

## CEGESOMA - State Archives

## NEWSLETTER

No 97 - September 2024



## NEWS

## PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY, THE CORNERSTONE OF DEMOCRACY

Nico Wouters, Director of CegeSoma and member of the State Archives Board of Directors, warns about the state of federal public archives and calls for a more transparent access.

► Read more



## BELGIUM WWII

The site has a new look! Discover its new interface and content, including contributions from the work of the inter-university seminar (UCLouvain and UAntwerpen) on local Resistance.

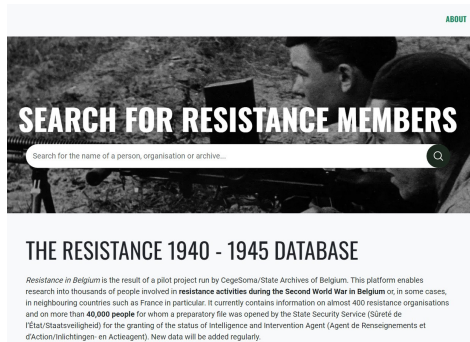
► Read more

## ON THE AGENDA

## STIL VERZET

Join us on Thursday 10 October (2:00 pm to 3:30 pm) for a conference-debate with Hans Vandevoorde and Koen Aerts. The talk, introduced by An Rydant, will focus on the fascinating life of August Vermeyleen, art historian, man of letters and writer. Before 1940, he was a leading figure in the Flemish movement, the first rector of the Dutch-speaking University of Ghent and a socialist senator.

► Read more



## RESISTANCE IN BELGIUM

Registration for the launch of the 'Resistance in Belgium' national platform, at CegeSoma, on 21 October, has already closed. Another presentation session will be held over the coming months.

► Read more

## SAVE THE DATES



Mark your calendars: on November 28 and 29, CegeSoma will be hosting two days devoted to the presentation of the best master's theses by young historians who have recently graduated from Belgium's universities.



## PUBLICATION

### A NEW INVENTORY

The archives of journalist Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe are now inventoried. They cover the period 1945-1955 and contain mainly documents relating to his career, during which he visited key geopolitical hot spots.

Inventaris van het archief van  
Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe

ca. 1930-1964 (vnl. 1945-1955)



► [Read more](#)



Square de l'Aviation 29 / B-1070 Brussels / Belgium  
Copyright © CegeSoma / State Archives, all rights reserved

[Home](#) » [News](#) » La transparence des autorités publiques, pierre angulaire de notre démocratie

## La transparence des autorités publiques, pierre angulaire de notre démocratie



Quel que soit le nouveau gouvernement fédéral, il est manifeste que des coupes importantes interviendront au sein des administrations fédérales. Les Archives de l'État, une institution scientifique fédérale sous-financée depuis des décennies est l'une des institutions qui risque d'être touchée de plein fouet, mais en silence. « En silence », car la dernière chose dont les décideurs politiques se souviennent, ce sont les archives des autorités publiques ou ce que nombre d'entre eux désignent sans doute par le terme de « vieux papiers ».

Face à l'ensemble des besoins pressants de notre société, il peut sembler compréhensible que personne n'en fasse sa priorité. Pourtant, tout citoyen a besoin d'archives à un moment ou à un autre de son existence pour faire valoir ses droits : un jugement du tribunal de police, un extrait des registres d'état civil ou du cadastre, un certificat d'adoption ou de divorce, des pièces justificatives pour la retraite ou les actes de vente antérieurs de sa maison. Il s'agit aussi des véritables pierres angulaires de toute démocratie parlementaire : la transparence des pouvoirs publics et le droit à l'information des citoyens.

