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**The past in Belgium: different memories and controversial history in a divided society?**

To-day, Belgium appears as a fragile state. Questions rose about its future, its survival. Every problem, every discussion is troubled by a linguistic, communautarian and let's say national antagonisms. Of course besides economical, cultural and linguistical origins, the division is also linked to the past and even more than the past itself to the way it is perceived by the different groups, the different communities.

The impression that prevails today in Belgium is that the Walloon and Flemish societies have different regards to the legacy of the Second World War. We have grown accustomed to juxtapose the image of a collaborating Flanders to that of a resisting Wallonia. Today, all nuance, critical regard and alternative memories seem to have disappeared from public space. The objective will be to apprehend the processes that have led to this numbing of every divergent discourse, in the northern part as well as in the southern of the country. This will involve analysing the mirrored construction of memorial processes, as well as their peculiarities within each society itself.

As soon as the Flemish and the French-speaking communities analyse the past differently, the existence of a Belgian identity is threatened. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to come to a more refined analysis of those different recollections of the past, and to look at how, when and where the vision of a collaborating Flanders and a resisting Wallonia was created, and how, when and where this vision became the dominant one, leaving other memories in the shade such as that of a patriotic Belgium, of a resisting Flanders, and of a collaborating Wallonia.

Between manipulation and the shifting of meaning, between silence and taboo, some elements of the past might have been obscured, or on the contrary overrated, to serve political, institutional and social interests.

But in some extend those different interpretations are deeper than only connected to the Second War even if this period appears as the most emblematic. The perception is that to-day all the Belgian history is analysed differently from the origins of the State in 1830 itself to the main events of the XXth century.

Of course this paper will focus on the Second World War and its legacy but aims also to go deeper in the Belgian history from its origins to present-day through the First World War to colonisation and decolonisation. The aim is also to compare different spaces of memory, from individual memory to community memory, from academic historiography to popular history.

**Keywords**

History of Belgium – XXth century – Wars – memory – nationalism – identities

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