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DEFENDING FRENCH IN FLANDERS, 1880-1975

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by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ultimately unsuccessful efforts of French-speaking populations in Flanders – who had long constituted an elite group within Flemish society – to maintain a place for French in the Flemish public realm, namely administration, the judiciary, and education. It spans the period from the late nineteenth century and the first concerted legislative efforts to (re)introduce Dutch into the overwhelmingly Francophone administrative and educational institutions of Flanders, to the 1970s, when a combination of legislative measures and socioeconomic pressures erased the last vestiges of French in Flemish public life. By examining the periodical press, debates in scholarly publications, political pamphlets and posters, parliamentary speeches, and private correspondence produced by these Francophones, I question how and why their arguments in favor of a legal presence for French in Flanders changed over time. At first, many Francophones appealed to the universality and utility of French language and culture, and argued that individuals should enjoy "free choice of language" in the public realm. Such arguments reflected the dominant status of French in the Western world as well as the prevailing anti-statist sentiments among the Francophone elite of Flanders. During the period between the world wars, and again during the 1960s, however, some Francophones who wanted French-language rights in public services constructed an identity as a minority and made claims in terms of minority rights. This rhetorical shift came about for several reasons. The growth of a mass-based Flemish Movement made elitist and classically liberal appeals to the "free choice of language" politically untenable. During the interwar period, "minority rhetoric" had become common across Europe among previously-elite groups like the German-speakers of Poland and Czechoslovakia; it is likely that the Francophones hoped that their use of such would make their claims more legitimate in the eyes of both the Belgian state and the international community. Finally, the decline of French as an *international* language, especially after World War II, made the Francophones less likely to appeal to its "universality" when arguing in favor of a place for the French language in Flemish public life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NB: In all cases where an institution has an official English name, I have listed it here.

ACAPSUL: Association du corps académique et du personnel scientifique de l'Université de Louvain
ADVN: Archief- en Documentatiecentrum voor het Vlaamse nationalisme, Antwerp
AFF: Association des Francophones de Flandre
AFVLF: Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française
AGR: State Archives in Belgium, Brussels
AMVB: Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse leven te Brussel, Brussels
AMVC: Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse cultuurleven, Antwerp
AP: *Annales parlementaires*
APFF: Association pour la promotion de la Francophonie en Flandre
BWP: Belgian Workers' Party
CAN: Comité d'action nationale
CCL: Commission du contrôle linguistique
CEFF-SFV: Francophones in Flanders Research Centre, Brussels
CEGESOMA: Centre for Historical Documentation and Research on War and Contemporary Society, Brussels
CJG: Centre Jean Gol, Brussels
CVP: Christelijke Volkspartij
ECHR: European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg
ÉHÉ: École des Hautes Études
EMW: *Encyclopédie du Mouvement wallon*
FHMW: Fonds d'histoire du Mouvement wallon, Liège
FUEN: Federal Union of European Nationalities
HL: Hoover Institution Library, Stanford University, Stanford, California
KADOC: Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society, Leuven
KBR: Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels
KUL: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
LA: Liberaal Archief, Ghent
LNUB: Ligue nationale de l'unité belge
MVW: Museum of Walloon Life, Liège
NEVB: *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*
PSC: Parti Social-Chrétien
PVV: Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang
UCL: Université Catholique de Louvain
ULB: Université Libre de Bruxelles

MULTILINGUAL CONCORDANCE

Place Names with English forms used in the text (current official names in bold)

English name	French name	Dutch name
Antwerp	Anvers	**Antwerpen**
Belgium	**Belgique**	**België**
Bruges	Bruges	**Brugge**
Brussels	**Bruxelles**	**Brussel**
Campine	Campine	**Kempen**
Flanders	Flandre	**Vlaanderen**
Ghent	Gand	**Ghent**
Ostend	Ostende	**Oostende**
Ypres	Ypres	**Ieper**

Flemish place names used in the text and their French forms

Dutch name	French name
Aalst	Alost
De Panne	La Panne
Dendermonde	Termonde
Diksmuide	Dixmude
IJzer (river)	Yser
Kortrijk	Courtrai
Leuven*	Louvain
Mechelen†	Malines
Ronse	Renaix
Sint-Genesius-Rode	Rhode-Saint-Genèse
Tienen	Tirlemont
Tongeren	Tongres

Political and administrative terms

English term	French term	Dutch term
alderperson‡	échevin(e)	schepen
mayor§	bourgmestre	burgemeester
MP (member of parliament)	député(e)	volksvertegenwoordig(st)er
municipality	commune	gemeente

* Older English texts use the French name, Louvain.
† Older English texts use "Mechlin" or the French name, Malines.
‡ I use the gender neutral term when discussing the position in general, and "gendered" forms when referring to specific individuals.
§ I use "mayor," following the precedent of translating the German "Bürgermeister" with this term. Older English texts use the terms "burgomaster" or "burgomeister."

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I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Albert John Forand (1927-1998), in whose memory I started learning French, and my father, Jerome Curtis Hensley (1956-2011), who passed away during its composition. I miss them both dearly, and hope that they would be proud of what I have accomplished.

INTRODUCTION

While Franz Kafka was making a name for himself writing in German while surrounded by Czech-speakers, in Flanders (northern Belgium), Maurice Maeterlinck was making a name for himself writing in French while surrounded by Dutch-speakers.[1] (Whether or not Maeterlinck was the "equal" of Kafka is a question best left for literary critics.) In 1911, Maeterlinck, born and raised in the Flemish city of Ghent, won the Nobel Prize in Literature for his work – all of which had been written in French. Along with his fellow Ghent native (and French-language author) Emile Verhaeren, Maeterlinck was a celebrity in France's literary circles, as both supposedly expressed an exotic "Germanic sensibility" in the Gallic tongue. Yet at the same time, some Flemings were calling for a more prominent place for Dutch – the language of the vast majority of those who lived in Flanders – in public administration, education, and the justice system. How, speakers of French in Flanders replied, could the Flemish Movement hope to restrain the place of French in Flanders – let alone replace it with the "cold" and "alien" standard Dutch language – when it produced such luminaries as the author of *The Blue Bird*? Yet in 1974, the last Francophone daily newspapers in Flanders folded, the coda to a decade in which French-language university education had disappeared from Flanders and new legislation required all employers in Flanders to address their subordinates in Dutch. Merely six decades separated the apotheosis of Maeterlinck from the demise of *Le Matin* of Antwerp.[2]

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[1] In the last two decades, there has been an outpouring of excellent scholarship on the language and nationality problem in the Habsburg Empire and its successor states which deals with these issues, and which has informed my own work: Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Chad Bryant, "Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939-1946," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 4 (2002): 683–706; Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2005); Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*, 2nd ed. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[2] One of the now-defunct Francophone daily newspapers of Flanders.

Returning to the analogy with the Czech case: While in both Czechoslovakia and Belgium the speakers of the former elite language lost their preeminent place in society, it happened with a bit less violence in the latter. There was no Belgian equivalent of the Beneš decrees that seized the property of the French-speakers of Flanders; no one in Ghent or Antwerp was evicted from their house at gunpoint. Despite this apparent quiescence, the Belgian language question played out in the context of a small country's big history, touching on all of the massive social and political changes that shaped Europe in the modern age: during the time period under investigation here, Belgium acquired and lost several African colonies, had an economy that was at one point the third-largest in the world, was twice occupied in brutal world wars, witnessed riots over the franchise, workers' rights, and university conditions, forced a king to abdicate, and became the seat of the European Union. At the same time, Belgium – like most European countries – witnessed a radical expansion of the franchise, developed an extensive welfare state (and a bureaucracy to match), and saw a dramatic democratization of education, starting with the relatively late institution of compulsory schooling in 1914 and continuing through the massive uptick in university enrollment in the 1960s.

In studying the decline of French in Flanders, I look at a case in which the elite language was challenged and ultimately supplanted by the vernacular. This is a relatively common phenomenon that often accompanies modernization. In the early modern age, high-status living languages replaced Latin as the medium of higher education. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the replacement of Swedish with Finnish in Finland, of German with various Slavic languages in the successor states of the Habsburg Empire, of Hungarian with Slovak in Slovakia, of English with French in Québec, and so on are examples of the triumph of vernaculars over higher-status languages. In the case of French in Flanders, the elite language being challenged was, in fact, *the* elite language of the (Western) world at the time, and one which, unlike Latin, was and still is spoken by tens of millions of people across the globe as a mother tongue. As a language and as a cultural

community, French and its speakers had gained an enormous amount of prestige throughout Europe, starting under the *Ancien Régime* and continuing throughout the nineteenth century. While the decline of Swedish relative to Finnish raised the ire of the old Swedophone elite, and the fall of German in Eastern Europe dealt a blow to partisans of German superiority, the Flemish Movement's challenge to French predominance was a frontal assault on the language with the most worldwide social and cultural capital during the time period. Moreover, this challenge was contemporaneous with a challenge to the French language's hegemony in Europe, as English gained ever more influence in international trade, diplomacy, and cultural, to the detriment of both local vernaculars as well as older elite languages like French. This development was not lost on either Francophones or Flemings, both of whom explicitly linked their arguments for or against French to the international fortunes of the language of Voltaire.

Subjects and Corpus

This work analyzes the attempts of the Francophones of Flanders to preserve a place for French in public life in Flanders, namely, how and why they changed from the late nineteenth century through the late twentieth century.[3] As such, the majority of my primary sources come from French-speakers of Flanders and those who sympathized with them, mostly Walloons and French-speaking Bruxellois. The focus on the Francophones of Flanders requires particular attention to issues of class. The Francophones of Flanders were, and are, overwhelmingly members of the higher classes of society: the aristocracy and the upper ranks of the bourgeoisie, concentrated in major Flemish cities, but with smaller populations across Flanders. This connection may be understood to go both ways: Historically, those who reached the upper echelons of Flemish society chose to speak French and to provide their children was a French-language education; conversely, "status seekers"

[3] This work does not address the role of French in Brussels, the Brussels periphery, or the "linguistic border" between Flanders and Wallonia, where different social and political pressures prevailed than in "Flanders" itself.

often chose to speak French to help their aspirations for socioeconomic status.[4] Walloons who had relatively cushy jobs in administration, business, and education also formed part of the French-speaking community of Flanders, if only during their sojourn in Flanders. With the possible exception of Walloon miners who worked in the coalfields in the Campine region in Flanders in the early twentieth century, there were essentially no individuals who spoke French as a native language among the lowest classes of Flemish society.[5]

As such, both the sources in favor of and those opposed to a public role for French in Flanders are fraught with assumptions about class. Partisans of the Flemish Movement have typically made a connection between speaking French and belonging to an exclusive social class explicit in order to condemn it. *Wij*, the magazine of the Volksunie (a now-defunct postwar Flemish nationalist party) noted in its review of a documentary on the Francophones of Flanders that all of the interviewees had richly-appointed homes and rather bourgeois interests, and that if the documentary had wanted to create a sympathetic portrait of the Francophones, it would have been better to choose "other, *normal* [*gewone*] French-speakers" as subjects – if such "normal" French-speakers existed.[6] Flemish essayist Geert Van Istendael, though much more moderate than the writers at *Wij*, nevertheless wrote that the well-known French-language Brussels newspaper *La Libre Belgique* "had thousands of Flemish subscribers [including] the Francophone Flemings of the well-to-do classes (were there others?)," implying that *all* of the French-speakers in Flanders were wealthy.[7]

The Francophones' position among the elites – we might even say their role *as* the elites, especially before World War II – of Flemish society informed their arguments in favor of French in

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[4] Dirk Wilmars [Jozef van Alsenoy], *Le problème belge: La minorité francophone en Flandre*, trans. Edmond Knaeps ([Antwerp]: Éditions Érasme, 1968), 108–115.

[5] Emma Lambotte, "Les Wallons en Campine," in *Congrès international pour l'extension et la culture de la langue française: Troisième session, Gand, 11-14 septembre 1913* (Paris: É. Champion, 1914), Section IV, 33–34.

[6] "Krik," "Vlaamse Franstaligen?" *Wij*, 25 April 1997. Clipped in Documentation Collection "Francofonen in Vlaanderen," ADVN. Emphasis added. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations into English are my own.

[7] Geert Van Istendael, *Le labyrinthe belge*, trans. Monique Nagielkopf and Marnix Vincent, 2nd ed. (Bordeaux: Le Castor Astral, 2008), 107.

the Flemish public sphere. Especially during the periods covered by the first three chapters of this work, Francophones often espoused rhetoric that was elitist by today's standards. They argued that the use of a language other than the demotic tongue in higher education and the upper echelons of government was unproblematic, as anyone who reached such summits would obviously had attained a level of education that would have included training in French, or have come from a well-to-do family where French was commonly spoken. Some Francophones of Flanders, such as those of the Association pour la vulgarisation de la langue française, claimed that by "popularizing" French, they were effecting a reconciliation between the upper and lower classes in a far more useful way, by elevating the common Fleming, than the Flemish Movement did in trying to force the French-speakers of Flanders to use Dutch.

The vast majority of the sources I use were produced by men. This is a function of my focus on the public sphere. The realms of university education, administrative careers, and journalism – the milieux from which most of the authors of my sources originated – were overwhelmingly male during much of the period I study. Women did not enjoy the right to vote in national elections in Belgium until after World War II. The public discourse of the Francophones of Flanders reflects its gendered origin in several ways. Perhaps most strikingly, some partisans of French in Flemish public life used the term "*moedertaalien*" (a play on "*moedertaal*," Dutch for "mother tongue,") as a term of abuse for partisans of the Flemish Movement. Much as the Francophones of Flanders, at the beginning of the period studied here, considered it obvious that public language ought to match the usage of the elites, so too was it unproblematic to have a public language that differed from the language of one's mother (a necessarily private affair). Following this parallel, at the same time that "elitist" arguments in favor of French in Flanders were challenged by a more democratically-oriented Flemish Movement, and the Francophones of Flanders began to adopt "minority rhetoric," (see Chapter 3), the Francophones of Flanders also began to *embrace* the value of the "mother

tongue" in and of itself – claiming that *their* mothers spoke to them in French, and that they thus deserved to have French recognized in the public sphere on those grounds.

I chose my corpus of materials in light of my focus on the arguments for keeping a place for French in the Flemish public sphere; as such, many of the materials I are examine were intended for public consumption. Most obvious in this case were publications whose remit included a defense of French in Flanders. Examples of such include the newsletter of the Association pour la vulgarisation de la langue française en Flandre published before World War I, newspapers associated with Belgian unity movements, such as the Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge of the interwar years, the Ghent literary journal *Épîtres*, which argued for the place of French literature in Flanders in the decade and a half following World War II, *Nos droits*, the newsletter of the Association des Francophones de Flandre in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as numerous publications of the Walloon Movement (especially before 1932, when many in the movement still saw the defense of French in Flanders as part of their mission).

Such publications, though quite relevant to the question of French in Flanders, were only a portion of my source base. I also looked at pamphlets, electoral material, and parliamentary debates addressing the language question, often in the context of particular debates regarding the position of French in Flanders: the legal equality of French and Dutch as official languages, the language of instruction at the state University of Ghent, the use of French in primary and secondary education, and the like. These documents formed another important part of the public discourse on the use of languages in Flanders that I study.

Moving out more broadly, I looked at sources that were not narrowly focused on the language question, but which were produced by the Francophones of Flanders or whose readership was disproportionately composed of such. This includes general interest publications like the monthly magazines *La Revue générale* (typically conservative and Catholic) and *Le Flambeau* (more

Liberal) as well as the French-language daily papers of Ghent and Antwerp, which appeared through the mid-1970s. Such publications often contained both opinion pieces as well as news pieces with a particular editorial slant in favor of French in Flanders.

For both of the World Wars, I looked at clandestine materials produced by the Francophones of Flanders. The "censored" press (those publications that appeared with the consent of the German government) did not provide a platform to the Francophones of Flanders as a group, as in both conflicts the German government preferred to accommodate the Flemish Movement in its grievances against the French-speaking "caste" in Flanders. Clandestine publications such as newspapers and fliers produced by the Francophones of Flanders during the wars tended not to *explicitly* make claims as Francophones of Flanders. That said, the themes that the Francophones of Flanders chose to emphasize in their clandestine publications – Belgian unity, individual freedom, and often, Francophilia – echoed those that they used in material produced in peacetime when arguing for a role for French in Flanders.

While my emphasis on the public realm led, logically, to an emphasis on "public" sources, I also looked at the private archival material and correspondence of organizations and individuals involved in the defense of French in Flanders, as well as published and unpublished memoirs. Such sources provide insight into the connections between different organizations and individuals under consideration. They also provide a valuable window into the more candid thoughts of these subjects, allowing me to connect their perceptions of themselves and of Flemish society to their public arguments regarding French in Flanders.

Finally, I draw on a range of Flemish materials including the Flemish press as well as more polemical publications and ephemera emanating from the Flemish Movement. These provide not only another way to hear the voices of the Francophones of Flanders (on whom the Flemish reported quite often) but also to gauge the reactions of the Flemish Movement to the Francophones'

arguments in favor of French. The Flemish Movement and the partisans of French in Flanders were engaged in a kind of feedback loop, as each reacted to the other over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Outline

In Chapter 1, "Dominance Challenged? The French-Speakers of Flanders and the Implausible Equality of Dutch and French before World War I," I examine the reactions of the French-speaking elite of Flanders to the first laws regulating language use in Belgium. From Belgium's independence in the 1830s until the 1870s, language use in the country had not been legislated; those who passed and debated the laws came from an elite which spoke French, no matter where in Belgium they hailed from. The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a wave of democratization as the franchise was expanded to all men aged 25 or older in 1893, thereby dramatically increasing the political power of the monolingually-Flemish masses.[8] Throughout the decades preceding World War I, the Belgian legislature began to pass laws mandating the use of Dutch (alongside French) in certain circumstances in Flanders.

These laws elicited strong opposition from the French-speaking elite; studying the nature of this opposition will be the main task I undertake in this chapter. The French-speaking elite used a variety of strategies to defend French in Flanders at this time, emphasizing the practical benefits of using an international language, the peerless prestige of French language and culture, and the virtue of freedom to choose one's language. For many in the Belgian elite, the use of French was self-evident; the various Flemish dialects being too underdeveloped and too dissimilar from one another to constitute a real "language" for modern purposes, and using French allowed for "intra-Belgian" contacts with the French-speakers on the other side of the "linguistic border" as well as with the

[8] This "universal suffrage" was tempered with the system of "extra votes," whereby "capable" voters who met certain property or education thresholds were able to cast up to two supplemental votes in national elections.

international community. In addition, the worlds of higher education, politics, and business were not readily accessible to the common folk; therefore the use of the demotic language for the benefit of such monolingual individuals would be superfluous. More concretely, French-speaking bureaucrats from Wallonia typically did not know Dutch; any requirement for civil servants to know Dutch would "privilege" Flemings and block career opportunities for monolingual Francophones.[9]

The aforementioned objections to language legislation, pragmatic as they were, were rather mundane. French-speakers in Flanders also appealed to the prestige and glamour of the French language and French culture in support of the continued predominance of French in Flemish society. They did not lack illustrious examples of French culture in Flanders. The *Belle Époque* witnessed a flourishing French-language literary movement in Belgium, centered in Flanders. Emile Verhaeren, a native of Ghent who wrote poetry in French, was celebrated worldwide, attracting the attention of figures such as Stefan Zweig for his work, which was said to embody a "European" spirit .[10] As mentioned above, Maurice Maeterlinck, the great Symbolist playwright and international literary icon, came from a family of the Ghent bourgeoisie. Maeterlinck was a darling of the French literary world, in part because of his exotic "northern sensibility," expressing Flemish themes in the French idiom. In 1911, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. The French-speakers of Flanders could point to the prestige and social capital of "their" Nobel Laureate to demonstrate the worth of a French presence in Flanders.

In Chapter 2, "Invasion, Occupation, and the Shattering of Flanders's Linguistic Equilibrium, 1914-1918," I examine the fundamentally transformative role of World War I in the language question in Belgium. The war was a watershed event for Europe, sometimes forging,

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[9] Interestingly, the passage of such laws and the surrounding controversy happened at the same time that similar debates were taking place in the Czech lands. The "Badeni Ordinances" of 1897, which mandated the use of both Czech and German in the civil service of Bohemia and Moravia, were wildly unpopular with German-speakers, who would be at a disadvantage to educated Czechs, who were more likely to be bilingual. They were eventually overturned in 1899.
[10] Stefan Zweig, *Emile Verhaeren*, trans. Jethro Bithell (London: Constable and Co., 1914).

sometimes breaking bonds of national identity, strengthening nationalist sentiment in Great Britain, France, and Germany, but leading to the fall of the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov empires and the rise of new states to take their places. While Belgium did not disappear in the aftermath of the war, the experiences of the "three Belgiums" during the war – German-occupied Belgium, the front lines, and the large exile communities in Britain, France, and the Netherlands – led to dramatic changes in the social structure and political landscape of the country, including relations between the language communities.

The German occupation of almost all of Belgium for over four years stifled political life as typically understood, yet also created new political phenomena. The Germans and their allies took advantage of ethnic conflicts and frustrated nationalist ambitions across Europe during the war: witness for example the creation of a client "Kingdom of Poland" in 1916, meant to win over the inhabitants of Russian Poland to the Central Powers' cause. The Germans tried this in Belgium as well. In an attempt to "divide and conquer" Belgium for their own ends, the occupying authorities tried to cultivate Flemish nationalist sympathies, claiming to represent a kindred "Germanic" people who would help the Flemings escape the yoke of the Francophone elite. The German occupiers enforced pre-existing language legislation more thoroughly than the prewar Belgian state, but quickly moved beyond that to transform the administrative structure of Belgium, dividing it into "Flemish" and "Walloon" regions which theoretically had a large amount of autonomy. The transformation of the University of Ghent, a French-speaking state university in the heart of Flanders, into a Dutch-language institution had been one of the Flemish Movement's most prominent demands before the war; the Germans granted this wish in 1917, reopening the university in Dutch with great pomp and circumstance. Some Flemings, known as "Activists," supported the Germans' plans, from a range of motives between idealism and avarice.

Under these circumstances, the Francophones' arguments in favor of French in Flanders were intimately linked with patriotic sentiments and spirit of resistance to the "*boche*" invader. I chart the ways in which Francophones in exile as well as the underground Francophone press painted the choice to speak French – or at least the *freedom* to use French – in Flanders as an act of patriotic resistance. While the French language was held in even higher esteem by some during the war because of its association with France, one of the countries fighting to liberate Belgium, for the most part theories of a grand "Germanic-Latin" conflict playing out in microcosm in Flanders had relatively little impact on the arguments used in support of a place for French in Flanders.

In Chapter 3, "From Resurgence to Retreat: The French-Speakers of Flanders from World War I to the Language Laws of the 1930s," I consider the heated decade and a half which followed the Armistice. Belgium's place alongside the victorious Entente powers bolstered a strident "Belgian nationalism" which was often Francophone and Francophile in nature. At the same time, the Flemish Movement had been radicalized by the experience of the war, and became more assertive in its demands. The Movement now demanded a completely Dutch-language Flemish public sphere, having abandoned its previous support for bilingualism. The administration, education, judiciary, and military in Flanders would need to be Dutch-speaking, and the University of Ghent would need to be Dutch-speaking as well to educate members of the new Flemish elite that would staff these services. For French-speakers, this was an unacceptable "return" to the policies the Germans followed during Belgium's martyrdom of 1914-1918. Francophones thus contested these attempts at *flamandisation* (the transformation of French-language public services into Dutch-language services) using a vocabulary infused with the same patriotic themes as that which they used during the war.

In other ways, however, Francophones' arguments for the ability to use French in the public sphere changed during this period. French was still the international language *par excellence*; however,

English began to make inroads as a language of diplomacy, culture, and trade.[11] As such, appeals to the grandeur and utility of the French language, while not absent from Francophones' rhetorical toolkit, became much less prominent. Likewise, the Francophones' prewar calls for maintaining "freedom of choice" in language matters encountered increasing resistance from Flemings who argued that such "freedom" was illusory in a society where a small, wealthy, and powerful group of people spoke one language while the (lower-class) majority of the population spoke a different language, one which additionally suffered from a deficit of prestige compared to the first. As states across the Western world intervened in social and economic affairs to address the consequences of *laissez-faire* economics, the Flemish Movement argued that the state could also intervene in language use in order to remedy the historical inequalities that resulted from the "domination" of a linguistic elite.

Under these circumstances, some Francophones of Flanders began to defend their rights to use French in Flemish public institutions by arguing that they constituted a "linguistic minority." The use of this particular terminology reflects the international concern during the interwar period for "minority rights" in the successor states of the eastern European empires.[12] I study this development in depth, as this use of "minority identity" provides a stark illustration of the way in which collective identities are contingent on political and social developments. The Francophones of Flanders, as their social and political power was in decline, moved away from a celebration of the French language's prestige and utility and toward a defensive embrace of their rights as a "minority." This use of what I call "minority rhetoric" – that is, when a "group" labels itself a "minority" in order to make social, political, and/or economic claims on the state – validates Rogers Brubaker's

[11] Keith A. Hamilton, "A Question of Status: British Diplomats and the Uses and Abuses of French," *Historical Research* 60, no. 141 (1987): 125–129.
[12] Many European states explicitly framed the question of "minority rights" as *solely* an Eastern European concern. Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137–165.

argument that "'National minority'. . . designates a political stance, not an ethnodemographic fact", and that the term "national minority" is "a loose and imperfect designation for a field of competing stances, and that the 'stakes' of the competition concern not only *what* stance to adopt as a national minority but *whether* the 'group'. . . should understand and represent itself as a national minority."[13]

Despite this new rhetorical strategy, the Francophones of Flanders were unable to prevent the transformation of the University of Ghent into a Dutch-language institution in 1930, nor did they block the passage of a series of laws in 1932 and 1935 that made Dutch the sole official language in public administration, public education, and courtroom proceedings. In Chapter 4, "An Uneasy Status Quo, 1932-1960," I treat a period which was relatively calm in regard to the language question in Flanders, even given the intervention of another world war, yet which would lay some of the foundations for the conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s. With the language laws of 1932-1935, the French-speakers of Flanders had, in theory, lost many of their rights in the Flemish public sphere. However, their social position was such that they were able to maintain a sort of "parallel" public sphere, consisting of private French-language schools, a French-language periodical press, and social and artistic clubs. Perhaps most importantly, French-speakers continued to play a disproportionately large role in the economic life of Flanders, a fact which irked the Flemish Movement.

World War II did not play the transformative role in Belgian language politics that the previous war had. To be sure, it left a drastic mark on the country, as it did across continental Europe. However, the transformation of the University of Ghent in 1930 and the institution of linguistic homogeneity in 1932-1935 had removed many of the causes for discontent which the German occupier could exploit. In addition, in 1940-1944, the Germans were less interested in antagonizing the Francophone ruling elites in Belgium and more interested in cooperating with them

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[13] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5, 62.

to keep Belgium's productive capacity working toward German ends.[14] While a significant number of Flemings collaborated with the Germans, as in the First World War, relatively fewer of them engaged in combatting French in Flanders as had done so in 1914-1918. After the war, controversy over the role of the king in Belgium's surrender in May 1940 led to a split between Flemish and Walloon public opinion and a governmental crisis in 1950, but this did not coincide with a neat division between Francophones of Flanders and the Flemish on that issue.

In Chapter 5, "Decline and Fall: The Last Fights for French in Flanders, 1960-1975," I examine a period of renewed and intense debate about the place of French in Flanders, at the end of which French had more or less disappeared from Flemish public life. The reemergence – with a vengeance – of the language question, including a renewed espousal of "minority rhetoric" on the Francophones' part followed a series of reforms which threatened the socioeconomic position of the Francophones of Flanders, once again demonstrating the contingency of minority identity.

The 1960s witnessed a wave of challenges to the Francophones' power in Flanders. New educational legislation, passed in 1963, hampered the operation of French-language private schools in Flanders. Flemish marches targeted the use of French in Catholic Church services in Flanders. Flemish leaders encouraged Flemings to boycott shops which did business in French. The Catholic University of Leuven, a world-renowned institution of higher learning, tore itself apart over the continuing presence of French-speaking students and faculty in the (Flemish) campus town. In addition, in the aftermath of World War II and decolonization, French was rapidly losing ground to English as the international language – a development which Francophones bemoaned, but which many Flemings saw as an opportunity to access an international culture that did not evoke the memory of Francophone domination.[15]

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[14] Werner Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium, 1940-1944* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1993), 134–135.
[15] David C. Gordon, *The French Language and National Identity (1930-1975)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 11.

Against this backdrop, some figures among the Francophones of Flanders began to make arguments which strongly resembled those used in 1918-1932. Veterans appealed to Belgian patriotism, as after World War I; in this case, "speaking French" was not seen as the pinnacle of patriotism – the Flemish Movement had come too far for that to be a viable argument – but maintaining Belgian unity, typically through bilingualism and a thoroughgoing respect for "linguistic minorities," *was*.[16] Some Francophones revived the "minority rhetoric" of the interwar years. This renewed emphasis on minority rights found its zenith when several groups of Francophone parents in Flanders brought legal cases against the Belgian state in the European Court of Human Rights, claiming that the government was infringing on their rights to educate their children in their own language. The court ruled in favor of the Belgian state, arguing that the state was not obliged to offer or subsidize education *in any particular language* to its citizens.

In 1968, the same year that the ECHR dealt a blow to Francophones' hopes of state-supported or recognized education in French in Flanders, the decision was made to divide the Catholic University of Leuven into two wholly separate entities, moving the French university out of Flanders and into Wallonia. In 1973, following the first round of state reforms which would devolve powers from the central state to regional and linguistic federal entities, the new "Flemish government" passed a law requiring employers in Flanders to use Dutch with their employees, thereby fulfilling one of the desiderata of the Flemish Movement – the *flamandisation* of the economy. In 1974, the last three French-language daily newspapers in Flanders ceased publication on account of declining readership. While Francophone social clubs and cultural circles still exist in Flanders – maintaining a low profile – the issue of French in the Flemish public sphere has essentially been settled in favor of its disappearance.

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[16] Francophones of Flanders were heavily (over)represented in the membership of Belgian unity movements in the early 1960s. See "Positions et mouvements en faveur de l'unité belge," *Courrier hébdomadaire du CRISP* no. 191 (1963).

The conclusion, “The Long Shadow of the Francophones of Flanders,” brings the narrative of the Francophones of Flanders to the present. While they have become less and less visible since the mid-1970s, they still exist, but they mostly keep their “*francophonie*” to themselves. However, the specter of the Francophones of Flanders continues to haunt Belgium, as they are often invoked as either a cautionary tale by the French-speakers in Brussels or as a potential source of trouble by the Flemish Movement. I end by considering the fate of the Francophone of Flanders in light of the fct that another global language – English – is gaining superiority not only in Belgium, but also Europe, and indeed the world.

CHAPTER 1

DOMINANCE CHALLENGED? THE FRENCH-SPEAKERS OF FLANDERS AND THE IMPLAUSIBLE EQUALITY OF DUTCH AND FRENCH BEFORE WORLD WAR I

Maurice Maeterlinck, the 1911 Nobel Prize in Literature, and the the French Language in Flanders

In *The Age of Empire*, Eric Hobsbawm argues that

> probably at no time since the seventeenth century did the rest of the world need to take as much ultural notice of the southern Low Countries [Belgium] as in the final decades of the nineteenth century. For that is when Maeterlinck and Verhaeren briefly became major names in European iterature (one of them [Maeterlinck] is still familiar as the writer of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*).[1]

Both Maurice Maeterlinck and Emile Verhaeren were part of the small but socially dominant group of Flemings who spoke and wrote French as opposed to Dutch and Dutch dialects, the language of the overwhelming majority of Flemings. In 1911, the world of letters did indeed take notice of them.

In that year, the Nobel Prize in Literature was only a decade old, yet the receipt of the award was already "becoming a criterion of pre-eminence in the Occidental world," in the words of the *New York Times*.[2] In that year, Maeterlinck, a playwright and poet who was well-known internationally as a leading figure of the Symbolist movement won that particular honor. His winning the prize was a source of pride for many people in Belgium. Flemish writers such as Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, while writing in French, traded in on their "exotic," "Nordic," and "Germanic" heritage in the French literary field. Literary critics often portrayed these men as

[1] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 225.
[2] "Awarded to Maeterlinck: This Year's Nobel Prize for Literature Goes to Belgian Author," *New York Times*, 10 November 1911, 7. See also Josepha Laroche, "Le Nobel comme enjeu symbolique dans les relations internationales," *Revue française de science politique* 44, no. 4 (1994): 599–628.

bringing a fresh, foreign sensibility to their work that was not present in that of French authors.[3] Literary scholar Raphael Ingelbien argues that Maeterlinck's Nobel Prize

> rewarded the efforts of one of those who had tried, since the 1880s, to create a Belgian literature and put it on the world map. To achieve this, Maeterlinck had cultivated his difference from France. Although he wrote in French, he did not regard his work as part of French literature—his exaltation of Germanic art partakes of that strategy. He also took a quasi-Romantic interest in popular culture, i.e. Flemish folk songs and legends.[4]

At the banquet held in Stockholm to celebrate the award, Charles Wauters, the Belgian Ambassador to Sweden, represented Maeterlinck who was absent on account of illness. In his acceptance speech, Wauters evoked Maeterlinck's literary talent and the mysteries of the Flemish countryside. He noted that

> although Flemish and from Flanders, Maeterlinck wrote French in a most flexible, subtle, and harmonious manner. Still, he is the genius of his race, the incarnation of the Flemish soil… Maeterlinck's success justly adds to the glory of French literature, but also to the glory of his country. The Swedish Academy, in awarding the literary Prize to him, has paid tribute to the French form of a Flemish idea.[5]

In the period before World War I, many in the intellectual elite of Flanders saw the success of writers like Maeterlinck and Verhaeren, who conquered the French literary world because of their perceived "difference," as proof that "*being* Flemish" did not necessarily require *speaking* Flemish. The division between "speaking Flemish" and "being Flemish" was a common one in this time period. Responding to an author who was sympathetic to the Flemish Movement, the lawyer Charles Van Beneden claimed to "love [his] Flemish brothers as much as [his] Walloon brothers," in part because he himself is Flemish. However, like "all those who are not against enlightenment," he opposed "forget[ting] French in favor of the language spoken by the people" in Flanders, as the Flemish language was "barbarous, atrocious to the ear and to the mouth" and of limited use, like Breton or the various Walloon dialects. French, on the other hand, was "a universal language… the

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[3] Paul Gorceix, "L'image de la germanité chez un belge, flamand de langue française: Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949)," *Revue de littérature comparée* no. 299 (2003): 397–409.
[4] Raphael Ingelbien, "Symbolism at the Periphery: Yeats, Maeterlinck, and Cultural Nationalism," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42, no. 3 (2005): 189.
[5] Speech of Charles C. M. A. Wauters, 10 December 1911, translated and reproduced in Lynn R. Wilkinson and Leon Sachs, "Maurice Maeterlinck," *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit *et al.*: Thomson-Gale, 2007), 331:107-108.

most beautiful of languages." While the introduction of Flemish in legal proceedings for those who do not speak French was a "charitable concession," making Flemish equal to, let alone "superior" to French in the Belgian context was unthinkable.[6] Not only could speaking French coexist with a "Flemish" identity, the fact of speaking French *while being a Fleming* was in fact considered to be a hallmark of *Belgian* identity. Indeed, one Flemish newspaper, reflecting in 1986 on Belgians who had won Nobel Prizes, called Maeterlinck "a typical Belgian of his time: a Fleming who wrote in French."[7]

For the nascent Flemish Movement, though, individuals like Maeterlinck were not (or should not have been) typical Flemings: They represented an elite whose control of and influence over Flemish society unjustly excluded the overwhelming majority of Flemings who spoke only "Flemish" (various dialects of Dutch) from fully participating in Flemish society. The Flemish Movement attempted to challenge this hegemony by introducing legislation that would make the use of Dutch mandatory in certain contexts in Flanders. The way in which the French-speakers of Flanders reacted to these early attempts – and, indeed, how the development of an identity as "French-speakers" was in part occasioned *by* such attempts – forms the focus of this chapter.