Soyons concrets. Il existe par exemple ce que l'on appelle les « archives nées numériques », c'est-à-dire les courriels et autres messages ou documents électroniques. Le sous-financement structurel des Archives de l'État ne permet plus à cette institution de remplir son devoir légal de conservation et de gestion de ces archives numériques émanant des pouvoirs publics. Les nombreux messages émis et reçus par les ministres risquent ainsi de disparaître en nombre. Dans un avenir prévisible, il sera par exemple impossible de procéder à une nouvelle évaluation critique de la politique menée lors de la pandémie de coronavirus. Les Archives de l'Etat gèrent également des archives de toutes les périodes clés importantes et délicates de notre histoire, comme notre

histoire coloniale. Il y a une semaine à peine, nous avons commémoré les 80 ans de la Libération. Nous semblons vouloir tirer des leçons de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et lorsqu'il s'agit de commémorations, tout le monde veille à être à l'avant-garde. Mais de nombreuses archives essentielles de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, qui n'ont été transférées aux Archives de l'État qu'après 2000, restent inaccessibles parce qu'il n'y a plus personne pour les traiter. Il y a quelques mois à peine, la Sûreté de l'État a restreint l'accès à des archives sur la résistance pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Il est de bon ton aujourd'hui d'honorer les « héros de la résistance », mais les archives réelles de ces combattants se révèlent soudain à nouveau dangereuses pour l'État. Et malgré les informations parues dans la presse au début de l'année, même les archives de la justice militaire – qui comprennent les dossiers de collaboration après la Seconde Guerre mondiale – restent aujourd'hui soumises à des règles strictes. Le contraste entre la réalité et l'hystérie mémorielle ne pourrait être plus grand.

Il s'agit en réalité de bien davantage que du sous-financement d'une institution. En faisant des Archives de l'État un tigre de papier, la Belgique en est venue à créer une culture du laxisme autour des archives gouvernementales que l'on peut qualifier d'inquiétante d'un point de vue démocratique. Prenons, par exemple, les archives des commissions d'enquêtes parlementaires, conservées par les Archives du Sénat. Il s'agit notamment des documents de la commission sur le réseau de renseignements international clandestin « Gladio » (Sénat, 1990), de la commission sur la criminalité organisée en Belgique (Sénat, 1996), de la commission sur la disparition d'enfants (Dutroux, Chambre, 1996), de la commission « Tueurs du Brabant » I et II (Chambre, 1988 et 1996), de la commission sur les événements du Rwanda (Sénat, 1997) et de la commission Lumumba (Chambre, 1999). Ces nombreux documents n'étant pas couverts par la loi sur les archives, la Chambre et le Sénat sont donc autorisés à fixer leurs propres règles. De quelles règles s'agit-il ? La réponse se trouve dans une loi plus que centenaire – elle date de 1880 – qui stipule qu'une commission d'enquête parlementaire peut « souverainement » décider de la levée du secret. Concrètement, cela signifie que seule la commission elle-même peut rendre les documents publics. Nous entrons alors dans l'Absdistan belge. Car lorsque la commission d'enquête concernée n'existe plus, aucune autre instance – ni le Parlement, ni le gouvernement, ni les tribunaux – ne pourra rendre ces documents accessibles. En d'autres termes, ces documents restent secrets pour l'éternité – indéfiniment. Un projet de loi du 20 juillet 2023 visait à renforcer encore ce secret. Dès lors, ne serait-ce pas une meilleure solution, et une économie de plus, que de jeter purement et simplement ces archives gouvernementales de ces commissions d'enquêtes parlementaires et de toutes les autres ? Après tout, il ne sert à rien de conserver des documents qui resteront à jamais fermés. Bien que l'absurde projet de loi 2023 n'ait pas été débattu, il pourrait être adopté lors de la prochaine législature sans que quiconque ne pousse des cris d'orfraie.

Mais le gouvernement a aussi du pain sur la planche. Par exemple le statut privé des archives du Cabinet fédéral. Vous avez bien lu : dans notre pays, les documents politiques des cabinets ministériels ne sont pas soumis à la loi sur les archives et sont *de facto* une propriété privée. Concrètement, cela signifie qu'il n'existe pratiquement aucun contrôle sur l'épuration ou la destruction des archives des cabinets ministériels. Ici non plus, les Archives de l'État ne disposent plus du personnel et des ressources nécessaires pour continuer éventuellement à gérer ces archives cruciales.

