

CEGESOMA NEWSLETTER

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PROJECT POSTWAREX

Results of a first workshop on archival sources useful for research about capital executions during the postwar repression. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/first-workshop-postwarex-project-sources-military-jurisdictions-study-death-penalty-and-capital)

PUBLICATION

Discover the last double issue (3-4/2020) of the Journal of Belgian History. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/publication/publication-double-issue-3-42020-journal-belgian-history)

THE CHILDREN OF COLLABORATION

A documentary that highlights the importance of the access to the archives of the postwar repression; an issue that remains relevant to both public debate and family history. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/news/les-enfants-de-la-collaboration-or-archives-collaboration)

EHRI

A call for applications to the Conny Kristel Fellowships. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/call-candidates-ehri-conny-kristel-scholarships)

READING ROOM

Within the framework of our security measures you are welcome to visit our reading room. [\[MORE INFO\]](https://www.cegesoma.be/en/reopening-reading-rooms-5-january-2021)

A first workshop for the Postwarex project : Sources from military jurisdictions to study the death penalty and capital punishment after WWII



Execution, 1948 - De Bruyne E.- Riemst - Rights reserved - photo no. 93220

On Monday, December 14, 2020, the **BRAIN 2.0 POSTWAREX project** team (**Dirk Luyten** and **Élise Rezsöhazy** for CegeSoma, Stanislas Horvat and Dimitri Roden for the Royal Military Academy) held its first online workshop (closed). The main objective of the afternoon's work was to bring together researchers

studying the repression of WWII collaboration, the military judiciary, as well as capital executions, and archivists in charge of court archives, in order to discuss sources useful for the research conducted by the POSTWAREX team. In particular, the POSTWAREX team is interested in the capital executions that were carried out in the context of this post-war repression, and in the decision-making process that led up to these executions, a problem that it approaches through the prism of military justice. Special attention was therefore paid to the legal sources from the military tribunals and the Military Court that carried out this repression and those produced by the military prosecution departments and the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office.

About thirty Belgian, French and Dutch researchers participated in the workshop. In addition to the global presentation of the project by Dirk Luyten (CegeSoma), **Johannes Van De Walle** (AGR 2 - Cuvelier repository) gave us an overview of the sources from the military jurisdictions found in the Cuvelier repository of the National Archives of Belgium. He pointed out the diversity of the sources, both in their nature and origin, the complexity of their classification, the specificities of the files of the different military tribunals and the heuristic difficulties generated by these specificities.

Élise Rezsöhazy then proposed a journey through the sources, mainly from the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, which allow her to take an institutional and meta-legal approach to the question of executions. She explained the heuristic limits of these sources and what, on the other hand, they allow us to document. She thus showed that the general legal, institutional and practical framework in which the military prosecution departments and the Chief

Military Prosecutor's Office carried out this repression can be reconstructed thanks to the documents kept by the General Instructions Service or its successor, the Documentation Service.

Dimitri Roden, for his part, spoke to us about the archives of the war tribunals and the Military Court, on which he has been working since the beginning of the project in order to establish a database of those sentenced to death and executed and to answer one of our research questions: why are some people sentenced to death executed and others not? In particular, he presented us with the limits and possibilities offered by the individual administrative files of the executed persons, established at the level of the military prosecution departments, in which information on judicial proceedings, requests for pardon and administrative issues surrounding the execution of the sentence are included. He notes, among other things, the absence of the Chief Military Prosecutor, Ganshof van der Meersch and then Paul van der Straeten, and the importance of the role of the military prosecution departments, where the first instructions are carried out. The two researchers of the project also underlined the important gap left by the absence of sources from these military prosecution departments, at the level of which important issues seemed to be at stake, since these bodies were at the root of the repression of collaboration and thus of capital executions.

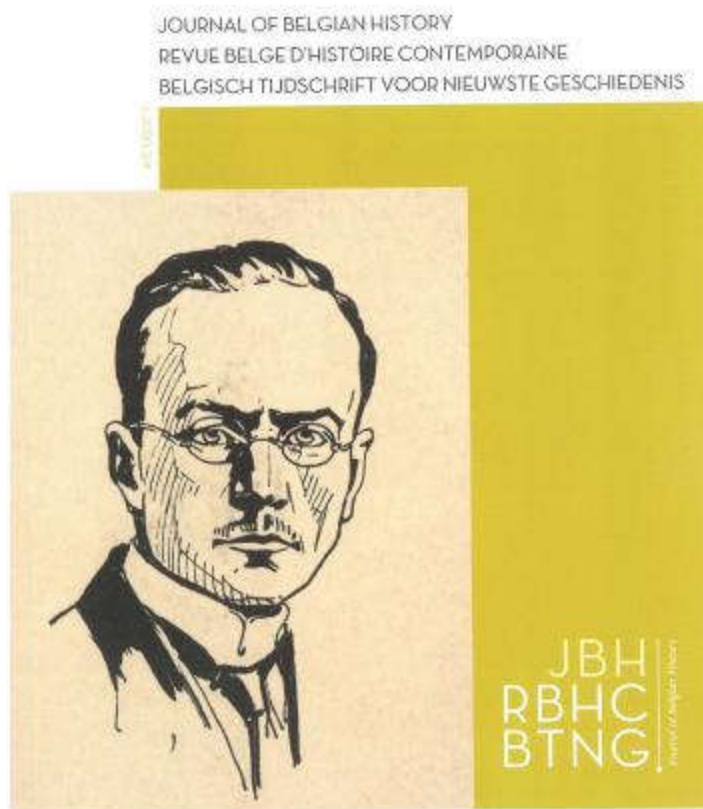
It then emerged from the discussions with the audience that these sources will certainly bring a new perspective to the question of executions and repression, in that they allow an approach through actors whose archives were not then exploited. Access to the files of military courts and tribunals will also certainly make it possible to complete the research carried out in recent years on the basis of more political sources, the press, or documents of limited scope.

