

Belgian propaganda and the image of Belgium in the United States during the First World War

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SUMMARY

This article focuses on the workings and impact of Belgian propaganda in the United States during the First World War. It sheds light on the peculiarities of the propaganda and shows how the Belgian question was exploited. The stereotypical image of Belgium as a molested country, as 'Poor Little Belgium', was meant to discredit Germany and inspire the generosity of the American public. Both aims concurred with those of the allied forces and the Commission for relief in Belgium.

Initially Belgian authorities believed that this myth would gain them American support for considerable recovery payments after the war. But the image proved counterproductive and was very difficult to shed. Subsequently, Belgian propaganda tried to introduce the 'small but courageous Belgium' in American public opinion. This new discourse became ever so important once America had entered the war. Several initiatives supported the new policy: press agencies, exhibitions, military parades, public speeches by the likes of Hendrik De Man, etc. All these endeavours conflicted with the powerful American propaganda machine: in the eyes of Americans Belgium was the defenceless victim of German militarism and not a courageous warring nation. This explains why Belgian demands had so little support in American public opinion. Adding to this, were the shortage of resources, the growing indifference of Americans and the lack of an influential Belgian-American population in the US.

The Question of Neutrality and Belgium's Security Dilemma during the First World War

The Search for a Politically Acceptable Solution^(*)

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I. INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For many Belgians both during and after the First World War, the regime of guaranteed, permanent neutrality, which the five great powers had imposed on Belgium in the treaties of 1839, had failed to protect the country against invasion and occupation and constituted an obstacle to free and flexible foreign and security policies. Germany, by its act of unprovoked aggression, their argument went, had destroyed the treaties and had demonstrated the strategic unsoundness of Belgium's frontiers and the inadequacy of its fluvial rights on the Scheldt. Hence, Belgium had to be liberated not only from German occupation forces, but also from all fetters to its ability to exercise a free and independent foreign policy and a security policy, which, if necessary, might entail the conclusion of alliances and military accords as well as territorial expansion. In other words, Belgium had to be recognized as a fully sovereign nation-state.¹

As the Belgians discovered very quickly, however, it was easier to formulate war aims than to achieve them, as it was easier to repudiate the regime of obligatory neutrality than to escape the historical, geopolitical, and internal political realities which made it difficult to overcome what I see as Belgium's naturally neutral condition. Moreover, finding a substitute for the great-power

(*) Due to a technical difficulty, all references are noted at the end of the article, beginning on p. 255.

guarantee of 1839 presented a virtually insurmountable problem for the leaders of a small, weak power such as Belgium. How could Belgium obtain a guarantee from powers such as Britain and France without joining them in a full-fledged military alliance once the war was won and the country were liberated from both German troops and the impediments of the 1839 treaties?

In explaining how the Belgians coped with their security dilemma after war broke out in 1914, this essay addresses two related questions. First, why did the Belgian government-in-exile finally adopt the position on neutrality that it did by 1918? Here the focus of attention will be on the interconnection between Belgium's international situation and the realities of Belgian politics both within and without the occupied country. Second, and most importantly, why can it be argued that, despite the Belgian government's apparent hostility to neutrality after 1914, its actions during the war demonstrated a reluctance to become entangled in agreements that would hamper the country's freedom and serve to exacerbate the nation's internal divisions? Here again the role of Belgium's geopolitical situation and the dynamics of internal Belgian politics as constraints on the formulation of foreign policy will be analyzed.

In answering these two questions, I will examine in detail the views, actions, and legacy of Baron Eugène Beyens, the Belgian Foreign Minister from July 1915 until July 1917. My purpose is to explain why Beyens can be seen as epitomizing the Belgian dilemma after 1914, i.e., how to best protect Belgium's security without jeopardizing its independence, and why his solution – a one-way treaty of guarantee – was the best available given Belgium's geographical and internal political circumstances after the regime of 1839 was overturned. To put Beyens' policy in perspective, I will also examine in particular the views and actions of Count Charles de Broqueville, Minister of War and Catholic Cabinet Head when the war started, who succeeded Beyens as Foreign Minister from August to December 1917, and those of Paul Hymans, the Liberal Party leader, who served as Belgian minister plenipotentiary in London from 1915 to 1917 and then, after entering the Cabinet in January 1916, eventually succeeded Broqueville as Foreign Minister. Needless to say, the views of King Albert I will also feature prominently in this account.

II. THE REGIME OF 1839-1914: DID IT FAIL?

Before we examine wartime Belgian diplomacy on the questions of neutrality and security, it is necessary to look briefly at the regime of 1839. As a great number of Belgian and non-Belgian historians and commentators, including Emile Banning, Edouard Descamps, Alfred De Ridder, Robert Devleeshouwer, Horst Lademacher, Jonathan E. Helmreich, E. H. Kossmann, Daniel H. Thomas, Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, Christophe Verneuil, and, most recently, Rik Coolsaet,² have shown, Belgian public and official opinion came to accept obligatory

neutrality as Belgium's normal international condition by 1914, and, while hostile opinions were sometimes voiced,³ no Belgian leader or political party ever seriously contemplated the regime's overthrow before war broke out in August 1914. Within a decade of the signing of the treaties of 1839, Belgian diplomats understood the great-power guarantee to be both "joint and several" – i.e., requiring the intervention of guarantors individually and not just collectively in the event of a violation of Belgian neutrality – even though there was considerable doubt in London about the accuracy of such an interpretation and the legally binding nature of the guarantee right down until August 1914.⁴ Rather than see neutrality as an obstacle to their country's independence, most Belgians adhered to the view, most notably articulated by the mid-19th-century Liberal statesman, Walthère Frère-Orban, that Belgian independence was inseparable from neutrality and indeed dependent upon it.⁵ Belgium's monarchs shared this view and never ceased advocating a strong army and system of fortifications to defend both neutrality and independence.⁶

Did the system fail in 1914? The answer to this question depends upon how one understands the purpose of the 1839 regime. If one argues that the object was to insure the country against invasion by any one of its powerful neighbors, then it can be said to have failed to deter German aggression in early August 1914, whereas it had succeeded in July 1870 in warding off a violation of Belgian territory. But such an interpretation puts undue emphasis on the deterrent value of the guarantee itself rather than on the specific foreign and military policies of the guarantors. France and Germany chose to respect Belgian neutrality in the summer of 1870 because they saw the political disadvantages – e.g., alienating Great Britain – as outweighing any military advantages that would have accrued to them by crossing Belgian territory in violation of their treaty engagements. William E. Gladstone, the British Prime Minister and his legal advisors did not see the guarantee as individually binding, but public opinion, which was vehemently anti-French, forced him to get Paris and Berlin to sign supplementary agreements to respect Belgian neutrality. Considering the fact that Britain had no continental ally, however, one wonders how London would have intervened effectively in the event of a violation of Belgium's neutrality.⁷

By late July 1914, Britain was again faced with the prospect of a violation of Belgian neutrality, though by then the legal experts at the Foreign Office had decided upon the binding nature of the guarantee. However, Germany's leaders had decided to violate Belgian neutrality if necessary – at least this is what the Schlieffen Plan intended – while the French, after some hesitation, decided not to do so.⁸ This was the crucial difference between 1870 and 1914. As I stated in my doctoral dissertation many years ago: "Nothing short of a military strategy designed to thwart a German move through Belgium could have prevented the invasion of August, 1914; but then such a strategy would have depended on a close alliance between Belgium and France and/or Britain,

something that few Belgians would have desired before 1914 even had it been legally possible."⁹

Despite the seeming failure of the security system of 1839, certain Belgian statesmen and diplomats, such as Charles Woeste,¹⁰ prewar leader of the Catholic Party's right wing and notorious antimilitarist; Léon Arendt,¹¹ prewar Director General of Policy at the Foreign Ministry; and Edmond Carton de Wiart,¹² former private secretary of King Leopold II and Director of the Société Générale holding company, opposed an abandonment of permanent neutrality even after the German invasion. For these observers, the regime of 1839 did not fail because, once Germany had violated Belgium's neutrality, Britain joined France and Russia and came to Belgium's rescue, and, in the end, the country was liberated.¹³

As a violated neutral, moreover, Belgium benefited from sympathy around the world and was able to occupy the moral high ground, a position that would not have been possible had Belgium been bound by an alliance. Indeed, the defenders of neutrality, including King Albert I, often pointed to Belgium's geographical situation and its internal political divisions as arguments against not only abandonment, but also alliances and military agreements, particularly with either France or Germany.¹⁴ For a country which was considered, prior to the outbreak of war, as Francophile or Germanophile depending on the prejudices of the observer, an unneutral Belgium would have had a difficult time convincing its two powerful neighbors that a policy of friendship with one should not be considered one of hostility to the other.

Critics of Belgian neutrality, however, have argued effectively that permanent neutrality caused the Belgians to relax, to rely on the theoretical guarantee, and to move too slowly in the direction of a strong defense and general conscription.¹⁵ According to this view, despite the efforts of Belgium's kings, the country did not have a credible military force to deter an aggressor in the last decade of peace. Whether or not Belgium could have done more to improve its ability to defend itself is a legitimate question. Most contemporary observers felt that Belgium's army was not up to the task required of it even after the reforms of 1909 and 1913. Many historians agree.¹⁶ But why did Belgium find itself with perhaps a weaker army than it needed? In my view, it was not neutrality, but a tradition of Catholic antimilitarism, doctrinaire Liberal parsimony, bourgeois complacency, and Socialist hostility which combined to thwart the efforts of the monarchs and statesmen to improve things faster than they did.¹⁷ This was the political reality of prewar Belgium and that reality would have been the same whether or not the regime of 1839 existed. To be sure, neutrality was often cited as both a reason and a justification for moving slowly in military matters.¹⁸ But neutrality did not prevent Belgium from developing and mobilizing the forces that it did put into the field in August 1914, forces which helped delay the German advance sufficiently to cause problems with the initial unfolding of the Schlieffen Plan, forces which held on to a small, but

symbolic, triangle of Belgian soil in West Flanders, and forces which survived to help liberate the country in 1918. Neutrality also did not prevent the Belgians from overcoming (temporarily) their internal differences in the face of German aggression and the torpidity that the regime of 1839 allegedly encouraged.¹⁹

III. BELGIUM, 1914-1918: NEITHER NEUTRAL NOR ALLIED.

The Decision to End the Regime of 1839.

Let us now return to my first question: Why did the Belgian government finally adopt the position on neutrality that it did by 1918? Here we first have to note that after the outbreak of war, anti-neutralist sentiment steadily grew both within the Belgian community in exile and in occupied Belgium, though Belgian nationalist publicists consistently exaggerated the extent of hostility to neutrality. Nevertheless, by late 1915 it was clear that there would be no going back to the prewar situation.²⁰

Once the experts at the Foreign Ministry determined that article 10 of the 1907 Hague Convention, which recognized a neutral's right to repel an attack by force without this action being considered a violation of its neutrality, did not deprive Belgium of the right to be considered a belligerent, the Belgian government faced the question as to whether or not to seek to join the so-called Pact of London, by which the governments of Britain, France, and Russia agreed, on 5 September 1914, to neither conclude a separate peace with Germany nor demand conditions of peace without prior consultations. Membership in the Pact would imply that Belgium had formally joined the alliance. But a formal request to join and Allied acceptance would also signify the end of the 1839 treaties. The question was, then, should Belgium formally seek to be freed from those treaties?

By the spring of 1915, the Belgian Cabinet, now located in Le Havre, decided that it wanted the treaties of 1839 revised and that it no longer considered obligatory neutrality a viable option. There was still no consensus, however, as to whether Belgium should adopt a policy of voluntary neutrality; what, if any, guarantees should be sought; and when to make a formal démarche to the Allied powers. King Albert, moreover, who believed that his people wanted to maintain neutrality, made clear his firm opposition to any unilateral renunciation of it. Hence, in the instructions that were sent out on 23 May 1915 to Belgian diplomatic representatives, the government merely reserved the right "to preserve a freely chosen neutrality."²¹

Though the instructions said nothing about Belgian hopes to acquire the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, suspicions of French designs on that state caused the government to decide, with the monarch's support, by mid-June, to inform

the Allies of its ambitions there.²² From this point on, Belgian fears that France would make its support for a Belgian solution of the Luxemburg question conditional on some form of customs and/or military union had a direct bearing on how the Belgian government approached the problems of neutrality and postwar security.

Beyens confronts the Security Dilemma.

It was at this point that King Albert recommended that his former minister of the Royal Household and former minister plenipotentiary to Berlin, Baron Eugène Beyens, be named Foreign Minister *ad interim* to relieve the ailing Julien Davignon. Beyens, whom most Catholic ministers saw as a "liberal," was a controversial choice; yet, Charles de Broqueville, the War Minister and Head of the Cabinet, agreed to name him in order not to alienate the monarch. Beyens took up his duties on 26 July 1915, on condition that he not be hindered in his work.²³

It is clear from the documentary evidence that King Albert was aware of Beyens' views on war aims before the Cabinet took a final decision on his appointment. In a report dated 30 April 1915,²⁴ the future Foreign Minister informed the king of his opposition to acquiring either German or Dutch territories, to permanent neutrality, and to any alliances with great powers, but particularly with France. However, he said he favored a *rapprochement* with the Netherlands, self-determination for the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, and, most importantly, a collective, one-way Allied guarantee of Belgium's postwar security. These ideas formed the basis of his long memorandum entitled "La situation politique de la Belgique après la guerre," which he submitted to the Cabinet in mid-August 1915 for approval as the basis for Belgian war-aims diplomacy.

In this document,²⁵ Beyens stressed that Belgium should neither be a signatory to any treaty of guarantee nor be required to send its troops automatically against Germany in the event of a new war. The latter requirement, he insisted, was unnecessary because Belgium would certainly resist another German invasion and dangerous because it could lead to misunderstandings and involve Belgium in a conflict with Germany started by an Allied guarantor for reasons having little to do with Belgian security interests. The only pledge that Belgium should make in return for an Allied guarantee, he concluded, would be to maintain a strong standing army. When we contemplate Beyens' idea for a non-binding treaty of guarantee tied to a strong system of defense, we must be struck by its similarity to the arrangement worked out after the Belgians proclaimed their so-called policy of "independence" on 14 October 1936, when Britain and France committed themselves, in April 1937, to go to Belgium's aid in the event of German aggression without any reciprocal obligations.²⁶

Though it had accepted Beyens' concept of a one-way guarantee treaty, the Cabinet decided to remove any reference to voluntary neutrality from the instructions that were sent to Belgian envoys in December 1915. It also decided not to press the Allies on the neutrality issue just yet.²⁷ This decision came at a time when Broqueville was trying to convince his Catholic colleagues that the entry into the government of leading opposition figures was essential to the maintenance of the *union sacrée*²⁸ and when key ministers, such as Jules Renkin, the Colonial Minister, Henry Carton de Wiart, the Justice Minister, and Paul Segers, the Minister of Railways, Merchant Marine, Posts, Telegraphs, and Telephones, were exerting pressure in favor of adhering to the Pact of London. Outside the Cabinet, such francophone nationalist publicists as Pierre Nothomb²⁹ and Fernand Neuray, editor of *Le XXe Siècle*, a newspaper with close connections to Broqueville, led the pro-alliance campaign.³⁰ Beyens had his work cut out for him, but finally, on 21 December 1915, he got the Cabinet to reject the idea of joining the alliance in exchange for a pledge that he would seek a formal Allied declaration that Belgium would not be excluded from any peace conference that might be called.³¹

The result of Beyens' overture was the so-called Declaration of Sainte-Adresse of 14 February 1916, whereby Britain, France, and Russia agreed to Belgium's three most important non-territorial war aims: an invitation to a peace conference, restoration of Belgium to full independence, and reparations for war damages. Nothing was said about neutrality, though in thanking the Allied powers, Beyens stated that his country had confidence in its "loyal guarantors" and would continue to fight until justice had triumphed.³²

By the time that the Allied Declaration was issued, the Belgian government contained three new ministers without portfolio.³³ The addition of three opposition leaders, who were Freemasons, split the Catholic Cabinet. But Broqueville managed to overcome the opposition of conservatives, such as Joris Helleputte, the Agriculture Minister, thanks to the support of Cardinal Joseph Mercier, the Archbishop of Mechlin, who saw the benefits of a *union sacrée* for national unity. A week before the new ministers were formally installed on 18 January 1916, they signed a document in support of the government's main war aims: the restoration of Belgium to full political, economic, and financial independence, along with full sovereignty over the Congo; a future international status for Belgium that would assure it full sovereign rights; and the return of Luxemburg. They also agreed that there should be no separate peace with Germany. A verbal agreement followed, committing the entire government to the creation of a Flemish-speaking university, the abolition of plural votes for eligible male electors, and the prohibition of Masonic proselytism in the army.³⁴

Beyens, who now became Foreign Minister in his own right, clearly welcomed the broadening of the Cabinet; but he found the king displeased with both the Declaration of Saint-Adresse and his loyalty pledge to Belgium's

guarantors. Albert lamented that the Allies refused to allow his government to use the term "justes revendications" to describe its aims or to pledge specifically to guarantee the territorial integrity of both Belgium and its colonial possession.³⁵ But even stronger criticism came from the nationalists both inside and outside the government. After one particularly vicious attack by Renkin during a Cabinet meeting on 24 February, Beyens offered to resign; he apparently, however, changed his mind when Broqueville urged him to stay.³⁶

It is difficult to determine the exact relationship between Beyens and Albert at this time, though we know that the king considered Broqueville as one of several cabinet ministers responsible for encouraging the expansionist and anti-neutralist exaggerations of the nationalist press. Indeed, when Albert met Broqueville in early March 1916, he heard his Prime Minister accuse him of pursuing a policy different from his government's, and learned of the hostility in the Cabinet to both neutrality and to Beyens, whom Broqueville called "l'homme du roi." The government and country, he stressed, wanted a policy of action, one that would enlist Allied support for economic and territorial advantages. To this the monarch retorted that the Belgian people would find Allied demands for Belgian adherence to treaties of alliance and military cooperation far more disagreeable than neutrality.³⁷

King Albert's indignation at both the insufficiencies of Allied promises and the exaggerations of the anti-neutralists appears, in retrospect, somewhat disingenuous because the monarch had, in the fall of 1915, authorized his closest confidant, Emile Waxweiler, former Director of the Solvay Institute of Sociology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, to enter into secret contact with Queen Elizabeth's brother-in-law, Count Hans von Törring-Jettenbach. Though Törring broke off the talks after the Declaration of Sainte-Adresse, accusing the Belgian king of having informed the Allies of them, Albert had gone so far as to indicate a willingness to abandon neutrality and to sign a defense treaty with Germany in exchange for the evacuation of the country and guarantees of independence.³⁸

Beyens on the Tightrope.

One of the ironies of Belgian foreign policy during the First World War is that the man whom the annexationists most clearly identified as a neutralist was the same man that King Albert would eventually come to regard as insufficiently protective of Belgium's interests vis-à-vis the Allies. This fundamental misunderstanding was the tragedy of Beyens' two years as Foreign Minister, for, when we examine the evidence, it is clear that Beyens' views most closely conformed to those of his monarch on a whole range of issues, not least of all Allied efforts to bring Belgium into an anti-German postwar economic system discussed at the Inter-Allied Economic Conference held in mid-June 1916 in

Paris. The French clearly wanted Belgium to join them in a customs union, while the British showed no signs of conceding equal treatment for Belgian trade within the British Empire. King Albert viewed a customs union as a mere prelude to a full-fledged Belgian-French military and political alliance, and, officially, the Cabinet rejected all French efforts in this regard. But the evidence seems to indicate that Albert had more reason to suspect the views of his Chief Minister than he did those of Beyens as far as a willingness to conclude binding agreements with the Allies was concerned.³⁹

King Albert was correct to fear, moreover, that French war aims, which entailed more than just the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine and the liberation of occupied territory, could be detrimental to Belgian independence. Indeed, if General Joseph Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, had his way, Belgium would be incorporated into a close alliance with France.⁴⁰

In early July 1916, after the Allied Economic Conference, Beyens travelled to London to sound out the British on the Scheldt, Luxemburg, and neutrality questions. In his talks with Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, Beyens repeated that Belgium had no desire to annex Dutch lands, but he went beyond the letter of his instructions by proposing the idea of a Belgo-Dutch co-sovereignty over the western estuary of the Scheldt to be legalized by a treaty between Belgium and the Netherlands negotiated under the auspices of the Allied powers. Such a dual regime, he stressed, would permit Belgium to keep the river open in time of war so that troops and supplies could be brought to Antwerp. On the question of Luxemburg, the Belgian Foreign Minister merely repeated the hope for British support of a Belgian solution, assuring Grey, however, that the form of any union should be decided by the Luxemburgers themselves.

Beyens then broached the subject of neutrality and security. In effect, he proposed that obligatory neutrality be replaced by an Allied treaty of guarantee to protect the independence and territorial integrity of both Belgium and the Congo. Belgium, he asserted, would not be a signatory, but would pledge to defend its independence and maintain an army recruited by general conscription. Again Beyens had gone beyond the letter of his instructions.⁴¹

In the Cabinet meeting which followed Beyens' return from London, Renkin led the attack, condemning the Foreign Minister for having exceeded his instructions by proposing a guarantee treaty that would allow outside interference with Belgian defense policies and by favoring a Scheldt regime that excluded a territorial solution. Broqueville essentially agreed with Renkin's critique, but, for the sake of harmony, worked to calm the crisis. The king also thought that Beyens had mishandled the *démarche*; that he had not been firm enough in his talks with the British Foreign Secretary; but he considered Renkin's remarks "*excessive and wounding*." Only Albert's continued, albeit weakened, confidence prevented Beyens from resigning.⁴² Despite this crisis, the Cabinet did not specifically repudiate the idea of an Allied treaty of

guarantee, though it did reject political alliances and customs unions and rejected any reference in future notes to the maintenance of a large conscript army. It also allowed Beyens to pursue his Scheldt and Luxemburg proposals.⁴³ Nevertheless, there were those who still wanted the Foreign Minister out.⁴⁴

Beyens had overcome Renkin's challenge at a time when the battles of Verdun and the Somme were proving to be the bloodiest of the war so far. As the casualties mounted, the king's lack of faith in a military solution emboldened him to see his country play a more assertive role in Allied military councils. He also was more determined than ever to work for a negotiated peace. But his government, which had been forced to tread very carefully where the question of peace was concerned, had very little room to manoeuvre.⁴⁵ This fact became clear in December 1916, when the Belgian government sought to respond independently to the German and American peace initiatives, a Belgian effort, which I have called "an exercise in diplomatic self-determination."⁴⁶

With King Albert making the strongest case in favor of an independent approach, the Cabinet decided, after meetings on the 19th and 20th, to seek Allied support for separate replies that stressed Belgium's right to full political and economic independence, reparations, and military security. After extensive talks in Paris with French leaders, Beyens and Broqueville got permission to include the essence of their program in the Allied response to Germany; and after further talks, in which the king took part, Paris and London agreed to let the Belgians formulate their own note for President Woodrow Wilson.

What should have been a clear triumph for Belgian diplomacy turned sour, however, when Jules Cambon, the Secretary General at the French Foreign Ministry, told Beyens that the Allies suspected the Belgians of desiring to conclude a separate peace with Germany. Beyens, who knew nothing of the secret Törring-Waxweiler talks of the year before, explained the Belgian position in a long letter to Cambon on the 27th,⁴⁷ which Broqueville approved but did not countersign, a letter that Professor Henri Haag, echoing King Albert's sentiments, describes as "*practically equivalent to the signature of the Pact of London*."⁴⁸ As I have explained in my review of Haag's great work, this assessment is too harsh.⁴⁹ It is true that Beyens made it sound as if his colleagues agreed with the Allies that the German overture was a pretext to get Belgium interested in talks. But he also reminded Cambon that Belgium was a violated neutral seeking no alliances and that the Belgian government was unanimously opposed to a separate peace. Beyens clearly believed he had the king's approval for what he said.

In the end, the Allied response, sent to Berlin on 30 December 1916, rejected the German overture as a mere manoeuvre of war and included a short paragraph on Belgium which read:

"The King and his Government have only one goal: the reestablishment of peace and law. But they want a peace which will assure Belgium legitimate reparations, guarantees, and securities for the future."

The Allied reply to Wilson of 10 January 1917, tried to make it appear that the Allies were fighting for the restoration of conquered territories, the implementation of the principle of national self-determination, and the establishment of a league of nations. Peace talks were impossible, it said, because the Central Powers, had committed "*willful aggression*" in order "*to insure their hegemony over Europe and their economic domination over the world*." The Belgian response differed only slightly from the Allied reply, declaring that, while Belgium wanted "*the present war ended as early as possible*," it saw no evidence that Germany would in the future guarantee the right of weak nations to live in peace. It then also placed the blame for the outbreak of the war and its continuation on Germany and proclaimed that Belgium would accept only a peace that "*would assure it equitable reparations and security guarantees for the future*."