Tout cela peut sembler très abstrait. Face à l'ensemble des besoins criants, par exemple en matière de soins de santé ou d'éducation, personne ne mourra demain du fait de nouvelles coupes dans une institution comme les Archives de l'État. Pourtant, la transparence et la capacité d'évaluer de manière critique les politiques gouvernementales sont des pierres angulaires essentielles de toute démocratie. Alors que l'Europe est à nouveau menacée par la guerre et les régimes autoritaires, et que les connaissances sur notre propre passé en temps de guerre s'amenuisent à une vitesse fulgurante, la base de notre mémoire collective est, aujourd'hui même, littéralement mise au rebut.

Il est urgent de prendre conscience de l'incurie désastreuse de la gestion de certaines archives du gouvernement fédéral. Toute réduction supplémentaire du budget des Archives de l'État – si tant est que l'on puisse encore y trouver de l'argent – qui réduirait encore l'influence de cette institution serait désastreuse. Alors même que la confiance du public dans les institutions de notre gouvernement démocratique semble s'effriter sans cesse davantage, un gouvernement qui traite sa propre transparence avec autant de désinvolture s'en prend également un

peu à lui-même.

Nico Wouters

Directeur du CegeSoma au sein des Archives de l'État, professeur invité à l'UGent

#### Autres actualités

[L'EHRI devient un ERIC pour sauvegarder l'avenir de la recherche sur l'Holocauste](#)

[Belgium WWII : la résistance à l'échelon local, la bataille des Ardennes et l'administration de la Belgique occupée](#)

[Appel à témoignages de métis néerlandophones](#)

[Une magnifique collection d'archives, le fonds photographique SADO, vient compléter les collections du CegeSoma !](#)

[Le moteur de recherche « Inventaires d'archives » désormais disponible dans AGATHA](#)

[Fermeture de la salle de lecture du CegeSoma](#)

[Un départ forcé](#)

[Journée 'Jeunes historiens' - Promotion 2024](#)

[La toponymie bruxelloise d'hier et de demain](#)

[La plateforme Resistance in Belgium : de l'engouement, des questions... et des réponses !](#)

[Nouvel inventaire ! La collection 'Journaux personnels et manuscrits' du CegeSoma.](#)

[RBHC: nouvelle publication \(2024/3-4\)](#)

