

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

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LECTURE – JUDICIARY, RESISTANCE AN VIOLENCE IN BRUSSELS 1940-1944

On Friday the 24th of March, historian Jan Julia Zurné (CegeSoma/State Archives) will discuss the attitude of Belgian magistrates during the Second World War. How did they react when the occupying forces demanded their collaboration in the repression of the resistance? And what were the consequences for the magistrates themselves and for the resistance groups? Info and registration :

isabelle.delvaux@cegesoma.be (<mailto:isabelle.delvaux@cegesoma.be>) [\[MORE INFO\]](#) (<http://www.cegesoma.be>

[/cms/index_en.php?article=3408&pag0nbr=28&pagofs=0](http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3408&pag0nbr=28&pagofs=0))

COMING SOON - A CLEAR AND ACCESSIBLE GUIDE ON THE SOURCES OF THE POST-WAR PURGES

Archives providing information on the post-war purges (the so-called 'repression') and its aftermath are not always very accessible to a layperson. On 18 May, a guide will be presented to the press, giving an overview of the archives that allow to reconstruct the individual trajectory of those who were confronted with the purges. The guide is an initiative of Ghent University, the ULB, the State Archives and CegeSoma and explains in a clear language how the different sources can be used. [\[MORE INFO\]](#)

(http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/autres_publications_en.php?article=3424)

ACQUISITION – ARCHIVES OF RESISTANCE MOVEMENT “DE WITTE BRIGADE”

CegeSoma has recently acquired the archives of the Witte Brigade, the only resistance movement of a national dimension founded in Flanders during the Second World War. The already inventoried collection of some twenty linear meter offers an invaluable testimony of the resistance in occupied Belgium and its position in post-war society. [\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/index_en.php?article=3418&pag0nbr=28&pagofs=0)

NEW RESEARCH - MURDERS DURING THE LIBERATION AND THE BELGIAN JUDICIARY: THE CASE OF BRUSSELS (1944-1945)

At the beginning of 2017, historian Jan Julia Zurné started her new research project at the CegeSoma. The project centres around the question of how the Belgian judiciary dealt with violence committed by resistance groups against (alleged) collaborators during and after the liberation. The research aims to shed more light on the ways in which the judiciary attempted to maintain or restore public order in a time when resistance groups seemed to have of more legitimacy than the police and legal system.

[\[MORE INFO\]](#) (http://www.cegesoma.be/cms/rech_encours_en.php?article=3382&pag0nbr=5&pagofs=0)

LECTURE - Judiciary, resistance and violence in Brussels 1940-1944

During the Second World War, the Belgian judiciary found itself in a difficult position: on one side, **the occupying forces** vehemently fought **the resistance**, whereas on the other side resistance groups violently attacked Germans and collaborators.

The magistrates working for the public prosecutor's office were faced with a dilemma: were they to hand over resistance fighters to the occupant, or should they suspend the prosecution of the perpetrators of violent attacks against collaborators - and thus leave the crimes unpunished? Which decision did the magistrates take? Did their attitude change over time and if so, why? And how did the occupying forces react?

These questions will be discussed during the lecture on Friday the **24th of March 2017**.

Our colleague **Jan Julia Zurné** (CegeSoma/State Archives), who has just defended a PhD thesis on this subject, will take the floor. She will talk about the attitude of the judiciary and police officers and discuss how they reacted when the occupying forces demanded their collaboration in the repression of the resistance. In addition to this, she will consider the consequences for both the magistrates themselves and the resistance. Nico Wouters (CegeSoma/State Archives), specialist on the Second World War and local administration, will introduce the lecture and moderate the discussion.

Would you like to learn more about the conclusions of this thesis? Click [here](#).

Pactical details:

The lecture will be held **in Dutch**.

- **Location:** conference room of the CEGESOMA, square de l'Aviation 29 at 1070 in Brussels.
- **Friday the 24th of March, 2.30 p.m.**
- **Please register:** [Isabelle Delvaux](#) - 02/556 92 57.

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*Murder of A.J. Wekselman in his home.
Brussels, 29 July 1943. (Collection
CegeSoma)*

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PUBLICATION - a Clear and Accessible Guide on the Sources of the Post-War Purges

Archives providing information on the post-war purges (the so-called 'repression') and its aftermath are not always very accessible to a layperson. **On 13 September**, a guide will be published, giving an overview of the archives that allow to reconstruct the individual trajectory of those who were confronted with the purges. The guide is an initiative of Ghent University, the ULB, the State Archives and CegeSoma and explains in a clear language how the different sources can be used. **The guide will be presented the same day to the press** at CegeSoma, in the presence of the Secretary of State of Science Policy, Zuhair Demir. **The event is open to the public** but spaces are limited. Registration by [e-mail](mailto:cegesoma@cegesoma.be) is mandatory.

Was Grandfather a Nazi?

Not a day goes by when CegeSoma (State Archives) does not receive a question of a descendant of a person who was confronted with the repression after the Second World War. The question can concern a conviction, a loss of rights as a consequence of the civil purge, an internment... Often, descendants have only a vague notion or even a completely wrong idea about what happened to (grand)father, (grand)mother, (grand)uncle and why this confrontation took place.

