

CEGESOMA - State Archives

NEWSLETTER

No 101 - February 2025



NEWS

THE CENTRAL ARCHIVES OF THE PARTICULAR PROCEDURE

These archives, which deal with the trials of collaborators after World War II in the Netherlands, were recently in the spotlight, and were the subject of an afternoon of reflection.

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CLOSING OF THE READING ROOM

From March 24 to 28, CegeSoma will be carrying out a general and in-depth inspection of its collections at the Square de l'Aviation (and of its archives at the AGR2 repository). The reading room will be closed.

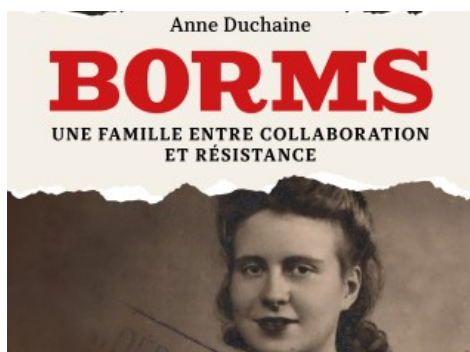
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ON THE AGENDA

ROYAL MILITARY MUSEUM

Join us for an atypical Public History Meeting on Thursday March 13. Wannes Devos will present the results of his doctoral dissertation, which shows that museums are not only places of history and memory, but also places of confrontation, the antechamber of politics and oblivion. He will be interviewed by Bruno De Wever.

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BORMS, A FAMILY BETWEEN COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE

On Wednesday April 23, Anne Duchaine will look at the controversial personality of her great-uncle, August Borms, and the resistance activities of her parents. She will discuss the construction of identity, the meaning of the word "resist", commitment and the transmission of memory. The interview will be conducted by Aline Cordonnier.

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Square de l'Aviation 29 / B-1070 Brussels / Belgium
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Afternoon of reflection in Nijmegen about the Central Archives for Special Jurisdiction



On Feb. 7, our former colleague Dr. Jan Julia Zurné, now a lecturer at Radboud University in Nijmegen, organized an afternoon of discussion about the Central Archives for Special Jurisdiction (Centraal archief bijzondere rechtspleging - CABR). The occasion was the digitization and planned online accessibility of these archives, initially scheduled for early 2025. For the time being, this online accessibility has not materialized, but nevertheless, this afternoon of inspiration provided a number of interesting directions for new research and reflection on the best way to deal with digitized archives.

The CABR are the archives on the trial of collaborators after World War II in the Netherlands and are very similar to the Belgian 'repression archives'. They are very extensive archives (more than 400,000 files) that are relevant not only to prosecution and punishment of collaboration, but also to the history of occupation itself. Since 2025, the CABR archives have been in the public domain. Given the expected great interest from family members - a phenomenon we also see in Belgium - it was decided to digitize the entire archives and make them accessible online. This not only facilitates consultation because a move to the National Archives in The Hague is no longer necessary, but also ensures that the already often in poor condition paper originals are not further degraded. To this end, a consortium "[Oorlog voor de Rechter](#)" (including the NIOD and the National Archives) set to work to enable and frame this digitization and online access, for example by providing sufficient context on the website for these complex and legal-technical archives. There is even a chat available 12 hours a day and Saturday mornings.

Personal data

These archives contain a great deal of (sensitive) personal data. Although a thorough data protection impact assessment had previously shown that making the archives accessible online would not pose a disproportionate risk to the protection of personal data, the Dutch data protection authority issued a formal warning against making the archives accessible online at the end of November 2024. It was then decided to refrain from doing so and to make only the names that appear in the files accessible online. Consultation of the files themselves is still done in the reading room of the National Archives. The expectation that the CABR archive would be in high demand came

true. For example, anyone who wanted to consult a file on 13 February could not visit the reading room until 21 March at the earliest. However, the request procedure has been greatly simplified and is entirely digital. On *Oorlog voor de rechter*, anyone wishing to consult a file can enter a name, is given a brief explanation of the outcome of the court proceedings, immediately receives an overview of the files on this person and can immediately request those files for consultation in the reading room of the National Archives, after creating an account of course.