1

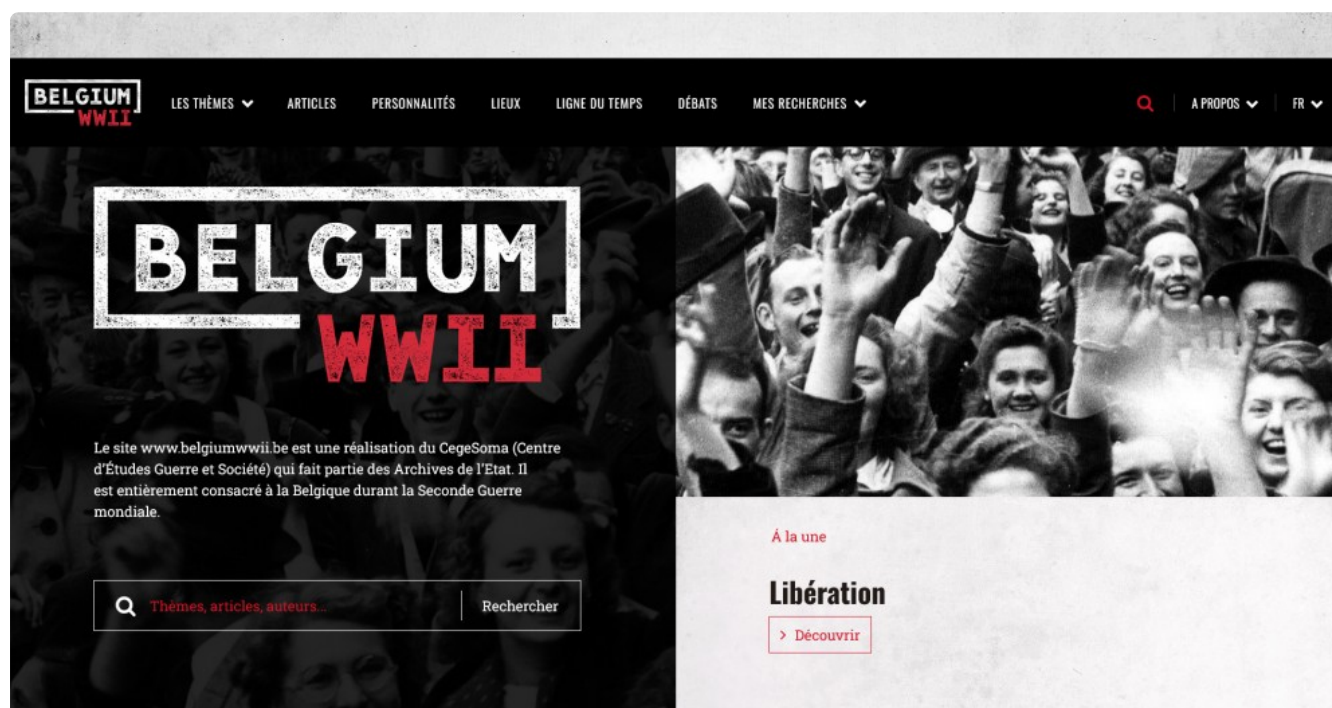
2



© CegeSoma | Square de l'Aviation 29, 1070 Anderlecht | 02 556 92 11

[Home](#) » [News](#) » Belgium WWII: new interface, new content

## Belgium WWII: new interface, new content



### A new interface

Launched in September 2017, the [www.belgiumwwii.be](http://www.belgiumwwii.be) website hardly underwent any changes to its presentation. After seven years of loyal service, the old interface has been replaced by a brand new layout. Our aim is to make consultation more ergonomic. From now on, when visitors log on, they will find a more thematic welcome on the front page, such as a series of articles linked to the 80th anniversary of the Liberation. The topics covered will of course be updated as the months go by.

From now on, you will be able to access all the site's content from the same interface. In the "Themes" section, you will be able to carry out cross-disciplinary research on resistance, collaboration and administration. New themes will gradually be added to this section. Also to facilitate access, you can now - on the left of the home page - find all contributions by title, theme or author using an immediately accessible tab.

The top horizontal bar on the home screen also gives you direct access to all contributions (articles, personalities, places, timelines and debates). As before, you can filter your searches by theme, or even refine them by adding tags.

Another new feature is the "My research" tab, which gives you access to thematic fact sheets based on the book *Papy était-il un nazi?* The aim is to help those wishing to research people affected by post-war repression. Eventually, a similar system will be set up for the Resistance, based on the book [Papy était-il un héros?](#)

From the home page, you can also access the drop-down menu at the bottom of the screen. Here you will find all the sections of the site.

Changes sometimes lead to typos and/or errors. If you notice any, please let us know at [belgiumwwii@arch.be](mailto:belgiumwwii@arch.be).

## New content

We've taken advantage of this update of the site to work behind the scenes on putting new content online. In addition to a contribution on [the Belgian Railways during World War II](#), you will also be able to discover a [biography of Narcisse Rulot](#), its General Manager. Research into the Belgian Railways has also brought to light new information about [the 20th convoy of April 1943](#). A new entry has therefore been put online.

Another new feature is a contribution on [the Meensel-Kiezegem tragedy](#). A few kilometers away and three months earlier, other tragic arrests took place in Molenbeek-Wersbeek. A contribution on this subject will be posted online shortly.

Other entries have also been put online: a new contribution on [the Royal Question](#) and another on [king Leopold's Political Testament of January 1944](#). The resistance fighter [Camille Joset](#) and the underground newspapers [De Vrijheid](#) and [La Libre Belgique \(Peter Pan\)](#) are also new additions. The biographies of [Gerard Romsée](#) and [Alexandre Galopin](#) have been greatly expanded.

