

CEGESOMA - State Archives

NEWSLETTER

No 104 - May 2025



NEWS

CALL FOR PAPERS

On 22 October, CegeSoma will host a research workshop in collaboration with CARCoB/Dacob on 'Communism and communists in Belgium. New critical approaches?'. Proposals for papers must be submitted by 15 June 2025.

► Read more



BELGIUM WWII

In the "debate" section, discover reflections by historians on the 8th of May and new contributions on the liberation of concentration camps, resistance movements, and the persecution of gays and lesbians in Belgium during World War II.

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In April, CegeSoma relaunched its multilingual LinkedIn profile. Via the link: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cegesoma/> you will be kept informed of events, publications and news related to CegeSoma.



STUDY DAY

A review of the study day "80 years after World War II: what past for the future?" held on May 17 in Ghent. The day focused on the importance of historical truth and how war can or should be a catalyst for moral action in our rapidly changing world.

► Read more

ON THE AGENDA

COMMEMORATING THE HOLOCAUST IN GREEN SPACES



On Thursday June 19, Alana Castro de Azevedo invites us to take a fresh look at the issues surrounding Holocaust memorials in the green spaces of London and Amsterdam. This Public History Meeting (in French) will be moderated by Bruno Benvindo.

► [Read more](#)



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New Critical Approaches on Communists and Communism in Belgium.

Call for papers



New Critical Approaches on Communists and Communism in Belgium

Research Workshop - October 22, 2025

organized by CegeSoma (State Archives OD4) in collaboration with CARCoB/Dacob

It's no coincidence that this Research Workshop takes its name from a collection of essays by José Gotovitch (1940-2024). Former director of CegeSoma, professor at ULB and linchpin of the Centre d'Histoire et de Sociologie des Gauches and CARCoB, José Gotovitch embodied like no other the intersecting history of the Second World War and the Cold War. Just over a year after his death, we would like to explore new avenues of research, focusing on innovative methodologies and sources that were recently made available.

Although the focus is on the history of communism in Belgium, the aim is also to consider it as an intrinsically transnational phenomenon. We particularly encourage proposals that address (trade) relations with Eastern Europe and the various solidarity movements with the so-called "Third World".

More broadly, we will also address the question of the relationship of Belgian communists to the discursive

practices and organizing principles of post-colonial movements in South America, Asia and Africa. We also wish to focus on the role of communists within the various (trans)national committees of survivors of Nazi concentration camps.

In terms of new methodologies, we refer, for example, to contemporary oral history practices (beyond social or institutional history) and to the work of French historians Claude Pénetier and Bernard Pudal on "Le sujet communiste". Militant identities and laboratories of the "self". Innovative research can also draw on recently revealed sources. These include, for example, Gotovitch's research archives recently transferred to Dacob/CARCoB and CegeSoma's rich collection of "Journals and Manuscripts".

Interested parties can submit a brief abstract (300 words) to widukind.deridder@kuleuven.be and chantal.kesteloot@arch.be by **June 15, 2025**. Selected proposals will receive a reply by June 30. The workshop will be held in English, French and Dutch. The contributions will then be compiled in a thematic issue.

Other news

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

[A 'new' colleague joins CegeSoma team](#)

[Issue 2/2025 of the Journal of Belgian History \(RBHC/BTNG\) released](#)

[80 jaar na de Tweede Wereldoorlog: welk verleden voor de toekomst?](#)

[Belgium WWII as we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the German surrender*](#)

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[THREE QUESTIONS TO ... Artyom Lyapounov,](#)

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[Belgium WWII: local resistance, the Battle of the Bulge and the administration of occupied Belgium](#)

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Belgium WWII as we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the German surrender*



May 8, an open debate

Beyond the celebration of May 8, we chose to focus on broader reflections in our “debate” section. In the context of the May 8, 1945 commemorations, we asked historians, both members and non-members of our support committee, to share their thoughts on this emblematic date. Beyond a historical reminder of some of the key events in Belgium in May 1945 ([“May 8, 1945. The surrender of Germany. A more problematic celebration?”](#)), we asked ourselves: what is the meaning of this day ([“The key to truly learning from the past”](#))? Should it become a public holiday ([“Why should May 8 \(not\) become a public holiday in Belgium”](#))? [Is it a day of peace ?](#) [How do we remember the “Belgian” deaths of WWII ?](#) [What is this date for victims of Jewish persecution ?](#) These are just some of the questions addressed by various authors. Nico Wouters extends the debate and challenges us with a somewhat provocative question: [does World War II still need historians ?](#) If these questions inspire you, don't hesitate to react and send us your comments at belgiumwwii@arch.be.

Liberation of the concentration camps

The 80th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps is also commemorated. The site takes a closer look at [the liberation of the Ravensbrück women's camp](#) and [Buchenwald](#), probably the most emblematic camp in the war memory forged in 1945. Here, too, we extend our reflection on the question of issues of power in concentration camps through the case of André Mandricxs, a Belgian Schindler or a red kapo ([“Schindler à la belge” or “kapo rouge”? Communist resistance in Nazi camps between political history and public memory](#))?

