



Conference invitation

November 24th, 2023
Cavalry & Guards Club, London

“They gave everything so that Belgium would live.”

(Text on bronze commemorative plaques on IAA graves (RUSRA-KUIAD))



*A conference organized by BISC in collaboration with
the Belgian Embassy in London and
the Royal Union of Intelligence and Action Services (RUSRA-KUIAD)*

Numerous Belgian citizens, men and women from all ages and social classes, were struck by the occupation of their country during World War II. As a result, they felt the need to do something about it and would evolve to a special form of Resistance. No less than 18.716 Intelligence and Action Agents (IAA) in 129 Intelligence and Action Services (IAS) operated in occupied Belgium and surrounding countries. In cooperation with the British services MI5, MI6, MI9, SOE and PWE, they were directed by the Belgian State Security in exile in London. Their fields of operation were: political, economic and military espionage; sabotage; psychological warfare; propaganda; escape lines; meteorological intelligence; support to Jews and people who refused the Compulsory Work Service... At least 4.000 Intelligence and Action Agents were arrested and 1.815 were killed: they were shot, decapitated or killed in concentration camps. This conference highlights some of their stories.

“Circumstances have suddenly given them the opportunity to do something special”

Fernand Strubbe (1921-2002), Captain IAA, Member RUSRA-KUIAD.

Conference program

Chair: Drs. Mathias Desmet (Ghent University & BISC)

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| 9.00 – 9.30 | Arrival of the guests |
| 9.30 – 9.40 | Welcome address
Guy Rapaille (President BISC) |
| 9.40 – 9.50 | Speech
H.E. Mr. Bruno van der Pluijm (Ambassador of Belgium to the United Kingdom) |
| 9.50 – 10.20 | The War fought from London
Mark Seaman MBE, Historian, Cabinet Office |
| 10.20 – 10.50 | Belgian intelligence services in London
Prof. Dr. Emmanuel Debruyne (Catholic University of Louvain) |
| 10.50 – 11.10 | Coffee break |
| 11.10 – 11.40 | Belgian SOE agents
Paul McCue (The Secret WW2 Learning Network) & Peter Verstraeten (RUSRA-KUIAD & FRAP) |
| 11.40 – 12.10 | Belgian Women in Intelligence
Dr. Helen Fry (Historian and Biographer) |
| 12.10 – 13.30 | Lunch break |
| 13.30 – 14.00 | Instructions for SOE operatives in Belgium
Tibo Minsart (Historian & RUSRA-KUIAD) |
| 14.00 – 14.30 | The Royal Union of Intelligence and Action Services, from Clandestinity to Interest Group
Robin Libert (RUSRA-KUIAD & BISC) |
| 14.30 – 15.00 | Coffee break |
| 15.00 – 15.30 | From WWII to today, lessons learned in bilateral cooperation
Colonel Bruno Plaetsier (Defence Attaché) & First Chief Commissioner Stanny De Vlieger (Belgian Federal Police LO) |
| 15.30 – 16.00 | The WWII archives of the Belgian military and civilian intelligence services
Kathleen Van Acker (ADIV/SGRS Classified Archives & BISC) & Robin Libert (RUSRA-KUIAD & BISC) |

16.00 – 16.45

Panel debate with the speakers

Chair: Prof. Dr. Pieter Leloup (Free University of Brussels & Ghent University)

16.45 – 17.00

Closing Remarks

Prof. Dr. Marc Cools (Ghent University, BISC & RUSRA-KUIAD)

Location

Cavalry & Guards Club
127 Piccadilly, London W1J 7PX
United Kingdom

BISC Working Group

Chris Bombeke (BISC Secretary)
Prof. dr. Marc Cools (Ghent University)
Prof. dr. Emmanuel Debruyne (Catholic University of Louvain)
Drs. Mathias Desmet (Ghent University)
Prof. dr. Pieter Leloup (Free University of Brussels & Ghent University)
Robin Libert (RUSRA-KUIAD)
Robin Liefferinckx (National Crisis Center)
Guy Rapaille (BISC)
Kathleen Van Acker (ADIV/SGRS)
Karin Van Peteghem (Ghent University)

Practical information

Cost: 120 EUR

Registration: people who are interested have to register at the following website:

<https://congresso.ugent.be/bisc-conference-112023/>

You will receive an e-mail confirming your registration. The registration is only definite after payment via the registration link.

Invoices can be made in GBP. Price is calculated at the rate on the day of invoicing.

Language: the presentations will be given in English.

During this conference, the **Chatham House Rule** applies.



Cavalry & Guards Club rules:

DRESS CODE: Jackets and ties (or service uniforms) must be worn by gentlemen in all public rooms and in the dining rooms. Ladies must be equally attired.

MOBILE PHONES may only be answered in telephone mode in the Balaclava Room, Writing Room and in private function rooms, NOT in the Hall, BAR, Conservatory, Terrace or other public areas. Phones may however be used in all areas as 'keypads' to access information, but we ask that they are used discreetly. Tablets and iPads may not be used in the Dining Room.

SMOKING is only permitted in the Conservatory and on the Terrace. People will be discouraged from smoking in front of the Club.