In 2023-2024, students from *UCLouvain* and *UAntwerpen* worked on local resistance. Writing a contribution for the site was part of their seminar work. These entries are currently being finalized. Two of them are already online: one is devoted to the communist resistance fighter [Julia Bachez](#), and the other to the socialist resistance fighter [Arthur Percque](#). Eventually, a good dozen contributions will be available. A fine synergy between the two universities and CegeSoma.

Other contributions include biographies of the successive Ministers of Justice at the Liberation, and an article on Julien Lahaut.

Stay tuned!

## Other news

["Archive Inventories" search engine now available in AGATHA](#)

[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](#)

[Wanted: Dutch-speaking Metis witnesses](#)

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

[Closure of the CegeSoma reading room](#)

[Brussels toponymy, past and future](#)

[Young Historians' Days - Class of 2024](#)

[Forced farewell to a colleague](#)

[The Resistance in Belgium platform: the buzz, questions... and answers!](#)

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

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

1 2 3

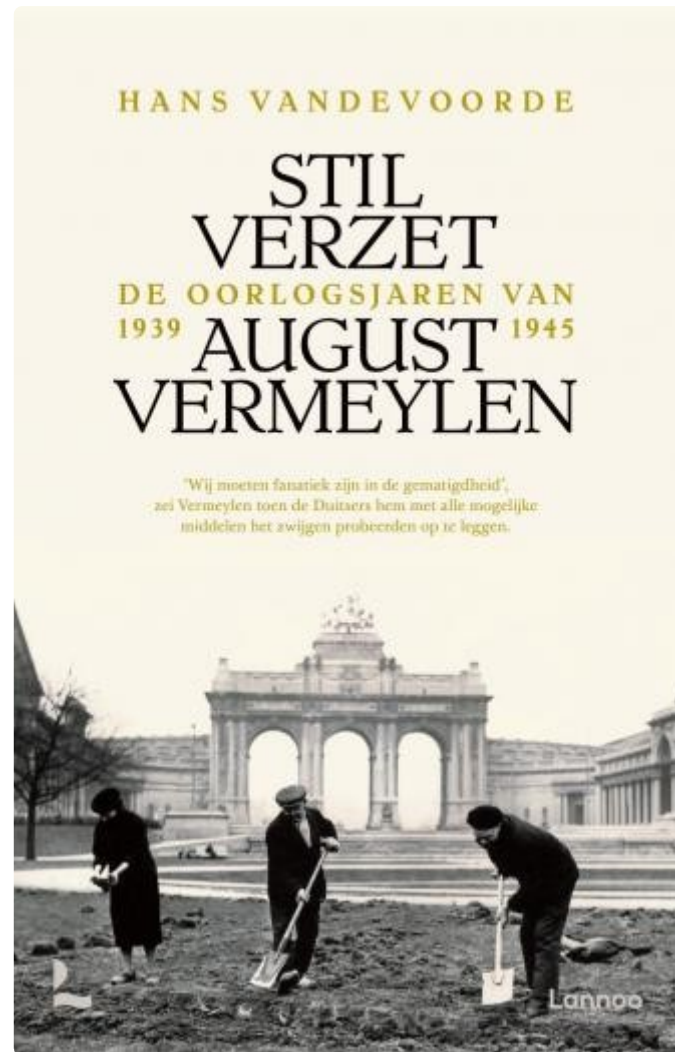


[Home](#) » [Event](#) » Stil verzet. De oorlogsjaren van August Vermeylen 1939-1945 (Silent Resistance: The war years of August Vermeylen 1939-1945)

## Stil verzet. De oorlogsjaren van August Vermeylen 1939-1945 (Silent Resistance: The war years of August Vermeylen 1939-1945)

Public History Meeting of CegeSoma (2024-7)

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



### Conference-debate in Dutch with guests Hans Vandevoorde and Koen Aerts, introduced by An Rydant.

August Vermeylen (1872-1945), an art historian, a man of letters and an author, was one of the leaders of the Flemish movement before 1940, the first rector of the University of Ghent when it became a solely Dutch-speaking institution and a socialist senator.