Due to Allied pressure, Beyens had to insert this more general statement instead of one which called for a peace

"which would render {Belgium} its complete political and economic independence, assure the integrity of its territory as well as that of its African colony, and procure for it equitable reparations, and sure guarantees for the future."

King Albert saw this change of wording as proof that Beyens was too ready to commit Belgium to the dictates of the Allies. He also disagreed with the Foreign Minister's insistence, made in letters to him of 4 and 10 January 1917, that Allied suspicions had to be allayed in order to avoid even stronger pressure that Belgium conform to Allied policy.⁵⁰ He saw no need to say that Belgium intended to act "*in perfect accord with the Allies*," a phrase that Beyens had used in the note handed to the French minister, Antony Klobukowski, on 12 January.⁵¹ Beyens felt that his integrity was under attack, that the king had lost confidence in him, and that he had no alternative but to resign. Nevertheless, he defended his policies, arguing in a long letter to Albert on the 21st that Belgium had little alternative except to rely on Allied support and seek security in a new system regulated by special conventions with several guarantors.⁵²

In this important letter, the Foreign Minister first refused to accept that the king had adopted the view of Renkin and Baron Paul Guillaume, Belgium's annexationist minister in Paris, that he, Beyens, had been "circumvented" by Cambon. Then, regarding the alteration in the text of the Belgian response to Wilson, he reminded Albert that Broqueville and the rest of the Cabinet had approved it. "*Nous en sommes donc tous responsables*," he stressed.

"Je persiste à croire que le désir si légitime du Roi, auquel s'était rallié avec empressement le conseil réuni à La Panne, 'd'obtenir dans un texte officiel la définition de notre point vue national et de nos buts de guerre', a été réalisé."

Beyens admitted that the Allies had been less than honest in being explicit in detailing their war aims after having forced Belgium to minimize hers. The comparison would have benefited Belgium, he noted. If, however, the king was not satisfied with the definitive text, he, Albert, could have insisted on the inclusion of the original war-aims statement. Beyens argued:

"Il ne l'a pas fait, et son silence, - qu'Il me permette de le Lui faire respectueusement remarquer, - me donnait le droit de penser qu'Il était satisfait du texte qui Lui avait été soumis."

As for the so-called "lettre d'obédience" to Klobukowski of the 12th, Beyens insisted that if there were anyone who wanted not to go beyond the Belgian response to the Declaration of Sainte-Adresse it was he. But Belgium was faced with real Allied suspicions, and Beyens believed he did what the situation required in writing the letter to Klobukowski. The French generals considered King Albert a pessimist, Beyens noted, and then there were the comings and goings of the Marquis de Villalobar and the "*voyages mystérieux à La Panne d'un Secrétaire espagnol*." Should the Belgians have given more force to these suspicions by refusing the letter requested? Beyens thought not.

"Ce n'est pas pour le maigre plaisir de rouler son vieil ami, le Baron Beyens, que M. Cambon est revenu sur la nécessité d'une déclaration formelle, afin de dissiper tout nuage."

Beyens, however, agreed that the draft of his letter to the French minister was not good, and he noted that he welcomed the changes made by the Prime Minister and the king.

Regarding the idea of a separate peace, Beyens stressed the confusion he felt after the Cabinet meetings of the 19 and 20 December 1916:

"On avait protesté contre l'idée d'une paix séparée mais en même temps on avait exprimé l'intention de connaître les conditions de l'ennemi et décidé d'exposer aux neutres nos buts de guerre. C'était s'engager insensiblement dans la voie d'une conversation avec l'Allemagne, où les Alliés refusaient d'entrer. D'où une scission avec eux inévitable. De plus j'avais entendu développer cette affirmation, militairement et politiquement fausse, qu'une paix de la Belgique avec l'Allemagne était possible du consentement des Alliés. Je m'étais tu pendant le conseil, ne voulant pas échauffer inutilement la discussion. Mais j'ai tenu dans ma lettre au Roi [of 10 January 1917] à refuter cette étrange conception, si contraire à la réalité."

Finally, Beyens did not agree with the king's optimism as to how much the Allies needed Belgium. It would not take much, he warned, for Allied leaders to turn public opinion against Belgium if there were sufficient reason to do so.

Beyens closed his long missive with the realistic reflection that if the Allies won the war and Belgium were thereby freed from German control, the Belgians would have to seek support from their liberators. But he asked: "*Quelle sera la nature de cet appui? Politique ou simplement militaire? Traité d'alliance ou seulement de garantie?*" His response revealed that his views had not changed:

"Le Roi sait où vont mes préférences. Je n'aperçois pas pour mon pays la possibilité d'une existence sûre, tant que les idées pacifiques ne prévaudront pas irrésistiblement en Europe, sans un secours éventuel réglé par des conventions spéciales avec plusieurs garants, et qui replacerait efficacement l'ancienne garantie de notre neutralité conventionnelle."

Even though Albert assured Beyens that he still had confidence in him⁵³ and followed Broqueville's advice that he should encourage the Foreign Minister to stay on,⁵⁴ the monarch clearly no longer believed that Beyens could stand up to the Allies. Though Beyens withdrew his resignation, Albert demonstrated his displeasure by effectively ostracizing him for the next six months, never once calling him to De Panne, something that Beyens' son called "une épreuve pénible" and Haag refers to as "une signe évident de disgrâce."⁵⁵

Beyens' Fall.

The exact circumstances of Beyens' fall and his replacement as Foreign Minister by Charles de Broqueville in late July 1917 are difficult to determine. But certain facts are clear: Beyens considered the Prime Minister one of his chief adversaries; Broqueville told the Cabinet on 13 July 1917 that Beyens was *persona non grata* in Paris; King Albert believed that his Foreign Minister of two years was too ready to bend to the wishes of the French; and Paul Hymans thought he, rather than Broqueville, should be selected to replace Beyens.⁵⁶

By the time Beyens resigned, all he could show for his efforts after two years was a statement, endorsed on 16 June 1917 by the French Prime Minister, Alexandre Ribot, which put France on record as having acknowledged Belgium's desire to have Luxemburg returned to her "*in the event that its international status would not be maintained after the war*."⁵⁷ But this came in the wake of not only the United States of America's entry into the war in early April, in order to "make the world safe for democracy," but also the Petrograd Soviet's call, on 15 May for a "peace without annexations or indemnities on

the basis of the self-determination of peoples." The French, however, had said nothing about "helping" Belgium achieve its aim. Hence, it became urgent to sound out not only the French, but also the British and the Americans on the prospect of diplomatic support for a Belgian solution of the Luxemburg question in light of a possible Allied conference for the revision of war aims that the Russian Provisional Government demanded in early June. At the Cabinet meeting of 22 June, the Belgian government gave qualified support to the so-called Petrograd peace formula, when it agreed that Belgium should disassociate itself from all Allied war aims that did not conform to it. But it reiterated its belief that the formula excluded neither reparations, colonial deals, nor the union of Belgium and Luxemburg, so long as the Luxemburgers themselves were given a chance to vote on the issue.⁵⁸

The departure of the man⁵⁹ whom King Albert considered too subservient to the French overjoyed Belgian annexationists and anti-neutralists.⁶⁰ But, in his last memorandum on war aims, Beyens revealed why the king had misjudged him. After warning his colleagues that the peoples of Europe were not going to be satisfied with a peace settlement which ignored the principles set forth in the Petrograd peace formula, he argued, that while Belgium had an indisputable right to demand complete independence and full reparation, it should no longer regard the acquisition of Eupen-Malmèdy and union with Luxemburg as essential war aims. He also contended that the areas of East Africa conquered by Belgian Congolese forces might now have to be returned to Germany as part of a compromise peace accord. In turning to the question of guarantees of Belgium's future security, Beyens observed that America's entry into the war and the probable establishment of a league of democracies to maintain the terms of a peace treaty rendered his proposal for an Allied treaty of guarantee obsolete. Belgium's best hope for security, he stressed, would now rest with such a league. In conclusion, he expressed the ardent hope that the war would end soon; for, if it continued much longer, he warned, widespread internal disorders would complete the destruction of the European social fabric, which the war had begun.⁶¹ King Albert certainly shared this last fear, but he did nothing this time to convince his Foreign Minister to remain at his post. Beyens left the political scene unlamented; but, for the moment, his proposal for a one-way treaty, despite his recent second thoughts, remained the accepted alternative to obligatory neutrality.

Broqueville Takes His Turn.

It is ironic that Beyens, whose ideas were closest those of King Albert,⁶² was replaced by a man who had a reputation for being a "jusqu'au boutiste" and who, by the king's own admission, had very close relations with some of the country's most ardent annexationists. But after two weeks of crisis, Broqueville

emerged as the new Foreign Minister. According to Professor Haag, the Prime Minister had long since given up his belief in a military victory and considered the Germans serious in their efforts to work for a mediated peace; but, since he had to keep this hidden from his colleagues, he played a "double game," going so far as to surround himself at the Foreign Ministry with members of what Haag characterizes as "*le clan annexionniste et belliciste*."⁶³ Whatever Broqueville's intentions, his involvement in the abortive Briand-Von der Lancken peace feeler caused him to lose his post as Foreign Minister before the year was out.⁶⁴

In Le Havre, Broqueville was confronted by a move to oust him led by Pierre Orts, the Secretary General *ad interim* at the Foreign Ministry. Orts was a Liberal with close connections to Hymans, who in turn threatened to resign from the Cabinet unless Broqueville gave up his ministerial post. The Cabinet Chief also had Renkin and Vandervelde against him. Only King Albert seems to have supported him unequivocally.⁶⁵

As the crisis developed, Albert conducted interviews with leading protagonists. To Van de Vyvere, who favored maintaining the status quo, he said, on 15 November, that there were three difficult points:

"Renkin ne peut quitter le Ministère, Broqueville ne peut cesser d'être chef de cabinet, Broqueville ne peut rester aux Affaires étrangères."

Then, on the 18th, he urged Broqueville to be conciliatory, especially with Renkin, and assured him that he had his continued confidence. Albert noted:

"Mais il tient à me mettre en garde contre un essai d'intimidation, une politique d'ultimatum aussi bien dirigée contre la Couronne que contre lui. Il y a là le choc de deux politiques: celle de la prudence, de l'expectative, du compromis acceptable et la politique absolue, outrancière, jusque boutiste de M.M. Hymans, Renkin et Orts."

On the 19th, he heard Poulet, who feared that the war would lead to revolution, express his desire to see Broqueville retained if possible; but, on the 28th Hymans made it clear that he would resign if Broqueville remained. The Liberal leader also made it clear that he wanted someone from the left to fill the post – perhaps Orts – but certainly not Jules Van den Heuvel, who was Belgium's minister at the Vatican and who had the king's support. The Minister of Economics then went on to argue that Belgium had to pursue the war at the side of the Allies until the restoration of a "*durable peace*." To this Albert responded that Britain's and France's uncompromising policy was not leading to a favorable peace but to an "irremediable and general revolution." On 4 December, Albert received Vandervelde, who said that Broqueville could remain Cabinet Chief, but he wanted him in charge of neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Ministry of War. The Socialist leader, if the king can be

believed, wanted someone that the monarch himself could control:

"M. Vandervelde donnerait sa préférence à un ministre assez terne pour les Affaires étrangères; il me conseille de prendre de l'influence sur lui. Il me dit qu'il aimerait me voir seul diriger les Affaires extérieures."

On 8 December, Albert told Broqueville that he favored turning the Foreign Ministry over to Gérard Cooreman, former Catholic President of the Chamber of Representatives and Director of the Société Générale, while Broqueville suggested Prosper Poullet. The Prime Minister also proposed the creation of a new war committee, divided into three sections – one for military and foreign affairs, one for economic affairs, and one for refugees and preparations for the restoration of the country – over which he would preside as Minister of National Reconstruction. Albert, sensing a trap, refused to sign the *arrêté*, though he agreed that, if the rest of the government went along, he would accept the idea.⁶⁶ After this long crisis, it was finally decided on 22 December 1917, that Broqueville would remain as Head of the Cabinet and receive the new post of Minister of National Reconstruction, but that Hymans would replace him as Foreign Minister.⁶⁷

Hymans Steers a Middle Course.

On the 17th, Hymans promised to keep Albert informed of the affairs of his new department. He acknowledged that the time was not right to make an announcement regarding Belgium's future status and that there should be no customs union with France. Hymans also agreed with Broqueville that there should not be a general resignation of the Cabinet, a move that would only disturb opinion at home and abroad.⁶⁸

In Haag's view, Broqueville paid the price for having committed the supreme crime of trying to emancipate his country's foreign policy from that of France and England.⁶⁹ The implication is that now Belgian policy was in the hands of a Francophile, anti-neutral expansionist, who intended to subordinate that policy to those of the Allies, despite his promise to King Albert to neither press for an immediate announcement regarding Belgium's future status nor to change policy regarding a custom's union with France.⁷⁰ There is no doubt about the new Foreign Minister's pro-Allied sympathies, but Hymans had already demonstrated his support for Beyens' *via media* and a willingness to cooperate with other members of the government to elaborate a policy which maintained an evenhanded approach to war-aims policy. An example in point is the Belgian response, published on 27 December, five days after Broqueville's departure as Foreign Minister, to the papal peace initiative of August 1917.⁷¹ The reply reiterated Belgium's demand for full

independence and territorial integrity of both it and its colony as well as full reparations and security guarantees for the future. It also made clear Belgium's intention to act in full accord with the powers guaranteeing its independence. Hymans, but not Broqueville, had a direct hand in the drafting of this document, which, though amended and approved by the Cabinet for the last time on 22 December, left out a specific repudiation of neutrality.⁷²

Hymans' determination not to incur Allied ill will, however, became clear when the Germans extended another peace feeler through Fernand Peltzer, the Belgian minister to Switzerland in mid-March 1918. Throughout the conversations, Hymans kept both his colleagues in the Cabinet and the Allies fully informed. King Albert was virtually alone in considering the latest German move worthy of serious consideration. But, with the German army on the move in the West after the launch of the massive offensive on 21 March, no chances could be taken.⁷³ Hymans was authorized to instruct Peltzer on 27 April to get Count Törring to clarify Berlin's intentions. As for Belgium's position, it would do everything to maintain its independence after the war. The Germans had to be convinced that, though opposed to neutrality, the Belgians had no plans to enter into permanent military ententes or alliances with any great power. However, for the time being, the fact that the Allies had not solicited any engagement on the part of Belgium was to be kept secret. In early May, Hymans notified the French and British ministers of his instructions to Peltzer, and, on the 10th, he informed the king of this fact.⁷⁴

One must keep in mind that the Törring-Peltzer talks were being held not only against the backdrop of the renewed German offensive, but also at a time when the *Frontbeweging* in the Belgian army and a serious difference of views regarding the king's constitutional role as Commander-in-Chief came together to cause a Cabinet crisis. The demands of the Frontists, which included: a Flemish-speaking university at Ghent, unilingual Flemish and Walloon regiments, and a Flemish administration in Flanders, did gain a certain degree of sympathy from the Prime Minister and his *chef de cabinet*, Léon Van der Essen, who served as an intermediary with the Frontists. But the majority of ministers remained sceptical of making concessions in wartime. King Albert expressed a willingness to examine possible reforms so long as they did not weaken the army, compromise the unity of the country, or undermine French culture and language in Flanders. In the end, the Cabinet decided to do little more than establish a commission of military men to investigate Flemish grievances in the army.⁷⁵

If the linguistic problem were not divisive enough, it coincided with a confrontation in the spring of 1918 precipitated when the king changed the Chief of the General Staff without consulting anyone in the government. Once again the monarch strictly interpreted his rights as Commander-in-Chief under Article 68 of the Belgian Constitution, while most ministers, including Broqueville, stressed the priority of Article 64, which required a ministerial

countersignature for all royal acts having a political implication.⁷⁶ Broqueville's reluctance to confront Albert directly and his sympathy for certain Frontist demands alienated key francophones such as Hymans and Vandervelde, who threatened to resign. Unable to restore his colleagues' confidence and having lost the king's goodwill, Broqueville decided to resign on 24 May.⁷⁷ Let us take a closer look.

At the Cabinet session of 22 May, Vandervelde and Hymans led the charge against Broqueville, not only accusing him of having known about the nomination of General Cyriaque Gillain ahead of time, but also criticizing the constitution of the linguistic committee. Vandervelde joined Hymans in threatening to resign, but this time if a committee were not set up to also study the question of the suffrage. Haag says that Broqueville's friends were paralyzed and could not speak. Renkin, meanwhile, prepared to deliver the coup de grâce on the 24th by denouncing Broqueville's methods of government.

At this meeting, Broqueville spoke first, defending himself against all charges; then, noting that he no longer had the confidence of his colleagues, he resigned. With this the session was suspended, as Carton de Wiart, Helleputte, and Paul Berryer, the Interior Minister, tried to find a solution that would prevent a break-up of the government and the inevitable bad impression that such a crisis would have in Belgium and, more importantly, in the army. The opposition members, however, supported by Renkin, as Haag notes, said that Broqueville could stay only if he agreed to change radically his style of governing. Policy, the Minister of Colonies said, had to be coordinated between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Broqueville could not be persuaded to change his mind: for him the insults of Hymans were "*la goutte d'eau qui a fait déborder le vase*." But, as Haag points out in referring to the notes taken by Léon Van der Essen, who interviewed the king's *chef de cabinet* on the 26th, it was the army command question which was the "immediate cause" of Broqueville's downfall. In a letter to Frédéric Van den Steen de Jehay at this time Broqueville denied having wished to challenge the royal prerogative regarding the army, but he attributed his resignation solely to the fact that he could no longer govern with colleagues hostile to him. Albert was, nevertheless, obsessed by what he viewed as his absolute right to command without interference, even going so far, as Haag asserts citing the testimony of Van de Vyvere who talked with him at the end of May, as threatening to demand that the Cabinet make an official decision on the principle of the matter. This the Finance Minister dissuaded the monarch from doing.⁷⁸

On the 24th Broqueville wrote a letter to Albert explaining his resignation. Luc Schepens concludes that, in the Prime Minister's mind, the linguistic question loomed large in the alienation of several colleagues, particularly Hymans.⁷⁹ On the 31st, Gérard Cooreman, the former Catholic President of the Chamber

of Representatives, took over as Head of the Cabinet as well as Minister for Economic Affairs.⁸⁰

Broqueville's departure, though a politically significant event, had little direct impact on either war-aims or peace diplomacy. Specifically, the so-called triumph of the opposition did not stop the Cabinet from approving on 23 June a new meeting between Count Törring and Peltzer in Bern. The prospect of any significant break-through resulting from the proposals that Törring presented, however, was undermined by the German government's refusal to abandon Belgium as a bargaining counter.⁸¹ Törring's efforts to exact firm promises from his masters in Berlin could not overcome the fact that Belgium would not be abandoned as a bargaining counter until Germany was forced to do so militarily. Thus, there was little hope that the Germans would have been willing to make the one concession – a promise of full independence for Belgium – that might have led to a serious break-through in the Törring-Peltzer talks that came to an end, as we shall see, in mid-September after the military tide had turned permanently in the Allies' favor.⁸²

As Willequet notes, Peltzer rebuffed Törring when he saw him on 10 August, declaring in writing that

"La théorie du gage et des garanties est en opposition complète avec le programme de la Belgique tel qu'il a été défini dans la note belge au Pape. Tant que cette théorie sera maintenue nous ne pouvons rien faire."⁸³

Thielemans states that Peltzer was following the instructions of Hymans, who took a harder line than the king. Albert, she notes, insisted that Germany make a prior commitment to liberate Belgium, but he made no reference to any "theory of pawns" in his draft response to Törring. In her view, the Belgian king still believed that Germany would only abandon Belgium when she had recovered her colonies.⁸⁴ Written in Galet's hand, the draft response⁸⁵ called for a clear and unequivocal statement of German intentions to restore Belgian independence, territorial integrity, and material status quo ante. Given the military turn of events, moreover, Albert saw a chance to act as an intermediary. But Albert wanted Törring to know that he had no intention of violating either his constitutional engagement to maintain his country's independence and territorial integrity or its interests.

When Törring returned to Berlin, he found Rear-Admiral Paul von Hintze, Kühlmann's successor as Foreign Secretary, willing to make the necessary concession, but General Erich Ludendorff vetoed any restoration of the status quo ante bellum in Belgium, despite the fact that the military tide had turned and despite a public statement by Wilhelm Solf, the German Colonial Secretary, on 21 August, that Belgium would be restored.⁸⁶ Gerhard Ritter is less willing than Willequet to give Hintze the benefit of the doubt. The late German scholar and arch-adversary of Fritz Fischer writes:

"If the Germans had really wanted to continue the talks, there would have been only one possibility. All reservations and limitations in respect of the relinquishment of Belgium would have had to go by the board, and Germany would have had to promise also to give whole-hearted assistance in restoring that country. This Hintze did not dare offer."⁸⁷

Nevertheless, when he met Peltzer for the third time on the 23rd (the latter now having been authorized to listen to what the Germans had to say), Törring went too far in declaring that he was speaking "in the name of the German government." In other words, "*les offres les plus larges d'intégrité, indépendance et liberté*," which Willequet says were now made⁸⁸ and which Haag also emphasizes,⁸⁹ represented, in my view, Törring's personal desire. Peltzer, of course, could not know this; so when the Count handed him a letter (during their fourth meeting a few days later) stating that the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary had agreed to permit Belgium to recover her economic and political independence (the integrity of the Congo also being guaranteed) and that all they wanted in return was to maintain commercial relations with her, to have her support at the peace table for a return of the lost colonies, and to obtain an equitable solution of the Flemish question (including an amnesty for the activist leaders), the Belgian minister in Bern had to treat it with all due care and respect.⁹⁰

Hintze received Törring's report on the 27th, and he was appalled by how far the Count had exceeded his instructions. The Chancellor and himself should not have been named and nothing should have been said about the Congo. Hence, fearing that the letter to Peltzer might be made public, the German Foreign Secretary reserved the right to eventually disavow both the letter's author and its contents. Hintze was also afraid of Ludendorff's reaction, especially since he had just worked out an agreement with the military leadership, which foresaw a German evacuation of Belgium on condition that no other power obtained political or economic advantages, superior to those enjoyed by Germany. The objective (as outlined in a document requested by the generals on the 26th) was to isolate Great Britain which, under the guise of fighting for the liberation of Belgium, was, they argued, really aiming to conquer Germany's colonies, destroy the Ottoman Empire, and weaken Germany politically and economically. Liberating Belgium, therefore, was part of a diplomatic manoeuvre to divide the Entente. But, as Willequet stresses, given the military situation, such a move came a year too late.⁹¹ Ritter observes that the document requested by the High Command

"could certainly not have been made public, except at the cost of creating a furor at home and abroad. It was decided to keep this hapless compromise in reserve, as the basis for a public statement 'at a suitable time.'"⁹²

Peltzer was hopeful that substantive discussions could now begin; but Hymans was more sceptical. Though he agreed that Germany seemed ready to recognize, in explicit terms, the territorial integrity of Belgium and its colony as well as its political and economic independence, the Belgian Foreign Minister argued that the demand for an amnesty of activists was an unwarranted interference in Belgian internal affairs. Moreover, Germany seemed intent on maintaining its commercial advantages in Belgium, stemming from the treaty of 1904 without at the same time saying anything about reparations. On top of this, Berlin wanted Belgium to intervene diplomatically with the Allies on behalf of a return of Germany's colonies, a demand which made the promise of full independence conditional and not absolute. In other words, Hymans' was implying that the "pawn theory" had not been completely abandoned. Hence, in communicating Törring's overture to the Allied ministers on 7 and 8 September, Hymans had cast the terms in a most negative light.⁹³

As Thielemans notes, Galet thought that the German offer should be pursued, but King Albert, in an apparent loss of illusions that he could convince his Foreign Minister otherwise, ratified Hymans' views on the matter. Thielemans also points out that the Cabinet was fully informed only on 12 September, that is, *after* the Allies.⁹⁴ As was to be expected, given the military turn in their favor, the latter were opposed to pursuing the Törring overture until after the outcome of the latest counter-offensive was known.⁹⁵

It should also not have surprised anyone that Törring's terms would be leaked to the press or that they would be seen as an attempt at a separate peace with Belgium before the war was lost, though Willequet is correct to deplore the addition of "false" propositions such as a request that Belgium remain neutral as reported by Reuters.⁹⁶ Hymans was not pleased by these revelations, the source of the leak of which he did not know.⁹⁷

Even more disturbing was a speech made by the German Vice-Chancellor, Friedrich von Payer, in Stuttgart on 12 September, in which he indicated that there could be no restoration of Belgium without a territorial *quid pro quo*, i.e., the return of Germany's colonies, and in which he accused the Belgians of having taken "an active part (before the war) in Great Britain's policy of encircling Germany." Von Payer, nevertheless, held out the hope of peace talks and hinted that separate negotiations with Belgium might be possible:

"The requisite understanding between Belgium and ourselves will be all the easier because our economic interests are frequently parallel and Belgium is even directly dependent on us as a hinterland."