Research perspectives

When the reflection afternoon was planned, it was expected that the CABR archives would be accessible online and that the participants would have a good idea of the contents and could share their ideas on research perspectives and methodological aspects. This was now not possible, leaving many questions open such as, for example, the exact choices made in digitizing the files, the quality of OCR, the functionality of searchability, etc. Nevertheless, the presentations on new research perspectives, interrogation practices and digital methods offered interesting leads especially as the questions were embedded in an international context, referring not only, as traditionally, to neighboring countries but also to Eastern and Central Europe. Moreover, in her introduction, Jan Julia Zurné pointed to legal history and historical criminology as sources of inspiration for historical research and argued for an approach from “uses of justice,” which allows for a more central focus on the subjects of justice. Whereas past research often focused on the role of the main actors such as prosecutors or judges, digitization offers an opportunity to look at the role of “auxiliaries” of justice such as interrogators. Elwin Hofman of Utrecht University gave an interesting talk on interrogation practices in a long-term perspective and outlined a methodological framework for dealing responsibly with this resource. It was noteworthy that in the Netherlands, in addition to police forces authorized to do so, ‘lay people’ such as school principals were used to interrogate suspects after the war.

Digitization

Milan van Lange of the NIOD pointed out the importance of knowing the structure of the underlying datasets used for digitization to be able to apply network analysis and techniques of digital text analysis by, for example, detecting patterns in the files based on words and terms. Furthermore, from an archival theory perspective, it is crucial to know how, by whom, and when files were formed because there is a chance that files may have become mixed up over the years or ended up outside their original context. The CABR's archives are somewhat “messy” due to their size and the use made of them over the years. The original structure of the archives needs to be precisely reconstructed and visible in the digital dataset. Because there is as yet no online access to the digitized files, the questions could be asked but not yet answered.

Context

Precisely because these archives can still be sensitive to family members, because they are technical in nature, and because it will not be immediately clear to those unfamiliar with legal proceedings what position a person who is named occupies in those proceedings (just because someone is suspected does not mean that they ultimately turn out to be guilty), contextualization is of great importance, especially when these archives are used for educational purposes. Therefore, *Oorlog voor de Rechter* puts great emphasis on that contextualization. Reference can be made here, for example, to the '[Handreiking Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging](#)', which Kris van der Aar, who incidentally was an intern at CegeSoma, wrote for the *Koninklijk Nederlands Historisch Genootschap*, another partner of *Oorlog voor de Rechter*. The guide is specifically intended for family members who want to use the CABR archive. It starts from targeted questions such as “Are the Central Archives for Special Jurisdiction (CABR) objective?” and answers them in human language.

Other news

[Inventory operation at CegeSoma March 24-28, 2025](#)

[EHRI Becomes an ERIC to Secure the Future of Holocaust Research](#)

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

[The SADO Photographic Archive: A Magnificent Addition to CegeSoma's Collections!](#)

[Brussels toponymy, past and future](#)

[New inventory! CegeSoma's 'Diaries and Manuscripts' Collection.](#)

[JBH : new publication \(2024/3-4\)](#)

[A new inventory! The archives of journalist Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe.](#)

[Belgian State Security Archives \(AA1333\)](#)

[Inventory of the archives of the Public Prosecutor's Office attached to the Military Court](#)

[Tens of thousands of biographical records on Belgian resistance fighters online from 21 October 2024!](#)

['Heritages of Hunger'](#)

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Inventory operation at CegeSoma March 24-28, 2025



During the last week of March, CegeSoma staff will carry out a general and in-depth inspection of its collections at Aviation Square (and its archives at the AGR2 repository).

The reading room will be closed, and we look forward to welcoming you back on Tuesday 1 April 2025.

Thank you for your understanding.

Other news

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The Royal Military Museum: a lively place for history

CegeSoma Public History Meetings (2025-2)

[World War I](#) [World War II](#) [Cold War](#) [Conference](#)



Conference-debate in Dutch with guest Wannes Devos.

