

Sebastian Bischoff, Christoph Jahr, Tatjana Mrowka, Jens Thiel (eds.), „**Mit Belgien ist das so eine Sache...**“. *Resultate und Perspektiven der Historischen Belgienforschung*. Historische Belgienforschung 9 (Münster and New York: Waxmann, 2021, 224 pp., ISBN 9783830943174).

This book presents the results of the fifth conference of the *Arbeitskreis Historische Belgienforschung* in Eupen, capital of Belgium's German-speaking community, on 1 and 2 November 2019. It offers an edited volume of chapters on different topics dealing mainly with the two World Wars, transnational matters and the German-speaking part of Belgium (*Ostbelgien*). Because of the variety of themes, dedicated mainly to diverging microhistorical aspects, it is difficult to condense this book to a few key ideas. Among all volumes of the serie *Historische Belgienforschung* at Waxmann Verlag, which includes excellent monographs and edited volumes on specific topics, this ninth volume is perhaps the most fragmented one. This is both a strength – for the in their scope diverse but spatially or chronically linked chapters on *Ostbelgien* or on the two World Wars – and a weakness – individual chapters take very different, unrelated directions: art history, social history, political history, biography and documentation – which is why I think it would be useful to give an insight in all the contributions.

Four chapters are dedicated to *Ostbelgien*: Winfried Dolderer provides an overview of the use of German and its dialectal forms in Belgium, with a particular focus on the Eupen-Malmedy area. Christoph Brüll reflects on the establishment of the border between Germany and Belgium following the transfer of the former Prussian territories of Eupen and Malmédy to Belgium in 1920. Through an overview of Belgian-German diplomatic relations, he delineates, on one side, the complexity of Germany's recognition of this loss of territory (again integrated to the *Reich* during the Second World War) and, on the other, the assimilation processes of the German-speaking population into Belgium. Peter Quadflieg compares archival practices and standards in Germany and Belgium along such aspects as classification and access deadlines, while Carlo Lejeune recounts the creation, work and objectives of the Centre for the Historical Study of German-speaking Belgium.

The First World War in Belgium, which forms the main part of the book, is studied under several aspects from social history, microhistory, art history to transnational history and periodical studies. Presenting his research project on a transnational history of European monarchies, Moritz Sorg shows how the conflict with Germany in the First World War challenged the Belgian monarchy because of the German ascendancy of Queen Elisabeth and consequently how the Queen's care for Belgian people was promoted.

Christoph Roolf reconstructs the everyday life of the *Generalgouverneur* Moritz von Bissing at the Trois Fontaines castle, revealing how politics are linked to this private space which welcomed many guests. Max Bloch gives a very interesting insight on Belgian official journeys of the German socialist deputy Albert Südekum who influenced the decision to end the deportation of Belgians for compulsory labor in Germany. Sebastian Bischoff analyses the reactions of the German socialist press to the events and discussions surrounding the *francs-tireurs* in the first months of the war. He observes a significant support for the belief in the existence of such a Belgian guerrilla among SPD-deputies and supporters.

This topic is also the subject of Jakob Müller's article, which examines it in the light of the recent international debate provoked by the publication of the highly controversial book of Ulrich Keller, *Schuldfragen. Belgischer Untergrundkrieg und deutsche Vergeltung im August 1914* (2017). Not only Keller's conclusions were condemned in reviews and newspapers' articles, but also the content of the laudatory preface by one of the foremost historians of the First World War, Gerd Krumeich, which provoked indignation among experts in Belgium and Germany (see: Christoph Brüll & Geneviève Warland, 'Débats récents sur l'invasion allemande en Belgique en 1914. À propos d'Ulrich Keller, Schuldfragen', *The Journal of Belgian History*, 2020). In this line, Müller concludes that Keller's attempt to revise the consensus on which Belgian and German historians had agreed – namely that the presence of *francs-tireurs* was limited to isolated cases – failed due to a lack of methodological accuracy in examining historical records. A last chapter on World War One by Christoph Jahr deals with the Belgian-German debates on remains and monuments, particularly to symbolise the tradition of ancient towns, and finally presents the plans for the reconstruction of the city of Ypres elaborated during the war.

The Second World War is covered by two chapters on the rescue of Jews from the persecution by the Nazis. The first, by Andrea Hurton, recounts the lives of Viennese emigrants to Belgium, while the second, by Adrian Stellmacher and Anneke Winckel, focuses on the transport of Jewish children from Cologne to Belgium, which enabled many of them to be saved, living in Belgian families or boarding schools as 'hidden children'.

Five chapters are not directly related to the World Wars or to *Ostbelgien*: Ilona Riek and Bernhard Liemann's contribution is dedicated to the presentation of an information service of the university library of Münster: *Fachinformationsdienst Benelux*, which collects and facilitates the access to scientific literature on Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The art historian Ilona Debes studies the statues and representations of a lion in the Palais de Justice in Brussels from a historical and symbolic perspective. Klaas de Boer connects the current demands of conservative Flemish parties, such as *N-VA* and *Vlaams Belang*, for an independent Flanders to the Flemish movement which formulated similar claims in the nineteenth century. Ulrich Dibelius examines in great details a visit by Karl Marx, who had just arrived

in exile in Belgium, to a supposed friend in Liège in order to determine who could have been this person. Also partly set in the nineteenth century, Christina Reimann's chapter on the beginnings of social security traces the diversity of aid and mutual assistance systems in two cities, Amsterdam and Antwerp, characterised by the presence of many migrants who were excluded from national systems.

Enough to indicate the diversity of the historical issues addressed, which are of interest to well or less informed readers, and presented in flawless language thanks to the quality of editors' work too.

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