It was to dispel any notion that they were contemplating a deal with Berlin in exchange for lenient treatment that Hymans and his colleagues decided to issue a public rejection of the Törring overture on the 19th.⁹⁸

In the official Belgian rejection of the German peace feeler, made public on 19 September, German motives and intentions were again portrayed in the most negative way. The Belgian government, the note said, had never received a formal set of proposals from the Imperial government. It then deplored what it characterized as a German demand that Belgium abdicate its sovereignty and resolve the language question along lines conforming to German policy. The maintenance of prewar commercial treaties it saw as a means of assuring German economic domination of a Belgium whose industry had been devastated by the invader. The request that Belgium help Germany get its colonies back was seen as proof that the "theory of pawns" had not been abandoned. Finally, it noted that the Germans had said nothing about repairing the damages they had caused in Belgium and then closed with a reference to the reply to the pope of 27 December 1917 as Belgium's "irreducible" program of war aims.⁹⁹

It is this document – "*une réponse accablante aux ouvertures de Törring*", as Thielemans calls it – that Haag, following Willequet, who notes that the Belgians were under Allied pressure, sees as "tendentiously" describing the German propositions.¹⁰⁰ Did the Belgian note interpret Törring's message in an "inexact fashion," as Jacques Willequet would have it? To support this conclusion, he argues that the reference to the Flemish question was nothing more than a "coup de chapeau" on the part of the Germans to people who had compromised themselves for them. The proposals on commercial matters, moreover, left room for discussion. And if Törring did not mention reparations, this was because Peltzer had not raised the issue! Hintze, Willequet insists, was disposed to respond favorably on this point. As for the question of colonies, this was a "*simple manoeuvre, destined to place England in contradiction with the principles she pretended to defend.*"¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, I cannot agree with the late eminent Belgian historian's interpretation here. Nor can I accept Haag's implication that a serious peace offer had been made and that it was only the intransigence of pro-Allied "jusqu'au-boutistes" such as Hymans which caused the opportunity to be missed and almost opened the door to Belgium's destruction via an Allied counter-offensive.

First of all, should we understand from the evidence that Törring was accurately representing his government's wishes? As Willequet notes, Törring himself, when he saw Peltzer on 24 September for the last time, lamented that his proposals had been deformed.¹⁰² Törring, whose good faith is not being questioned, had ample reason to be dismayed given the Pan-Germanist press campaign that portrayed him as a dupe of the Belgians. But the Bavarian Count was not an accurate judge of events. Warning Peltzer that another opportunity like the one missed might not return, Törring said that future military reverses for the Entente were in the "order of things" and asked what would remain of Belgium if the German armies were constrained to evacuate

her territory by force of arms? He then asked what use was it to France to be liberated by the Americans if there would no longer be any Frenchmen? Törring made it clear that he believed Belgium had acted under Allied, and especially British, pressure. He also reiterated that he had been authorized by the German Foreign Ministry to receive Belgian counterproposals and that the reparations question could have been discussed.¹⁰³ Clearly, however, as noted earlier, Törring had gone beyond his instructions and Hintze himself was not free to act as he would have liked. The German government was not ready to relinquish Belgium without some *quid pro quo* and guarantees, and the public statements coming from governmental figures were, if anything, contradictory.

What about Törring's concern, which is shared by Haag,¹⁰⁴ that Belgium risked devastation by the final battle to liberate her, and his (i.e., Törring) implying that if this happened it was her own fault for giving in to Allied pressure and not taking Germany's realistic proposals seriously? Here two points must be stressed. The first is that when Törring initially approached the Belgians, a great all-out German offensive to decide the war in the West before American military power could be brought fully to bear was about to be launched. The first meeting with Peltzer took place six days after the offensive began, and, for all intents and purposes, it seemed as if the Germans were on their way towards a significant break-through. The German advance reinforced King Albert's natural pessimism, and it is understandable that he would favor any peace that might spare Belgium from destruction, so long as her independence could be guaranteed. There is no evidence that shows the Belgian monarch preferring in the spring of 1918 either a separate peace or a compromise settlement, which would have left his country subordinate to Germany. By the same token, when the tide of battle turned in favor of the Allies, Albert had his hopes renewed that Belgium could benefit from Germany's need for a means to undermine the Allied war effort. He thought every chance for peace should be allowed and was dismayed by the hard line taken by Hymans and other members of the Belgian government.¹⁰⁵ However, at every crucial point when the Belgian Cabinet took a decision regarding the Törring overture, the king went along with the majority. He even praised Hymans' diplomacy vis-à-vis the Allies.

Which brings me to the second point that must be emphasized. Hymans was consistent in his view that Belgium had to keep the Allies fully informed of any contacts made with German intermediaries, and this was a policy the government had agreed to in the wake of the von der Lancken affair. Hymans' so-called subservience to the Allies could be interpreted as political wisdom in light of the chronology of events from March to September 1918. As we have seen in his instructions to Peltzer of 27 April,¹⁰⁶ Hymans had stressed Belgium's desire not to be bound by alliances or military agreements with any great powers; and, while he did not feel the time was ripe for revealing

the "important secret" of the Belgian government's independence from the Allies to the Germans, he did hold out the possibility in the future. Finally, it is difficult to see how Hymans or the Belgian government could have acted otherwise in September 1918, given the military situation and the press campaign surrounding the Törring proposals. As he informed his Legations on 26 September, any attempt at this point to renew the contact would take on the character of a separate negotiation; therefore, a clear stop had to be made.¹⁰⁷

By the fall of 1918, it was clear that the Allied offensive could not be stopped. As King Albert finally prepared to order his army to move forward, Hymans sought to gain support for Belgium's decision to abandon obligatory neutrality after the war. Though, at first, there was some hesitation regarding reference to the possibility of adopting a voluntary neutrality, the Belgian government decided to delete references to both voluntary neutrality and Beyens' concept of a one-way Allied treaty of guarantee. The Allies accepted the Belgian decision by the time the Armistice was signed on 11 November. Thus, as the war drew to a close, the Belgian ministers in Le Havre were confident that one of their most important war aims would be realized at the peace conference.¹⁰⁸

The Belgian government-in-exile had finally decided to reject the 1839 neutrality regime in its totality. In answer to the first question posed at the beginning of this essay as to why the Belgian government took this decision, then, we can see that a combination of circumstance and self-delusion, encouraged by an intense anti-neutralist propaganda campaign, left little room for dispassionate debate, as Edmond Carton de Wiart discovered when he published his note advocating a return to obligatory neutrality in March 1918. Even King Albert came around to accepting the inevitable.

However, we can also say in partial answer to my second question that the Belgian government, despite its hostility to neutrality after 1914, at no time committed itself during the war to any alliance, military accord, customs union or any other agreement that limited Belgium's sovereignty or its freedom to act. In this regard, there was a basic continuity of policy regardless of who held the post of Foreign Minister and the clear turn towards a more pro-allied and annexationist attitude in the Foreign Ministry and Cabinet after Beyens' fall in July 1917. In other words, the constraints of both internal and international politics forced Belgium's wartime leaders to carefully tread a diplomatic path that led towards neither declared neutrality nor a formal alliance with the former guarantor powers.

IV. EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

The Le Havre government's caution meant that the question of Belgium's future security still remained unresolved when the war ended. At the Paris Peace Conference¹⁰⁹ and after, successive Belgian governments tried and failed to solve this problem in a way that was both compatible with the country's independence and acceptable to a majority of Belgians. The problem stemmed from the need to balance Belgium's strategic interests against the reality of internal politics. Indeed, even before the war ended, King Albert decided to squarely face the need for a government, which truly represented the wishes of the Belgian people.

In the days preceding the armistice, King Albert called in a number of Cabinet ministers and prominent figures who had remained behind in occupied territory to meet with him at the Castle of Loppem near Brugge, where he had temporarily set up his headquarters, in order to discuss the composition of a new government of national union and reforms such as the granting of universal suffrage "pure and simple" (i.e., without plural votes), the implementation of the eight-hour day, and the creation of a Flemish university at Ghent. As a result, on 13 November, the government of Cooreman resigned, and Léon Delacroix, a Catholic lawyer, who had been an important member of the CNSA/NHVC, was charged with forming a new Ministry of National Union composed of six Catholics, three Liberals, and three Socialists. Four were to be veterans of the government at Le Havre, while eight were to be from occupied Belgium.¹¹⁰ If we compare, the government, which resigned on 13 November 1918, with the new one, we count eleven ministers who did not remain in office of the fourteen who returned to Belgium.¹¹¹ In the new government, three ministers from the Cooreman government were retained: Vandervelde (S) became Justice Minister, Hymans (L) remained Foreign Minister, and Renkin (C) moved over from Colonies to the Ministry of Railways, etc. Broqueville (C) came out of his brief retirement to become Interior Minister. Joining these veterans were eight political figures from occupied territory, six of whom, as Liane Ranieri notes, were prominent in the CNSA/NHVC.¹¹² For Haag, Helleputte, Pouillet, and Van de Vyvere could be considered flamingants in the Le Havre governments.¹¹³ Before his departure, Broqueville had moved close to them, as we have seen. All these ministers were Catholics and all represented Flemish constituencies, as did Paul Segers. In the new government, there were four ministers representing Flemish areas, but they could hardly be called flamingants.¹¹⁴

Many conservative Catholics denounced this government shake-up as well as the commitment to universal manhood suffrage without first calling an election under the old system as the "*coup d'état de Lophem*." The king, they argued, was coerced into making such concessions by Liberal and Socialist threats to foment revolution unless they were given satisfaction, allegations

which Albert always denied. Haag notes that the former Prime Minister, though favorable to suffrage reform since before the war, would have preferred the vote for men and possibly women at aged twenty-five with a second vote for fathers either thirty-five or forty years of age. This was a far cry from universal manhood suffrage "pure and simple" that the king and the Delacroix government now supported. Broqueville played an important role in convincing his party's conservatives of the impossibility of following strict constitutional procedure for amending the Belgian constitution. Thus, on 10 April 1919, it was decided that the election for the Constituent Assembly would be held on 16 November 1919 on the basis of universal manhood suffrage at twenty-one with no plural vote.¹¹⁵

As the foregoing political situation demonstrates, no government, which claimed to be one of national union, could afford to alienate one constituency or another. Tradeoffs and compromise would have to predominate in both domestic and foreign policy. Nevertheless, for a time, most Belgian leaders thought that they could unify the country around a program of expansionist aims that they hoped to realize at the peace conference.¹¹⁶ There was even an attempt to play power politics with the great powers. But the territorial solution to Belgium's internal divisions proved an illusion, as the Allies, the Dutch, and the Luxemburgers refused to cooperate in the creation of a "Greater Belgium."¹¹⁷ Belgium emerged from the peace conference with Eupen-Malmèdy,¹¹⁸ neutral Moresnet, and the right to exercise administrative control over Ruanda and Urundi as mandates of the League of Nations. Belgian aims vis-à-vis the Netherlands were left ultimately to bilateral negotiations, which proved frustrating and fruitless.¹¹⁹

Belgian hopes for a political union with the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg were also dashed on the rocks of French opposition and Luxemburger patriotism.¹²⁰ In the end, the Belgians settled for an economic union between Belgium and Luxemburg in 1921, but the price that had to be paid for Paris's support was the Franco-Belgian Military Accord of 1920, "*un chef-d'oeuvre d'ambiguïté*," in the words of Jacques Willequet,¹²¹ which the French interpreted as an alliance, but which the Belgians consistently viewed as a mere military arrangement for mutual aid in the event of a direct German attack on them.¹²² At no time were Belgium's policy makers content with the French connection alone, despite a willingness to cooperate in the Ruhr occupation of January 1923 in a last effort to get Germany to pay reparations¹²³ on schedule. The Belgians manifested their suspicions of French objectives in the early 1920's by remaining reluctant to ratify any economic or commercial agreement that might undermine Belgian sovereignty.¹²⁴ Indeed, the Belgian government even supported, albeit unofficially, separatist movements in the Rhineland to counter French aims there.¹²⁵

A British guarantee had to be obtained to both complete and offset the link to France. But London's price was a virtual return to neutrality, which was

deemed unacceptable, and a simultaneous agreement with France.¹²⁶ Finally, in October 1925, the Belgians obtained the elusive British guarantee at Locarno, but the price this time was a Belgian commitment to take sides against the state that committed an act of "flagrant aggression." What would happen, however, if Germany and France went to war over Poland or Czechoslovakia, two countries that were allied to France?¹²⁷ And what about the implications of the building of the Maginot Line, commenced in 1929? How could Belgium avoid being invaded if Germany and France came to blows?¹²⁸

It would take another rather lengthy study to answer these questions and to explain why, in the long run, Belgium's leaders decided to return to neutrality in 1936.¹²⁹ Suffice it to say here that anyone who carefully studies Belgian foreign policy in the context of the 1930's cannot help but conclude that the return to neutrality was inevitable given the lack of unity between Britain and France, on the one hand, and the divisions within Belgian society, on the other. Only an unequivocal, determined British policy to stand up to Germany no matter what the risk could have perhaps offset the influence of the neutralists, who, thanks to the ambiguities of Belgian-French military relations, gained the upper hand in 1936. A Britain committed to appeasement and a United States of America formally committed to neutrality by act of Congress, however, only reinforced the neutralist leanings of the Belgians. Even after Britain ceased to be tolerant of Hitler's expansionist aims, it was impossible for the Belgians to turn back. So long as the avoidance of war at all costs was their goal, geography and internal politics left the Belgians little choice than to hide as best they could.

On the basis of the evidence presented in this essay, two overall conclusions can be drawn. First, hostility to the regime of 1839 developed quickly within and without the Belgian government after the war broke out. But it was not until September 1918 that all references to a possible return to voluntary neutrality were eliminated from the instructions sent to Belgium's diplomatic representatives. The delay stemmed in part from the fact that many Belgians, especially those behind German lines, still harbored a desire to remain non-aligned. In fact, this sentiment permeated the letters and dispatches of key Belgian ministers, who, though opposed to any formal declaration of neutrality, consistently eschewed any system of alliances or customs unions that would have fettered Belgium's postwar independence. The second major conclusion, then, is that no matter what views were expressed on neutrality per se, Belgians, regardless of party or linguistic community, were generally sceptical as to the value of joining any alliance system. Beyens' one-way treaty of guarantee was the only politically acceptable solution to Belgium's security dilemma after the war.

Neither the Franco-Belgian Military Accord nor the Treaty of Locarno proved to be satisfactory. Hence, the decisions to return to neutrality in October 1936 and to welcome the one-way guarantee from Britain and France in April

1937 were virtually inevitable. A "realist" analysis would have Belgian leaders either seeking to balance power or bandwagoning as a result of their experiences between 1914 and 1936. But, in the end, they chose to seek a political consensus in favor of rearmament and to pursue a policy of voluntary neutrality in the hope that the potential adversaries would be dissuaded from crossing Belgian territory. Armed neutrality did not deter the Germans in either 1914 or 1940. As a security system, therefore, both the regime of 1839 and the one-way guarantee of April 1937 failed to protect Belgium from involvement in war. However, one must ask the question: Would Belgium have been safer or more united in 1914 and in 1940 had its leaders been either free or willing to engage in alliance diplomacy? I doubt it.

FOOTNOTES

(*) This essay is based on a talk entitled "The Significance of 1914 in the History of Belgian Foreign Policy: The End of Neutrality?" presented at the "Dag van de Nieuwste Geschiedenis/Journée de l'Histoire Contemporaine 1998" held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven on 25 April 1998. The session entitled "Het Belgisch buitenlands beleid in historisch perspectief (20ste eeuw)/La politique extérieure de la Belgique dans une perspective historique (20e siècle)," which was organized by Professor Peter Van Kemseke (KUL), also featured presentations by Rik Coolsaet (RUG), Maria De Waele (MIAT), Gustaaf Janssens (Archivist at the Royal Palace), and Mark Van Den Wijngaert (KUB). Thanks in part to a grant from the Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society in 1981, I was able to spend that summer in Brussels. The better part of my research in the Beyens papers at the Belgian Foreign Ministry was done at that time. Having written both my Master's and Ph.D. theses on Belgian foreign policy in the era of the two world wars (see the titles listed in the bibliography), I have consulted a vast array of both unpublished and published primary sources as well as innumerable secondary works. I would like also to thank the several colleagues and anonymous readers who have provided me with their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this work.

¹ These arguments were made both during and after the war; see, for example, Paul Crokaert (1917) and (31 August 1922); Pierre Nothomb (31 January 1922); and Pierre van Zuylen (1950), pp. 10-14, 45. (Check bibliography at the end of this essay for full references to published sources.) Here it should be stressed that opponents of neutrality, such as Nothomb, campaigned in favor of territorial expansion at the expense of Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg in Europe. The territories most coveted were the so-called "Walloon Cantons" of Eupen, Malmèdy, and St. Vith ceded to Prussia in 1815, neutral Moresnet, the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, southern Limburg with Maastricht, and Zeeland Flanders (Zeeuws Vlanderen) on the left bank of the Scheldt. Via the latter territory, the annexationists hoped to gain control over the mouth of the western Scheldt. The most extreme expansionists sought either to attain part of the Rhineland or to separate that territory from Germany as well. In Africa, the Belgian government ultimately opted for Portuguese cession of the Cabinda enclave and the left bank of the Congo River. The aim was to conquer part of German East Africa and trade it to the British in return for diplomatic pressure on Lisbon to make the desired concessions to Belgium. Portugal, of course, was to be compensated at the expense of German territory in Africa. For detailed accounts of Belgium's war aims between 1914 and 1919 see Michael F. Palo (1978) and Maria De Waele (1988-89). For Nothomb and his ideas and influence, see the essays in *Pierre Nothomb et le nationalisme belge de 1914 à 1930* (1980).

For the purposes of this essay the term "nation-state" is used in the traditional sense, i. e., its definition when it was coined in 1918: "a form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous people inhabits a sovereign state; esp.: a state containing one as opposed to several nationalities," as is noted in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition (1994), p. 773. International relations' theorists, such as Barry Buzan (1991), however, are not satisfied with this "catch-all" term that is still standard at the United Nations. Hence, "nation-state, exemplified by Hungary, Italy and Japan... {where} the nation precedes the state," is merely one of "four possible nation-state links" for Buzan (pp. 72-73). The others are the *state-nation* where (p. 73) "the state plays an instrumental role in creating the nation, rather than the other way around" (e.g. the United States, Australia, and many Latin American countries); the *part nation-state* where (p. 74) "a nation is divided up among two or more states, and where the population of each state consists largely of

people from that nation" (e.g. North and South Korea today and formerly East and West Germany and North and South Vietnam); and lastly the *multination-state* comprising (pp. 75-76) "those states which contain two or more substantially complete nations within their boundaries" (e.g., Belgium, Canada, and the former Yugoslavia). Though Belgium is studied in works based on international relations theory such as those by Michael I. Handel (1990) and Robert L. Rothstein (1968), most theoretical studies fail to adequately place Belgium's security dilemma in the proper internal political context.

² See the bibliography for the relevant titles by these authors.

³ In late 1911, a general in the cavalry, Baron Léon de Witte, in a brochure entitled *Situation de la Belgique en prévision d'un conflit franco-germain* and under the pseudonym "O. Dax," called upon Belgium to abandon neutrality and to ally itself with the stronger foe (i.e., Germany) once war became imminent. He called for an international conference to abrogate the neutrality clauses of the treaties of 1839. Though quickly repudiated and taken off the market, the brochure caused the French great concern. See Devleeshouwer (1958), pp. 135-140; and Bitsch (1994), pp. 438-439. General de Witte's idea is an example of what international relations theorists today would call "bandwagoning."

⁴ For a thorough discussion, see Thomas (1983), pp. 44-56, 198-209, 241-248, 275-323, 368-383, 507-529.

⁵ Frère-Orban expressed this view to Prince Napoleon in April 1869 during discussions over the French attempt to take control of certain Belgian railways; see *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 389-423; and the essays by Nadine Lubelski-Bernard (1981), pp. 217-228, and Lode Wils (1981), pp. 207-216. See also Lieutenant-Général Albert E. Crahay (1987), pp. 25-115.

⁷ Since the British feared France most at this time, Gladstone's policy was aimed at deterring France by threatening to intervene against the violator of Belgian neutrality. There was little talk of intervening against Germany. But Gladstone's main objective was staying out of war at all costs, and he had already had promises from both Berlin and Paris that Belgium's integrity and neutrality would be respected; it was fortunate for British credibility that the Prime Minister's resolve was not tested at this time, despite the fact that he did envisage sending 20,000 soldiers to Antwerp, as Roy Jenkins notes (1997), pp. 327-328. See the detailed account in Thomas (1983), pp. 275-323. A. J. P. Taylor (1971), p. 206, long ago argued the point of Britain's inability to effectively intervene in Europe without a continental ally. It is clear that King Leopold II (1865-1909) considered the main threat as coming from France, and he wanted the British to appreciate this fact. See Helmreich (1976), pp. 148-149.

⁸ Bitsch (1994), pp. 450-463; and G. Pedroncini (1978). On Germany's responsibility for deliberately violating the treaties of 1839, see Jacques Willequet (1963). On the eve of the war, two Frenchmen from the north – the Senator, Maxime Lecomte, and Lieutenant-Colonel breveté Camille Levi – penned a major study of Belgian neutrality in light of the danger from Germany. In their Foreword they write (1914), pp. iv-v: "La France, en dehors de ses sentiments et de la foi due aux traités, a un intérêt évident au maintien de l'inviolabilité du territoire belge. L'Allemagne, au contraire, semble avoir la conviction, comme bien des faits tendent à le prouver, que son intérêt supérieur, en cas de guerre avec la France, lui commande l'invasion de la Belgique."

⁹ Palo (1978), p. 824. For recent examinations of Belgian and British policies during the July-August Crisis, see J. Stengers, "Chapter Six: Belgium," pp. 151-174, and K. Wilson, "Chapter Seven: Britain," pp. 175-208, in Keith Wilson, ed. (1995).

¹⁰ Woeste, who remained in occupied Belgium during the war, expressed his views on neutrality in the spring of 1915 to Baron Léon Capelle, the Director General of Commerce at the Belgian Foreign Ministry, who reported on popular attitudes in Belgium during the

course of the war. His reports, which were crucial to the government-in-exile at Le Havre as a means of keeping track of opinion at home, were smuggled out of the country in the diplomatic pouches of the Spanish Legation in Brussels. It was not an easy task as Capelle informed Baron Beyens on 13 June 1917; see his letter in the Beyens Papers, 12481-21/5 (Correspondance avec Cardinal Mercier-Baron Capelle), at the Archives of the Belgian Foreign Ministry (hereafter abbreviated as ABFM. (Please note that I use the English translation of Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de Belgique/Ministerie Buitenlandse Zaken België for the sake of brevity.) For Woeste's views on neutrality during the war, see his *Mémoires* (1927-37), vol. 3, p. 27. After the war he defended his views in a publication entitled *La neutralité de la Belgique doit-elle être maintenue?* (1919).

¹¹ See note by Arendt for the Direction Politique, May 1915, Classement B, dossier 279-280 (Paix, Pacte de Londres 5/9/1914). Engagement ne pas conclure paix séparée (1914-1919), ABFM. Hereafter just the dossier number in the Classement B series will be given once it has been identified.

¹² The publication of his note entitled "La neutralité garantie: ses inconvénients et ses avantages" in the spring of 1918 stunned the government in Le Havre. Chevalier E. Carton de Wiart sent his revised memorandum to Charles de Broqueville on 25 March 1918; see in Broqueville Papers, dossier 395 (Correspondance avec le cabinet des Affaires étrangères concernant la politique intérieure et le commerce avec l'étranger, 1914-18), General Archives of the Realm (hereafter GAR. Once again for the sake of brevity I have used the English translation of Archives Générales du Royaume/Algemeen Rijksarchief). The text has been published in Lademacher (1971), pp. 493-504. Already in the autumn of 1917, preliminary drafts had been sent to the king and the Cabinet for comment. The debate was intense with certain people close to the monarch, such as Count Frédéric Van den Steen de Jehay, Albert's *chef de cabinet*, favorable and others, such as Jules Ingenbleek, his private secretary, very critical of any suggestion that the regime of 1839 could be maintained. Louis de Lichtervelde, Broqueville's secretary, was particularly critical. He not only called for an abandonment of permanent neutrality, but also expressed the desire to see Belgium enter "close military collaboration with its guarantors." See the Archives of the Royal Palace (hereafter ARP. I again choose the English translation for Archief van het Koninklijk Paleis/Archives du Palais Royal), Archives du Cabinet du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 255, F. Van den Steen de Jehay to E. Carton de Wiart, 31 October 1917, enclosed note by J. Ingenbleek, 30 October 1917; F. Van den Steen de Jehay to E. Carton de Wiart, 26 December 1917; doss. 256, Louis de Lichtervelde to F. Van den Steen de Jehay, 21 January 1918.