"Flemish at Heart?": The (Non-)Identity of the Francophones of Flanders before the First World War

Before World War I, the "French-speakers of Flanders" had little concept of themselves as a separate group. Most Flemings who spoke French would have identified either simply as "Belgian," or as "Flemish," understood solely as a subtype of "Belgian." They would *not* have seen themselves as having an identity based on which language they spoke. When these individuals were identified as members of a distinct group, it was more often than not in a disapproving fashion, by members of

[6] Ch[arles] van Beneden, "Réponse à M. Frans Deckers," *La Jeune Wallonie* 5, no. 5 (December 1910): 36–37.
[7] "Negen Belgen kregen al Nobelprijs," *De Standaard*, 16 October 1986. Clipped in AMVC, Nobelprijs collection, NN29.

the Flemish Movement. Flemings who spoke French, either as their first language or as a language of choice, were sometimes called "*flamands du cœur* [Flemings at heart]." While this was originally a term these individuals would use themselves, demonstrating their continued identification with Flanders, supporters of the Flemish Movement who felt that French-speaking Flemings were "betraying" the Flemish people would come to use it in derisory manner. A more common term of abuse for Flemings who spoke French was "*fransquillon*" ("little Frenchie," spelled *franskiljon* in Dutch). Another term was more frequently used, especially by the Francophones of Flanders themselves, was "Flemings of French expression [*Flamands d'expression française*]," a construction which clearly distinguishes between identity (Flemish) and language (French).[8]

Conversely, French-speaking Flemings, as well as Walloons and Bruxellois, often used the term "*flamingant*" to describe adherents to the Flemish Movement, or sometimes only the most radical thereof. While this originally only meant "Flemish-speaking" (analogous the usage of *bretonnant* and *gallicant* to refer to Breton- and French-speaking inhabitants of Brittany), *flamingant* was increasingly perceived an insult by the end of nineteenth century. Many supporters of "Flemish" causes would instead refer to themselves as "*vlaamsgezind* [Flemish-minded]" or "*vlaamsvoelend* [Flemish-feeling]."[9]

Returning to the example of Maeterlinck, we can see that the French-speaking "Flemings at heart" had multifaceted reactions to the cultural and political Flemish Movement. In 1899, Maeterlinck commended the author Cyriel Buysse for "firmly returning to our maternal Flemish" when writing of his novels; Maeterlinck claimed that in doing so Buysse had been able to produce literature of the highest quality.[10] Shortly thereafter, though, he publicly attacked the political

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[8] This term was also used by outsiders to describe the French-speaking population of Flanders. See Henri Charriaut, *La Belgique moderne, une terre d'expériences* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1910), 35.
[9] W[illem] De Vreese, "De woorden 'flamingant' en 'franskiljon'," *Tijdschrift voor nederlandsche taal- en letterkunde* 51 (1932): 65–90.
[10] Maeterlinck to Buysse, 28 November 1899, reproduced in A. Van Elslander, *Maurice Maeterlinck et la littérature flamande* (Ghent: Seminarie voor Nederlandse Literatuurstudie, 1963), 40–41.

Flemish Movement in the French paper *Le Figaro*. The Flemish Movement was composed of a "handful of agitators whose obscure birth out in the country [*naissance obscure au fond des fermes*] and late education had rendered them incapable of learning French." Their envy had led them to create "a kind of official and artificial jargon, pretentious, baroque, and stillborn, from the various popular *patois*" which was alien both to real Flemish dialects and to the Dutch of the Netherlands. In their quest they were aided by the Flemish clergy, "the most ignorant of clergies," who saw the promotion of Flemish to the detriment of French as a manner to "protect" the peasantry from harmful outside influences.[11] A week and a half later, Maeterlinck wrote another article in *Le Figaro* in which he expressed his esteem for writers such as Buysse as well as Stijn Streuvels and Guido Gezelle, who wrote in "true Flemish [*flamand véritable*]," yet repeated his attacks on the Flemish radicals who wanted to elevate either their "jargon" to the level of a literary language, as well as his conviction that Flemish radicals were allies of the clergy in their mission to keep the peasantry isolated from the civilizing influence of France.[12]

As one might imagine, many in the Flemish Movement did not respond well to these provocative comments. The Brussels-based "pan-German" monthly review *Germania* published a poem that upbraided Maeterlinck as a "race traitor [*stamverrader*]." Beginning with an epigraph from Maeterlinck's article in *Le Figaro*, the poem chides Maeterlinck for supposedly turning his back on his people:

> You are a son of Artevelde [a figure from the history of the city of Ghent]
> You are a *Gentenaar*
> Who dares to abuse our Dutch language
> As if it were but jargon
>
> Given that you neglect your own race [*stam*]
> Forget your mother-tongue
> Make your books in the enemy's language
> Live in a foreign city [Nice]
>
> Should the Flemish people therefore cast off

[11] Maurice Maeterlinck, "Commémoration inutile," *Le Figaro*, 5 July 1902, reproduced in Van Elslander, 23.
[12] Maurice Maeterlinck, "Un anniversaire inutile," *Le Figaro*, 14 July 1902, reproduced in Van Elslander, 31.

Their lovely mother-tongue
And through cowardice still increase
The pride of the Walloon?[13]

Germania, admittedly, was a somewhat extreme publication in the Flemish press.[14] "Race," as used in this piece – which we must take with a grain of salt, as "*stam*" may also be translated as "people" or "tribe" – was not the primary concern of the prewar Flemish Movement, whose criticisms of the the place of French in Flanders rested on social and economic arguments, as detailed below. Still, in the eyes of the Flemish Movement it was *not* self-evident that one could privilege speaking French and still represent a "Flemish" mentality.

We may tentatively compare the situation of the French-speakers in Flanders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to that of the German-speakers in the Czech lands, especially in cities like Prague and Brno (Brünn). Both groups had long considered themselves to be integral parts of their respective societies, with an identity based on status rather than language. As the historian Gary Cohen writes, "the experience of German-speakers in Prague and other urban minorities in Europe suggests that upper-strata groups generally develop conscious ethnic identities only after being provoked by direct challenges from subordinate groups or adverse changes in political structures."[15] I argue that the same holds true for the Francophones of Flanders: these individuals did not conceive of themselves as belonging to a particular group until the Flemish Movement and its legislative victories questioned their previously self-evident place in Flemish (and Belgian) society. The ways in which this group identity changed over time, and how these changes reflected the Francophones' attempts to keep a place for French in Flemish public life, form the major subject of this study.

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[13] Leonard Buyst, "Aan een stamverrader: Maurice Maeterlinck," *Germania*, July 1902, 636.
[14] Bruno De Corte, "Het tijdschrift Germania (1898-1905) in het kader van de Vlaams-Duitse betrekkingen" (Licentiate thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1982); Bruno Yammine, "De 'Flamenpolitik', breuk of continuïteit in de Duitse politiek? Nieuw licht op het tijdschrift 'Germania,'" *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 68, no. 3 (2009): 214–263.
[15] Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*, 2nd ed. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 205.

The Background to the "Language Question" in Flanders

Most of the area which we today call the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) had been united by a series of dynastic marriages into a loose polity during the late Middle Ages, which was eventually inherited by the Habsburg monarchs of Spain. During the sixteenth-century wars of religion, Calvinism made inroads into these provinces; the northern areas of which escaped Spanish rule to become the Dutch Republic, under the control of the Calvinist House of Orange. The "Southern Netherlands" were united in personal (not administrative) rule with the Spanish Habsburgs (until 1714) and then, following the War of the Spanish Succession, the Austrian Habsburgs.

In these areas there existed, and continues to exist, a "linguistic border" running from east to west, north of which the vernacular dialects are closely related to Dutch, and south of which the demotic languages are Walloon and Picard dialects, related to French. The northern area has come to be called Flanders, and the southern area Wallonia.[16] Brussels was a Flemish city, just north of the "linguistic border," which has become majority French-speaking in the almost two centuries since it became the capital of an independent Belgium.[17] Until a few decades ago, this line was *not* a political border; it bisected several principalities during the *Ancien Régime*, and later a handful of Belgium's provinces.[18] In addition to this *geographical* border a class or social border developed within the

[16] Jean Stengers, "The Vocabulary," in *Modern Belgium*, ed. Marina Boudart, Michel Boudart, and René Bryssinck (Palo Alto, CA: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1990), 6–9; Jean-François Gilmont, "Du bon usage des catégories géopolitiques en histoire," in *L'Identité wallonne: Jalons pour une identité qui se construit*, ed. Luc Courtois and Jean Pirotte (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fondation Wallonne Pierre-Marie et Jean-François Humblet, 1994), 41–50.

[17] Paul De Ridder, "De mythe van de vroege verfransing: Taalgebruik in Brussel van de 12de eeuw tot 1794," in *De macht van het schone woord: Literatuur in Brussel van de 14de tot de 18de eeuw*, ed. Jozef Janssens and Remco Sleiderink (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2003), 181–212.

[18] The creation of the "linguistic border" – which has remained remarkably stable over the centuries – remains shrouded in mystery. Jean Stengers argues that there is not enough evidence to determine its origins. See his *La formation de la frontière linguistique en Belgique: Ou, de la légitimité de l'hypothèse historique* (Brussels: Latomus, 1959).

northern areas which would eventually come to be called "Flanders," between the common people, who used Dutch dialects, and the aristocracy, who slowly came to use French.[19]

The adoption of the French on the part of the upper classes was a Europe-wide phenomenon in the eighteenth century, as the worlds of letters, philosophy, and diplomacy, and many royal courts, all used French as a common tongue. This development owed much to France's role as the preeminent power on the continent, as well as the perceived quality and elegance of French literature.[20] In Flanders, however, this development was not only earlier than in other parts of Europe, but also created a substantial (though still relatively limited) population which spoke French *at home*. The relative proximity of Flanders to France and its political union with "Wallonia" help explain the deeper roots French laid down in Flemish society. The Francophones of Flanders would often cite this "historic bilingualism" in defense of the French language's rights in Flanders. We should take these invocations with a grain of salt. In *Ancien Régime* Flanders, French did not replace Flemish, or even hold as preeminent place in, public administration as it did during the first decades of Belgian independence. There was also very little organized education outside of private tutoring or religious schools, both of which were accessible only to the elite; thus, education did not serve to "Frenchify" the Flemish masses to any extent, occasional complaints about the benign neglect of Dutch notwithstanding.[21]

In 1789 – contemporaneously with the French Revolution, though having vastly different motives – the Brabant Revolution saw the Austrian Netherlands rebel against the attempts of

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[19] Roland Willemyns, "Taalpolitiek in de Bourgondische tijd," *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal-en Letterkunde* no. 2 (1994): 162–177; Sébastien Dubois, *L'invention de la Belgique: Genèse d'un État-Nation, 1648-1830* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2005); Marcel Deneckere, *Histoire de la langue française dans les Flandres, 1770-1823* (Ghent: Romanica Gandensia, 1954).

[20] See for example Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 406–411, as well as Marc Fumaroli's suggestively-titled *When the World Spoke French*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: New York Review Books, 2011).

[21] Such as the oft-cited "first document" of the Flemish Movement, Jan-Baptist Verlooy's *Verhandeling op d'onacht der moederlijke tael in de Nederlanden* (Treatise on the Neglect of the Mother-Tongue in the Low Countries) of 1788, excerpted and translated by Tanis Guest in Theo Hermans, Louis Vos, and Lode Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History, 1780-1990* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1992),49–54 .

Habsburg Emperor Joseph II, who considered himself an enlightened despot, to impose a uniform administration and thereby abolish the patchwork of old privileges and constitutions that regulated the provinces. In 1790, the provinces formed the "United Belgian States [French: *États Unis Belgiques*; Dutch: *Verenigde Nederlandse Staten* or *Verenigde Belgische Staten*]," reviving a Latin term, "*Belgica*," sometimes used for the Low Countries. We may thus see 1789-1790 as an important moment in the development of a particularly "Belgian" identity.[22] This "proto-Belgian" state did not last long, however. The Austrians were able to reassert control over these areas by the end of 1790. In 1795 revolutionary France annexed these provinces; they remained part of France until 1814.

The French regime provided a crucial catalyst to the formation of "Belgian" identity. The Prince-Bishopric of Liège – formerly a separate state under the Holy Roman Empire – became associated with the former Austrian Netherlands. The patchwork of non-contiguous feudal entities gave way to nine French *départements*, the boundaries of which would define the nine provinces of independent Belgium. For the first time, the territory which would become Belgium was subject to a uniform set of laws and regulations.

French rule, like that of Joseph II, encountered resistance from the "Belgians." Notably, anti-clerical measures and the introduction of conscription sparked the "Peasants' War" of October-December 1798 in which Catholic, rural populations briefly attempted armed insurrection against the French administration. The Peasants' War would come to figure in *both* Belgian nationalist and Flemish mythology as an example of heroic resistance against the "alien" French.[23] The Napoleonic regime would require all official documents to be in French, with an allowance for unofficial translations. While this and other acts of the French regime did not *introduce* the French language to Flanders, they strengthened its position in Flemish society. The Flemish Movement in independent

[22] Jean Stengers, "La Révolution brabançonne, une révolution nationale?," *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques (Académie Royale de Belgique)*, 1992, 323–369.
[23] Philippe Raxhon, "La « Vendée belge » dans la mémoire collective aux XIXe et XXe siècles," *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 102, no. 2 (1995): 59–86.

Belgium would therefore come to remember the period of French rule as a time when the French challenged much of what differentiated Belgium from France, namely its local traditions, Catholic identity, and the Flemish tongue.

At the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, these areas became part of the "United Kingdom of the Netherlands" (1814-1830), joining the provinces of the old Dutch Republic, under the rule of the House of Orange. In addition to providing a "buffer state" between France and the German Confederation, the creation of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was seen as "reuniting" lands which had been torn asunder during the Wars of Religion.

The new state seemed to have a promising future, combining the industrial prowess of the Southern Netherlands with the colonial markets of the North. King Willem I undertook massive public works projects and opened new state schools and universities in the South. However, divisions soon manifested between the two "halves" of the state. Liberals in the South disliked King Willem I's autocratic tendencies, and many Catholics were uneasy with the Calvinism of the king and of much of the administration. The South was also underrepresented in the legislature of the newly-created state.

The factor of discord in the United Netherlands which receives the most attention today, to the near-exclusion of the others, is the linguistic question. The Dutch royal court, like many in Europe at the time, was French-speaking. However, the language of the state in the Dutch Republic had been Dutch; upon the creation of the United Netherlands this status was extended to the South as well, though there were provisions for French in the southern provinces of the former Austrian Netherlands ("Wallonia").[24] Still, the obligation to know Dutch in order to obtain public employment rankled many "Walloons," as well as the French-speaking upper classes of Flanders. In

[24] Albert De Jonghe, *De taalpolitiek van Willem I in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1814-1830): De genesis der taalbesluiten en hun toepassing* (Sint-Andries-bij-Brugge: Darthet, 1967).

addition, some Flemish-speakers argued that standard Dutch as practiced in the North was too far removed from the Flemish used in the South.[25]

In 1830, there was an uprising in the Southern Netherlands against the policies of the central government, which quickly evolved into an armed conflict for the independence of "Belgium." The French aided the new Belgian state in its battles with the (Northern) Netherlands, and there was a strong current of Francophilia among the provisional government. The revolutionaries offered the crown of the new Kingdom of Belgium to the Duke of Nemours, the second son of King Louis-Philippe of the French, who promptly refused it on his son's behalf, wishing to avoid further entangling France in an international conflict. Eventually, the provisional government chose Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, a German prince, widower of the former heiress to the British throne and uncle of the future Queen Victoria, partly to gain British support; he swore an oath to uphold the Belgian Constitution on 21 July 1831 (thereafter observed as Belgium's national holiday).

There were many in Belgium who had not agreed with the decision to split from the Netherlands, the "Orangists," taking their name from the Dutch royal house. While a handful were Flemings who regretted the division from fellow Dutch-speakers, many, if not most Orangists, had supported the continued union with the Netherlands for more practical reasons. Many industrialists – including those in Liège, one of the most Francophile cities in Wallonia, as well the French-speakers who owned textile businesses in Ghent – feared the loss of markets in the North as well as in the Dutch East Indies.

Starting in the late nineteenth century, writers sympathetic to the Walloon Movement often portrayed the Belgian Revolution as a revolt of French-speakers against the language policy of King Willem, from which Flemings abstained, in an effort to show that Belgium owed its existence to French-speakers (or, more specifically, Walloons), who were therefore the most "patriotic" Belgians.

[25] Lode Wils, *Waarom Vlaanderen Nederlands spreekt* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2001).

As a corollary to this interpretation, attempts to "force" public servants to know Flemish/Dutch were cast as unpatriotic throwbacks to the policies of the hated "*Roi Guillaume*." Interestingly, this analysis found echo among some of the later leaders of the Flemish Movement, who used it to argue that Belgium is a Francophone state which holds no interest for Flemings. This reductionist view of the Revolution is flawed. The very *division* of Belgians into "Flemings" and "Walloons" did not exist in 1830, and was certainly not present in the consciousness of the revolutionaries (or their opponents). In addition, as mentioned above, there were many French-speakers who supported the House of Orange, as well as Flemish-speaking Catholics who opposed the secularizing influence of the Dutch government.[26]

That said, one journalist has referred to the early Belgian state as "a French-speaking state with facilities for the Flemings," and that interpretations is not wholly false.[27] Many of the founders of Belgium would likely agree with that conclusion, while at the same time not seeing it as a reproach. On 16 November 1830, the provisional government of Belgium issued a declaration on language use in state administration. In accord with "the principle of the freedom of language… every citizen has the right to avail himself of the language which best suits his interests." While the decree provided for translations (to be published after the official French text) and stated that "citizens are entitled to use French, Flemish or German, without distinction" in dealing with public administration and the courts," because "the Flemish and the German languages, in use among the inhabitants of certain places, differ from one province to another," it would be "impossible to publish an official text of laws and decrees in Flemish and German." Therefore, "the official bulletin

[26] Jean Stengers, "La Révolution de 1830," in *Les grands mythes de l'histoire de Belgique, de Flandre et de Wallonie*, ed. Anne Morelli (Brussels: Éditions Vie ouvrière, 1995), 139–148; Chantal Kesteloot, "Eerst Belg, dan Vlaming en Waal: De Vlaamse en de Waalse Beweging en de Revolutie van 1830," in *Broedertwist: België en Nederland en de erfenis van 1830*, ed. Pieter Rietbergen, Tom Verschaffel, and Jan de Hond (Zwolle: Waanders, 2005), 91–119; Aristide R. Zolberg, "The Making of Flemings and Walloons: Belgium: 1830-1914," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, no. 2 (1974): 179–235.
[27] Dirk Vander Peypen, "Een Franstalige staat met faciliteiten voor Vlamingen," *Apache News Lab*, 14 November 2010, http://www.apache.be/?p=10061.

of laws and acts of government is to be published in French."[28] The concept of the "freedom of language" was also enshrined in Article 23 of the Belgian constitution of 1831, which stated that "the use of the languages spoken in Belgium is discretionary [*facultatif*]. It can only be regulated by law, and only for acts of public authority and for judicial proceedings."

Contrary to later Flemish nationalist myth-making, the Belgian state did not officially try to *impose* French on the Flemish, at least not in the way that the French state had a policy of turning "peasants into Frenchmen," to use somewhat Eugen Weber's oft-cited (and oft-oversimplified) phrase.[29] To this day, Flemish politicians and foreign scholars alike quote a supposed letter from Charles Rogier (a deeply Francophile leader of the Belgian Revolution of 1830 and sometime prime minister of the new Belgian state) dating from 1832, or sometimes 1834, wherein Rogier claims that assigning bureaucrats from the French-speaking part of the country in Flanders will help to eliminate the "Germanic" elements in Belgium, and provide a useful unity of language. This "letter" likely never existed, and was probably a fabrication intended to discredit Rogier (and the Francophone state apparatus) in the eyes of the Flemings.[30] In Rogier's day, the simple truth was that the political classes likely had little to no interest in which language the "lower orders" spoke, as anyone educated (and wealthy) enough to attain a political position or work a government job would know French.

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[28] Translated by Tanis Guest in Hermans, Vos, and Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement*, 71–72. Until 1839, Belgium also contained what is today the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where a number of German dialects were spoken.
[29] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).
[30] Leonard Willems, "Over twee antivlaamsche brieven toegeschreven aan Minister Rogier," *Verslagen en mededelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* Second Half-Year (1902): 53–90, claims that the earliest known references to this letter date from 1866. Jan Erk, a Turkish-Dutch political scientist, cites the supposed letter uncritically in "Le Québec entre la Flandre et la Wallonie: Une comparaison des nationalismes sous-étatiques belges et du nationalisme québécois," *Recherches sociographiques* 43, no. 3 (2002): 501; Hendrik Vuye, a Flemish academic writing on behalf of the Flemish regional government, uses it as an example of early Francophone intransigence in *Language and Territoriality in Flanders in a Historical and International Context* (Wemmel: Vlaamse Overheid, 2010), 15.

A Nascent Flemish Movement Challenges the Hegemony of French

The Flemish Movement emerged in the young Belgian state as a cultural movement focused on the promotion of Flemish language and literature. Lode Wils, a prominent historian of the movement, has argued that it was in its origins and in its first manifestations, a *Belgian* movement. Emphasizing the Flemish language was *not* necessarily a sign of pro-Dutch sympathies, but rather part of an effort to "make Belgium more Belgian" by concentrating on one of the key factors that differentiated Belgium from France. Indeed, Wils notes, early partisans of the Flemish Movement protested Belgium's retrocession of land to the Netherlands in the 1839 Treaty of London.[31] For many of the early Flemish Movement, it was not even evident that the language the Flemings spoke was "Dutch" (or that Dutch should be the reference language for the different Flemish dialects); it was not until 1864 that a Royal Decree declared that the spelling of "Flemish" in official documents would follow the rules used in the Netherlands for standard Dutch.[32]

From its beginnings as a cultural and literary movement of writers and intellectuals, the Flemish Movement grew to encompass political demands, calling for the use of "Flemish" in administrative services, judicial proceedings, and education.[33] At first this was a call for justice for the Flemish masses who did not know French; an attempt to ensure that they could interact with the apparatus of the state despite not knowing the language of the privileged, political class. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Flemish Movement's demands expanded. We may consider the growth of a *Flemish* petty bourgeoisie as a driver of this movement, as upwardly-mobile

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[31] Lode Wils, *Histoire des nations belges: Belgique, Wallonie, Flandre: Quinze siècles de passé commun*, trans. Chantal Kesteloot, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 2005), 176–180. See also Éliane Gubin, *Bruxelles au XIXe siècle: Berceau d'un flamingantisme démocratique, 1840-1873* (Brussels: Crédit communal de Belgique, 1979).

[32] Lode Wils, *Waarom Vlaanderen Nederlands spreekt* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2001).

[33] In this, the Flemish Movement demonstrated the transition from "Phase A" to "Phase B" in Miroslav Hroch's schema for the development of "national revivals" among smaller ethnolinguistic groups in Europe, whereby such movements have three "phases": "Phase A (the period of scholarly interest), Phase B (the period of patriotic agitation) and Phase C (the period of a mass national movement)." Hroch claims that the Flemish Movement never quite reached Phase C before 1914, as there was no real call for a separate Flemish "nation." While this is true, Hroch's interpretation is rather teleological, seeing the "nation" as the logical endpoint of ethnolinguistic activism. Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 23, 107–116.

individuals who did not know French found their mobility blocked because they lacked access to the prestige language.[34]

The Flemish Movement now envisioned a Flanders where upwardly mobile individuals could pursue careers in the public and private sector without necessarily having to know French. This reflected a more general "democratization" of Belgium – indeed, of Europe overall. As social movements and calls for universal suffrage challenged the upper classes' hold on the reins of economic and political power, so did the Flemish Movement call for the "emancipation" of the majority of Flemings who did not know the language of the elites. The expansion of state power in service of its enlarged social duties also increased the amount of contact that the average citizen had with the state, putting further pressure on the state to speak the language of the average citizen – which, in Flanders, was overwhelmingly Flemish. All of these developments presupposed a new educational and legal apparatus to support the creation of "Flemish" public life in Flanders.[35]

I want to address a misconception about the prewar Flemish Movement. Though some French-speakers – in all areas of Belgium – feared that the Flemish Movement wanted to "eradicate" French from Flanders, this was not true of the overwhelming majority of the prewar Flemish Movement. Many in the movement framed their program as one which allowed for social mobility at all levels of society to be possible in Flemish/Dutch, without necessarily precluding the ability to climb the social ladder in French. Even those who wanted to restrict the use of French as a *medium* of instruction in Flemish schools still supported the teaching of French as a *subject.* Alfons Sevens, a Flemish writer (and former schoolteacher) argued that while French should lose its place as language of instruction, it should be the first "foreign" language taught to Flemish schoolchildren. Using a familial metaphor, Sevens claims that as all households have a mother, so too should all individuals

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[34] The classic study of the connection between economic development and the creation of "national" identities is Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).
[35] Luc Boeva, *"Pour les flamands la même chose": Hoe de taalgrens ook een sociale grens was* (Ghent: Provinciebestuur Oost-Vlaanderen, 1994).

have a mother tongue. Those households which are large and complicated can hire a maid, much as a person might learn new languages if their career required them too. However, it would be a mistake to try to *replace* the "mother" (Flemish) with the "maid" (French) in both cases.[36] Critiques like those of Sevens thus denied the "historic bilingualism" thesis put forward by many Francophones of Flanders in defense of the "rights" of French in Flanders.

The Flemish Movement's proposed solutions to the "Flemish Question" often called on the state to "restore" the proper relationship between the languages spoken in Belgium. Public education policy, hiring practices for public administration and for judicial bodies, and military regulations, among others, were seen as legitimate objects of legislative action on the part of the Flemish Movement. These proposals for state intervention, however mild, met with resistance from an elite and a political culture that had been steeped in the idea of "liberty" as an organizing principle. We now turn to examine the different ways in which Belgians conceptualized "liberty" in the *Belle Époque*, how Francophones used "liberty" as an argument against the Flemish Movement's agenda, and how the Flemish Movement responded to such arguments.

Changing Conceptions of Liberty in *Belle Époque* Belgium: Work, Church, Language

From the Belgian Revolution of 1830 until at least the 1880s, the major cleavage in Belgian politics was between the Catholic Party and the anti-clerical Liberals. While these factions clashed, often with great rhetorical violence, over the role of the Church in society, both parties inherited a "tradition of intense localism and anti-statism" from the Belgian past. The history of local autonomy and distrust of central authority, often seen as an overbearing outside influence, made themselves felt during the French occupation of 1795-1814 and the "reunion" with the Netherlands in 1814-1830. These values dovetailed nicely with the ideals of free trade and *laissez-faire* in economic matters

[36] Alfons Sevens, *Fransch, de voertaal? NEEN! Fransch, een vreemde taal? de eerste vreemde taal? JA!* (Ostend: Dhont & Co., [after 1907]), 11–13. CEGESOMA BB B 4/70.

to which both Catholics and Liberals subscribed.[37] Appeals to "ancient Belgian freedoms" also supported early Belgian patriotism, and allowed Belgian politicians to ground the rhetoric of "liberty" in an ideology different from the *revolutionary* "liberty" of the French tradition.[38]

These shared beliefs in economic liberty and a relatively weak state faced a great challenge in the three decades before World War I. Belgium had been the first country on the European continent to industrialize, and experienced the same labor and social unrest that would affect other parts of the West. In 1886, the same year that the deadly Haymarket incident in Chicago brought labor radicalism to the fore of American politics, massive strikes in the industrial centers of Wallonia were put down with deadly force.[39] The previous year had seen the founding of the Belgian Workers' Party (BWP), heralding the entry of socialism as an electoral force into Belgian politics. These members of the working class and their political organizations called into question the prevailing attitude of "liberty" which permeated much of the Belgian ruling class, both among the doctrinaire Liberals and the conservative Catholic party, regarding the state's (lack of a) role in relations between employers and the employed.[40]

In addition to the left-wing activity of the Belgian Workers' Party, the end of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of "Christian Democracy" in Belgium, especially Flanders. Drawing from the social doctrines embodied in the 1891 Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and represented by the Catholic priest Adolf Daens, the Christian Democrats, while opposed to the "Godless" Marxism of the BWP, also contested the primacy of the conservative, Francophone Catholic establishment in Flanders. Indeed, Father Daens made a name for himself by agitating for better working conditions

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[37] Carl Strikwerda, *A House Divided: Catholics, Socialists, and Flemish Nationalists in Nineteenth-Century Belgium* (Lanham, MD *et al.*: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 27–33.

[38] Lode Wils, "Het beroep op 'de oude Belgische vrijheden' in het midden van de 19de eeuw," *Standen en Landen* 32 (1964): 115–122. See also Janet Polasky, "Liberal Nationalism and Modern Regional Identity: Revolutionary Belgium, 1786-1830," in *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, ed. Iván Zoltán Dénes (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 75–88.

[39] Marinette Bruwier *et al.*, eds., *1886: La Wallonie née de la grève?* (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1990).

[40] Jo Deferme, *Uit de ketens van de vrijheid: Het debat over de sociale politiek in België, 1886-1914* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2007).

for the textile workers in the Flemish city of Aalst, coming in to conflict with Charles Woeste, the francophone Catholic leader who represented the city in parliament. Daens, like many in the Flemish Movement at the time, linked the problems of the working classes in Flanders to the disadvantages they faced in a society in which access to social and political power was predicated on a knowledge of French.[41]

Indeed, the social question and the language question were intimately linked in Belgian society. Both phenomena involved relations of power between groups on unequal footing: the rural nobility and urban factory owners vis-à-vis manual laborers in the one case, and speakers of the high-prestige world language French vis-à-vis speakers of the low-status Flemish/Dutch "dialects" in the other. These cleavages often overlapped, the ownership class being French-speaking while the working class was "*patoisant*."[42] In both the economic and linguistic spheres, the ruling classes often used the discourse of "liberty." As the worker was free to negotiate the terms of his contract with an employer without the intervention of the state, so too were Belgian citizens free to use the language(s) of their choice, as specified in Article 23 of the Constitution.

The discourse of liberty had also been brought to bear in the intense debates between Liberals and Catholics regarding confessional schooling, reaching a high point in the "school war" of 1879-1884.[43] While the Liberals wanted the state to maintain a network of lay schools, the Catholics felt that doing so would unfairly put Catholic schools at a disadvantage. The Catholics argued that it was part of the "freedom of the head of the household" to choose a lay or religious school for his children (at this time period, only the *father's* freedom was taken into consideration, as reflected in

[41] Frans-Jos Verdoodt, "Daensistische beweging," *NEVB*.
[42] In Wallonia, there were a substantial number of Flemish migrants who came to work in the coal and steel industry and who also formed a linguistically-distinct subclass. As we shall see, fear of this minority "implanting" itself in Wallonia came to convince some Walloons to abandon the fight for the French linguistic minority in Flanders, in order to seek reciprocity from the Flemish Movement.
[43] Vernon Mallinson, *Power and Politics in Belgian Education, 1815 to 1961* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 85–98; Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards*, 3rd ed. (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers, 2009), 89–92.

the original French terminology, "*liberté du père de famille*"). Soon, the term "freedom of the head of household" was adopted by proponents of French-schooling in Flanders, both Liberals and Catholics.[44] As a man could choose lay or a religious education for his children, so too should be able to choose French- or Dutch-language schooling for them, if he judged it to be in their best interest. This transposition of the concept of a father's right to choose schools for his children from the religious to the linguistic realm did not go uncontested. Flemish parliamentarian Hendrik Borginon claimed that "The head of the household has learned religion, but not pedagogy, he is licensed as a Christian, he does not have a teacher's diploma."[45]

Many in the Flemish Movement thought that the Francophones' conception of "liberty" in regard to language rang hollow. They cited the French priest Lacordaire: "Between the strong and the weak, between the rich and the poor, between the master and the servant, it is liberty that oppresses and the law that liberates."[46] This sentiment had concrete consequences for the Flemings' legislative agenda. As political scientist J. A. Laponce argues in his study on language and territoriality, when two languages coexist in a given space, "the dominant language preaches liberty and equality; the subordinate language talks of borders, security, exclusivity, privileges."[47] The speakers of the dominant language, in other words, see freedom and lack of restraint as not only harmless but actually helpful in securing and even spreading the influence of their tongue. For speakers of the subordinate language, however, only rigidly-enforced rules can save their idiom from being overwhelmed by societal pressure to adopt the dominant tongue.

While it is true that the Belgian state was for a very long time *de facto* French-speaking, a state of affairs grounded in large part by appeal to "liberty," it also did not seek to actively suppress

[44] Interview with Lode Wils, Leuven, 27 June 2011.

[45] Borginon in the Chamber of Representatives, 21 January 1914, cited in Harry Van Velthoven, *De Vlaamse kwestie 1830-1914: Macht en onmacht van de vlaamsgezindheden* (Kortrijk-Heule: UGA, 1982), 329.

[46] Maurits de Vroede, *The Flemish Movement in Belgium*, trans. W. Sanders (Antwerp: Kultuurraad voor Vlaanderen, 1975), 32.

[47] J. A. Laponce, *Languages and Their Territories*, trans. Anthony Martin-Sperry (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 41.

Flemish – again, in large part because of the heritage of "liberty." Indeed, François Perin, a Walloon lawyer, politician, and amateur historian who promoted Wallonia's annexation to France, argued that the Belgian revolutionaries of 1830, in choosing not to establish obligatory schooling, had erred. Because schooling would have supposedly "Frenchif[ied] *patois*-speaking Flemings, like the French Republic had Frenchified Dunkirk [in French Flanders]," the "Belgian gamble" had been "lost."[48] Perin, of course, is arguing from a distinctly "French" (as in the French state) ideal of a monolingual, monocultural state. It is questionable whether or not compulsory schooling could have truly "Frenchified" all of Flanders – it is quite likely that most primary schools in Flanders would still have taught in Dutch. The point remains, though, that Belgium's commitment to liberty, which allowed for the use of French in Flanders to conform to the wishes of a small but influential population, paradoxically prevented the massive, state-sponsored spread of French among the population at large.

Partly as a result of the strikes of 1886 and the increased labor militancy which followed, the Belgian government agreed to one of the major demands of the workers' movement, universal suffrage for men aged 25 and older, with a caveat: In order to "temper" the influence of the "masses," voters with additional qualifications such as owning a large amount of real estate, paying a certain amount of taxes, or holding a diploma from an institute of higher education were allowed up to two additional votes. In both the struggles for universal manhood suffrage and the obstacles set up by its opponents, Belgium was not unique; labor leaders and other sympathetic political figures across Europe worked toward universal (male) voting rights and more conservative interests tried to block such rights outright or water them down by creating a tiered system of suffrage (or representation).

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[48] François Perin, *La Belgique au défi: Flamands et Wallons à la recherche d'un état* (Huy: Presses de l'Imprimerie coopérative, 1963), 89.

In Belgium, though, the suffrage question had profound consequences for the language question. Before 1893, so-called "official Belgium," composed only of those whose financial situation made them eligible to be electors, and the even smaller group of those who were eligible to run for office, was almost completely French-speaking, even in Flanders. Those with the means to be part of the electorate would almost certainly have had an education in French. Until the introduction of universal manhood suffrage, then, while those Flemings who qualified to run for office or to vote could argue about the need for Flemish in public life, they would be able to partake in the political life of the country in French with little to no difficulty.

With the advent of universal manhood suffrage, though, even in its watered-down form, candidates for office had to contend with a much larger electorate which, in Flanders, more often than not spoke little to no French. Political parties would now have to offer programs that would interest Flemish electors, and do so *in Flemish*.[49] Several scholars, including Herman Van Goethem, have pinpointed this change as a "critical juncture" in the development of the Flemish Movement and the evolution of Belgian society. Van Goethem argues that the addition of a mass of Flemish voters ultimately meant that the unitary Belgian state that emerged from the Revolution of 1830 would be impossible to maintain.[50]

On a final note, the classical liberal ideal of a small state informed (or was abused by, depending on one's point of view) critics of language legislation in another, more roundabout manner. Francophones pilloried language laws for the translation and interpretation costs they would incur. They portrayed the "*flamingants*" as mere job-hunters, anxious to create "redundant" Flemish-speaking positions in the civil service and to provide employment for armies of translators for Flemish government documents that "no one" would read. The perception of careers in civil

[49] Els Witte and Harry Van Velthoven, *Languages in Contact and in Conflict: The Belgian Case* (Kapellen: Uitgeverij Pelckmans, 2011), 73–78.
[50] Herman Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, trans. Ian Connerty (Brussels: Academic and Scientific Publishers / University Press Antwerp, 2010), 15–16.

service and even of transparency of government as the domain of a privileged elite – one that was Francophone or at least *knew* French – is apparent in these dismissals of the Flemish Movement's concerns, and goes along with a concern for profligate spending. It should not be a surprise that Francophone organizations like the Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française (on which more below) often used "*budgétivore* [budget-eater]" as a term of abuse for the "*flamingants*."[51] What kind of legislation did proponents of French argue would make such a fearful dent in the budget, along with other damaging effects?

