

Royal Commission of History

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Annual Report 2002

The Commission held meetings on 9 March, 29 June, 12 October and 14 December. The Commission Officers also met on those days.

The Commission was saddened by the loss of one of its members, Adriaan-E. Verhulst, who died 16 November. Our colleague had performed numerous responsibilities in the university sphere and in public life. He had been a member since 1965 and had served as President from 1980 until 1984. He had distinguished himself by numerous scientific works of high quality, works which enjoyed international recognition. Within the Commission, he showed himself to be an editor endowed with great erudition and a remarkable concern for accuracy and precision. These talents found their expression in several articles published in our *Bulletin*. Beyond that, these same qualities were amply demonstrated in his unfinished commentary, with a view to publication, of the documents and papers of Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders (1168-1177). This work will be continued by our colleague, Mrs. Thérèse de Hemptinne, who had already served as co-editor of the previous volumes. The Commission was represented at the funeral of our confrere. Solemn tribute was also paid to him at the meeting of 14 December.

On 1 January, our colleagues Jean-Louis Kupper and Ludo Milis assumed office – pursuant to the elections held in 2001 in accordance with our rules – as President and Vice-President, respectively.

True to the mission entrusted to it since 1834, the Commission has pursued the publication of documents and writings relating to our national history. This task is a never-ending one and is one that has substantially evolved over time. Performance of the task has been adapted to the general development of methods and of centers of interest of historical research and scholarship. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that we have more than once shown the way. Our members have often played an innovative and leading role in the field, as the chronological list of the Commission's publications attests. Currently, there are 221 titles covering all historical periods. The catalog is regularly updated on the Commission's Internet website (www.kbr.be/crh-kcg). As our website demonstrates, we are assiduously committed to use of the most modern means of communications. That does not mean, however, that we do not continue to make all of our work available in printed form. What it does mean is that we are taking full advantage of the digitized form, which will probably see further developments. Currently, the desirability of selecting one mode or the other is evaluated, on a case by case basis, with an open mind, while paying due attention to the need for caution.

The abundance of historical documentation dictates a certain selectivity in the choice of prospective publications. Budgetary constraints also impose such a policy. On the basis of criteria formulated by the Commission, we seek to promote novel approaches. The Commission endeavors to accord priority to publishing little-known documents, which, by virtue of their character, are able to expand the type of sources available to the historian. Similarly, attentive to current trends in historical research and scholarship in Belgium and

abroad, the Commission endeavors to draw novel perspectives and insights from classical sources.

The results of this policy find their embodiment in a series of projects, culminating in the issuance of publications in our various collections. These books and articles are the fruit of the activity of Commission members and of volunteers, who submit their work for Commission approval. Projects of a certain breadth may nevertheless pose a possible need to call upon paid researchers working under Commission guidance and supervision. The range and scope of this research, which often extends over several years, must be resolutely limited in order to be able to ensure that all projects concerned have the financing necessary for completion within a reasonable time frame. For despite the search for partnerships and patrons – increasingly difficult to obtain – the budgetary resources allocated to the Commission remain essential for the pursuance of this policy and for funding publication of its results.

The list of current and future activities highlights the concern to promote the different periods of our national history. It also illustrates the very special concern not to neglect the contemporary period or the history of the time in which we live

- Thus, Mrs. Alla Namazova, head of the contemporary history section of the Institute of Universal History Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, submitted the manuscript of the *Guide des documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Belgique conservés dans les archives des institutions de Russie*. This working tool, whose breadth exceeds the archive collections repatriated from Russia, will also facilitate the exploration of the former, pending a detailed inventory of the latter documents. After careful revision by Mrs. Françoise Thomas, graduate in history and researcher at the Académie royale de Belgique, the text is currently under review by four members of the Commission under the Commission's normal submission procedure. Under the same procedure, the voluminous *Journal* (years 1830 and 1855-1880) was submitted for review. The opus is the diary kept by Baron Michel-Edmond de Selys-Longchamps, senator, naturalist scholar and member of the Académie royale de Belgique. These notes and memoranda, intended for personal use, constitute eloquent testimony to the author's life style and the life of the aristocracy of the period. More broadly, this unusual document is a wealth of information on the political, economic, social, religious and scientific life of the 19th Century.
- Mr. Jo Tollebeek, Professor at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, is preparing the publication of the correspondence exchanged, in the course of the years 1888 to 1908, between the historian Paul Fredericq, Professor at the University of Ghent, and the American medievalist Henry Charles Lea.
- Mr. Dirk Luyten is completing preparations for the publication of the records of the Alexandre Galopin Committee (1940-1944), preserved in the archives of the Société Générale. The manuscript is expected to be submitted in the course of 2003. Conducted jointly by our Commission and the AMSAB (Institut d'Histoire sociale) of Ghent, the project to publish a computer-readable version of the reports of the Steering Committee and of the General Council of the Belgian Workers' Party (Parti ouvrier belge) (1894-1940), supplemented by an index, would make available to a

broader public a basic source, one that is unwieldy to consult in its current form. An agreement is being formulated and the target date for termination is the year 2005.

