

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

NO 6 - MAY 2014

[nl](#) [fr](#) [en](#)

4 JUNE: CONFERENCE BY VIRGINIE JOURDAIN ON THE HISTORY OF THE BRUSSELS HOTEL INDUSTRY

On Wednesday 4 June, we conclude our cycle of conferences on the history of Brussels. Virginie Jourdain (ULB) will present her research on the Brussels hospitality industry in the period 1880-1940.

[\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2686)

BRUSSELS14-18.BE: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH THE OCCUPIED CAPITAL

In cooperation with VisitBrussels, CEGESOMA created a website on Brussels during the First World War. Brussels14-18.be presents an exceptional photographic journey, in no less than three languages, throughout the occupied capital. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2619)

NEW ISSUE OF THE JBH

The spring issue of the Journal of Belgian History offers the reader analyses of a few typical fault lines in recent Belgian history, as well as a diplomatic trip to Hungary. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2683)

[/cms/index_en.php?article=2683](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2683)

BASTOGNE WAR MUSEUM OPENED ITS DOORS

The brand new Bastogne War Museum opened its doors last March. Using modern scenographic elements, the museum presents a broad view on the Battle of the Bulge. CEGESOMA offered the substantive themes and concepts. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2606)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: THE ARCHIVES OF THE INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS AND ACTION GROUPS

The archives of the Intelligence Networks and Action Groups are an essential source for the study of the Belgian resistance during the Second World War. A new list of the more than 40,000 personal files will largely facilitate the task of making these archives accessible to the public. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2692)

http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2692

The Hospitality Industry in Brussels (1880-1940), an Invisible Profession? A Sector in Search of Public Recognition

Afternoon Conference by Virginie Jourdain (ULB)

On **Wednesday 4 June 2014**, Cegesoma organises an afternoon conference on the history of the Brussels hospitality industry between 1880 and 1940.

The hospitality industry participates in a very direct way in urban development. Hotels absorb and regulate population and migration flows inherent to the urbanization process. Until recently, the kind of public service offered by hotels has not previously been studied by Belgian historians. For a long time, research focused on the most visible aspects of the sector: the big luxury hotels on the one hand and the small worker's boarding houses on the other. Yet, the hotel sector in an urban context amounts to a lot more than this. Between both extremes are a wide range of guest houses that meet the varied needs of travelers with diverse motives and backgrounds. Brussels is a perfect ground for the study of the hospitality industry. The period studied here – 1880 to 1940 – allows to comprehend the developments in the sector, from an almost artisanal, non-professional industry to a modern and professional structure. In this period, important standards and regulations concerning management, training and hotel marketing were designed, defined and developed. However, the more traditional hotels also continued to exist.

This conference wants to offer a fresh perspective on the complex nature of the Brussels hospitality industry and on the many reorganisations that have characterized this defining era of professionalisation. It also focuses on certain continuities which embody the Brussels hospitality industry until today, both spatially as with respect to public perception.

Virginie Jourdain holds a Phd in contemporary history (ULB). Her research focuses on urban history, the socio-economic history of Brussels in the 19th and 20th centuries, the hotel sector, consumer society and pressure groups.

This (French-language) activity takes place in the conference room of Cegesoma (Square de l'Aviation 29, 1070 Brussels) and starts at **2.30 p.m.** Participation is free, but registration is required via cegesoma@cegesoma.be or 02/5569211.

22 / 5 / 2014

◀ [Back](#) ▶



Show in the Brussels Atlanta hotel in the 1930s. (Photo Cegesoma, N° 35432)

An Inside Look at Brussels 1914-1918

During the Great War, Brussels lived a unique experience. Even though the Belgian capital escaped the fighting, it was Europe's largest city to endure the war under occupation. This forgotten history is illustrated on the new website www.brussels14-18.be/en, a public history project carried out by CEGESOMA, and launched by the Région de Bruxelles-Capitale and VisitBrussels. The website traces the history of civilian populations using photographs of the 1914-1918 period.

This website retraces the history of Brussels at war, from the pacifist appeal made by Jean Jaurès in July 1914 until the Marolles neighbourhood's popular memory staging five years later (picture). The viewpoint includes that of the different populations who lived side by side in the occupied city: Belgians, Germans, but also refugees fleeing the violence of the front and persons to be deported for forced labour in enemy territory as from 1917. The history of working-class Molenbeek connects to that of the rural areas of Uccle, which is a reminder of the fact that, at the beginning of the 20th century, Brussels was an important urban centre while in part remaining a rural community.