¹³ In my dissertation, I defended this view (1978), pp. 824-826. Daniel H. Thomas (1983), pp. 569-570, 598, essentially agrees, as does Henri Haag, in his *magnum opus* *Le comte Charles de Broqueville, Ministre d'État, et les luttes pour le pouvoir* (1910-1940), 2 vols. (1990), vol. 1, pp. 332-333, that Belgium should have remained neutral after World War I. (Please note that from now on only the page numbers of Haag's study of Broqueville will be given since the pages are consecutive.) For a more critical view, see Robert L. Rothstein (1968), pp. 68-69; and Sally Marks (1981), pp. 393-402. Both Rothstein and Marks are typical of an approach to the problem of Belgian neutrality, which emphasizes international power relationships rather than internal political restraints. There is an important distinction to be made between so-called "strong states" (where there is little domestic instability) and "weak states" (where the main threat to security can be said to come from within the state itself) as Barry Buzan stresses (1991), pp. 96-107. It is clear that in Buzan's terms, Belgium has always been a "strong state." However, I contend that even in "strong states" there exists a domestic political context, which helps define, if not determines the government's foreign and security policies.

After E. Carton de Wiart's memorandum was published, it evoked numerous critical

commentaries. Typical was the one by Eugène Standaert, a Belgian official in exile in Britain, who stressed that permanent neutrality hurt Belgium's military preparedness before the war and was not the main reason why Britain entered the war. The traditional desire to prevent the Low Countries from falling under the domination of a great power was what moved London to declare war in the end, he claimed. However, even Standaert saw voluntary neutrality as a viable alternative. Standaert also stressed that E. Carton de Wiart's views were not shared by a majority of British opinion. See ARP, Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 258, E. Standaert to E. Carton de Wiart, 23 April 1918; E. Standaert to J. Ingenbleek, 2 May 1918.

¹⁴ As will be seen later in this essay, King Albert was not always consistent on the issue of neutrality; however, his wartime opposition to the nationalist campaign against neutrality and in favor of alliances is well documented. See, for example, his notes on a conversation with Broqueville on 3 March 1916, in Marie-Rose Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 257-258. For an overall analysis, see Jacques Willequet (1976), pp. 70-82.

¹⁵ See in particular, Devleeshouwer (1958), pp. 332-341, and (1981), pp. 284-291.

¹⁶ For a recent analysis of the Belgian military reform in its overall context, see David Stevenson, (1996), pp. 299-301. The idea that Belgian military increases in 1913 were too little too late was standard after the war; see, for example, J. A. Wullus-Rudiger {Armand Wullus}(1935), p. 86.

¹⁷ In late 1886 and early 1887, a war scare developed between France and Germany as a result of Bismarck's effort to use the bellicose statements of General Georges Boulanger, the French Minister of War, to get a military reform bill through the Reichstag. The threat of war caused great concern in Belgium and brought requests from two close advisers to Leopold II, General Henri-Alexis Brialmont, the designer of the Antwerp fortress network, and Emile Banning, an important publicist and diplomat, that the Meuse fortifications be strengthened. When the British were sounded out regarding their readiness to defend Belgium, there was some hesitation, as numerous articles were published in the press on both sides of the Channel speculating on Britain's readiness to uphold its treaty obligations. Belgian public opinion, despite strong opposition from within the Catholic majority and certain Liberals such as Frère-Orban, gave support to the government of Auguste Beernaert, which sought the necessary credits for renovating the Meuse forts. In the parliamentary debate, which followed in June 1887, the Catholics made it clear that they would vote for the forts so long as the question of general military service was left aside. In the final vote of 14 June, the Meuse forts bill passed by 80 (of which 7 Liberals) to 41 (of which 11 Catholics). In his article, Michel Dumoulin (1981), pp. 223-244, demonstrates the complex interaction between public opinion and decision making. Clearly, however, one must come to the conclusion that this crisis proves that Belgium had little alternative except to pursue a neutral policy, even had the regime of 1839 not existed. The French, as Pierre Guillen so effectively shows (1975), pp. 87-96, were concerned with what they saw as a Germanophile government and military strategy (that based on the Antwerp redoubt). They, therefore, applauded the refurbishing of the Meuse forts that was voted, though Paris should have had no illusions as to Belgium's commitment to remain scrupulously neutral. The French, however, did not remain passive when the Belgian government announced plans to arm the Meuse forts with guns purchased from Krupp. A strong campaign in the Francophile press, encouraged from Paris, to get this decision overturned succeeded. Thanks to pledges of support from French firms such as Creusot, Cail, and Saint-Chamond, the Belgian firm of Cockerill was able to guarantee the government that it had the capacity to provide the artillery and armaments needed for the new forts. This victory for French lobbying, however, does not so much indicate that Brussels was now moving towards Paris as it demonstrates the determination of the Belgians to avoid accusations of unneutral behavior.

¹⁸ The standard study of Belgian anti-militarism is by F. Lehouck (1958). Here it should not be forgotten that the War Minister, Charles de Broqueville, proposed his military reform bill that introduced general conscription in December 1912 and that the debate on it, in secret session, took place amidst a Liberal-Socialist push for suffrage reform (i.e., the elimination of plural votes) that culminated in a general strike on 14 April 1913. The Cabinet Chief managed to get the leaders of the Liberal and Belgian Workers' Parties behind him by declaring his commitment to universal manhood suffrage to them secretly while publicly holding out the mere possibility of reform. In this way, he got the strike called off and kept his Catholic Party united as the military bill approached a vote. (On the general strike and Broqueville's tactics in ending it without the loss of right-wing support, see Gita Deneckere (1991).) When the vote on the military bill took place in the Chamber of Representatives on 28 May 1913, Broqueville could count 103 votes in favor, 62 against, with four abstentions. All but two Catholics voted with the majority, which included Paul Hymans and 14 other Liberals. Twenty-five Liberals and all 33 Socialists present cast negative votes. Charles Woeste, the anti-militarist ultra-right leader, voted with the majority, most likely because exemptions from service were accorded to seminarians and teachers. Flemish representatives voted for the bill, despite reservations, probably because Broqueville had earlier promised that Flemish recruits would be instructed in their own language. The military law was clearly less than the most adamant advocates of reform would have liked, but it did pass. The annual contingent was to rise to 33,000 men from 15,000 in 1910, with overall wartime strength going from 180,000 to 340,000 by 1920; of this number 150,000 men were to form the field army, 130,000 were to man the fortresses, and 60,000 were to form the reserve. It was a compromise measure that reflected the complicated political and ideological makeup of the country. In reality, neutrality had almost nothing to do with the outcome. For an analysis, see Palo (1978), pp. 107-112. Haag (1990), pp. 154-165, contrary to Devleeshouwer, (1958), pp. 178-221, paints a more optimistic picture of the military situation on the eve of the war. For a comprehensive analysis of both the social structure and the political and ideological divisions in 19th-century Belgium, see the recent study by Carl Strikwerda (1997). He is particularly convincing as to how the concepts of "class," "bureaucracy," and "corporatism" should be understood in the Belgian context (see Chapter 1: "The Problem of Mass Politics," pp. 1-25, for his definitions, and Chapter 14: "Working-Class Movements, Mass Politics, and Pluralism, 1875 to 1940," pp. 401-419, for his conclusions.

¹⁹ To be sure, as Jean Stengers stresses (1981), p. 47, there was an outburst of patriotic sentiment among Belgians under the impact of invasion, which contrasted in striking fashion with the torpor characteristic of the era of neutrality. But it would be going too far to argue that this so-called "Belgian" patriotism was able either to overcome the growing sentiment of alienation on the part of many Flemings or to counteract ingrained suspicions of France common among Belgians regardless of language or region. See also C. Verneuil, who concludes (1997), p. 183: "Si l'agression allemande du 4 août 1914 surprit la majorité des Belges et provoqua une extraordinaire flambée patriotique dans le royaume, preuve de leur attachement viscéral à leur neutralité et à leur indépendance, elle avait été annoncée depuis longtemps déjà. Inséparable du concert européen, de l'équilibre des puissances et du respect du droit international, la neutralité belge sombra avec eux dans la guerre en 1914. Ce ne fut sans doute pas un hasard si le premier acte de la destruction du vieil ordre européen fut la violation de la neutralité belge: toute refonte du premier passait par la disparition de la seconde. La neutralité belge était-elle un idée du XIXe siècle, et non du XXe?" One of the aims of the present essay is to answer this question in the negative.

20. As noted above, Baron Capelle had interviewed prominent Belgians in occupied territory in the spring of 1915. In late June, he observed that the great majority of Belgians undoubtedly wanted to maintain neutrality of some kind and avoid future entanglements; but he personally was clearly opposed to a simple return to the status quo ante bellum. He preferred a perpetual neutrality, voluntarily consented to, and endorsed by the powers in the peace treaty, a solution which he felt most Belgians would accept (see note by Capelle, 27 June, 1915, doss. 279-280, ABFM). The subsequent propaganda campaign by publicists such as Nothomb against neutrality and in favor of joining the alliance against Germany, meanwhile, gave a distorted picture of what Belgians both inside and outside the country desired as a postwar regime. In mid-1916, Capelle was instructed to undertake a formal survey of opinion on six questions. The first had to do with neutrality, the second with territorial expansion, the third and fourth with political and economic relations with Germany after the war, the fifth concerned views on the exiled government's current policies, and the sixth asked what a new postwar government's policies should be on such issues as income taxes, alcoholism, and Flemish demands. In all, I have been able to locate 69 reports in answer to the questionnaire in Classement B, doss. 377 (Enquêtes sur l'avenir de la Belgique), ABFM. In his memoirs, Paul Hymans (1958), vol. 1, p. 177, argued that the survey indicated an overwhelming hostility to neutrality. A similar view was expressed on 3 February 1917 by Count Louis de Lichtervelde, Broqueville's private secretary, upon examination of 40 reports (see in doss. 279-280 and in doss. 377, ABFM). For the sake of brevity I will not identify the respondents, except to say that among them were prominent political figures and diplomats, including a former Director General of Policy at the Foreign Ministry and a former Foreign Minister, several lawyers, a couple of medical doctors, university professors, two priests, and a number of businessmen, several of whom were members of the Comité Nationale de Secours et d'Alimentation (CNSA)/Nationaal Hulp- en Voedingscomité (NHVC). All three political tendencies were represented. Brussels (Brabant) was the residence of 44 respondents. The remaining 25 were from the following cites (provinces): 9 from Liège (Liège); 3 from Antwerp (Antwerp); 2 each from Dinant (Namur), Mons (Hainaut), and Ghent (East Flanders); and one each from Aalst, Louvain, and Nivelles (Brabant), Soignies and Tournai (Hainaut); Huy (Liège); and Arlon (Luxemburg). Clearly, Flemish opinion was severely underrepresented. Of 56 responses to the question on neutrality, 37 were in favor of abolishing the regime of 1839. Of these, however, five said either that Belgium should choose voluntary neutrality or that neutrality was the only logical policy to pursue. Another held out the possibility that Belgium could choose neutrality if necessary. Finally, another respondent concluded that Belgians were indifferent to neutrality and that, while they saw the old regime as insufficient in terms of a guarantee, they would follow the government's decision whichever way it went. Thus, we can conclude that only 30 of the 56 respondents opposed any type of neutrality. This means that 26 were in favor of or allowed the possibility of some form of neutrality. Of this group, 6 favored a return to the regime of 1839. To them we can add 9 others who supported some form of guaranteed neutrality. Of those respondents with clear political affiliations, Catholics (8 for and 7 against) and Socialists (6 for and 6 against) were evenly split on this question as were those (4 for and 4 against) with no clear ideological tendency. The Liberals were clearly opposed to neutrality (8 for and 13 against), but even here one cannot speak of an overwhelming majority. Of the 35 respondents from Brussels, 18 favored neutrality while 17 opposed it. Interestingly, of the 15 Liberals from Brussels surveyed, 7 favored neutrality. If we look at how the 30 clear opponents of neutrality viewed the prospect of Belgian participation in some kind of alliance or defense agreement, we see that only 6 (two from each political preference) were favorable. A similar number of the 26 proponents of neutrality favored defense agreements. A number of respondents on both sides of the

neutrality question indicated their support for a strong defense whether or not they favored defense agreements. On the basis of this new analysis, therefore, I believe that contemporaries such as Hymans and Lichtervelde and historians such as D. H. Thomas (1983), pp. 539-540, and Jacques Willequet (1984), p. 17, have over-estimated the hostility to Belgian neutrality among predominantly francophone notables in occupied Belgium during the war. In my thesis (1978), pp. 579-580, I had analyzed only the most complete responses to the Capelle survey, but still I had my reservations about Hymans' conclusions. I had also indicated (pp. 580-581) that the Capelle survey showed a clear tendency against annexations, particularly in the case of Dutch territories. My more recent analysis of 57 responses has led me to revise this conclusion somewhat, with clear majorities in favor of acquiring Luxemburg, Eupen-Malmèdy, and Zeeland Flanders. For the best qualitative analysis of the Capelle survey responses on territorial questions, see De Waele (1988-89), chapters II through VIII, *passim*.

21. See the analysis and documentation in Palo (1978), pp. 221-235, notes 1-35, 245-251. The 23 May 1915 instructions said nothing about territorial war aims in Europe, but the decision to barter territory conquered in German East Africa in order to obtain Cabinda and the left bank of the Congo river from the Portuguese was mentioned. See in *ibid.*, pp. 300-301. For the text see Davignon to Hymans, Guillaume, and de Buisseret, 23 May 1915, 1 annex: copy of instructions on war aims dated 28 April 1915, Correspondance Politique Légations, Grande-Bretagne, 1915, (CPL, GB) ABFM. A number of ministers and officials wrote comments on Belgium's war-aims program at this time and King Albert read most of these. The strongest case for voluntary neutrality was made by Léon Van der Elst, the Secretary General at the Foreign Ministry. Prosper Poulet, the Minister of Arts and Sciences, saw the regime of 1839 as dead, but supported the idea of a one-way guarantee, which, we will see, Beyens favored. Count Emile Goblet d'Alviella, the Liberal Minister of State, who would enter the Cabinet in January 1916, opposed obligatory neutrality as well. Goblet, however, supported territorial acquisitions so long as the populations concerned approved. Emile Vandervelde, the Socialist Minister of State, who would also join the Cabinet in early 1916, was of a similar view, but rejected the idea (articulated by Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London) that Belgium should become "une petite 'grand puissance.'" Such a policy, he said, would entail onerous long-term military expenditure. See ARP, Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 236, note by L. Van der Elst, 19 May 1915; note by E. Vandervelde, no date, but context indicates May 1915; "Note sur la neutralité," by P. Poulet, 26 May 1915; Count E. Goblet d'Alviella to King Albert, 9 June 1915, with enclosed note on Belgium's future relations with Germany, etc.

22. Palo (1978), pp. 267-274, 280-283.

23. As Haag notes (1990), p. 355, in early June, Broqueville proposed that Beyens be called in to assist Davignon, but in a letter to the Chief Minister of 8 June (see Marie-Rose Thielemans and Emile Vandewoude, eds. (1982), no. 426, pp. 581-582), Albert insisted that Beyens be given actual responsibility; hence the solution to name him Foreign Minister *ad interim*. The Cabinet Head raised objections in his letter to the king on the 9th, noting that there was great hostility to Beyens within the Cabinet. Albert, however, defended his solution in a strong letter on the 10th (see Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), no. 427, pp. 582-583, and p. 584 for the quote from Broqueville's letter of the 9th where Beyens is referred to as "une personnalité... antipathique"), and the next day Broqueville acquiesced. Haag notes (1990), pp. 356-358, that Broqueville had to resist a threat by Joris Helleputte, the Agriculture Minister, to organize a collective resignation of the Cabinet. At the Cabinet meeting on 2 July 1915, it was decided that Davignon would be given a leave of absence for reasons of health (see Procès verbal du Conseil des Ministres, 2 July 1915, Broqueville Papers, doss. 375 (Changement du titulaire du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères; Départ

de J. Davignon; son remplacement par Beyens; incident avec le Roi (juin 1915), GAR). On 16 July, Beyens wrote to Broqueville to warn him that he would accept the post only on condition that he be able to work freely. Renewed hostility in the Cabinet or ill will on the part of functionaries at the Foreign Ministry would force him to decline the honor proffered. He did note, however, his agreement with the document on Belgian aims that had been submitted to the Cabinet in April. See Beyens to Broqueville, 16 July 1915, Beyens Papers, doss. 12481/21/5 (Correspondance avec mes collègues, 1915-1917), ABFM. It is partially quoted in Baron Beyens (1981), pp. 32-33. See also Henri Davignon (1954), pp. 276-277, who notes that Julien Davignon had offered to resign in 1915, not only because of his illness, but also

because he was "a little disgusted" with the indiscretions of a few of his colleagues. King Albert refused. He also says that it was at his father's request that Beyens took definitive possession of his portfolio in January 1916.

²⁴ Beyens Papers, doss. 12481/21/1 (Correspondance avec le Roi), ABFM. It is partially excerpted in Beyens, (1981), pp. 26-28.

²⁵ Copies of this document can be found in doss. 279-280 and in the file Neutralité, Indépendance, Défense Militaire, (NIDM), ABFM. It is quoted in Beyens (1981), pp. 54-55, but the year is erroneously given as 1916.

²⁶ This commitment was made public in the Anglo-French Declaration of 24 April 1937. Fernand Vanlangenhove (1980), pp. 197, 246, who was Secretary General at the Foreign Ministry at the time and who was instrumental in the negotiations that led up to this declaration, has acknowledged his debt to Beyens. In an earlier work (1969), p. 11, however, Vanlangenhove (who cites Hymans' *Mémoires*) quotes a note of 11 October 1917 by Albert de Bassompierre, the General Director of Policy, in which the one-way treaty of guarantee is mentioned. Here he makes no mention of Beyens; but on the next page (p. 12) he does! See also, Willequet (1976), p. 75.

²⁷ On 24 November 1915, Beyens sent a dispatch to his representatives in London, Paris, and Petrograd stating the case against obligatory neutrality, but retaining the idea of a possible voluntary neutrality after the war (see in CPL, GB, ABFM). However, under pressure from the majority in the Cabinet, Beyens was subsequently forced to drop the reference to voluntary neutrality, though the Allies were not to be told of this decision until the time was right (see Beyens to Hymans, Guillaume, and de Buisseret, 7 Dec. 1915, nos. d'ordre 1041, 2427, and 349 respectively, Classement B, I Luxembourg, ABFM; and Renkin to Broqueville, 11 Dec. 1915, Broqueville Papers, doss. 409 (Conditions éventuelles de paix en ce qui concerne la Belgique; Questions générales, correspondance et notes, 1915-1916, GAR).

²⁸ Broqueville faced vehement opposition to any broadening of the Cabinet from Helleputte, who insisted that Parliament had to be consulted first. However, with the three parties cooperating within the CNSA/NHVC in occupied Belgium, Broqueville saw the necessity to bring in opposition leaders in exile as crucial to the maintenance of the Le Havre's government's credibility. For the most detailed account, see Haag (1990), pp. 362-373.

²⁹ In the fall of 1915, Nothomb had drafted an extensive memorandum on war aims, had it endorsed by several prominent Belgian writers, lawyers, and diplomats, and submitted it to the Belgian Cabinet. To realize its "natural" frontiers, Belgium, he argued, had to receive the left bank of the Scheldt, Dutch Limburg, the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, and the "Walloon" Cantons of Prussia. In addition, he called for the establishment of a neutral Rhineland buffer state. Since the attainment of such aims depended upon a decisive Allied victory over Germany, he advocated that Belgium join the alliance immediately. See the text of this memo of 15 Nov. 1915, in doss. 323 II A (Conférence de Paix: Luxembourg;

Révision des traités de 1839; Est-Afrique), ABFM; see also Henri Davignon to Pierre Nothomb, 18 Nov. 1915, and H. Davignon and P. Nothomb to Beyens, 16 Dec. 1915, in doss. 176, Nothomb Papers, Centre général du documentation, Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve. For an analysis, see Jacques Willequet (1970), pp. 349-351. For Nothomb's postwar critique of Belgian policy regarding the Pact of London, see his article in *Le Flambeau* (31 January 1922), pp. 16-18; for Beyens' rebuttal of Nothomb's overall critique of his policies, see his "Deux politiques" in the same journal (30 April 1922) and 31 May 1922).

³⁰ Professor Haag (1990), pp. 373-375, is at pains to point out that the views of his protagonist should not be confused with those of Neuray, despite the close relationship between the two men. For a more skeptical view, considering the financial involvement of the Prime Minister in not only the *XXe Siècle* but other wartime journals as well, see Luc Schepens (1983), pp. 187-193.

³¹ Beyens' arguments were contained in a long note dated 20 Dec. 1915 (doss. 279-280, ABFM) which he read to his colleagues on the 21st. He stressed that, since the Belgian government had no intention of signing a separate peace and would communicate immediately to the Allies any overture by the Germans to Belgium, there was no need to adhere to the Pact of London. He then warned that if Belgium were an "allied" power and Germany evacuated Belgian territory for military reasons, the Belgian army would have to continue fighting. It was preferable, he concluded, that Belgium do everything possible to maintain its special position as a violated neutral fighting a war of self-defense. Broqueville's role at this time is ambiguous. See Haag (1990) pp. 387-404.

³² For an account of the diplomacy of the Declaration of Sainte-Adresse, see Palo (1978), pp. 324-343, notes 34-79, pp. 348-353.

³³ They were the Liberal leader, Paul Hymans, who remained in London as minister plenipotentiary; Count Emile Goblet d'Alviella, a Liberal Representative from Brussels; and Emile Vandervelde, the head of the Belgian Workers' Party and President of the Second International. All three were made Ministers of State as war broke out.

³⁴ The fullest account is in Haag (1990), pp. 375-383. See also King Albert to Helleputte, 24 January 1916, in Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), no. 449, p. 643, and comments, pp. 643-644.

³⁵ The problem of the Congo needed special attention, and the Allies subsequently issued a separate declaration pledging to uphold its integrity on 29 April 1916. For these negotiations, see Palo (1978), pp. 519-523, notes 1-15, pp. 567-569. Nevertheless, King Albert was not pleased with the Declaration of Sainte-Adresse. In a letter to Jules Ingenbleek of 18 February 1916, in which he had accused Broqueville of wanting to establish "his absolute dictatorship" over the monarchy, the king called the Declaration "weak" because it did not speak of the integrity of the country and its possessions and did not include the term "légitimes revendications." "Moi je trouve cela un échec...." he said. See Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), no. 455, p. 655.

³⁶ In letters to Ingenbleek of 22 and 24 February 1916, Albert took Fernand Neuray and his *XXe Siècle* to task for printing both annexationist and anti-dynastic articles, and he accused Broqueville's entourage of leading a campaign against him; see Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), nos. 457 and 458, pp. 658-660. Clearly, the king was upset with his Chief Minister. But Broqueville managed to explain away his own failure to defend Beyens in the Cabinet on the 24th by claiming that it was the king who had undermined his authority. On 26 February 1916, Beyens wrote to his wife: "Broqueville a essayé de m'expliquer pourquoi il ne m'avait pas défendu. C'est la faute du Roi qui a miné son autorité sur ses collègues. Il m'a dit que j'étais le seul homme capable de diriger la politique étrangère, qu'il ne fallait attacher aucune importance à Renkin, ni à l'hostilité de la petite

coterie du Havre." See Baron Beyens (1981), p. 86, n. 2. Haag, who recounts the story of Beyens' attempted resignation, (1990), pp. 417-420, cites neither this letter nor those by Albert to Ingenbleek. According to Henri Davignon (1954), p. 281: "Le parti de la 'petite Belgique', trouvait en Renkin, son plus farouche adversaire."

³⁷ In his biography of Broqueville (pp. 426-430), Haag tends to minimize the differences between the Prime Minister and the king. He bases his conclusion on the closeness of the two men's policies and on the phrase in the king's letter of 5 March 1916 (a letter reproduced in Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 345), where he says: "Je sais, d'après nos nombreux entretiens que la politique de M. Renkin n'est pas la vôtre, et c'est le principal." However, by not mentioning the letters to Ingenbleek cited above and by not including all the specific terms used by both the king and Broqueville during their talk on the 3rd (as reported in Albert's *Carnets*) and by the king in his letter of the 4th (for example, Albert's insistence that it was premature to discuss territorial extensions, economic unions, or neutrality), Haag underestimates the disagreement between the king and the Cabinet, if not Broqueville himself. See full text of Albert's letter to Broqueville of 4 March 1916 in Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), no. 459, pp. 660-663. Here one should note a significant discrepancy between Raoul Van Overstraeten's edition of Albert's *Carnets* (1953) and the original, which Professor Thielemans has now published. Whereas in the entry for 27 February 1916, Albert complains of the nationalist campaign of *Le XXe Siècle* "encouragé par certains ministres" in Van Overstraeten, ed. (1953), p. 82, he specifically mentions "de Broqueville, Carton, Renkin, Segers et d'autres" in Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 256.