- The sources for the most recent periods are also receiving the Commission's attention. A fundamental issue is posed in this connection, one which the Commission is currently grappling with, i.e. the rigor and the care required of the researcher confronted with an especially difficult mission, while remaining mindful of the Society's legitimate expectations. Without the benefit of hindsight, the researcher must take care to establish historical truth with total impartiality; but to this end, he has available at this point in time only incomplete, fragmentary, if not partial or biased, versions of that truth. Both the researcher and the source run the risk of falling victim to an effort to enlighten that is influenced by the pressures of current events. The primary task of the historical critic is therefore particularly delicate; any weakness of purpose can seriously compromise the scholarly value of the product of the research.
- Among ongoing research projects, mention should also be made of the continuation of the *Thesaurus Diplomaticus* (normally dubbed the "Nouveau Wauters"). This digitized repertory of maps of the former Southern Netherlands, both published and unpublished, preserved in many Belgian and foreign archives, is a complete and total revision of the version published in the 19th Century. It represents the fruit of a partnership with the National Medieval Latin Dictionary Committee (Comité national du Dictionnaire du latin médiéval), with Mr. Paul Tombeur, Professor Emeritus of the Université catholique de Louvain, and our colleague Walter Prevenier, Professor Emeritus of the Universiteit Gent. Mr. Philippe Demonty, a Commission research associate, is conducting studies under the Commission's guidance and supervision. An initial CD-ROM, fully described in the report for 1999, has met with highly favorable acceptance by the world of scholarship, both in Belgium and abroad. Thus, the University of Nancy II Atelier de recherche et d'études de textes médiévaux (ARTEM) has adopted the methodology. The current objective is to pursue the analyses to cover the period until 1250. Currently, the documentary portion includes 15,812 analyses and the bibliography accompanying the notes, 3,225 titles. Already, without waiting for the publication of a new version of the CD-ROM, the Commission has been beset by requests to consult the updated database. Mrs. Ulrike Seif, Professor at the University of Passau, requested and obtained authorization to use the source to advantage in pursuing her work on the influence of canon law on medieval testamentary practice.
- The other projects are proceeding according to the established timetable.
 - Professor Alain Dierkens (Université libre de Bruxelles) is supervising preparations for the publication of the documents and papers of the Counts of Louvain and the Dukes of Brabant (until 1190). Submission of the manuscript is anticipated by the end of 2004.
 - Mr. Alain Marchandisse, senior fellow of the FNRS at the University of Liège, is working on drawing up the cartulary of the Abbey of Aulne.
 - Owing to the death of our colleague A.-E. Verhulst, work on publication of the titles and deeds of Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders (1168-1177) – Volume II of the second part came off the press last year – is now continuing under the sole responsibility of our colleague Thérèse de

- Hemptinne. She is completing Volume III with the help of Mrs. Lieve De Mey.
- The book under preparation by Bryce and Mary Lyon, *The Wardrobe Book of 1296-1297: A Financial and Logistical record of Edward I's 1297 Autumn Campaign in Flanders Against Philip IV of France*, will be published in 2003.
 - Submission of the final manuscript by Mrs. Véronique Lambert, *De oorkonden van het Sint-Donatiaanskapittel te Brugge*, is expected shortly. In order to optimize utilization of its publications, sometimes old, but always of current interest, the Commission has felt that it must provide tables with names of persons and places for them. The Commission has received a subsidy from the City of Bruges and from the Province of West Flanders to sponsor the compilation of the index of the accounts of the City of Bruges (1302-1319). This work in progress has been entrusted to Mrs. Kathrien Vandewoude.
 - Mr. Stijn Meersseman has undertaken to draw up the index for the *Recueil de documents de l'industrie drapière en Flandre*. Approximately one-third of the work has been completed to date.
- The Commission's catalog of publications has been enhanced by a new volume in our In-8 collection: David Guillardian, *L'obituaire des grands chanoines du chapitre Sainte-Gudule de Bruxelles (1506)*, 307 pages. This study confirms the interest and the richness of necrological sources. The Brussels document clearly deals with accounting matters (name, amount of loan, mortgagor, tax base). It records 570 events, the oldest of which go back to the 11th Century. In addition to the interest of the work for ecclesiastical history, it offers interesting testimony on the types of social behavior and mentality to be found in the Brussels region. The influence of the 'chapter' (body) of canons appears in effect to be limited geographically. The work offers significant resources for the study of personal names (anthroponymy) and for the study of local place names (toponymy).
 - Technical problems have delayed the printing of the work by Godfried Croenen, *De oorkonden van de familie Berthout (1212-1425)*, LXXXII, 485 pages (collection in-4°). Publication is expected before the end of 2003. It is a considerable effort – an exemplary effort – of reconstitution of particularly rare archives of a seigniorial family. The collection of documents on this important Brabantine lineage significantly illuminates the political, economic and social history of the old Netherlands nobility in the middle ages. It also enriches our knowledge of the testamentary practices and of marriage contracts of the period. It is necessary to also mention the author's contribution to the knowledge of the tools of diplomatic practice (minutes, chirography, etc.).
 - In order to meet the demand, the work by E. I. Strubbe and L. Voet, *De Chronologie van de Middeleeuwen en de Moderne Tijden in de Nederlanden* (1960) – so popular that the initial printing was sold out – has been reprinted by photographic process – in limited-edition quantity, however. The Commission has asked an associate to update the work with corrigenda and addenda.
 - **Volume CLXVII, 2001, fasc. 1-4 of the *Bulletin*** has come off the press. In addition to administrative matters, it contains two articles totaling 305 pages.

