

REVOLUTION, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND
THE BRUSSELS COMMERCIAL BOURGEOISIE,
1780-1793

by

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The Brabant Revolution of 1789 poses a perplexing question for comparative historians of eighteenth century Europe. According to most historians, the third estate, led by the bourgeoisie, rose to overthrow the privileged orders — the nobility and the clergy — in a series of democratic revolutions. These revolts at the end of the eighteenth century destroyed the foundations of the ancien regime. That did not happen in the Brabant Revolution. Instead, in the Austrian Netherlands the leaders of the third estate supported the nobility and the clergy in their effort to defend the privileges of the ancien regime. In Brussels, the center of the Brabant Revolution, the bourgeoisie led the struggle of the privileged orders against the democrats.

Rather than explain this enigma of bourgeois support for the privileged orders, most historians have chosen to ignore it. They have dismissed the Brabant Revolution, viewing the democratic revolution in the Austrian Netherlands as small and insignificant in comparison with France. In addition, they point out, the Brabant Revolution failed.

The few historians who have persisted in their study of the Brabant Revolution account for the bourgeois support of the privileged orders by explaining that the leaders of the third estate in Brussels simply did not understand their own interests. The nobles and clergy were able to manipulate the naïve Belgian people, these historians contend, because the Austrian Netherlands were politically and economically backward. Democratic revolution was successful only in more developed societies such as France.

This interpretation has been called into question by recent work on the economic history of Belgium. This research suggests that by 1812 the region that is now Belgium had become the most industrially developed section of Napoleon's Empire, far surpassing France in the production of textiles and in heavy industry. Much of Belgian industry had been mechanized causing a contemporary to write of one industrialist, John Cockerill, that "he believed that he had a mission to extend manufactures everywhere and to fill the whole world with machinery." (1) These industrialists quickly diversified their enterprises, becoming involved in all stages of the production process and building by 1820 what Jan Dhondt has called "un véritable empire industriel." (2) Less than forty years after the Brabant Revolution, Belgium took its place behind England as the second industrial nation, leading all the continental European countries. Barring a miraculous leap in industrial technology in Belgium in 1800, the economy of the Austrian Netherlands at the end of the eighteenth century could not have been as underdeveloped as the comparative historians have assumed. The economy at the time of the Brabant Revolution was probably the most advanced of any society in continental Europe.

The economic historians who have begun to trace the origins of the industrial revolution in Belgium have substantiated this conclusion. Although they have not found the "take-off stage" in the Austrian Netherlands in the eighteenth century as defined in the English model of the industrial revolution, they have documented a steady growth in industrial production, stimulated and then retarded by the dramatic changes in political regimes in the region. This process began early in the eighteenth century. The first New-comen steam engine was introduced in Liège in 1720 and by 1750 many négociants had begun investing in new machinery. The mechanized production process required that workers be concentrated in centralized workplaces or factories. Population grew and prices rose steadily from 1750 to the 1780's. The Belgian

(1) "Le Comte de Bedelièvre," *Biographie liégeoise*, as cited by W.O. HENDERSON, *Britain and Industrial Europe, 1750-1850*, Leicester, 1965, p. 124. I have maintained original spelling and punctuation in citations.

(2) Jan DHONDT, "L'industrie cotonnière gantoise à l'époque française," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, II, 1955, p. 240.

economy at the time of the Brabant Revolution was indeed among the most prosperous and most advanced in continental Europe. (3)

These findings not only invalidate the standard interpretation of the Brabant Revolution, but they further complicate the original question of the reasons for the bourgeois alliance with the nobility and clergy. Why did the leaders of the bourgeoisie in the most economically advanced region of Europe support the privileged orders in their struggle against the democrats? I suggest that we re-examine the question before trying to answer it. The definition of privilege implied by the question is French and, I believe, does not apply to the Austrian Netherlands. In the Austrian Netherlands, unlike France, part of the third estate was privileged. The privileged bourgeois were fighting to defend their own interests in the Brabant Revolution.

One example of the division between privileged and unprivileged members of the third estate is the split within the bourgeoisie of Brussels. The artisans and merchants in traditional trades, that is all the commercial bourgeois except the wholesalers, manufactures, and bankers, belonged to guilds which were part of the nine "Nations" of Brussels. The Nations had been granted numerous privileges in the fourteenth century in exchange for their promise to supply the duke, the sovereign ruler of the province, with troops. (4)

(3) Jan CRAEYBECKX first posed the question of the relationship between the Revolution and industrial development in "The Brabant Revolution: A Conservative Revolution in a Backward Country?" *Acta Historiae Neerlandica*, IV, 1970. Other important works on the industrialization of the Austrian Netherlands include: Jan CRAEYBECKX, "Les débuts de la révolution industrielle en Belgique et les statistiques de la fin de l'empire," *Mélanges offerts à G. Jacquemyns*, Brussels, 1968; H. COPPEJANS-DESMEDT, "Economische Opbloei in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden," in *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, VIII, 1955, pp. 273-280; Jan DHONDT, "L'industrie cotonnière..."; F. MENDELS, "Proto-industrialization: The First Process of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII, 1972, pp. 241-261; A.S. MILWARD and S.B. SAUL, *Economic Development of Continental Europe 1780-1870*, London, 1973; Joel MOKYR, *Industrialization in the Low Countries 1795-1850*, New Haven, 1976; J. VAN DER WEE, *De industriële revolutie in België, Historische aspecten van de economische groei*, Antwerp, 1972; pp. 168-208; and Robert DEVLEESHOUWER, "Le consulat et l'empire: Période de 'take-off' pour l'économie belge?" *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XLII, 1970, pp. 610-619.

(4) A. HENNE and A. WAUTERS, *Histoire de la ville de Bruxelles*, Brussels, 1843-5. The Austrian emperor, Joseph II in 1789, served as duke of the province.

For four centuries, the Nations had been able to restrict guild membership either to relatives or to those men who could pay a substantial entrance fee. The guild within the Nations determined the length of apprenticeship, set their own prices in the Brussels marketplace, over which they had a monopoly, and organized their own military unit. In addition to their control over the trades, the Nations traditionally spoke for the entire Brussels third estate in the provincial government. (5) Through indirect election, the members of each Nation selected several doyens who sat with the magistrate of Brussels and the guilds and magistrates of Louvain and Antwerp as the Brabant Third Estate. (6)

According to the Brabant Constitution, the duke received his subsidies from the Estates. The Estates assembled for deliberation on the taxes twice a year. The first two Estates — the clergy and the nobility — voted first and then sent their vote to the Third Estate. The doyens of the Nations of Brussels conferred in nine separate circles. A majority vote of the Nations would negate the first two Estates' vote to accord the duke his subsidy.

The wholesalers, manufactures, and bankers were outside of the guilds and consequently had neither representation in the Estates nor economic privileges. The *négociants* were well-educated; they read widely and corresponded with philosophers and the intellectual elite of Europe. Whereas the interests of the shopkeepers and artisans seemed to be limited to Brussels, many of the *négociants* travelled throughout Europe. The wine wholesaler Antoine d'Aubremez, for instance, had fought in the War of American Independence.

The doyens of the guilds, enjoying the receipts of flourishing trade, lived comfortable lives. The bankers and wholesale merchants, on the other hand, were very wealthy. According to a 1794 French list of "persons reputed to be rich," the mean income of wholesalers, manufacturers, and bankers in Brussels was 16,000 florins compared

(5) For more information on the guilds see : Alphonse WAUTERS, *Les Serments de Bruxelles, leur origine et leurs règlements* (1847), ARCHIVES DE LA VILLE, BRUSSELS (AVB); P.A.F. GERARD, *Rapédus de Berg, Mémoires et documents pour servir à l'histoire de la Révolution Brabançonne*, Brussels, 1842, Mss. G 573, BIBLIOTHEQUE ROYALE, BRUSSELS (BRB); and *Archives des corps de métiers*, ARCHIVES GENERALES DU ROYAUME, BRUSSELS (AGR).

