

CRITICAL CHRONICLE OF THE
BELGIAN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

PREFACE

The disappearance in 1975 of the Bulletin Critique d'Histoire de Belgique founded by Prof. Dhondt, which first appeared in the Revue du Nord and became an independent publication later, was experienced as a loss by many people (1). Especially in the field of Late Modern History, where the number of titles increases so extremely fast, it became definitely hard to keep abreast with the evolution in the different sectors of historical investigation.

With this new Critical Chronicle we shall fill the gap. The elaboration has many features which correspond with the previous formula, though there are obvious differences. The main objective remains unaltered : informing and orienting both the specialist and the interested layman. An important difference lies in the fact that we no longer aim at an overall survey of the history of Belgium from the prehistoric times till now, but restrict ourselves to the most recent period, so broadly speaking from the last decade of the 18th century until today. Moreover, the group of co-operators will no longer be limited to "Gandavenses"; we shall gradually appeal to specialists from other institutions.

The latter difference is connected with language, the typical problem in Belgium. During the preliminary discussions in the Board of Directors of the "Jan Dhondt Foundation" this question was often raised. After weighing all formulas, preference was given to the use of English. Thus we hope to give an international dissemination to the Belgian historical production, which is almost exclusively in French or in Dutch. In that way also we avoid an overlapping with

(1) *Bulletin Critique d'Histoire de Belgique et du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1973-1975, Ghent, 1975 (Studia Historica Gandensia, 201).*

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valuable chronicles which have acquired an excellent reputation in the Revue du Nord, the Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique or in the Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden...

It is not our intention to concatenate extensive reviews in this Chronicle. Fundamental analyses of recent studies indeed belong elsewhere in the Periodical. We mainly wish to meet the reader who wants quickly to find out whether an article is original or not, what important sources were consulted, what methods were used and what hypotheses or results achieved.

As we also wanted to follow the trends in historiography, a link with the last Bulletin Critique seemed obvious. Hence, in the next issues older contributions will be published along with recent ones. It is our hope that, after a certain period of transition, the Chronicle will succeed in following topicality closely.

The annual production of articles and books is very considerable and different in value. It goes without saying that only the valuable contributions are considered for review. They will be grouped thematically, and where that should prove unfeasible, which will often happen, they will be presented as systematically as possible.

Naturally every co-operator is responsible for his points of view. Therefore, each contribution is followed by the author's initials and at the back is a list of authors' names.

Henceforth this Chronicle will appear in every issue of the Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis — Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine. We would ask the reader to postpone his judgment on the success of this undertaking for a couple of years. Through the planned frequency it is not necessary always to present a complete whole : thus anyone will be able to notice that the first issue had turned out rather unbalanced, that some sectors have not or hardly been dealt with, in spite of their importance. The positive promises of co-operation justify our hope that all spheres of interest will be given ample attention in the future.

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