

PHD RESEARCH

LUIS ANGEL BERNARDO Y GARCIA

The Belgians' stomach. "Economic Miracle" and Labour Force Restauration. Food Policy Origins and Development during the immediate aftermath of WWII (1914-1948) -

[Original Title : *Le Ventre des Belges. "Miracle économique" et restauration des forces de travail. Origines et développement de la politique alimentaire du second immédiat après-guerre (1944-1948)*]

Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2015. Supervisor : Serge Jaumain; co-supervisor : Jean-Jacques Heirwegh.

In the immediate aftermath of WWII, the "scarcity economy" of the occupation persisted in Belgium. In order to ensure food supplies for the population and maintain economic activity, authorities began to organize the national economy from above, though it had until then traditionally been left to the workings of the free market. The governments that succeeded each other after the Liberation were committed to restoring the labour force. Like defending a "strong franc", this restoration was necessary for economic growth, the maintaining of social order and political normalization. The heavy and unrewarding supply department was handed over to the Communist Party for most of its existence, which stretched from September 1944 to December 1948.

Belgium's choice (which was creditworthy) was to favour a policy of abundant supply, as opposed to the investment planning chosen by impecunious countries such as France, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom. Hindered by the legacy of the occupation, food policies were strongly contested by the food sector. Immediately after the Liberation, labour class organisations strongly opposed the politics

of austerity and the sacrifices required for Belgium's recovery. In fact, the food policies applied at the time -i.e. the price and wages policies and the general food supply policy- can only be analysed and studied in comparison with former food crises dating back to the first occupation. To conclude, the food crises linked to the (aftermath of the) wars run parallel with a small-scale informal economy and are primarily the result of foreign supply crises.