A talk led by Bruno De Wever.

This is not a museum, “but a cluttered repository whose manual has been lost”. In 2017, in the daily *De Standaard*, journalist Geert Sels was particularly critical of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History. A clean slate and a phoenix-like rise from its ashes: this seemed to be the only way out of this museum impasse, which translated in political terms into the transformation of the Military Museum into the War Heritage Institute.

With *Clio in militaire dienst? Het Koninklijk Museum van het Leger (en van (de) Krijgsgeschiedenis): een geschiedenis, 1911-2017* (« *Clio in military service? The Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History: A History, 1911-2017* ») the Military Museum's historical manual sought by Sels was finally written in 2024. The dissertation spans over a hundred years of history and brings to life an institution mostly unknown (and unloved?) in Flanders. The unique insight into the life of one of the nation's largest museums leads to an honest and disarming picture. It holds up a mirror to the museum, contextualizes both the glorious periods and the lesser times, and finally offers a critical analysis of an institution trying to survive between the political hammer and the military anvil.

During this public history meeting, walk with us through the mysterious corridors of the Royal Military Museum, a fascinating place where history is alive but rarely really heard. Discover not only a century of museum history, but also an unseen perspective on Belgium's past. In war and peace, in freedom and occupation, rich in historical discoveries and never-before-told stories, this presentation takes you to a terra incognita. A journey that shows how museums are not only places of memory, but also of confrontation, (backroom) politics and oblivion.

Wannes Devos will present the results of his research **on Thursday March 13**. The debate, which already promises to be fascinating, will be moderated by Bruno De Wever. This event will take place in the CegeSoma conference room in partnership with the non-profit organization 'Les Amis du CegeSoma'.



Wannes Devos holds a master's degree in Business Economics and a doctorate in History (*UGent*). He has worked in the museum and heritage sector for more than fifteen years and was, among other things, a member of the Flemish assessment committee Landelijk Musea. As a public historian, he specialized in museum (re)presentation of conflicts and of the past, leading to his dissertation on the Belgian Military Museum. Today he is attached to the BELvue Museum, where he is working on the future museum project.



Bruno De Wever is Professor Emeritus at Ghent University. A historian specialized in the history of the Flemish movement, collaboration during WWII and public history, he authored numerous books, such as *Greep naar de macht. Vlaams-nationalisme en Nieuwe Orde. Het VNV 1933-1945* (1994). Dissertation advisor of Wannes Devos, he is also a member of the Scientific Committee of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History. He is Vice-President

of CegeSoma's Scientific Committee.



13/03/2025 - 14:00 to 15:30

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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

When: Thursday, 13 March 2025 (2:00 pm to 3:30 pm)

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

Admission fee: €5.00 to be paid on site

Bring a friend!

Main language

Dutch

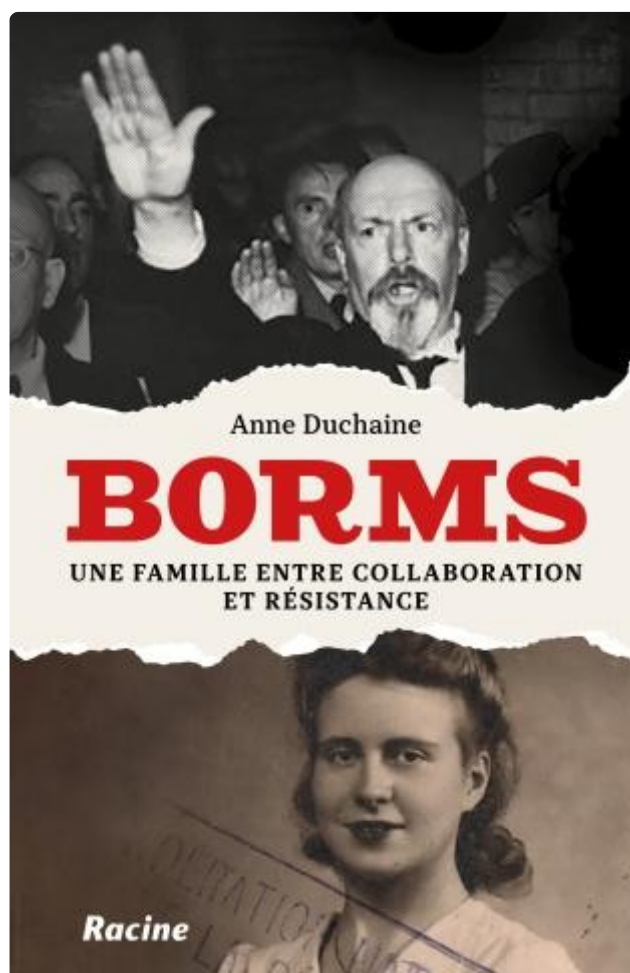
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Borms, a family between collaboration and resistance.