(6) In this article, "Third Estate" refers to the delegates chosen to sit in the Estates and "third estate" to the third order of the ancien regime.

to 10,000 florins for brewers, the wealthiest of the guilds. (7) The Brussels négociants, rather than seeking to use their wealth for ennoblement, preferred to reinvest their capital in new industrial enterprises. Consequently, many of them were known for their commercial activities throughout Europe. (8) Their commercial adventuring contrasted markedly with the shopkeepers and artisans who continued to practice the trade their fathers or uncles had passed down to them.

Thirty-eight of the Brabant revolutionaries were members of the commercial bourgeoisie of Brussels. By profession, there were : two gunsmiths, one belt maker, one wig maker, one leather chair maker, two brewers, one dyer, one greaser, one gloves merchant, three men identified as leaders of the guilds, one wine merchant, one draper, one hosier, one boatman, one tanner, one milliner, one saltfish merchant, one forger, two goldsmiths, one carpenter, one haberdasher, six bankers, two wine wholesalers, one cloth manufacturer, one manufacturer of carriages, and three wholesalers. (9) This list of professions is not as haphazard as it might first appear. The first twenty-five were members of the guilds, twenty of them doyens. Except for the gloves merchant, all the guildsmen were revolutionary traditionalists, supporters of the privileged coalition led by Brussels lawyer Henri Van der Noot. All of the négociants, outside of the guilds, supported the democrats led by another lawyer, J.F. Vonck.

(7) Statistics on wealth of the commercial bourgeoisie come from the *Liste des Contribuables*, 70-1, 70-2, and 70-3, AVB; 2^{ème} liste and *Liste des personnes réputés riches*, D^s 33, ARCHIVES NATIONALES DE FRANCE (ANF); and A. VERHAEGEN, "Note sur le travail et les salaires en Belgique," *Bulletin de l'institut de recherche économique et sociale*, XIX, 1953.

(8) J. BOUCHARY, "Le Banquier Ed. de Walckiers," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 1938, pp. 133-155; Carlo BRONNE, *Madame de Nettime, Banquière des Pays Bas*, Brussels, 1969; and DERIVAL, *Le Voyageur dans les Pays Bas Autrichiens ou lettres sur l'état actuel de ces Pays*, Amsterdam, 1784.

(9) Revolutionary artisans and négociants included : E. Adan, Adrien Appel-mans, P.J.C. Beeckmans, Dansaert, François de Noter, Petrus Doms, Vincent Gillé, J.B.C. Huyghens, Mommaerts, F.J. Opphalens, Jobert Parys, Jean Joseph Saegermans, Jean Cyprien Schruers, André Smeesters, Tintilair, J.S. Van Assche, J.B. Van den Block, J.B. Van den Sande, J. Van den Schick, A.F.D. Van der Stricht, J.B. Van Lack, J. Van Parys, P.N. van Zieunne, H.A. Verhasselt, Henri Feigneaux, Jean Jacques Chapel, Guillaume Chapel, Daniel Dannoot, Antoine d'Aubremez, J.B. De Vleeschouwer, Guillaume Herries, F.J. Nicolle, J.J. Pins, Plowits, H. Seghers, Jean Simons, Sironval, Ed. Walckiers, and J.B. Weemaels.

The Brabant revolutionaries had divided into two factions several months before the Revolution. Although leaders of the two revolutionary parties conferred and finally coalesced to fight the common enemy, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, they could not agree on revolutionary tactics. Vonck's democrats appealed to the Belgian people to scrounge arms and uniforms and join the patriot army. The traditionalists led by Van der Noot negotiated for the support of Prussian, English, and Dutch troops. The leaders of the two groups bickered over every decision, from the date of the declaration of war to the stealing of shoes by barefoot soldiers. The struggle between the Vonckists and the Vandernootists grew even more bitter with the winning of Belgian independence.

Basic political differences lay beneath the strategical disputes. As the following brief history will demonstrate, the Vandernootists and the Vonckists disagreed over the very goals of the Revolution. The artisans and shopkeepers as Vandernootists were fighting to conserve the privileges and traditions of the ancien regime and the négociants as Vonckists to introduce reforms that would create a new societal structure, one ordered according to wealth and talent rather than privilege.

THE BRABANT REVOLUTION

Van der Noot and a group of government lawyers initiated the resistance against Joseph II in January 1787. The Nations took over the leadership of the movement in the summer, encouraged by Van der Noot who wrote many of their grievance petitions. (10) They informed the Emperor that his proposed series of administrative reforms was unconstitutional. For centuries the Brabant Constitution had guaranteed the happiness and prosperity of their ancestors, they said. In the name of "le peuple," they threatened to withhold the Emperor's taxes until "le flambeau sacré de la loi constitution-

(10) *Note van de conferentie de welke de gedeputeerde van de negen natien der stad*, May 2, 1787, AVB, No 3500.

nelle" had regained its original brightness. (11) For the next two years the Nations, on behalf of the entire Third Estate, mounted protests against each of the Emperor's new edicts, even those reforms directed specifically at the privileges of the Church or the University of Louvain, issues of no direct concern to them.

The Nations did not assume this leadership role by choice. The first two Estates had abdicated it to them. (12) Time after time, the Emperor succeeded either in placating the nobles and clerics with promises or more often frightening them with threats. For two years, the nobles and clergy consistently voted the Austrians their taxes while overlooking the Emperor's reforms that threatened their privileges.

The Nations alone petitioned the Emperor for the preservation of privilege. By privilege they meant not only their prerogative to regulate commercial affairs and to carry arms, but also the continuation of Belgian society as it had existed since the Middle Ages. They were fighting for the maintenance of the Brabant Constitution, and Catholic Church, and the system of orders — the Belgian ancien regime.

The artisans and shopkeepers of the Brussels guilds also played a major role in the initial military resistance against Joseph II. In the summer of 1787, Van der Noot called together the doyens of the Nations and the leaders of the five sermens, the traditional bourgeois guard, on the pretext of controlling the disorder in the streets. The assembled doyens pledged themselves to "le maintien de la tranquillité publique et du bon ordre." (13) Van der Noot then suggested that they prepare themselves to organize and command the volunteer battalions of the Brussels bourgeoisie. The Brussels populace did not fear the new military force, but rather lionized it as "soutiens infati-

(11) Nations to Etats, *Etats de Brabant*, Carton 153, AGR; *Journal général d'Europe*, June 5, 1787, 13:258; and *Assemblée générale de Brabant à leurs Altesses*, May 15, 1787, AVB, Liasse 610B.

(12) Madame de Bellem, Goethals 210, BRB. Torrington, the English ambassador reported that "the nobles wish to do everything in their power to conciliate matters and to gain the good will of his Imperial Majesty while the Third Estate are desirous of having terms made first." Report of July 9, 1787, *Foreign Office Papers*, 26/9, PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE, LONDON (PRO).

(13) P.A.F. GERARD, *Rapédus de Berg*, p. 269; and p. 117, Mss. 19648, BRB.

gables, vrais pères de l'Etat." (14) Not surprisingly, the Austrians reported an increase rather than a lessening of activity in the cabarets and the streets after the formation of the civilian guard. The armed volunteers had rejoined their friends, the artisans and merchants, in the cabarets and bars nightly for revolutionary discussions. This time they were armed.

The Emperor soon wearied of the constant threats of the volunteers and the Nations and dissolved the Estates in June, 1789, stationing battalions of troops behind the Estates' Assembly Hall. Van der Noot then began to look for help outside of Belgium. A few of the merchants and artisans followed him into exile but most simply continued to meet in the cabarets awaiting the outcome of Van der Noot's negotiations.