Linguistic Legislation before World War I

Several important laws (re)introduced Flemish into public life in Flanders in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Some French-speakers had interpreted Article 23 of the Constitution, which stipulated that the use of languages in Belgium was a matter of choice, to mean that state employees could choose which language to use in their dealings with public and with other branches of the administration. Proponents of language legislation countered that "in a free country, bureaucrats are made for citizens" and not vice-versa. It was thus not onerous to require public servants to speak the same language as the majority of the citizens whom they served.[52]

Perhaps the most glaring example of linguistic injustice in the early Kingdom of Belgium was the use of French in court cases where one or more parties did not know the language. In 1860, two Flemish workers employed in Wallonia, Jan Coucke and Pieter Goethals, were charged with and found guilty of the robbery and murder of a local woman, and executed. The press reported that neither man spoke French well, if at all, while the interpreters provided by the court did not speak

[51] "Appétits flamingants," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 28 (March 1903): 52; "S. N.," "À propos des nouvelles exigences du flamingantisme," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 37 (February 1904): 33; Maurice de Smet de Naeyer, speech at General Assembly of *AFVLF* of 11 December 1904, reproduced in *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 45 (December 1904): 240. See also "Régime flamand," *L'Antiflamingant: Organe de la Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française*, 15 April 1911, 7; "Curtio [pseud.]," "Le Flamingant," *L'Antiflamingant*, 15 April 1911, 8–9.
[52] Jan Clement, *Taalvrijheid, bestuurstaal en minderheidsrechten: Het Belgisch model: Een constitutionele zoektocht naar de oorsprong van het territorialiteitsbeginsel en de minderheidsrechten in de bestuurstaalwetgeving* (Antwerp *et al.*: Intersentia, 2003), 171–172 .

Dutch well. In the following year, a suspect in a different crime alleged that (French-speaking) members of his gang, not Coucke and Goethals, had committed the murder, casting doubt on the men's trial. Research undertaken in the twentieth and twentty-first century has shown that Coucke and Goethals probably spoke more French than had been widely believed, that one of the interpreters may have been Dutch, and that the testimony that supposedly exculpated the two was riddled with inconsistencies. Still, in the 1800s and well into the 1900s, many Flemish nationalists thought the two suspects had been unfairly tried, or even innocent, and "Coucke and Goethals" became a byword for many Flemings for a Belgian state that disregarded their rights to deal with their government in their own language.[53]

The case of Coucke and Goethals galvanized Flemish attempts to reform the use of languages in the judiciary. Yet while their trial took place in the Walloon city of Mons, where the predominance of French could be expected, if not excused, there were myriad cases involving lesser infractions, tried *in Flanders*, where the use of French posed a significant barrier to litigants' and defendants' comprehension.[54] In response to such infamies, the first piece of linguistic legislation as allowed by the Constitution, the law of 17 August 1873 regarding the use of languages in judicial affairs, mandated that trials in the "Flemish" part of the country were to take place in Flemish unless the accused specifically asked for French.[55] Even this relatively common-sense law elicited protest from French-speakers. Jules Bara, a prominent Walloon liberal, argued during the debate on the bill that "we [Walloons] are *de facto* excluded from all judiciary positions in Flanders."[56]

Alexis Schwarzenbach, in his book on the cultural and political aspects of stamps, coins, and banknotes in the multilingual states of Switzerland and Belgium, notes that in the latter country most

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[53] Gaston Durnez, "Coucke, Jan en Goethals, Pieter," *NEVB*; Lieselot Van Herreweghe, "Coucke en Goethals: Ware martelaars van de Vlaamse zaak?" (Master's thesis, Universiteit Gent, 2010).
[54] Rik Van Cauwelaert, *"Ils nous ont pris la Flandre": Waals socialisme en Belgische illusies. Van Jules Destrée tot Elio Di Rupo.* (Kapellen: Uitgeverij Pelckmans, 2012), 39–40 .
[55] Pierre Maroy, "L'évolution de la législation linguistique belge," *Revue de droit public et de la science politique en France et à l'étranger* 82, no. 3 (1966): 457.
[56] Bara in the Chamber of Representatives, 12 July 1873, cited in Clement, 167–168.

of these publically-issued "bearers of value" were exclusively French until the last years of the nineteenth century, when coins (1886), banknotes (1888), and stamps (1893) with bilingual inscriptions appeared, thereby changing the linguistic physiognomy of Belgium. Still, Flemish was less prominent than French on most of these objects, and there were numerous complaints about misspelling of Flemish terms. Nevertheless, Schwarzenbach argues that these changes show that near the end of the nineteenth century, "Belgium was no longer considered to be a predominantly French-speaking country with a traditionalist Flemish minority; however, Belgium was not yet perceived to be a bilingual country with two *equal* national languages."[57] This would soon change, in theory if not in practice.

In 1898, the Belgian Parliament passed the so-called "Law of Equality," which declared that Flemish (Dutch) was an official language of the kingdom on the same standing as French, and which mandated that both the Flemish and French texts of the laws be considered legally binding – until then, only the French text had been official, and the Flemish text had only been considered a translation provided for convenience's sake. This legislation represented a significant symbolic victory for the Flemish Movement, even if they often found the application of the law to be lacking, but many partisans of French felt it to be an affront.[58] Belgium now presented itself as a country with two languages, not just a French "language" which served as a link between speakers of various "dialects." Maurice Wilmotte, a Walloon literary historian and friend of French in Flanders, was shocked that the partisans of the Flemish Movement had claimed for "various kinds of gibberish [*divers charabias* – that is, Flemish dialects] the dignity of a common tongue and the same prerogatives as for French, rich in a literary past and literary present."[59]

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[57] Alexis Schwarzenbach, *Portraits of the Nation: Stamps, Coins and Banknotes in Belgium and Switzerland 1880-1945* (Bern *et al.*: Peter Lang, 1999), 73-74. Emphasis added.
[58] See Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).
[59] Maurice Wilmotte, *La culture française en Belgique* (Paris: H. Champion, 1912), 105.

In regards to education, while every Flemish commune had a Flemish-language primary school; secondary education, both official and private (the latter almost always being Catholic), was in French until the law of 15 June 1883 required that state secondary schools in Flanders teach partly in French and partly in Flemish. The Flemish Movement then pushed to apply the same regulations to private schools, a goal achieved in 1910.

While the law of 1883 upset many French-speakers, the campaign to apply its tenets to private education rankled them far more. One Jesuit educator from Flanders, Jules Verest, while agreeing that private schools in Flanders ought to teach Flemish (though not necessarily *in* Flemish), denied the state the right to *mandate* private schools to do so. This would be the end of the "liberty of education," a right which the Belgians had won along with their independence from the Netherlands.[60] Verest, as a Catholic clergyman, was deeply opposed to *any* state intervention in education, likely remembering the "school war" of 1879-1884.[61] Maurice Wilmotte fulminated against the Flemish Movement's supposed intrusion on the prerogatives of private schools: "The *flamingant* ogre began to demand more and more. Why should private education escape from the obligations of state education?"[62]

Opponents of extending language regulations to private schools could argue that it was unconstitutional. Article 17, the relevant provision in the 1831 Constitution, only specified that "Education is free; all preventative measures are forbidden… Public instruction given at the expense of the State is… regulated by law," thereby leaving the right of the state to regulate *private* teaching in question. The other reason for the Francophones' specific resistance to regulation of private schooling is that the Francophones of Flanders – again, drawn from the upper ranks of Flemish society – were more likely to have sent their children to private schools anyway. Those who had sent

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[60] J[ules] Verest, *Vers la suppression de la liberté d'enseignement* (Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1907).
[61] Jozef Jageneau and Marie Gevers, "Verest, Jules," *NEVB*.
[62] Wilmotte, *La culture française en Belgique*, 105.

them to public school previously were more than likely able to pay for a private education in French after the law of 1883.

University education in Belgium was completely in French before World War I, with the exceptions of a few classes aimed at lawyers who would practice in Flanders and for teachers for Flemish secondary schools, and of some courses in Flemish literature. I will return to the university question in more detail below when I examine the debate over the language(s) of instruction at the University of Ghent.

One last law which would affect the language question was that of 19 May 1914, which made primary schooling compulsory throughout Belgium. The relatively late introduction of mandatory education, in comparison to other Western European states, was another legacy of the power of liberalism among the Belgian political class. As fate would have it, World War I would intervene before the law was put into practice. It is interesting to speculate how the relationship between languages in Flanders (and in Belgium as a whole) would have evolved in a peaceable Belgium. Compulsory education promised to spread fluency in standardized "Flemish" (Dutch), bridging the gap between dialects that many proponents of the Flemish Movement bemoaned as an impediment to wider acceptance of Flemish as an administrative language. Might Flanders have moved toward a society in which Flemish/Dutch was the language of administration and business, yet where the French-speaking minority enjoyed wide-ranging rights? The experience of World War I, as we will see in the next two chapters, would infuse the language question with deeply divisive emotional resonance, making such a development unlikely. Returning to the prewar era, we now look at *why* the French-speakers in Flanders criticized many of the attempts to legislate language use in Flanders.

Explaining the Resistance of the French-Speakers

Francophones' reticence to use Flemish in public life, and resistance to laws that introduced or expanded the role of Flemish in administration and education, irked the Flemish Movement. Many of the "French-speakers" of Flanders knew some Flemish, though not usually standard Dutch; in some cases these individuals came from *patoisant* backgrounds and used French mostly in public. French poet Charles Baudelaire, who spent several years in Belgium in the 1860s, wrote in his unpublished *Pauvre Belgique* (Poor Belgium) somewhat disparagingly about the "Frenchified" upper classes: "People do not know French, *no one* knows it, but everyone *affects* not knowing Flemish. It's in very good taste. The proof that they know it very well, is that they *chew out* [*engueulent*] their servants in Flemish."[63] Indeed, they often admitted that they spoke enough of the local *patois* to communicate with the lower classes, and thus the call for standard Dutch in government offices was superfluous at best, or even the imposition of a "foreign," academic tongue which was poorly understood by the average person. The Flemish Movement, though, saw the refusal of the Francophones to adjust to the use of standard Dutch as a form of bullheadedness or snobbery. Some Francophones of Flanders, reflecting on their situation, seemed to agree with that assessment.

Suzanne Lilar, born in 1901 to a middle-class family in Ghent, notes in her memoirs that in many bourgeois circles in her hometown, speaking French was not "merely" an act of using a different mother tongue. The upper bourgeoisie "did not content itself with speaking French, it affected to not know Dutch, [a language] of which they only retained a few locutions and commands for the domestics." Upwardly mobile members of the petty bourgeoisie, meanwhile, "bought for their children the right to distinguish themselves from the people" by sending them to French-speaking private schools, some of which discouraged their students from doing the homework for

[63] Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres posthumes*, 4th ed. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1908), 271. Emphases in original.

their Dutch-language courses.[64] Journalist Charles d'Ydewalle, a member of a prominent West Flemish aristocratic (and thus Francophone) family, born the same year as Lilar (1901), uses terms even more stark than hers to describe the relationship between Flemish- and French-speakers. "The Flemings," he wrote, "all *patoisants*, were a bit of the Third World, with a Frenchified aristocracy."[65]

It would be a mistake, however, to see the Francophones' opposition to legislation in favor of Dutch as "mere" snobbery. They perceived the Flemish Movement as an attack on their favorable economic and social position; it is natural that they would push back against measures which they feared would diminish the relative value of their (and their forebears') "investment" in the French language. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" helps us understand this apprehension on the part of the Francophones of Flanders.

Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital, which is a material, "embodied," and transmissible product of accumulated labor, and "cultural capital," an immaterial product of the accumulation of education and acculturation. It represents an investment of time by the holder, as "like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan," the work needed to acquire such capital "cannot be done at second hand."[66] Bourdieu argues that "early domestic education" plays a key role in the accumulation of cultural capital, and in the case of the Francophones of Flanders, speaking French *at home* allows them a head start in acquiring the cultural capital which is fluency in the French language.[67]

Economic capital may suddenly lose its worth, to the chagrin of its holder who had invested time and labor into its creation. For example, a period of inflation could render economic capital in the form of a bank account much less powerful. Cultural capital can also suddenly decline in value.

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[64] Suzanne Lilar, *Une enfance gantoise* (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1998 [1976]), 39, 41, 44.
[65] Charles d'Ydewalle, *Confession d'un Flamand* (Brussels: Pierre de Méyère, 1967), 39.
[66] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 244.
[67] *Ibid.*

Making the connection to the Francophones of Flanders, a "devaluation" of French as a form of cultural capital – by making French comparatively less vital to the day-to-day operation of Flemish society, as the Flemish Movement desired – would essentially "wipe out" Francophones' "savings accounts" of accumulated cultural capital in the form of proficiency in French. At the risk of being reductionist, we may see the reaction of the Francophones of Flanders to the Flemish Movement and its projects as a fight to maintain the value of the "investment" in French language which they and their ancestors had made over the years.

This fear of losing the sunken costs of having learned French went hand in hand with a suspicion that the Flemish Movement, or at least its most extreme members, sought to create a new elite for Flanders. This new elite, the Francophones argued, would maintain its power in part by keeping the common people of Flanders ignorant of French. The *flamingants* wanted to become bigger fish by creating a smaller pond, a Dutch pool separated from the French ocean. The newsletter of the Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française (AFVLF), a group of Francophones of Flanders drawn from Ghent high society who sought to spread the knowledge of French among their fellow Flemings, mocked what they perceived to be the pretension of the Flemish Movement to erect a new ruling class.[68] The AFVLF agreed with the Flemish Movement that Flanders suffered because of the gap between the Francophone ruling class and the Dutch-speaking common people, stated one editorial. The answer to this problem, however, consisted of helping the population to acquire a good understanding of French, thereby giving them access to greater levels of culture and education. Indeed, claimed the AFVLF, "our populations have too much good sense to recognize as masters those who want to keep them in their sole knowledge of

[68] I discuss the AFVLF in greater detail below. See also Elizabeth Durnez, "L'Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française: Een verzetsbeweging tegen de vernederlandsing van de Rijksuniversiteit te Gent" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1974).

the Flemish language." The motivations of the "little *flamingant* clan" were "seizing all the [public] positions, all the powers, all the benefits."[69]

Some of the Flemish Movement's proposals did indeed call for the creation of a Dutch-speaking intellectual and business class, though perhaps with less venal motivations than those attributed to them by their French-speaking opponents; indeed, many of these writers would argue that they were inviting the French-speaking Flemings to "return" to their Flemish roots. Julius MacLeod, a botanist at the University of Ghent, called for the university to (gradually) transition to teaching in Dutch in order to bridge the "gap" between the Flemish population and "its" elite. A proponent of the "university extension" movement, MacLeod argued that university education in Dutch would create an educated class that could spread scientific knowledge to a mass of Flemings who did not have the time or means to learn foreign languages. MacLeod even contended that the emphasis on French was retarding the intellectual development of the "Gallicized Flemings" themselves: they have "become like the French themselves – they now find it very difficult to learn foreign languages; intellectually they are isolated from the rest of the world."[70]

Flemish economist Lodewijk De Raet, another proponent of the transformation of the University of Ghent, who in fact rejected MacLeod's gradualism, bluntly attacked the Flemish elite for their neglect: "If there is any Flemish culture at all to speak of, then it came into being *despite* the men of government and the ruling classes." The Flemish lower classes were at an economic and social disadvantage because of the interclass language barrier. De Raet proposed that a Dutch-language University of Ghent "will give the Dutch language the necessary authority to enable it to

[69] "Une nouvelle classe dirigeante," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 57 (February 1906): 41–42.

[70] Julius MacLeod, "Language and Knowledge" (1895), translated by Tanis Guest in Hermans, Vos, and Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement*, 172–177.

impose itself on the ruling classes. This will stem the tide of Frenchification, allow us to control our material development and to promote it in the Flemish land."[71]

Returning to Francophones' resistance to language legislation, we may also advance a less instrumentalist view, interpreting the Francophones' opposition to the Flemish Movement as evidence of concern for the well-being of their fellow Flemings. Groups like the AFVLF maintained that they worked in Flemings' best interests. Knowledge of French, claimed the AFVLF, was vital to Flemings' economic and social success, not only in Belgium but also – especially – internationally. The AFVLF instituted French courses for children and adults in Ghent, Antwerp, and other major cities, distributed Flemish-French phrasebooks to Flemish seasonal workers who sojourned in Wallonia and France, and contested legislation that restricted the amount of French in public schools.

Those who exulted the virtues of French often derided those of Dutch at the same time. While the Flemish *patois* had a charm that evoked memories of one's hometown and childhood, they were too primordial to serve all the needs of a modern society and too mutually unintelligible to bind Flemings together. Dutch – besides being the language of the hated King Willem – was also too different from Flemish *patois* to serve as a common tongue, and besides, even academic Dutch was of little use outside of the Netherlands. The Francophones of Flanders – at least before World War I – thus argued that the Flemings should relegate the Flemish *patois* to folkloric or sentimental use, and use French for official matters, just as their Walloon compatriots had done with their *patois*. For example, a petition of the Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française sent to all members of the Belgian legislature in late 1911 or early 1912 in favor of "freedom of language" states that "local dialects, spoken by a certain number of our compatriots (*be these dialects Flemish or Walloon*) constitute an insufficient instrument" for the promulgation of high science and culture.

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[71] Lodewijk De Raet, "The Flemish University and Flemish Life" (1907), translated by Jane Fenoulhet in in Hermans, Vos, and Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement*, 193–201. Emphases added.

"The Maeterlincks, the Verhaerens, the Rodenbachs" of Flanders had recognized that reality by writing in French.[72] This argument elided the fact that the gap between *Walloon* dialects and French is much smaller than that between *Flemish* dialects and French, making it easier for the speakers of the former to learn standard French. They also may have relied on an inflated sense of the dominance of "French" in Wallonia. Aristide Zolberg argues that it "was more politic to emphasize the similarity [between French and Walloon]; hence 'Walloons' were French speakers, if not yet, at least in the making."[73]

The opponents of language legislation in Flanders also appealed to patriotic sentiments, claiming that while French tied Flemings closer to their Walloon compatriots, the promotion of Flemish as a prerequisite for public employment in Flanders alienated them. The fact that French was the "native language" of almost half of the Belgian population as well as an international language of great utility undergirded Francophones' arguments for the maintenance of French-language rights in Flanders. A good knowledge of French, claimed the Francophones, would go a long way toward keeping the unity of the country intact.

I suspect that readers may have expected to see one seemingly simple reason for the Francophones' resistance to linguistic legislation: namely, that they wanted to protect their rights to use their mother tongue (in this case, French). While, as we will see below, this motivation was not absent from Francophone discourse before World War I, it did not play a prominent role in Francophones' arguments. There are several reasons for this.

For one thing, the Flemish Movement before 1914 had relatively little interest in banning French from public administration in Flanders. Under most of the proposed language legislation, Francophones in Flanders would still be able to receive public services in French. Requirements to

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[72] Petition of the Ligue nationale pour la défense de la language française signed by Fernand Pavard and Simon Sasseratt [*sic*: read "Sasserath"], reproduced as "Un Manifeste," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 117 (February 1912): 42. Emphasis added.
[73] Zolberg, "The Making of Flemings and Walloons," 192–193.

know Dutch would only apply to public employees and not the public in general; this restriction would affect Walloons much more than Francophones of Flanders, who often knew a local dialect.

There is another, perhaps more fundamental reason why the argument of protecting Francophones' rights to their "mother tongue" only made scattered appearances prior to 1914. Such a line of thought contradicted much of the theoretical underpinning of their opposition to the Flemish Movement. A considerable number of the "Francophones of Flanders" had not learned French at their mothers' breasts, but were rather native speakers of Flemish who used French regularly, even to the extent of speaking French instead of Flemish at home. Even those raised in French typically descended from ancestors who had made a similar transformation. Organizations like the AFVLF wanted Flemings to continue to have such a *choice*, using French if they pleased and sending their children to French-language schools if they thought that a more valuable form of education.

Any concern for protecting "native languages" could therefore be seen as backward or archaic. It was in fact the *Flemish Movement* whom the Francophones often "accused" of being too enamored with the mystique of the "native language," to the extent that the *flamingants* fetishized Flemish to the detriment of the much more useful French. (Indeed, opponents of the Flemish Movement mockingly called its proponents "*moedertaaliens*," playing on the Dutch word "*moedertaal* [mother tongue].") The Brussels economist Maurice Ansiaux, member of the Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française (on which more below), argued in 1912 that "those Flemings who speak French are truly the sons of modern thought, they use the foremost of the rights written into our Constitution, they demonstrate [*font acte de*] individual liberty. Nothing is more sacred than the right to betray the language or the faith of one's ancestors!" When speakers of less-common

languages learned a world language – even at the expense of their own – they were merely making a choice to join a modernizing world.[74]

The Specter of Bilingualism

The language legislation passed since 1873 was disquieting to many French-speakers in that it seemed to recognize, and even promote, "bilingualism" on the *national* level in Belgium, and in Wallonia as well. While "bilingualism" in Flanders was a cherished historical fact and a cornerstone of Belgian unity, "bilingualism" in Wallonia was at best a hassle, at worst an attempt to "denature" the Gallic culture of the Walloons.

For some French-speakers, Flanders was "bilingual" in that French served as the cultivated language, and various Flemish dialects – which they distinguished from standard Dutch as practiced in the Netherlands – the "popular" languages or "*patois*," were incapable or at the very least not suited to fill the role of a fully-fledged language for administration, education, commerce, and culture. This situation corresponds with what today might be called "diglossia," that is, the use of different languages in different social situations by the same individual.[75] For many French-speakers, the Flemish dialects in Flanders occupied – or ought to occupy – the same role in Flanders as the different Walloon dialects did in Wallonia; they could be the language of hearth and home, a vehicle for folklore, used to add local flavor to literature, but not in any way an official language. Only French could fill *that* position in Belgian society.

Émile Buisset, a Liberal MP from Charleroi in Wallonia, was a strident proponent of this view. In an article entitled "French: The Official Language of Belgium," he argued that French, as the language understood by all Walloons and all of the educated class of Flemings, was the only

[74] Maurice Ansiaux, *La Suprématie de la langue française en Belgique* (Brussels: Librairie française et internationale, 1912), 9–11.
[75] Charles Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15 (1959): 325–340.

language which could ever aspire to official status. In addition, the 1830 declaration of the Belgian Provisional of Government which made French the official language for all government decrees (with the possibility, though not the requirement, of translations) was *not* superseded by Article 23 of the Constitution; rather, Article 23, by reserving the ability for the state to regulate language use in matters of public administration, *strengthened* the intent of the Belgian Provisional Government to make French the sole "official" language for Belgium.[76] Buisset's argument is thus an example of one historian's claim that for many of the Francophone Belgian elite, "Article 23 had been written mainly as a reaction against [Dutch King] William I's attempts to require Belgian civil servants to learn Dutch, and was therefore a sort of historic contract to use French."[77]

While later in the twentieth century many Belgian Francophones would accuse the Flemish Movement of subscribing to a "blood and soil" nationalism in which the fact of being in Flemish territory necessitated the use of Dutch, before World War I almost the entire Flemish Movement supported bilingualism in Flanders, while many French-speakers, especially in Wallonia, saw Wallonia as a wholly monolingual region. Many of the early proponents of the Walloon Movement explicitly argued that Flanders should indeed be bilingual, or ideally that French, not standard Dutch, should serve as a common bond between speakers of different Flemish (and Walloon) dialects in Belgium. Wallonia had "always" been monolingual, or more exactly, there was no historical Dutch-speaking population in Wallonia which mirrored the Francophones of Flanders. Flemish migrants who came to work in the metal and mineral industry in Walloon cities such as Liège and Charleroi were dismissed as a temporary aberration which could be assimilated. The question of Flemings in Wallonia was also occasionally used to raise the specter of "islands" [*ilôts*] of

[76] Émile Buisset, "Le français, langue officielle de la Belgique," *Revue de Belgique* 45 (1913): 939–954.
[77] Arthur Edward Curtis, "New Perspectives on the History of the Language Problem in Belgium" (PhD dissertation, University of Oregon, 1971), 243–244.

Flemings who would be cut off from the local population, or even of Flemish "colonization" of Wallonia.[78]

Franz Foulon, a liberal personality most often known as a Walloon due to his career in local politics in the Walloon city of Ath, actually spent the first 25 years of his life in a French-speaking family in Dendermonde in East Flanders.[79] Shortly before World War I, he authored a tract on the "Question of Languages in Belgium" stating that the opposition between bilingual Flanders and monolingual Wallonia lay at the heart of the language problem. French had long possessed "citizenship [*droit de cité*]" in Flanders, and the Flemish who would "ban" it from Flanders were going against centuries of tradition. However, this did not mean that bilingualism should be extended to Wallonia. Indeed, Foulon argued that this latter proposition pleased "Frenchified" Flemings: It would help assure their dominance throughout Belgium, as they would be part of an elite caste which knew both "national" languages, but would offend both Flemish extremists and most Walloons, who were committed to the monolingualism of their respective regions. Foulon argued for French to remain a common language for all of Belgium, repeating the common argument that while it was in Flemings' own interest to learn French, Walloons drew no advantage from learning Dutch, which itself was different from the various Flemish "dialects."[80]

In a deeply suggestive move, the Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française, one of a number of organizations formed before World War I in order to protect the French language in Flanders, published a monolingual French train schedule for the Belgian railways as an alternative to the official bilingual edition published by the government. While the Ligue claimed not to begrudge Flemings the use of monolingual Flemish train schedules if they so desired, it also argued that such a

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[78] Maarten Van Ginderachter, *Le chant du coq: Nation et nationalisme en Wallonie depuis 1880* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2005), 44–51.
[79] Jean-Pierre Delhaye and Paul Delforge, *Franz Foulon: La tentation inopportune* ([Charleroi]: Institut Jules Destrée, 2008), 7.
[80] Franz Foulon, *La Question des langues en Belgique* (Brussels: Imprimerie Victor Feron, 1914), 5–16.

Flemish guide would have very few users, and that the publication of a bilingual guide was done under pressure from *flamingants* in order to mask the relatively weak readership solely Flemish documents would attract. While the bilingual train guide was inconvenient for French-speakers, among other reasons because "all the places in the Flemish part of the country are mentioned first in Flemish," the Ligue's guide was more compact and less expensive than its bilingual counterpart, and its success would be "the most obvious demonstration of the superficial character of the *flamingant* movement."[81]

Most of the laws which mandated the use of Dutch in certain circumstances had been passed by the homogeneous Catholic governments which had been in power in Belgium since 1884 (and would remain so until the outbreak of the First World War). The Catholic Party's majority rested in large part on support in Flemish districts. Many Liberals and Socialists from Wallonia and Brussels, frustrated both by their parties' impotence on the national level and the requirement to know Dutch for certain civil service positions, came to conflate "Flemish" with "Catholic" and spoke of "Flemish domination" of the government. While, on the one hand, this observation was correct – seven of the eight Catholic Heads of Cabinet (Prime Ministers) from 1884 to the beginning of the war were from Flanders – these Flemish politicians were for the most part French-speaking, or at the very least spoke French almost exclusively in the course of their political duties. These "French-speaking Flemings," however, did not think of themselves as a coherent group in the manner in which we will see during the interwar years. The nascent Walloon Movement would demonstrate concern for the place of "French culture" in Flanders – for the sake of Flemings who were "attached" to French as well as for Walloons to feel "at home" in Flanders – while at the same time attacking (some) French-speaking Flemings as "*flamingants*" for supporting a Flemish political

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[81] Mass-mailing of *Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française*, "Guide horaire des chemins de fer belges (Édition française)," [1910]. Documentation collection "Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française," AMVC.

program, one which was relatively moderate in comparison to that which later Flemish radicals would espouse.

The fears of a Catholic, *flamingant* domination of Belgium came to a head in the 1912 legislative elections. The Liberals and Socialists had formed an electoral cartel, hoping that by uniting all "anticlerical" voters they could achieve a majority. Instead, the Catholic Party gained several seats, especially in Flanders. In the aftermath of this stunning defeat, the Walloon Socialist MP Jules Destrée published an open "Letter to the King on the Separation of Wallonia and Flanders," in a liberal-oriented magazine, *La Revue de Belgique*. Much of the historiography on the language debate in Belgium has exaggerated the importance of this piece, likely because it seems to predict some of the changes in the structure of the Belgian state which would come about throughout the twentieth century, and because it has become a *lieu de mémoire* for the Walloon Movement. Destrée's letter should rather be seen as an expression of a historically-situated frustration which was shared mostly by other left-leaning, upwardly mobile elites in Wallonia. Still, the "Letter to the King" provides an interesting insight into the concerns which motivated the early Walloon Movement, which in many ways was more concerned with Flanders than with Wallonia *per se*.

Destrée's "Letter" is most well-known for his declaration to the king that "there are no Belgians."[82] He sets up a dichotomy between Catholic Flanders and free-thinking Wallonia, which in the unitary Belgian state has lead to the domination of the (numerically larger) former over the latter. Thus, the Walloons constitute a people ruled contrary to their interests. Destrée submits a list of things which have been taken from the Walloons by the Flemings. Among these are "our past," "our artists," "our public employment," "our money," "our security," and "our language." However, the first item on the list is not something to be found in Wallonia: "To start with, [the Flemings] have taken Flanders from us. Certainly, it was their possession. But it was also a little bit ours."

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[82] Jules Destrée, "Lettre au Roi sur la séparation de la Wallonie et de la Flandre," *Revue de Belgique*, 1912, 740.

Arguing with more than a touch of hyperbole, Destrée laments that Walloons who come to a large Flemish city are treated with increasing hostility and receive fewer and fewer services in French: "We now feel like foreigners in Flanders, at least as much as in the Hague or Amsterdam." (Destrée, who was adamantly opposed to any language facilities for Flemings in Wallonia, does not mention if Flemings in Charleroi and Liège felt like foreigners as if they were in Paris or Nice.) Destrée also shows some solicitude for the Francophones of Flanders: "The offense, the menace, the intimidation, the constraint are incessant. Flemings who want to keep contact with French civilization are looked down on and ridiculed. The crowning achievement of this enterprise, pursued with tireless tenacity, will be the extinction of the last home of French culture in Flanders, the University of Ghent."[83]

The solution Destrée offered for the ills of the Belgian state was "administrative separation:" that is, devolving numerous competencies of the central state to regional apparatuses in Wallonia and Flanders (and in some formulations, Brussels) so that each "region" could regulate its own affairs without undue "meddling" from the other. This was an idea which had found expression from time to time among various Walloon intellectuals and politicians concerned for the "linguistic integrity" (ie, monolingualism) of Wallonia, as well as the supposed neglect that a Flemish-dominated government demonstrated toward Wallonia.[84]

We should remember that these calls for administrative separation appealed to extremely few Belgians of any linguistic or political stripe before 1914.[85] Even those who did make such calls often did so more as a theoretical or rhetorical threat than as a concrete political program. The French-speakers of Flanders were especially unreceptive to the idea of administrative separation. On a

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[83] *Ibid*., 746–747.
[84] Paul Delforge, *Un siècle de projets fédéralistes Pour La Wallonie: 1905-2005* (Charleroi: Institut Jules Destrée, 2005).
[85] Alexander B. Murphy, *The Regional Dynamics of Language Differentiation in Belgium: A Study in Cultural-Political Geography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 101; J. Vandeplas, "De Vlaamse pers (1912-1914) en het federalisme," *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 25, no. 5 (1966): 329–44.

philosophical level, many French-speakers in Flanders considered themselves as providing a link between Flanders and Wallonia, thereby ensuring Belgian unity – a role that would become much less relevant in a Belgium comprised of two (or three) separate regions. More concretely, some Francophones of Flanders worried that a Flanders with a large amount of legislative leeway would encroach on their rights. A unitary Belgium was necessary to prevent *flamingant* domination of the Francophones of Flanders. Under administrative separation, argued one opponent, "French [would be] put on the same footing as German or English. French [would be] brutally uprooted, extirpated from Flander where, nevertheless, long centuries of usage had procured a rightful place for it!" How could Walloons – defenders of French culture – support such a solution? Walloon support for administrative separation would abandon "Flemings whose maternal or everyday language is French" to the tender mercies of the *flamingants*.[86] This last citation reflects a concern for French *qua* mother tongue of the Francophones of Flanders – a preoccupation that was embryonic during the prewar years, but which became predominant during the interwar years, and again in the 1960s. However, Walloon support for "administrative separation" – what would come to be called "federalism" after World War I, when the Germans and their collaborators gave the former term a negative connotation – did not really gain much traction in Wallonia until at least the 1930s, or even the 1960s; most Walloons still felt thoroughly "Belgian."[87]

There were, of course, many Belgians who saw bilingualism, either of the civil service or of the population more generally, as a viable and indeed patriotic solution to the "language problem" in Belgium. Some of the earliest Walloon political organizations, formed in the first half of the 1890s, investigated different methods of better learning Dutch so as to maintain Walloon civil servants'

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[86] F. Pavard, "La Séparation administrative et la défense de la langue française," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 111 (June 1911): 153–156. This piece was originally published in the subtly-titled periodical *L'Anti-flamingant*.
[87] Paul Delforge, "Fédéralisme et Mouvement Wallon," *EMW*.

competitiveness on a national level.[88] Around 1910, a Ligue pour la vulgarisation de la langue flamande en Wallonie – note the parallel to the name of the AFVLF – came into being. The stated goals of this group were "*rapprochement* between Walloons and Flemings and good understanding between them… the fraternization of Flemings living in Mons and its environs, [and] respect and promotion of the Flemish language." The prospectus containing the statutes of this group was prefaced with a famous, even hackneyed quote from the poet Antoine Clesse: "Flemings, Walloons, these are but given names / Belgian is our family name."[89]

Within Flanders, too, while many members of the Flemish Movement challenged the predominance and exclusive use of French in various situations in Flanders, very few called for the eradication of French in Flanders, despite the evocation of a "defrancization" by some French-speakers. Edward Anseele, Sr., a Flemish socialist who represented the Walloon city of Liège and later the Flemish city of Ghent in Parliament, was a member of the AFVLF, an organization which was often portrayed as the instrument of an "asocial" Francophone bourgeoisie by more radical *flamingants*. Anseele felt that learning French would help Flemish workers become more cultured and make them more attractive employees. He and some other Flemish socialists noted that in many other countries, the working class and the bourgeoisie spoke the same language, and that this alone did not guarantee a favorable position for the former.[90]

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[88] Corinne Godefroid, "Un premier 'exécutif' du Mouvement wallon: Le Comité permanent des Congrès wallons (1890-1893)," in *Studium et museum: Mélanges Édouard Remouchamps* (Liège: Éditions du Musée de la Vie Wallonne, 1996), 2:696, 699, 706.

[89] Pamphlet, "Statuts de la Ligue pour la vulgarisation de la langue flamande en Wallonie," [postmarked 20-21 November 1910], Documentation collection "Bond tot Verspreiding van de Vlaamse Tael [*sic*] in Waalsch België," AMVC. I have not been able to find any other mention of this organization, which was likely connected to Flemish migrant groups in Mons.

[90] Boeva, *"Pour les Flamands la même chose"*, 94–95.

Organizing the "French-Speakers of Flanders"

As I have stressed throughout this chapter, those in Flanders who spoke French, either as a mother tongue or as a matter of preference, typically did not see themselves as anything other than (Flemish) Belgians. As such, it would be fruitless to look for any kind of "Francophone of Flanders" Movement along the lines of the Flemish and Walloon Movements. There were however organizations whose membership was mostly composed of Francophones of Flanders, and which served as *de facto* social organizations for the Francophone communities in the northern half of Belgium.

Most of these organizations tended to have a rather narrow geographical basis, drawn from the elites of a given locality. This was the case of artistic clubs such as the Cercle royal artistique et littéraire in Ghent and Philotaxe in Antwerp, local chambers of commerce, Masonic lodges, and the like. Such groups were not expressly "Francophone of Flanders," but because they drew their membership from local elites, they tended to be Francophone in makeup. As the members of these organizations did not typically see themselves as a distinct group (at least not a group distinguished by language – socioeconomic status *was* relevant in these cases), the fact that they tended to be very local reflected the fact that their primary identification was based on where they lived, not as part of a "Francophone community" which extended across the whole of Flanders.

There were, though, some developments which can be seen as helping to foster a greater sense of community amongst the Francophones of Flanders. There had been Francophone newspapers and magazines in Flanders under the *Ancien Régime*, and especially since the Revolutionary and Napoleonic occupation. The late 1800s witnessed the founding of several important Francophone newspapers in Flanders. Besides the national French-language dailies published in Brussels, there were papers such as *Le Bien public* of Ghent (founded 1853) and *La Métropole* (founded 1894) of Antwerp for Catholics and *La Flandre libérale* of Ghent (founded 1874)

and *Le Matin* of Antwerp (founded 1894) for the Liberals, alongside smaller weekly or monthly publications in French in Flemish cities of varying sizes. In his now-canonical *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson called the reading of the same newspaper, contemporaneously, by private individuals within certain linguistic and geographical bounds, a "mass ceremony" through which they became members of a nation.[91] The existence of a press geared toward the French-speakers of Flanders may have reinforced a nascent awareness, not of belonging to an ethnic group *per se*, but of having a community of interests with other French-speakers across Flanders. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Flemings who could not read French – many of whom could also not read their own mother tongue – would be excluded from this community, by dint of not participating in the "mass ceremony" of reading one of these papers in the morning. This tentative, common experience could then lay the "groundwork" for a full-fledged ethnic identity to develop among the Francophones of Flanders; this (incomplete) development will be discussed in Chapters 3 through 5.