CegeSoma Public History Meetings (2025-3)

World War II [Conference](#)



Conference-debate (in French) with guest Anne Duchaine.

A talk led by Aline Cordonnier.

Within the Borms family, two figures stand out, seemingly at odds with each other: August, a Flemish nationalist, close to the Nazis, collaborator during both world wars, arrested in 1945 and executed in April 1946, and his niece, Regina, a resistance fighter with the Armed Partisans, arrested in Liège in 1944 and deported "Nacht und Nebel" to the Gommern and Ravensbrück concentration camps.

Anne Duchaine, author of '*Borms, une famille entre collaboration et résistance*', is the daughter of Regina Borms and Jacques Duchaine, both members of the Armed Partisans. Interested by her mother's connection with her paternal uncle, August Borms, she looked into this controversial figure, and gained access to his repressive files, enabling her to understand his involvement in the inner circles of National Socialism.

At the same time, realizing that she had only a fragmentary knowledge of her parents' resistance activities, she became a meticulous explorer of World War II archives and assiduously frequented the reading rooms of CegeSoma, CARCoB and Dacob.

Anne Duchaine retraces this family saga and then plunges us into the post-war years, particularly those of disillusionment in the face of the recomposition of geopolitical alliances. She examines the construction of identity in the face of a parent wounded by her executioners and, beyond her own family history, a reflection on many other similar stories, questions the meaning of the word "resist", as well as the themes of commitment and the transmission of memory.

Who exactly was August Borms, and what were the links between his life and that of his niece? What prompted Regina Borms, born in East Flanders and a committed Communist, to join the Resistance and, once deported, to stand up to the Nazis? What is our subjective relationship with history? How and what can we pass all this on? How can we guarantee a living memory that can inform and help us understand the present?

Our guest will answer these questions and present the results of her research on Wednesday 23 April. The debate will be moderated by Aline Cordonnier. This event will take place in the CegeSoma conference room as part of the Public History Meetings, in partnership with the association ' Friends of CegeSoma'.



Anne Duchaine graduated from *UCL* and began her career in psychiatry before becoming a researcher in the sociology of work. She has published work and articles in the *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, *La Revue nouvelle* and *L'Observatoire*. In 2019, she spoke as part of the Transmemo research project on children of resistance fighters and children of collaborators, then for the TV documentary "*Les enfants de résistants - Belgique 1940- 1945*" (Children of resistance fighters - Belgium 1940-1945).



Aline Cordonnier is a cognitive psychologist by training and a post-doctoral researcher at *UCLouvain*, where she studies the complex interaction between individual and collective memory. Her current work aims to understand how personal and historical memories of controversial pasts are transmitted from one generation to the next within families, contributing to our understanding of how shared narratives shape family identity and cultural continuity.



23/04/2025 - 14:00 to 15:30

PRACTICAL INFORMATION :

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

When: Wednesday, 23 April 2025 (2:00 pm to 3:30 pm)

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

Admission fee: €5.00 to be paid on site

Interested parties can purchase the book on site for €27.50 (please bring the exact amount in cash).

Anne Duchaine, *Borms. Une famille entre collaboration et résistance*, Brussels, Racine 2024, 384 p.
Please bring a friend!

Main language

French

BROWSE THE BOOK

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