Just as the Nations abandoned their petitioning effort, the wholesalers, bankers, and manufacturers who were members of the Brussels commercial society picked it up. They appealed to Joseph not as members of an official group, but as "citoyens" who were disturbed by "la crise terrible où se trouve notre Patrie." They volunteered to help the Emperor restore "la tranquillité publique." (15) The Emperor ignored their first letter. Although they acknowledged that "le but de notre assemblée se borne absolument et exclusivement au commerce," they responded that it was impossible "de résister à l'impulsion de la Nature;" they could not silence their grievance against the deprivation of their constitutional rights. They demanded the restoration of "nos anciens droits, notre liberté" telling the Emperor that the Belgian people would not long tolerate arbitrary rule. (16) If Joseph wanted to restore public order, they advised, he had but to rule according to its provisions.

Two of the more active members of the Commercial Society, the wine wholesalers Antoine d'Aubremez and J.B. Weemaels, along with several lawyers decided that nothing short of a popular rebellion

(14) "Collection des vers et chansons composés dans le tems de la Révolution des Pays Bas," ed. A.J.D. de BRAECKENIER, Brussels, G. Huyghe, 1790, in *Révolution belge*, vol. 57, pamphlet 1, BRB; "Ode à Son Altesse Monseigneur le Duc d'Arenberg," 1787, in *Révolution Belge*, vol. 55, pamphlet 15, BRB; and "Ode à Messieurs les Brabançons présentée par le peuple du Hainaut," AGR, Liasse 610A.

(15) Assemblée de Commerce to Joseph II, August 5, 1789, AVB, *Registre 1016*.

(16) Assemblée de Commerce to Joseph II, August 10, 1789, AVB, *Registre 1016*.

would restore the rule of law to the provinces. As they reflected on the two-year struggle of the Estates against the Emperor they were impressed with the resilience of the rebellious crowd that had filled the Grand'Place time after time. The wholesalers and lawyers applauded the Estates' early resistance, but they concluded that the time for legal, restrained protest had passed. It had proved ineffective against an emperor who was determined to impose his rule on his subjects without regard for their wishes.

This small contingent of lawyers, wholesalers, and one engineer formed a secret revolutionary committee, *Pro Aris et Focis*, under the direction of Vonck. They vowed that the next popular uprisings would be "l'ouvrage non du hazard, mais d'une combinaison bien réfléchie, bien conduite, contre les précautions, les ruses & les bras toujours menaçans du despotisme." (17) As part of their effort to recruit "des personnes de tout rang et condition" to enlist, they convinced eight other wholesale merchants and bankers from the Brussels Commercial Society to join them. (18) Throughout the summer and early fall of 1789 the new committee bought guns and ammunition from Liège, distributed pamphlets to villages throughout the Brabant and drilled revolutionary troops.

The Vandernootists and Vonckists merged into one committee in exile to coordinate the final plans for the revolution in October 1789. None of the wholesale merchants, bankers, or manufacturers participated. Some continued to raise funds to provision the new army, but a large number apparently stayed in the capital where they organized the uprising of the Brussels bourgeoisie that finally drove the Austrians back to Austria.

Van der Noot was elected by the Estates to preside over the first independent Belgian government. The Estates declared themselves sovereign and excluded the Vonckists from the government of the new nation. Still outsiders, the négociants continued to meet at the Commercial Society. The lawyers and professionals from Vonck's original committee joined the négociants as they protested

(17) "Les Auteurs secrets de la Révolution présente," AGR, *Ecrits Politiques*, vol. 29.

(18) Ch. TERLINDEN (ed.), *Les Souvenirs d'un Vonckiste. Les Aventures de J.B. Van der Linden ou détails circonstanciés sur la Révolution de Brabant*, Brussels, 1932, p. 118; Adolphe BORGNET, *Lettres sur la Révolution brabançonne*, Brussels, 1834, p. 222; p. 136, Mss 19648, BRB; Walckiers, Mss 14890, BRB; and De Brouwer, Mss 14890, BRB.

the Estates' reassertion of absolute control in the new republic. The revolution had been fought, they said, to give the Belgian people back their sovereignty. In reasserting their control without consulting the people, the Estates had stolen the people's sovereignty. "Vous êtes le tout, le Peuple n'est rien," one banker charged the Estates. (19) "Une Aristocratie exclusive s'est emparée de tous les pouvoirs d'une manière incompatible avec la vraie liberté & le bonheur du Peuple," another member of the Commercial Society complained. (20) Together, they demanded the establishment of a government in which each citizen was represented; a government ordered by talent and wealth, not privilege.

The doyens joined the protest against the organization of the new republic. At the initial meetings of the new Brabant Estates after the formation of the independent republic, the first two Estates had insisted on convening separately from the Third Estate. As soon as the nobles and clerics sensed the growing dissatisfaction in the Third Estate, they had demanded that the doyens swear an oath of loyalty to the first two Estates and instructed them not to report back to the Nations. The Third Estate demanded to know why the deliberations and votes of the first Estates needed to be so secret. What, they asked, did the coalition of nobles and clerics intend to do. (21)

Van der Noot and his secretary, the cleric Pierre Van Eupen, met with the doyens to answer their complaints in February. The doyens bluntly told the two leaders that the merchants and artisans were afraid of being governed by an aristocracy. (22) The doyens requested that the representation of the Estates be reapportioned,

(19) Ed. de Walckiers to Etats de Brabant, Chateau de Hem, Chatellerie de Lille, March 31, 1790, DINNE, *Lettres*, Supplément, vol. 3.

(20) Walckiers and Herries to Maire de Lille, April 12, 1790, DINNE, *Lettres*, Supplément, vol. 3.

(21) *Journal de Bruxelles*, January 15, 1790, p. 100; January 12, 1790, *Foreign Office* 26/14, PRO; "Van seven zighnoemde Commissarissen der natien van Brussel met het opgevolgt advies van het magistraet," December 24, 1789, Mss 14890, BRB; Comtesse d'Yves, *Goethals* 210, BRB; and Ruelle to Montmorin, December 26, 1790 and December 30, 1789, AGR, *Manuscripts Divers*.

(22) "Aen die Seer Eerweerde ende Seer Edele Heeren, Die Hooghmogende Heeren der twee eerste staeten van Brabant & door die Natien van Brussel als derde Lith van der selve provincie," January 25, 1790, AVB, Liasse 616; and *Postillon*, January 22, 1790 and February 17, 1790.

giving the Third Estate enough votes to balance the voice of the first two orders. Van der Noot and Van Eupen were surprised at the demands; they told the doyens that such proposals might be expected from the French revolutionaries, but not from Brussels guild leaders. The two leaders left without resolving the dispute. Van der Noot was confused by the stand of his friends. He did not understand that during the resistance and Revolution the doyens had grown accustomed to leading and were no longer content to follow submissively the other two Estates.

The doyens' call for the doubling of the Third Estate was echoed by the Vonckists who proposed that the representation of the Third Estate be increased to give it a voice equal to that of the other two Estates combined. "De cette manière, le Tiers-Etat sera du moins pourvu de la force physique qui lui est nécessaire, pour contre-balancer les deux premiers," Vonck suggested. (23) Like the doyens, the Vonckists felt betrayed by Van der Noot. The Revolution, they charged, had been usurped by a privileged minority of aristocrats and monks. Van der Noot had excluded the active revolutionaries from the government.

The democrats acknowledged the similarity of their cause to that of the doyens, but it took a poorly-timed powerplay by Van der Noot to bring the two groups together in resistance. In the middle of February, Van der Noot demanded that the volunteers, who were all members of the Nations, swear an oath of allegiance to the Estates. He apparently assumed that if forced to take sides, the guildsmen would support their old friends, Van der Noot and the first two Estates. He was wrong. The night that the oath was published and posted in the city, the officers of the volunteers called upon Vonck at his home to ask his advice on resistance. (24) They listened sympathetically as Vonck suggested that they voice their disapproval of the Estates' aristocratic composition by publicly swearing their allegiance to the people instead of to the Estates. The officers accepted his advice, and after leaving Vonck's house, they informed the volunteers of their plans for resisting Van der Noot's oath.