As a series of laws established a place for Dutch in Flanders – and thus seemed to present a danger to the primacy of French – a number of issue-specific pressure groups appeared in Flanders. Along with smaller groups like Ligue pour la liberté des langues, the Ligue nationale pour la défense de la langue française, and the Union pour la défense de la langue française à l'université de Gand, the most important was the Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française (AFVLF).[92] The statutes of the AFVLF specified that one needed to "be Flemish or reside in the Flemish part of Belgium" to be named a full member.[93] This stipulation reflected the importance of native Flemings in the promotion of French, and was likely an attempt to preemptively deflect

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[91] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 22–46, "mass ceremony" at 35.

[92] Elizabeth Durnez, "L'Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française: Een verzetsbeweging tegen de vernederlandsing van de Rijksuniversiteit te Gent" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1974).

[93] Brochure [1899?], 2. Documentation collection "Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française," AMVC.

criticism from the Flemish Movement that such an organization was a vehicle for Walloons to exercise dominance over Flanders. The members of the AFVLF, whom the Flemish Movement nicknamed "*vulgarisateurs*," were often drawn from the classes I have outlined as constituting "French-speakers of Flanders," aristocratic and bourgeois figures who typically spoke French at home as well as in public. However, the AFVLF actively sought the participation of native Flemish-speakers, like Edward Anseele, mentioned earlier, the presence of whom would highlight the AFVLF's argument that French was a useful tool for *all* Flemings.

The AFVLF was intimately connected to other upper-class, Francophone organizations in Flanders. The Administrative Committee of the AFVLF was originally housed in the offices of the Cercle royal artistique et littéraire in Ghent before moving to the building of the Cercle commercial et industriel in the same city.[94] The AFVLF carried out activities throughout Flanders designed to promote French. Among these were the organization of French courses for both children and adults, the creation and maintenance of French-language lending libraries, (co-)sponsoring speakers and other cultural functions in French, and the creation of a pocket French-Flemish dictionary, which was to be distributed to the many Flemings who worked as seasonal agricultural workers in Northern France.[95] As of 31 December 1911, the AFVLF had 1242 members and organized 37 French courses with 1323 students drawn entirely from the working-class population, "all this in the Flemish city of Ghent" (though whether this qualifier applies to the number of members, of students in French classes, or both is unclear).[96]

The AFVLF did not limit itself to simple educational activities; it also called for the maintenance of French in the Flemish public sphere. The AFVLF cited the 1883 law on public secondary education, which stipulated that such schooling in Flanders needed to take place at least

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[94] "Assemblée générale extraordinaire du 14 Mai 1899," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 2 (June 1899): [2].
[95] *L'Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française* (Ghent: V. Van Duusselaere, 1913), 26. KBR, R 761 B.
[96] P. Vermeersch, "L'Amendement Delbeke," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 137 (February 1914): 20.

in part in Flemish, as an impetus for the association's existence, bemoaning what they portrayed as a decline in both the proportion of Flemish students exposed to French as well as the quality of the French spoken by students graduating from public secondary schools in Flanders; the French classes offered by the AFVLF were intended in part to compensate for the poor knowledge of French among the Flemish populace.[97] The AFVLF supported revising the law of 1883 in relation to language use in schooling, and was vehemently opposed to the Flemish Movement's campaign to extend this linguistic requirement to private schools.[98]

The AFVLF did not sell its monthly newsletter in stores or offer a subscription separate from membership in the association; this policy led some Flemish newspapers to call the newsletter a "secret" publication, a denomination with which the AFVLF took exception.[99] The newsletter contained a mix of original content and republications of articles and speeches, provided either for informational purposes or because the editors of the newsletter agreed with their arguments.

As mentioned earlier, the AFVLF couched many of its arguments in favor of French in Flanders in terms of the economic and social utility of French for the Flemish masses. Nonetheless, in the pages of the AFVLF's newsletter, we see a preliminary, tentative identity forming among the Francophones of Flanders. There are a few precocious expressions of what I will call "minority rhetoric" – which I define as "asserting that one belongs to a group that is a linguistic, ethnic, or national minority, and using that status as a justification for certain political programs and policies"[100] While this minority identity did not gain purchase to the extent that it would in the decade and a half following World War I, a handful of pieces in the *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* argued for

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[97] *L'Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française*, *passim*.
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] "Bétisier flamingant," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 69 (April 1907): 123–124.
[100] David J. Hensley, "An Unlikely Minority? The Development and Use of 'Minority Rhetoric' among the Francophones of Flanders, 1918-1932," *Journal of Belgian History* 43, no. 4 (2013): 81. My understanding of the use of the term "minority" as a political maneuver is informed by Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the rights of the French language in Flanders for the sake of "those Flemings whose mother tongue is French," not just on the grounds of the usefulness of French.

This use of "mother tongue" arguments appears in a petition the AFVLF addressed to both houses of the Belgian legislature, urging legislators not to extend the provisions of the 1883 law on language in secondary education to private schools. While the law of 1883 "tended to give satisfaction to students whose mother tongue is Flemish," the AFVLF reminded the deputies and senators that "in Flanders, there are thousands of children whose mother tongue… is *French*." "These students," the petition continued, "have a right to the protection of the law just as much as those who have been raised in Flemish." In fact, the obligatory use of Flemish as the language of instruction threatened to make schooling "sterile" for Francophone children. "The *flamingants* ask to enjoy liberty," ended the petition, and "we ask that you respect ours as well, and keep us safe from an intolerable tyranny."[101] "We" and "ours" in this case, refer to the French-speakers of Flanders *as a group*, reflecting an incipient identity among the authors and signatories of the petition. The language of persecution, represented in the preceding quote in the reference to "intolerable tyranny," also appears in a speech that AFVLF Secretary-General Georges Van Montagu gave at the General Meeting of 15 December 1907, in which he claimed that "the grievances of which the *flamingants* previously complained have disappeared, and it must not come to be [*il ne faut pas*] that the oppressed of yesterday become the oppressors of tomorrow."[102]

The AFVLF also briefly published a small newspaper in Flemish, at first called *De Taalstrijd* (The Language Struggle, 1900) and later *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen* (The Language Question in Flanders, 1900-1901). These ephemeral publications demonstrate at least a token willingness to

[101] Reproduced in *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 75 (30 December 1907): 325–330. Emphasis in original.
[102] "La Réunion générale du 15 décembre 1907," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 75 (30 December 1907): 313.

engage with the Flemish masses, whose interests the *AFVLF* claimed to hold dear.[103] In their pages, the AFVLF argued that French was an economic and social necessity for Flanders, and that Flemings' actions in seeking out French-language education disproved the *flamingants*' claims that French-language education engendered backwardness among the Flemish masses. The paper advanced the counterclaim that it was the *flamingants* who wanted to keep the Flemish population "ignorant" of French in order to keep them more closely under their thumb.[104] Other articles imputed only slightly less nefarious motives to the *flamingants*, for example their supposed desire to create "fat and well-paying little jobs" for petty Flemish intellectuals.[105] *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen* reproduced a speech by the secretary of the AFVLF – part of which, the paper was quick to point out, was given in Flemish, "proof" that the *vulgarisateurs* were not hostile to that language – in which he compared the *flamingants* to the Boxers in China: both groups were marked by a "fear of all change and enmity toward everything that is foreign."[106]

De Taalkwestie also used another of the commonplaces of the Francophones of Flanders: a comparison between the "sensible" Dutch and the "fanatical" or "French-hating" *flamingants*. Though Francophones could vituperate against the Dutch as the historical oppressors of the French-speakers when necessary, they could also evoke them as examples of cool-headed reason. While the Dutch loved their mother tongue, they realized that it was "insufficient" for the task of participating in international scholarship and commerce, and prided themselves on knowing French, German, and English.[107]

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[103] Producing Dutch-language material in defense of French may seem paradoxical, but it echoes the experience of many linguistically-mixed areas. In the run-up to the plebiscite to determine the fate of Upper Silesia after World War I, for example, there was an explosion of German-language propaganda arguing for the region to join Poland, and Polish-language propaganda in favor of voting for Germany. See James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), Chapter 5.
[104] "Het werkvolk en de flaminganten in den provincieraad," *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen*, 13 November 1900, 2.
[105] "De Vlaamsche Akademie," *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen*, 13 November 1990, 2.
[106] "Bij de vulgarisateurs," *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen*, January-February 1901, 2–3.
[107] "Vlamingen en Hollanders tegenover de vreemde talen," *De Taalkwestie in Vlaanderen*, 13 November 1900, 2.

The claim that the inhabitants of the Netherlands were more tolerant of French and more realistic in their appreciation of its value than were the *flamingants* appears repeatedly in the writings of the AFVLF, and elsewhere in those of the defenders of French in general. If the Flemings' fellow Dutch-speakers could use French with no compunctions, why could not the Flemings themselves? This question presumed that situations in Flanders and in the Netherlands were equivalent. However, as Laponce argues, "a differentiation should be made between the bilingual who lives in a bicultural context and the bilingual who lives in a unilingual context. English-French bilingualism of an engineer in Paris does not have the same social importance as that of his or her equivalent in Montreal."[108] In the former case – of, say, a university professor or customs officer in Amsterdam – speaking French would simply provide another "tool" for doing one's job, and perhaps access to a greater variety of literature. In the latter case – let us take the example of a lawyer in Antwerp – speaking French would make it likely that this individual would spend significant amounts of time immersed in French-speaking professional and social environments, and could potentially "assimilate" to the French-speaking milieu. To be sure, many partisans of French in Flanders likely wished for such an outcome. In an era when Flemish identity was becoming more and more pronounced, however, the potential of a "second language [to be a] threat to self-identity" (to borrow Laponce's phrasing) gave the Flemish Movement pause.[109]

Last but not least, the Liberal Party, especially in municipal politics, was also strongly associated with the Francophones of Flanders. Indeed, given the ideological bases of the arguments in favor of French in Flanders, one of which was freedom from state constraint, it is unsurprising that many Francophones of Flanders would choose to support the Liberal Party. We may also look for a more economically determinist reason for this adherence, as the Francophones of Flanders

[108] Laponce, *Languages and Their Territories*, 44.
[109] *Ibid.*, 49–52.

often came from the business world, or had important business interests, and the Liberal Party's program was seen as especially "business-friendly."

We should not, however, exaggerate the connection between the Liberal Party and the Francophones of Flanders, especially in the period before World War I. Many French-speakers of Flanders from the conservative bourgeoisie and aristocracy supported the Catholic Party. In addition, the higher echelons of the Catholic clergy in Belgium, including Flanders, tended to be pro-French. Conversely, there were important supporters of the Flemish Movement among the ranks of the Liberal Party, such as Karel (Charles) Buls, mayor of Brussels (1881-1889), Jan van Rijswijck, mayor of Antwerp (1892-1906), Louis Franck, an MP from Antwerp who was one of the major proponents of a Flemish-language university in Ghent, and Paul Fredericq, a historian at the University of Ghent, among others.

In addition to these "autochthonous" Francophone groups, there were also associations in Flemish cities for the benefit of Walloon residents who had relocated to Flanders, typically in the course of their employment. Emblematic of these associations was the Ligue wallonne d'Anvers, commonly known as the Ruche wallonne (Walloon hive). These groups often published newsletters that featured Walloon dialect songs and poetry, as well as small news items about goings-on in Wallonia.[110] These groups of Walloon "expatriates" were not solely folkloric organizations; they also intervened in political debates: in 1884, for example, the Ruche wallonne agitated for a "Walloon" (French-language) section to be created in the city's public secondary school. Indeed, Lode Wils has gone so far as to say that these associations of Walloons in places such as Ghent and Antwerp were the original motor of the Walloon Movement, which he compares (with some hyperbole) to the

[110] Steve Heylen and Bart D'Hondt, "Emile Meunier (1866-)," *ODIS - Database Intermediary Structures Flanders*, 7 December 2007, http://www.odis.be/lnk/PS_452.

German nationalist associations who wanted to "protect" the "rights" of German civil servants in Prussian Poland.[111]

Early in the Walloon Movement's existence, a Flemish-minded pamphlet argued that "*fransquillons*" were a kind of "useful idiot," providing cover for Walloons who wanted to keep French-language jobs in Flanders. The participants of early Walloon Congresses considered the "*fransquillons*… their 'Flemish brothers,' worthy of sharing with them all the functions, all the jobs, all the advantages!" The author called on "*fransquillon* Flemings" to see that "in the hands of the *Walloneux* [*sic*] you are nothing but the vile instruments that they employ to lower your [own] race," and to "return" to the Flemings and help them "conquer our rights" in order to create a "strong, prosperous, and happy Belgium.[112] One of the methods by which the Flemish Movement hoped to conquer its rights was through the institution of Dutch-language university education in Flanders.

"A Crime against Civilization": The Debate around the University of Ghent

One of the most important demands of the Flemish Movement, which went unfulfilled until after World War One, was the creation of a Flemish- (Dutch-)language university. Flemish leaders such as the economist Lodewijk de Raet portrayed the lack of university education in the Flemings' native language as one reason for Flanders's relative backwardness compared to Wallonia.[113] Because Flemish students who wished to attend university in Belgium had to do so in French, they often had to "catch up" to students who had taken some or all of their pre-university schooling in French. Then, at the end of their university training, they were prepared for a career in a liberal profession, but – in the eyes of de Raet and other proponents of Flemish university education – they were bereft

[111] Wils, *Histoire des nations belges*, 206–207.
[112] D. Crauwers, *Le Mouvement Wallon en Belgique: Simples annotations sur le « Compte-rendu analytique des débats des Congrès Wallons: 2e Session: Namur, 25-26 Décembre 1891, 3e session: Liège, 20 Novembre 1892, 4e session: Mons, 1 Novembre 1893 »* (Leuven: Typ. Alphone Meulemans-De Preter, 1895), 4, 24. Documentation collection "Waalse Beweging," AMVC.
[113] Lodewijk de Raet, *De Vervlaamsching der Hoogeschool van Gent* (Brussels: De Vlaamsche Boekhandel, 1906).

of a proper Dutch vocabulary on, say, legal or medical matters. As such, they were less able to communicate *in a professional capacity* with the average, monolingual Flemings who ought to form the majority of their clientele.

Proponents of a Flemish university set their sights on transforming the University of Ghent – which, while located in Flanders, taught in French – into a Dutch-language university. For the Flemish leaders, Ghent was a logical choice because it already had the existing infrastructure to support a full range of university activities, and being a state university, its operation was subject to the Belgian legislature. Thus, concerted political action could conceivably change the language of instruction at Ghent, which would be much less likely at the private Catholic University in Leuven. Historian Harry Van Velthoven has argued that "the Dutchification of the University of Ghent meant the beginning of the end for *fransquillonisme* in Flanders… and that was well-understood in those ['*fransquillon*'] circles."[114]

The campaign for a Dutch-language university in Ghent mirrored the movement of the Czechs for a Czech-language university in Prague, which succeeded in splitting the Charles University into German- and Czech-speaking sections in 1882.[115] Many proponents of transformation of the University of Ghent pointed to the example of Prague and of other universities which taught in "smaller" European languages. One common, though dubious, argument claimed that the Flemish were one of only three peoples in Europe who did not have a university in their own language, alongside the Romanians in Hungary and Poles in Russia.[116]

Defenders of the French-language institution in Ghent also drew parallels to the Czech case, typically arguing that *if* a Flemish-language university were to be created in Belgium, the French-

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[114] Van Velthoven, *De Vlaamse kwestie 1830-1914*, 241–242.
[115] For example, Georges Margot, *Le flamand à l'université: Étude sociale sur le Mouvement flamand* (Leuven: Peeters, 1910), 50–58; *La question de l'Université flamande à l'Association Catholique de Bruxelles* (Brussels: F. Van Gompel, 1911), 7–8. Brochures "Gand français," FHMW.
[116] *Verslag van de Commissie verlast met het onderzoeken van de wenschelijkheid van het inrichten eener Nederlandsche Hoogeschool in Vlaamsch-België (XXIIIe Nederlandsch Taal- en Letterkundig Congres)* (Ghent: I. Vanderpoorten, [1896]), 4.

language university of Ghent should not be transformed or even paired with its Flemish equivalent in the same city. Had not Prague experienced waves of violence between the students attending the German and Czech universities?[117] J. Lhoneux, a Walloon teaching at a Ghent secondary school, denied the parallels between the cases of Ghent and Prague:

> One objects in vain [by referring to] Bohemia and Croatia. There, it is an entire people that wants to be taught in its own language, and that is its right.
> Here, an enlightened, numerous, and capable bourgeoisie raises its children in French. It has changed its language [over the course of centuries], under the influence of forces which are numerous and probably irresistible.[118]

Why should Ghent tempt fate by setting up the conditions for "national" quarrels between linguistic groups as happened in Prague? It would be better for the University of Ghent to remain wholly francophone, thereby avoiding an introduction of ethnic conflict into the city as well as supposedly safeguarding the economic livelihood of those who depended on the student population, which French-speakers predicted would decrease dramatically if the university were to be made "Flemish." After all, were not a large proportion of the students in Ghent Walloons or international students, who would not be as interested in, or even capable of, studying in Flemish instead of in an international medium of scholarship such as French?

The French-speakers of Flanders vigorously opposed any transformation of the University of Ghent. They took heart in the instructions of Cardinal Mercier to the Belgian bishops of 1906. Mercier chastised those who sought to change the Catholic University of Leuven into a partly or fully Dutch-language institution, claiming that they "had not reflected enough on the role of a university," especially as regards its international calling and its need for an international language of instruction. The Francophones of Flanders made these words their own, applying them to the University of Ghent.[119] The role of French as an international language formed an integral part of

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[117] For example Ansiaux, *La suprématie de la langue française en Belgique*, 17.
[118] "Enquête de 'Wallonia' sur la néerlandisation de l'Université de Gand et sur le mouvement flamingant," response of J. Lhoneux, *Wallonia* 19, nos. 3–4 (March–April 1911): 94–96.
[119] Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier en de Vlaamse beweging* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1975), 50ff.

the Francophones' defense of the *status quo* at the University of Ghent, and indeed, in the role of French in Flanders as a whole.

French in Flanders as an International Affair

In an oft-cited phrase from an essay of 1900, the Flemish writer and critic August Vermeylen argued that "to be something, we must be Flemings. — We want to be Flemings in order to become Europeans."[120] Vermeylen, a socialist with internationalist leanings, saw the *flamandisation* of Flanders – without, however, excluding French from every educated Fleming's upbringing – as necessary for Flemings' intellectual development and ability to participate in a wider, European culture. As such, he was an ardent proponent of the transformation of the University of Ghent into a fully Flemish institution; when this finally came to pass in 1930, he became its first rector.[121]

Much of the French-speaking class in Flanders, and in Belgium as whole, did not share Vermeylen's ideal. For them, the Flemings' best chance to "become Europeans" was to *increase* the role of French in Flanders. In this optic, French was *the* international language of culture and diplomacy, and to a lesser extent world trade, and Flemings had a precious opportunity to learn French like a second native language, situated as they were in the "historically bilingual" Flanders. The confluence of the French language's dominance in Flanders and its role as a world language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries allows us to place the story of French in Flanders into the global history of the French language.

Many studies of "Francophonie" and French linguistic identity outside of France concentrate on the period after World War II, and focus on (former) French colonies.[122] However, before World War I, France deliberately projected its power abroad through the promotion of

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120 August Vermeylen, "Vlaamsche en Europeesche Beweging (1900)," in *Eerste bundel van Aug. Vermeylen's verzamelde opstellen* (Bussum: C. A. J. van Dishoeck, 1904), 213.
121 Raymond Vervliet, "Vermeylen, August," *NEVB*.
122 David C. Gordon, *The French Language and National Identity (1930-1975)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978).

French culture and language.[123] Other peoples, such as the Czechs, used French as an international language in an attempt to avoid using another, more problematic international language, such as German.[124]

Though not to the extent that we will see after World War II, some French commentators feared a decline of the relative share of French-speakers internationally; this concern motivated their advocacy for French abroad. One French author claimed in 1907 that "if, during the majority of the 19th century, the French language gained ground outside of France, in recent years it is in decline [*régression*] in most of the countries where it is spoken."[125]

The Belgian Fernand-A. Van Aalst rejected theories of the decline of French worldwide and at the same time defended Belgium as an essentially "French" country. Belgium was "intellectually and morally" closer to France than even French Canada or Alsace-Lorraine. Belgians enjoyed the same literature and theater as the French, and even Maurice Maeterlinck was unknown to the Belgian "masses" as he was too Germanic. In the Flemish strongholds of Antwerp and Ghent, "the entire official world… practices French, Dutch does not predominate anywhere." Van Aalst goes through a brief tour of the world and claims that there are people who can speak or who want to speak French across the entire globe. And to do so, they come in great numbers "to Paris, to Lyon, to Brussels, to Ghent (to the *French* University of Ghent)."[126] In evoking the "*French* University of Ghent" — emphasis on "French" — as an institution which attracts students from China, Turkey, and Persia, Van Aalst ties together the question of the University, a matter of domestic politics, with the relative power of French civilization on the international stage.

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[123] Mathew Burrows, "'*Mission civilisatrice*': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914," *Historical Journal* 29, no. 1 (1986): 109–135; J. P. Daughton, "When Argentina Was 'French': Rethinking Cultural Politics and European Imperialism in Belle-Époque Buenos Aires," *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 831–864.
[124] Stéphane Reznikow, *Francophilie et identité tchèque, 1848-1914* (Paris: Champion, 2002).
[125] J. Dewachter, "Recul du français en Belgique à notre époque," in Société Dunkerquoise pour l'encouragement des sciences, des lettres et des arts, *Congrès des sciences historiques en juillet 1907 (Région du Nord et Belgique) à Dunkerque* (Dunkirk: Typographie-Lithographie Minet-Tresca, 1907), II: 127.
[126] Fernand-A. Van Aalst, "Le français hors de France," *La Belgique artistique & littéraire* 22 (1911): 169–175. Emphasis in original.

The Walloon literary historian Maurice Wilmotte took a leading role in the movement to connect the domestic and international aspects of the language question, as president of the Association internationale pour la culture et l'extension de la langue française. Before World War I, this Association held three conferences in Belgium, the first stemmed from its founding at the Universal Exposition in Liège (in Wallonia) in 1905. The two following Congresses were held in locations chosen precisely because they represented zones where French was perceived to be in conflict with another language. In 1908, the Congress of the Association was held in Arlon, the capital of the Belgian province of Luxembourg, where parts of the local population spoke dialects of German. In 1913, the Congress was held in Ghent, an even more symbolic choice: as seen earlier, for the past several years the state-run university in the city had been the object of calls to be transformed into a Flemish-medium institution.

Anne Rasmussen has argued that these conferences represented an attempt to tie the language question in multilingual societies where French was one language among several, such as Belgium, Switzerland, and Canada, to the question of an international scholarly language, which should, obviously, be French, not German or English.[127] The proponents of French in Flanders did not let the popularity of Belgium (and Switzerland) as sites for international conferences of all kinds go unnoticed. The monthly newsletter of the AFVLF reproduced a speech of Hermann De Baets, a prominent Ghent attorney, on the importance of French culture to the Flemish. Belgium, De Baets pointed out, was at the "crossroads of intellectual circulation, [the circulation of] ideas." One of the reasons why Belgium was popular for academic and diplomatic meetings was that "by tacit accord of scholars, as well as by the traditions of diplomacy, the reports and discussions in these meetings take place in French." How then, De Baets asked, could Flemings deprive themselves of the immense

[127] Anne Rasmussen, "L'internationalisme belge au miroir de la France (1890-1914)," in *France-Belgique (1848-1914): Affinités-Ambiguïtés*, ed. Marc Quaghebeur and Nicole Savy (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1997), 112-114; Anne Rasmussen, "L'internationale scientifique, 1890-1914" (Doctoral dissertation, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1995), 507–510.

benefits of knowing French, especially when they had the sheer luck to live in a country blessed to host so many intellectual luminaries?[128]

Belgium between France and Germany[129]

The interest of French intellectuals and politicians and of other French-speakers in the status of French in Flanders stemmed not only from a general concern for the spread of French influence and civilization, but also reflected Belgium's position as a land that was both geographically and culturally located between France and her rival, Germany. In this optic, the "defeats" of French vis-à-vis Flemish were perceived as victories of a conquering pan-Germanism which was using – or according to some Francophones, had created – the Flemish Movement as a counterweight to the influence of France in Belgium. However, it is interesting to note that in regards to language use among the substantial German immigrant population in the port city of Antwerp, one of the hotbeds of the Flemish Movement, class considerations usually prevailed over ideas of ethnic brotherhood. The Germans in Antwerp formed a commercial elite, and for the most part learned French in order to fit in to high society, perhaps learning Dutch as an afterthought.[130]

The city of Ghent hosted a World's Fair in 1913, providing another opportunity for both proponents and opponents of French in Flanders to popularize their messages. The Vlaamsche Hoogeschool Commissie (Flemish University Commission), a pressure group which supported the transformation of the University of Ghent into a fully-Dutch-language school, organized a demonstration for 10 August 1913. A pamphlet for the demonstration argued that the "*franskiljons*"

[128] Hermann De Baets, "Les Flamands et la culture française," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 134 (October 1913): 142–143.
[129] The title of this section and much of the discussion therein are indebted to Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, *La Belgique entre la France et l'Allemagne, 1905-1914* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994).
[130] "Men zette zich af tegen de Franse grieven door te vermelden dat de Duitse kolonie regelmatig Franse sprekers ontving, of graaggeziene gasten waren op het jaarlijkse galabal van de 'Société française de Bienfaissance'. [*sic*] Bovendien pasten de Duitse burgerij zich vanzelf aan het Frans als kultuurtaal aan." Geert Pelckmans, "De Duitse kolonie te Antwerpen en haar invloed op de Antwerpse samenleving (19e eeuw – 1914)," (Licentiate thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1993-1994), 82.

were conspiring with French diplomatic staff in an "antinational" manner, painting the question of the University of Ghent as a matter of international, especially French, concern. The pamphlet went on to speculate that if these machinations continued, "we will eventually be considered a sphere of French influence, just like Morocco."[131]

We should be careful not to overestimate the influence of France among the French-speakers of Flanders, however. The AFVLF repeatedly stressed that it had turned down offers of financial support from the *Alliance Française*, despite approving of the latter organization's goals, in order to keep the AFVLF a "Flemish" organization and not a proxy of the French government.[132]

The Congo: Belgium Acquires Its Own "Civilizing Mission"

As an industrial and commercial power which occupied a privileged position between France and Germany, Belgium enjoyed an importance on the world stage disproportionate to its small size. King Leopold II of the Belgians, frustrated by the lack of colonial initiative on the part of his subjects, acquired a "private colony" in the Congo in 1884, which provided him with massive wealth at the expense of millions of horrifically tortured and murdered Congolese. In order to submit the Congo to some kind of governmental oversight, the Belgian state annexed the "Congo Free State" in 1908. Belgium joined the ranks of the other imperial powers of Europe, ruling a resource-rich land which was over 80 times larger than the metropole.[133]

The entrance of Belgium into the colonial club changed the parameters of the "language question" in the eyes of many Belgians, French-speakers and Flemish-speakers alike. As Belgium

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131 Pamphlet of Vlaamsche Hoogeschool Commissie addressed "Aan de Vlaamsche Maatschappijen en de Vlaamschgezinden van geheel het Land [To the Flemish Societies and Flemish-Minded throughout the Country]," [1913]. Documentation collection "Vlaamse Hogeschoolcommissies," AMVC.
132 "Opinions d'un pangermaniste," *Bulletin de l'AFVLF* no. 39 (April 1904): 120.
133 On the Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) as well as Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885-1980*, ed. Kate Connelly, trans. Alice Cameron and Steven Windross (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

was now responsible for administering and "civilizing" the indigenous population of the Congo, it had now more than ever to think in an international context. Thus, argued many French-speakers, Belgium, and the native Congolese, would be better served by using French in the colony and not "importing" the language conflict from the mother country. The Flemish Movement, meanwhile, stressed the need for Flemings in the Congo to enjoy the same ability to use Flemish in their interactions with the colonial administration as they (theoretically) did in the metropole.

The Belgian Colonial Charter for Congo contained language similar to that of Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution, allowing for the free use of languages except where regulated by law for certain public functions. However, there was no linguistic legislation in the Congo before World War I. At the 1908 Congress of the Association internationale pour la culture et l'extension de la langue française, Walloon Liberal Oscar Grojean remarked with approval that while the Belgian parliament had approved many questionable pieces of "*flamingant*" legislation, they had on the other hand "refused to admit that all Belgian functionaries employed in the Congo should have to know, besides French, the Flemish tongue."[134] Such a measure appeared particularly injurious to the Walloon Movement – it was bad enough that the Flemings wanted to "exclude" Walloons from public service jobs in Flanders (by imposing a requirement to speak Flemish), but they wanted to turn the Congo into their own private "hunting ground" for bureaucratic jobs as well.[135]

As we might expect, many Flemings saw matters differently. Flemish academics and clergy from Leuven founded the journal *Onze Kongo* in 1910 to comment on events in Belgium's new colony from a particularly Flemish point of view.[136] The journal's very name suggests a program: the Congo is the Flemings' ("ours") colony as much as it is that of the French-speakers (one may

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[134] Oscar Grojean, "La langue française en Belgique," in *Congrès international pour l'extension et la culture de la langue française. Deuxième session: Arlon-Luxembourg-Trèves, 20-23 septembre 1908* (Paris: Champion, 1908), Section 1b, 62.
[135] Hector Chainaye, "Les ligues wallonnes et la défense de la langue française," in *Congrès international pour l'extension et la culture de la langue française. Deuxième session: Arlon-Luxembourg-Trèves, 20-23 septembre 1908*, Section 1b, 154.
[136] Jan-M. Goris, "Onze Kongo," *NEVB.*

wonder to what it extent it belonged to the indigenous Congolese, in the estimation of the editors). An article on Flemish language rights in the Congo pointed out that French had been the sole official language of the Congo Free State. With the Congo now subject to the Belgian parliament, the Flemish Movement could press for language legislation in the colony: "The accusation that we are going too far, that we are exorbitant, will surely be leveled at us. Yet the Flemings are used to that, and will surely not worry themselves about it this time, either. Right is right."[137]

Perhaps reflecting his reliance on French-speaking informants, the Frenchman Henri Charriaut wrote in 1910 that the *flamingants* wanted Flemish, *not French*, to be taught to the indigenous population off Belgium's newly acquired colony. Charriaut then quotes the *Société royale de géographie*:

> If Belgium claims to carry out the civilizing task that has been entrusted to her, she can only do it by initiating the negro populations [*les populations nègres*] to European culture little by little; indigenous languages are insufficient and inadequate instruments for this. Therefore, the French language alone seems to us to be capable of playing a civilizing role in Africa; not combating the already-too-great influence of English with all of our means of influence would be a naïveté which one would not hesitate to exploit against us, and wanting to impose the *moedertaal* [that is, Flemish] in the Congo would [be a waste of energy].[138]

The "civilizing mission" that Belgium had taken up in the Congo – echoing the well-known terminology of the French Third Republic's colonial propaganda, though espoused by royalist Belgians – had itself become a kind of club with which proponents of French could attack the Flemish Movement.

The acquisition of the Congo added a new dimension to the debate over language use in Belgium by expanding (geographically and administratively) the sites where language could be an object of contestation to include the administrative, judicial, and educational apparatus of the colony. These debates were further complicated by the question of the role of indigenous languages in the colony; this issue became more relevant following World War I and especially after World

[137] Edm. Ronse, "Onze taalrechten in Kongo," *Onze Kongo* 3 (1912–1913): 459–468.
[138] Charriaut, 42–43.

War II. Belgium's foray into colonialism had other, more subtle effects on the discussion of language within the metropole, however. Colonial imagery and metaphors began to color the arguments of both the Flemish Movement and the proponents of French in Flanders.

Partisans of French in Flanders used colonial symbolism as part of their rhetorical repertoire. A joke which appeared in a 1914 issue of *Pourquoi Pas?* (a Brussels weekly known for its irreverence, and sympathetic to the Francophones of Flanders), imagined a scenario in which a Walloon and a Fleming were both sent to the Congo. Neither spoke the other's language, and so they conversed in a local tongue. When a native Congolese asked the Walloon why he and the Fleming spoke "negro [*nègre*]" to one another, none of the Walloon's answers seemed to satisfy him. Finally, the Congolese replied to the Walloon: "You're not telling the truth. You speak negro with him because *he's the savage of Europe!*"[139] The implication about the Flemish language is obvious.

Adherents of the Flemish Movement could also muster colonial comparisons in service of their arguments. Alfons Sevens mocked the claim that the Flemish Movement's legislative goals were extreme by pointing out that before 1890, judges in Flanders were not legally required to know Dutch. Sevens noted a Belgian magistrate who went to work as a judge in Egypt took three years beforehand to learn Arabic, and claimed that judges serving in the Congo needed to know the "language of the negroes."[140] A Francophone of Flanders who was sympathetic to the Flemish Movement wrote in 1913 that

> It is not just *free* peoples who have the right to be judged and administered in their mother tongue, but also the people of the colonies themselves, and it would be something else [*il ferait beau de*] to tell the oldest and best colonizers of the world, the English and the Dutch, that it is unjust that the knowledge of Hindi, Sinhala, or of Javanese be imposed on those who want to embrace a judicial or administrative career in India, Ceylon, or Java![141]

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[139] "Négro-Belge," *Pourquoi Pas?*, 2 April 1914, 1650. Emphasis in original. The dialogue of the Congolese was given in "petit nègre," a simplified form of French used in the colonies. I have decided to translate it to standard English. The same joke was recounted in a Walloon political periodical: "*Li sauvage d'Europe*," *Défense wallonne: Bulletin mensuel de l'Assemblé Wallonne*, 1914, 206.

[140] Alfons Sevens, *La question flamande exposée aux Wallons* (Ostend: Dhont & Co., [1909]), 11. CEGESOMA BB B 4/71.

[141] Paul Lippens, *Voix d'outre-tombe. La Question flamande* (Brussels: F. Vanbuggenhoudt, [1929?]), 23. HL. Emphasis added.

Respected More in the Breach than the Observance: Language Legislation and the Relationship between French and Dutch at the End of the "Long Nineteenth Century"

In the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, the French language in Flanders, while having lost its monopoly on public life, still played an important role in business, culture, administration, and education. French was still overwhelmingly the language of higher education, except for a few scattered courses in Dutch at Ghent, Leuven, and Brussels meant to acquaint those in the liberal professions with the necessary terminology to deal with the overwhelmingly Dutch-speaking public. It was still possible for French-speakers in the large cities of Flanders, as well as foreign visitors, to consider Flemish a "*patois*" or a regional language along the lines of Breton and Occitan in France or Welsh in the United Kingdom. Indeed, many French-speakers thought of the various laws in favor of language rights for Flemish-speakers in Belgium as "concessions" to a backward population which needed to be "raised up" to the level where it could use French, the "real" language of the country. Many *flamingants*, needless to say, did not agree with this interpretation, instead seeing the language laws as defenses of the inherent rights of Flemings which had been wrested from an often unwilling Francophone political class.

However, there were signs that the Flemish Movement was making progress in critical areas. The communal councils of hundreds of Flemish towns, as well as the provincial councils of Antwerp, Limburg, and West Flanders, had all passed motions calling for the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent. In March 1914, the Chamber of Representatives passed a preliminary version of the bill on the *flamandisation* of the university; the government gave hints that it would push for a fully bilingual institution, and not the replacement of French by Dutch.[142] On 19 May of that same year, Belgium became one of the last states in Western Europe to make some level of schooling

[142] Karel de Clerck, ed., *Kroniek van de strijd voor de vernederlandsing van de Gentse universiteit* (Beveren: Orion, 1980), 103; Marie Bourke, "The Flemish University Question and the Development of a Modern Dutch-Language Culture in Belgium 1890-1914" (DPhil dissertation, University of Oxford, 1989), 30–31; Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, trans. Claudine Spitaels and Marnix Vincent (Brussels et al.: Peter Lang, 2004), 33.

mandatory for all children. This would have the effect of spreading the knowledge of standard Dutch among the Flemish population. The question of French-speaking primary and secondary schools in Flanders remained open, and would indeed continue to be a source of friction in Belgian politics in the decades to come.

However, there was little time to see how these developments would affect the linguistic situation in Flanders. Before the bill on the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent could be taken up in the Senate, and before the beginning of the new academic year in Fall 1914, fate would brutally intervene. Belgium, so often defined itself by its position between France and Germany, would suffer for this very "in-betweenness." In August 1914, on its way to attack France, Germany invaded Belgium, inaugurating four years of war and occupation that would irrevocably change the nature of the language debate.

