

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

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OUR BULLETIN 2014 HAS BEEN PUBLISHED

The Bulletin reports on our activities from September 2013 to October 2014 and announces the initiatives planned for 2015. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=1843)

SYMPOSIUM THE GREAT WAR FROM BELOW: NEW SOURCES FOR SOCIAL HISTORY

On 3 March, a symposium on new sources for the social history of the First World War in Belgium will take place in the State Archives in Brussels. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2865)

STATE, FILM AND PROPAGANDA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On 11 February, Bénédicte Rochet will talk about the chaotic history of the Belgian propaganda during the Second World War. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_fr.php?article=2877)

FLAMENPOLITIK AND WAR CRIMES FOCAL POINTS OF THE NEXT HISTORIKERDIALOGE

On 26 January, Lode Wils and Gerhard Hirschfeld will debate on the subject of the Flemish movement and the Flamenpolitik at Ghent university. On 12 March, another Historikerdialog will take place at the ULB about the Leipzig trials on WWI German war crimes. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2873)

THE NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP SYSTEM IN OUR COLLECTIONS

Our collections hold a lot of precious information on the history and memory of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Find out more here. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2882)

A NEW ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL OF BELGIAN HISTORY

The fourth issue of the JBH of 2014 will as usual be entirely in English. Our goal is to give more international visibility to Belgian contemporary history. [\[MORE INFO\]](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=2876)

CIRCULATE THE PETITION TO HELP CEGESOMA !

We hope to collect 5000 signatures before presenting the petition to Mrs. Elke Sleurs during her visit of CegeSoma in February. Spread the word! [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.change.org/p/mevr-elke-sleurs-het-cegesoma-dreigt-te-verdwiinen)

CegeSoma Info: the Bulletin's Second Life

To better meet the readers' expectations and needs, this year we decided to transform the traditional *Bulletin* into *CegeSoma Info* ([available here](#)). Our yearly publication is henceforward a 12-pages long newspaper containing around 50 short and richly illustrated articles about our activities. But there's more....



An important new feature of the *CegeSoma Info* is the intention to better convey our activities into the topics treated in the journal. In this sense, it is divided into sections about the Cold War (and more specifically the assassination of Julien Lahaut), the Great War, WWII, international cooperation, digitization and, last but not least, the departments/the research. The last article describes the successful petition launched to save CegeSoma and the list of the upcoming events.

This new communication channel will certainly surprise you. Please tell us what you think. Have a nice reading!

Fabrice Maerten
Editor-in-chief

23 / 10 / 2015

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Conference “The Great War from Below”: New Sources for Social History

On **3 March 2015** a conference will take place at the National Archives of Belgium about the new sources for a social history of the First World War in Belgium. This conference is part of the BRAIN research project “The Great War from Below”, coordinated by CegeSoma. It aims to study the long-term impact of WWI on Belgian society.

The day will be divided as follows:

- In the morning session, different (new) players will talk about new tools, particular initiatives and new light on unfamiliar sources.
- In the afternoon session, the “Great War from Below” researchers will discuss their ongoing research.

Prof. John Horne (Trinity College, Dublin) will present the closing statements.

The conference languages will be Dutch, English and French. You can download the conference [poster](#) here, as well as the [full programme](#) brochure and the details regarding subscription.

Conference 'The Great War from Below': New Sources for Social History
Tuesday 3 March 2015
National Archives of Belgium, Rue de Ruysbroeck 8-10, 1000 Brussels



A Veterans Association salutes the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Brussels, thirties. (Photo CegeSoma, no. 38709)

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Etat, cinéma et propagande durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale à l'affiche de notre prochaine conférence

Il n'y a pas que les dictatures qui se servent de la propagande. Les Etats démocratiques aussi utilisent des canaux d'information pour légitimer leur politique. Le **mercredi 11 février**, l'historienne **Bénédicte Rochet** évoquera l'histoire chaotique de la propagande du gouvernement belge pendant la Seconde guerre mondiale.

Confronté à un problème de crédibilité, le gouvernement belge recourt à la propagande pour y remédier. Produire des actualités filmées apparaît comme l'une des solutions. Mais l'expérience en la matière est très limitée. Début 1941, aucun cinéaste belge n'a encore rejoint la Grande-Bretagne. L'improvisation et la quête auprès des Alliés font office de stratégie.