The German occupation upset all aspects of daily life. The public space was transformed: the Royal Palace became a makeshift hospital, the Palace of Justice was used as a soldiers' barracks, and the boulevard Lambertmont was turned into a kitchen garden. Social tensions increased but at the same time the war also forced people to find new strategies to fight poverty, hunger and unemployment. This website illustrates that the occupation was not a passively endured experience. It gave rise to patriotic resistance as well as to collaboration with the enemy. Other, apparently more trivial areas, such as philanthropy or leisure activities, were also taken up by the citizens of Brussels during the war. All this goes to show that the 1914-1918 conflict was not merely a military matter. The civilian population was at the forefront. Brussels was a laboratory of total war and this will put its mark on the whole 20th century.

To bring this forgotten history back to life, exceptional material has been used, namely war photographs. The history of the occupation is told through these images. For the first time, family archives are accessible to everyone. They are completed by 1914-1918 press photographs, as well as by images kept in Belgian archive centres (*Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles*, *Musée de l'Armée*, *Archives du Palais royal*, etc.) or foreign collections (*Bibliothèque nationale de France*, *Nationaal Archief Nederland*, Imperial War Museum).

The site www.brussels14-18.be/en is now available.

Bruno Benvindo

16 / 5 / 2014



In 1919, the inhabitants of the Marolles stage different events marking the history of the capital during the Great War. They make a parody of the justice administered by the German occupier in 1914-1918. (© Académie royale de Belgique)

◀ [Back](#) ▶

Journal of Belgian History - 2014, no. 1

The spring issue of the *Journal of Belgian History* comprises four original contributions on 20th century Belgium. It offers analyses of a number of fault lines in Belgian history since the 1930s, as well as a diplomatic trip to Hungary.

Through an analysis of Chamber debates on the use of languages in administrative matters, **Karen Lauwers** examines how the law of the same name of 28 June 1932 was passed. She unveils processes of identification and exclusion which clearly reveal the tensions within the language groups. The Francophones in particular were not as unanimous as was previously suspected.

The Hungarian historian **Gergely Fejérdy** presents an image of the Belgo-Hungarian diplomatic relations in the inter-war period within a European context. The hostility of the First World War at first nourished distrust in these relations, but they improved in the 1920s. A few influential figures, such as ambassador Jacques Davignon, are extensively discussed.

In her contribution, **Ophelia Ongena** questions the regional economic policy between 1930 and 1959, which in contrast to other European countries, was established rather late. The regional expansion law of 1959 was passed after decades of opposition and was a strong incentive for the Flemish economy. Until today, hardly any historiographical attention had been paid to these policy processes.

In their article "Een breuklijn op de terugweg" (A Declining Faultline), **Nicolas Bouteica** and **Carl Devos** analyse the share of socio-economic themes in the party programmes of the Flemish liberals and socialists between 1961 and 2010. In the 1960s, there was a clear division between the two parties. The differences became more diffuse through the increase in prosperity and the diminishing class consciousness, but play a role nevertheless. Quantitative research, derived from the political sciences, traces this evolution in detail.

Lots of reading pleasure!

To subscribe or order an individual issue:

Willem Erauw, Cegesoma, square de l'Aviation, 29, 1070 Brussels, jbh-admin@cegesoma.be, tel. + 32 (0)2 556 92 27

For more information, visit the [website of the journal](#).

Willem Erauw

11 / 7 / 2014

◀ [Back](#) ▶



2009-2014: from the Bastogne Historical Center to the Bastogne War Museum

Some five year after its initiation, the project launched by the Bastogne authorities, local historians and the highly influential company IDELUX, is succesfully completed. The already aging Bastogne Historical Center – the display of its collections decidedly marked by the 1970s – has been transformed in the ultra modern [Bastogne War Museum](#), which has opened its doors to the public on 22 March 2014.

Indeed, if the creation of the new museum owes a great deal to the sacrosanct 'duty of remembrance' – a common enough mantra in our postmodern societies – it undoubtedly owes as much, if not more, to the equally honourable wish to give a boost to the economic activity of a region which has long been devoted to 'memorial tourism'.

According to the local press and impartial witnesses, the operation has been completed, not without difficulties and setbacks, thanks to different specialised museographic institutions (Présence, La Prod est dans le Pré), and also to the support of CEGESOMA.