(23) J.F. VONCK, *Considérations impartiales sur l'état actuel du Brabant*, Lille, 1792.

(24) For an account of the meeting see Terlinden, *Les Aventures*, pp. 213-214.

The next morning Van der Noot arrived to find a deserted Grand'Place. He hastily sent his scouts in search of the volunteers, who were congregated in various locations around Brussels. Most of the two thousand finally answered Van der Noot's summons, but they refused to take his oath. They pledged allegiance instead to the people of Belgium, utilizing an oath written by the banker, Jean Jacques Chapel. (25) Chagrined and defeated, Van der Noot left to report the humiliating episode to the Estates.

The democratic leaders revelled in their new-found popular support. Edouard Walckiers, the banker who had taken command of a section of the volunteers, dined nightly with his company, treating the men to food and drink in local taverns. In a new round of pamphlets, the Vonckists urged the people of Brussels to resist "vos nouveaux Tyrans" by fighting for a more open, popular government. (26) It was the responsibility of the people to demand a voice for themselves in the governing of their society, they said, because the Estates would not voluntarily abdicate their power.

Their enthusiasm carried the Vonckists too far. On March 15, 1790, they presented a petition to the Estates demanding that a national assembly be called to establish a democratic government. (27) In the hands of the Estates, the petition served as definitive evidence of a Vonckist plot to undermine the Belgian government. The Estates immediately declared "la guerre civile" against the authors of this "projet de détruire la religion, la Constitution, et la vraie liberté." (28) Van der Noot and Van Eupen's cries of

(25) TERLINDEN, *Les Aventures*, p. 125; DINNE, *Lettres*, 1:122.

(26) "Le Brutus Belgique aux volontaires de Bruxelles," *Révolution Belge*, vol. 1, pamphlet 11, BRB; "Relation exacte de ce qui c'est passé à Bruxelles, dans les journées de 16 & 17 Mars, 1790," *Brochures 1790*, BIBLIOTHEQUE, UNIVERSITE LIBRE DE BRUXELLES, BRUSSELS (ULB); "Remerciement de la Société patriotique de Bruxelles," *Brochures 1790*, vol. 2, ULB; and "Lettre d'un citoyen patriote à M. le vicomte de Walckiers," March 18, 1790, AGR, *Etats Brabant* 191.

(27) "La Triple Henriade à la tête des Belges écrasés," *Révolution Belge*, vol. 55, pamphlet 21, BRB; and P.A.F. GERARD, *Rapédus de Berg*, 2: pp. 137-138 and 283.

(28) "La Triple Henriade," "Decret du Conseil Souverain de Bruxelles," cited in *Journal de Bruxelles*, March 18, 1790; "Journal des Séances du Congrès," in L.P. GACHARD, *Documens politiques et diplomatiques sur la Révolution belge de 1790*, Brussels, 1834, p. 90; "Le Curé, Le Bailli, et le Berger de Village, Avis essentiel aux Belges villageois par un de leurs amis," *Révolution Belge*, vol. 3, pamphlet 4, BRB; "Tolle Leg, Aux Amis de la Paix et de la Patrie," *Revolution*

and shopkeepers of Brussels. They had convinced the Nations that the Vonckist intellectuals planned to imitate the French Revolution in Brussels.

For the next three days, groups of shopkeepers and artisans roamed through Brussels, pillaging the homes of the democratic petitioners and threatening to hang them from lampposts. Parading through the streets, the crowds chanted "Chacun [des démocrates] veut être la lumière... il faut pour les satisfaire, les mettre au reverbère." (29) Vonckists anxiously petitioned the Nations to police the city and to reestablish order. Instead, the civil guard joined the roaming mobs that jeered the helpless lawyers and bankers. The shopkeepers and artisans had returned to Van der Noot's camp.

Many of the Vonckist wholesalers and bankers quickly tired of the harassment by the Estates. Unlike some of the more moderate Vonckists, they also lost faith in the majority of the Belgian people who so gullibly followed the Estates. A stable monarchy was better than an unruly republic where mobs threatened to hang democrats from lampposts, they concluded. (30) Together with several members of the upper nobility, they invited the Austrians back to help them oust the false Belgian revolutionaries. Once the Austrians had returned in the fall of 1790, the Vonckists optimistically expected cooperation in instituting their plans for a new government. The Austrians again refused to heed their counsel.

Many of the négociants then turned to France for help. A year later, when the French revolutionary army routed the Austrians, these négociants joined the French in announcing the beginning of "la règne de liberté et d'égalité" and declaring war on "tous les privilèges odieux." (31) They were joined by one artisan, La Faye, a

Belge, vol. 1, pamphlet 12, BRB; A.C. GAMBIER, "Observations politiques et juridiques qui démontrent l'inutilité d'une Assemblée Nationale," *Revolution belge*, vol. 3, pamphlet 31, BRB; and E.J. DINNE, *Mémoire historique et pièces justificatives pour M. Van der Mersch*, Lille, 1791, 1, p. 161.

(29) Le Hardy to Vonck, March 15, 1790, Mss 20474, BRB; and P.A.F. GERARD, *Rapédus de Berg*, 2, p. 192.

(30) Extrait de la lettre au M. d'Aubremez, August 2, 1790, BRB, Mss 20474; Herries to Vonck, St. Nicolas, August 4, 1790, Mss 20474; Albert MATHIEZ, "Vonck et Proli," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 1927, pp. 62-63; and Serruys to Vonck, Ghent, October 31, 1790, BRB, Mss 20474.

(31) Ed. WALCKIERS, *Journal de la Société de Liberté et d'Egalité*, November 23, 1792, pp. 68-69 and December 31, 1792, p. 317; J.J. Chapel, January 23, 1793, Bouteville 480, AGR; and "Procès Verbaux," *Collection des Procès verbaux des séances des représentants provisoires de la ville libre de Bruxelles*, December 14, 1792, BRB.

perfume salesman who led their attempts to nationalize the breweries and to end the guilds' monopoly in the marketplace.

The other artisans continued to protest the threatened limitation of their privileges. Throughout the Austrian and French occupations, the *doyens* denounced the wholesale merchants, bankers, and manufacturers for their democratic sympathies. The small shopkeepers and artisans of Brussels struggled to defend the economic and political privileges enjoyed by the Nations of Brussels since the Middle Ages.

Throughout the Revolution, the Brussels bourgeoisie had led the privileged coalition because they believed their own particular privileges were tied to the defense of the *ancien regime*, to the preservation of the system of orders, of the Brabant Constitution, and of the Catholic Church. The one time the nobility and the clergy had tried to exclude them from the caste of the privileged, the artisans withdrew their support from the *ancien regime* and joined the democrats. But as soon as they were readmitted to that circle, they again attacked the *Vonckists* as presumptuous outsiders and the *négociants* specifically as greedy men who would do anything to increase their own wealth and power.

The *négociants*, except for that one brief interlude of cooperation, labelled the members of the Nations "*les bourgeois privilégiés*" and complained that they "*ne paroissent désirer qu'un changement de choses qui les favorisât eux seuls à l'exclusion de ceux qui, par le système abusif de la représentation, n'y ont aucun part.*" (32) The *négociants* used the terms "*aristocraten*" to apply not only to the first two estates but to the guild members as well. The *doyens* of the Nations were part of the privileged orders of Brussels society fighting to maintain their position while the wholesale merchants and bankers, men with no established position in the traditional society, wanted to reorder society to give themselves a place in it.