CHAPTER 2

A WAR OF WORDS: INVASION, OCCUPATION, AND THE SHATTERING OF FLANDERS'S LINGUISTIC EQUILIBRIUM, 1914-1918

"Brave Little Belgium" and the Multiplicity of "Belgian" Nationalisms

On 1 August 1914, the German government demanded that German troops be allowed to cross through Belgian territory on their way to attack France, following the Schlieffen-Von Moltke Plan whereby Germany would quickly knock out France in order to concentrate the whole of its war effort against Russia. The Belgian government balked at violating the neutrality which the small country had sworn to uphold as part of the 1839 Treaty of London recognizing its independence. Nevertheless, on 4 August, the German Empire invaded the Kingdom of Belgium, leading the British to enter the war as a guarantor of Belgian neutrality.

In a proclamation dated the following day, King Albert I of the Belgians called the "Army of the Belgian People" to the defense of their nation: "Remember, in the face of the enemy, that you fight for freedom and for your imperiled homes. Remember, Flemings, the Battle of the Golden Spurs, and you, Walloons, who hold a place of honor at this moment, the 600 men of Franchimont."[1] This communiqué appeared as Liège and its surrounding forts bore the brunt of the German invasion. The "Battle of the Golden Spurs" was a 1302 victory of Flemish urban militias over the French army, the anniversary of which (11 July) came to be celebrated as a Flemish "national" holiday in the nineteenth century. The "600 men of Franchimont" were inhabitants of a town near Liège who all met their death in an attempt to drive the Burgundians from the Prince-Bishopric of Liège in a sneak attack of 29 October 1468.

[1] Cited in Jean Stengers and Éliane Gubin, *Le grand siècle de la nationalité belge: de 1830 à 1918* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2002), 151.

As opposed to German Emperor Wilhelm II's famous "Speech from the Balcony" of 1 August, in which he proclaimed "I no longer recognize any parties or any confessions; today we are all German brothers and only German brothers," thereby papering over the multiplicity of identities in German society, the Belgian king's call to arms explicitly appealed to the "duality" of the Belgian people.[2] In doing so, Albert lent credence to the idea that Belgium was a country composed of two "blocs." His words were meant to evoke unity in diversity, but that ideal that proved illusory over the course of the war. If questioned, the king would likely have included the Francophones of Flanders among the "Flemings" whom he addressed. By 1918, few in the Flemish Movement would do so.

Henri Charriaut, the French observer of Belgium, had written in 1910 that Belgium was destined to forever exist "between two utopias" – that of a homogeneous Flanders and Wallonia, on the one hand, and that of a union of "two races that do not speak the same language," on the other – in a kind of "wobbly regime." This state of affairs was likely to continue, until and unless "events come to change it… for better or for worse," though any change would be "undesirable."[3] In hindsight, it is hard not to read these words as a prophetic reference to World War I. Indeed, the war had dramatic – and often contradictory – effects on the "language question" in Belgium. For many Belgians, the common suffering and fighting engendered a kind of linguistic "*union sacrée*" or "*Burgfrieden*," as differences in mother tongue were dwarfed by common values and a common desire to push the Germans out of the national territory. Yet for some Flemings, real and perceived disdain from French-speaking Belgians abroad and at the front, and German political maneuvering in the occupied territory, served to alienate them from the concept of "Belgium" altogether, adding a hitherto-unseen virulence to "Flemish nationalism."

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[2] Jeffrey Verhey, trans., "The Kaiser Speaks from the Balcony of the Royal Palace (August 1, 1914)," *German History in Documents and Images*, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=815.
[3] Henri Charriaut, *La Belgique moderne, une terre d'expériences* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1910), 75.

With specific reference to the Francophones of Flanders, the war also produced two competing identifications: that of the Francophones themselves, who claimed a distinctly Belgian identity, and that of the Flemish Movement, who came to understand the *fransquillons* as one of, if not the most, dangerous threats to the existence of Flemish culture and language. The Francophones of Flanders themselves cultivated a self-image based on a deep sense of *Belgian* patriotism. The tentative expressions of a separate "Francophone of Flanders" identity that surfaced in the decades before 1914 disappeared. Nevertheless, these "Belgian patriots" emphasized the importance of the French language, not as a marker of identity *per se*, but as an instrument of Belgian unity. In turn, they portrayed the "*flamingants*" – including but not limited to those who collaborated with the Germans – as having removed themselves from the Belgian body politic through their intransigence. Many Flemings, meanwhile, argued that it was the "*fransquillons*" who had shown themselves to be lacking in civic feeling, by continuing to speak a language which divided them from the mass of the Flemish people. The identification of "Flemish" with "Flemish-speaking" became ironclad among most Flemings, both those loyal to the Belgian state and those who collaborated. At the same time, the *fransquillon* became the most important "other" to the Flemish Movement, the ultimate symbol of disloyalty to one's people.

In this chapter, I detail the experience of World War I in Belgium and how it affected the development of the debate over French in Flanders. This chapter is perhaps a paradoxical one. On the one hand, during the time period in question, the Francophones of Flanders make almost no reference to themselves *as a group*, in stark contrast to the various organizations that specifically represent Francophones' interests that appear in other chapters. On the other hand, the events of World War I are likely the most decisive in terms of their ultimate effect on the language situation in Flanders. As such, even if the Francophones of Flanders themselves do not always occupy "center stage" in this part of the story, I have tried to explain the way in which the war was a crucial

turning point for the fate of French in Flanders, and thus ultimately for the Francophones of Flanders themselves.

War and the Creation of "Three Belgiums": At the Front, under Occupation, and in Exile

Between the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, on 28 June 1914, and Germany's ultimatum of 2 August 1914 demanding Belgium to let the troops of the former pass unhindered through the territory of the latter, Belgian public opinion was divided concerning the events in the Balkans. As Jean Stengers points out, the Liberal and Socialist press tended to have a more skeptical view of the Habsburg state's attitude towards Serbia, while the Catholics had more sympathy with the conservative Catholic government in Vienna, and looked askance on Russia's interference in the affair. However, the German demand for free passage, a violation of not only the neutrality but also of the honor of Belgium, "swept away" these differing opinions, leaving only a unanimous desire to see Germany and her allies defeated.[4]

The invasion of Belgium took the small country unawares. The Belgian army offered a spirited resistance, notably at Liège, where the forts held out for almost two weeks in August, providing the French valuable time to mobilize before the bulk of the German forces could engage them. However, it was obvious that the Belgian military was no match for the massive German military machine. The port city of Antwerp, which had been heavily fortified (after a great deal of political haggling) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had been chosen to serve as the national redoubt in case of an invasion. Put to the test, the redoubt fell by early October 1914, capitulating much faster than expected and soon providing fodder for those who would attack the patriotism of the Flemish Movement (on which more below). The Belgian army fell back to a position near the French border, as the front stabilized. All of Belgium was now under German

[4] Stengers and Gubin, *Le grand siècle de la nationalité belge: de 1830 à 1918*, 147–149.

occupation, save a small part of West Flanders located behind the front, including the seaside resort town of De Panne where the royal court was installed for the duration of the war, and a tiny exclave of Antwerp province surrounded by the Netherlands. The Belgian Congo became a battleground, as Belgian and Entente troops (including native Congolese) engaged German forces in neighboring Cameroon and German East Africa.

Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality, and the determined (if doomed) military response from the Belgians, added a moral dimension to the war on the part of the Entente.[5] Besides being the immediate *casus belli* for the British, the invasion of Belgium allowed the Entente to portray the war as one of "right against might," of a defense of the rights of "small nations" like Belgium and Serbia to be safe from the predations of their larger, ambitious neighbors.[6] The actions of its army during the Belgian campaign of Summer 1914 would only add to the sense of moral outrage directed at Germany, both internationally from the Entente and many neutral powers, but also, naturally, from Belgians, who would remember the "Rape of Belgium" long after the war. This bitterness toward the Germans would come to flavor many Belgians' perceptions of linguistic measures that the Germans had introduced during the war, and which Flemish "radicals" supposedly tried to resurrect afterward.

As German troops moved westward through Belgium, unverified tales of "*francs-tireurs*" – civilian snipers who supposed picked off German soldiers, contrary to the laws of war – came to color the Germans' perceptions of the Belgians and led to numerous brutal reprisals against the civilian population. In Aarschot in Flemish Brabant, the death of a German officer, supposedly at the hands of a *franc-tireur*, led to the mass killing of 168 civilians on 19August 1914 in guise of

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[5] On the use of "Belgium" as a symbol, see Sophie De Schaepdrijver, "Champion or Stillbirth: The Symbolic Uses of Belgium in the Great War," in *How Can One Not Be Interested in Belgian History? War, Language and Consensus in Belgium since 1830* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2005), 55–83.
[6] John S. Ellis, "'The Methods of Barbarism' and the 'Rights of Small Nations': War Propaganda and British Pluralism," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30, no. 1 (1998): 49–75.

reprisal. In the Walloon town of Dinant, the German army killed some 674 civilians, including children, and set fire to many buildings, again citing the presence of *francs-tireurs*, on 23 August. This was the single largest execution of civilians by the German military in World War I.[7]

Two of Belgium's four universities were also victims of the German advance through Belgium. The campus of the University of Liège took damage from the German attacks of early August 1914. When the Germans occupied the city, the university's buildings were subject to looting from German soldiers, and many were officially requisitioned by the part of the Germany army. In an (unintentionally?) symbolic act, the periodicals room of the library was repurposed as a stable.[8] By far the most horrific "bibliocaust," however, happened in the Flemish university town of Leuven. The Germans set the Catholic University's Library, along with much of the town itself, ablaze on 28 August, claiming the right of collective punishment for the town supposedly harboring *francs-tireurs*. Some 300,000 books as well as many irreplaceable incunabula, manuscripts, and archeological artifacts were lost. These attacks, much like the Germans' damage of the Cathedral at Reims in September 1914, were used as proof of the hollowness of German "*Kultur*" and evidence that the Germans targeted sites of historical and cultural significance as a manner of waging war. In the latter half of the war, when the Germans attempted to court Flemish public opinion by reopening the University of Ghent as a Dutch-language institution, many Belgians, Flemish and otherwise, recalled with deep irony the "gifts" that Germany had bestowed on the Belgian academic world in August 1914.[9]

Occupied Belgium was further subdivided according to Germany's military needs. Most of the occupied territory was placed under a Government-General, with a Governor-General drawn

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[7] John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Larry Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

[8] Paul Delforge, *La Wallonie et la Première Guerre Mondiale: Pour une histoire de la séparation administrative* (Namur and Charleroi: Institut Jules Destrée, 2008), 387.

[9] De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 82–84. See also Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Eine Ruine im Krieg der Geister: Die Bibliothek von Löwen, August 1914 bis Mai 1940*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1993).

from the upper ranks of the German officer corps and a "civilian administration [*Zivilverwaltung*]" composed of German civil servants and a large number of Belgian government workers who maintained their posts. There were similar arrangements at the level of the provinces and the *arrondissements*; while the municipalities were theoretically allowed a large amount of self-administration, the local police forces were placed under the authority of the German military. The occupied portion of West Flanders, most of East Flanders, and the parts of Hainaut and Luxembourg province near the French border were subject to a more rigorous military administration, the "staging zone [*Ettapengebiet*]" because of their nearness to the front.[10]

In addition to the Belgian soldiers at the front and the majority of Belgians who spent the war under German occupation, some 600,000 Belgians spent the war in exile, chiefly in France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.[11] The Belgian cabinet itself, under Chief Minister Charles de Broqueville (himself a Francophone of Flanders, from the province of Antwerp) took up residence in the French town of Le Havre. The government, which had been homogeneously Catholic since 1884, admitted Liberals and, in a more shocking move, Socialists to form a government of national unity. Indeed, at the beginning of the war, many Belgian political figures were worried about the *Socialists'*, not the Flemish Movement's, potential disloyalty; the language issue hardly entered the minds of the political class at the time, certainly not as a source of potential discord. Over the course of the war, many Flemings, both on the front and in occupied Belgium, came to feel that this government was woefully ignorant – if not maliciously so – regarding the abuse and condescension to which Flemings and the Flemish language were subjected.

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[10] Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, trans. Claudine Spitaels and Marnix Vincent (Brussels et al.: Peter Lang, 2004, 130-131.

[11] Michaël Amara, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil: Les réfugiés de la Première Guerre Mondiale: France, Grande-Bretagne, Pays-Bas, 1914-1918* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2008), 12.

Francophone Officers, Flemish Enlisted Men, and the Language Question at the Front

In the narrowest sense, the question of the linguistic situation among the Belgian soldiers at the front impacted the Francophones of Flanders only to the extent that those at the front, usually officers, had difficulties commanding the Flemish enlisted men. In the long run, however, the relationship between languages at the front was a microcosm of the historical situation in Flanders (a Francophone upper class and a Flemish-speaking/*patoisant* lower class), made more bitter by the circumstances of the war. The language question at the front led, among others, to the creation of the "Front Movement," whose impact on the Flemish Movement (and mistrust of "*fransquillons*") was felt long after the war's end.

The question of languages in the army, including the call for monolingual regiments, had provoked a fair amount of discussion in Belgian political life before the war. The circumstances of the war would soon exacerbate linguistic tensions within the military. Soldiers from across the country found themselves in close quarters on a relatively small strip of land in West Flanders. In some ways, this proximity helped build camaraderie: for example, Francophone enlisted men often picked up sayings from the local West Flemish dialect.[12] In more important ways, however, the demographic and power imbalance between Francophones and Flemings in the army would lead to a series of problems.

The majority of Belgians were Flemings; it was no surprise that the majority of the enlisted men were as well. This demographic imbalance was compounded by the fact that Wallonia fell to the Germans before (most of) Flanders, and thus more men from the latter region were able to join the army in the first weeks of the conflict. According to one historian of the Flemish Movement, yet another factor contributing to the overrepresentation of Flemings among the ranks of the enlisted was that many Walloons who had training in heavy industry (from producing coal and steel) were

[12] De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 183.

removed from the army and sent to work in munitions factories instead.[13] The majority-Flemish army was led, however, by an overwhelmingly Francophone officer corps. French-speakers of Flanders were almost completely absent from the ranks of the enlisted men, since men whose names were drawn for conscription could pay someone to take their place until 1909. The French-speakers in Flanders tended to come from the upper classes and usually took advantage of this possibility.[14] The French-speaking nature of the officers was itself a reflection of the relative social positions of French and Dutch in Belgium, in that the usually upper-class background prevalent amongst those aspiring to a commission meant that they had likely had some or all of their schooling in French, even in Flanders. Those officers who came from Dutch-speaking homes often felt social pressure to use French; a reputation as a "*flamingant*" could imperil one's chances for promotion.[15] Members of the officer corps vented their spleen at Flemish soldiers who knew French but who "insisted" on using Dutch.[16] This state of affairs led many Flemish soldiers to feel that they were being neglected or mistreated in comparison to their French-speaking counterparts.

In fact, an entire mythology – I do not use the term here to intimate that these beliefs were *false* (some, though certainly not all, were), but rather to indicate that they played a kind of legendary, motivational role among many Flemings – grew up around the injustices suffered by Flemings at the front. In the realm of believability, there were the aforementioned cases of contempt for all things "Flemish" on the part of the majority Francophone officer corps. Many Flemish soldiers were indignant at the public staements of French-speakers that seemed to mock them (see below) at the same time that they were fighting and dying for Belgium. When Flemish soldiers gathered in "study groups" and published overtly political tracts – forming what would come to be known as the

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[13] A. W. Willemsen, *Het Vlaams-Nationalisme 1914-1940* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1958), 49.

[14] Luc De Vos, "De numerieke verhouding tussen Vlamingen en Walen in het Belgisch leger bij het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog," *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen* 43, no. 4 (1984): 222–223.

[15] *Ibid*; Herman Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, trans. Ian Connerty (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers for University Press Antwerp, 2011), 105.

[16] Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy*, 97.

"Front Movement" – they faced military discipline and censorship. Objectively, the Belgian Army's disapproval of soldiers participating in secret political societies while in a combat situation seems perfectly reasonable. Subjectively, however, the "Front Movement" experienced the army's disciplinary actions as further persecution, proof of the Belgian establishment's disdain for all things Flemish. Besides its very real proscription by the Belgian Army, the Front Movement's mythmaking also rested on less credible anecdotes of anti-Flemish actions in the army. Chief among these are stories of principled Flemish soldiers who refused promotions as a way to protest the anti-Flemish tendency of the army, and tales of monolingual Flemish soldiers who died because they did not understand the orders given by their French-speaking officers. Still, the experience of the Front was crucial in radicalizing Flemish consciousness, and members of the "Front Movement" would be prominent in the vanguard of the Flemish Movement after the war.[17]

Much of the "Front Movement" was possible, at least at the beginning, because of the abundant Flemish "trench press," much of which served to keep soldiers in touch with comrades from the same village or region during the war, and which was a natural precursor to the more politicized publications that were produced at the front later in the war.[18] There were of course also French-language "trench papers" that played the same role for French-speakers, but these seem to have only served soldiers from Brussels and Wallonia. The data in one survey of the French-language Belgian trench press, listing the papers by the locality with which they identify themselves in their titles, demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of these referred to places in Wallonia or Brussels, with only a smattering referring to locations in Flanders.[19] This seeming absence of a "Francophone of Flanders" trench press may reflect the relative lack of Francophones of Flanders

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[17] De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 171–221. See also Luc Schepens, *Albert Ier et le gouvernement Broqueville, 1914-1918: Aux origines de la question communautaire* (Paris: Duculot, 1983), 55–66; 126–137.
[18] Guy Bulthe, *De Vlaamse loopgravenpers tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Brussels: Musée royal de l'armée et d'histoire militaire, 1971).
[19] François Bertrand, *La presse francophone de tranchée au front belge, 1914-1918* (Brussels: Musée royal de l'armée et d'histoire militaire, 1971). Four of these refer to specific secondary schools in their title, and one of these has a bilingual title.

among the enlisted men. It might also – and here I am stretching a bit more – stem from the more "cosmopolitan" nature of the French-speakers of Flanders, who would prefer to read the *national* French-language newspapers printed in exile.

"After the War, No One Will Speak Flemish Anymore"[20]: Rumors of Anti-Flemish Plots

In the first year or so of the war, reports of the (supposed) desire of noted Francophone Belgians to use the conflict as an opportunity to eradicate Flemish in Flanders gained purchase as propaganda for the Germans and for a handful of radical Flemings who collaborated with them. Many of the citations used for this purpose were exaggerated, taken out of context, or simply made from whole cloth. However, these anti-Flemish soundbites became integral parts of Flemish mythology, woven together to portray the war as a "battle" between languages in Flanders. Much like the allegations that Charles Rogier had conspired to eliminate Flemish in the early Belgian state, the tales of Francophone schemes to get rid of Flemish during the war maintain a prominent place in certain strands of Flemish nationalist thought.

Nobel laureate Maurice Maeterlinck provided one of the earliest of these pieces of "evidence" of French-speakers' "conspiracy" against the Flemish language. Speaking in Milan on 30 November 1914, Maeterlinck argued that while Belgium knew that it could not stand up to Germany alone, in entering the war and sacrificing itself, the country had saved "Latin civilization… the only one whereunder the majority of men are willing or able to live." Belgians stood "had stood for centuries at the junction of two powerful and hostile forms of culture. They had to choose [between them] and they did not hesitate." Not *despite*, but *because* "more than half of Belgium is of Teutonic stock," argued Maeterlinck, the country was "better able than any other to understand the culture

[20] Commonly used by members of the Flemish Movement (in French as "*Après la guerre, on ne parlera plus du Flamand*") to summarize the supposed attitude of many French-speaking Belgians. See for example Maurits Basse, *De Vlaamsche beweging van 1905 tot 1930*, (Ghent: Van Rysselbergh & Rombaut, 1930), I:166.

that was being offered her, together with the imputation of dishonour which it included." Maeterlinck's praise of Latin culture likely had a very practical goal: wooing then-neutral Italy into joining the war on the side of the Entente powers. "Italy," Maeterlinck implored, "owes us [Belgians] justice… It is for Italy as much as for France that we have suffered. She is the source, she is the very mother of the ideal for which we have fought and for which the last of our soldiers are still fighting in the last of our trenches."[21] While such rhetoric may have left the average Flemish enlisted man, who was often barely literate, if at all, indifferent, the educated and ambitious young men who formed the leadership of the Front Movement seized on these words. Their grievances against the Belgian state for its supposed laxity in enforcing linguistic legislation were now compounded by the fact that they were supposedly fighting and dying for "Latin culture."

Somewhat more intemperate were the comments of Gérard Harry. The French-born son of English parents, Harry had moved to Brussels in 1876 and made a name for himself as a journalist in the liberal-minded French-language press. In "exile" in his native France during the war, Harry wrote a column on Belgian affairs for *Le Petit Journal*. The 21 December 1914 installment began on a note of national unity and reconciliation, arguing that the German invasion of Belgium had erased old quibbles between Flemings and Walloons. It was soon apparent, however, that Harry saw the union of the "races" as engendering the inevitable supremacy of French in *all* of Belgium, Flanders included. The Flemish Movement, whatever its intentions, would always lead to a kind of Germanophilia: "*Flamingant* associations dissolved themselves, suddenly enlightened of the danger and injustice of [trying] to make their idiom prevail over the admirable language [*verbe*] of our southern neighbors." Meanwhile, the action of individuals such as Maurice Wilmotte, who fought to defend and expand the role of French in Belgium and especially in Flanders, had become

[21] Reproduced in Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Wrack of the Storm*, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1916), 47–58.

"outdated": all Belgians would soon be connected "by this prestigious anti-Germanic link [*trait d'union*]: the French language."

Harry's piece also harkened back to the common argument that learning French was in the best interests of the Flemings themselves. Hundreds of thousands of Belgians, including many monolingual Flemings, found themselves refugees in France, Britain, and other countries where no one spoke "Flemish." The "somewhat Teutonic" sounds of the Flemish tongue supposedly made them seem like Germans in their host countries, causing numerous embarrassments and inconveniences. Harry ended his column with a shockingly insensitive passage:

> [All that remains is] to note the extraordinary lesson… which the methods of war have directly and indirectly inflicted on the Flemings in forcing them to expatriate *en masse* to lands where they had to recognize immediately [*ils ont dû immédiatement reconnaître*] that their dialect was as useless to them as a counterfeit coin… while the French language [*Verbe français*] showed itself, for the Walloons, the "open-sesame" of all doors and all hearts. Let us render this justice to our persecutors from Berlin: they will have been, in Belgium, the agents [*ouvriers*] of the moral and verbal harmony of which we began to despair."[22]

A third example of an anti-Flemish statement that became repeated as proof of Francophone perfidy came from Walloon radical Raymond Colleye, who published an article in a British journal in 1915 on "the future of Latin Belgium." Colleye expressed his contentment at the fact that both Flemings and Walloons had been united in the fighting of what he called "the Germano-Latin war" taking place. He continued by praising those Flemings who realized that any culture of value in Belgium was essentially French in nature, and he commended the work of organizations like the AFVLF. While there had been some Germanophile stirrings among the Flemings, Colleye believed this was "done with. *Flamingantisme* is dead… R.I.P." He (in)famously ended his article with the claim that "The Belgium of tomorrow will be Latin, or it will not be anything."[23]

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[22] Gerard Harry, "Le courrier belge: L'Union morale et verbale des races," *Le Petit Journal*, 21 December 1914, 3.
[23] Raymond Colleye, "L'Avenir de la Belgique latine," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, August 1915, 291-302.

Colleye was a somewhat marginal figure in the Walloon Movement, whose calls for increased union with France alarmed the Belgian government in exile to the point that it often censored his Paris-based newspaper, *L'Opinion wallonne*.[24] The government also thought his strident attacks on the Flemish Movement to be injudicious and harmful to morale. One internal note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Colleye of being "personally responsible for the rupture of the *union sacrée*, language-wise [*au plan linguistique*]."[25]

Certainly, the words of individuals like Maeterlinck, Harry, and Colleye were not of a tenor that would please the Flemish Movement, or even the average Fleming. Nevertheless, they were statements of isolated individuals, not necessarily indicative of government policy. While Maeterlinck was undeniably a "big name," Harry was a journalist of only moderate renown, and Colleye was a marginal figure *within* the Walloon Movement, which was itself diminutive in comparison to the Flemish Movement, Lode Wils has argued that radical Flemish and German propaganda reproduced and repeated these passages in order to gin up fears of a French-speaking conspiracy among Flemings, making them amenable to drastic measures to prevent the "eradication" of Flemish culture.[26]

The German occupation authority was also responsible for releasing some of these stories into the wild. Émile Buisset, the Walloon Liberal and author of the 1913 article declaring French "the official language of Belgium," discussed in the previous chapter, was a key figure in one such tale.[27] In the first months of the occupation, Buisset – along with his fellow Liberal, the Fleming Louis Franck – complained to the German Governor-General, Colmar van der Goltz, that Flemish civilian prisoners were being freed while Walloon civilian prisoners remained incarcerated. In a letter

[24] Philippe Muret, "Colleye, Raymond," *EMW*.
[25] Note of Bassompierre, 21 November 1916, cited in Delforge, *La Wallonie et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 203.
[26] Lode Wils, *Flamenpolitik en Aktivisme: Vlaanderen tegenover België in de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1974), 19–26.
[27] On the "Buisset Affair," see Bruno Yammine, "'Honderden keren probeerden de Walen ons ervan te overtuigen dat er geen Vlamingen meer waren…' De 'zaak-Buisset' en de Duitse oorlogspropaganda (1914-1915)," *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 71, no. 3 (2012): 233–256.

of 5 May 1915, Buisset brought up the question of this preferential treatment with von der Goltz's successor, von Bissing. In passing, Buisset also complained about the priority given to Dutch rather than French in translations of German official orders, "despite the constitutional conception which had instituted French as the official language of our country."[28]

The German authorities, however, used Buisset's complaint against them for their own purposes. During the summer of 1915, collaborationist Flemish newspapers alluded to the letter, downplaying complaints about the prisoners and reporting that Buisset complained about Dutch being used *in addition* to French (when Buisset had in fact complained about Dutch being used *in preference* to French). Some collaborationist newspapers reproduced the letter, bolding certain passages to make it seem as if 1.) the language issue was Buisset's main concern and 2.) Buisset had already brought up the "irritating [linguistic] measures" in 1914 (when the actual "irritating measures" he referred to were the differences in the treatment of Flemish and Walloon prisoners). With these intentionally skewed interpretations of Buisset's words, pro-German propaganda could claim that Buisset wanted to eliminate the role of Dutch in the Belgian public sphere. Thus, Buisset was portrayed as another Francophone, like Maeterlinck, Harry, and Colleye, who supposedly sought the elimination of the Dutch language. More grievously, he had attempted to use the Germans to accomplish his goal, as "proven" by his appeals to the Governors-General! If Francophones thought it legitimate to try using the German administration to enforce a certain language regime, why should not the Flemish "Activists" (with a capital "A": individuals who collaborated with the German occupier in order to further their political and linguistic goals, as described below) avail themselves of the same opportunity?

The Germans also spun documents purporting to show Francophone perfidy out of whole cloth. The pamphlet "The Truth about the Fall of Antwerp" was mostly likely a complete

[28] AP, Chamber of Representatives, 17 March 1920, 660–661.

fabrication of German origin. The surrender of Antwerp, the national redoubt of Belgium, in early October 1914 led to a series of debates about the "responsibility" for this defeat in the refugee press.[29] "The Truth about the Fall of Antwerp," which claimed to be an excerpt from one or another French, Belgian, or Dutch newspaper, made the rounds in occupied Belgium.[30] While not about the language question strictly speaking, the pamphlet portrayed Antwerp, seen as the most *flamingant* of Flemish cities, in a very negative light, and attributed its fall in large part to moral failings caused by *flamingantisme*. The piece accused several important Antwerp politicians, including Louis Franck, of surrendering too early contrary to military orders, thereby allowing the Germans to take large stocks of ammunition and several forts intact. Supposedly, Franck was called to account for his actions in The Hague by Paul Hymans, a Francophone Liberal politician who was fulfilling diplomatic duties for the wartime government. The pamphlet has Hymans launch into a tirade against Franck, upbraiding him as a coward and *flamingant* whose name will be hated forevermore. Antwerp had shown itself to be an "infamous city" and "putrid corner" of Belgium, whose inhabitants were more concerned with profit and saving their own skin than in protecting the otherwise blameless Belgian nation, and that Antwerp would need to be remade after the liberation. Finally, Hymans's speech ends with a rousing call to Belgian patriotism: "The era of *flamingantisme* is finished. LONG LIVE UNITED AND INDIVISIBLE BELGIUM."

Lode Wils, among others, argues that this pamphlet was pure propaganda on the part of the Germans. In addition to the fact that various versions of the pamphlet contain different provenances for their content, the pamphlet also contains elements which were likely intended to rouse anti-British sentiments among Flemings. For example, the pamphlet claims that although

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[29] Wils, *Flamenpolitik*, 45–51.
[30] The copy in the Rare Manuscript Room of the University of Ghent, from which I quote, claims that it is from *Le Temps* (Paris) of 28 December 1914. "La vérité sur la capitulation d'Anvers." Documenten betreffende de Wereldoorlog 1914-1918, de Vlaamse Beweging, het Activisme en de Vlaamse hogeschool van Gent, Hs. III 23, 2.4.3., University of Ghent Library. No corresponding article appears in that issue of *Le Temps*.

Franck and the others intended to save Antwerp with their actions, they have instead guaranteed that Antwerp would be destroyed by British troops when they came to help the Belgians retake the town.[31] Another argument for the falsity of the document, which Wils does not address, is the almost comically over-the-top nature of Hymans's speech. In two short pages of bombast, "Hymans" accuses Antwerp of being, *inter alia*, a "city of greedy Jews," a "foil" for the "honestly virile attitude of the Belgians," "the Judas giving greater contrast to the smooth and pure figure of the Christ," and an "abscess" from which all "German pus" will be purged.[32]

Several prominent Activists would go on to cite one or more of these (supposed) examples of French-speaking intransigence as reasons for their entering into Activism. Leo Picard, an Activist who had studied history at the University of Ghent before the war, specifically cited a comment from his former thesis adviser, Hubert Van Houtte (a partisan of French in Flanders) as helping to jump-start his move toward Activism. Van Houtte is supposed to have said that "This will be the end of *flamingantisme*. This war will deal it a more terrible blow than the Revolution of 1830."[33] Indeed, these citations – from the true to the manipulated to the invented – did important rhetorical work for the Activists. They helped to shift the blame to the French-speakers for breaking the *union sacrée*. Hippoliet Meert, an Activist who had criticized the "Frenchification" of Flanders before the war, wrote a letter to *De Witte Kaproen* (a Flemish publication edited by the Belgian-loyal *flamingant* Alfons Sevens) in which he castigated those such as Sevens who called for Flemings to "be quiet" about language issues during the war. Citing the examples of Maeterlinck, Harry, and Colleye, among others, Meert claimed that faced with cynical individuals who wanted to use the war as an

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[31] Wils, *Flamenpolitik en Activisme*, 51–53.

[32] "La vérité sur la capitulation d'Anvers," Documenten betreffende de Wereldoorlog 1914-1918, de Vlaamse Beweging, het Activisme en de Vlaamse hogeschool van Gent, Hs. III 23, 2.4.3., University of Ghent Library. The remark about "greedy Jews," besides its obvious reference to the substantial Jewish population of Antwerp in general, may also allude to Maarten Rudelsheim, an Amsterdam-born Jewish resident of Antwerp who was active in the Flemish Movement, and who would become an Activist in the latter years of the occupation.

[33] Leo Picard to Karl Lamprecht, 30 December 1914, cited in Daniël Vanacker, *Het activistisch avontuur*, 2nd ed. (Ghent: Academia Press, 2006), 27.

opportunity to further "Frenchify" Flanders, "being quiet is cowardice." When, even during the war the *fransquillon* benefitted from "advantages," the Flemings were forced to turn to the Germans, not out of any great esteem for them, but rather to protect their rights. "We want to have a restored Belgium as a real fatherland," claimed Meert, but not just any restored Belgium, rather one with strong guarantees against further "Frenchification."[34] These stories of plots against Flemish also helped to reinforce the image of the French-speaking Fleming as a "traitor," providing a convenient "Other" for the Activists.

The Birth of "Activism:" A Renewed Challenge to French in Flanders

The war, by its very nature a disruptive event, seemed to offer possibilities to individuals and groups who sought to fundamentally alter their societies. Different nationalist movements in belligerent countries attempted to take advantage of the upheaval to change or sever their relationship with their host state. Both the Entente and the Central Powers seized the opportunity to weaken their foes by encouraging separatist movements. The Central Powers wooed the inhabitants of Russian Poland by creating a simulacrum of an independent state, and (halfheartedly) supplied Indian and Irish independence struggles against the British Empire. Several Entente armies accepted Czechs and Slovaks – technically subjects of the Habsburg Empire – as volunteers who were fighting to hasten the birth of a new Czechoslovak state at the expense of Austria-Hungary, while the British supported the insurrection of local Arab leaders against the Ottomans, as memorialized in the 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*.[35]

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[34] Hippoliet Meert to the Editors [of *De Witte Kaproen*], Ghent, 17 July 1916. Documenten betreffende de Wereldoorlog 1914-1918, de Vlaamse Beweging, het Activisme en de Vlaamse hogeschool van Gent, Hs. III 23, 2.2.2., University of Ghent Library.
[35] Alan Sharp, "The Genie That Would Not Go Back into the Bottle: National Self-Determination and the Legacy of the First World War and the Peace Settlement," in *Europe and Ethnicity: The First World War and Contemporary Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Seamus Dunn and T. G. Fraser (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 10–29.

Belgium – namely, Flanders – also provided a tempting target for those who would harness nationalist sentiment as an instrument of war. Granted, the Belgian case was not as bombastic as those mentioned above. There was no Flemish equivalent of the Easter Uprising, nor did any German agent in Flanders cut as dashing a figure as T. E. Lawrence. The popular support among Flemings for the small groups of militants who worked with the Germans to further the "Flemish" cause was miniscule compared to pro-independence sentiment in Ireland or the Czech lands during the war. Still, the experience of the Germans' attempt to exploit the language question for their own war aims – the so-called *Flamenpolitik* or "Flemish Policy" – with the help of their Flemish collaborators would leave an indelible stamp on Belgian society.

A small group of Flemish extremists, the "Activists," who saw the German occupation as an opportunity to advance "Flemish interests" – and perhaps their own careers – collaborated with German military and political figures who, under the guise of helping their Germanic "brothers" in Flanders, had an interest in reshaping or even destroying the Belgian state for German geopolitical ends. The appellation "Activist" had originally been given to Swedish politicians who advocated their nation's joining the Central Powers in pursuit of Swedish foreign policy goals. It was adapted to apply to those Flemings who supported "actively" working with the Germans in trying to change the language situation in Belgium. By deduction, those Flemings who refused to collaborate with the German occupation authority, even if they supported some of the linguistic policies they proposed, came to be known as "Passivists."[36]

[36] De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 152; Sophie De Schaepdrijver, "Belgium," in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Chichester, UK and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 393.

From *Université de Gand* to *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*: The Transformation of the University of Ghent as Catalyst for (Francophone) Resistance

As discussed in Chapter 1, the question of the University of Ghent was one of the utmost importance to both the Flemish Movement and the Francophones of Flanders. For the former, the University needed to teach in Dutch in order to create an upper class who could effectively administer Flemish society in its own language. For the latter, the French-speaking University of Ghent was an important center of international scholarship and a vital link between the Flemings and Walloons which helped created an upper class fluent in the "common" language of all educated Belgians, French.

Along with the atrocities of 1914, the execution of heroic figures like Gabrielle Petit and Edith Cavell, and the eventual "administrative separation" of Belgium in 1917 (discussed below), the transformation of the University of Ghent into a Dutch-medium institution in 1916 was one of the most radical – and remarked on – actions of the Germans in Belgium during the war. It was, perhaps, the action that would have the *most* resonance for the Francophones of Flanders in particular; they certainly referred to it constantly during the political debates of the 1920s. It also further divided the Flemish Movement, already splintered by differing attitudes toward Activism. While a majority of Flemings rejected German interference in a matter that was explicitly "domestic" in nature and which did not seem to follow any military necessity, others felt that the Flemings should grasp the opportunity to have a university in their language – which was their right – no matter who provided it.

Originally, many Activists and their sympathizers envisioned the extent of their collaboration with the Germans as limited by the latter's commitments under the Hague Convention of 1907. According to this international convention on the laws of war, an occupying power, in wartime, was to administer the occupied nation as much as possible according to the preexisting legislation of that

country, making exceptions only for pressing military contingencies. The Activists thus hoped that the German occupation government, as the *de facto* executive power in most of Belgium, would apply the linguistic legislation which had been voted into law before the war in a more "stringent" manner than the prewar Belgian state was supposed to have done. In doing so, the Activists hoped, it would show many Belgians that the language laws were in fact viable, and not the potential disaster which many of their (French-speaking) detractors had claimed they would be. Likewise, the successful and diligent application of these laws would make Flemings unsatisfied with a more lackadaisical interpretation after the war, thus placing the postwar Belgian government before a *fait accompli* regarding the use of languages in public services.

