

## EDITORIAL

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Chief-Editors

This fourth issue of the *Journal of Belgian History* (JBH) of the 2013 annual volume, continues the editorial policy presented during last year's re-launch of the JBH; namely to defend Belgian history's presence and visibility on an international level by publishing our December issue in English. This issue is therefore the second with an exclusive English content, and it contains four articles and several sections.

The article by Irish scholar Vincent O'Connell – a result from his doctorate thesis – deals with a relatively little-known topic, namely Belgium's assimilation policy towards the German-speaking territory of Eupen-Malmedy between 1919 and 1940. As an interesting exercise in borderland history, this article tells the detailed national and international political history of Belgian's contradictory, and somewhat botched, policy towards the Eastern Cantons annexed in 1919.

The article by American historian David Hensley tackles a subject

clearly in the very heart of Belgian history (and of today's political agenda), namely the language issue. Hensley investigates the development and conscious use of minority rhetoric and identity promotion by French-speaking groups in Flanders between 1918 and 1932. In doing so, he investigates whether we should consider this rhetoric as a purely utilitarian strategy to reach certain social, cultural and political goals within the framework of the Belgian nation-state, or whether there really was a reinforced Francophone identity in reaction to the fundamental changes in post-war society.

Joris Mercelis' article deals with a subject and field of research often neglected undeservedly in the pages of the JBH, namely business history (or entrepreneurship research). By analysing famous Belgian chemist Leo Baekeland's move to the US, Mercelis sheds light on the relationship between academia and entrepreneurship, stressing so-called "informal institu-

tions” to explain Baekeland’s success in the US. At the same time, the article pleads for a re-evaluation of in-depth social background analysis to explain certain decisions, in this way adding to (and not contradicting) ongoing scholarly trends in the sub-field of entrepreneurship theory.

Finally, the article of Kim Christiaens tackles a much more recent period, notably the rise and development of Third World solidarity activism in Belgium during the 1970s. Christiaens explains how and why mobilisation in Belgium against the Brazilian dictatorship played a certain pioneering role, as it laid the groundwork for Third World solidarity activism in Belgium until the 1980s.

As always, all published articles are innovative in terms of scholarship, but in this case they are quite literally state-of-the-art. All four articles published in this journal are the direct result of recently defended and, in all four cases, previously unpublished PhD research. As such it underlines the essential importance of doctoral and postdoctoral-level researchers for journals like the JBH. It is also important to note that two articles in this issue were written by non-Belgian scholars, which confirms the JBH’s editorial policy to further internationalise modern and contemporary Belgian history.

Besides the four articles, the English issue also contains several sections which – unlike the articles – were not submitted in the standard peer-review process. These sections are intended for shorter texts of a more essayistic nature, expressing personal opinions and

views of historians and other professional peers.

The *Debate* section tries to do exactly what its title implies, namely confronting different opinions on topics relating to Belgian history with a broader international relevance.

In first instance, the “Beyond Belgium” project was a conference reflecting on the role of Belgium in transnational history. This led to a thematic issue with several contributions by Belgian authors, after which the project’s promoters invited three international specialists (Pierre-Yves Saunier of the *Université de Laval*, Timothy Baycroft of the University of Sheffield and Martin Conway of the University of Oxford) to reflect on the results of the project. We are glad to be able to publish their reactions in our Debate section.

We also publish a right to reply, which is in fact a direct response to the essay published in last year’s English issue, in which Belgian Holocaust specialist Lieven Saerens voiced his critical comments on German historian Insa Meinen’s recent book on the persecution of Jews in Belgium during WWII. In reacting to Saerens’ text, Meinen further broadens the ongoing debate on the history of the Holocaust in Belgium.

In last year’s English issue, we introduced the *Current Issues in Belgian History* in which several specialists in one specific field reflect on a theme, a trend, a body of literature, an ongoing debate etc. relevant to Belgian modern and contemporary history today. This issue’s Current Issues

section contains two different contributions.

In the first, Christophe Verbruggen (*UGent*), Erik Thoen (*UGent*) and Isabelle Parmentier (*UNamur*) provide an analytical overview of Environmental History in Belgian historiography. The second text was written following an ambitious three-day conference organized in Ghent on the topic of theory and history. Several authors responsible for the organisation of this conference touch on the most pressing points of discussion that emerged during this conference, at the same time providing a brief overview of the current state of the field of the philosophy of history.

Like last year's English issue, this edition also publishes the *PhD* and *Review Section*. The *PhD Section* contains short summaries of recent PhD research directly related to Belgian modern or contemporary history. More elaborate descriptions of these PhD theses were published in the double sized issue of September 2013 (in Dutch or French). The *Review Section* contains a list of reviews published in this September issue, in French or Dutch.

All content related to the sections, as well as the article abstracts, have an immediate open-access availability through our website ([www.journalbelgianhistory.be](http://www.journalbelgianhistory.be)). The full content of the articles is likewise made available one year after publication of the paper journal.

We also refer to this website for all other relevant info, including the full digital archive

of the former *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis/Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine* as well as the *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis/Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps présent*. This website also provides the latest information on current or upcoming issues.

We sincerely hope you will enjoy reading this second installment of the English issue.