³⁸ In addition to the queen and Waxweiler, only General Harry Jungbluth and Captain Emile Galet were *au courant* regarding the talks in Zurich. For details on the Törring-Waxweiler talks, see Haag (1990), pp. 492-496. See also Thielemans (1981), pp. 229-260. The theme that Albert was convinced of a German military victory sooner or later unless serious moves towards a compromise peace were made has been a consistent one in the works of Professor Thielemans; see her biographical essay, *Albert de l'enfance à la maturité* in Thielemans and Vandewoude, eds. (1982), pp. 115-123; and letters 438, 439, 441, 443, 444, 450, 451 and commentary, pp. 604-618, 619-623, 625-640, 644-650; see also her *Albert Ier, Carnets* (1991), pp. 51-62, and entries for the 3rd, 10th, 17th, 25th, and 30 November 1915, the 10th, 13th and 15th December 1915, the 2nd and 15th, January 1916, and the 7th and 8th February 1916, pp. 232-253. See also Luc Schepens (1976), pp. 83-100.

³⁹ See Haag (1990), pp. 436-449, where the Prime Minister is given the benefit of the doubt. According to Fernand Vanlangenhove (1927), p. 219, Etienne Clémentel, France's Minister of Commerce and National Economy, sounded out Broqueville on the idea of a customs union on 28 May 1916 at Sainte-Adresse, but received no reply. According to Thielemans (1991), p. 66, Broqueville was prepared to collaborate with an Allied economic entente directed against Germany. This policy, she notes, differed from that of King Albert, who, in a letter to Beyens on 25 March 1916 wrote: "Je ne puis assez déconseiller de prendre un engagement irrévocable de nous lier économiquement aux puissances alliées et de nous interdire toute conclusion future de traités de commerce avec l'Allemagne;" see text of letter on p. 346. After the Allied Economic Conference, Albert wrote in his diary (Thielemans {1991}, p. 272, on 27 June: "D'après tout ce qui me revient, Broqueville et Clémentel ont eu des entretiens dont la portée a dépassé de beaucoup ce que le chef du Cabinet nous avait dit. Ce ne serait rien moins qu'une union douanière que nous proposerait la France et Broqueville serait acquis à cette idée et endormirait les soupçons de ces collègues en leur parlant seulement du libre échange que nous promet la France." This entry was not published in Van Overstraeten's edition of Albert's *Carnets*. On the same day, as Thielemans notes (1991), p. 72, Broqueville wrote to the king denying he had made any binding commitments. But Albert remained skeptical, and in a letter dated the 5th of July

(Thielemans {1991}, p. 357), he insisted that Broqueville communicate with him in writing to both save time and avoid misunderstandings. As Thielemans notes (1991), p. 73), the Cabinet Chief took this request as a vote of no confidence and warned that a break in direct contacts would "lead inevitably to a future rupture." Albert tried to reassure his minister in a letter of the 7th, but he did not withdraw his request (see Thielemans {1991}, pp. 357-358). For more details on Allied economic policies, see Georges-Henri Soutou (1975), pp. 257-273, and (1989), pp. 109-411, 746-851. On Clémentel's effort to obtain a customs union with Belgium, see also the brief summary in Eric Bussière (1992), pp. 13-23.

Fifty respondents to the Capelle survey in 1916-1917 had something to say about economic and commercial relations with Germany and/or the Allied powers after the war: 28 favored some kind of economic penalties against Germany; 11 opposed such penalties; 23 favored an indemnity or reparations to be paid by Germany; and 20 expressed a desire for full economic liberty. Of the 13 respondents with views on customs unions or economic accords with the Allies, 11 favored such agreements in general, while 2 specifically argued against a customs union with France. No one indicated a preference for such an agreement with France, however. Finally, 18 respondents favored treaties of commerce. When we break the responses down by political party, we find 6 Catholics, 15 Liberals, and 7 Socialists favoring economic penalties against Germany, while 2 Catholics, 4 Liberals, and 4 Socialists were specifically opposed. The breakdown by region is as follows: respondents from Brussels favored penalties by 15 to 7; those from Flanders were evenly split 2 to 2; while those from Wallonia overwhelmingly approved penalties 11 to 2. On the specific question of reparations or indemnities, 9 Catholics, 7 Liberals, no Socialists, and 7 non-party figures were favorable. On the question of economic accords with the Allies (including possible customs unions), 2 Catholics, 5 Liberals, 3 Socialists, and one non-party figure were favorable, while only one Catholic and one Liberal specifically argued against such accords. Opinion on this question by region is as follows: 4 from Brussels in favor and 2 against; and 7 from Wallonia in favor and none against. Of the six respondents in the survey from Flanders, none expressed an opinion on this question. For the survey, see in doss. 377, ABFM.

⁴⁰ In his Examen Critique "Les buts de guerre français" (1990), pp. 441-442, Haag criticizes Pierre Renouvin (Jan.-March 1966), pp. 1-38, for downplaying French expansionist goals beyond Alsace-Lorraine. The most dangerous views from a Belgian point of view were those held by General Joffre, who, in late August 1916, drafted a memorandum calling for annexation of the Saar Basin, the formation of three or four autonomous states on the left bank of the Rhine, and the possibility of a union of Luxemburg and Belgium if the latter joined France in an intimate alliance. For Roy A. Prete (1985), p. 896: "French military war aims with regard to Belgium were remarkable, rivaling the aggressive war aims of the Germans. Enlarged by the left bank of the Scheldt and Dutch Limburg, at the expense of the Dutch (to be compensated by Prussian East Friesland), Belgium would also receive border cantons (which she actually received later), Eupen, Malmédy and St. Vith, and would be brought into the French economic and political orbit by an economic *zollverein* and integration of the Belgian defense system into that of France. If Belgium thus gave up her neutral status and accepted an intimate alliance with France, France would renounce her claim to Luxemburg, and leave open to the population of the duchy the choice, in a plebiscite, either of annexation to Belgium or independence under French economic and military control. The French in either case would exercise complete economic, political and military control up to the Rhine." On French war aims and Belgium, see David Stevenson (1982a), and (1982b), pp. 17-18, 27, 31-32, 43-44, 50-52, 73, 121-122, 125, 154-155, 159, 170, 183-184.

⁴¹ Of course, the ground had been prepared diplomatically. In early July, before meeting

Grey, Beyens repudiated the annexationist propaganda campaign in an effort to calm both Dutch and British opinion. Preliminary notes on both the Scheldt and Luxemburg questions had also been sent to London for review. For details, see Palo pp. 378-387, notes 65-90, pp. 424-426; and De Waele, (1988-89), pp. 244-254, which is particularly informative on the propaganda campaign and the Dutch reaction. For the notes on the Scheldt, neutrality, and Luxemburg by Beyens, which were submitted to Grey on 7 July 1916, see respectively in doss. 10997 (Revendications belges, 1914-1918), no. 603, doss. 279-280; and Class. B., I Lux., ABFM.

⁴² For details see Haag (1990), pp. 464-469; and Palo (1978), pp. 387-392, notes 91-101, pp. 426-427. Even before the Cabinet met, Beyens felt the sting of criticism from Hymans, who until now had staunchly supported his policies. For the Liberal leader, Belgium should simply repudiate neutrality and pursue a completely independent foreign policy "without reserve, without condition, and without restriction" (see note by Hymans, 7 July 1916, Hymans Papers, doss. 85 [Pièces se rapportant aux demandes de la Belgique, formulées devant Edward Grey par le baron Beyens (1916)], GAR; and Hymans, (1958), vol. 1, p. 173). As Haag notes (1990), p. 466, Renkin wrote an analysis of Beyens' memoranda and submitted it to Broqueville who annotated it. According to Haag, the Cabinet Chief gave the Colonial Minister the benefit of the doubt on the question of the guarantee and the Foreign Minister the same benefit on the issue of the Scheldt. However, I believe that Broqueville generally supported Renkin's arguments on the Scheldt as well, considering his critical marginal notes (see Renkin to Broqueville, 19 July 1916, Broqueville Papers, doss. 411 [Mémoire sur la neutralité et sur l'Escaut (Beyens), GAR]. Segers, who was not present at the 13 July Cabinet meeting, summarized his arguments against Beyens in a note sent to Broqueville and Hymans on 3 August 1916 (see in Broqueville Papers, doss. 411 and Hymans Papers, doss. 85, GAR). In a letter to Albert of 14 July 1916 (not cited by Haag), Beyens summarized his trip to London and his talks with Grey. He also discussed the Cabinet meeting of the 13th. He mentioned that he was supported by Broqueville, Vandervelde, Schollaert, and Van de Vyvere (see this letter in Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/6 [Lettres de Beyens au Roi, février au mars 1917], ABFM. Here it should be noted that Frans Schollaert, former Cabinet Chief and President of the Chambre of Representatives at the outbreak of war, was not a member of the Cabinet.

If one compares the text of Albert's diary entry of 22 July 1916, published in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 276-277, with those portions as published by Van Overstraeten in (ed. 1953), pp. 103-104, one can readily see that the general left out the reference to Broqueville's having told him of the bad effect that Beyens' action in London had had and to the fact that he showed the king Renkin's critical report. The king's remark that Broqueville opposed territorial expansion at the expense of Holland was duly printed, but the reference to Renkin, Segers, and Carton being "fervent partisans" was not. Broqueville's alleged lack of hostility to the king's preference for a "declared neutrality" and his commitment to a policy of "absolute independence" vis-à-vis the Entente powers are also noted, but missing from Van Overstraeten's edition are the concluding paragraphs where the monarch, though expressing his disappointment with Beyens' action, criticizes Renkin for now supporting a policy of complete independence, whereas hitherto he had consistently condemned obligatory neutrality.

Professor Thielemans (ed. 1991), p. 73, suggests that Beyens was furious with Broqueville for having excluded him from his talks on economic questions with Clémentel and British statesmen and that as a result he decided to act as a "cavalier seul" when he traveled to London in early July. She also publishes (ed. 1991), p. 360, the king's letter of 23 July 1916, published in part by Van Overstraeten (ed. 1953), pp. 104-105, in which it is clear that Albert was more interested in avoiding misunderstandings than in giving Broqueville

"un droit de regard sur les Affaires étrangères," as Haag puts it (1990), p. 468. Nevertheless, Thielemans (ed. 1991) p. 75, writes: "Quel camouflet pour Beyens. Broqueville triomphait, il pouvait envisager le départ de Beyens et rêver de s'emparer du Ministère des Affaires étrangères". Perhaps the Cabinet Chief so dreamed. But was this the intention of the king? I doubt it.

In any event, Beyens was not without supporters in the Cabinet. Two of the most loyal were Aloïs Van de Vyvere, the Finance Minister, and Joris Helleputte, the Minister of Agriculture. On 26 July 1916, for example, Van de Vyvere wrote to Helleputte (who had been unable to attend the cabinet meeting on the 13th due to an automobile accident at Châlons-sur-Marne) about Renkin's attack:

"Le Roi s'est montré la tête contre Beyens, je crois. D'un autre côté il trouve Renkin un énergumène. Bref toute la meute Neuray a juré la perte de Beyens....

Mais, pour le moment, je ferai tout ce que je pourrai pour empêcher Beyens d'être victime de cette conjuration. S'il tombait ce serait le triomphe de la meute des agités." (See this letter in Schollaert-Helleputte Papers, doss. 613, GAR).

Helleputte, on the same day, wrote to Léon Van der Elst, the Secretary General at the Foreign Ministry (see in Van der Elst Papers, doss. 84, GAR): "J'ai perçu quelques échos, un peu vagues d'ailleurs, d'incidents au conseil.... Si votre ministre a été attaqué, je crois qu'il aura été bien défendu."

In a letter to Hymans of 2 August (see Hymans Papers, doss. 85, GAR.), Beyens expressed frustration with Broqueville's lack of support vis-à-vis Renkin. He stressed that he refrained from resigning only because the king urged him to stay and fight for what he believed. On the 4th Hymans responded (see in Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/2, ABFM) that he was pleased that the king had dissuaded Beyens from resigning, "une décision qui aurait de dangereuses répercussions et compromettrait gravement le crédit moral du gouvernement belge."

On 8 August Broqueville wrote to Helleputte (see in Schollaert-Helleputte Papers, doss. 613, GAR) to give his account of the key cabinet meetings of 13 July and 4 August. He was critical of Beyens, whom he accused of not having respected the wishes of the Cabinet and of having pursued a "personal policy." "Il y a vraiment des gens," he closed, "qui ont la vocation de la gaffe et c'est particulièrement dangereux quand on n'a foi qu'en soi."

In his diary entry for 31 July and 1 August 1916 (see Thielemans, ed. [1991], pp. 277-278), King Albert noted that he told Van de Vyvere that Beyens had gone too far in his memorandum to Grey and that he, like Broqueville and the rest of the Cabinet, firmly opposed any binding agreements with Belgium's powerful protectors. The Finance Minister, however, defended Beyens, expressing concern that both Broqueville and Renkin, with the king's approval, wanted to interfere in the running of his department.

On 12 August, Hymans wrote to Beyens (see in Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/2, ABFM) to say how relieved he was that the incident was now closed without a cabinet breakup which would have undermined the government's prestige both in occupied Belgium and abroad.

⁴³ See Beyens' response to Renkin, 4 Aug. 1916, and Beyens to Hymans, 6 Aug. 1916, Hymans Papers, doss. 85, GAR; and the detailed dispatch sent to all Belgian legations on 13 Sept. 1916, doss. 323 II A, ABFM. In his published dissertation, Rune Johansson (1988), p. 181, n. 85, argues that, since I had not used the minutes of the 4 August 1916 Cabinet meeting, which can be found in the Broqueville Papers, GAR, doss. 381 (Procès verbaux du Conseil des Ministres (1 février 1916-30 décembre 1916), for my dissertation, I misconstrued the meeting to have been "a victory for Beyens' policy." Here Johansson has clearly misread what I wrote (1978), p. 391: "Beyens' effort was not in vain; for, although the Cabinet reaffirmed its intention to seek neither alliances nor customs unions, it did not specifically

repudiate the idea of an Allied treaty of guarantee, and it gave Beyens permission to pursue his stated policies on the Scheldt and on Luxembourg." Having reread the evidence, I stand by my original statement. Haag, who has also consulted the minutes, more or less corroborates my conclusion when he writes (1990), p. 469: "Au conseil suivant (4 août), les affaires s'arrangèrent mieux que prévu. Beyens déclara que la note remise à Londres le 7 juillet n'engageait pas le gouvernement; Renkin convint que les observations qu'il avait faites le 13 juillet n'avaient plus la même raison d'être. La fièvre tomba. Broqueville donna lecture de la lettre où le Roi résumait leur entretien du 22 juillet; les traités d'alliance furent, à nouveau, rejetés et la politique d'indépendance proclamée." The Broqueville Papers, GAR, also contain Cabinet minutes from 21 July to 22 December 1917 (doss. 382) and from 5 January to 9 April 1918 (doss. 383). These minutes as well as those of all Cabinets down to 1949 are now available on microfilm at the GAR. See the inventory in Lucie Verachten (1994).

⁴⁴ Outside the Cabinet the campaign against Beyens' "timid" and "status quo" policy continued unabated, and, on 14 August 1916, Gaston Barbanson, chief administrator of the Luxembourg steel company called the Société des Aciéries Réunies de Burbach, Eich, Dudelange or ARBED, wrote to Broqueville (see Broqueville Papers, doss. 43 (dossier devoted to Barbanson and his Comité d'Enquête Economique Belge during the war), GAR) urging him to persuade the king to get rid of Beyens. The Cabinet Chief, he pleaded, should go so far as to threaten to resign himself if the Foreign Minister were not forced to retire.

⁴⁵ As a result of Allied discontent with a German peace feeler that had been sent to King Albert by way of banker named Franz Philippson, the Belgian Cabinet decided in October 1916 that all overtures sent to the king had to be brought to the attention of the Belgian government and that no emissary bearing peace terms should be received by the crown in the absence of a responsible minister. Nevertheless, Broqueville and several other ministers, though not Beyens, thought that the Germans should be sounded out via King Alphonso XIII of Spain. See the account in Haag (1990), pp. 474-489, 509-518. As King Albert wrote to Broqueville on 6 December 1916 (see Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 379-380, Belgium had to be careful not to seem too enthusiastic for peace talks at a time when the war was going badly for the Allies. It would be better to maintain a firm but calm stand vis-à-vis the enemy, so that when he was in difficulty he would be encouraged to propose favorable peace terms.

⁴⁶ See Palo (August 1980), pp. 583-597. See also Haag (1990), pp. 521-582; Beyens (1981), pp. 155-178; and Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 295-297, 381-399.

⁴⁷ For the text of Beyens' letter to Cambon, see doss. 278 (Propositions de Paix), ABFM.

⁴⁸ Haag (1990), p. 558.

⁴⁹ Palo (1996), pp. 1053-54.

⁵⁰ Beyens to King Albert, 4 and 10 January 1917, Beyens Papers, doss. 12481/21/6 (Documents appartenant au Baron Beyens) (Lettres au Roi), ABFM. In the letter of the 10th Beyens wrote: "Pour le moment nous sommes prisonniers de l'Entente. Nous sommes condamnés à lutter jusqu'au bout avec elle, à subir les conditions de l'Allemagne si l'Entente s'avoue vaincue, mais nous imposerons avec elle des conditions équitables à l'Allemagne, si celle-ci, désespérant de vaincre, se résout à déposer les armes." Beyens hoped for this outcome with the next spring offensive.

Then he concluded: "Le moment psychologique viendra alors pour le Roi et pour son Gouvernement de s'adresser aux Alliés et de leur faire admettre l'inutilité de la prolongation de la tuerie. Aujourd'hui que l'Angleterre et la France ont mis à leur tête leurs hommes les plus déterminés, nous ne serions pas écoutés. Nous ne réussirions par des propos décourageants ou par des conversations avec des neutres, qu'à exciter leurs suspicions et

à perdre le bénéfice de notre attitude passée. Sachons patienter encore quelque pénible que soit la patience, mais soyons prêts à profiter des événements. La paix est dans l'air. Dans quelques mois, je l'espère, elle s'imposera d'elle-même aux belligérants."

⁵¹ See in doss. 278, ABFM. King Albert was furious as can be seen from his letter to Beyens of the 14th. In it he complained that Beyens had been circumvented by Cambon; that he, the king, never envisaged the possibility of a separate peace; that he had no desire to play the role of arbiter in the conflict. But he would have preferred that Belgian aims be clearly expressed in the note to Wilson, something that a policy of firm resistance to Allied pressure might have accomplished. As for Allied suspicions, Albert said that they should not be exaggerated: "on a besoin de notre drapeau, de notre exemple, de nos souffrances." He was also unhappy that a copy of Beyens' note had already been shown to a "foreign functionary" (i.e., Jules Cambon) before he had a chance to see it. See this letter to Beyens, 14 January 1917, Beyens Papers, doss. 12481/21/1, ABFM. See also Beyens (1981), pp. 268-269; and Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 396-397. Van Overstraeten (ed. 1953), pp. 130-132, quotes from the letter but does not give the date.

⁵² The letter is dated 21 January 1917 and can be found in the Beyens Papers, doss. 12481-21/1 (Correspondance avec le Roi), ABFM; it has been published in its entirety by Baron Beyens (1981), pp. 269-273, who calls it (p. 175) one of the bitterest documents his father ever drafted. Actually, Beyens had already indicated his willingness to resign, in a letter to Frédéric Van den Steen de Jehay, Albert's *chef du cabinet*, dated 16 January 1917, the day he received the king's missive of the 14th. A copy of the letter to Jehay can be found in Beyens Papers, doss. 12481-21/1, ABFM, and it is mentioned in Beyens (1981), pp. 174-175.

⁵³ The text of this letter (dated 27 January), which can be found in the Beyens Papers, doss. 12481-21/1 (Correspondance avec le Roi), ABFM, has been reproduced by Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 399.

⁵⁴ This becomes clear when we read Albert's letter to Broqueville of 18 January 1917, which has been published by Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 398.

⁵⁵ See Beyens (1981), p. 180; and Haag (1990), p. 597. Over a year after he resigned as Foreign Minister, Beyens finally received an official invitation to visit the king and queen along with his wife. The courtesy followed the positive reception that Albert had given Beyens' *La Question Africaine*. See Count F. Van den Steen to Beyens, 25 September 1918, and Beyens' reply, 28 September 1918, Arch. du Cab. Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 17, ARP.

⁵⁶ According to Haag (1990), pp. 597-599, the reason for Beyens' resignation given by Broqueville at the Cabinet meeting of 13 July, to the effect that Beyens was *persona non grata* in Paris, was nothing but a "fallacious pretext" to hide the real reason: that King Albert considered Beyens too willing to bend to the wishes of the French. Baron Beyens' son, however, who cites the unpublished memoirs of his father to stress that he considered Broqueville and Renkin his key enemies in the government (1981), p. 180, gives more credence to the so-called pretext, and he argues that Broqueville, who coveted the post of Foreign Minister, had acted in bad faith (pp. 192-195). He claims that Broqueville had misconstrued a revelation made in confidence to him by his father at the end of December 1916 regarding a conversation he had with Jules Cambon on 27 December. He cites a letter written to Vandervelde by Beyens in late July 1917, in which the latter recounted that Cambon had warned him that his departure would be welcomed by certain persons and then pointed to the office of Philippe Berthelot, the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay. Beyens then told this to Broqueville, who, apparently, understood it to indicate a French loss of confidence in the Belgian Foreign Minister. This letter is dated 25 January 1917 and is reproduced in *Un diplomate belge*, Annexe XIX, pp. 274-275. The original can be found in

the Beyens Papers, doss. 12481-21/1, ABFM.

Regarding Hymans' ambitions, Haag (1990), p. 598, 599, n. 1, cites the *Souvenirs* of Paul Segers at the GAR. Haag has overlooked a letter from Renkin to Pierre Nothomb in which the Colonial Minister said that Hymans' offer to become Foreign Minister was rejected by the Catholic majority because he had been a strong supporter of Beyens' policies; see Renkin to Nothomb, 27 July 1917, Nothomb Papers, doss. 179, Louvain-la-Neuve. The rivalry between Broqueville and Hymans after the forced resignation of Beyens is treated at length by Luc Schepens (1983), pp. 90-97. King Albert preferred that Hymans come to Le Havre to take up the new portfolio for Economic Affairs, which he eventually did in October 1917; see Albert to Hymans, 8 August 1917, in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 419-420, and Hymans' positive reply, 9 August 1917, Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 585, ARP. The latter dossier also contains a copy of a letter from Hymans to Broqueville of 28 July 1917, in which he warns that if Pouillet were chosen to succeed Beyens, the Liberals would resign from the Cabinet.

⁵⁷ Gaiffier to Beyens, 16 June 1917, Class. B, I, Lux., ABFM.

⁵⁸ Palo (1978), pp. 595-601, notes 53-69, pp. 616-619. The Petrograd formula put severe strains on the *union sacrée* in all belligerent countries. Thus, the Belgian government-in-exile's acceptance of it is important. Among his last acts as Foreign Minister, Beyens made démarches in Paris and London to insure that any Allied conference called in the wake of the Russian appeal be opened to full Belgian participation. King Albert was fully behind this initiative as was the entire Cabinet. See Beyens to Count F. Van den Steen de Jehay, 28 June 1917; and Beyens to Count F. Van den Steen de Jehay, 2 July 1917, with enclosed note from Beyens to Gaiffier, 20 June 1917, Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 17, ARP.

As leader of the Belgian Workers Party and President of the Second International, Vandervelde publicly opposed forcible annexations during the war and the peace conference. Luxemburg and Eupen-Malmédy, he said, could be acquired only if the populations there so desired. He, however, did not support the International's Secretary, Camille Huysmans, who had taken up residence in the neutral Netherlands, when he insisted that Allied Socialists work for a compromise peace. Vandervelde opposed talks with the enemy so long as Belgium remained occupied and its people suffered. Hence he opposed Huysmans regarding the Stockholm Conference called by Dutch and Scandinavian Socialists in the spring of 1917 so that Allied and neutral Socialists could meet with delegates from the Central Powers. After the war, the two leaders supported one another, thereby preventing a split in the party. Nevertheless, Vandervelde's public stand against annexations during the war could not obscure the fact that his own secretary, August DeWinne, favored a vast program of territorial acquisitions, including Dutch, German, and even Swiss territory! Other prominent Walloon Socialists such as Louis Piérard and Jules Destrée also supported taking territory from Germany and supported the "reunion" with the Grand Duchy. By the end of the conflict, however, most Belgian Socialists returned to the fold and once again spoke out against annexations of any kind. See Herman Baltazar (1976); Mieke Claey's-Van Haegendoren (1967), pp. 63-66, 85-113; and Janet Polasky (1995), pp. 123-134. On the role of Huysmans, see the relevant documents in Denise De Weerd and Wim Geldorf, eds. (1975).

⁵⁹ Beyens' resignation was reported on 28 July 1917, in the Belgian Propaganda Office's publication *Information Belge*, no. 408; see Collection Presse, doss. 389, ABFM.