He was barred from holding public office by the Germans during the Second World War. In Hans Vandevoorde's book *Stil verzet. De oorlogsjaren van August Vermeylen 1939-1945*, which draws on diaries and other intimate



documents, we discover a Vermeylen who continues his work on a novel in isolation. He maintains his network of friends and acquaintances thanks to trips to see concerts and exhibitions and by going for walks in Brussels. He helps Jewish refugees, cares for his family and consistently rejects any collaboration with the Nazis but remains loyal to friends and students who go too far in their admiration for Germany.

Vandevoorde reconstructs the fascinating life story of August Vermeylen just before and during the Second World War thanks to the personal diaries, agendas, notes and many letters of the author, supplemented with information from the personal papers of contemporaries. This original insight into daily life under the occupation reveals the thoughts, everyday concerns and behaviour of a unique man who remained true to his principles.

The *AMVB - Archief en Museum voor het Vlaams Leven te Brussel*, CegeSoma and its non-profit organisation Les Amis du CegeSoma invite you on Thursday 10 October to a conference-debate with Hans Vandevoorde as part of CegeSoma's Public History Meetings series. An Rydant will introduce Vandevoorde before he discusses his work with Koen Aerts. They will consider, among other things, diaries and other intimate documents as sources for historical study: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using them? Are they reliable sources? What is the role of (self-)censorship and the broader historical context?

Everybody is welcome!



An Rydant is the Director of the *AMVB*, a pluralistic archive with holdings relating to the history of Flemish life in Brussels from the early 19th century to the present. She studied contemporary history at the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* and worked at CegeSoma in 2022 for a project on the Independence Front (FI-OF) in seven central Flemish cities. She was part of a team that was instrumental in launching a project on Second World War diaries (*Archiefpunt*) and drew on intimate documents herself for a book she has written on the Second World War in Mechelen, which will be published in October.



**Hans Vandevoorde** is a senior lecturer at the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* and a volunteer postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History at *UGent*. He writes on modern Dutch literature and culture. His study on Karel van de Woestijne received a prize from the Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature.



**Koen Aerts** teaches history at Ghent University. He oversees teaching methodology in the Department of History and Cultural Studies and specialises in the history of the Second World War and its aftermath, collective memory and public history. His research has inspired the TV documentary series *Kinderen van de collaboratie* and *Kinderen van het verzet*.



10/10/2024 - 14:00 to 15:30

**PRACTICAL INFO:**

**Where:** CegeSoma Conference Room, Aviation Square 29 - 1070 Brussels

**When:** Thursday, 10 October 2024 (14:00 - 15:30)

**Registration required:** [isabelle.ponteville@arch.be](mailto:isabelle.ponteville@arch.be) or 02.556.92.11

Those interested can buy the book at the event for €34.99.

Hans Vandevoorde, *Stil verzet. De oorlogsjaren van August Vermeylen (1939-1945)*, Tielt, Lannoo, 2024, 360 pp.

Feel free to spread the word and invite others!

**Main language**

Dutch

© CegeSoma | Luchtvaartsquare 29, 1070 Anderlecht | 02 556 92 11

[Home](#) » [Event](#) » Launch of the “Resistance in Belgium” national platform

## Launch of the “Resistance in Belgium” national platform

World War II [Conference](#)



We had to close registration for the launch of the national 'Resistance in Belgium' platform. In the coming months, a new presentation session will be organized when the online platform is extended to 'underground press status' files. We will get back to you on this occasion. Thank you for your understanding.

**Resistance in Belgium is a national database on the Resistance that allows you to research thousands of people involved in resistance activities during the Second World War from home ... The CegeSoma/State Archives will soon be making this unique tool available to you!**

We invite you to discover this new Resistance in Belgium platform on 21 October 2024 at 2pm at the CegeSoma.

