

PHD RESEARCH

ARNAUD BOZZINI

Political commitment and identity reconstruction. The communist Jews in Brussels in the aftermath of World War II (1944-1963) - [Original Title :

Engagement politique et reconstruction identitaire. Les Juifs communistes à Bruxelles au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1944-1963)]

Université libre de Bruxelles, 2012. Supervisor : Jean-Philippe Schreiber.

Whereas the Holocaust has since been invested by three decades of historical research, the situation is quite different for the period of reconstruction of Jewish communities after 1945 which remains largely absent in contemporary historiography. But the crisis which the Holocaust represented allows the analysis of the various processes which occurred and which aimed, in the long term, to reconstruct the Jewish communities of Belgium. This thesis seeks to shed light on the process of a return to normality. The objective is to question the period of reconstruction in terms of political commitment and, more specifically, it is both a socio-political and a cultural history of the reconstruction of the Jewish community in Brussels. The approach adopted identifies the major challenges facing the Jewish communities after the Liberation, as well as the specific responses that political activism brought during a pivotal decade in the history of the Jews of Belgium.

In this using political investment as a source of reconstruction, the analysis focuses on the participation of the community in the Brussels' far left-wing and communist groups. By understanding the presence and the specific action of communist Jews in rebuilding Brussels, this research highlights how the

practical manifestations of political commitment may be a factor of reassertion and reconstruction of the notions of self and their community. To this end, the study is structured primarily on records of the Jewish communist movement in Brussels, and those of its leaders, as well as some archives from within the Belgian Communist Party. The revisiting of these sources sets this research at the confluence of four interesting historiographical fields: the history of Jews and the Holocaust in Belgium, the history of Jewish communist agitation in Belgium, the history of communism in Belgium more generally, and finally the process of memory formation.