Actually the fight between the *négociants* and the Nations had been going on for at least ten years before the outbreak of the Brabant Revolution. During the 1770's and 80's, instead of battling over sovereignty and representation, the two groups had argued over specific economic issues. The wholesale merchants, manufacturers, and bankers had demanded commercial liberty, the right to operate their industries outside of the regulation of the guilds. The Nations

(32) DINNE, *Mémoire*, 1:132-3.

fought to defend the guilds' commercial and industrial monopoly. The same men who debated each other as Vonckists and Vander-nootists in 1789 had opposed each other a decade earlier in suits and petitions over the privileges of the guilds and the right to free trade. The Brabant Revolution was only one battle in a long struggle between the two sections of the Brussels commercial bourgeoisie.

THE CHALLENGE TO COMMERCIAL PRIVILEGE

Many négociants opened new industries during the eighties. One porcelain maker petitioned the Emperor in 1788 for help in setting up a new porcelain works in Brussels. He claimed that with his new manufacturing process, he could make porcelain of the same quality as the guilds but more efficiently and so sell it for two-thirds of the price. But because he was not a member of the porcelain guild, he was legally not allowed to manufacture or sell porcelain in Brussels. "Permettre à une seule Soicété de faire valoir de talens dans un certain genre d'ouvrage, c'est oter au personne qui...ait fait une nouvelle invention ou qu'il ait introduit une nouvelle manufacture, en ce cas... (de) jouir du fruit de son travail," he protested. (33) Another manufacturer petitioned to establish a new manufacturing house in Brussels to produce draperies in the English style. Although the construction of a larger, more efficient drapery house would be in the public interest, he said "le corps de métier de tondeurs, sans considérer l'utilité publique, ni le bien général, pourroit y porter quelque obstacle...en vertu de leurs privilèges." (34) He asked for a suspension of the guild's privileges to allow him to begin production and to employ his workers to staff the new machines.

The pleas of the new manufacturers were echoed by négociants already operating large manufacturing houses in Brussels. Guillaume Herries argued in 1783 that "les corps de métiers avec tous leurs privilèges et leurs droits font une barrière insurmontable à l'agrandissement des manufactures et à toute espèce d'industrie." Because they feared competition, the guilds refused to allow any industrialist to

(33) DOMINIQUE JOSEPH RIS, "Coye Boeken," p. 125, *Registre 1016*, AVB.

(34) 't Kint, December 7, 1781, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 401.

operate in Brussels "qui les surpassent en habilité ou en industrie." (35) Guillaume Chapel, a négociant who tried to manufacture cloth outside of the regulations of the guild, battled the Nations for at least four years. At one point, the Nations threatened to seize his tools and machines because he refused to honor their practices. Chapel charged that their commercial monopoly violated "la liberté naturelle." One did not need to belong to a guild to be a good industrialist or to be useful to society, he argued; he had done quite well without their secrets and customs. He had profitted from "son industrie et speculation." (36)

Chapel and a number of other négociants protested against the requirement that manufacturers hire only artisans trained by the guilds. Employing guild artisans raised manufacturing costs so substantially that the Belgian industrialists could not compete with England for the export market. For a factory to succeed, Chapel argued, it was necessary "qu'elle soit affranchie de toute gêne extérieure et que le fabricant jouisse de la liberté la plus illimitée." (37) The guild monopoly over employment not only hurt industry, it also discriminated against the workers themselves. Poor workers could not afford the lengthy apprenticeships and costly entry fees to become members of the guilds and so were cut off from employment. Apprentices' petitions requesting delays in the deadlines for payment of their fees substantiated the négociants' argument. (38) Besides, the négociants complained, once the artisans had finished their apprenticeship, their work deteriorated. They became complacent; drunken and idle and not worthy of employment. (39)

(35) "Extrait de l'avis rendu par le négociant d'Ostende, Herries, en date du 18 février, 1783," AGR, *Conseil Privé*, 1152B.

(36) "Guillaume Chapel vs. les Doiens anciens et supputs du Métiers des Teinturiers de cette ville, October 10, 1781," AGR, *Conseil Privé* 401.

(37) "G. Chapel et Manufactures de coton, draps...vs. gilds," July 23, 1784, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 401.

(38) Patriote zélé to Ministère Plenipotentiaire, May 31, 1778, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1006; G. CRUYTSEN, "Principaux défauts du régime corporatif dans les Pays Bas à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," *Revue de l'instruction publique en Belgique*, 1887, p. 290; and anonymous letter, April 20, 1785, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 401.

(39) Eydelet, June 11, 1780, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 401.

No new industries would be established in Belgium unless the privileges of the guilds were surpressed allowing full freedom of labor, the Brussels négociants argued in a joint petition. (40) In Brussels, Herries protested that "le négociant est l'esclave de ces corporations." (41) According to another writer, "les Arts et Métiers qui sont le patrimoine naturel du peuple, devinrent la proie de quelques hommes privilégiés qui les vendirent au prix qu'ils voulurent à leurs concitoyens." The guilds had taken advantage of their monopoly; they produced poor quality products inefficiently. Unless this monopoly was broken, the négociants protested, "l'industrie s'endormit à l'ombre des privilèges." (42)

The growth of Belgian industry was tied to commerce. And, the négociants complained, because of the guilds' monopoly control of transport, the cost of exporting goods out of Brussels was prohibitive. Belgian manufacturers would be able to sell their products abroad at competitive prices only if the internal customs and privileges were reduced. In addition to removing barriers, the négociants asked the Austrians to protect and to encourage Belgian commerce. For example, the Baron de la Marck wrote that he had just discovered interesting possibilities for commerce in America but could find no one in Belgium willing to underwrite the risk. He asked for a loan from the Austrian government. (43) Other merchants demanded protection of their merchandise from seizures by foreign countries. Commerce, they reminded the Emperor, was useful to the nation as a whole. (44)

The guilds disputed the négociants' assumptions. It was necessary, the doyens said, for each profession to have its "statuten, reglementen, ende privilegien." (45) If workers were not trained

(40) "Mémoire sur l'établissement d'une chambre consulaire à Ostende," November 24, 1783, AGR, *Conseil Privé*, 1152 A.

(41) "Extrait de l'avis rendu par le négociant d'Ostende, Herries, en date du 18 février, 1783," AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152 B.

(42) "Memoire" cited by CRUYTZEN, "Principaux défauts," p. 288.

(43) Baron de la Marck and Stein, April 11, 1783 and August 15, 1783, AGR, *Conseil du Secrétariat d'Etat et de Guerre*, 2152.

(44) D'Aubremez, October 29, August 18, September 6, September 23, and November 7, 1781, AGR, *Conseil du Secrétariat d'Etat et de Guerre*, 2193.

(45) François Puttemans and Petreus Pauwels, April 22, 1785, AGR, *Conseil Privé*, 401.

through a long apprenticeship program guided by the masters of the craft, then their work was likely to be substandard. Why, they asked, should "mains étrangères ou non privilégiés qui n'ont payé aucun droit au corps et qui ne supportent aucune charge publique" take work that legitimately belonged to the trained bourgeois of Brussels. (46) The artisans also protested that if competition were allowed in the domestic market, prices would inevitably be driven below production costs causing many established manufacturers to go bankrupt. Free export was contrary to the public interest, they charged, citing the examples of the export of leather and grain that had resulted in shortages in Belgium. (47) They were speaking, they claimed, out of "le zèle de contribuer au bien être commun;" privileges were in the best interests of all the Belgian people. (48)

The guilds fought the négociants by filing suits against them charging that they had hired untrained workers or were not using proper manufacturing methods. The trials, which often dragged on for years, resulted in the bankruptcy of several major industrialists. (49) A law of 1771 that was strengthened in 1787 was supposed to regulate these trials, but throughout the eighties, négociants and workers continued to complain about lengthy and ruinous suits brought by the guilds.