Persecution and resistance

Other themes are also addressed in new contributions. For instance [the persecution of homosexuals and lesbians in Belgium during WWII](#). The site is also enriched by new entries on resistance fighters such as [Adrienne Gommers](#), [Joseph Bracops](#) and [Léon-Ernest Halkin](#).

In short, a wealth of inspiring reading!

* Belgium WWII articles are all available in Dutch and French, not in English.

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80 jaar na de Tweede Wereldoorlog: welk verleden voor de toekomst?

Study Day



The study day "**80 jaar na de Tweede Wereldoorlog: welk verleden voor de toekomst?**", took place on May 17 in Ghent.

It was an initiative of Prof. Koen Aerts, in collaboration with *Archiefpunt* vzw, *Oud-studenten Geschiedenis Universiteit Gent - OSGG*, *Faculteit Letteren en Wijsbegeerte UGent* (Humanities Academy UGent), *CegeSoma*- State Archives, *Instituut voor Publieksgeschiedenis*, *TAPAS/Thinking About the PAST and Postgraduate Erfgoed en Samenleving*.

Nico Wouters spoke about the importance of the search for historical truth and how science is under pressure (again) today. In the ensuing panel led by Bruno De Wever, Eva Willems, Jan Dumolyn and Olga Van Oost discussed this issue. Some agreed with Wouters' statements and others did not: it became an animated debate, also with the audience.

In the afternoon, Maarten van Alstein initiated the debate in his keynote on how war can or should serve for moral action in our rapidly changing world. This tied the debate straight into the morning. Led by Berber Bevernage, Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, Kaat Wils-Verhaegen, Antoon Vrints and Gillian Mathys debated the need for action and what space is available to us all in a world where democracy is increasingly under pressure. Again, many issues were raised, each deserving a separate debate.

The numerous informative stances from partners and colleagues added to the experience. To be continued for sure!

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Commemorating the Holocaust in green spaces: tensions and contestations in London and Amsterdam

World War II [Conference](#)



Conference-debate (in French) with guest Alana Castro de Azevedo.

An interview led by Bruno Benvindo.

Today, all over the world, existing monuments are the subject of debate and contestation. But what about new monuments? Aren't they sometimes controversial even before they exist?

The processes involved in building memorials in the public space are often long and complex. They mobilize many players and unfold in several stages: project conception, search for funding, choice of site and artist, obtaining planning permission, etc. The visions and interests of those involved in this type of process are sometimes fundamentally opposed.

Building a memorial is a complicated, politicized and far from consensual process. To illustrate this point, Alana Castro de Azevedo has carried out a comparative analysis of three concrete cases: the creation of two memorials to the victims of the Holocaust, the Holocaust Namenmonument in Amsterdam the UK Holocaust Memorial and

Learning Centre in London, and a memorial to the victims of colonial slavery in Lisbon. Although each project raises specific issues - from the choice of artist, to the location of the memorial, to the influence of citizens and other stakeholders on decisions - what they have in common is that they all provoked controversy.

Beyond a simple description of the issues at stake in each case study, she also asks how to reconcile the work of remembrance with other concerns, such as the preservation of green spaces in urban areas? Who should be involved in these processes? Who holds the decision-making power? Is it possible, through a participatory process, to achieve a unanimously accepted result?

On Thursday 19 June, Alana Castro de Azevedo will answer these questions, based on five years' research as part of her PhD dissertation on the analysis of memorial construction processes in public space. Her aim is to take a fresh look at the challenges of memorialization in green spaces, while reflecting on how to make commemorative processes more inclusive and democratic. More specifically, she will look at the memorials in Amsterdam and London. The debate will be led by Bruno Benvindo.

This event will take place in the CegeSoma conference room as part of the Public History Meetings, in partnership with the NPO "Friends of CegeSoma".



Alana Castro de Azevedo holds a PhD in Political Science from Amsterdam Free University. Her doctoral dissertation, defended in 2025, examines citizen participation in the process of creating memorials commemorating the victims of colonial slavery and the Holocaust, as well as the many conflicts arising from them. From 2016 to 2019, she worked on the implementation of UNESCO's Slave Route project, focused on the identification and valorization of places of memory and heritage sites linked to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Since 2024, she has been conducting research at CegeSoma on controversies linked to colonial heritage in the public space, as part of the European CONCILIARE project.



Bruno Benvindo is a historian. He worked as a researcher at Brussels Free University, then at CegeSoma, publishing '*Henri Storck, le cinéma belge et l'Occupation*' (2010) and '*Décombres de la guerre. Mémoires belges en conflit, 1945-2010*' (2012, with Evert Peeters). He is currently Director of Exhibitions at the Jewish Museum of Belgium, where he is developing a program of exhibitions exploring the interface between art and history in the 20th century.



19/06/2025 - 14:00 to 15:30

PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

Where: CegeSoma conference room, Aviation Square 29, 1070 Brussels

When: Thursday, June 19, 2025 (2:00 pm to 3:30 pm)

Registration required: isabelle.ponteville@arch.be of 02.556.92.11

Event fee: €5.00 payable on site

Main language

French

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