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Publication of the double issue (3-4/2020) of the Journal of Belgian History

JBH



The last double issue (3-4) of the JBH (Journal of Belgian History) of 2020 just came out. It contains five articles on a variety of themes, mostly from freshly defended doctoral or master's theses, and 10 critical reviews of recently published academic works.

The first contribution (in Dutch) comes from the PhD dissertation (2019) of a Ghent historian, Jan Naert. In this article, he puts into perspective the actions and strategies put in place by burgomasters and mayors in their attempt to secure a non-violent transition from peace to occupation status during the First World War in occupied Belgium and Northern France. This new approach makes it possible to nuance the historiography of this period, which is still too often focused exclusively on German violence against civilian populations.

The second contribution (in French), written by Alain Rahier, who holds Masters degrees in History and in

Military History, studies in depth the way in which the Anglo-Dutch and Prussian occupation troops, who in 1814-1815 shared the territory of the future Belgium, financed this occupation.

The third article (in French) is signed by Iris Flagothier, holder of a double master's degree in History and Museology. She analyzes the history of the Walloon Movement through the history of gender by focusing on the Union des Femmes de Wallonie and its driving force, Marguerite Horion-Delchef. A 'Union' which, despite its relative failure at the level of women's emancipation, will, within a Walloon Movement essentially reserved for men, prepare the ground for women's movements over the following decades.

The fourth contribution (in English) is based on Heidi Degerickx's PhD (2020) and is the product of a co-authoring with her three (co-)promoters. On October 17, 1994, the United Nations proclaimed the first 'World Day Against Poverty' on the occasion of which a 'General Report on Poverty' (GRP) was published. This was an important step in the Belgian political management of poverty, which brought about a form of public recognition of the interest and care for the socially disadvantaged and introduced the idea of giving a voice to the poor. This article analyzes the genesis of this report and examines how the social actors involved in its writing tried to mobilize the 'voice of the poor' as a rhetorical instrument.

The last article (in Dutch), written by Nico Wouters (CegeSoma-AGR, UGent), looks at the case of Leo Vindevogel (1888-1945), war burgomaster of Ronse/Renaix, the only parliamentarian to have been executed for acts of collaboration after the Liberation. After his death, he became, as a martyr, one of the most iconic symbols in Flanders of the so-called failure of post-war repression. This article analyzes in depth the link between 'historical truth' and the formation of a myth.

This double issue can be ordered from [Hilde Keppens](#) (CegeSoma) or via jbh-admin@cegesoma.be. The articles will be added in 2021 to the RBHC's digital archive, which is fully accessible via www.journalbelgianhistory.be.

RELATED LINKS

[Leo Vindevogel in Belgium WWII](#)

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Les Enfants de la Collaboration or the Archives of the Collaboration?



An exceptional promotional campaign

Three years after the Flemish series "*Kinderen van de collaboratie*", on 25 November 2020, *RTBF* broadcasted "*Les Enfants de la Collaboration*", a documentary directed by Tristan Bourlard and Anne-Cécile Huwart and co-produced by *RTBF/Les Gens*. Rarely has a historical documentary benefited from such a promotional campaign: about thirty online and printed press articles, several radio interviews, and a presentation on TV news the same day of the broadcast. It's hard to ignore the event, which was followed by 361,869 viewers, representing more than 24% of the market share.

A broadcast on Canvas

It is quite rare for television programs broadcasted in one of the communities to be picked up by the other. However, this is what happened with "*Les Enfants de la Collaboration*". Broadcasted in prime time on *RTBF*, the

program was then aired on Canvas on January 6 and 13, 2021; the Flemish channel having in fact split the program into two episodes. For Canvas, this was a logical step, since the same channel had already shown all the series "*Kinderen van...*". Nevertheless, this fact is rare enough to be underlined. True, the audience rate is lower than on the French-speaking side, but it is still honourable (207,867 viewers for the first episode and 251,688 for the second) given the context: a presentation at a later hour, a first episode aired the same day as what was happening on Capitol Hill, a modest press campaign, a program entirely subtitled ...