As a solution to the problem, the négociants proposed the establishment of a chamber of commerce in Brussels to adjudicate disputes between manufacturers. The traditional tribunal for settling commercial disputes had such intricate and archaic rules that the négociants argued it obstructed rather than furthered justice. "Des longueurs de la procedure et des chicanes qu'ils essuient constamment tendent naturellement à empêcher l'accroissement du commerce." (50) They proposed that the new tribunal be run by the

(46) J.B. Claessens for Nations, March 30, 1785, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 402; Nations, April 4, 1785, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 402; and H.H. de Greef and C.J. de Middeleer, July 1782, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 402.

(47) Letter to Marie Christine et Albert Casimer signed by numerous merchants, Brussels, July 2, 1788, AVB, *Liasse* 611; and Memoire from Maître selliers, carrossiers, cordonniers, et corroyeurs, December 1787, *Copie Boeken*, AVB, *Registre* 1016.

(48) "Représentation du Tiers Etat du Brabant", AVB, *Pergameni* 3500.

(49) "Extrait de l'avis rendu par le négociant Frederic Romberg," February 4, 1783, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152 B; and numerous memoires, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 402 B.

(50) "Memoire sur la nécessité de reformer les abus dans l'ordre judiciaire du

most successful merchants who obviously understood the needs of Belgian commerce better than anyone else. Not that the current judges were biased, the négociants explained, they just lacked the proper experience to set regulations that would encourage commerce and industry in Belgium. (51)

Early in the 1780's, the négociants appealed to Joseph II for his support of the chamber of commerce. Ever since his first visit to Belgium, Joseph had openly displayed his opposition to privileges. In one of his first edicts, he ordered major changes in Church practices, including the suppression of religious orders thus demonstrating his intention to disregard tradition in his reforms. One Brussels lawyer who would later become a leading democrat praised his sovereign as the ruler who "daigne montrer la lumière de la vérité à ses sujets... Sa Majesté prend le parti de la raison contre la tyrannie de l'erreur." (52) Two years later, this lawyer wrote the Emperor asking him to extend his reform to commerce and industry. "Quant au commerce interne, laissez agir les Belges," he advised. "Sire, ils n'ont besoin que de la liberté civile pour mettre en activité leur industrie." (53) The négociants concurred, believing that Joseph would be the ideal monarch to destroy the privileges of the guilds.

Joseph followed in a line of economic reformers. His mother had heeded the advice of her mercantilist counsellors and promoted Belgian industry and commerce. "Nous avons d'un côté porté notre attention et nos soins maternels à l'établissement de diverse manufac-

tribunal de la chambre de commerce, dite Laecken-gulde," Brussels, July 7, 1773, April 7, 1776, and July 6, 1781, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152 A.

(51) "Les négociants et commerçans de cette ville de Bruxelles, 1781," AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152; *Mémoires*, June 29, 1781, July 18, 1781, November 22, 1783, and April 1, 1783, AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152 B; "Mémoire touchant l'Etablissement des chambres consulaires," AGR, *Conseil Privé* 1152 B; "Rapport," October 6, 1787; AGR, *Conseil du Secrétariat d'Etat et de Guerre* 2150; R. LE-DOUX, *La suppression du régime corporatif dans les Pays-Bas autrichiens en 1784. Un projet d'édit sans auteur et sa date*, Brussels, 1912, p. 39 (*Mémoires de l'Académie Royale, Lettres*); and H. VAN HOUTTE, "Chambres de commerce et tribunaux de commerce en Belgique au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Gand*, 1911, pp. 5 and 19.

(52) Charles Lambert d'OUTREPONT, *Des Empêchements dirimant le contrat de mariage dans les Pays-Bas Autrichiens selon l'édit de sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi*, 1787; and *Journal générale d'Europe*, October 1, 1788, p. 209.

(53) Charles Lambert d'OUTREPONT, "Considérations sur la Constitution de Brabant et Limbourg," May 23, 1787, *Révolution Belge*, vol. 35, pamphlet 13, BRB.

tures pour les productions communément nécessaires, et d'un autre côté aux ressources du commerce et d'un trafic plus étendu," she declared at the end of her reign. (54) She had lowered duties, reorganized public finance, and built roads and canals between industrial centers. She had also investigated the possibility of limiting the privileges of the guilds.

At first Joseph continued his mother's tradition. In 1784 he ordered the magistrates of all the cities and villages in Belgium to supply "une liste exacte et classifiée" of the regulations and privileges of all the guilds. (55) He then solicited specific suggestions from the négociants for abolishing those privileges that hampered trade and industry. (56) All of the magistrates, except the mayor of Brussels, conducted the survey and most returned the results to Vienna. As an introduction to their reports, several magistrates indicated that they found the guilds to be detrimental to the growth of industry in their town. (57) The négociants naturally agreed. "L'on a trouvé qu'il ne convient pas de soumettre les marchands en gros à la moindre gêne ni corporation," one négociant told the Emperor. (58) The privileges of the guilds, another concluded, "forment un obstacle au progrès et au développement de l'industrie et blessent la liberté des citoyens." (59)

After gathering the information, Joseph commissioned a number of "projects." In 1786, "voulant accorder aux négociants de ce pays des preuves de notre désir de seconder leurs vues pour l'expédition des affaires qui concernent le commerce," he proposed to study the establishment of chambers of commerce staffed by judges chosen by the negociants. (60) He told the negociants that he was

(54) Maria Theresa, October 1, 1750, AGR, *Chancellerie Autrichienne des Pays Bas* 651; H. VAN WERVEKE, "Beschouwingen over het economische leven in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden tijdens de XVIIe en de XVIIIe eeuw," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap*, LXI, 1940, p. XC; VAN DER WEE, *De industriële revolutie*, p. 170; and CRUYTZEN, "Principaux défauts," p. 292.

(55) VAN HOUTTE, "Chambres..." pp. 18-19; and H. COPPEJANS-DE-SMEDT, "De enquête van 1784 over het ambachtswezen in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden," *Archief en Bibliotheekwezen in België*, XLII, 1971, p. 37.

(56) VAN HOUTTE, "Chambres," pp. 18-19.

(57) AGR, *Conseil Privé* 405-406.

(58) AGR, *Conseil Privé* 430; and LEDOUX, *La suppression...* p. 14.

(59) LEDOUX, *La suppression...*, p. 15; and AGR, *Conseil Privé* Register 34.

(60) "Projet d'Edit de l'Empereur, portant établissement de chambres consulaires dans plusieurs villes commerçantes aux Pays Bas" cited by VAN HOUTTE, "Chambres..." p. 39.

also considering a "projet d'édit" for the suppression of the guilds. (61) He never carried through any of the major reforms, however. Except for some very minor changes, he left the privileges of the guilds intact. His commercial policies fluctuated back and forth between support of open and closed markets. (62)

This indecisive policy infuriated both sides, the négociants as well as the Nations. Belgian industry and commerce which had prospered since 1750 began to decline in the middle of the 1780's. The négociants blamed Joseph for the slump. They could not understand why the Emperor agreed philosophically with their position but refused to act to remedy their grievances. And the doyens did not trust him. All of Joseph's inquiries had convinced them that the impetuous and self-willed Emperor would one day simply abolish the guilds. (63) That both the négociants and the Nations opposed Austrian policy is a testament to Joseph's lack of political skill. It certainly is not a sign of the reconciliation between the two groups.

The Nations had based their defense of privilege on their assumption of corporate harmony — what was in their interest was in the best interest of the whole Brabant people. There was one common good. They had inherited their elite political and economic positions from their ancestors. Their lengthy professional training made them more qualified to exercise their trade. Therefore, they concluded, economic competition would hurt not only the guilds but the people in general. They had also been trained to exercise their political positions in the Estates, they explained. They knew what was best for the people as a whole and would act on that knowledge. Again they concluded, a group of outsiders had no

(61) "Projet d'Edit de l'Empereur concernant les exclusives et levées d'argent des corps de metiers," AGR, *Conseil Privé* 402; and LEDOUX, *La suppression*, p. 12.