Bénédicte Rochet (UNamur) a récemment présenté une thèse de doctorat sur cette question. Pour ce faire, elle a remué tout ce qu'il est possible de voir en matière d'archives audiovisuelles. Cette approche, combinée à une recherche archivistique plus classique, lui a permis de mettre à jour la manière dont un régime démocratique a mis en œuvre cette stratégie de propagande. Quelle a été l'ampleur des efforts ? Ceux-ci ont-ils effectivement été couronnés de succès ?

Toutes ces questions seront abordées au cours de cet exposé, où vous seront également présentées des images de ces actualités filmées.

Cette séance se déroulera **le mercredi 11 février à 14 h 30** dans la salle de conférence du CegeSoma, 29, square de l'Aviation. L'exposé sera suivi d'un débat. Participation libre sur inscription avant le lundi 9 février par téléphone (02 5569211) ou par mail (cegesoma@cegesoma.be).

Bénédicte Rochet est collaboratrice scientifique du FNRS à l'Université de Namur et chargée de cours à Paris 3 - Sorbonne nouvelle en histoire du cinéma muet. Historienne du cinéma, elle consacre ses recherches aux rapports entre images filmées et conflits mondiaux. Elle a défendu en avril 2014 à l'UNamur une thèse intitulée "Des actualités filmées au service de l'Histoire. La propagande audiovisuelle d'un gouvernement belge en état de siège (1940-1945)".



Le ministre de la Justice, de l'Information nationale et de la Propagande du gouvernement belge à Londres, le catholique Antoine Delfosse, inaugure l'exposition « Visages de la Belgique » dans la capitale britannique le 15 avril 1944. (Photo CegeSoma, fonds Delforge, n°31017)

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Flamenpolitik and war crimes at the heart of the next Historikerdialoge

On 26 February, Lode Wils and Gerhard Hirschfeld will take the floor at the Ghent University on the themes of the Flemish movement and Flamenpolitik. On **12 March**, another dialogue will take place between Gerd Hankel and Pieter Lagrou, this time in Brussels, on the Leipzig Trials, which aimed to judge war crimes perpetrated by the Germans during WWI.

During the First World War, the university of Ghent turned into an important asset of the German flamenpolitik. After years of struggle to create a Dutch-speaking establishment, they finally received « their » university from the hands of the occupier in 1916. The latter's contribution to this higher-education institute was a matter of contention between activists and « passivists », and an important asset in the history of the Flemish movement. This will be the subject of the debate which will take place on **26 February at the University of Ghent**.

Another debate of the Historikerdialog series will take place on **12 March at the Free University of Brussels (ULB)**. The recently published English-language version of Hankel's **The Leipzig Trials : German War Crimes and Their Legal Consequences after World War I** will provide the topic of the debate. In this book (German edition 2003), Hankel demonstrates how German courts' war crimes definitions revealed differences between German and international interpretations of existing agreements on the treatment of civilians, "francs-tireurs", or prisoners of war. The Leipzig trials reinforced German perceptions that their conduct of war was legitimate, with disastrous effects on World War II, but also paving the way to the Nuremberg Trials.

Historikerdialog:

- **On 26 February in Ghent:** "Flamenpolitik, activisme, frontbeweging: de Vlaamse beweging en het Duitse rijk" with Lode Wils and Gerhard Hirschfeld.

- **On 12 March in Brussels:** "The Leipzig Trial: Failed Precedent for a Century of International Justice" with Gerd Hankel and Pieter Lagrou.

Subscription and information on the website www.historikerdialog.eu



Mass demonstration in front of the Reichstag against the Treaty of Versailles on 15 May 1919. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Wikimedia commons)

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The Nazi Concentration Camp System in our Collections

On the occasion of the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, it seems appropriate to highlight the riches of the CegeSoma collections on the history and memory of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps during the Second World War.

Archives: from the Accounts of Survivors to the Activities of Political Prisoners' Associations.

Our archive collections hold a lot of original documents on Belgian deportees concerning the political and racial imprisonment in the concentration camps (less so with regard to the extermination camps). Most of these are post-war documents which, even if they do not originate from the 1940-1945-period, certainly contain important information.

The largest original collection is the archive of the Fédération Nationale des Prisonniers Politiques, which is the main action group of former political prisoners and their legal successors. Also interesting are the archives of associations ("Amicales") of camp survivors (Neuengamme, Buchenwald, Dora, Sachsenhausen...).