⁶⁰ See Gaston Barbanson to Broqueville, 17 July 1917, Broqueville Papers, doss. 43, GAR. On 5 July 1917, Beyens revealed the irony of his situation in a letter to his wife: "Le moral du Roi n'a jamais été à la hauteur de ses autres qualités. Maintenant il est franchement mauvais. S.M. a toujours eu l'esprit critiqueur. Elle rend volontiers Ses Ministres

responsables de tout ce qui Lui arrive de désagréable.... Si j'avais plus de prestige auprès du Gouvernement français, celui-ci n'aurait pas osé faire à mon Souverain l'injure de le soupçonner de recevoir des messages secrets. Voilà ce que dira Albert I...." Quoted from letter in the Beyens Papers at the ABFM by Willequet (1976), p. 79, n. 1.

⁶¹ Beyens sent his note on peace conditions to Hymans on 14 July 1917, Hymans Papers, doss. 87 (Note transmise par baron Beyens - Conditions de paix, 1917), GAR. There is no indication that King Albert was aware of this memorandum. There is, however, clear evidence that Beyens was under no illusions as to Germany's willingness for a compromise peace, whereas Broqueville seems to have been more willing to give Germany the benefit of the doubt. For example, in Annexe 15 (1990), pp. 937-939, Haag reproduces a compte-rendu by Count de Lichtervelde of an interview he had with the Marquis de Villalobar on 20 December 1916, which was sent to Broqueville on 3 January 1917. In citing this document in his *Examen Critique* (1990), p. 625, Haag writes: "Nous ignorons les réactions immédiates de Broqueville. Par contre nous savons qu'il n'attacha guère d'importance aux conditions très dures dont avait parlé Gerard devant Cambon. Elles n'étaient pas, selon lui, conformes à la pensée *actuelle* du gouvernement {de Berlin}." Here in addition to the memoirs of James W. Gerard, the former American ambassador to Germany, Haag cites a letter from Gaiffier to Beyens of 25 February 1917, and one from Broqueville to Beyens of 7 March 1917, both found in the Beyens Papers, doss. 12481, ABFM. Haag, who stresses that Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg saw the terms related to Gerard as a maximum to be gained "if possible", however, does not list them or indicate the reaction of other members of the Belgian government to them. As Beyens reported to King Albert on 19 February 1917 and to Hymans on the 22nd (see in doss. 278, ABFM and Hymans Papers, doss. 90, GAR, respectively) Ambassador Gerard told him that Berlin would restore Belgium to independence on condition that she reduced her army to militia status, demolished all fortresses, retained all laws passed on behalf of the Flemish population since August 1914, guaranteed German businessmen the right to invest capital in the Belgian economy, placed the port of Antwerp and the railways under a Belgian-German administration, and allowed German naval forces to occupy the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge provisionally. Beyens, who thought that at most Germany would hold Belgium as a pawn until her aims elsewhere were attained, was now shocked into warning the king and his colleagues that the Belgian government had to resist all German overtures for a separate peace and to rely more than ever on her "allies" for liberation. Paul Hymans fully agreed: "Il faut lutter, en étroit accord avec les Alliés, jusqu'au bout. Tout, toutes les souffrances, tous les sacrifices, l'exil à perpétuité plutôt que dans une Belgique asservie, plutôt que de retour dans une Belgique vassale." See Hymans to Beyens, 24 February 1917, Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/2, ABFM.

In a letter to Broqueville of 2 March 1917 cited in Beyens (1981), pp. 183-184, the Foreign Minister states: "Que les conditions rapportées par M. Gerard (et par d'autres que lui, d'après ce que m'écrit Hymans) nous lient davantage à l'Angleterre et à la France, c'est une conséquence que je ne cherche pas à nier. Mais je ne refuse à croire à une complicité, à une préméditation de M. Gerard avec M. Cambon, comme c'est votre pensée, je crois, parce que je ne vois pas du tout l'intérêt que M. Gerard aurait en de se prêter à ce jeu. Tel que je le connais, je le tiens pour un esprit indépendant et nullement Francophile. Enfin l'esprit qui règne aujourd'hui à Berlin semble vous échapper. On s'y croit certain de la victoire dans la guerre sous-marine. On y forge des plans extraordinaires, comme celui d'entraîner le Mexique et le Japon dans une guerre contre les Etats-Unis,...."

In his letter to the king of 7 March 1917, found in the Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/6 and excerpted in Beyens (1981), p. 183, the Foreign Minister again defended the American Ambassador against Broqueville's skepticism and concluded: "Sur ces dispositions M. de

Broqueville déclare qu'il est mieux renseigné que M. Gerard. Un avis certain lui est parvenu il y a deux mois, d'après lequel l'Allemagne n'exigerait de la Belgique que des conditions économiques avantageuses, en respectant sa pleine indépendance. M. de Broqueville a refusé par ailleurs de nous dire de qui il tenait cette information rassurants." Here it should be noted finally that the terms that Gerard related to Beyens corresponded closely to those, which Count Georg Hertling, the Bavarian Prime Minister, was urging Bethmann-Hollweg to communicate to King Albert through Villalobar. See Hertling to Bethmann-Hollweg, 24 February 1917, André Scherer and Jacques Grunewald, eds. (1962-66), vol. 2, pp. 14-15; and Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 110.

Hence, Beyens was under no illusions as to Germany's willingness for a compromise peace. The Foreign Minister's belief that Belgium must rely on an Allied victory, however, did not signify that he thought the war had to be fought until all Allied war aims were realized. Nor was he insensitive to how recent events had changed the objectives for which the war was being fought. Indeed, in an exchange of letters with Emile Francqui and the Marquis de Villalobar between March and June 1917, Beyens made it clear that the Russian revolution and the U.S. entry into the war made the chances for a lasting peace greater. Though he did see the threat that continuation of the war posed to social stability, he did not share Villalobar's pessimism or his aristocratic fear of democracy and socialism. Perhaps this is why Beyens lost the support of Albert. See the letter of Francqui of 9 March 1917 and Beyens' response of 23 April in Beyens Papers, doss. 12481 - 21/5; see Villalobar to Beyens, 29 April, Beyens to Villalobar, 16 May, and Villalobar to Beyens, 11 June in the same dossier, ABFM. These letters are excerpted in Beyens (1981), pp. 117-121.

⁶² This is not to say that the two men had identical outlooks. Still, it is difficult to imagine Beyens disagreeing with the king's insistence that a compromise peace, however negotiated, had to bring Belgium complete independence. Here one can take as an example Albert's response to an overture via Count Törring and a certain Doctor Leboeuf, the royal physician, which called for peace on the basis of free passage for German troops through southeast Belgium, maintenance of Germany's interests in Liège, and transfer of control of the Meuse railway line from French to German hands. Albert, who kept this proposal secret, rejected it in a response dated 24 June 1917, three weeks before Beyens' departure. Professor Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 108-110, stresses Albert's emphasis on the necessity for the restoration of the status quo in Belgium, the suspicions of the French, who tried to restrict Leboeuf's movements, and the fact that Count Van den Steen de Jehay, the king's *chef de cabinet*, was kept in the dark about the overture while Captain Emile Galet, his *aide de camp*, was well informed. Albert's letter of 24 June 1917, already published by Scherer and Grunewald, eds. (1962-66), vol. 2, pp. 312-313 is reproduced in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 414-415.

⁶³ Haag (1990), pp. 601-606. According to Count Louis de Lichtervelde (March 1946), pp. 541-542, Broqueville convinced the king that he should replace Beyens as Foreign Minister because he then would be in a better position to play a role as peace mediator. H. Davignon (1954), pp. 281-282, agrees. The changes at the Foreign Ministry were as follows: Albert de Bassompierre, a leading advocate of gaining Dutch territories, was made General Director of Political Affairs, while Pierre Orts, a diplomatic counsellor at the Colonial Ministry and a protégé of Renkin, now became special minister plenipotentiary at the disposition of the Foreign Minister, General Secretary *ad interim*, and *chef de cabinet* of the Foreign Minister (This office for Broqueville as head of the government was held by Léon Van der Essen from August 1917 until May 1918, when Broqueville left the wartime government altogether). At the same time, Léon van der Elst, a close collaborator of the king and a staunch supporter of neutrality, was moved out as General Secretary and sent to Madrid, while Orts brought in as his assistants Fernand Ryckman de Betz and Fernand

Vanlangenhove, two young men who had signed Pierre Nothomb's pro-annexionist memo. of November 1915. Other Cabinet changes included the nomination of General Armand de Ceuninck as Broqueville's successor as Minister of War and Vandervelde's being given the Ministry of Intendance (Supply). See Palo (1978), pp. 608-610, notes 87-93, p. 621; and Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 114-117.

Haag relies on Orts' *Souvenirs de ma carrière* located at the GAR as a key source for the conclusion (1990), p. 602, that Broqueville received the portfolio for Foreign Affairs on the condition that Orts be appointed his "homme de confiance" and "coadjuteur." According to Luc Schepens (1983), pp. 93-94, Broqueville himself considered bringing Liberals such as Orts into the Foreign Ministry in order better to control them.

⁶⁴ See Haag (1990), pp. 583-596, 607-637, for a recent survey of the literature and sources on the feeler extended by Baron Oskar von der Lancken-Wakenitz, the Chief of the Political Section of the Governor-General's Office in Brussels, to Broqueville and Aristide Briand, the former French Prime Minister, by way of his intermediaries Barons Evence Coppée père et fils, an important coal magnate and his son, who had remained behind in occupied Belgium, and Pauline, the Countess Werner de Merode de la Rochefoucauld, the widow of a Belgian Senator from Charleroi. In addition to published sources such as André Scherer and Jacques Grunewald, eds., (1962-66); Oskar, Baron von der Lancken-Wakenitz, (1931); Georges Suarez (1938-52); Albert Chatelle (1936); Wolfgang Steglich (1964), Haag cites important unpublished sources from the German foreign ministry archives in Bonn, the personal papers of Baron Coppée (in private hands), and the Broqueville Papers at the GAR. Particularly important is a note by Baron Coppée père dated 9 February 1920 located in the latter collection in doss. 428. Not cited or mentioned by the author is another report by Baron Coppée père which was published as Annexe V in Jacques de Launay (1963), pp. 75-82. This is a curious document written in the third person, portions of which are in language identical to an account by Briand, which Suarez published in vol. 4 of the work cited earlier. I noted the similarity of these documents in his account of the peace moves of 1917 (see Palo (1978) pp. 622-682, especially notes 84, 85, and 86, p. 677). Another older work of interest is R. Recouly (1939).

⁶⁵ See Haag (1990), pp. 628-633. Haag, as we have seen, refers to Orts' own memoirs regarding his role as Broqueville's "homme de confiance." However, he does not cite it here for an important commentary on Broqueville's character and his relations with the king at the time of his appointment. Orts writes (see *Souvenirs de ma carrière*, p. 71, Orts Papers, doss. 389, GAR) that "la personnalité de Broqueville était très discutée: on lui reprochait un manque de franchise et surtout sa légèreté. Ses amis politiques portaient sur son caractère le même jugement que ses anciens adversaires. Seul le Roi soutenait Broqueville et il l'a toujours soutenu fidèlement. Je n'allais pas tarder à recueillir personnellement la preuve de ce singulier attachement. Singulier, car il n'eût pas été possible de trouver deux hommes plus dissemblables au moral. Le Roi jugeait très exactement le ministre. Il lui arriva de dire: 'il n'existe pas sur terre plus grand menteur que M. de Broqueville.'" Haag, however, refers to this last observation in an Examen Critique entitled "Du Mensonge" (p. 780), when addressing the problem of politicians not keeping their promises and whether that constitutes lying. The context is a parliamentary debate in July 1933, during Broqueville's last term as Prime Minister. Haag says that he has serious doubts about the authenticity of the king's alleged words, but he does not explain why he has such reservations.

⁶⁶ For these diary entries see Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 327-332. There is also a letter from Albert to Broqueville of 16 November 1917, published by Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 431, which shows that the king hoped to see Broqueville avoid a crisis by providing the Cabinet with a report on the Briand-Coppée affair. He saw no way that Renkin could be

forced out. It is also clear that Albert at first would have preferred to have Van den Heuvel as Foreign Minister; see the king's letter of 26 November 1917, located in the Van den Heuvel Papers, GAR, which has now been published in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 432-433. As Haag notes (1990), p. 635, n.3, Van den Heuvel wrote a letter to the king on 3 December 1917 in which he refused (for reasons of health, according to Thielemans, ed. (1991)) p. 119 the honor of becoming Foreign Minister. As Count F. Van den Steen de Jehay told Albert by telegram in early December 1917, Renkin and Hymans were set on provoking Broqueville's resignation. See in Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 586, ARP.

⁶⁷ Another Socialist, Emile Brunet, was brought in as Minister without Portfolio, thereby raising the number of opposition ministers to four. The Ministry of Economic Affairs, which Hymans had held, meanwhile, was temporarily abolished, its duties being given to the Christian Democrat, Prosper Poulet, the Minister of Arts and Sciences. According to Haag (1990), pp. 635-637, Renkin rejected, Poulet for the post of Foreign Minister, while the Liberals vetoed Cooreman. According to Albert's diary entry for 16 December 1917 (Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 333), Broqueville had rallied to Hymans along with the rest of the government. Albert's comment, regarding Brunet's appointment and a proposal to name Georges Lorand, the Radical Liberal Representative from Virton as Minister of State later on, is worth quoting: "Il semblerait que la droite, sentant que les choses vont mal, veut décharger sa responsabilité sur la gauche qui portera ainsi le poids, devant le pays, des inévitables insuccès vers lesquels on marche et aussi subira le contrecoup des espoirs déçus." For Schepens (1983), pp. 162-163, Broqueville aimed to be a veritable Prime Minister, and the move to name Brunet, a Socialist, to the Cabinet was designed to weaken Hymans' Liberals.

Finally, as both Thielemans (1991), p. 119 and Schepens (1983), p. 161, note, Hymans had tried and failed to get Alexandre Galopin, an industrialist with Liberal sympathies, named to succeed him as Minister of Economic Affairs. Vandervelde had successfully vetoed this choice.

⁶⁸ Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 333. Thielemans also notes (ed. 1991), p. 119, citing remarks by Hymans in the Goldschmidt Collection, that the king agreed that Belgian policy had to be based on a loyal entente and solidarity with the Allies. She stresses, however, that Broqueville actually reinforced his power in the new government by creating a sort of "Ministère de la Présidence du Conseil." For Luc Schepens, who cites an undated note by Broqueville outlining the reorganization of the War Committee (1983), p. 157, Broqueville demonstrated his ability to turn the tables on his adversaries by rendering them suspect in the eyes of the king.

⁶⁹ Haag (1991), p. 637.

⁷⁰ See diary entry of 17 December 1917 cited earlier, in Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 333.

⁷¹ In his note published on 14 August 1917, Pope Benedict XV urged the warring nations to commit themselves to the principles of general disarmament, mandatory arbitration of international disputes, and freedom of the seas. He requested a reciprocal repudiation of indemnities and the evacuation of all occupied territories. Specifically, he mentioned the need for the total restoration of Belgium "with guarantees of its entire political, military, and economic independence toward any power whatever" and for the restitution of Germany's colonies. Regarding territorial questions, he expressed the hope that "the contending parties" would "examine them in a conciliatory spirit, taking into account... the aspirations of the population." See text in James Brown Scott, ed. (1921), pp. 129-131. It was clear that the Vatican was trying to get the Germans to make an unequivocal declaration regarding their intention to liberate Belgium, but this was something the High Command was reluctant to do, despite German Foreign Secretary, Richard von Kühlmann's hope

that some minor concessions might bring Britain to the peace table. In the end, the German and Austro-Hungarian responses of 21 September avoided any reference to Belgium (see texts in Scott, ed. (1921), pp. 137-141; see also Fritz Fischer (1967), pp. 411-434).

The Belgian government was pleased with the papal peace initiative, but withheld a definitive response pending Allied approval (see van den Heuvel to Broqueville, 18 August 1917, no. 254/79, a note by Bassompierre, 22 August 1917, Orts to Van den Heuvel, 25 August 1917, no. d'ordre 103, doss. 278, ABFM; and minutes of the Committee for War and National Reconstruction, 19 August 1917, Renkin Papers, doss. 12, GAR). On 29 August, President Wilson declared that the peace the Vatican envisaged was incompatible with the principles of freedom, equality, security, and self-government for all peoples and impossible so long as Germans were not free to choose their own system of government and unwilling to forego the domination of other nations (see Scott, ed. (1921), pp. 133-135). British radicals on the left welcomed what was tantamount to a call for political revolution in Germany; while the British government, despite reservations, made no comment, preferring instead to recommend that no further reply to the Vatican was necessary (see Sterling J. Kernek [1975], pp. 59-61; for the attitude of British radicals, see Marvin Swartz (1971), p. 144). On 5 September, the Belgian Cabinet decided to heed the British request, though Van den Heuvel, the Belgian minister at the Vatican, was instructed to inform Cardinal Gasparri, the Papal Secretary of State, that Belgium would never consider a separate peace with Germany regardless of the concessions offered (see Klobukowski to Ribot, 5 September 1917, Broqueville Papers, doss. 428, GAR; and Orts to Van den Heuvel, 7 September 1917, no. d'ordre 115, doss. 278, ABFM). For a recent study of Belgian-Vatican relations based on archival sources, see Jan De Volder (1996). De Volder (1996), p. 146, n. 59, has found evidence in the archives of the Vatican that Broqueville thanked the pope privately for his peace effort.

⁷² As we have already seen in the preceding note, the Belgians had agreed in early September to follow the British and French lead and not respond at that time. However, the door to a separate response was left open, and in mid-December Orts and Bassompierre, the chief policy directors at the Belgian Foreign Ministry, recommended that any Belgian reply should contain a specific repudiation of neutrality, but, at the same time, stress Belgium's special belligerent status (see "Projet de réponse au message pontifical rédigé par la Direction Politique," December 1917, note by Bassompierre, 16 December 1917, and note by Orts, 19 December 1917, doss. 278, ABFM). The final text, which was drafted by H. Carton de Wiart, Poulet, Hymans, and Vandervelde, amended and approved by the Cabinet on the 15th and 22nd of December (see Broqueville Papers, doss. 382, GAR), and published on the 27th, however, made no mention of these controversial points. Instead it stressed Belgium's right to full independence and reparations as essential peace conditions in terms that went as far as possible to satisfy the wishes of the Political Direction. "The integrity of Belgium, the territory of the mother country and colonies, political, economic, and military independence without condition or restriction, reparation for damage suffered, and guarantees against a renewal of aggression of 1914 - such remain the indispensable conditions of a just peace so far as concerns Belgium. Any settlement that would not recognize them would shake the very foundations of justice, since it would forevermore be established that in international domains the violation of right creates a claim for its author and may become a source of profit." So read the Belgian response, which also made clear Belgium's intention to act in full accord with the powers guaranteeing its independence. See final text of response to pope, 24 December 1917, doss. 279-280, ABFM. There is little evidence that Broqueville played a role in drafting this document, which represents a compromise between those in the Cabinet who merely wanted to reaffirm Belgium's basic aims publicly and those in the Foreign Ministry who desired to make her special

position, but, at the same time, her abhorrence for the regime of 1839, absolutely clear.

⁷³ On the Törring-Peltzer talks, see Jacques Willequet (1968), pp. 661-675. Here it should be noted that the Törring overture had its origin in a speech made by Count Hertling, the German Chancellor, on 25 February, in which he said that "we do not contemplate retaining Belgium, but that we must be safeguarded from the danger of that country, with which we desire after the war to live in peace and friendship, becoming the object or the jumping-off ground of enemy machinations. If, therefore, a proposal came from the opposing side, for example from the Government in Havre, we should not adopt an antagonistic attitude, even though the discussion at first might only be unbinding." See full text in Scott, ed. (1921), pp. 279-285.

Three days after this speech, Lloyd George told Baron Ludovic Moncheur, Hymans' successor as minister plenipotentiary to London, that Hertling's demand for guarantees was a sign that Germany still sought to dominate Belgium and hoped to start separate peace talks similar to those being conducted with Russia. Moncheur, as he reported to Hymans, responded that Belgium would act only in concert with its guarantors and would never accept a peace that did not insure its complete independence. As is clear from his instructions to the Belgian Legations on 14 March, Hymans was also skeptical of German intentions, but he did not want to reject the German overture before learning what concessions, if any, Berlin was prepared to make. See Moncheur to Hymans, 1 March 1918, and Hymans to the heads of Legation in London, Paris, Bern, Madrid, The Hague, Rome, Vatican City, and Washington, 14 March 1918, doss. 279-280, ABFM. It is important to note that Hymans sent this dispatch the day before Peltzer received word that Count Törring wanted to see him. Hymans' instructions to Peltzer, dated 16 March 1918, can be found in doss. 10138 bis, ABFM.

In his report to Hymans of 28 March 1918 (see in doss. 10138 bis, ABFM), Peltzer noted that Törring said that Germany was prepared to restore Belgium but not Alsace-Lorraine. He then asked the Belgian minister if Belgium intended to return to neutrality, a query to which Peltzer responded by saying that a majority of Belgians was opposed to the regime of 1839. Peltzer, however, made it clear that Belgium would neither answer the Chancellor's speech of 25 February nor take any other diplomatic steps without first consulting the Allied Powers. To this Törring replied with a warning that Belgium had little time to act given the current German offensive, which, if it ended in victory, would enable the Pan-Germans and annexationists to prevent concessions in the West.

On the 29th, Hymans informed King Albert of what transpired in Bern and advised that the Allies be informed not only of Törring's remarks, but also of the Belgian government's intention not to respond. Albert, however, though he was opposed to any separate peace and realized that one had to await the outcome of the German offensive, did not want this chance for a compromise peace, however remote, to be thrown away without careful examination, and so he informed Hymans and Broqueville. See Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 146-147.

Thielemans also publishes three documents, which throw light on the king's attitude. The first (ed. 1991), pp. 456-457, is a note of 30 March given to Broqueville for transmission to Hymans, in which the monarch stressed that to accept an invitation to talk was not to agree to negotiate peace. Moreover, there was no question of negotiating, he stressed, so long as German troops did not evacuate Belgium and, since Belgium was a pawn, Germany would not remove her forces until she had reached an agreement with England. Since there was no question of a separate peace, Albert saw no reason why Belgium should not encourage a clarification of the German position, which might facilitate a general peace. He opposed Hymans' desire to issue a categorical refusal.

The second is a letter from Albert to Broqueville of 1 April 1918 (ed. 1991), pp. 458-459, in

which the monarch says that Hymans had agreed to make a démarche to the Allies along the lines indicated in his note of 30 March. He then stresses that Broqueville should use his influence "pour que le premier froncement de sourcils de M. Villiers ou de M. Klobukowski ne fasse pas battre machine en arrière à notre département des Affaires étrangères, en compromettant une action qui peut être si utile à l'avenir du pays et à la cause d'une paix raisonnable et surtout favorable à la Belgique."

Finally on 6 April, Albert wrote to Hymans (ed. 1991), pp. 459-460, repeating the main points of his note of 30 March; but he added that it was regrettable that Peltzer did not insist on obtaining clarifications regarding the main points at issue.

On 9 April, Hymans notified Klobukowski of the contents of Törring's conversation with Peltzer, stressing that Törring had alluded to the restoration of Belgium without mentioning the word "independence" much as the Chancellor had in his speech. The next day Hymans made a similar report to Sir Francis Villiers. See notes by Hymans of 9 and 10 April 1918, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM.

⁷⁴ In the Belgian Foreign Ministry's instructions of 27 April, which were approved by King Albert, Peltzer was told to accept a new interview if Törring so requested in order to learn as much as possible about German intentions vis-à-vis Belgium, particularly the so-called "guarantees" mentioned by Hertling. For his part, the Belgian minister was to reiterate Belgium's essential war aims as listed in the reply to the pope of 24 December 1917 and to stress that Belgium intended to pursue a completely independent policy after the war. If Törring asked whether Belgium was acting in concert with the Allies, Peltzer was to respond that London and Paris were being kept informed, but that this nevertheless did not mean that Belgium would not be able to make independent judgments on questions of interest to her. Hymans emphasized that when he was seeking information about German conditions Peltzer was to insure that his interlocutor understood that he was speaking in his own name and that at no time was he to surpass his instructions. See Hymans to Peltzer, 27 April 1918, no. d'ordre 397, ABFM, which is also quoted in Willequet (1968), pp. 665-666.

The Allies were then notified of these instructions, with the king being kept fully informed. See notes by Hymans of 3 and 5 May 1918, and Hymans to Albert, 10 May 1918, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM.

⁷⁵ This summary is based in part on Haag (1990), pp. 638-649, who has consulted most of the usual published sources. Haag's account follows his earlier treatment of the subject in (1975a), pp. 35-51.