Around the winter of 1915–1916, however, the German occupier decided to step out of the bounds of this tenuous legality by "reopening" the University of Ghent. The four Belgian universities had suspended their activity at the beginning of the war, reflecting the attitude that young men of university age should be found at the front rather than in the classroom. The Germans planned to reopen the University of Ghent as a Dutch-language institution (a "Flemish University [*Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*]"), thereby fulfilling a longtime desideratum of the Flemish Movement and, so the German administration hoped, gaining a greater part of the sympathies of the Flemish population. None of the other universities in Belgium were reopened. The Universities in Brussels and Leuven, as "free" universities, were technically outside of state control, although some Activists debated forcing the latter to reopen as a Dutch-language institution.[37] While some obscure Walloon academics considered reopening the other State University, that of Liège, under German patronage, the occupier was hesitant to do so as the physical plant had been badly damaged during

[37] Meeting of Council of Flanders, 3 June 1917, in Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge, *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre (Raad van Vlaanderen)* (Brussels: Th. Dewarichet, [1928]), 15; Extraordinary meeting of Council of Flanders, 14 August 1917, in *Ibid*., 21]; Delforge, *La Wallonie et la première guerre mondiale*, 261.

the fighting of August 1914 and the German authorities were loath to do anything that might remind people of the ransacking of the institution.[38]

The Germans' decision to create the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool* was in part inspired by the Central Powers' experience with the University of Warsaw. At the beginning of the war, Warsaw was located in Congress (Russian) Poland, and since 1870 the University there had taught in Russian. Despite their own questionable history with Polish language rights in Prussian Posen, the German government attempted to win over the inhabitants of former Congress Poland, especially the intelligentsia. To do so, they transformed the University of Warsaw into a Polish-language institution, a move that much of the local population welcomed.[39]

In September 1915, the head of the German civil administration for East Flanders sent out a circular to the prewar teaching staff of the university, asking if they would be able to resume teaching.[40] This request would lead to massive refusals on the part of the professors, making the University of Ghent one of the earliest major loci of resistance to the Germans. The overwhelming majority of the professoriate declared that they could not resume teaching, both because conditions in the *Etappengebiet* made teaching difficult, and because it was their moral and patriotic duty not to teach while students were on the front lines and while the other universities in the country remained closed.[41] Some professors, such as Henri Pirenne – who before the war had been well-known in Germany and had promoted Franco-German intellectual *rapprochement* – had lost loved ones to German arms (in this case, Pirenne's third son, Pierre).[42]

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[38] Delforge, *La Wallonie et la première guerre mondiale*, 386–388.
[39] Robert Spät, "Für eine gemeinsame deutsch-polnische Zukunft? Hans Hartwig von Beseler als Generalgouverneur in Polen 1915-1918," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 58, no. 4 (2009): 473–475.
[40] Karel de Clerck, ed., *Kroniek van de strijd voor de vernederlandsing van de Gentse Universiteit* (Beveren: Orion, 1980), 105.
[41] See the professors' replies to the inquiry of 17 September 1915 of the *Zivilverwaltung* of East Flanders regarding their ability to resume their teaching duties, in Elienne Langendries, ed., *De "Vlaamsche Hoogeschool" te Gent (1916-1918)*, (Ghent: Archief RUG, 1984-1985), 1:300–312, as well as that of Academic Council of the University, 1:313–315.
[42] Bryce Dale Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia, 1974), 205, 212–213.

As Sophie De Schaepdrijver points out, this resistance of the teaching staff, with Pirenne and his friend and colleague, historian Paul Fredericq, at its head, was in 1915 still directed against any reopening of the university whatsoever.[43] In early 1916, however, the Government-General was anxious to expand its *Flamenpolitik* and thus sent out a second circular, asking not only if the professors would be willing to resume their teaching duties, but also if they could do so in Dutch. Many professors reiterated the reply they had provided to the inquiry of September 1915, namely that concerns about academic freedom and patriotic duty prevented them from teaching "in any language." Paul Fredericq, who had been a well-known supporter of the Flemish Movement, stated that his oath of loyalty as an employee of a state university prevented him from taking part in a restructuring of the university which was out of the remit of the occupying power as outlined in the Hague Convention: "That is why, while being able to teach in Dutch, I do not believe myself in a position to do so [*en mesure de le faire*]."[44] Several members of the faculty stressed that while "Flemish" was their "mother tongue," they did not have a sufficient grasp of the Dutch terminology relating to their subjects, having taught, sometimes for decades, in French. The 68-year-old Henri Schoentjes, former rector of the university and professor in the faculty of sciences, added that he could not, "on the eve of [his] retirement… assume the task of a long literary preparation" to be able to teach his subjects in Dutch.[45]

Another letter, dated 13 April 1916, asked professors who had yet to clarify their ability to teach in Dutch to do so. Only those who were completely incapable of teaching in Dutch or improving their Dutch sufficiently to do so would continue to draw partial salaries as they did

[43] De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 157.
[44] Paul Fredericq to the Administrator-Inspector of the University of Ghent, Ghent, 14 February 1916, in Langendries, ed., *De "Vlaamsche Hoogeschool" te Gent (1916-1918)*, 1:328.
[45] H. Schoentjes to Monsieur Vanderlinden, Administrator-Inspector of the University of Ghent, Ghent, 14 February 1916, in Langendries, ed., *De "Vlaamsche Hoogeschool" te Gent (1916-1918)*, 1:343.

before; otherwise, professors were expected either to teach their courses or lose all payment.[46] Georges Hulin de Loo – who was mayor of the East Flemish village of Loo-ten-Halle well as an art historian at the University – responded that there was no question of him teaching in Dutch, "given [his] insufficient knowledge of Flemish." He wanted to avoid any semblance of "ambiguity" on his part, however, because even though claiming to be unable to teach in Dutch could be "profitable" for him (as he could still draw a partial salary), his "duty of loyalty" forbade him from teaching at the University of Ghent "in the present circumstance," even in French.[47]

George Garnir, one of the three founding editors of the semi-satirical weekly, *Pourquoi Pas?*, which [as we have seen] had an anti-*flamingant* and francophile tone, kept a diary under the German occupation. In an entry of 21 October 1916, he noted the official opening of the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool.* Moritz von Bissing, the German Governor-General, gave a speech for the occasion in which he extolled the potential of the reformed university for improving relations between the Germans and the "low German" race of the Flemings. This speech, Garnir predicted, would remain the "Tunic of Nessus" for *flamingantisme* (referring to the story from Greek myth of the garment that killed Hercules) that is to say a source of anguish and destruction of which one could not rid oneself.[48]

In the fall of 1916, the *Indépendence belge*, a newspaper published among Belgians in exile, spread a bilingual petition among Belgian refugees expressing disapproval of the "Flemish University." The petition's wording avoided any question of the absolute merits of a Flemish University, but instead argues that the reopening and reorganization of a university during wartime falls far outside the exigencies of war which would permit the occupying power to contravene

[46] "Der Verwaltungschef bei dem Generalgouverneur in Belgien," circular dated 13 April 1916. Georges Hulin de Loo collection, Hs. 3098, University of Ghent Library.
[47] Draft of letter of Hulin de Loo to "Monsieur le Président [of the *Zivilverwaltung* of East Flanders]," 20 April 1916. University of Ghent, Rare Manuscripts, Georges Hulin de Loo, Hs. 3098.
[48] [George Garnir], Pourquoi Pas? *pendant l'occupation* (Brussels: Éditions de l'expansion belge, 1918), 141.

Belgian legislation. In addition, the petition praised the heroism of Paul Fredericq and Henri Pirenne who had refused to collaborate with the new institution and who were taken to Germany as prisoners of war. Many signers identified themselves as Flemings, some writing letters in Dutch or Flemish which they sent along with the signatures, explaining that even though they had supported the transformation of the University before the war, they could not accept this "unpatriotic" maneuver.[49] One Belgian living in England asked the Belgians working in his workshop, "mostly Flemings… almost illiterate, some [of whom] do not even know how write," to sign the petition.[50]

For the most part, protests against the Germans' reopening – let alone transformation – of the university did not explicitly *deny* the right of Flemings to have their a university in their language, but rather contested the Germans' capacity to make such a change. An example from *L'Antiprussien*, a clandestine French-language newspaper from Ghent, demonstrates this point rather nicely. On the eve of the German invasion, the paper noted, the question of the University of Ghent was a hot-button political issue. The Germans had hoped to make political hay out of the situation by unilaterally "giving" the Flemings a university, but "patriotic *flamingants*" rejected the Germans en masse. These Flemings cited the lack of a legal precedent for the Germans to do so and worried (with reason, as events would later demonstrate) that such an act would "gravely compromise the [legitimate] project to *flamandiser* the University of Ghent."[51]

Administrative Separation and the Council of Flanders

The creation of a Dutch-language university in Ghent under German patronage was one of the first in a series of steps which the Germans and their Activist allies would institute in their

[49] Found in Commission des Archives de Guerre, Folder 114, "Protestations contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand envoyées à *L'Indépendence belge*," AGR.
[50] Letter of Arthur Fouarge, 30 October 1916. Commission des Archives de Guerre, Folder 114, "Protestations contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand envoyées à *L'Indépendence belge*," AGR.
[51] "Anti Bosch" (pseud.), "La Flamandisation de l'Université de Gand… par les Allemands," *L'Antiprussien*, 21 July 1916, 2–3. Available from The Belgian War Press website, maintained by CEGESOMA (http://warpress.cegesoma.be).

attempt to reshape or even eliminate Belgium. In the last two years of the war, the German administration would undertake even more radical measures, two of which are extremely important for the story of the French-speaking minority in Flanders. One of these was the introduction of "administrative separation" – the central administration of the country was divided into two separate bureaucracies, one for "Flanders" and located in Brussels, and one for "Wallonia" and located in Namur (this, despite – or perhaps because – many members of the Walloon Movement would have viewed Liège as the obvious choice for the "capital" of Wallonia). The other was the creation of a kind of semi-official national or constituent assembly for Flanders, the Raad van Vlaanderen (Council of Flanders). This body often viewed itself as a proto-parliament of sorts, and later declared the "autonomy" of Flanders in January of 1918.

As we saw in Chapter 1, only a relatively small cadre of Walloon politicians, and even smaller group of young Flemish radicals, saw administrative separation of the country along linguistic lines as a serious solution to Belgium's political quarrels before the war. The Francophones of Flanders in particular feared such a development: a distinct Flemish sub-state entity would be overwhelmingly "Flemish," while a unified Belgium had an equilibrium of Flemish- and French-speakers, taking Walloons into account. As such, the Francophones of Flanders would be politically and linguistically isolated in an administratively separate Flanders. This, of course, was one of the motivations of the Germans, and especially of their Activist allies in proclaiming administrative separation.

Propaganda directed at Walloons in occupied Belgium that attempted to convince them of the value of administrative separation specifically addressed the question of the Francophones of Flanders. One example comes from *L'Avenir wallon*, a censored (German-approved) newspaper published by Franz Foulon. In its program, *L'Avenir wallon* claimed (against the mountain of evidence from before the war) that "Wallonia [had] always declared that she was not interested in the internal affairs of the Flemish household." If "today [1916] the Flemings want to exile French

from their territory… That is their right," even if it destroys Belgian unity. The alternative, keeping Belgian unity intact at the expense of both Flemings' and Walloons' inherent uniqueness, was unacceptable.[52]

More prolix was Paul Ruscart, a bureaucrat in the employ of the ephemeral "Walloon Ministry" established in Namur, in his pamphlet *Propos d'un Wallon sur la question flamande*. Ruscart mocks prewar Walloon "anti-separatists" who cited a concern for the cultural and economic well-being of Flanders (which, in their eyes, required the use of French) to justify their meddling in Flemish affairs: "To these all-too-generous friends of the Flemings, whose happiness they pretend to cultivate in spite of themselves, we respond that before worrying about the Flemings of French culture, they would do much wiser work in worrying about the destinies of the Walloon people, and about the defense of French culture in Wallonia."[53] Ruscart tries to mitigate Walloon skepticism of Activism by citing several prominent Activists, including August Borms (perhaps the most notorious member of the Council of Flanders), all of whom claim that "we do not hold anything against the Walloons, but rather against the 'bastard Flemings' and '*fransquillons*.'"[54]

Nevertheless, the Activists' animosity toward the presence of French in Flanders, while focused on the "*fransquillon*" "language traitors," also seemed to require evacuating all "foreigners" whose presence contributed to the power of French in Flanders. As such, the Activists called for the deportation of Walloon civil servants in Flanders, and mooted doing the same with French nuns and monks who taught at private schools in Belgium, having relocated there in large numbers following the Third Republic passing a series of laws against religious education.[55]

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[52] "Notre programme," in *L'Avenir wallon*, 9-15 November 1916, 1, reproduced in Jean-Pierre Delhaye and Paul Delforge, *Franz Foulon: La tentation inopportune*, Écrits politiques wallons 9 (Namur and Charleroi: Institut Jules Destrée, 2008), 227.
[53] Paul Ruscart, *Propos d'un Wallon sur la question flamande* (Namur [Brussels]: [Imprimerie Emile Kumps], 1918), 12n2. HL.
[54] *Ibid*., 8–9.
[55] See *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre* 61, 125, 422; Delforge, *La Wallonie et la première guerre mondiale*, 117.

On 12 October 1918 the Constitutional Commission of the Council of Flanders submitted a draft of a new constitution for an independent Flemish polity. The Preamble notes that Article 2 of this constitution establishes Dutch as the sole official language of Flanders, and thus puts an end to "the nonsensical affirmation of Belgian politicians and even of scholars like Kurth and Pirenne that Flanders is a bilingual country." Flanders could not claim the title of a bilingual country, the Preamble continues, just because of a small minority which pretended to speak French well. This would replace Article 23 of the Belgian constitution, which was nevertheless good if one believed "that the citizen lives for the civil servant and not the civil servant for the citizen."[56] Here we see a rather pithy rejection of the idea of "liberty of language" which was so important to the French-speakers of Flanders, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Reciprocal Accusations of National Indifference: "*Flamingant*" vs. "*Fransquillon*"

Over the course of the war, both the Francophones of Flanders and the some of the more radical partisans of the Flemish Movement developed and invested themselves in their *Feindbild* of the other. Indeed, during and after the war each group defined itself in large part against the other, viewing them as "traitors." I understand this situation as a case of competing, if not necessarily mutually exclusive, national identities – and "national indifference." For the Francophones of Flanders, adherence to the "Flemish Movement" – especially after some Flemings began to collaborate with the Germans – was tantamount to treason toward the *Belgian* nation. Francophones often applied this frame indiscriminately to loyal *flamingants* and Activists alike. For the Flemish Movement, especially its more radical members (including many of the Activists), it was the Francophones of Flanders whose use of French – and, perhaps, love of France – was treason toward the *Flemish* nation.

[56] Translated in *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 268.

I would like to analyze these accusations of "treason" by using insights gleaned from the study of "national indifference," a concept created and articulated by historians of Central and Eastern Europe over the past decade and a half. "National indifference," as a lens through which to view the past, has several components. Briefly, "national indifference" in and of itself refers to the relative *lack* of importance that many individuals attached to their supposed "national identity," even in places like the Habsburg Empire, which were supposedly riven with nationalist discord. Tara Zahra, one of the premier proponents of national indifference analysis, argues that historians have overrepresented the power of nationalism and national identities in large part because of the sources available to them – while nationalist organizations produce copious amounts of paper, people who are not concerned with "national identity" do not form associations of nationally indifferent individuals.[57] Thus, historians – even those critical of nationalist claims – tend to "read" the actions of individuals through a nation-centric lens, ascribing nationalist motivations to their historical subjects where none may have existed. So, for example, parents in Bohemia might have chosen between a Czech and a German school for their children not on the basis of their "nationality" or home language, but because one school had a better schoolhouse than the other.[58] To be sure, neither those French-speakers who participated in Belgian-patriotic resistance nor the radical supporters of the Flemish Movement who uttered calumnies about the Belgian government were "nationally indifferent."

However, the theory of "national indifference" also has another aspect, one which is quite relevant to studying the actions of both French-speakers and members of the Flemish Movement who attacked one another. As Zahra points out, "the coherence of [national indifference], I believe, ultimately lies in nationalists' own use of it to mobilize potential recruits. Regardless of diverse

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[57] See her excellent introduction to the concept: Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.
[58] Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 44.

motivations and interests, nationally indifferent individuals were denounced, boycotted and rallied for the national cause…"[59] As I said, we can scarce call the proponents of French or of Flemish during World War I "nationally indifferent." Crucially, though, each saw *the other* as "indifferent" to the nation to which they "ought" to belong. For the French-speakers of Flanders, *flamingants* who pilloried the Belgian government for its inaction on language problems during wartime (let alone those who collaborated with the Germans) were maddeningly unmoved by sentiments of Belgian patriotism. Conversely, proponents of the Flemish Movement inveighed against *fransquillons* who peevishly insulted their own "mother tongue" and called for the adoption of another, thereby showing themselves untouched by a real "Flemish feeling."

The Flemish "masses" – who perhaps better fit the definition of nationally indifferent individuals – were the object of nationalist proselytizing from both the Francophones of Flanders and the Flemish Movement. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Francophones of Flanders had attempted to convince the "common Fleming" of the utility of French, in part appealing to Belgian patriotism. Likewise, the Flemish Movement portrayed the common folk of rural Flanders as *both* the repository of Flemish values *and* a population who needed to be "initiated" into a fully-Flemish consciousness.[60] These attempts to win over the Flemish population continued during the war, and we will look at those of the Belgian patriotic organizations in some detail later in this chapter.

The war, with its attendant heightened emotional states and increased stakes, made the fear of individuals who were "nationally indifferent" – or perhaps we might say "nationally traitorous" – much more pronounced than in the prewar era. I would like to focus on the way in which the Francophones of Flanders became "enemy number one" in the radical Flemish Movement's politics during the war. While the Flemish Movement had few kind words for the "*fransquillons*" before the

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[59] Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 104.
[60] See Pieter Judson's discussion of the ambivalent role played by nationally indifferent individuals in the imagination of nationalist movements. Judson, 5–6, 23, 68.

summer of 1914, radicalized Flemings saw the French-speakers of Flanders as less redeemable and even more of a danger to Flanders than ever before. Indeed, we might say that the war of words that the radical Flemish Movement waged on the French-speakers of Flanders was as much a maneuver to rally support from their own "side" as it was to try to convert those from the other "side." The radical Flemish Movement's attack on the Francophones of Flanders is important for this study in that it created a kind of "anti-image" against which the Francophones felt they needed to argue, thereby informing these Francophones' *self*-image and *self*-representation.

The "*Fransquillons*" as Enemy Number One of the Flemings?

At the same time that the French-speakers of Flanders seemed to minimize their identity as a group, the Flemish Movement – mostly Activists, but some Belgian loyalists as well – increasingly portrayed the "*fransquillon*" as a distinct – and adversarial – population. The "*fransquillon*" was an insidious opponent of Flemish language and culture, an "other" all the more pernicious because he was a "traitor" to Flanders, having allegedly abandoned his native Flemish out of opportunism or perversity. "Worse than the Turk is the Turkish convert." So went a Czech saying aimed at "Germanified" Czechs, as cited by Jeremy King in his study of changing identities in the Bohemian town of Budweis.[61] The radical Flemish Movement expressed similar sentiments toward the Francophones of Flanders, reserving an ire for them that surpassed any dislike of Walloons or the French. Indeed, one student of the Activist press argued that one Activist paper "took aim primarily at the *fransquillons*, who were portrayed as the greatest enemies of the Flemish people. In the eyes of

[61] Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 63.

the paper the attitude of the Walloons was understandable… they were standing up for their own interests. The *fransquillons* were the traitors…"[62]

The identification of speaking French with treason went hand-in-hand with the identification of French-speakers as being "against nature." Cyriel Verschaeve, a Flemish chaplain serving on the front whose writings spread both among the Front Movement and in Activist circles, wrote a "Flemish Nationalist's Catechism" in March 1918, which was structured as a series of questions and answers designed to present his form of Flemish nationalism to the reader in the form of a dialogue. One of these question-and-answer pairs takes aim directly at the French-speakers of Flanders:

> Q. Are there native Flemings who favour the [*sic*] French?
> A. Among animals, among all other creatures, such unnatural hostility to one's race and kind would be impossible; but the human capacity for unnatural behaviour and stupidity far exceeds that of the animals.
> There are, alas, many such Flemings.[63]

The "Council of Flanders" found many reasons to inveigh against "*fransquillons*," often using the world vaguely as a term of abuse for members of the Belgian establishment with whom they disagreed. In a meeting with German Chancellor Georg von Hertling, two members of the Council discussed the future of a potential independent Flanders. Josué De Decker said that the Flemish Movement started as a reaction against "Belgicism [*sic*]," and that "among the enemy forces which we [the Flemings] have to combat, the *fransquillons* occupy the first place; they are, unfortunately, the wealthy, strong in capital, who not only deceive us in elections, but join with our enemies to hobble all laws relating to languages."[64] Another internal report of the Council of Flanders argued that among the enemies of the "Flemish ideal," one ought to place "those who consider that in Flanders, for reasons of the general interest of civilization, a foreign [*sic*] international language should have

[62] Anne Baeyens, "Het activisme te Antwerpen: Gedachteninhoud van de Antwerpse activistische pers 1914-1918" (Licentiate thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1973), 186.
[63] Cyriel Verschaeve, *Catechismus van den Vlaamschen Nationalist*, translated by Tanis Guest in Theo Hermans, Louis Vos, and Lode Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History, 1780-1990* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1992), 243.
[64] Minutes of an interview of Tack and De Decker with Chancellor Hertling at Spa, 3 August 1918, translated in *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 436.

priority over the Flemish language," like Cardinal Mercier, as well as "partisans of bilingualism" like Charles de Broqueville.[65]

In one telling exchange in the Council, August Borms complained about divisions among its members. Another member interrupted, claiming that such divisions were caused by the presence of "*duitschkiljons* ['Little Germans,' formed by analogy with '*franskiljon*']." Borms objected to this formulation: "'*Duitschkiljons*,' here again another manner of sowing mistrust. Are there any among us who want to Germanize Flanders, to give Flanders a German influence?"[66] Borms evidently thought that French-speakers presented the greater threat to Flanders than did the Germans (upon whom his position depended).

The *fransquillons* became the object of abuse, both real and rhetorical, from the Activists. During a meeting of the Council of Flanders in July 1917, one member suggested that the effect of forced deportation of Belgians to Germany to work as laborers could be mitigated by prioritizing the deportation of out-of-work *fransquillons*![67] Anti-Activists saw these attacks as a cheap attempt to curry favor with the Flemish masses. A (French-language) anti-Activist pamphlet chastised those who celebrated the opening of the "Flemish University" of Ghent while working-class Flemings were marched off to forced labor:

> They spoke of stipends, salaries, future victories, the extermination of the *fransquillons* by brick blows and gunfire, the moral and intellectual recovery of the Flemish people, the rectification of grievances, but none of these righters of wrongs had the indelicacy to inquire of His Excellency [Von Bissing] of the fate reserved for [the forced laborers].[68]

[65] "Rapport H. Van den Broeck. Les différentes tendances du Flamingantisme," 16 May 1918, translated in *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 389.
[66] Meeting of Council of Flanders, 16 August 1918, summarized in *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 66.
[67] Extraordinary Meeting of Council of Flanders, 7 July 1917, summarized in *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 16.
[68] "Les deux cortèges," anonymous pamphlet [1916?]. Documenten betreffende de Wereldoorlog 1914-1918, de Vlaamse Beweging, het Activisme en de Vlaamse hogeschool van Gent, Hs. III 23, 2.4.1., University of Ghent Library.

For the anonymous author(s) of this tract, fulminations against the "*fransquillons*" served only to distract Flemings from the *real* injustices they suffered – at the hands of the Germans and their collaborators.[69]

Speaking French *as* Patriotic Resistance

The French language was associated with Belgian patriotism during World War I. Given the prevalence of French in Belgian politics and high society, this is not surprising. As a recent pop history of the Flemish Movement remarks:

> It is in French that Cardinal Mercier addressed pastoral letters drenched in patriotic ardor to the faithful, that Emile Vandervelde became the first socialist in Belgian history to accede to the rank of minister, that King Albert incarnated the resistance to the invader, that Émile Verhaeren went all the way to the Americas to sing the praises of brave little Belgium, that Camille Huysmans took part in the socio-pacifist [*sic*] High Mass of the Second International in Stockholm.[70]

It is worth noting that several of these individuals have specific connections to Flanders. Cardinal Mercier, though a Walloon, was the primate of Belgium by way of his office as archbishop of Mechelen, and a professor at the Catholic University of Leuven.[71] The poet (and wartime cultural ambassador) Émile Verhaeren had sang the praises of his native Flanders in French, before his death in a train accident in 1916. Camille Huysmans, the Socialist among the "three crowing cockerels" representing the Flemish Movement in the Belgian parliament, still used French when representing Belgian socialists at the meeting of the Second International.

The connection between Belgian patriotism and the French language was perhaps more pronounced in Flanders than elsewhere in Belgium not only because it was the language of the upper classes, but also because it could represent a conscious repudiation of the "Flemish-only"

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[69] On the Germans' use of Belgian forced labor, see Jens Thiel, *"Menschenbassin Belgien": Anwerbung, Deportation und Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 2007).

[70] Pierre Stéphany, *La Flandre aux Flamands: De 860 à 2008* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2008), 120.

[71] On Mercier during the war, see Ilse Meseberg-Haubold, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers gegen die deutsche Besetzung Belgiens, 1914-1918: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Rolle des Katholizimus im ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1982); Robrecht Boudens, *Kardinaal Mercier en de Vlaamse beweging* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1975), 110–195.

policy that the Activists imposed with the Germans' help. Certainly, not all Flemings made this connection, and many Flemings who remained wholeheartedly loyal to Belgium also had cause to criticize the place of the *fransquillon* in Flemish society. However, the connection between Belgian patriotism and the (not necessarily exclusive) use of French was *not* solely a creation of hot-headed exiles like Gérard Harry, nor was it even the limited to native French-speakers.

Indeed, "common" Flemings used French as a way to show their displeasure with the wartime *status quo*. One diarist from Brussels, commenting on the opening of the "Flemish University" of Ghent in October 1916 and the speech made by Governor-General von Bissing during the ceremonies, claimed that "in Ghent, the indignation amongst the population is so great that many old inhabitants of the city [*vieux Gantois*] no longer want to speak Flemish."[72] Several Flemish "heads of the family" throughout the country chose to display their displeasure with the Germans and their Activist allies by claiming that their children's mother tongue was French, even when that was quite likely not the case. One clandestine Flemish newspaper, *De Vlaamsche Leeuw*, which presented itself as fiercely pro-Belgian, anti-German, *and* anti-*fransquillon*, claimed when an Activist educational bureaucrat sent a questionnaire to families in Brussels asking what language their children spoke, "embittered Flemish fathers of the household" answered "French." Such actions demonstrated the way in which the Activists' collaboration with the Germans had (unfortunately) made "half-hearted" individuals turn away from everything seen as "Flemish."[73]

A particularly striking example (though one which we ought to take with a grain of salt, as the incident is documented in a collection of Activist documents translated and published after the war by the Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge, a pressure group whose members were disproportionately Francophones of Flanders) of the *use of French itself* as a form of resistance comes

[72] Garnir, Pourquoi Pas? *pendant l'occupation*, 141.
[73] "L.E.E.W.," "Onze taal in het lager onderwijs," *De Vlaamsche Leeuw* (November 1917): 3. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.

from a public girls' school in Ghent. Over the course of January and February 1918, the Commission of Arts and Sciences of the Council of Flanders examined the use of languages at the school. Of 307 Flemish students at the school, *all of them* had parents who said that French was the common language of their home environment, even when those parents spoke little to no French. The inspectors from the Council of Flanders attributed this uniformity to a concerted effort by some "organism" to pressure parents to assert the necessity of French schooling, despite the new regulations that required the exclusive use of Dutch in public schools in Flanders.[74]

The postwar editors of this document, however, read these (counterfactual) declarations of Flemish parents that their home language was French as signs that they recognized the utility of French, despite the Activists' attempts to force a homogeneously-Dutch education. The editors commented:

> The Activist policy consisted of "Flemishifying" official education. The report demonstrates that it was deserted for private education. The Activists thus appealed time and time again to the German authority in order to obtain the *flamandisation* of private education, and this under the harshest sanctions.
> The German authority, fearing a strong movement of public opinion, always refused to accord the *flamandisation* of private secondary schools to the Activists.

Henri Pirenne, the renowned historian at the University of Ghent who was taken into German custody in March 1916 for his role in opposing the occupant's plans to reopen and *flamandiser* the university, is supposed to have insisted on speaking French when arrested. This, despite the fact that he had studied at the University of Leipzig and had developed extensive personal and professional contacts throughout Germany. When asked why he refused to speak German, Pirenne allegedly responded: "I have forgotten German since 3 August 1914." Apocryphal or no, this anecdote demonstrates the strong connotations languages have to their speakers. They are more than just tools of communication; different languages may be evoke different feelings and attitudes in multilingual individuals. Pirenne's recollections of his time in German captivity provide

[74] "Une Enquête de la Commission de contrôle linguistique," translated and reproduced in *Les archives du Conseil de Flandre*, 311–315.

further evidence of the way in which the French language and patriotic feeling were connected in the minds of many "Francophones of Flanders," a class into which we might place Pirenne despite his birth in Wallonia, having taught at the University of Ghent since 1886 and married a member of the Francophone bourgeoisie of the city. Before the war, Pirenne had been one of the key proponents of the existence of a historical "Belgian" identity that long predated the existence of the Belgian state; one element of that identity was the existence of a bilingual ruling class in Flanders. The war seemed only to reaffirm Pirenne's beliefs in the existence of a real Belgian identity, in spite of German arguments to the contrary.

Pirenne's journal provides a window into his appreciation of the role of the French language. Remarking on conditions in the German POW camp for officers in Krefeld in which he was first kept, Pirenne muses that it is "curious to note" the extent to which French is the common language of the camp, both amongst prisoners of different nationalities and between them and the Germans. This is not particularly surprising, as the British and Russian POWs mostly came from the upper echelons of their respective societies, being officers, and were thus likely to have had some study of French; the use of French on the part of French and Belgian officers was self-evident. Nonetheless, Pirenne wonders if the "difficulty of English pronunciation or the more attractive character of the French language and people" might have determined this state of affairs.[75]

Pirenne soon found himself moved from the officers' camp at Krefeld to the camp at Holzminden, farther east in Germany, where many prisoners were enlisted men. Pirenne kept himself busy – and helped other prisoners pass the time – by giving a course on Belgian history in the camp. The course became popular, even among some German soldiers. During his last lecture before the Germans transferred him to live among civilians (under supervision) in the city of Jena, Pirenne discussed the tenth and eleventh centuries in Belgian history. Among the events of this time

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[75] Henri Pirenne, *The* Journal de guerre *of Henri Pirenne*, ed. Bryce Dale Lyon and Mary Lyon (Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1976), 75. Entry of 29 April 1916, at Krefeld.

period that Pirenne thought it important to mention (it is the only specific topic from the lecture that makes it into his journal) was the "first introduction of French in Flanders."[76] Might we imagine that Pirenne was making a subtle jab at the Germans and Activists who, by "banishing" French from Pirenne's University of Ghent and other public institutions in Flanders, were doing violence to Flanders's "historical bilingualism?"

We should not, however, see Pirenne's esteem and concern for the French language as evidence that he idolized France as did, say, Raymond Colleye. Instead, Pirenne, the internationally-renowned historian of Belgium, was himself deeply devoted to the country of Belgium, a preoccupation reflected both in his historiography and in his personal sentiments. Journal entries from his days in German POW camps demonstrate his satisfaction at the proof of "Belgianness" that he witnessed there. Shortly after his arrival at Holzminden, several witnesses informed him that Flemish and Walloon POWs got along without any major incidents.[77] The series of informal lectures organized for prisoners (where Pirenne would give his lessons of Belgian history) included French courses for Flemings and Flemish courses for Walloons.[78] Alfons Sevens – the Flemish author who had argued against using French as a medium of instruction in Flemish schools before the war – was also interned at the camp in Holzminden on account of his resistance to the Germans. On meeting Pirenne, Sevens said that the experiences of the war and occupation had convinced him that Pirenne had been correct to see a "Belgian soul." (Pirenne does not mention if this had an impact on Sevens's preferred language policies.)[79] The following day, Pirenne gave a lecture on Belgian history in which he argued that the *linguistic* border in the medieval "Belgian" territories never constituted a *political* border, and that "there [was] no racial conflict in Belgium."[80]

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[76] *Ibid.*, 173. Entry of 26 August 1916, at Holzminden.
[77] *Ibid.*, 103–104. Entries of 19 and 20 May 1916, at Holzminden.
[78] *Ibid.*, 118. Entry of 2 June 1916, at Holzminden.
[79] *Ibid.*, 158. Entry of 1 August 1916, at Holzminden.
[80] *Ibid.*, 159. Entry of 2 August 1916, at Holzminden.

As a final testament to the prevalence of using French to "claim" a Belgian-patriotic identity – in this case, as a defense against accusations of disloyalty – I offer the following: During the occupation, at the newly-Dutch-speaking University of Ghent, the new rector, Hoffmann, had maintained that students should still be able to take their exams in French and that the teaching personnel should not be "intolerant." This fact was apparently used by some French-speakers who attended the institution as proof that their (Belgian) patriotism was beyond reproach: they had only ever spoken French, not Dutch![81]

Francophone Political Engagement during the War: Patriotic Resistance

In Chapter 1, I noted that the Francophones of Flanders only began to organize themselves into groups whose purpose was *explicitly* related to their status as French-speakers in Flanders after the Flemish Movement's early legislative victories seemed to challenge their position in society. Even then, these organizations, such as the AFVLF, only rarely and incompletely moved from talking in terms of interests to talking in terms of identity; most Francophones of Flanders saw themselves as Flemish Belgians who happened to speak French, either by birth or by choice. These groups, as we saw, coexisted with an extensive network of political, economic, and cultural organizations which were *de facto* Francophone in Flanders, even if this did not form an explicit part of their identity or "mission."

During the war, the Francophones of Flanders' portrayal of themselves as a distinct group, which was quite limited before the war, virtually disappeared. Instead, they portrayed themselves exclusively as loyal Belgians. Crucially, the viscerally anti-*flamingant* language sometimes seen in prewar publications like the newsletter of the AFVLF, and in the writings of some Francophone refugees and expats during the war, was notably absent from the wartime resistance writing of

[81] M. Bittlestone, "De Gentse Universiteit gedurende de Eerste Wereldoorlog (2)," *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen* 42, no. 2 (1983): 66–67, 67n27.

Francophones of Flanders in occupied Belgium intended for public consumption.[82] I offer two tentative explanations for this, one idealistic and one cynical; the two are not mutually exclusive. First, the common experience of the German invasion and occupation may have made linguistic quarrels seem petty in the face of shared *Belgian* suffering. Second, not toeing a strong "francophone" line avoided alienating the great mass of Flemings at a time when unified resistance to the Germans was the order of the day.

There was at least one organization that we may classify as a *de facto* Francophone of Flanders resistance group, in the sense that, like some of the cultural and economic organizations in larger Flemish cities, most of its members were French-speaking, even if this was not an explicit part of their identity. This was Action patriotique, a group active in Ghent during the last year of the war. The very name – in French, and containing the word "patriotic" – demonstrates the appeal to (Belgian) patriotism that characterized French-speakers' action during the war.

The membership list of *Action patriotique* reads like a "Who's Who" of the Francophone bourgeoisie of Ghent, with many lawyers, business-owners, and high-level civil servants included. There were also many (former) professors of the University who refused to teach at the "*Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*" established by the German occupier.[83] One of the principle organizers of Action patriotique was Joseph Bidez, a professor of Walloon origin who taught at the University of Ghent. Other members were well-known for their public opposition to the *flamandisation* of the University, both before and after the war. Eugène Dauge gave speeches against the *flamandisation* of the University before the war.[84] Eugène Eeman, a physician and professor at the University of Ghent, was the first president of the postwar Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et de

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[82] See the example of *L'Antiprussien* and its attack on the *German* "Flemishification" of the University of Ghent – but not against the idea of "Flemishification" *tout court* – discussed earlier.

[83] Joseph Bidez, ed., *L'Action patriotique: compte-rendu de l'assemblée plénière du 24 novembre 1918: Rapport sur l'histoire d'une société secrète sous l'occupation allemande à Gand* (Ghent: I. Vanderpoorten and E. Grootaert, 1919), 65–70.