Information on the different camps (among others Breendonk) can also be found in the documentary files and lists. The documentation on the Gedenkstätte Mauthausen can be consulted on CD-R, and camp documents on political and racial Belgian deportees drafted on the spot at the liberation are available on thousands of microfilms (entitled 'Ministère de la Santé Publique'). The concentration and extermination camps are also one of the themes of the original archive collection of the Belgian War Crimes Commission.

Last but not least, we draw attention to the personal documents. These are private archives deposited by the victims or their relatives and some hundred eye-witness accounts of survivors. We also refer to the publication [Getuigen](#) by Gie Van Den Berghe, in which he systematized all known witness accounts in the 1990s. Also among the personal documents is a small collection of funeral cards.

Obviously, the previous overview is very brief. All archive material on the camps can be found by entering the key words '(concentration) camps', 'political prisoners', 'Jews - persecution', 'deportation' and the names of the camps in our Pallas catalogue (section 'Description of the collections').

Library : Hundreds of Studies

The study of genocides and the concentration camp system has long been a priority for our library.

The item « camp de concentration » contains 133 entries in our digital catalogue, against 89 for « Konzentrationslager » and 38 for « concentratiekamp ». On refining the search, we find that under the heading « Auschwitz », 394 entries are mentioned, against 143 for « Buchenwald », 85 for " Dachau " and...78 for Breendonk, still a federal establishment. Here too, the current historiographical tendencies have a significant impact. It is unlikely that some forty years ago, this sinister classification would have been the same.

Of course our library also holds the standard works on the theme, from L'Univers concentrationnaire by David Rousset and the *Der SS-Staat* by Eugen Kogon, *If this is a man* by Primo Levi, and the monumental *Encyclopedia of camps and Ghettos 1933-1945*. Well-structured overviews such as those by Alain Brossat (*L'épreuve du désastre : le XXème siècle et les camps*) or Joel Kotek and Pierre Rigoulot (*Le siècle des camps. Détenition, concentration, extermination*) can also be found.

While trying to build a consistent collection, we did not leave out specific local monographs which seemed useful for Belgium as well as for its immediate neighbours (for instance the interesting study of Boud Van Doorn on Vught or the one by Hans Verhaegen and Maud Keus on Amersfoort). We also value the production from more distant countries, or more focused or detailed approaches. In this context, we must mention the stimulating analysis by Annette Becker *La genèse des camps de concentration* (in the *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*) and other equally interesting works on the long-term psychosomatic impact of the penitentiary system on the survivors of concentration camps (Julian Gatarsky,...).

Audiovisual Collection : from Photographs of the Camps to Witness Accounts

The audiovisual department holds hundreds of photographs of the camps, mostly taken at their liberation (the rich collections Algoet and Ganshof van der Meersch) or during later pilgrimages or inaugurations of memorials (the collections De Geyter, Huybregts, amicale of Ravensbrück). Much rarer are the images dating from the Nazi period, such as those by Otto Kropf on Breendonk. We also mention a wide range of photographs illustrating the activity of associations of former prisoners and/or their legal successors (*CNPPA, Union des mères et femmes de fusillés et déportés politiques décédés, amicales* of Buchenwald, of Dachau...). In general, the images refer to the concentration camps : Buchenwald, Dachau and, to a lesser extent, Bergen-Belsen, Breendonk, Dora, Mauthausen, Ravensbrück and Wolfenbüttel.



The survivors among the dead in the liberated Camps of Buchenwald. (Photo CegeSoma, Algoet Collection.

Poster for a "show" on Breendonk organised by the Eindhoven section of the National Confederation of Political Prisoners, 1948. (CegeSoma Collection, n°274444)

The sector also holds, besides a few posters (mainly regarding Breendonk), several dozens of transcriptions of interviews of survivors. Their names can be found by consulting the catalogues « Interviews [by researchers of the CegeSoma] », « Emissions Jours de guerre » and « Emissions VRT » of the sub-section « Catalogues » (in « To find a document »). In the series « Interviews », we draw attention to the many interviews carried out with Buchenwald survivors by Daniel Rochette, co-author of a study on the Belgians in the camp and who donated a collection of documents on this subject to our institution. We also recall the great importance given to this question in the series « Jours de guerre-TV » (57 transcriptions of interviews and preparatory files) and about a dozen transcriptions of interviews with survivors of Ravensbrück in the series « Emissions VRT ».

Finally, the DVD and videotape collection, which can be consulted in our reading room, consists of some thirty audiovisual documents in French, Dutch or German on Buchenwald and, in particular, on Auschwitz.

Alain Colignon, Fabrice Maerten, Dirk Martin
04/02/2015

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