In noting the figure of 80% Flemish speakers in the Belgian wartime army, Haag (1990), p. 639, does not cite the study by F. E. Stevens (1981), pp. 293-301, which shows that the proportion of Dutch speakers to francophones was more like 65% to 35% than 80% to 20%. In discussing Stevens' findings, Schepens notes (1983), pp. 58-59, that the figure 80% was first made public on 19 May 1917 in a fake interview Broqueville gave *Le Courrier de l'Armée*. Having found the draft of the "interview" in the Broqueville Papers, doss. 496, GAR, Schepens leaves the reader wondering why the War Minister would have done such a thing. What was his purpose? I found a clipping of this alleged interview in the Hymans Papers, doss. 406, GAR, and in it Broqueville said he did not know if the figure was 80% but that before the war it was 67%. There is evidence, however, which shows that the figure of 80% was cited in government circles long before this interview was published. In a draft of a letter to an unidentified colleague, dated 20 October 1915 and apparently not sent, Joris Helleputte complained about anti-Flemish remarks made in an article published by *La Dépêche de Toulouse* and reproduced by *Le XXe Siècle* on that same day. He stressed that before the war the army was 67% Flemish and 33% Walloon; now it was 80% Flemish! "La suspicion jetée sur les flamands est odieuse," he wrote. "Il faut absolument qu'on

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Luc Schepens notes (1983), pp. 169-172, that Albert, after having consulted with Jules Ingenbleek, his personal secretary, and Fritz Van den Steen, his *chef de cabinet*, warned the Cabinet on 1 February 1918 that, while the Flemish question was "une affaire de famille" and should not be internationalized, certain "reasonable" concessions could be made so long as they did not weaken the army, compromise the unity of the country, or undermine French culture and language in Flanders. Schepens also points out that in the handwritten version of the king's statement, he indicated a desire to satisfy the Flemings' desire for an institution of higher learning. But Schepens reminds his readers that Albert was opposed to anything that would diminish the bilingual reality in Flanders, and that therefore he would have opposed the elimination of the francophone university at Ghent. During the course of the Cabinet debate, moreover, Albert made it clear that, though before the war he favored regional units, to tamper with the composition of the army during wartime would lead to a revolt by the officers. The texts of the drafts of the king's statement have now been published in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 441-447.

Schepens also notes (1983), pp. 175-176, that the Cabinet decided on 1 February to charge Broqueville, Helleputte, Hymans, Vandervelde, and Van de Vyvere with the task of drafting a governmental statement on the Flemish question. However, agreement on a text was impossible. Broqueville decided to drop the idea of separate Flemish units, informing the king on 12 February of his concern regarding the obstinacy of Helleputte and Van de Vyvere on this point. Thielemans notes (ed. 1991), pp. 124-125, that, when Van de Vyvere warned that the Flemish ministers would resign if a commitment were not made to the idea of Flemish regiments, Broqueville countered that such a move would be treason to Belgium's interests and a disaster for the Flemish cause. Thielemans also publishes (ed., 1991), p. 448, a letter from Albert to Broqueville of 17 February in which the monarch said he shared his Chief Minister's concerns on the Flemish question, but that he regretted his proposal to create Flemish and Walloon regiments. Such a fundamental reform, which would imply the separation between the regions of the country, should not be taken in wartime. However, he saw the need for moderate concessions.

At the Cabinet meeting of 20 March, the king's *compte-rendu* of which was first published by Van Overstraeten, ed. (1953), pp. 180-183, the idea of language schools for officers was accepted as was that of a committee of military men to investigate grievances. Albert also noted that, in addition, committees were to be established to study the suffrage and educational reform questions as well as the Flemish problem. Thielemans also reproduces this text (ed. 1991), pp. 453-454, as well as a draft in which the monarch's concern regarding the loss of discipline in the army is clearly made manifest and where he stresses that it is essential that "la souveraineté ne soit plus divisée sur la question flamande à l'armée" (p. 452). For his part, Schepens points out (1983), pp. 177-178, that on the 19th Ingenbleek and Van den Steen prepared a text of a royal declaration inspired by the hope of ending the division within the government. This statement, which the king was to have read to the Cabinet on the 20th, concluded as follows: "Ayez confiance dans la parole de votre souverain. Je puis vous le dire, vous le promettre, les Flamands recevront satisfaction dans le domaine de l'enseignement, de l'administration, de l'armée. Je suis convaincu que je vous parle au nom du pays, des Wallons comme des Flamands, qui tous, dans un même élan de sacrifice ont bien mérité de la Patrie;" Schepens notes (1983), pp. 178-181, that this "precise and formal" text, which was not read by the king to the Cabinet, apparently served as a basis for the proposals made by Segers. The best study on the question of Flemish activism during the war remains Lode Wils (1974). For a detailed overview, see A. W. Willemsen (1958). For a critique from an anti-flamingant (i.e., Belgian nationalist) viewpoint,

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Luc Schepens notes (1983), pp. 169-172, that Albert, after having consulted with Jules Ingenbleek, his personal secretary, and Fritz Van den Steen, his *chef de cabinet*, warned the Cabinet on 1 February 1918 that, while the Flemish question was "une affaire de famille" and should not be internationalized, certain "reasonable" concessions could be made so long as they did not weaken the army, compromise the unity of the country, or undermine French culture and language in Flanders. Schepens also points out that in the handwritten version of the king's statement, he indicated a desire to satisfy the Flemings' desire for an institution of higher learning. But Schepens reminds his readers that Albert was opposed to anything that would diminish the bilingual reality in Flanders, and that therefore he would have opposed the elimination of the francophone university at Ghent. During the course of the Cabinet debate, moreover, Albert made it clear that, though before the war he favored regional units, to tamper with the composition of the army during wartime would lead to a revolt by the officers. The texts of the drafts of the king's statement have now been published in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 441-447.

Schepens also notes (1983), pp. 175-176, that the Cabinet decided on 1 February to charge Broqueville, Helleputte, Hymans, Vandervelde, and Van de Vyvere with the task of drafting a governmental statement on the Flemish question. However, agreement on a text was impossible. Broqueville decided to drop the idea of separate Flemish units, informing the king on 12 February of his concern regarding the obstinacy of Helleputte and Van de Vyvere on this point. Thielemans notes (ed. 1991), pp. 124-125, that, when Van de Vyvere warned that the Flemish ministers would resign if a commitment were not made to the idea of Flemish regiments, Broqueville countered that such a move would be treason to Belgium's interests and a disaster for the Flemish cause. Thielemans also publishes (ed., 1991), p. 448, a letter from Albert to Broqueville of 17 February in which the monarch said he shared his Chief Minister's concerns on the Flemish question, but that he regretted his proposal to create Flemish and Walloon regiments. Such a fundamental reform, which would imply the separation between the regions of the country, should not be taken in wartime. However, he saw the need for moderate concessions.

At the Cabinet meeting of 20 March, the king's *compte-rendu* of which was first published by Van Overstraeten, ed. (1953), pp. 180-183, the idea of language schools for officers was accepted as was that of a committee of military men to investigate grievances. Albert also noted that, in addition, committees were to be established to study the suffrage and educational reform questions as well as the Flemish problem. Thielemans also reproduces this text (ed. 1991), pp. 453-454, as well as a draft in which the monarch's concern regarding the loss of discipline in the army is clearly made manifest and where he stresses that it is essential that "la souveraineté ne soit plus divisée sur la question flamande à l'armée" (p. 452). For his part, Schepens points out (1983), pp. 177-178, that on the 19th Ingenbleek and Van den Steen prepared a text of a royal declaration inspired by the hope of ending the division within the government. This statement, which the king was to have read to the Cabinet on the 20th, concluded as follows: "Ayez confiance dans la parole de votre souverain. Je puis vous le dire, vous le promettre, les Flamands recevront satisfaction dans le domaine de l'enseignement, de l'administration, de l'armée. Je suis convaincu que je vous parle au nom du pays, des Wallons comme des Flamands, qui tous, dans un même élan de sacrifice ont bien mérité de la Patrie;" Schepens notes (1983), pp. 178-181, that this "precise and formal" text, which was not read by the king to the Cabinet, apparently served as a basis for the proposals made by Segers. The best study on the question of Flemish activism during the war remains Lode Wils (1974). For a detailed overview, see A. W. Willemsen (1958). For a critique from an anti-flamingant (i.e., Belgian nationalist) viewpoint,

see J. Wullus-Rudiger (1957), 69-160. See also his polemical indictment published under the pseudonym "Rudiger" (1921). The Flemish nationalist perspective can be found in Hendrik J. Elias (1969-72), vol. 1. For a detailed analysis from a German point of view, see Winfried Dolderer (1989).

⁷⁶ The fullest account of this question is in M.-R. Thielemans (1988), pp. 87-127. See also A. E. Crahay (1987), pp. 146-150. The trouble started when Albert appointed General Cyriaque Gillain to replace Louis Rucquoy as General Staff Chief on 11 April without consulting or informing the Cabinet. The Cabinet protested on the 19th. Two days later Broqueville handed the king a long note by his personal secretary, Louis de Lichtervelde, which the Prime Minister said he did not have time to read attentively and which, in essence, argued that the command of the army was a governmental prerogative subject to a *contresigné* by a minister. Here was what Haag has called "l'événement qui scela le sort politique de Broqueville." On this question, see Haag (1990), pp. 653-655, and Appendix I: "Le problème du commandement de l'armée sous le gouvernement Broqueville [août 1914-mai 1918]", pp. 848-867. The reason for the king's choice of Gillain remains a mystery, but in all probability the new General Staff Chief agreed with Albert's defensive strategy. See Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 461, who notes that this document was published in fac-similé in Van Overstraeten, ed. (1953), pp. 165-167.

In his *compte-rendu* of Haag's biography of Broqueville, Jean Stengers points out (Jan.-June 1991), pp. 165-166, that, according to the king's *carnet des officiers d'ordonnance*, found at the Royal Palace Archives, the meeting between Broqueville and Albert took place on 21 April and not the 24th as Van Overstraeten noted (ed. 1953), pp. 197-198. For the text of Lichtervelde's "Mémoire sur le commandement de l'armée et la Constitution," see Thielemans (1988), pp. 114-118.

On 24 April, Albert addressed a curt note to Broqueville asking if he approved the arguments and shared the opinions of the author of the *mémoire* (Thielemans, ed. [1991], p. 464). Without revealing the author of the memorandum, the Cabinet Chief made it clear that he did (Thielemans, ed. [1991], p. 154). In his response to Broqueville's letter of the 26th (reproduced in Thielemans [1988] pp. 119-120), dated the 29th (see text Van Overstraeten, ed. [1953], pp. 198-202, and in Thielemans, ed. [1991], pp. 467-469, Albert made it clear that he would not tolerate any ministerial interference with his command of the army and that he identified his duty as nothing less than to guarantee Belgium's territorial integrity.

Professor Stengers is convinced that Broqueville sought to obtain from Albert "a certain concession of principle" regarding the ministerial role in military matters, despite his agreement with War Minister General De Ceuninck's assertion at the Cabinet on 11 May that the constitutional texts demonstrated that the king was the "absolute master of the army." For Stengers, there is a great similarity between the views expressed in Broqueville's letter to the king of 26 April (which Haag dismisses as "ambiguous" - (1990), p. 654) and the Cabinet's 11 May endorsement of Vandervelde's argument that the monarch must always be covered by ministerial responsibility. See Stengers (Jan.-June 1991), pp. 166-168. Haag, on the other hand (1990), pp. 655-658, sees less deliberation on the Prime Minister's part, arguing that he miscalculated in hoping that his "coded language" - i.e., the Lichtervelde note - would be understood by Albert. For an overview of the constitutional power of the Belgian monarch to command the army, see Stengers (1992), pp. 89-105. Stengers convincingly demonstrates how a custom in 1831 came to be considered a constitutional right by Belgium's monarchs until 1949, when a special commission recommended that, in an age of total war and an integrated NATO command, the monarch was no longer fit for such a role. Stengers also notes that it was quite normal for the kings to have assumed command without the ministerial countersignature. See also Albert

Duchesne (1976); and Jean Vanwelkenhuyzen (1983) for more on Belgian-Allied military relations.

⁷⁷ In the king's entourage, Haag sees Ingenbleek, Galet, and Jungbluth working to unseat the now vulnerable Charles. Jungbluth is portrayed as particularly eager for revenge along with Renkin, who kept the recently-returned-from-the-wilderness *chef de la Maison Militaire du Roi* well informed of the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting of 11 May. Haag sees De Ceuninck as a "gaffeur" who had the misfortune of declaring that the king was absolute master of the army. Vandervelde was now prompted to ask if Broqueville, who, as noted, defended the War Minister, had notified the monarch of the Cabinet's decision of 19 April regarding the nomination of the Chief of the General Staff. Broqueville did not tell the truth when he said he had, a faux pas which allowed his colleagues to consider him a liar. But Haag insists that Broqueville had let the king know of the Cabinet's "surexcitation passagère." At this point, Hymans criticized, on the one hand, the poor job that Poulet's censorship bureau was doing in stifling the pro-Frontist press, and, on the other hand, the tolerant attitude of the committee on the linguistic question established within the Ministry of National Reconstruction and headed by Léon Van der Essen, Broqueville's *chef de cabinet*. If Hymans charged that the Frontists were threatening the *union sacrée* and warned that if his colleagues did not agree with him he would resign. Caught between Hymans' attempt at blackmail – i.e., threatening to break up the national union that he pretended to want to save – and the Frontists, Broqueville defended himself poorly, notes Haag (1990), pp. 658–661.

Haag's account here is firmly grounded in research in the Van der Elst Papers at the GAR and in the letters from Renkin to Jungbluth at the Royal Library. Haag's prodigious research, however, does not seem to include doss. 410 of the Hymans Papers, GAR, which contains a series of letters exchanged between Hymans and Broqueville from 1–6 May 1918, concerning the latter's handling of the Flemish question. Luc Schepens has read these letters and notes that Hymans had sent copies of his to the king. For Schepens the entourage of the king and Hymans were instrumental in the weakening of Broqueville (1983), pp. 202–207. See also Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 155, where the hostility of Hymans and Renkin regarding Broqueville's handling of the Flemish problem is noted.

⁷⁸ Haag (1990), pp. 661–665.

⁷⁹ Schepens (1983), pp. 208–213. For her part, M.-R. Thielemans agrees (ed. 1991), p. 156, with Haag that Broqueville acted to cover the king, but, in citing a letter of his to F. Van den Steen de Jehay, she stresses that "il voulait 'couper les ailes au canard' qui attribuait sa chute à l'affaire du haut commandement de l'armée."

⁸⁰ Thielemans notes that Cooreman was warmly recommended to the king by Emile Francqui, a key figure in the CNSA/NHVC, and she stresses (ed. 1991), p. 156, that the new Prime Minister accepted the post on condition that he be relieved of it as soon as the government returned to Belgium. She cites no direct evidence for this, however. On 23 June 1918, Cooreman wrote to Van den Heuvel (Van den Heuvel Papers, doss. 1, GAR) to thank him for his congratulations. In this letter, the new Chief Minister stressed that he had been reluctant to accept the responsibility thrust on him. Then he added: "Ma politique s'appuiera surtout sur l'opinion du pays occupé que je m'efforcerai de suivre du plus près possible, dans un esprit de loyale union patriotique et de constante sollicitude pour le renouveau du pays. Je crois pouvoir compter sur le concours de tous mes collègues du gouvernement, mais il y a nécessairement des divergences de vues et puis la durée de l'exil n'est pas bonne inspiratrice."

⁸¹ On 24 June, Richard von Kühlmann, the German Foreign Secretary, who, Willequet stresses (1968) p. 667, was very sceptical of the approach to Belgium and who no longer believed that the war could be won by military means alone, went before the Reichstag

and said that, while Germany was ready to consider any firm and unambiguous proposal made by the Allies, she could not make "a prior concession by giving a statement on the Belgian question which would bind us without in the least tying the enemies." For the full text, see Scott, ed. (1921), pp. 342–347. As Chancellor Georg Hertling told the Reichstag on 12 July, moreover, Germany still intended to hold on to Belgium as a "pledge" or "pawn" (*Faustpfand*) for future negotiations. Willequet notes (1968), pp. 667–668 that Hertling was unaware of Törring's report to Kühlmann, in which the Belgian position regarding full independence with reparations, as articulated by Peltzer, was emphasized, when he spoke to the Reichstag. Hertling's speech is excerpted in Hans W. Gatzke (1966), p. 280.

Thielemans notes that King Albert considered the Chancellor's speech as positive, seeing in it a readiness on the part of Berlin to grant full Belgian independence and territorial integrity (1991), p. 148. In a non-dated *Projet de communication du Roi au gouvernement suite au discours du chancelier Hertling du 13 juillet 1918* (sic), drafted by Galet and found in the ARP (Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 484, King Albert was supposed to have argued as follows: "The declarations of Hertling deserve the fullest attention of the Belgian government because Berlin has now declared publicly its readiness to reestablish Belgium as an independent state, without political or territorial impediments. Reparations would be easier to work out the shorter the war. Finally, without separating from the Entente Powers, the Belgian government should work for a general peace which is the only way to liberate the country and to end the suffering of not only the Belgian people, but also all the peoples engaged in this war." My translation.

⁸² Of particular interest are the following documents of July 1918 (specific date in parenthesis) all located in doss 10138 bis, ABFM: Hymans to Van den Steen de Jehay (8); notes by Hymans (12); Hymans to Peltzer (12); Hymans to King Albert (16); Peltzer to Hymans (18); Hymans to Peltzer (20); Peltzer to Hymans (25). See also Willequet (1968) p. 667. It is important here to stress King Albert's approval of Hymans' handling of the Törring talks at this point in light of Haag's criticism of the Belgian Foreign Minister. See Albert's letter to Hymans of 18 July 1918 in Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 485–486.

⁸³ Quoted in Willequet (1968), pp. 668–669. See also Hymans to Peltzer, 8 August 1918, no. d'ordre 169, and Hymans to King Albert, 9 August 1918, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM.

⁸⁴ Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 149.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 489–490.

⁸⁶ See Willequet (1968), pp. 669–670. For Solf's speech, see Scott, ed. (1921), p. 374. See also Gerhard Ritter (1969–73), vol. 4, pp. 326–328.

⁸⁷ Ritter (1969–73), vol. 4, p. 326.

⁸⁸ Willequet (1968), pp. 670–671.

⁸⁹ Haag (1990), p. 647.

⁹⁰ In addition to Willequet (1968), pp. 670–671, see Peltzer to Hymans, 24 August 1918, no. 6493, and Peltzer to Hymans, 26 August 1918, no. 6551/1375, 1 annex: letter from Törring to Peltzer, 23 August 1918, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM. Willequet points out that Törring's letter, though dated the 23rd, was revised in light of Peltzer's questions and consultations with Berlin before he handed it to the Belgian minister on the 26th.

⁹¹ Willequet (1968), pp. 671–672. See also Ritter (1969–73), vol. 4, pp. 328–329.

⁹² Ritter (1969–73), vol. 4, p. 329.

⁹³ See Hymans to Peltzer, 12 September 1918, no. d'ordre 934, 1 annex: Hymans' observations on Törring's letter of 23rd August, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM. See also Ritter, (1969–73), vol. 4, pp. 329–330; and Willequet, (1968), p. 673.

⁹⁴ Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 149–150.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Whitlock to Orts, 10 September, 1918, dos. 10138 bis, ABFM; and Ritter (1969–73), vol. 4, p. 330.

⁹⁶ Willequet (1968), p. 673. As Henry Carton de Wiart pointed out in his memoirs long ago (1948), pp. 360-361, the suspicions aroused on the Allied, particularly the French, side were revived by the memory of the von der Lancken affair.

⁹⁷ See note by Hymans, 13 September 1918, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM; Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 150.

⁹⁸ For the text of von Payer's speech, see Scott, ed., (1921), pp. 383-386. See also Fischer (1967), pp. 632-633; and Willequet (1968), p. 673.

⁹⁹ Willequet (1968), pp. 673-674; Thielemans, ed. (1991), pp. 150-151.

¹⁰⁰ Haag (1990), p. 647. Belgian ministers and officials were upset with the reaction of the French press and government to the response to Törring. As Gaiffier reported to Hymans on 23 September 1918 (see no. 7818/2416 in Arch. du Cab. du Roi Albert I (1914-1918), doss. 283, ARP), the French government, in Renkin's view, suspected certain elements in the Belgian Cabinet as favorable to a separate peace. "En outre il classe les Ministres belges en bons ou en mauvais, suivant les opinions plus ou moins flamingants qu'on leur attribue." Philippe Berthelot, the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay, was particularly critical of the observations that accompanied the Belgian response. Gaiffier reported him as saying: "Elles donnaient l'impression que si la réponse avait été autre, vous avait donné satisfaction, vous l'eussiez acceptée." For Berthelot, Belgium had to fight "jusqu'au moment où la conclusion de la paix ne portera pas atteinte aux intérêts de ses garants."

¹⁰¹ Willequet (1968), p. 674.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 675.

¹⁰³ See Peltzer to Hymans, 25 September 1918, no. 7547/1578, doss. 10138 bis, ABFM. See also Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 151.

¹⁰⁴ See (1990), p. 648, Examen Critique entitled "La crainte d'une dévastation de la Belgique lors de l'offensive finale alliée." Haag concludes: "Ajoutons que le jugement de l'historien, et du public en général, sur l'objet qui nous occupe, est facilement faussé par la connaissance qu'ils ont des événements ultérieurs, à ce moment imprévisibles. Que la Belgique, par chance, ait échappé aux destructions, ne signifie pas que le danger était imaginaire et qu'il n'y a plus lieu aujourd'hui d'en tenir compte dans l'appréciation qu'on porte sur la réaction des contemporains."

¹⁰⁵ Thielemans, ed. (1991), p. 151 quotes from Galet's Journal de campagne to show that in the king's entourage it was believed that the failure of the Törring feeler was due to "membres du gouvernement belge modérés et raisonnables pendant les courts moments où ils respirent l'air paisible de La Panne mais raides et intraitables dès que rentrés en France, ils retrouvent les vents belliqueux qui soufflent de Paris."

¹⁰⁶ See n. 74 above.

¹⁰⁷ Hymans to heads of Legation in Allied countries, 26 September 1918, doss. 278, ABFM. See also Vanlangenhove (1969), p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ Palo (1978), pp. 715-716, notes 106-111, 749-750. For Belgian diplomacy and the armistice, see Chapter XIII: "Belgium and the Armistice, November 1918," pp. 756-813. According to Raoul Van Overstraeten (1960), p. 10, King Albert would have preferred that Belgium adopt a regime of voluntary neutrality when the war ended. In an effort to condemn Leopold III for his advocacy of a return to neutrality in October 1936, many commentators portray Albert as an anti-neutralist thanks to his speech from the throne made on 22 November 1918 when he said: "La Belgique victorieuse et affranchie de la neutralité que lui imposaient les traités dont la guerre a ébranlé le fondement, jouira d'une complète indépendance.... La Belgique, rétablie dans ses droits, réglera ses destinées suivant ses besoins et ses aspirations, en pleine indépendance." It is clear, however, that, as a good constitutional monarch, the king in this case was articulating the policy of his government, which intended to seek the revision of the 1839 at the peace conference. For the excerpt

quoted and the view that Albert's words did not reflect his "*sentiment profond*," see Crahay (1987), pp. 156-157.

¹⁰⁹ The most detailed study of Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference is still Sally Marks (1981). See also my own "Epilogue-Conclusion" in Palo (1978), pp. 814-839. For a recent overview of Belgian aims, 1914-1919, which stresses the economic motivations of Belgian expansionism, see Rik Coolsaet (1998), Chapter 9, pp. 207-232.

¹¹⁰ For the details on the composition of the Delacroix Cabinet, see Haag (1975a), p. 63, Figure 8. For detailed analyses of Loppem and the governmental changes, see in particular Henri Haag, (1975a), pp. 53-70; and his articles on Loppem (1975b), pp. 313-347, and (1976), pp. 169-191. In his biography of Broqueville (1990), pp. 671-673, Haag has harsh words for Cooreman, whom he calls "une marionette dans la main de Francqui" and whom he accuses of duplicity for deciding to resign suddenly on 13 November at Brugge, thereby forcing the rest of the Cabinet to do so. This decision and the rest of what occurred until the formation of the new government on 21 November, was, in Haag's words, "manigancé dans l'ombre par Francqui, avec le consentement du Roi, gagné depuis longtemps à ses idées." In the end, he sees this turn of events as the triumph of the CNSA/NHVC, of which Francqui was the head, over the "legal government" of Le Havre, which was now "fort injustement, relégué aux oubliettes."

Liane Ranieri, who herself cites the previous work on the subject by Haag, however, reminds her readers (1985), p. 178, that Francqui always denied having played a decisive role in this affair. In his biographical essay of Paul-Emile Janson, who was the Vice-President of the Provincial Committee of the CNSA/NHVC for Hainaut, Professor Stengers (1973), pp. 208-214, speaks of this Liberal's commitment to the idea of national union and his role at Loppem. Janson's memo on Loppem is reproduced on pp. 285-287. Stengers stresses (pp. 213-214) that Janson always denied having put forth the name of Delacroix as Prime Minister; that honor, as he made clear on 28 December 1930, in the *Journal des Tribunaux*, cols. 786-787, had to go to Francqui. On the Belgian Workers Party decision to enter the Delacroix government, see Claeys-Van Haegendoren (1967), pp. 122-127.