A Maze for the Layperson

In case of a conviction, the judicial files are the most appropriate source. As a rule however, they are not accessible to descendants. A lot of information on persons suspected of or convicted for collaboration after 1944 can also be found in other archives of government institutions (prisons, courts of first instance, consultative commissions, commissions responsible for administrative purges). These archives are kept in the repositories of the State Archives or in provincial or communal archives. To find one's way to (and in) these archives is not easy.

A Guide in a Clear Language for a Wide Public

At the initiative of Dr. Koen Aerts (Ghent University), experts of the State Archives, CegeSoma and Prof. Pieter Lagrou (ULB) have joined forces to write an easy-to-use guide which gives an overview of all relevant archives and which helps the layperson find the way to the right archive. Each source corresponds to a separate mention in which archivists and historians explain what information is available and how the source can be used for personal research.

Dealing with the Myths on Collaboration and Repression

The first part of the book proposes an introduction to the repression to the non-specialist reader, in which the different penalties are listed and the juridical procedures are explained in a clear language based on the most recent historical research. This synthesis will hopefully contribute to dispel a number of myths on collaboration and repression.

Presentation on 13 September

The book is published in Dutch and French by Lannoo/Racine and will be presented on 13 September at CegeSoma, in the presence of the State Secretary for Science Policy, Zuhair Demir.

The publication is for sale (24,99€ - postal charges offered) at [CegeSoma](http://cegesoma.be) or can be ordered via [CegeSoma](http://cegesoma.be).

Papy était-il un Nazi ? Sur les traces d'un passé de guerre [Koen Aerts, Dirk Luyten, Bart Willems, Paul Droossens & Pieter Lagrou], Racine, Bruxelles, 2017 (ISBN : 9789401445979).

To consult the list of our publications, [click here](#).

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ACQUISITION – Archives of the Witte Brigade

An Essential Collection for the History of the Resistance in Flanders

The *Witte Brigade (Fidelio)* is the only resistance movement of a national dimension founded in Flanders. Its archives have recently been donated to our institution. They are all the more precious because they cover not only the post-war but also the occupation period. Furthermore, a detailed inventory has been made which greatly facilitates accessibility.



Meeting of the Borgerhout section of the Witte Brigade, without a doubt shortly after the Liberation

From the Antwerp Liberal Nucleus to the Non-political National Organization

The *Witte Brigade* was founded on 23 July 1940 during a meeting which brought together a number of friends of teacher and reserve officer Marcel Louette (1907-1978). They were members of the *Jonge Geuzenwacht*, an organization presided by Louette. Recruiting was first done among the acquaintances of the founders, but was rapidly extended to the administrations of the city, the port and the police. In 1940, the movement was only present in Antwerp and its immediate surrounding areas, but from 1941 onwards it gained members in the rest of Flanders, in particular the provinces of Antwerp, Brabant and East Flanders. There were also a few groups in Brussels and Wallonia.

A Multifaceted Resistance , a Late but Ferocious Repression

The organization mostly engaged in non-violent actions, such as the printing and distribution of clandestine press, the gathering and circulation of intelligence, the creation of escape lines for allied airmen, the aid to Jews and to persons trying to avoid forced labour in Germany. Its armed activities were limited to small sabotage actions and a few attacks on collaborators. The repression which hit the organisation particularly hard from November 1943 and which resulted in the arrest of 700 members, including Marcel Louette in May 1944, prevented that the organization played a significant role during the Liberation.

Recognition Procedures, Patriotic and Social Action

In the immediate post-war period, the organization tried to obtain recognition for its members as armed resistance fighters. This recognition was given to 3,305 persons. Via the recognition procedure of the *Witte Brigade*, some 900 members of the *Kempisch Legioen* were also acknowledged. This organisation was mostly active in the Kempen and Limburg, and only received a national and thus autonomous status in 1961. In April 1946, the non-profit organization *Witte Brigade (Fidelio)* was created to uphold the spirit of patriotism dear to the movement and to defend the moral- and material interests of the members. Finally, in June 1953, the private limited liability company Marcel Louette was founded to provide a holiday location for the members of the movement and their children.

The Archives

The inventory made by our former colleague Jan Laplasse gives a good overview of the contents of the collection, and also greatly facilitates accessibility. However, two important points must be made. First, two boxes of photographs and slides are not included in the inventory. Second, the personal files of the members of the *Witte Brigade (Fidelio)* are temporarily kept at the seat of the *Witte Brigade (Fidelio)* in Antwerp. The collection consists of some twenty linear meters, and is divided in four sub-sections (AA 2495 to AA 2498). For the study of the resistance in occupied Belgium one can use the documents dating from the period itself (AA 2495/656-846) as well as the personal files of the members of the *Kempisch Legioen* (AA 2495/4745-5627). The thousands of other files are a rich testimony to the place of the resistance in Flemish society after September 1944.

Fabrice Maerten

1. Jan Laplasse, *Inventarissen van de archieven van de gewapende verzetsgroep Witte Brigade (Fidelio), de vzw Witte Brigade (Fidelio), de pvba home Marcel Louette en het persoonlijk archief Marcel Louette*, Antwerpen, 2001 (CEGES BA L 4.7.FID/1).



Meeting of an association of former resistance fighters in the immediate after-war period. The speaker is probably Hubert Halin; at his left another major figure of the after-war patriotic world, Luc Somerhausen.

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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).

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 state 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.

Research director: [Dirk Luyten](#)

Researcher: [Jan Julia Zurné](#)

Duration: January-December 2017

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

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