[84] Eugène Dauge, *Contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand: Discours prononcé à l'assemblée générale de l'Union des Anciens Étudiants de l'Université de Gand le 20 novembre 1910*. Brochures "Gand français," FHMW.

la liberté des langues (later Ligue nationale pour l'Unite belge). Serving as rector of the University after the war, he resigned his office in 1923 when the Belgian parliament approved the partial *flamandisation* of the University.[85] Hubert Van Houtte a historian at the University who had supposedly confided to Leo Picard (see above) that the *flamingantisme* would be done for after the war, wrote a booklet shortly after the war questioning whether Flemings "really" wanted a Flemish University.[86] *Action patriotique*'s members of honor also demonstrate the connection between Belgium patriotism and the French language. To be certain, one of the members of honor was Paul Fredericq, the Flemish historian who had made his preference for a partly-Flemish university abundantly clear, but in a way, he is the exception that proves the rule. Fredericq – whose nephew was a member of the Central Committee of Action patriotique – had demonstrated his Belgian patriotism by refusing to teach at the "*Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*," leading the resistance of like-minded professors along with Henri Pirenne, and, like Pirenne, suffering deportation to Germany for his troubles. Other members of honor included Henri Pirenne himself, Émile Braun, the French-speaking mayor of Ghent as well as Pierre Verhaegen, a Francophone aristocrat who, along with his father, had been imprisoned by the Germans for circulating anti-German literature. Verhaegen, too, would write a pamphlet against the *flamandisation* of the University after the war.[87]

Action patriotique had been founded in the aftermath of the 30 March 1918 arrest and deportation of Ghent Mayor Émile Braun and one of the city aldermen for their resistance to the German administration. The group issued a series of tracts, in both French and Dutch, meant to sustain Belgian patriotism and combat what it portrayed as the subversion of Flemish identity on the part of the Germans and the Activists. Many of these tracts attacked the Activists' interpretation and

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[85] J. Pirenne and E.-W. Eeman, "La Ligue Nationale," *Le Flambeau*, May 1923, 199–204; Paul Regniers, "EEMAN (Eugène-William)," in *Biographie nationale*, vol. 35, supplement vol. 7, First Installment (Brussels: Bruylant, 1969), 224–225.

[86] H[ubert] Van Houtte, *Le peuple flamand demande-t-il une Université flamande?* (Ghent: I. Vanderpoorten, 1918). HL.

[87] [Pierre] Baron Verhaegen, *Contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand* (Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1922). Brochures "Mouvement flamand," FHMW.

celebration of the 1302 Battle of the Golden Spurs, which had been increasingly considered a "national" holiday for the Flemish before the war.[88] The Activists intended to promote the celebration of 11 July as a Flemish holiday, vaunting the Flemings' defeat of France – and, the Activists continued, of French culture and influence in Flanders. One pamphlet on the "Activist error concerning the Battle of the Golden Spurs" agreed that Flemings could look back to the victory of 1302 with pride, but contested any racial or linguistic reading of the battle. While it was true that the battle was waged against the forces of the King of France, the County of Flanders which prevailed on the field stretched from Zeeland (in the modern-day Netherlands) to the Artois region (in modern-day France) and "a part of its population thus spoke Dietsch [*thiois*] or Flemish and [the] other part Walloon or French." Such linguistic duality was also apparent in other "proto-Belgian" states like the Prince-Bishopric of Liège and the Duchy of Brabant and therefore "the juxtaposition of [the] two national languages in modern Belgium is not at all artificial but rather has deep roots in the past." [89]

Finally, I should note that there were several Flemish-minded anti-German publications produced during the war, such as *De Vlaamsche Leeuw* (The Flemish Lion) and *De Vlaamsche Wachter* (The Flemish Watchman) in occupied Belgium, and *Vrij België* (Free Belgium) among Belgian exiles in the Netherlands. These publications typically attacked the Activists not only for collaborating with the Germans, but also for besmirching the good name of the Flemish Movement and making it harder for the Flemings to maintain the moral "high ground" vis-à-vis the "*fransquillons*." These Belgian-patriotic Flemings criticized some French-speakers of Flanders for potentially alienating large swathes of the Flemish population through their heated anti-*flamingant* rhetoric.

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[88] Gevert H. Nörtemann, *Im Spiegelkabinett der Historie: Der Mythos der Schlacht von Kortrijk und die Erfindung Flanderns im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Logos, 2002); Philippe Raxhon, "1792 contre 1302: d'une bataille à l'autre sur les chemins de Flandre et de Wallonie," *Cahiers marxistes*, no. 226 (2003): 131–148.
[89] Bidez, ed., *L'Action patriotique*, 33-34.

Conclusion: A Brief Euphoria

Upon the liberation of the country, expressions of Belgian patriotism reached an apogee. In his war memoirs, one French-speaker from Ghent, Marc Baertsoen, recounts meeting with a soldier from Liège on 11 November 1918 as the Belgian army entered town. Thinking that he would honor him by referring to the resistance of the city of Liège in 1914, Baertsoen cried out "Ah! Bravo! The valorous Liégeois!" to which the soldier responded "No sir… there are no more valorous Liégeois: There are only Belgians!"[90]

The French were hailed as liberators as they made their way into Belgium; their entry into Flanders was celebrated as warmly there as in Wallonia. In Bruges, cries of "*Vive la France*" greeted French troops upon their arrival into the city; the English received a somewhat colder welcome.[91] Henry Carton de Wiart, a Catholic Walloon politician, wrote in his memoirs that upon the visit of French President Poincaré to Bruges on 9 November 1918, the mayor did not have a suitable gift to offer to the French head of state. Instead, he offered "the text of a German poster condemning the city to a heavy fine and the elimination of all signage in French to punish the population for crying '*Vive la France*' during the transit of French prisoners of war." Carton de Wiart reported that Poincaré was moved to tears.[92]

The return of the Belgian government and Belgian troops to Flanders entailed the return of "Belgian" iconography. Paul Bergmans, who before 1916 had been an assistant librarian at the University of Ghent, wasted no time in preparing the university for the return to the old Belgian regime. On the morning of 11 November 1918, he had the Flemish signage removed from the front of the university library and had a Belgian flag hoisted there instead.[93] Other signs of "Belgianness"

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[90] Marc Baertsoen, *Notes d'un Gantois sur la guerre de 1914-1918* (Ghent: A. Vandeweghe, 1929), 359.
[91] Delforge, *La Wallonie et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 423.
[92] Henry Carton de Wiart, *Souvenirs Politiques (1878-1918)* (Bruges and Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1948), 382–383.
[93] Vanacker, *De activistische avontuur*, 452.

in Flanders were French: on the same day, the Ghent College of Aldermen resumed publishing its reports in French.[94]

The imminent end of the war and defeat of Germany meant the effective end of Activism, as the Activists realized that they had precious little support among the Flemish population. In October and November 1918, most members of the Council of Flanders accepted the inevitability of the return of the Belgian government which had been based in Le Havre and De Panne. While the exile of the Belgian government was ending, that of the Activists was beginning. Numerous individuals involved with Activism: members of the Council of Flanders, mid- to high-level state employees who owed their position to their political beliefs (or opportunism), journalists who supported the German administration and/or the Council of Flanders, much of the teaching staff of the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*, and the like fled to the Netherlands or Germany.[95] Some of the former members of the Council of Flanders formed a "Flemish Committee" in the Netherlands, which would have but a brief postwar existence and little impact.[96]

The liberation of the country also led to a rash of popular retribution against those who had (or were perceived to have) collaborated with the German occupier. In Ghent, houses of Activists were pillaged and "decorated" with graffiti reading "*Landverrader* [Dutch: Traitor]" and "*Justice est faite* [French: Justice has been done]." The presses of Activist newspapers were trashed. At a café which had been a meeting place for students at the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*, the proprietor was thrown out of his establishment and his daughters were "abused [*mishandeld*]."[97] Some Activists and their sympathizers would later claim that such vigilante justice had the tacit approval or even assistance of the police and governmental authorities, even arguing that during the war "*fransquillons*" had drawn

[94] Willem Dedobbeleer, "De Groote Oorlog bekeken door een pince-nez: Edward Anseele, het socialisme en de bezetting van Gent" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 2007), 175.
[95] Vanacker, *De activistische avontuur*, 446–447.
[96] Pro Flandria Servanda*: Flanders' Right and Claim for Autonomy, Formulated, Explained, Justified* ([The Hague]: The Flemish Committee, 1919).
[97] Vanacker, *De activistische avontuur*, 453–455.

up blacklists of individuals whose belongings were ripe for "plunder."[98] Several Flemish-minded soldiers who formed part of the returning army called for moderation of this uncontrolled revenge. They likewise circulated a pamphlet which claimed that returning Front soldiers could not accept the reopening of the University of Ghent in French in light of their great sacrifices along the IJzer. Such calls had little impact.[99]

Writing in 1972, G. Van Lent-Speelers, daughter of Reimond Speelers, the second rector of the "Flemish University" in Ghent under German occupation, recalled the conditions under which her family had to flee Ghent in November 1918, when she was a child of thirteen. Her testimony expresses the way in which Flemish radicalism was being assimilated to German-ness, a process which would continue unabated in the 1920s. She states that as she and her family were preparing to leave Ghent, and Belgium altogether, one passer-by hurled insults at them, calling her father "*flamboche*" (a portmanteau of "*flamand* [Fleming]," or perhaps "*flamingant*," and "*boche* [an insulting term for a German, i.e. "Jerry"]) and her Dutch nanny "*hollandoboche*."[100] The (intentional) conflation of "*flamingant*" with "*boche*" would persist in the rhetoric used by opponents of language legislation in the interwar years.

The contrast between the triumphant attitude of the victors with a sense of persecution on the part of those who had collaborated with the losers was not unique to Belgium after World War I; indeed, it is present in any society after a period of occupation. This duality would come to dominate memories of the war in Flanders, and in turn Flemish politics and society. What *is* distinctive about this situation is the rapidity with which the Francophones' position as "moral victors" of World War I became compromised, and how began to lose their grip on the political and social discourse within Flanders. The turnabout came to be in large part because the number of (ex-)Activists who had lost

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[98] Alphonsus Theophil Maria Jonckx, *Belgica juris contemptrix* (Antwerp: Centraal Comité voor Amnestie, 1932), 67–77.
[99] Vanacker, *De activistische avontuur*, 453–455.
[100] G. Van Lent-Speelers to M. De Wulf, 7 July 1972. Karel Van Acker-M. De Wulf collection, "Documentatie over de vernederlandsing der universiteit van Gent in 1916-18 en erna," University of Ghent Archive.

faith in the Belgian state was augmented by a much larger contingent of Flemings who, while not anti-Belgian, were disappointed in the Belgian government for not delivering the linguistic and social reforms to which they felt entitled after participating for four years in the Belgian war effort. It is the struggle for these reforms – which threatened the standing of the flush-with-patriotism Francophones of Flanders – that forms the central conflict of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

FROM RESURGENCE TO RETREAT: THE FRENCH-SPEAKERS OF FLANDERS FROM WORLD WAR I TO THE LANGUAGE LAWS OF THE 1930S[1]

Matters of Life and Death

In a 1922 article in a Franco-Belgian magazine, J. M. Remouchamps, Secretary-General of the *Assemblée Wallonne*, called for the maintenance of the French-language University of Ghent. Arguing that Flemings both wanted and needed access to French education, Remouchamps cited an anecdote (for which he does not provide a source) from the World War: among the last wishes of a Flemish worker sentenced to death by the Germans was that his wife "teach [their] son French, so that he may make his way in the world."[2]

This brief passage neatly encapsulates many of the common tropes used by partisans of French in Flanders in the years following 1918. Remouchamps was a Walloon politician associated with the Liberal Party, belonging to a faction of the Walloon Movement which continued to place a great deal of importance on the persistence of French in Flanders. The article itself was published in *France-Belgique*, a magazine which promoted closer cooperation between France and Belgium, as countries which shared the same language and which had fought together in the Great War. Remounchamps, like many other supporters of French, buttressed his arguments by saying that the continued use of French reflected the real interests of most Flemings, who were concerned with the ability of their children to progress socially and economically. Finally, Remouchamps's framing of a French education in Flanders as the last wish of a martyr of World War I is but one example of

[1] Parts of this chapter were previously published as David J. Hensley, "An Unlikely Minority? The Development and Use of 'Minority Rhetoric' among the Francophones of Flanders, 1918-1932," *Journal of Belgian History* 43, no. 4 (2013): 80–107. I thank the editors for their permission to reproduce this material here.

[2] J. M. Remouchamps, *Le Flamingantisme et l'Université de Gand* (Brussels: D. Reynaert, [1922]). Brochures, "Mouvement wallon: Flamingantisme," MVW. Offprint from *France-Belgique*, November 1922.

many from this time period of the use of references to the war to create pathos in the reader to support the agenda of the French language supporters.

World War I would weigh heavily on discussions of language policy in Belgium, as both various factions of the Flemish Movement as well as their opponents used emotionally-supercharged references to those who had been persecuted or killed "for the cause" during the conflict. Each side thus claimed that they best represented the real legacy of the war. The debate on the future of language use in Belgium – especially in Flanders – became a contest to decide the meaning of the war's dead and the duties of the war's survivors.

For many in the Flemish Movement, many Flemish soldiers – a disproportionately large contingent of the Belgian army, for the reasons discussed in the previous chapter – had paid the ultimate price in defense of Belgium, which the state should repay with rights for the Flemish (Dutch) language. The argument was encapsulated tidily in the signs that often sprung up on graves and memorials to the dead: "*Hier ons bloed, wanneer ons recht*?" – "Here [is] our blood, when [will we have] our rights?" This connection of the sacrifice of the Flemish war dead to the righting of linguistic wrongs was heightened by the increasingly fantastic stories of soldiers who had died in battle, unable to understand the orders given to them by an overwhelmingly French-speaking officer corps.

It is telling that, after the war, the new, radical Flemish party which began to contest elections was called the Front Party, as many of its members had been active in the Front Movement during the war, and it claimed to continue the fight for Flemish rights which had begun in the trenches. The Front Party also became increasingly sympathetic to former Activists, seeing them as victims of an overly-retributive Francophile Belgian state. Therefore, in addition to demands for language rights, the Front Party fully supported amnesty for those Activists who had been

prosecuted by the state because of their actions in the war – a stance which many Flemings of differing political stripes came to hold.

Among the more moderate Flemish political figures, the call for "equality in right and in deed" between Flemings and Walloons became a common rallying cry, reflecting a set of political demands known as the "Minimum Program." The Minimum Program had been formulated during the war by several "passivist" Flemish organizations which were loyal to Belgium, and found its most dogged proponent in Frans Van Cauwelaert, the well-known Catholic parliamentarian from Antwerp. The Minimum Program called for the complete *flamandisation* of education, administration, the legal system, and the armed forces in Flanders.[3]

As one might expect, the Minimum Program was not popular with French-speakers. The conservative Catholic politician Charles Woeste, a Brussels native who had long been an MP for Aalst despite knowing little Dutch, was certainly *not* an ardent Francophile; or at the very least hated *la gueuse* (the French Republic) as much as many French monarchists. He refused to publicly support the Minimum Program, as a partisan of "liberty and equality" who was willing to address Flemish "grievances" but who "could not accept an imperative mandate" on how to address such "grievances." In his memoirs, the octogenarian Woeste voiced his concern at the "outraged *flamingants*" who wanted to "ban" the French language from Flanders. Vastly underestimating the popularity of the Flemish Movement, he opined that Cardinal Mercier should have forbidden the lower ranks of the Flemish clergy from reading certain *flamingant* publications and from participating in political rallies, but that he was confident that "good sense" would soon gain the upper hand over the extremists.[4]

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[3] Lode Wils, "Koning Albert I en het Minimumprogramma," *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen* 54, no. 3 (1995): 167–171; Reginald de Schryver, "Minimumprogramma," *NEVB*.
[4] Charles Woeste, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique (1914-1921)* (Brussels: L'édition universelle, 1937), 78, 102–103.

Other criticisms of the Minimum Program focused on its strident language. One Flemish war veteran who was active in Belgian patriotic movements during the interwar period (on which more below) described the wording of the Minimum Program as "lame [*boîteuse*]." "Equality in right and in deed" was impossible. While there could be, and should be, *legal* equality of French and Flemish in Belgium, "not even a speech from the throne" could "make 1 equal 10," nor make Flemish the *effective* equal of French. The Flemish question was essentially a "cultural and social question" which could not find its solution in the political sphere.[5]

The experience of the war also fueled a strident, usually Francophone, form of Belgian patriotism which saw the unitary Belgian state as not only surviving the trial by fire of 1914–1918, but being strengthened by it. "Brave little Belgium," for which Belgian soldiers as well as civilians like Gabrielle Petit had given their lives, could not dishonor their memories by dismantling itself. For this brand of Belgian patriotism, the Flemish Movement was equated with Activism, and thus seen as wanting to dig Belgium's grave. The existence of a French-speaking class in Flanders was not only the proof of the unity of the state, but also a necessary guarantor of that unity, lest the nation find itself divided into two halves which, literally, could not understand one another. So solicitous were some political figures of protecting the concept of Belgian unity that they refused to even countenance any theoretical "duality" in Belgium. In 1919, for example, the director of the Royal Mint refused a design for coinage that figured two women labeled "Flanders" and "Wallonia" holding aloft the Belgian escutcheon: "I think that it is wrong that [the artist] evokes the pacification of the Flemish-Walloon quarrel; he would have done much better to celebrate… the immortal glory

[5] A. Wullus-Rudiger, "Le Conflit linguistique et sa solution," *Revue belge*, 1 July 1929, 16.

of our country; it is an error to associate our laurel-wreathed king to the *flamingant* struggle. We ought to, on the contrary, unite him with the triumph of our armies."[6]

We may also call the language question one of "life and death" not only as a metaphor calling referring to war imagery, but also as a matter of economic and social success. The Flemish Movement continued to argue, as it had before the war, that a truly *Flemish* elite was needed to raise the economic standing of Flanders, and thus a university which could *create* that elite was necessary. For the Walloon Movement, the threat of "bilingualism" being extended to Belgium as a whole threatened the livelihood of Walloon civil servants who, supposedly unwilling or unable to learn Flemish, would be excluded from public employ. Some French-speakers in Flanders, on the other hand, saw the *maintenance* of bilingualism (in Flanders) as a social necessity for their existence as "a group" – demonstrating the beginnings (or might we say renewal) of a separate Francophone-of-Flanders identity, which I will discuss in greater detail below. Some observers, such as the Ghent journalist Luc Beyer de Ryke, a self-described *fransquillon*, place the laws which mostly eliminated French schooling and administration in Flanders at the beginning of the long, slow decline of the Francophone Flemish community: "The legislation of 1932 methodically and inexorably set the steamroller in motion."[7]

A Country Still Licking its Wounds

In the aftermath of the four years of war and occupation through which Belgium had suffered, feelings of patriotic euphoria often masked the deep dissatisfaction many Belgians had with their political system. The experience of Activism in the occupied country, and of the Front

[6] J. Allard, Director of the Royal Mint to the Governor of the National Bank, 5 May 1919, cited in Alexis Schwarzenbach, *Portraits of the Nation: Stamps, Coins and Banknotes in Belgium and Switzerland 1880-1945* (Bern *et al.*: Peter Lang, 1999), 150.
[7] Luc Beyer de Ryke, *Les lys de Flandre: Vie et mort des francophones de Flandre (1302-2002)* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2002), 14.

Movement among the soldiers, had created lasting divisions in the body politic. For some, the Flemish Movement and even the Flemish language were tainted – perhaps irrevocably – by the collaboration of some Flemish with the Germans. For others, the bitter experience of being a "second-class" soldier on the front lines, or of seeing the Germans provide some of the linguistic reforms for which they had so hoped, fueled the perception that the Belgian state was unwilling or unable to satisfy the just linguistic demands of the Flemish people.

After a series of discussions between King Albert I and prominent politicians, held at the Palace of Loppem in West Flanders on 21 November 1918, the new government proposed a series of reforms in response to real and perceived discontent among the Belgian populace, two of which would have massive repercussions for the language issue in Flanders. The first called for universal manhood suffrage, without the system of extra votes for the wealthy or educated as had existed before the war. Such a move would have the effect of making the Flemish-speaking majority in Parliament even more stark than it had been before the war. The second called for the creation of the "foundations" of Dutch-language university education in Ghent. Left unsaid was whether these "foundations" would eventually *replace* the French-language University of Ghent or *coexist* with it.

These suggestions reflect a conviction that the sacrifices of common (Flemish) soldiers on the field of battle deserved recompense in the political sphere.[8] However, these and other measures that seemed to support the Flemish "Minimum Program" alienated many members of the Belgian cultural and political elite. The change in voting requirements was implemented in 1919 on a *de facto* basis, not – as it was technically supposed to be – as a change to the Constitution (which would require the election – under the old suffrage system – of a new legislature as a constituent assembly). The vote was extended to all men 21 and older (lowere from 25) with no supplemental votes as in the previous system. In 1921, the system was amended: Women were still excluded from the

[8] Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale*, trans. Claudine Spitaels and Marnix Vincent (Brussels et al.: Peter Lang, 2004), 291.

national franchise, but they could now vote in local elections and *stand* for election to the national parliament; war widows were allowed to vote on their late husbands' behalf.

November 1918 witnessed the German Revolution as well as aborted attempts at left-wing revolution in Alsace-Lorraine and the Netherlands. Many critics, especially conservatives, saw the concessions which the king and the government made to the Flemish Movement (as well as, for example, labor unions) as a hasty attempt to prevent a similar revolution in Belgium, occasionally referring to the "Coup of Loppem."[9] *La Flandre libérale*, the liberal newspaper of Ghent, accused the government of having "the intention of turning its nose on the guarantees which the founders of our nationality have surrounded the revision of our constitutional pact." Indeed, much like Germany had ignored all semblance of legality in 1914, the Belgian government was preparing to treat the constitution "like a scrap of paper."[10]

The declaration regarding university education in Ghent touched on an issue that, as we have seen, provoked spirited discussion before the war and provided one of the key bones of contention between loyal Belgians and Activists during the war. After the war, many in the Flemish Movement argued not only *for* a Dutch-language university in Ghent, but *against* the continued existence of the French-language university, as this disappearance would weaken the ability of the French-speakers of Flanders to "reproduce" themselves. The majority of the Flemish Movement also argued against establishing a new, separate Flemish University elsewhere in Ghent or in Antwerp while keeping the French-language one on pragmatic grounds. They argued that the cost of creating a new university from scratch would not be justified; the relatively small number of students in Belgium barely

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[9] Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 onwards*, 3rd ed. (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers, 2009), 146–148; Laurence van Ypersele and Axel Tixhon, "Célébrations de Novembre 1918 au royaume de Belgique," *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 67 (2000): 62–63.
[10] "Le coup d'État," *La Flandre libérale*, 3 December 1918, 1.

provided adequate enrollment in the already-existing institutions[11]. Both the French-speakers of Flanders and many Walloons saw the "destruction" of the French-speaking university of Ghent as a concession to Flemish "extremism." From a sense of patriotism that saw French as a necessary unifying factor for the Belgian nation, and using arguments that called back to the experience of the war, these Francophone groups fought tenaciously for the maintenance of a French-language University in Ghent, a fight which dominated the political engagement of the Francophones of Flanders *qua* Francophones during this time. Analyzing the battle over the French-language University of Ghent, and the ways in which the Francophones attempted to defend it, will occupy an important section of this chapter.

During the war, several self-described Belgian nationalists called for an expansion of Belgium's borders, claiming that the Belgian state had been "crippled" by the loss of parts of what are today the Netherlands and Luxembourg in the 1830s. The proponents of such ideas gathered in groups like the Comité de politique nationale, which also tended to hold a very conservative, French-speaking point of view in regards to Belgian internal politics. French-speakers from Flanders played an important role in these organizations. *L'Action nationale*, an Antwerp-based French-language paper whose editorial staff had worked on *La Métropole* (another important Antwerp French-language paper) during its printing in exile in the United Kingdom in World War I, fervently supported such annexationist aims, maintaining and even expanding the role of French in Flanders, and harsh punishment both for the Central Powers as well as those Flemings who had collaborated with them.[12]

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[11] In the 1920-1921 academic year, there were 8,435 Belgian students (alongside 894 international students) in Belgium's four complete universities, 0.11% of the Belgian population of 7,465,782 as enumerated in the census of 1920. *Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo belge (1920-1921)* (Brussels: Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Hygiène, 1923), xv, xlvii.

[12] Jean Beaufays, "Aspects du nationalisme belge au lendemain de la Grande Guerre," *Annales de la Faculté de Droit de Liège* 16, nos. 1–2 (1971): 105–171.

Ultimately, the grandiose expansion plans of these groups went unfulfilled. Belgium, which had not eagerly participated in many Allied actions, had further alienated international opinion when it made territorial claims on the neutral countries of the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Belgium did receive some compensation, though. Belgium annexed a handful of villages on the Belgo-German border, and Belgium was awarded a League of Nations mandate over the former German colony of Ruanda-Urundi.[13] Belgium also joined a defensive military pact with France on 7 September 1920, abandoning its traditional neutrality. While this did not directly impact language policy, it did seem to verify the fears of some in the Flemish Movement – including many Belgian-loyal Flemings such as Frans Van Cauwelaert – that Belgium was becoming too closely identified with French interests.[14]

Indeed, the Allied victory in World War I seemed to vindicate the French-speaking bourgeoisie in Flanders, as the Activists' project crumbled immediately upon liberation, and the French language acquired a renewed cachet in Flanders as the language of Belgium's great ally and as a language of domestic accord between Flanders and Wallonia. As we saw earlier, the Belgian-loyal Flemish Movement called on the memory of Flemish sacrifices on the field of battle to justify their calls for more comprehensive language laws. Opponents of these language laws could also muster memories of the war to support their politics. If using French made one a good patriot and ally of the French, than any attempt to limit it might make one a bad patriot, or even an ally of the Germans.

We can see this kind of rhetorical identification of "language legislation" with "German tyranny" in the response to the Law of 31 July 1921 on language use in public administration. The law specified that local and provincial administrations had to use the language of the region for internal communications, as well as when communicating with other administrative bodies. When

[13] Romain Yakemtchouk, *La Belgique et la France: Amitiés et rivalités* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 59–63.
[14] *Ibid.*, 70–73; Guido Provoost, *Vlaanderen en het militair-politiek beleid in België tussen de twee wereldoorlogen: Het Frans-Belgisch militair akkoord van 1920*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1976).

communicating with the public, however, such public authorities could *choose* to do so in both languages, and if 20% of the voters of a commune demanded, the commune was *required* to communicate with individuals in the language that the individual used to contact the administration. As one analysis of the law put it, "the law of 1921 thus, in principle, put both languages on an equal footing, while remaining careful to accommodate the Francophone minorities established in Flanders."[15] French-speaking opinion nevertheless savaged this relatively moderate law – one which would seem downright generous to the Francophones of Flanders by the eve of World War II – as the "Von Bissing Law," evoking the specter of the late German Governor-General of Belgium.[16]

If the Francophones of Flanders could use accusations of being "German" to attack their political opponents, it stands to reason that they would have a more favorable opinion of things "French." This was indeed the case, but we should hesitate to identify the Francophones of Flanders as lackeys of France (as some extremists in the Flemish were wont to do). While the Francophones of Flanders gloried in the ability to enjoy French cultural production and have access to French scholarly works, and were grateful for the role of France in liberating Europe, they were not – as a handful of Walloon radicals were – partisans of annexation to France. Such a project ran counter to their extremely strong identification with Belgium, and many Francophones of Flanders were devout Catholics and uneasy with the militantly secular Third Republic. Rather, the Francophones of Flanders supported French as an international language that it would behoove Flemings of all backgrounds to learn. They feared attacks on the language of Voltaire not only from the Flemish Movement but also – foreshadowing a concern that would become commonplace after World War

[15] Pierre Maroy, "L'évolution de la législation linguistique belge," *Revue du droit public et de la science politique en France et à l'étranger* 82, no. 3 (1966): 461–464. See also Jan Clement, *Taalvrijheid, bestuurstaal en minderheidsrechten: Het Belgisch model: Een constitutionele zoektocht naar de oorsprong van het territorialiteitsbeginsel en de minderheidsrechten in de bestuurstaalwetgeving* (Antwerp et al.: Intersentia, 2003), 239–320.
[16] Chantal Kesteloot, *Au nom de la Wallonie et de Bruxelles français: Les origines du FDF* (Brussels: Éditions Complèxe, 2004), 38.

II – from the growth of the Anglo-American idiom. I would now like to examine how the question of French in Flanders was linked to the question of French worldwide.

The Language Question in Flanders and Francophonie

On 30 July 1914, just prior to the German invasion of Belgium, the Tienen weekly newspaper *Les Jumelles*, dedicated to "Sports, the Arts, and the Theater," ran an opinion piece entitled "Let's speak French, please." The author lamented the use of English terminology in sports, tennis above all. "It's pushing the *Entente Cordiale* a bit too far" to require the use of a dictionary to follow a tennis match, and "*rien*" could fill in for "love," "*quinze*" for "fifteen," and so on. Indeed, using French terms would be "the surest way of being understood by our compatriots" – namely, other Belgians.[17]

A French-speaker lamenting the dominance of English in popular culture sounds oddly familiar to many observers a century later. Nevertheless, this piece is an interesting artifact of a very peculiar historical moment. With a publication date of 30 July 1914 in a weekly paper, it was almost certainly written just before the beginning of the war on 28 July. French was seen as endangered by *English*, and the *Entente Cordiale* merited a brief, almost humorous mention. Moving from an international to a domestic context, *Les Jumelles* – itself a mostly-French language publication – argued that French was a necessity for communication *between Belgians*. The town of Tienen was (and is) a major sugar-refining center located in Flemish Brabant, approximately 50 kilometers southeast of Brussels. A newspaper in mid-sized *Flemish* city, whose readers were likely members of the bourgeoisie connected to the refining industry, either of Walloon extraction or Flemings who were (or aspired to be) French-speaking, could thus proclaim without batting an eyelash that *French* was the best *lingua franca* for Belgians.

[17] André Glarner, "De grâce, parlons français," *Les Jumelles: Sports, Arts, Théâtres* (Tienen), 30 July 1914, [3]. Hagelands Historisch Documentatiecentrum en Stadsarchief, Tienen.

The war would quickly change many of these assumptions. For members of the class that likely read papers like *Les Jumelles*, the *Entente Cordiale* could no longer be a laughing matter, but rather the source of an alliance which promised to rid Belgium of the hated German invader. French was important not as a way to differentiate oneself from the English, but rather as a sign of difference from the "*boche*." One point remained similar, though: for the Francophone bourgeoisie of Flanders, French remained one of the best hopes for Belgian unity. English, on the rise thanks to the power of the British Empire and the United States, was surely important for those Belgians who were engaged in international trade and diplomacy. But for most Francophones of Flanders, the worldwide rise of English – which, unlike French, had no native speakers in Belgium – did not seem, at first, to have any bearing on the domestic situation in Belgium. Even during the interwar period, however, there were hints of the coming seismic shift in worldwide language usage, which would not leave Flanders unshaken.

Starting in the interwar period, French faced more and more competition from English as an international language.[18] One author has argued that this very decline in the ubiquity of French fueled efforts to promote it: "No longer could the defenders of the universal role of French rest on laurels won in the eighteenth century, no longer could they hope to see French remain an important international language without a deliberate effort to defend and diffuse it."[19] Flemish Socialist Camille Huysmans noted in 1930 that what made the Belgian language case of particular interest to the outside world was that not only did each of the languages involved have a hinterland outside of Belgium, but one – French – was a major international language.[20] French faced challenges both from the Flemish Movement in Flanders, and also from the English-speaking world abroad. While many important intellectuals in Belgium and France saw the outcome of the war as a victory for

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[18] Charles Issawi, "The Struggle for Linguistic Hegemony, 1780-1980," *American Scholar* 50, no. 3 (1981): 382.
[19] David C. Gordon, *The French Language and National Identity (1930-1975)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 11.
[20] Camille Huysmanns [*sic*, Huysmans], "The Flemish Question," *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 9, no. 5 (1930): 680.

"Latinity," there were signs that French, the nearly uncontested language of international relations before the war, faced increasing competition from English. Contemporary observers in Belgium also made the connection between the domestic language question and the use of languages in the international arena.

Shortly before the end of the war, Alfons van de Perre, a Catholic MP for Antwerp and ardent supporter of the Flemish cause, who was often seen as sympathetic to the Front Movement and even to Activism (though he took part in neither), wrote an English-language text, *The Language Question in Belgium*.[21] Van de Perre intended this book to enlighten the outside world about the question of languages in Belgium in a way which would breed sympathy for the Flemish Movement. Van de Perre's decision to write in English, and not French, is in itself telling, perhaps linked to his conviction that English was gaining ground on French, although more likely a consequence of having spent much of the war as a refugee in Great Britain.

While most of the text focuses on developments within Belgium, Van de Perre makes several references to the international status of French, and challenges thereto. Van de Perre cites Oxford literary scholar Walter Raleigh, who claimed that the greatest gain for Britain from the war was the "triumph of our common language" made possible by the entrance of the United States."[22] The rise of the United States as a world power strengthened the global position of English; though in the interwar period this was still secondary to the influence of the British Empire and British trade in promoting the language. As a result of American and British pressure, both English and French were official working languages at the Paris Peace Conference which produced the treaties ending the World War, a departure from nearly two centuries of precedent establishing French alone as the

[21] Alfons van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium* (London: Grant Richards, 1919).
[22] *Ibid*., 236. See Walter Alexander Raleigh, "Some Gains of the War: An Address to the Royal Colonial Institute, February 13, 1918," in *England and the War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918), 75–104, esp. 92–99. Raleigh specifically welcomed both the international domination of English as well as the *rapprochement* between American and British idioms.

language of diplomacy in the West.[23] Noted French linguist Anotine Meillet complained that "the end of a war in which France played the primary military role has thus consecrated the ruination of the privilege which made French the sole diplomatic language." Furthermore, the League of Nations – in the francophone city of Geneva, no less! – had both English and French as official languages "despite all the inconveniences," opening the door to other languages becoming official and the creation of a diplomatic Tower of Babel.[24]

Van de Perre argued that demographics were working against French-speakers, as English- and German-speakers were reproducing at faster rates, and that even among the Latin tongues, French would take second place to Spanish. He hinted that this development could have repercussions on language relations in Belgium: "If the outcome of our learning French is to bring about the loss of our Flemish soul, our Flemish citizenship, then in future [*sic*] we shall learn English instead of French; it will be ever so much easier, and more useful too. More useful because, after this war, English will be the language of the world."[25]

Van de Perre's suggestion that English was less threatening than French to Flemings' identity illustrates Québécois political scientist J. A. Laponce's argument that languages which are socially and geographically "closer" to a given population can actually be *less* favored than those which are farther away. Laponce argues that for a Flemish person, learning French brings the "danger" the he or she may be assimilated to the more prestigious French-speaking population, potentially "losing" their Flemish identity, much as learning English poses more of a "danger" to a Québécois than to a Parisian.[26] Thus, for a Fleming, learning English would not carry the "threat" of being assimilated to another culture, as English is clearly a "foreign" language for them, in a way that

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[23] Keith A. Hamilton, "A Question of Status: British Diplomats and the Uses and Abuses of French," *Historical Research* 60, no. 141 (1987): 125–129; Issawi, "The Struggle for Linguistic Hegemony, 1780-1980," 386.
[24] Antoine Meillet, *Les langues dans l'Europe nouvelle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Payot, 1928), 254–255.
[25] van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium*, 235.
[26] J. A. Laponce, *Languages and Their Territories*, trans. Anthony Martin-Sperry (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 44, 50, 52.

French is not. We see similar forces at play in the suggestion of some Basque extremists of the early 1900s that if Basque was fated to die out, the Basques "should adopt French or English rather than Spanish;" though this was likely a rhetorical device meant to signal the "anti-Spanish" *bona fides* of such Basque radicals.[27]

Likewise, van de Perre's musings on the preferability of English to French were still a rhetorical feint on his part, as he pointed out that "the universality of a language is… not of so much importance as often thought," implicitly challenging one of the main arguments of French-speakers for continued French dominance in Flanders. After all, for patriotic reasons Flemings would be better off learning French instead of English if they were forced to choose, and "a Walloon who has to do his business in Flanders must speak Dutch in preference to English."[28] Moreover, the extent to which the average Fleming had exposure to English was far less than that which he or she would have to French; this period did not yet see the rise of mass electronic media and the resulting domination of American cultural products.[29]

Still, the interwar period did witness the beginnings of a worldwide shift from French to English as an auxiliary language. Another Belgian author – this one in favor of a "bilingual" (French/Dutch) Belgium, Amédée Visart, also attested to the way in which English-speakers perceived themselves to speak a world language. Visart, from a noble family (and thus, one can say with certainty, raised in a Francophone household) was the longtime (1876-1924) Catholic mayor of the Flemish city of Bruges. In a book on "Bilingual Belgium," Visart compares the language question in Belgium to that in some other countries. Turning his attention to Canada, he notes that, as most Flemings with any education know some French, so do most French Canadians who have aspirations to climb the social ladder know some English. The reticence of English Canadians to

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[27] Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 556n2.
[28] van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium*, 237.
[29] Antoinette De Vos-Hughes, "The Family Life of the Belgian Bourgeoisie during the Interwar Period" (PhD dissertation, Open University, 2001), 31–32.

learn French can thus been seen as parallel to the notion, held by many Walloons, that they need not learn Flemish. However, Visart continues his analysis of the Canadian situation: English-speaking Canadians, "like their European brothers [*Europeesche stamgenooten* – that is, the British], like to delude themselves that their language is adequate for anything, and [that] others need only speak English, [if] they want to have contacts with them."[30] We can read this as a rather early example of the stereotype of the English-speaker as arrogant and ignorant, overconfident in the universality of his or her language. Of course, at this time, the stereotype found its roots in Britain's position as the dominant imperial power of the globe, whereas after World War II it relied on American hegemony in international affairs.