¹¹¹ Eight Catholics (Berryer, Carton de Wiart, Cooreman, Helleputte, Hubert, Poulet, Segers, and Van de Vyvere), one Liberal (Goblet d'Alviella), and one Socialist (Brunet). De Ceuninck, the War Minister, was not a party figure.

¹¹² Léon Delacroix (C), Finance Minister and Prime Minister, Alphonse Harmignie (C), Minister of Arts and Sciences, Baron Albéric Ruzette (C), Minister of Agriculture, Henri Jaspar (C), Minister of Economics, Louis Franck (L), Minister of Colonies, and Fulgence Masson (L), Defense Minister; see Ranieri (1985), n. 331, p. 371. The other members of this government of national union were Edouard Anseele (S), Minister of Public Works, and Joseph Wauters (S), Minister of Labor and Industry.

¹¹³ See Haag (1975a), p. 41.

¹¹⁴ "[C]e qui ne veut pas dire," cautions Schepens (1983), p. 225, "que ses derniers (Ch. de Broqueville, A. Ruzette, E. Anseele et L. Franck) étaient des flamingants.... tout au plus de parfaits bilingues!" Baron Ruzette, as Schepens notes (p. 211), moreover, in citing a letter from Neuray to Broqueville of 8 November 1918, did not want to see French culture diminished in Flanders and expressed fear that a unilingual Flemish university would lead to administrative separation. As for Louis Franck, Schepens calls him (p. 229) "un belgiciste convaincu" by 1918.

¹¹⁵ Haag (1990), pp. 673-678. As Haag notes (1975a), p. 65, of the 186 deputies in the prewar Chamber of Representatives 179 were left in 1919, i.e., 95 Catholics, 43 Liberals, 40 Socialists, and 1 Daensist. Here it should be noted further that the title of the second chapter of the latter work cited in this note is "Le coup d'état parlementaire" (1975a), pp. 63-70, a phrase that Haag borrows from Paul-Emile Janson, the leader of some twenty prominent

Liberals in occupied Belgium who had met on 21 October 1918 to back the idea of universal manhood suffrage at 21, and uses to describe the accelerated procedure for constitutional revision decided at Loppem (pp. 54-56). Despite Haag's emphasis on the illegality of the entire process decided upon by the king and the key figures who met with him at Loppem, he downplays the idea that these men were somehow frightened into concessions by a threat of revolution. A sense of realism and pragmatism seems to be what motivated these men as well as Broqueville, and, as Haag pointed out at the colloquium on King Albert held in 1975 (1976), the monarch had decided on the need for serious suffrage reform long before 11-14 November 1918. For a classic statement of the view that King Albert was the victim of an "impotence" at Loppem, see Maurice des Ombiaux (1921), pp. 7-29. Haag cites this polemical work, which is very sympathetic to Broqueville, in his bibliography and when he speaks of the Coppée Affair of 1920-21 (1990), p. 722, n. 2, though he does not refer to it here. However, in his article (1975b), pp. 315-324, Haag refers to the great commotion created by des Ombiaux's publications in 1921. Particularly noteworthy is the hostility to Vandervelde manifested in these philippics. The controversy eventually died down; but, as Haag notes in this same article (pp. 325-347), it flared up again in early 1930, when the journalist Gérard Harry published the fourth volume of his memoirs which contained a preface written by Paul Hymans that King Albert characterized in a letter to the latter on 22 January 1930 as "plutôt une réfutation du livre lui-même qu'une préface." A flood of articles in the press followed the book's publication. What wounded the king, however, was a piece by Fernand Neuray in *La Nation Belge* of 9 February, which, as Haag notes, concluded with the words: "Qu'on élève un monument au centre de Loppem et qu'on fasse graver sur le socle: légèreté, naïveté, sentimentalité." Albert's official response addressed to the Prime Minister, Henri Jaspar, was published on the 11th, and Haag reproduces it. In it the king denied that anyone had spoken to him about the possibility of political or social disturbances; he stressed that G. Cooreman had announced his intention to retire as soon as the government returned to Belgium when he took over as Cabinet Chief in June 1918; and he stated that the formation of the Delacroix Cabinet conformed to constitutional procedure. In a letter to Neuray drafted at the same time, but neither signed nor sent, according to Haag, Albert again denied that he acted out of fear, but stressed that he accepted the decisions made at Loppem of his own free will: "La politique, dite de Loppem, je ne l'ai pas subie, je lui ai apporté au contraire mon chaleureux appui." For Els Witte and Jan Craeybeckx (1987), p. 162, the "anti-Loppem" tendency, which was totally anti-democratic, was the origin of "fascisme bruxellois et francophone." For an analysis of French influences on the right in Belgian politics in the era of the world wars, see Eric Defoort (1978).

¹¹⁶ The Belgian delegation to the peace conference was composed of Hymans, Vandervelde, and Van den Heuvel, thereby reflecting the tripartite structure of the new government. Though ostensibly committed to the governmental consensus on war aims, the delegation soon showed signs of disunity, which, in turn, reflected the growing conflict within Belgian public opinion regarding the peace program. Rather than conforming to the basically expansionist policy of Hymans and a majority of his colleagues, as certain scholars assert (see, for example, Johansson (1988), p. 149, n. 165, Vandervelde "attacked," in the words of Janet Polasky (1995), p. 138, "any proposals that appeared to be tainted by annexation." For more detail on the views of the Belgian Workers Party, see Claeys-Van Haegendroen (1967), pp. 160-166. For a brief overview of public opinion on territorial question at the peace conference, see Devleeshouwer (1968).

¹¹⁷ As he had during the war, Pierre Nothomb led the pro-annexationist campaign during the peace conference. Having been appointed to a post in the Belgian Foreign Ministry by Hymans, Nothomb founded the Comité Politique Nationale in December 1918 as a pressure

group. On the CPN and its activities, see Jean Beaufays (1971), pp. 105-171; Eric Defoort (1977); Maria De Waele (1988-89), pp. 927-954. See also the essays in Pierre Nothomb et le nationalisme belge de 1914 à 1930 (1980). As he revealed in a letter to Richard Dupierreux, a pro-annexationist Socialist in a letter of 18 September 1917, Nothomb wanted to group Belgians of all parties and linguistic groups in a "national party" founded on universal suffrage for all people 21 and over. He called for linguistic reform and the creation of a Flemish university at Ghent. Belgian independence, he argued, could only be realized if the program of territorial expansion were implemented. See in Nothomb Papers, doss. 180, Louvain-la-Neuve. Similar views were expressed in June 1917 by Auguste DeWinne, Vandervelde's ministerial *chef de cabinet*, in a memorandum entitled "Une plus grande Belgique." See Johansson (1988), pp. 88-89. For an example of how "corporatist" ideas could be joined to disappointment with the results of the peace conference and fear of "flamingantisme" in the mind of a young francophone adherent of the CPN, see Jacques Pirenne (1975), pp. 115-125.

¹¹⁸ For a detailed account of Belgian diplomacy and decision making regarding acquisition of German territory during the war and the peace conference, see Johansson (1988), especially pp. 114-129, where economic reasons, because of zinc-mining, carried the day within the Belgian-Danish Commission as far as Eupen, with an overwhelming German-speaking population, was concerned. In lieu of a proper plebiscite, the Belgians were to make it possible for the local population to sign protest lists which would then be turned over to the League of Nations. The Versailles Treaty, however, relegated the question of the 6 billion occupation marks left behind at the time of the armistice to direct Belgian-German negotiations. Gustave Stresemann, Germany's Chancellor and later Foreign Minister, tried, once he came to office in 1923, to make a deal whereby Germany would redeem the marks in exchange for retrocession of Eupen-Malméd. Even the Treaty of Locarno of October 1925, which called for mutual recognition of the Franco-German and Belgo-German frontiers as established by the Treaty of Versailles, did not stop the German leader from pursuing a "peaceful" revision of the border between his country and Belgium. In the end, the Belgians refused to discuss such an exchange. The mark question was finally settled as part of the Young Plan of 1929. Germany agreed to pay Belgium 606 million marks over a period of thirty-seven years. Of course, this agreement as well as those concerning reparations in general fell by the wayside once Hitler came to power in 1933. For details, see Marks (1981), pp. 347-355, and Manfred J. Enssle (1980), passim. See also the essay by Jacques Bariéty (1975). Vandervelde's *chef de cabinet* in 1925-26, Henri Rolin, learned via his friend, Marc Somerhausen, Representative from Verviers, that had a plebiscite been held in Eupen and the other German-speaking cantons in 1926 the result would have been to the detriment of Belgium. See Devleeshouwer (1994), p. 61.

¹¹⁹ Even though the Belgians had given up hope of obtaining territorial transfers from Holland even before the Treaty of Versailles was signed, they still hoped to obtain a joint agreement regarding the defense of Limburg and Dutch recognition of Belgian sovereignty over the Wielingen Channel, at the mouth of the Scheldt, which passed through Belgian territorial waters. But agreement was hard to come by. Finally, a treaty was signed by the two countries on 3 April 1925, by which the Dutch recognized Belgium's abandonment of neutrality, agreed to interpret any German violation of Limburg as a *casus belli*, allowed Antwerp to have a naval base, and accepted to improve the navigability of the West Scheldt estuary. The Belgians paved the way for agreement when they gave up their claims to Wielingen. The Belgians also abandoned all territorial claims and demands for a defense pact. The Dutch Second Chamber, however, rejected the treaty, in March 1927. In the meantime, London and Paris signed a separate treaty with Belgium in May 1926 formally abrogating the neutrality clause of the treaties of 1839. See Helmreich (1976), pp. 249-255;

and De Waele (1996). For a detailed analysis of Dutch public opinion, see R. L. Schuurisma (1975). For a critique of the latter work, see Vanlangenhove (1978a).

¹²⁰ There is a vast literature on the Luxemburg question both during and after the First World War. The studies that are based on the best archival research are Christian Calmes (1976); Sally Marks (1981), Chapter Five, pp. 206-254; Gilbert Trausch (1975); and G. Trausch (1978). During the peace conference, French public opinion moved from a favorable to a hostile stance as far as Belgian aims were concerned. On Luxemburg, however, the French press remained relatively discrete. See Pierre Miquel (1975). See also Maurice Baumont (1975).

¹²¹ Willequet (1984), p. 19.

¹²² For the text of the accord, see *Documents diplomatiques belges* (hereafter DDB), vol. 1, doc. 175, pp. 405-408. There are numerous studies of the accord. For a convenient summary based on primary documents, see Fernand Vanlangenhove (1969), Chapter 2, pp. 17-28, and (1980), Chapter 2, pp. 11-23. See also Van Overstraeten (1946), pp. 34-40; and (1960), pp. 10-14; Claeys-Van Haegendorn (1967), pp. 166-169; Jonathan Helmreich (1976), chapter 8, pp. 226-241; David Owen Kieft (1972), pp. 6-20; Sally Marks (1981), pp. 339-346; and Jean Stengers (1973), pp. 217-220, as well as his (1978), pp. 227-243. The most detailed account, which concentrates especially on the role of the opposition of the Flemings is the two-volume magnum opus of Guido Provoost (1976-77); see especially vol. 1, pp. 81-186. It should not be forgotten that at the peace conference, Clemenceau had toned down French aims vis-à-vis Germany in exchange for an Anglo-American guarantee of French security, which, as a result of the US Senate's refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles in November 1919 and in March 1920, was ultimately withdrawn. The French held the US president responsible for this turn of events because of his refusal to accept reservations regarding the League Covenant that were requested by moderate senators. On US policy towards France after the war, see Melvyn P. Leffler (1979), especially pp. 3-18, where Wilson's policy and the French reaction is discussed. Had the Anglo-American guarantee of France against "unprovoked aggression" become reality, Belgium would have benefited, because it is unthinkable that such a guarantee would not also have covered that small state as well. Indeed, there may have been no need for a Franco-Belgian Military Accord at all!

¹²³ Belgium received the right to eight percent of the total sum collected from Germany and a priority payment of 2.5 billion francs. For the details on Belgium's futile efforts at the peace conference to get total war costs covered, see Marks (1981), Chapter Four, pp. 170-205. The most recent account of Belgium's role in the reparations question can be found in the doctoral thesis of Rolande De Poortere (1993-94). See also Marc Trachtenberg (1980). For the Dawes and Young Plans and an assessment of the success of Belgian reparations diplomacy, see Helmreich (1976), pp. 295-306. Helmreich notes (p. 302) that "a rough estimate of Belgium's total proceeds from the occupation marks agreement and reparations would be about 2,509 million gold marks, a far cry from Belgium's original hopes." Despite his opposition to the occupation of German territory in principle, King Albert went along with the Theunis Cabinet's decision to join France in early 1923 because he was concerned by opposition to increasing the term of military service among Flemings and Socialists. It was hoped that by joining in the occupation, the government could maintain support in parliament for a 15-month term of service - five of them temporary, while, at the same time, keeping an eye on the French. To appease Flemish opinion, necessarily hostile to any increases in terms of military service, the king and government pushed for a compromise on the question of creating a Flemish university at Ghent. In the end, it was agreed - at least temporarily - that the University of Ghent would be divided into two sections, with education being two-thirds in Dutch and one-third in French in the Flemish section, and

two-thirds French and one-third Dutch in the French section. The term of military service was fixed at 12 months, with two supplementary months added for the duration of the Ruhr occupation. See Haag (1975a), pp. 79-83; Thielemans (1976), pp. 317-323; and Willequet (1979), pp. 188-189, 194-196. For an overall analysis of Franco-German relations and their impact on Belgium, see Jacques Bariéty (1977); and the extended review of that work by F. Vanlangenhove (1978b).

¹²⁴ For the most recent and thorough analysis of Franco-Belgian economic and commercial relations in the interwar period, see the published doctoral dissertation of Eric Bussière (1992), especially pp. 41-230, which cover the period 1919-1924. A commercial agreement was signed on 12 May 1923. It would have lowered the tariff on selected Belgian exports to France by 12 to 13%. But fears of over dependence on French goodwill and the political implications of such an agreement led to its ultimate rejection in the Belgian Parliament in February 1924. Bussière sums up Belgian policy during the Ruhr crisis best when he writes (p. 167): "Le combat de la Ruhr est en effet de nature différente pour les Belges et les Français. Pour Theunis et Jaspar, il s'agit d'un combat économique à remporter contre la puissance industrielle allemande.... Ce combat de la Ruhr est contemporain des efforts des firmes belges pour s'implanter commercialement sur les marchés étrangers et notamment anglais. Ce combat est aussi financier: n'oublions pas que le souci majeur de Theunis, ministre des Finances, est de sauver les finances publiques et la monnaie de son pays; il a besoin d'une solution rapide et rentable à la question des réparations. Cette recherche explique la dureté de la politique belge; cette attitude est d'autant plus fondée que les responsables belges savent que les objectifs de Poincaré sont plus vaste et plus ambigus." See also Willequet (1975); and Coolsaet (1998), Chapter 10, pp. 233-247.

¹²⁵ On Belgian hesitancy to follow the French in their Rhineland policy in the early 1920's, see Walter A. McDougall (1978), pp. 153-154, 184, 193, 196-198; and Helmreich (1976), pp. 268-295. As Stephen A. Schuker notes (1976), p. 189: "Only with great reluctance had the Belgians joined the French in the Ruhr adventure originally. They had never entertained the illusion that direct exploitation of the Ruhr would be particularly profitable, but England, by proposing in January 1923 to end the Belgian priority in regard to reparations receipts, had driven Belgium into the arms of France. Besides, as the Belgian ambassador in Washington had confidentially informed the State Department, Belgium was 'a very small ally... as much afraid of France as it is of Germany,' and apprehensive that if it held aloof from the Ruhr occupation it would find itself permanently 'encircled' by France, economically if not indeed militarily." As F. Vanlangenhove (1978b), pp. 418-421, stresses, the Belgians preferred an autonomous Rhineland, while the French hoped for an independent Rhine state. Brussels distanced itself from all separatist activities, however, when it became clear by the end of 1923 that the British were determined to support German territorial integrity. For the impact of the Ruhr Crisis on Belgian military relations with France, see Provoost (1976-77), vol. 1, pp. 187-311.

¹²⁶ See Vanlangenhove (1969), Chapter 3, pp. 29-40; Helmreich (1976), pp. 241-245; Marks (1981), pp. 346-347.

¹²⁷ At Locarno Germany recognized the status quo of 1919 in the West and agreed to pay reparations according to the Dawes Plan of 1924 in exchange for the removal of Allied troops from the Rhineland five years early and her entrance into the League of Nations in 1926. Britain and Italy signed as guarantors. During the negotiations, the US used financial leverage to obtain an agreement, which Washington believed would bring "a new order of capitalist stability in Europe" and, thereby, obviate the need for a direct US commitment. For US policy, see Leffler (1979), pp. 112-120. The most important question for the Belgians was the nature of their obligations under this treaty. Already in the spring of 1925, when the French and British were discussing how to respond to the initial German overture,

Baron Edmond de Gaiffier d'Hestroy, Belgium's ambassador to Paris, informed the Foreign Minister *ad interim*, Baron Albéric Ruzette, that the French were seeking to get the status quo in the East guaranteed as well as that in the West. In the *aide mémoire* that was sent to London and Paris in response, the Belgian government insisted: "La Belgique ne saurait, en effet, en raison de sa situation et de ses forces limitées, s'engager dans des accords qui s'étendent à des régions éloignées d'elle et à des intérêts qui ne la touchent pas directement. Mais elle entend d'ailleurs s'en tenir pour ces questions aux obligations qui lui incombent comme membre de la Société des Nations." See Gaiffier to Ruzette, 23 May 1925, and Ruzette to Gaiffier and Baron Ludovic Moncheur (London), 26 May 1925, annexe "Aide-mémoire belge concernant le projet français de réponse," 25 May 1925, DDB, vol. 2, nos. 56 and 57, pp. 188-192. Fernand Vanlangenhove, who would soon become Secretary General at the Belgian Foreign Ministry and who was one of the editors of the DDB, is at pains, in his accounts of Locarno (1969), Chapter 4, pp. 41-60, and (1980), pp. 51-61, to stress the continuity of Belgian foreign policy and the reluctance of Belgium to incur obligations beyond those incurred by the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations. But Locarno had dire implications for Belgian security because the treaty (for the English language text, see F. J. Berber (1936), pp. 48-53) was vague when it came to defining what constituted a breach, and under what circumstances the guarantor powers would be obliged to intervene. Although the signatory powers agreed that they would "... in no case attack or invade each other, or resort to war against each other," they stipulated that this agreement would not apply in the event of a situation calling for "... the exercise of the right of defense." Article 2, however, stated that a "flagrant breach" of articles 42 and 43 of the Versailles Treaty (pertaining to the Rhineland) would be sufficient reason for military counter-action "... if such breach constituted an unprovoked act of aggression." Yet it also stipulated that if fortifications were built or troops were assembled in the Rhineland demilitarized zone, "immediate action is necessary." The article did not, however, either define an "unprovoked act of aggression" or specify the type of fortifications or kind of troops that were barred. Nevertheless, a guaranteed state under the treaty could theoretically claim self-defense if it went to war as a result of an "unprovoked act of aggression" against it or if the demilitarized zone were violated. According to article 4, section 1, all allegations made by contracting parties regarding violations of article 2 of Locarno or articles 42 and 43 of Versailles had to be brought before the Council of the League. If, however, a guaranteed power was the victim of a "flagrant violation" of the treaties, section 3 of article 4 provided that the other signatory powers, including the guarantor powers, should immediately render aid to that party "... as soon as the said Power has been able to satisfy itself that this violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression...." Since the British made it very clear during the talks at Locarno that they reserved the right to judge what constituted a "flagrant breach" or "unprovoked aggression," the Belgians tried in December 1925 to get London to clarify its position and to agree to bilateral staff talks. The British, however, insisted that, under Locarno, such talks would have to include the French, Germans, and Italians as well. See Sir George D. Graham, British ambassador in Brussels, to Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary, 12 December 1925, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Series Ia, vol. 1, doc. 143, pp. 249-250. For an overall analysis of Locarno, see Jon Jacobson (1972); for a recent look at French policy from Locarno to the Wall Street collapse, which emphasizes the interplay between economics and security, see the studies by Edward D. Keeton (1987) and Vincent J. Pitts (1987). For a sympathetic view of the dilemmas facing the French from the Peace Conference to the advent of Hitler, see S. Marks (1976). Even P. M. H. Bell, who emphasizes the role of Locarno as opening up a new era of peace and prosperity which was only broken by the depression, stresses (1997), p. 41, that Britain took no concrete measures to ensure that its guarantee under the treaty could be fulfilled

militarily or that the territories involved could be defended.

¹²⁸ As one expert on the question has written in a recent survey of French policy (see Robert J. Young (1996), p. 20): "...[T]hese static Maginot defensive works were intended to permit, not to preclude, a mobile thrust into Belgium with a view to joining forces against an actual, even an imminent, German attack." For detailed studies of French military development and strategy in the interwar period, Judith M. Hughes (1971); see R. J. Young (1978); Maurice Vaisse (1981); Robert Frankenstein (1982); Robert A. Doughty (1985); Bradford J. Lee (1985); M.S. Alexander (1992).

¹²⁹ Such a study is in preparation. The most informative secondary works on the problem of Belgium's return to neutrality are: R. Binion (1969); C. Brescianino (1979); M. A. Butler (1978) and (1985); R. Devleeshouwer (1994); V. Dujardin and M. Dumoulin (1997); M. Dumoulin (1999); J. Helmreich (1976); D. O. Kieft (1972); C. Koninckx (1987) and (1997); P.-H. Laurent (1969); J. K. Miller (1951); M. F. Palo (1969); J.-H. Pirenne (1975); G. Provoost (1976-77); O. de Raeymaeker (1945); G. van Roon (1985); R. L. Rothstein (1968); R. Van Eenoo (1977-79); F. Vanlangenhove (1969), (1972), (1974), and (1980); J. Vanwelkenhuyzen (1989); J. Velaers and H. Van Goethem (1994); J. Willequet (1958b), (1973), (1975), and (1984); J. A. Wullus-Rudiger (1945), (1946), and (1950). Needless to say, there are numerous published memoirs and documents that can also be consulted on the subject as well as vast archival resources in Belgium, Britain, and France that have been opened for research in the last three decades.

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Het neutraliteitsprobleem en veiligheidsdilemma van België tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog: de zoektocht naar een politiek aanvaardbare oplossing

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SAMENVATTING

Tijdens en na WO I vonden vele Belgen dat het regime van continue en gegarandeerde neutraliteit, door de vijf grootmachten opgelegd aan België bij de verdragen van 1839, faalde het land te verdedigen tegen invasie en bezetting. Dit regime was een hindernis geworden voor de ontwikkeling van een flexibele buitenlandse- en veiligheidspolitiek. De Duitse daad van agressie deed deze verdragen teniet en toonde aan dat: 1) de Belgische grenzen strategisch onverdedigbaar waren en 2) de fluviale rechten op de Schelde inadequaat waren. België moest dus niet alleen bevrijd worden van de Duitse bezettingsmacht maar ook van alle obstakels die een vrije uitoefening van zowel buitenlandse als veiligheidspolitiek in de weg stonden. Eens deze obstakels uit de weg zouden er immers allianties en/of militaire akkoorden kunnen afgesloten worden en zou een eventuele territoriale expansie niet uitgesloten zijn. Met andere woorden, België moest erkend worden als een soevereine staat.

België ontdekte al snel dat het formuleren van oorlogsdoeleinden gemakkelijker was dan de realisatie ervan. Ook kwam het tot de vaststelling dat het eenvoudiger was de verplichte neutraliteit te negeren dan om effectief te ontsnappen aan de historische, geopolitieke en interne politieke realiteit die het zeer moeilijk maakte om de, mijn inziens natuurlijke neutrale conditie, te overwinnen.

Bovendien was het voor de leiders van een klein, zwak land als België een onoverkomelijk probleem een alternatief te vinden voor de garantie van de grootmachten van 1839. Hoe kon België immers garanties bekomen van grootmachten zoals Frankrijk en Groot-Brittannië zonder met hen, eens de oorlog voorbij en het land bevrijd van zowel Duitse bezetters als de verantwoordelijke van de verdragen van 1839, militaire verdragen te sluiten?

In dit essay, waarin uitgelegd wordt hoe de Belgen met het veiligheidsdilemma na het uitbreken van WO I in 1914 omgingen, zullen twee gerelateerde vragen besproken worden. Ten eerste: waarom nam de Belgische regering in ballingschap een neutrale positie in zoals dit gebeurde in 1918? Hier zal de nadruk liggen op de samenhang tussen de Belgische internationale situatie en de realiteit van de Belgische politiek, beide in een bezet land. Ten tweede en vooral: waarom, ondanks de schijnbare vijandigheid t.o.v. de neutraliteit na 1914, vermeed de Belgische regering betrokken te geraken bij akkoorden die de vrijheid zouden hinderen en aanleiding zouden kunnen geven tot interne verdeeldheid binnen de natie?