

IAP Project – Murders during the Liberation and the Belgian Judiciary: the Case of Brussels – Multiform violence against collaborators

Everywhere in Europe, governments and citizens dealt with collaborators after the liberation in 1944-1945. This was done through legal institutional means by courts, but also in a more spontaneous and violent ways by members of resistance groups and citizens. In Belgium as well, real and alleged collaborators were taken prisoner, molested and in some cases murdered. There was also more symbolic violence: household goods were destroyed and homes were plastered with slogans. This street violence was a reaction against the many years of occupation, but it is today, and in some cases also at the time, considered unjust (and illegal).

Liberation of Brussels by the Allied, 9/1944 – Image CegeSoma N° 29077

A better understanding of the post war judiciary

In the IAP project 'Murders during the Liberation and the Belgian Judiciary: the Case of Brussels' the key issue at stake is the reaction of the Belgian judiciary against violence committed by resistance groups at the time of the liberation against (alleged) collaborators in the capital. Is there also a law enforcement crisis after the liberation, following the complex and problematic period of occupation? How did the Belgian judiciary try to restore its image tarnished during the occupation at a time when resistance groups had more arguably legitimacy than the police and the judiciary? What was the impact of the reaction against this violence on the restoration of the judicial apparatus? How did the population make use of the judiciary to deal with collaborators, or not, and what does this reveal about the social position of the judicial apparatus during the *sortie de guerre*?

Through a local case study on the judicial district of Brussels, this research endeavors to gain more insight in the administration of the judiciary during the turbulent postwar period.

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