

## PHD RESEARCH

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**Crossing the occupation 1914-1918. From *modus vivendi* to strike, the Belgian magistrates in face of the enemy** - [Original Title : *Traverser l'Occupation 1914-1918. Du 'modus vivendi' à la grève, la magistrature belge face aux occupants allemands*]

*Université catholique de Louvain*, 2013. Supervisors : Xavier Rousseaux & Dirk Luyten.

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The history of the Belgian judicial system during the Great War is largely unknown. The collective memory has mostly retained the episode of the magistracy's strike, also called '*cès de justice*', which, from February 1918 until the Armistice, paralysed the Belgian courts and led to the installation of a German judiciary. At the end of the war, this shining example of mobilisation formed one of the *topoi* of patriotic literature. In contrast, the co-existence of the Belgian judiciary with the German occupier during the preceding three years, although not incident-free, is cast in shadows and mostly reduced to the most prominent abuses of the latter.

This black-white narrative is in dire need of re-examination. With the help of the unexplored judicial archives of the Great War, Mélanie Bost revisits this remarkable period. She analyses the reactions of the magistrates – judges and public ministry – to new problems encountered within their duties and the determinants of their reactions.

What was the *modus vivendi* defined with the occupier? What were the vectors of the gradual weakening of this agreement until the 1918 strike? What role did the magistracy play during the enemy occupation? How was the judicial patriotism defined in 1914-1918?

What can be learnt from the experience of the occupation period about the judicial actor in terms of behaviours, "habitus" and internal cohesion?

The answers to those questions shed new light on the relationship between occupiers and occupied between 1914-18. They also contribute to our knowledge of the Belgian judiciary, considered as a professional body and a political power, at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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