The latter institution was called upon to validate the new museum's itinerary on a scientific basis. It established the most complete and concise synopsis of the events, while highlighting the essential characteristics of the phase of the conflict in which it fits. This phase includes the ultimate radicalisation of the war, Hitler's 'last gamble' and the hellish bombings marking the end of Nazi Germany. CEGESOMA, through its appointed representatives Alain Colignon and [Chantal Kesteloot](#), proposed the introduction of new themes and concepts. Among these figured the German secret weapons, the total mobilisation of Germany, the extreme violence against civilians by means of mass bombardments, the end of the war and, finally, the short and long term consequences of the conflict. Our suggestions were generally met, no doubt because they corresponded with the expectations of the museum's promoters.

The museum has resolutely, but not aggressively, opted for a modern approach. There is a good balance between pedagogical texts, documents and objects (selected for their illustrative value or their emotional charge), interactive touch-screens and spectacular scenographic elements. In short, everything to attract the attention of a wide public, whether Francophone, Flemish, British/American or German, without indulging in the 'War Game'. The visitor without prior historical knowledge is guided along the itinerary by four fictitious characters representing the principal protagonists: a German soldier, an American soldier, a Belgian teacher and a boy from Bastogne. With the help of audio guides they take the visitor through the chaos of the Battle of the Bulge. The many eyewitness accounts of contemporaries constitute a second key thread, giving human depth to a conflict which is gradually getting lost in the mist of time.

Will the Bastogne War Museum meet the expectations of its initiators? Time will tell. Its medium-term success will no doubt depend on the efficiency of the museum staff and the organisation of all kinds of related events (exhibitions, symposia, conferences and other events).

[Alain Colignon](#)

8 / 4 / 2014



Scenographic view of Bastogne War Museum. (La Prod est dans le Pré)

◀ [Back](#) ▶

The Intelligence Networks and Action Groups: More than 40,000 Personal Files Relate the History of the Resistance

Autumn 1940. The Belgian government in exile, led by Hubert Pierlot, established itself in London. One of its first preoccupations was the creation of efficient secret intelligence services. An important part of the archives of this new State Security Service are kept in Cegesoma.

"The intelligence service that I have in mind will not just collect military intelligence. Its task will be infinitely larger and more delicate. It will be a constant provider of elements which will allow the government to assess the situation of the Belgian state, its citizens, its occupiers and enemies, and its friends".

With these words, Fernand Lepage, deputy military prosecutor, addressed Roger Taymans, chief of staff of prime minister Pierlot, shortly after his arrival in London on 5 November 1940. A few days later, the 35-year-old Lepage established himself as head ad interim of the newly created State Security Service, the organization of which was inspired from the British Intelligence Services.

The Service's priority was the gathering of a maximum of sensitive information on the situation in Belgium. Gradually, its activities extended to the action on the ground, the political warfare and the escape lines from the occupied country. Thus, the archives contain very useful sources on the activities of the several Belgian intelligence services (*Luc-Marc, Zéro, Clarence* and others), on the structures specialized in armed combat (*Groupe G, Nola...*), escape networks such as *Comète* and services connected to political warfare, such as *Carol, Samoyède* and *Socrates*, which provided help to persons evading conscription to work in Germany.

At the end of the war, the State Security Service decided to grant the status of "Intelligence and Action Agent" to those who applied for it and whose resistance activities had been "exceptional". Awarding this statute led to a number of investigations and declarations by the entitled persons, their environment and their direct superiors. The files also include accounts of the activities of the agents, personal files, etc.

The archive fund of the State Security Office on the Intelligence and Action Agents consist of two series:

- Series 1 contains 413 general documentation files on the activities of the State Security Service in London and the resistance networks on the ground. They mostly date from the war period (for the inventory of this series: search Pallas for "Dossiers Services de Renseignement et d'Action SRA" or "Inlichtings- en Actiediensten IAD").
- Series 2 collects the personal files related to the recognition of resistance activities during the German occupation.

A complete list of personal files was recently drawn up by one of our volunteers, based on old lists and a paper filing system. In view of a long term preservation of these valuable records, we are presently repackaging them in binders and non-acidic boxes.

The fund is accessible at Cegesoma (No AA 1333), but permission to consult it must still be requested from the State Security Service. For more information on this archive fund or on the procedure to be followed in order to consult it, please contact [Gerd De Coster](#).

Mathieu Roeges & Sophie Defêche

22 / 5 / 2014



René Bruaux (in the middle of the photograph), parachuted into occupied Belgium in March 1942, was first a radio operator for the intelligence service Zéro. He then operated in France in connection with the mail transport to Great Britain. On his return to London in May 1943, he is sent back to France in May 1944 to work for the Ali-France network. (Photo Cegesoma, No 64040)

◀ [Back](#) ▶