- Claude Bruneel broaches the subject of the political opinions of the officials employed by the government of the Austrian Netherlands: *Le personnel de la Chambre des comptes des Pays-Bas face à la Révolution Belgique (1787-1792)*. The reports of Dominique de Locher of Vienna, president of the accounting body, and an annotated list of the personnel of the institution, established by the supporters of the Revolution, make it possible to discover the opinion and the behavior of each of the public servants. These sources also recreate the climate that reigned in the bureaucracy from the initial troubles in 1787 until the restoration of Austrian power. They highlight the state of abandonment, in the interim, of these public servants, left to their own devices and bereft of any means of subsistence following the flight of the government in December 1789. The documentation also makes it possible to analyze, as they evolved, the principles and the implementing procedures of the policy of reintegration, in effect starting January 1791. Under the title *Revenant et exorcisme à Liège. Quête de reliques en Sardaigne (1634-1652)*, Philippe George provides a rich and picturesque insight into the religious mentality in the area of Liège at the time of the Counter Reformation. The author brings to life the typical elements of the medieval world: ghosts, pilgrims, quest for religious relics (Holy Grail). They are brought back to the Episcopal Diocese of Liège following an interminable Odyssey, ten years long and studded with the most diverse perils. Not the least of these was capture by the Turks, followed by a 75 day period of captivity in Tunis.
- For the volume bearing the 2002 vintage label, three articles have already been selected. We owe them to
 - Philippe Desmette (*Entre Rome et Flobecq : la Confrérie du Saint-Nom de Jésus de Soignies en 1581*);
 - Jean-François Nieuws (*Un exemple précoce de répertoire féodal : le livre des fiefs de la châtellenie d'Encre (nord de la France, ca 1245)*);
 - Rob Weckx, (*De Diestse schepenakten van 1265 tot 1306, toebehorend aan het Stadsarchief te Dies*)t.

At the European level, the Commission is associated with the major undertaking of the Monumenta Paleographica Medii Aevi, sponsored by the International Academic Union.

Our Vice-President, Ludo Mills, is contributing, as in the past, with Mrs. Véronique Lambert, to the advancement of the work of the Repertorium Fontium Historiae Medii Aevi (New Potthast).

The Secretary-Treasurer, Claude Bruneel, represented the Commission in Rome, at the colloquium held at the Academia Belgica on the occasion of the Centenary of the Belgian Historical Institute. Our colleague Ludo Milis, former president of the Institute, moderated a round table discussion – attended by representatives of the various national institutes – on the role and the future of this type of institution.

The Commission has always been mindful of ensuring the broadest possible dissemination of its work both in Belgium and abroad. The 2001 launch of the Commission's website in French, Dutch and English has undeniably done much to further that end. In addition to administrative and historical information on our endeavors, it includes the complete and

illustrated catalog of the published works. The most recent ones are accompanied by a summary. An interrogation function by name of author, title words and key words facilitates consultation of the website. The effect in terms of orders for our publications has been nothing short or remarkable. The upturn in orders was also attributable to a policy shift. In view of the unsatisfactory results that had been obtained by the Brepols firm, the Commission decided to distribute its publications itself as from January 2002. Mr. Luc Moreau, of the Académie royale de Belgique, took up the torch with characteristic gusto. His active and effective management bore instant fruit.