\* \* \*

**Anne Chardonens**, head of digitisation and digital humanities projects at CegeSoma, and **Fabrice Maerten**, a Resistance specialist in charge of collections development at CegeSoma, will show you all the features of this database through concrete examples.

Their presentations will be followed by a roundtable discussion moderated by **Chantal Kesteloot** on the expectations of the public and scientists concerning the platform. Joining her will be **Michèle Corthals**, **Dany Neudt**, **Eric Loze** and **Jérôme Delnooz**. Audience members will also have the opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts during a discussion session following the roundtable.



The Resistance in Belgium platform is the result of a pilot project run by CegeSoma/



State Archives under the name [Wikibase Resistance](#) since 2021 and it enables you to carry out research on more than 40,000 people who took part in the Resistance in Belgium. You can explore data on these people using a wide range of criteria, including name, place of birth or residence, membership of resistance movements and even dates of detention.

Aimed at the public as well as specialised researchers, this platform completes [the Belgium WWII portal](#), which is dedicated to the history of the Second World War in Belgium. It will be expanded gradually.

It exists today thanks to the work of a multi-disciplinary team supported by a scientific committee and the successive investment of some sixty people (volunteers, interns, student workers and CegeSoma staff).

#### PROGRAMME

- 2:00 pm: Introduction by Xavier Jacques-Jourion, Director General of the State Archives of Belgium
- 2:15 pm: Presentation of the platform and its features (Anne Chardonnes) and case studies (Fabrice Maerten)
- 3:00 pm: Roundtable moderated by Chantal Kesteloot with Michèle Corthals (*UAntwerpen*), Dany Neudt (*Helden van het verzet/VUB*), Eric Loze (*RTBF*) and Jérôme Delnooz (*Territoires de la Mémoire*)
- 3:30 pm: Questions - answers
- 4:00 pm: Drinks



21/10/2024 - 14:00 to 16:00

#### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**Where:** CegeSoma Conference Room, 29 Aviation Square - 1070 Brussels