(62) *Esprit des Gazettes*, July 11, 1789, p. 55; *Journal générale d'Europe*, Annonces, June 2, 1789, p. 115; September 19, 1789, p. 63; and June 3, 1783, p. 122; GOETVAL, "Histoire de Belgique Beschryvinge sedert 't jaer 1780 tot 1790," Mss. 1590-1593, 4 : 40-41; Necker to comte de Montmorin, Paris, December 15, 1788, and comte de Trauttmansdorff to chevalier de la Gravière, January 3, 1789, Eugène HUBERT, *Correspondance des Ministères de France accrédités à Bruxelles de 1780 à 1790*, Brussels, 1920.

(63) P.A.F. GERARD, *Rapédus de Berg*, p. 99; and Jean Xavier Van der Noot to Henri Van der Noot, January 21, 1791, AGR, *Archives des Etats Beligiques Unis* 183.

right to presume to improve the entire system that had served their ancestors for centuries.

The négociants were not as interested in conserving as in growing and improving. They believed that growth came with the opening of government and industry to individual initiative. Nicolas Bacon, one of the most eloquent anti-corporativists, argued that only with true equality of opportunity would new factories grow. "Une ville sans fabrique ne pourroit longtemps subsister et se trouveroit bientôt désert," he explained in justification of his position. (64) New industry was essential to the well-being of the nation. In government as in commerce, the negociants contended, privileges prevented the most useful classes from participating equally. The nation would not advance without the contribution of the active and talented members of the society.

The political issues that the Vandernootists and Vonckists debated — popular sovereignty versus the preservation of the Estates — were closely related to the original economic disputes between the two groups. It is not surprising that the negociants and the guildsmen joined opposing parties in the Revolution. Both the negociants and the Nations saw the Brabant Revolution as a chance to secure the goals for which they had struggled since 1780. For them, the Brabant Revolution was the continuation of the debate between corporate and individual liberty.

In conclusion, the Brabant Revolution cannot be dismissed as an insignificant echo of the French Revolution. The revolt of the Vandernootists was uniquely Belgian, it cannot be ignored with the usual explanation that the Belgian traditionalists were fighting the spread of the enlightened ideas of the French Revolution. The artisans and small shopkeepers of Brussels led the revolt of the privileged orders to defend the ancien regime. But, in fact, the privileges that the Brussels artisans and shopkeepers were defending — their commercial monopoly and voice in the Estates — were

(64) N. Bacon cited by H. HASQUIN, *Les réflexions sur l'état présent du commerce, fabriques et manufactures des Pays-Bas Autrichiens (1765) du négociant bruxellois, Nicolas Bacon (1710-1779), Conseiller député aux affaires du Commerce, Brussels, Commission Royale d'Histoire, 1978, p. 89*

precisely the "rights" demanded by the "revolutionary" shopkeepers in France. The privileged orders in France fought against the pressures of a shrinking, pre-industrial economy, while in Belgium the privileged orders, especially the Nations, were defending themselves against a rapidly industrializing economy.

The Brabant Revolution occurred in the midst of the economic transformation of Belgium. During the 1780's, the traditional cottage industry and the guilds coexisted with the new factories. The new industry was concentrated in Ghent, Liège, and the Hainault, three traditional manufacturing centers. Although recent research suggests that the traditional rural industry created the markets and the capital accumulation which made the growth of the new industry possible, the masters of the older industry did not themselves view the relationship as cooperative. They did not move aside quietly and allow themselves to be replaced.

Brussels had been a center of traditional industry. Although it was not one of the three centers of major growth at the end of the eighteenth century, it was directly affected by the economic changes. Partially, this was the result of its location. The excellent canal and road connections with Ghent, Liège, and the Hainault made it the center of domestic as well as international trade. (65) A commercial center, it soon became a major European banking center. Equally important, Brussels functioned as the administrative center for the provinces. (66) The capital flourished indirectly as a result of the prosperity of the provinces. The population of the city grew 29% between 1755 and 1783.

That is not to imply that Brussels was devoid of industry. Traditionally, Brussels had been known for its luxury industries. Lace produced in Brussels was still without equal in Europe. Between nine and ten thousand workers were employed in that industry. (67)

(65) VAN DER WEE, *De Industriële Revolutie...*, p. 186; COPPEJANS-DESMEDT, *Histoire économique...*, p. 60; and COPPEJANS-DESMEDT, "Econometische Opbloei...", p. 273.

(66) *Courrier de l'égalité*, November 19, 1792, pp. 1511-2; DERIVAL, *Un voyageur...*, 1, p. 115; and J. VERBEEMEN, "Bruxelles en 1755. Sa situation démographique, sociale, et économique," *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*, XLIV, p. 230.

(67) Etienne SABBE, *De Belgische vlasnijverheid. Histoire de l'industrie linière en Belgique*, Brussels, 1954, p. 33; MOKYR, *The Industrial Revolution...*, pp. 16-17; VERBEEMEN, "Bruxelles en 1755...", p. 233; and VAN BRUYSEL, *Histoire du commerce et de la marine en Belgique*, 3, p. 286.

Brussels was also famous for its carriages, quality linen, and tapestries. (68) During the eighteenth century, new textile industries, not regulated by the guilds, expanded rapidly. In addition, Brussels manufacturing houses produced chemicals, watches, painted paper, playing cards, mineral water, beer, salt, tobacco, porcelain, sugar, and oil in reasonably large quantities. Most of this industrial growth occurred outside of the regulations of the guilds.

The size and tenacity of the privileged revolt in Brussels should at least in part be attributed to the traditional strength of the Brussels Nations. The guilds fought against every incursion into their economic and political territory. Their chief enemy, the négociants, found little support beyond their own ranks at the end of the eighteenth century. The guilds won the battle of the Brabant Revolution. Together with the first two estates, they excluded the négociants and the other democrats from political power in the *Etats Beliques Unis*. In the short run, the guilds were successful; in the long run, they would lose as the leaders of Belgian industrialization gained strength and support. In the Austrian Netherlands, the Brabant Revolution was the first political struggle fought between the privileged orders and the industrialists and their supporters.

(68) Armand JULIN, *Les grandes fabriques en Belgique vers le milieu du XVIIIe siècle*, Brussels, 1903, p. 66; and N. BRIAVOINNE, *De l'industrie en Belgique*, 2 vols., Brussels, 1839.

APPENDIX

	Traditionalists				Democrats			Jacobins
Legal Professions	87	89	90	93	89	90	93	93
Balza						x		x
Bosschaert							x	
Charlier					x	x		
Claeyssens			x					
Cobus								x
De Brouwer					x			
De Faure					x			
De Launay					x			
De Roovere					x			
Dondelberg					x	x		
Donroy						x		
d'Otrenghe					x	x	x	
D'Outrepont	x				x	x	x	
Drugman		x	x	x				
Emmerichts					x			
Foubert						x	x	
Goffin	x	x	x					
Le Hardi					x			
Merckx					x			
Messemaecker					x	x		
Moerincx						x	x	
Moris	x	x	x					
Mosselman	x				x			
Pasteels					x	x		
Poringo	x					x		x
Liboutin								x
Robyns	x							
Sandelin					x	x	x	
Serruys					x			
Thielens						x	x	
't Kint	x		x	x	x			
Torfs					x	x	x	
Triponetti			x					
Turiot						x		
Van Bellinghem					x			
Van Bevere						x		
Van Campenhout			x					
Van Daelen	x	x		x				
Van den Cruyce					x			

