and Nico Wouters look back at the overall evolution of Belgian society under occupation and also ask the question of how our society views this troubled period now. 2020 should have been the occasion to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, but this anniversary was pushed into the background by the health crisis even though our society today remains, in part, the heir of this major conflict. What are the major achievements of research into this conflict and what remains to be discovered? Beyond the classic divisions, what legacy has the conflict left us? How can we fight against certain forms of political or ideological mobilisation? In addition to a chronology of the occupation, the issue also offers updated contributions on the Resistance (Fabrice Maerten), collaboration (Alain Colignon and Bruno De Wever), the extermination of Jews and Gypsies (Laurence Schram), the 'false' *Soir* (Eglantine Lebacqz), living and surviving in occupied Belgium (Kevin Gony), the hell of Breendonk (Patrick Nefors) and a contribution on René Magritte's painting '*Le Retour*' (Patrick Weber).

For the CegeSoma, this publication is a great opportunity to promote recent research findings to a wide audience: a public history approach the institution is keen to promote. Photographs, mainly from the CegeSoma's collections, accompany the various contributions. The issue also contains additional contributions that propose a journey through other periods of our history.

In short, this is a publication that should appeal anyone interested in the history of Belgium and, more particularly, in the difficult and troubled period of the Second World War.

This publication is on sale in bookshops and at CegeSoma for €19.90 (excluding postage). Interested? Send an email to cegesoma@arch.be

Other news

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