**When:** Monday, 21 October 2024 (2:00 pm - 4:00 pm)

**Registration required:** [isabelle.ponteville@arch.be](mailto:isabelle.ponteville@arch.be) or 02.556.92.11

#### Main language

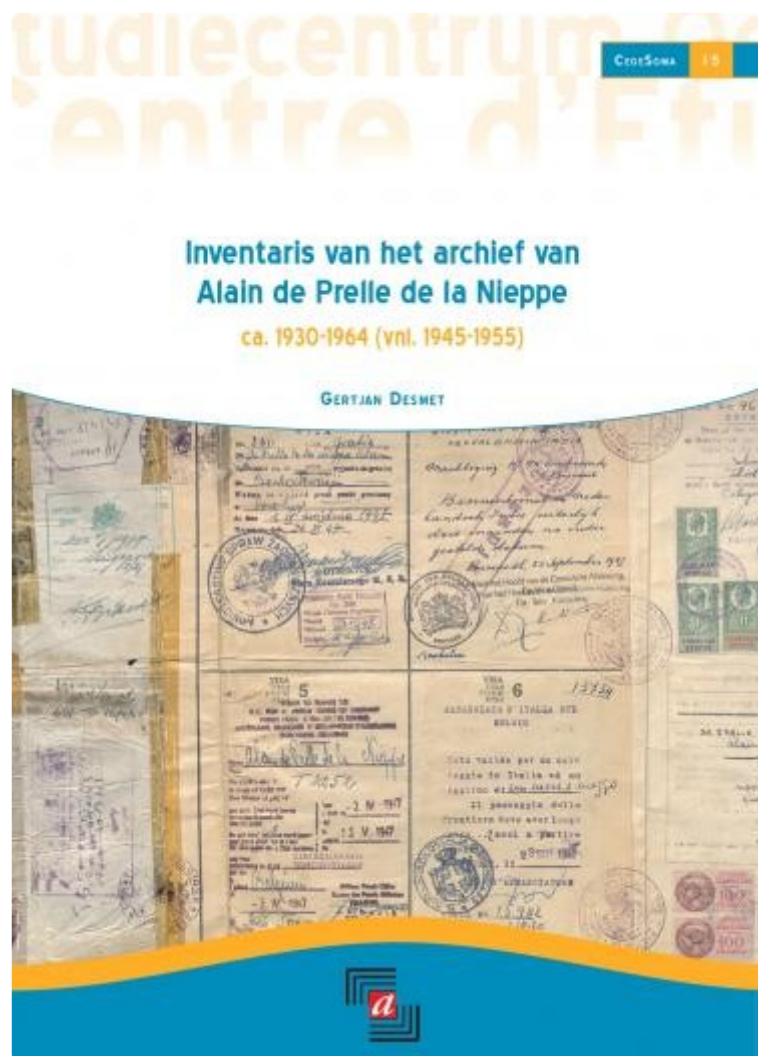
Dutch

French

© CegeSoma | Luchtvaartsquare 29, 1070 Anderlecht | 02 556 92 11

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

## A new inventory! The archives of journalist Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe.



Some time ago, we reported that the archives of the reporter Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe had been donated to CegeSoma. [The inventory of this archive has now been published and is available for consultation via our search engine 'Search', where it can also be downloaded.](#) De Prelle's fascinating archives (reference 03161) are freely available for consultation.

Alain de Prelle de la Nieppe (1922-1955) travelled to England during the Second World War as a war volunteer and he served in the Belgian Section of the Royal Navy (1941-1945). In the late 1940s, de Prelle made his first forays in journalism. As an independent reporter, he witnessed a number of flashpoints during the early years of the "Cold War": the Greek civil war, the first wave of decolonization in North Africa and the Middle East, the independence struggles in the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina, the denouement of the Chinese Revolution, the war in Korea, ....

De Prelle's work appeared in Belgian and foreign magazines, but, above all, it was through his contributions to the weekly French-language magazine *Moustique* and its Dutch-language counterpart *Humoradio* that he made a name for himself as a "Tintin"-like journalist. In particular, the challenge of Charles Dupuis, director of Éditions Dupuis, to circumnavigate the globe on barely a thousand Belgian francs captured the imagination of the public. De Prelle

included his press articles in the books *Le Tour du Monde sur un billet de mille* (1953), *Cent mille kilomètres en système D* (1954), *Plus riche que Lavarède* (1955), *Mes aventures avec le Mau-Mau* (1955) and *Fiancé à l'aventure* (1956). In 1955, de Prelle went to Morocco to report on anti-French riots. He was fatally injured in a road accident near Khouribga and died at the age of thirty-two. He was subsequently buried at Antwerp's Schoonselhof cemetery.

The de Prelle de la Nieppe's archives span some four linear meters and date largely from the immediate postwar period (i.e., 1945-1955). They primarily contain documents relating to his career as a journalist and include dozens of manuscripts and articles (typed out by his wife), hundreds of photographs for illustrative purposes, as well as correspondence, notes and travel documents. The archives also contain the manuscripts and typescripts of his books and earlier commercial works (such as promotional texts for airlines). Lectures given by de Prelle in Belgium are documented, among other things, by some 40 posters.

P.S. Do you possess any archival documents (photos, letters, diaries, documents from your association, etc.) relating to the conflicts of the 20th century? Do you wish them to be preserved for future generations? If so, [\*\*do not hesitate to contact us!\*\*](#)

#### Other news

["Archive Inventories" search engine now available in AGATHA](#)

[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](#)

[Wanted: Dutch-speaking Metis witnesses](#)

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

[Closure of the CegeSoma reading room](#)

[Brussels toponymy, past and future](#)

[Young Historians' Days - Class of 2024](#)

[Forced farewell to a colleague](#)

[The Resistance in Belgium platform: the buzz, questions... and answers!](#)

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

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

1 2 3  