	Traditionalists				Democrats			Jaco- bins
Legal Professions	87	89	90	93	89	90	93	93
Van der Linden					x	x		
Van der Hoop		x	x	x				
Van der Noot, H.	x	x	x	x				
Van Doorselaer					x			
Van Overstraeten		x	x					
Verlooy						x		x
Vonck					x	x		
Willems					x	x		
Wittonck							x	
Liberal Professions								
Bisschop			x	x				
Claeyssens						x		
De Braeckenir			x	x				
De Cuyper					x			
De Frenne								x
De Vleesshouwer					x	x		
Dinne					x	x		x
Espagnac								x
Fernandez				x				
Fisco	x				x	x	x	
Gaine					x			
Hayez					x	x		x
Herbinaux						x	x	
Jacobs								x
Janssens							x	
Melsynder								x
Pauwels		x	x	x				
Peeters						x	x	
Secretan					x	x		
Van Mons						x		x
Merchants and Artisans								
Adan	x		x					
Appelmans	x							
Beeckmans	x	x	x	x				
Dansaert			x	x				
De Bouge							x	
De Lannoy							x	
De Neck						x		x
De Noter	x	x	x					
Depres							x	
Doms			x					

Brussels Commercial Bourgeoisie, 1780-1793

	Traditionalists				Democrats			Jaco- bins
Merchants and Artisans	87	89	90	93	89	90	93	93
Feigneaux						x		
Gillé	x							
Greuse						x		
Huyghens	x	x						
La Faye						x		x
Mommaerts	x							
Ophalens			x					
Parys		x						
Saegermans	x	x	x	x				
Schruers	x	x						
Smeesters			x					
Tintilair							x	
Van Assche		x	x	x				
Van den Block		x						
Van den Sande	x							
Van den Schick	x							
Van der Stricht			x					
Van Lack	x							
Van Parys	x	x	x	x				
Van Zieune	x							
Verhasselt		x	x					
Wholesale Merchants and Bankers								
Chapel, J.	x				x	x	x	x
Chapel, G.					x	x		
Dannoot					x			
D'Aubremez					x	x	x	
De Vleeschouwer					x		x	
Herries						x		
Michels							x	x
Moris					x			
Nicolle						x	x	
Pins						x		
Plowits					x			
Seghers						x		
Simon	x				x	x	x	
Sironval						x	x	
Walckiers	x				x	x		x
Weemaels	x				x	x	x	

	Traditionalists				Democrats			Jaco- bins
	87	89	90	93	89	90	93	93
Clergy								
De Hooghe					x	x		
De Park		x	x					
Du Vivier			x	x				
Feller	x	x	x	x				
Grimbergh			x					
Huygh		x	x					
Janssens						x		
Morisson					x			
Nys	x	x	x					
Saint Bernard	x	x	x	x	x			
Schellekins					x	x		
Tongerloo	x	x	x	x				
Van Gils		x						
Van Hees					x	x		
Van Hove	x	x						
Vlierbeck			x					
Nobility								
Aremberg					x			
De Hove		x	x	x				
De Lannoy			x					
Duras			x					
Godin						x		
La Marck					x			
Limmighen	x	x	x	x				
Mérode		x						
Romerswael, Baronne					x			
Romerswael, Baron	x	x	x	x				
Rosière					x			
Saint Rémi						x	x	
Ursel, Duc d'	x					x	x	
Ursel, Duchesse d'					x			
Van der Haegen			x					
Van der Noot de Vreckem		x	x	x				
Yves	x	x	x		x			
Miscellaneous								
Arnaerts (military)								x
Blaës (bodyguard)			x					

Brussels Commercial Bourgeoisie, 1780-1793

	Traditionalists				Democrats			Jaco- bins
Legal Professions	87	89	90	93	89	90	93	93
De Brancas (military)						x		
De Man, Madame					x			
De Page (rentier)						x		
De Pinaud	x	x	x					
De Roy (son)		x						
Dujardin (son)			x					
Heyndricks								x
Millé (pléban)			x					
Van Hamme (military)		x	x					
Unidentified								
Baret								x
Bosmans			x					
Chateigner								x
Collier								x
Collinet					x			
De Bere								x
De Raet								x
Deslondes		x	x					
De Smet				x				
Estienne								x
Frison								x
Goguet								x
Grimault								x
Lubin								x
Meersman						x		
Millecamps						x		
Snoeck					x	x		
Van der Noot, J.B.					x			

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REVOLUTIE, INDUSTRIALISATIE EN DE BRUSSELSE COMMERCIELE BURGERIJ

door

Janet POLASKY

SAMENVATTING

De vergelijkende geschiedschrijvers beschouwen de Franse revolutie als hét voorbeeld van een achttiende-eeuwse revolutie. Tijdens de Brabantse omwenteling sloten, in tegenstelling met wat bij de Franse revolutie gebeurde, vele burgerlijke leiders zich aan bij de adel en de geestelijkheid en verzetten zich aldus tegen de democratische revolutie. De meeste historici hebben de steun van de Belgische burgerij aan de eerste twee standen in 1789 meestal beschouwd als een blijk van de politieke naïviteit en achterlijkheid van de Belgische samenleving. Dit artikel gaat de verdeeldheid na die binnen de Brusselse handeldrijvende burgerij bestond tussen de voorstanders van de democratische en van de traditionalistische partijen. Het stelt de vraag waarom de negocianten de democratische revolutie ondersteunden terwijl de gildedekens de conservatieve tegenpartij vervoegden. In feite dateerde de verdeeldheid binnen de Brusselse handeldrijvende burgerij al van tien jaar vóór de Brabantse omwenteling. Reeds in de jaren 1770 hadden de negocianten, de voortrekkers van industrialisering, hun offensief tegen de commerciële privileges van de traditioneel-machtige Brusselse gilden, ingezet. De Brusselse handeldrijvende burgerij beschouwde de Brabantse omwenteling als de eerste politieke confrontatie waarbij de industrialisering op het spel stond. Misschien, zo besluit de auteur, verschilde de Brabantse omwenteling zo sterk van de Franse Revolutie niet omdat de Belgische burgerij naïef was, maar omdat, in tegenstelling tot Frankrijk, België in 1789 reeds volop in de industriële revolutie verzeild was.

REVOLUTION, INDUSTRIALISATION ET
BOURGEOISIE COMMERCIALE BRUXELLOISE

par

Janet POLASKY

RESUME

Les auteurs soucieux d'histoire contemporaine considèrent la Révolution française comme le modèle par excellence de la révolution du XVIII^e siècle. Au cours de la Révolution brabançonne — et contrairement à ce qui survint pendant la Révolution française —, de nombreux dirigeants de la bourgeoisie s'allièrent à la noblesse et au clergé, et s'opposèrent ainsi à la révolution démocratique. La plupart des historiens ont émis l'opinion que l'appui donné par la bourgeoisie belge aux deux premiers états en 1789 témoigne d'une certaine naïveté politique et reflète la situation arriérée de la société belge.

L'article apporte une analyse de la division qui partagea la bourgeoisie commerciale bruxelloise en deux partis, démocratique et traditionnaliste, et pose la question suivante : pour quelle(s) raison(s), les négociants appuyèrent-ils la révolution démocratique, tandis que les doyens des métiers rejoignirent le camp conservateur ?

En fait, la division au sein de la bourgeoisie commerciale bruxelloise prit naissance une dizaine d'années avant la Révolution brabançonne. Depuis les années 1770, les négociants et les protagonistes de l'industrialisation avaient entamé leur offensive contre les privilèges commerciaux des puissants corps de métiers bruxellois. La bourgeoisie commerciale bruxelloise considéra la Révolution brabançonne comme la première confrontation politique mettant en jeu la question de l'industrialisation.

En conclusion, l'auteur de l'article émet l'hypothèse que la différence que l'on peut observer entre les Révolutions française et brabançonne n'est pas imputable à la naïveté présumée de la bourgeoisie belge, mais qu'elle naît, en revanche, du processus de la Révolution industrielle déjà largement entamé en 1789 dans les territoires belges, contrairement à la situation qui prévalait en France à cette époque.