The view of historians relegated to the *RTBF's* Auvio platform

Initially, the documentary was to be accompanied by a second part, "*Le regard d'historiens*" («The historians' viewpoint»), following the example of the series shown on Canvas. The *RTBF* made another choice and this part is only visible on the Auvio platform and via the CegeSoma website. This second part was not shown on Canvas either. If the emotion generated by the look of the witnesses is essential, it is nevertheless insufficient when one also wants to apprehend the facts in terms of knowledge. We know how much there can be a gap between social representations and the facts themselves. The lack of public knowledge about World War II is also regularly pointed out, with an emphasis on young people. It must be noted that the lack of diffusion of the historical contextualization section, while it did prompt a number of regrets, was hardly debated, even though one of the objectives was precisely to recontextualize the facts and enable them to be understood, particularly by a "young" public. Under the heading "*Devoir de mémoire: la grande passoire*," journalist and filmmaker Sylvestre Sбилle wrote about the program in *L'Écho* on 2 January 2021, regretting both the lack of debate after its broadcast and the lack of knowledge about this period among secondary school students, yet without mentioning the historical complement to the program.

The return of the "old demons"

A few days ago, during the controversy over the presence of Staf De Clercq and August Borms in a gallery of portraits of personalities who contributed to the emancipation of the Flemish language and people in a special edition of the magazine *Newsweek*, the historian Hervé Hasquin stated in the columns of the newspaper *Le Soir*: "why don't we say that there were also Walloon collaborators who were authentic fascists, whereas Flemish nationalism mainly found in the collaboration with the Occupier a way to achieve its ends". And the former minister-president insisted on the need to explain and denounce a historical omission. It seems to us, however, that this omission in no way corresponds to reality, but rather to media choices. For a long time now, all controversies about the past collaboration of such and such personality have functioned like a soufflé with much fuss, shouting, polemics and controversies and then nothing more. The soufflé sinks and loses its power of attraction. Information favors the scoop, the announcement effect. It was not after the release of the documentary "*Les Enfants de la Collaboration*" that the political world demanded access to the archives, but rather after the appearance of Staf De Clercq and August Borms in the magazine *50 jaar Vlaams Parlement*. However, as general archivist Karel Velle reminds us, the program did provoke an important demand for access to the archives: of the 89 requests made on the French-speaking side in 2020, 46 were submitted between November 25 (date of broadcast of the program on *RTBF*) and December 31, 2020. There is thus a real social demand and a need for history, for confrontation with the reality of the facts, beyond emotions.

Working in the shadows?

For many years, historians have been working on collaboration and its consequences. Of course, parts of this history remain to be written. The archives of repression are far from having revealed all their secrets. But

beyond the polemics and controversies, it is also a social history of commitments that could be written, a history of legal procedures and social expectations that accompanied them. What view(s) did contemporaries have of these trials? Although the first convictions made the headlines, only six journalists followed the trial of Léon Degrelle in December 1944. There were only about twenty people in the public. It is true that the main person concerned was absent. A few months later, in September 1945, the death of Leo Vindevogel, mayor of Renaix and the only member of parliament executed for collaboration, was just an item on the day's news in the *Nieuwe Standaard*, whereas ten years later, the same newspaper did not hesitate to compare this conviction to the Dreyfus affair. The complexity of these mechanisms cannot be summed up in a scoop or in emotionally fuelled anger.

What about tomorrow?

We can only hope, however, that these controversies will help move the debate forward. In other words, that the management and the access to the archives of repression will be left to the State Archives, but also that the research and the dissemination of the knowledge it generates will find a real place where it is needed: in teaching, in public debate and in history books.

Chantal Kesteloot

Other news

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Call for candidates for the EHRI-Conny Kristel scholarships



'Dr. Anna Ullrich in conversation with some former EHRI fellows during the conference 'Holocaust Studies in its Social Setting', on July 3, 2019 in Amsterdam. (Photo Marc Nauwen/EHRI)

The EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure), of which the State Archives/CegeSoma is one of the partners, aims to facilitate international Holocaust research by improving access to archives and stimulating international contacts between Holocaust researchers.

The Conny Kristelfellowships, which offer young Holocaust researchers the opportunity to conduct archival research in one of the EHRI's partner institutions, help achieve this goal. An EHRI Fellowship can also be applied for at the State Archives/CegeSoma (if working in Belgium, you cannot apply for

a scholarship at the State Archives/CegeSoma, but may apply for an institution outside of Belgium).

More information about application conditions and the procedure can be found [here](#). Applications will be accepted until March 15, 2021. For questions about opportunities offered by the State Archives/CegeSoma for Holocaust research, please contact dirk.luyten@arch.be.

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Reopening of the reading rooms - 5 January 2021

Our reading rooms reopen **on Tuesday 5 January 2021** and can be freely accessed upon appointment and under strict observance of the safety measures in force.

Reservation of workspace in the reading room must be made by e-mail to the State Archives in question at least 2 workdays before the visit. You can find the contact details of our repositories [here](#). (CegeSoma : cegesoma@arch.be).

Please consult the [special preventive measures against Coronavirus/COVID-19](#) to best prepare your visit.

You can stay informed about further developments via our website and via [Facebook](#).

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