

The history of the Centre

From Centre for Research and Studies on the History of the Second World War to Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society

The Cegesoma was accommodated in the Résidence Palace from 1993 to 2004.

The Centre for Research and Studies on the History of the Second World War was founded on 13 December 1967. Its task was ?to take all necessary measures to collect, preserve and study documents or archives relating to the Second World War in Belgium, its antecedents, background and consequences? [*Moniteur Belge* (Belgian law gazette)], 10 February 1968, n° 29, p. 1259-1260). Originally, the Centre was attached to the General Archives and was placed under the direction of the Department of National Education.

José Gotovitch at the publication of "L'An 40", in 1971.

In 1969, a team of six researchers commenced its activities laying down the essential milestones which were to pave the way for a number of pioneering studies on the Second World War. In 1971, in collaboration with Jules Gérard-Libois, José Gotovitch published the reference work *L'An 40*. From the onset, the Centre was a member of the International Committee for the History of the Second World War.

Parallel with its research activities, the Centre concerned itself with building archival collections from the period 1939-1945 and the constitution of a rich library which gradually expands its collections domain. Furthermore, its photographic archives was from the start one of the richest in Europe with regard to the Second World

War. The collections have expanded considerably over the last years. Finally, the digitisation of the collections which started in the 1990s with the photographs has accelerated from 2000 onward.

From the 1980s, to create a link with the academic circles, the Centre organises monthly seminars and from 1990 onwards it holds international symposia. Increasingly, the Centre carries out its own research projects.

On 10 January 1997, the Centre for Research and Studies on the History of the Second World War changed its name to Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society (Cegesoma). Its field of activities has extended to the history of the XXth century (see Mission).

In September 2011, the Public History sector was added to the sectors Documentation and Academic Activities with the aim of sharing the acquired expertise with the wider public. Finally, the increasing importance of digital technology has led, in January 2016, to the creation of the sector Digitisation.

The Centre, which is presently called CegeSoma, has been integrated in the Belgian State Archives since 1 January 2016. It constitutes its fourth Operational Directorate (DO4).

About forty persons work at the Centre, among which seven permanent academic collaborators, a computer expert and the head of the Operational Directorate.

The reading room of the Place de Louvain, in the nineteen eighties.

Reading room (square de l'Aviation)

The hall of the building on the Square de l'Aviation where the Centre is presently located.