Observers from France, too, linked the language question in Flanders to the fate of French on the global scale. The *Revue belge* – a conservative, Catholic-leaning biweekly magazine whose readership was drawn from the (often monolingual) French-speaking aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Belgium – regularly published a "Letter from Paris" from a Belgian writer living in Paris, Paul Prist.[31] The "Letter from Paris" in the 1 April 1930 issue, entitled "The Defense of the French Language," opened with an anecdote about a Léon Riotor, a municipal councilor in Paris who had expressed his indignation at the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, and suggested that a "French school" be opened in Ghent, similar to the one already operating in Brussels. Furthermore, Riotor was deeply concerned that knowledge of French apparently decreasing across the world. Prist uses this story as a jumping-off point for a discussion of the reasons for this decline in French.[32]

Prist also cited the Paris Peace Conference as a key symbolic turning point, saying that British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, by "intending to speak only English" had managed to

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[30] Amédée Visart, *Het tweetalig België* (Brussels and Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1919), 45.
[31] Reine Meylaerts, *L'aventure flamande de la* Revue belge*: Langues, littératures et cultures dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Brussels et al.: Peter Lang, 2004), 77n64. For a general overview of the ideology and readership of the *Revue belge*, see Meylaerts, Chapter 1.
[32] Paul Prist, "Lettre de Paris: La défense de la langue française," *Revue belge*, 1 April 1930, 82–83.

do what "Bismarck, after Sedan, had not dared do at Frankfurt" – that is, challenge the primacy of French as the language of diplomacy. The loss of the French language's monopoly in international was more blatantly demonstrated by the fact that the Italian and French representatives at the *London* Naval Conference of 1930 dared speak in English instead of French. French is currently menaced by an influx of "Anglo-Saxon" terms in sport as well as English-language movies, Prist maintained, and, foreshadowing policies that the French would indeed adopt after World War II, postulated that any solution which did not include "coercive taxes for signs written in a foreign language" would remain "grotesque and inoperative."[33]

Prist's article is interesting for its rhetorical strategy, especially given its likely audience of well-to-do French-speaking Belgians. His evocation of the language question in Belgium as a prelude to a discussion of French more generally is can be seen as a an attempt to make the French-speaking elite in Belgium see a community of interest between themselves and those French persons who are trying to "defend" the French language worldwide. Would not the readers of the *Revue belge* be more attuned to the fact that one cannot simply rely on "prestige" alone to maintain the position of French, especially when that prestige is being undermined by another language? Of course, Prist was either unable or unwilling to see the parallels between "coercive taxes for signs written in a foreign language" and the linguistic legislation meant to make the Flemish public sphere wholly Dutch.

It is important to note, however, that while the question of French in Flanders was intimately linked with Belgium's political and cultural relations with France, concern about the French language did not necessarily mean solicitude for French interests. First, aside from some back-channel inquiries regarding the University of Ghent, the French government did not intervene in the language question in Flanders, nor, in fact, did the Dutch government.[34] There was no French

[33] *Ibid.*, 83–87.
[34] Maria de Waele, "De Strijd om de citadel: Frankrijk en de vernederlandsing van de Gentse Universiteit, 1918-1930," *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine* 32, nos. 1–2 (2002): 153–193. Some *individuals* from each of these states did. For French

or Dutch equivalent to the Weimar Republic's interest in *Volksdeutsche* in Eastern Europe, Hungary's support of Magyars in Romania and Slovakia, or Russia's concern for Russian-speakers in the post-Soviet states after 1991.[35]

Second, the Francophones of Flanders themselves often eschewed too close of an identification with France. One Francophone Flemish writer, Daniel Ryelandt, a conservative Catholic journalist from Bruges, accused many French authors of pointing to the popularity of French language courses and cultural and academic events in French in Flanders in order "to show that the Flemish masses are not at all hostile to France." While many Belgians, including in Flanders, have great sympathy for France, the popularity of French culture is *not* a result of "gratitude" toward France, and French culture is as much a possession of the Flemings as it is of the French themselves.[36] Jacques Pirenne, son of Henri Pirenne and a key figure in the defense of French in Flanders in the interwar years, even argued that while the Flemish language was a "small language" and French an "important, international" one, "such a consideration should deliberately be put aside." Pirenne posed the language question as a purely internal one.[37] By minimizing the international aspect of the language question, Pirenne likely hoped to prevent the unpopularity of "immoral," secular France among a segment of Catholic Flemings from "poisoning" the discussion on the place of French in Flanders. Pirenne could also portray himself as coming from a patriotic *Belgian* point of view.

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interest in the language question in interwar Flanders, see for example René Gillouin, *De l'Alsace à la Flandre: Le mysticisme linguistique* (Paris: Éditions Prométhée, 1930). In the interwar Netherlands, "pan-Netherlandic" historian Pieter Geyl was one of the most prominent figures who showed interest in the "South-Netherlanders" (the Flemish). See the works reprinted in Pieter Geyl, *Noord en Zuid: Eenheid en tweeheid in de Lage Landen* (Utrecht and Antwerp: Aula-Boeken, 1960).

[35] Carole Fink, "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926-1933," *Central European History* 5, no. 4 (1972): 330–357; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Zsuzsa Csergo, *Talk of the Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[36] Daniel Ryelandt, "M. René Gillouin et la question flamande," *Le Flambeau*, July 1930, 302. On Ryelandt, see Pierre Sauvage, "Ryelandt, Daniel, Benoît" in *Nouvelle biographie nationale*, vol. 1 (Brussels: Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, 1988), 298–299.

[37] Jacques Pirenne, *Il faut doter le pays d'un statut linguistique* (Brussels: Ligue Nationale pour l'Unité Belge, 1929), 14.

In addition, many defenders of French in Flanders used an argument which would be out of place in republican France, namely, that the *flamingants* wanted to create a homogeneous community through state force, and that this threatened the tradition of the old local freedoms which the Belgian provinces had enjoyed under the *Ancien Régime*, as well as the "acquired rights" which French had earned in Flanders over the centuries. This was thus the very opposite of the Third Republic's project of making "peasants into Frenchmen;" the proponents of French in Flanders wanted to *prevent* the state from "making bourgeois into *flamingants*."[38] The call to "ancient Belgian freedoms" echoed an argument in nineteenth-century Belgium which held that the freedoms of Belgium's 1831 Constitution were better understood as a revival of such ancient freedoms, and *not* the heritage of the 1789 Revolution in France.[39]

While many proponents of French harbored a great respect for France, especially after World War I, a good number of them reckoned that in Belgium, a strong central government *à la française* – albeit one where Flemings, under the new democratic system of suffrage, were an absolute majority of voters – could backfire and turn the state into an instrument of *flamandisation*. J. M. Remouchamps, a staunch advocate of the French language whose evocation of a poor Flemish martyr wishing that his son learn French opened this chapter, advocated "communal autonomy" in determining the language of administration. In this way, "the province and the state would find themselves… bound by the choice of the commune." The wholly monolingual towns of Wallonia and Flanders could maintain monolingual administrations, while Brussels, towns along the language border, and "certain Flemish cities" could adopt a bilingual administration.[40]

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[38] A reference of course to the classic work of Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).
[39] Lode Wils, "Het beroep op 'de oude Belgische vrijheden' in het midden van de 19de eeuw," *Standen en Landen* 32 (1964): 115–122.
[40] J. M. Remouchamps, "La Question des Langues en Belgique et l'Autonomie Communale," *Le Flambeau*, March 1920, 386–388.

The French-language discourse in Flanders even called the *flamingants* "Jacobins" (as a term of abuse) for the linguistic project of the "Minimum Program." Pierre Verhaegen, a Francophone aristocrat from Ghent, called *flamingants* "Jacobins" because of their supposed desire to destroy French as a sign of superiority, much as (in Verhaegen's view), the Jacobins were possessed of a mania for leveling and destroying any perceived advantage which the upper classes had.[41] Francophone Catholics from Ghent called the *flamingants* "Jacobins" for attacking religious schools in Flanders that taught in French.[42] A Francophone Catholic student newspaper at the University of Ghent, criticizing the calls for the "elimination" of French in Flanders, called for "com[ing] back from Jacobin exaggeration to return to that eminently Belgian virtue: good sense."[43]

Nevertheless, appeals to French as an international language, as well as references to France's aid in liberating Belgium during the war, were omnipresent in arguments about French in Flanders during the interwar years. The Tienen-based *Association pour la propagation de la langue française* argued that while it loved the Flemish language, it did not want "the insanity of a few maniacs to distance or tarnish the light coming from the south" – that is, the *flamingants* should not cut Flanders off from French culture.[44] Francophilia and memories of the war loomed large in the discussion about the transformation of the University of Ghent into a Dutch-language institution. The battle for the University of Ghent would be the main field of action for the defense of French in Flanders during the 1920s.

[41] [Pierre] Baron Verhaegen, *Contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand* (Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1922), 18.
[42] Jean de Hemptinne *et al.*, "Les Catholiques gantois et la Défense des Minorités," *Le Flambeau*, November 1929, 272.
[43] Stany de Buck, "Notre Attitude," *L'Étudiant catholique*, 15 October 1929, 1a. University of Ghent Archive.
[44] "Marmaine," "Pourquoi nous voulons propager la langue française," *Bulletin de l'Association pour la propagation de la langue française* (Tienen), 1, no. 4 (25 March 1922): 1. KBR.

The Battle for the University of Ghent[45]

The war had brought Belgium and France closer together as *de facto* allies, a situation which would soon be made official by the signing of a mutual defense pact in 1920. This closeness would be reflected in a greater solicitude among many Belgians, including the French-speaking Flemings, for the real and perceived interests of France. In December 1918, the Academic Council of the University of Ghent unanimously adopted a resolution opposing the *flamandisation* of the school, rhetorically asking if Belgium should commit the "rude injury of expelling the French language" at a time when "our soldiers march hand in hand with the soldiers of the Republic."[46]

Many French-speaking politicians rejected any proposal regarding the University of Ghent which would eliminate courses taught in French, though some were amenable to adding courses in Dutch or creating a parallel Dutch-language institution in Ghent (or Antwerp). One such individual was Charles Woeste, the conservative, Francophone Catholic MP. He advised Prime Minister Léon Delacroix (1918-1920) against getting rid of French-language courses, asking rhetorically if one was "really going to force into retirement professors who, like Mr. [Henri] Pirenne, had been victims of the Germans?"[47]

Such appeals to patriotic feelings and evocations of German persecution loomed large in calls to keep the University of Ghent French-speaking. A petition circulated among students of the University expressed their "unanimous desire" for the university to be kept French-speaking, not

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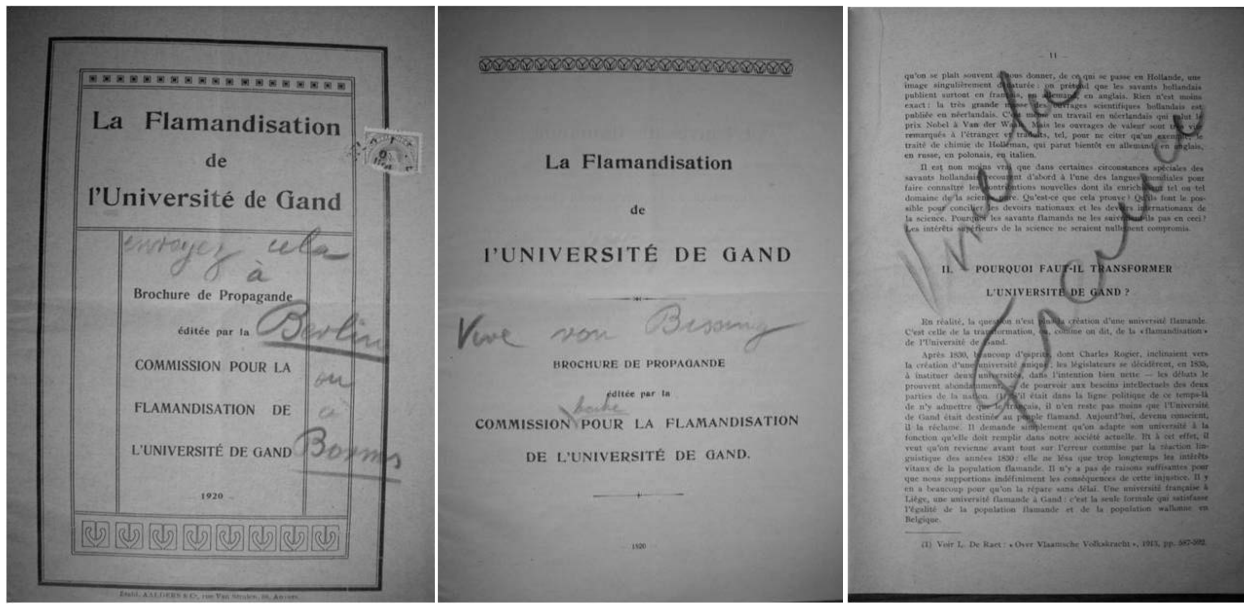
[45] For exhaustive detail of the events leading to the transformation of the University of Ghent into a fully Dutch-language institution, see Karel de Clerck, ed., *Kroniek van de strijd voor de vernederlandsing van de Gentse universiteit* (Beveren: Orion, 1980).
[46] "Rapport du Conseil académique de l'Université de Gand sur la transformation de cette Université en Université flamande, adopté à l'unanimité en la séance du 28 décembre 1918." Brochures "Gand français," FHMW.
[47] Charles Woeste, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique (1914-1921)* (Brussels: L'Édition universelle, 1937), 71.

only for cultural and economic reasons, but also as the university had been "an ardent center [*foyer*] of resistance to the intrigues of the fatherland's enemies during the war."[48]

[48] Petition to "Monsieur le Ministre," ([1920?]), Administration de l'Enseignement Supérieur Nouveau Fonds, Emploi des langues, Folder 31, "Université de Gand 1920-1930," AGR.



La Flamandisation de l'Université de Gand

Brochure de Propagande éditée par la COMMISSION POUR LA FLAMANDISATION DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE GAND

1920

La Flamandisation de l'UNIVERSITÉ DE GAND

BROCHURE DE PROPAGANDE éditée par la COMMISSION POUR LA FLAMANDISATION DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE GAND.

1920

— 11 —

qu'on se plait souvent à nous donner, de ce qui se passe en Hollande, une image singulièrement dénaturée : on prétend que les savants hollandais publient surtout en français, en allemand, en anglais. Rien n'est moins exact : la très grande masse des ouvrages scientifiques hollandais est publiée en néerlandais. C'est même un travail en néerlandais qui valut le prix Nobel à Van der Waals. Mais les ouvrages de valeur sont très vite remarqués à l'étranger et traduits, tel, pour ne citer qu'un exemple, le traité de chimie de Holleman, qui parut bientôt en allemand, en anglais, en russe, en polonais, en italien.

Il est non moins vrai que dans certaines circonstances spéciales des savants hollandais recourent d'abord à l'une des langues mondiales pour faire connaître les contributions nouvelles dont ils enrichissent tel ou tel domaine de la science pure. Qu'est-ce que cela prouve ? Qu'ils font le possible pour concilier les devoirs nationaux et les devoirs internationaux de la science. Pourquoi les savants flamands ne les suivraient-ils pas en ceci ? Les intérêts supérieurs de la science ne seraient nullement compromis.

II. — POURQUOI FAUT-IL TRANSFORMER L'UNIVERSITÉ DE GAND ?

En réalité, la question n'est pas la création d'une université flamande. C'est celle de la transformation, ou, comme on dit, de la « flamandisation » de l'Université de Gand.

Après 1830, beaucoup d'esprits, dont Charles Rogier, inclinaient vers la création d'une université unique ; les législateurs se décidèrent, en 1835, à instituer deux universités, dans l'intention bien nette — les débats le prouvent abondamment — de pourvoir aux besoins intellectuels des deux parties de la nation. (1) S'il était dans la ligne politique de ce temps-là de n'y admettre que le français, il n'en reste pas moins que l'Université de Gand était destinée au peuple flamand. Aujourd'hui, devenu conscient, il la réclame. Il demande simplement qu'on adapte son université à la fonction qu'elle doit remplir dans notre société actuelle. Et à cet effet, il veut qu'on revienne avant tout sur l'erreur commise par la réaction linguistique des années 1830 : elle ne lésa que trop longtemps les intérêts vitaux de la population flamande. Il n'y a pas de raisons suffisantes pour que nous supportions indéfiniment les conséquences de cette injustice. Il y en a beaucoup pour qu'on la répare sans délai. Une université française à Liége, une université flamande à Gand : c'est la seule formule qui satisfasse l'égalité de la population flamande et de la population wallonne en Belgique.

(1) Voir L. De Raet : « Over Vlaamsche Volkskracht », 1913, pp. 587-592.

Figure 3.1. (Defaced) Brochures Advocating the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent (1920s)

Several copies of this 1920 brochure advocating the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent found a less-than-warm welcome. The AVMC holds several copies returned to sender, with hostile handwritten commentary (left to right):

1. "Send this to Berlin or to Borms"
2. "Long Live von Bissing." In addition, the "Committee for the *Flamandisation* of the University of Ghent" is qualified as "*boche* [Kraut]."
3. "Long Live France!"

These notes convey the extent to which opposition to Flemish legislative projects in the 1920s was intimately tied up with the memory of the recent war, evoking strong emotions. (This is not to discount the very real "intellectual" and "political" bases of such opposition.) Unfortunately, I was not able to ascertain the recipient(s) of these brochures and thereby identify the author of the comments.

Source: Document collection "Vlaamse Hoogeschoolcommissies," AMVC.

The University of Ghent was indeed reopened in its prewar French configuration in 1919, treating the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool* as a aberration whose existence did not figure in to the "real" history of the university. The rectorship was originally bestowed on Paul Fredericq, but his failing health caused him to resign in favor of his fellow historian-martyr Henri Pirenne. Pirenne's resistance to the Germans' plans and subsequent two years of internment, his widespread international renown, and his historical vision of Flanders as a bilingual area made him a potent symbol of Belgian patriotism. He expounded on his vision of Belgian national identity – and attacked what he saw as the "zoological" (that is, racial) vision of human history held by many Germans – through the "bully pulpit" of his rectoral addresses.[49]

Pierre Nolf, Minister of Arts and Sciences from 1922 to 1925, attempted to mitigate the *flamandisation* of the University and make it more palatable to many French-speaking parliamentarians. Nolf was a Francophone originally from Ypres (Ieper) in Flanders who had attended the University of Liège, where he trained in medicine and then worked as research physician.[50] Chosen from outside of parliament to fill a ministerial vacancy, Nolf developed a "compromise" whereby the University of Ghent would offer a French and a Flemish curriculum, and students could pick between the two. A French curriculum would require that one take two-thirds of one's courses in French and one-third in Dutch; a Flemish curriculum would require two-thirds of courses in Dutch and one-third in French. The administration of the university was to be conducted in Dutch. The proposed compromise passed through both houses of Parliament fairly easily, and was seen as a way to preserve the "bilingual" nature of the Flemish elite. As with many compromises, however, it ended up satisfying no one. Many French-speakers were upset because they felt that this system would exclude Walloon and foreign students (who would likely not know

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[49] Sophie De Schaepdrijver, "'That Theory of Races': Henri Pirenne and the Unfinished Business of the Great War," *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine* 41, nos. 3–4 (2011): 533–552.
[50] Armand Colard, "Nolf (Pierre-Adrien-Émile-Louis)," in *Biographie nationale*, vol. 34, Supplement Vol. 6, First Installment (Brussels: Bruylant, 1967), 609–620.

Dutch), while many Flemings, especially Flemish nationalists, considered this arrangement to be incomplete and not a real alternative to a full Dutch-language university education.

The new "regime" did not find many partisans among the existing employees of the university. The Catholic Minister of Economic Affairs, himself a Fleming educated in French, wrote to Nolf in September 1923 complaining that "[the] central administration, faculties, rector, administrator-inspector, inspectors, deans of the faculty [have all shown themselves] violently hostile to Flemish, and no longer have the right to demand the confidence of Flemish opinion." While they might serve "the interests of the French-language minority," they can "no longer pretend to be our [=the Flemings'] tutors and representatives."[51]

As if to verify Van de Vyvere's argument, multiple professors demonstrated their unwillingness – if not inability – to begin offering courses in Dutch under the new bilingual regime. In response to a July 1923 circular from the Ministry of Arts and Sciences asking about such, Henri Pirenne, Joseph Bidez (*de facto* leader of Action patriotique during World War I) and Jean Halleux (author of a pamphlet against the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, discussed below) were among those who expressed no desire to teach in Dutch. Albert Counson and Fernand Severin, both Romance philologists, claimed that teaching their subject in Flemish was self-evidently nonsensical. A classical philologist responded that he wanted to continue to teach his courses solely in French, "without any reserve and no matter what may be, in the future, the consequences of this declaration. Please consider it irrevocable." A professor in the Faculty of Medicine noted that he did not know Dutch at all, but that he might be able to have a printed version of his course translated. He ended by adding a personal note "for what it's worth," stating that "within all legal boundaries, I will fight for the defense, at the University of Ghent, of the elevated and imprescriptable rights of the French language and culture." Georges Hulin de Loo claimed that while he knew the "usual

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[51] Aloïs Van de Vyvere to Pierre Nolf, 21 September 1923. Aloïs Van de Vyvere collection, 1.3.6.3, KADOC.

language" (that is, Flemish dialect), he doubted that he could teach his courses on logic in Dutch: "I have never come around to reading a single work from a Dutch [*hollandais*, not *néerlandais*] logician, given the lack of scholarly interest."[52] In late 1923, rector Eugène Eeman – whose presidency of the Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et de la liberté des langues (soon renamed Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge) did not augur well for his enthusiastic cooperation with the new linguistic regulations – resigned his post during the middle of his term in protest.[53]

Flemish nationalists came to call the newly-bilingual University of Ghent the "Nolfbarak," that is, the "Nolf-shack." Many Flemish organizations called on Flemish students to boycott the hybrid institution, to hold out for a fully-Flemish university.[54] Among partisans of the old French university, this boycott was interpreted as a means to cover up the fact that the Flemish curriculum was much less popular than the French one, as a result of students' "logical" preference for courses in the more cosmopolitan French language.[55]

(Re-)Organizing the Francophones of Flanders

French-language "associational life" began to flourish in Flanders after the end of the German occupation. In addition to preexisting groups like the Cercle royal artistique et littéraire, there were new *de facto* Francophone cultural organizations that appeared in Flanders. Myriam Mertens's work on civil society in interwar Ghent, while focused on a network of liberal and liberal-leaning organizations in interwar Ghent, stresses that there were circles based more on the fact of speaking French (and to a lesser extent, bourgeois identity), to the point of crossing ideological lines.

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[52] Henri Pirenne to Rector, 10 August 1923; Joseph Bidez to Rector, 12 August 1923; Jean Halleux to Rector, 17 August 1921 [*sic*]; Albert Counson to Rector, 18 August 1923; Fernand Severin to Rector, 11 August 1923; Paul Faider to Rector, 10 August 1923; M. Delacre to Rector, 30 August 1923; Georges Hulin de Loo to Rector, 29 September 1923, all in Administration de l'Enseignement Supérieur Nouveau Fonds, Emploi des langues, Folder 33, "Université de Gand, 1920-1930," AGR.

[53] Paul Regniers, "Eeman (Eugène-William)," in *Biographie nationale*, vol. 35, supplement vol. 7, First Installment (Brussels: Bruylant, 1969), 224–225.

[54] Aktie-Komité ter vervlaamsching, *De Wet-Nolf en de vervlaamsching der Universiteit te Gent* (Ghent: Tspyker, 1924). HL.

[55] François-L[ouis] Ganshof, "Le Nouveau Régime de l'Université de Gand," *Le Flambeau* 6, no. 12 (1923): 636–640.

In examining the contributors to *Gand artistique*, a review of art and literature produced in Ghent between 1922 and 1931, Mertens notes that there was "no segregation among them on ideological [*levensbeschouwelijke*] grounds, but rather a cross-ideological cooperation, principally for language reasons." The contributors included French-speaking intellectuals connected with the University of Ghent such as Albert Counson, a Romance philologist from Wallonia who defended the use of French in Ghent as a historical reality, Georges Hulin de Loo, the art historian who would later be booed by Flemish students for continuing to teach in French, and Paul Bergmans, the liberal-leaning French-speaking head librarian of the university, who was edged out of his job as *flamandisation* came into place under the Nolf system. Art and literary critics from Catholic milieus as well as some from socialist backgrounds, such as Jules Destrée, also contributed. The "red thread" that united them was their commitment to French-language culture, be they of French, Walloon, or Francophone Flemish background, or of socialist, liberal, or Catholic politics. Indeed, almost all of the contributors were opposed to the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent.[56]

Moving to the content of *Gand artistique*, Mertens notes that many of the articles made references to "cultural exchange" between France and Flanders. Francophone Flemish writers were privileged as subjects of articles, which Mertens attributes to a desire to portray Flemings who were "open to French culture" as the best kinds of Flemings. Finally, the review's interest in the culture of France "can in any case… be understood as the reaction of a Flemish, French-speaking elite to the democratization of society and the concomitant [*bijhorende*] erosion of the monopoly of power of French in Flanders."[57] Still, these developments could be read as an affirmation of a general *francophone* identity rather than of a specific *francophone of Flanders* identity; this division will become more salient after the linguistic legislation of the 1930s.

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[56] Myriam Mertens, *Een liberale zuil in Gent? Aspecten van het Gentse (georganiseerde) liberalisme tijdens het interbellum* (Ghent: Maatschappij voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde te Gent, 2008), 84, 87–96.
[57] *Ibid.*, 101–109.

Moving to organizations whose purpose was more specifically linguistic, prewar organizations like the AFVLF and *Amitiés françaises* resumed their activities in favor of French language and culture in Flanders after liberation.[58] They were joined by newcomers such as the *Association pour la propagation de la langue française* in Tienen, as well as ephemeral newspapers like *De Eenheid* (Unity, 1919-1921), a Dutch-language newspaper that appealed to Flemings' common sense in arguing for a continued role for French in Flanders, as well as *La Vraie Flandre / Het Ware Vlaanderen* (The Real Flanders, 1920-1921), a newspaper that attempted to combat the "*flamingants*" and "Activists" by appealing to a long tradition of bilingualism in Flanders.[59]

The Liberal Party remained an important home for many Francophones of Flanders, even more than it had been before the war. There were few vocal *flamingant* liberals in the decade after World War I. Paul Fredericq, the historian of the University of Ghent, prominent member of the *Willemsfonds* and early historiographer of the Flemish Movement, died in 1920. His death was often attributed to the internment that he, like his colleague and friend Pirenne, had endured during the war on account of his opposition to the "*Vlaamsche Hoogeschool*." Louis Franck, the Liberal of the "three crowing cockerels" along with the Catholic Frans Van Cauwelaert and the Socialist Camille Huysmans, sporadically published on the Flemish Movement but became more and more aligned with the Belgian "establishment." From late 1918 to 1924 Franck was the Belgian Minister of the Colonies, and in 1926 he became governor of the Belgian central bank. He committed suicide in 1937 during an investigation into his policies at the head of the bank.[60] We will see that more and more of the Walloon and small numbers of Flemish members of the Liberal Party began to distance

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[58] On the AFVLF during this period, see Gontran van Severen, *Soixante années de vulgarisation de la langue française en Flandre* (Ghent: Association Flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française, 1958), 59–75.

[59] Jules Huysmans, "Pour le maintien de la culture française en Flandre: De reaktie van de Franssprekende elite op de sociale veranderingen na wereldoorlog I: Haar houding ten opzichte van de vernederlandsing van het openbare leven Gent 1918-1940" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1980).

[60] Georges Albert, *50 jaar liberalisme in Vlaanderen* (n.p., 1964); Monique Lambert, "Les libéraux gantois et la question des langues, 1918-1932" (Licentiate thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1971); Patrick Lefèvre, "Le mouvement libéral flamand à Bruges (1872-1940)," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 58, no. 2 (1980): 382–392; Tom De Graeve, "Vlaamse liberalen en Liberale Partij tegenover de Vlaamse Beweging (1918-1940)" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1985).

themselves from the Francophones of Flanders (concerning the language question, at least) around 1930.

By far the most important new organization for the Francophones of Flanders in the decade and a half following the end of World War I, was the Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge (LNUB), called the Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et de la liberté des langues between 1923 and 1925. Its founders were Jacques Pirenne and Eugène Eeman.[61] Eeman was a physician and professor at the University of Ghent, who served as its rector from 1921 to 1923; he would be its first president. Pirenne soon became the public face of the LNUB. An Egyptologist and lawyer, he had served as the personal tutor of Crown Prince Leopold (the elder son of King Albert), and would later serve Leopold as personal secretary after he acceded to the throne. As son of the renowned University of Ghent historian Henri Pirenne, a Walloon from Liège province, and Jenny Vanderhaegen, a member of the French-speaking Flemish bourgeoisie, Jacques himself could be seen to incarnate "Belgian unity."[62] The younger Pirenne had served during the war, and lost his brother Pierre in fighting on the IJzer. He had briefly considered participating in the creation of a new political party to advance a Belgian patriotic agenda, but he was somewhat more moderate than some of the other individuals who participated in these enterprises, and he decided that a non-partisan organization would be more effective.[63]

The LNUB did not promote itself as a specifically "Francophone-of-Flanders" organization, but its stated motives (the maintenance of the French University of Ghent, "linguistic liberty," and Belgian unity) had special appeal to Francophones of Flanders, who indeed played a disproportionately-large role in the organization. This mustering of certain "Belgian patriotic"

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[61] "Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge (1923-1945)," *ODIS - Database Intermediary Structures Flanders*, 26 June 2009, http://www.odis.be/lnk/OR_2779.

[62] Claire Préaux, "Notice sur Jacques Pirenne," *Annuaire de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, 1974, 157–195; Bryce Dale Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia, 1974), 81–85.

[63] Beaufays, "Aspects du nationalisme belge au lendemain de la Grande Guerre," 157; Jacques Pirenne, *Mémoires et notes politiques* (Verviers: André Gérard, 1975), 115–125.

themes would happen again during the 1960s, when a panoply of "Belgicist" organizations popped up in reaction to the language laws of 1962 and 1963, again attracting large numbers of Francophones of Flanders.

The immediate impetus for the creation of the LNUB was the push for the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent. One of its first actions was to organize a large "National Demonstration" in Brussels on 28 January 1923 in favor of Belgian unity and against the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent. Flemish and Francophone news outlets each reported different numbers of demonstrators: 30,000 in Flemish papers, between 150,000 and 200,000 in French-language newspapers. There were rumors that Xavier Neujean, the Walloon Minister of Railways, had ordered station chiefs to provide group discounts to travelers heading to Brussels for the demonstration, even if they had not filled out the proper forms.[64]

Nevertheless, the "half-and-half" "Nolf university" came into existence starting with the 1923 academic year. As we saw, Eeman resigned his rectorship over this turn of events. Still, the LNUB did not remain idle. The LNUB sponsored the creation of an École des Hautes Études (ÉHÉ) in 1923, a French-language private institution of higher education in Ghent whose course offerings were intended to replace those which had been "*flamandisés*" at the state-run University of Ghent. For the LNUB, the ÉHÉ's mission was to "take up the task abandoned by the University of Ghent… to keep a center of Latin culture in Flanders."[65] For the Flemish Movement, on the other hand, the ÉHÉ was "disloyal competition," drawing students away from the University of Ghent and while at the same time relying on the labor of many University of Ghent faculty, who, already having a position, could accept smaller salaries.

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[64] Huysmans, "Pour le maintien de la culture française en Flandre," 93–97; de Clerck, *Kroniek van de strijd voor de vernederlandsing van de Gentse universiteit*, 179–181.
[65] "École des Hautes Études," *Pour l'unité: Organe de la ligue nationale pour l'unité belge*, August-September 1930, 4.

The LNUB, like the AFVLF before it, offered free courses in French across Flanders, the "*Leçon de Français*" often placing calls for donations in its newsletter. The tone of these appeals ("50 francs per month ensure the teaching of French to a Flemish child") bears a striking resemblance to modern-day charities' solicitation of funds to feed the underprivileged in the global south, for example.[66] These courses reflected a paternalistic concern for the welfare of the Flemings who might otherwise be "cut off" from French culture. We may also see these courses a way of "battling" the influence of the Flemish Movement, much like the "language activists" in the Habsburg realms used language courses (also supported by donations) to help solidify their "national" presence in different parts of the Empire in the decades preceding World War I.[67] The Flemish Movement certainly saw the schools that way. In the Flemish province of Limburg, for example, the LNUB sponsored French classes proximate to the new mining operations, turning what the Flemish Movement considered an opportunity for Flemish growth into a potentially "dangerous" opportunity for "Frenchifying" Flemish children.[68]

The LNUB rejected amnesty for Flemish Activists who had collaborated with the Germans during the war, and to that end published not only a series of polemic tracts, but most importantly, in 1928, a translated and abridged edition of various records relating to the Council of Flanders which Jacques Pirenne had managed to acquire from sources within Germany.[69] Both the act of publishing the "Archives of the Council of Flanders" itself, as well as the occasional editorial notes in the publication, make it clear the extent to which the LNUB understood the fight against Flemish "separatism" in the interwar years as an extension of the patriotic battles of World War I.

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[66] Solicitation in *Pour l'unité: Organe de la ligue nationale pour l'unité belge* (August-September 1928): 2.

[67] Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 44, 79.

[68] Katholieken Vlaamschen Bond van Limburg, *Een noodkreet tot het Vlaamsche Volk! De Scholen in de Limburgsche Mijnstreek (Schooljaar 1927-1928)* (Antwerp: Katholieken Vlaamschen Schoolbond, 1928). ADVN.

[69] Pirenne, *Mémoires et notes politiques*, 138–140; Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge, *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandre (Raad van Vlaanderen)* (Brussels: Th. Dewarichet, 1928).

When the University of Ghent became completely Dutch-speaking starting in the 1930 school year, there was a stipulation that those who taught at the university could not teach at another institution in Flanders using a language other than Dutch. This was an attempt to prevent instructors at the university from "disloyally" undermining it by offering the same material in French at the ÉHÉ. Several professors were thus forced to choose between the two institutions. The art historian Georges Hulin de Loo complained bitterly that the "*cumul*" of positions at multiple institutions of higher education had never previously been a problem in Belgium, with many people teaching for example at both the University of Ghent and the ULB, when universities were still purely "centers of learning" and (supposedly) not politicized battlegrounds.[70] On 17 December 1930, Hulin de Loo, who continued to lecture at the ÉHÉ, was locked out of his classroom at the university by Flemish students, who then proceeded to chase him down the street and heckle him, singing "*De Vlaamse Leeuw*" (the then-unofficial Flemish "national anthem") and "other Activist songs."[71]

On 20 October 1931, the Belgian government officially dismissed a number of professors at the University of Ghent who had continued to teach in French, including Joseph Bidez, Hubert Van Houtte, and the previously-mentioned Georges Hulin de Loo. The liberal magazine *Le Flambeau* referred to these dismissals as "*Les Matines gantoises* [The Ghent Matins]," by analogy with the "*Matines brugeoises* [Bruges Matins, itself an ironic reference to nighttime prayer services]," the massacre of a French garrison by Flemish troops in Bruges in 1302. Comparing the actions of the Belgian government to Soviet Union's treatment of dissident intellectuals, *Le Flambeau* bitterly joked

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[70] Georges Hulin de Loo to "Monsieur le Ministre de l'État" [Fulgence Masson], 13 January 1931. Georges Hulin de Loo collection, Hs. 3098, University of Ghent Library.
[71] Georges Hulin de Loo to "Monsieur le Commissaire," 20 December 1930. Georges Hulin de Loo collection, Hs. 3098, University of Ghent Library; Leo Elaut, "Reminiscenties uit de strijd voor de vernederlandsing van de Gentse universiteit," *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 32, no. 2 (1973): 73.

that "one could not inaugurate the second century of our independence any better than by this holocaust."[72]

From "Freedom of Language" to "Minority Rights:" A New Identity for the Francophones of Flanders?

The concept of free choice of language was deeply ingrained in the mentality of the French-speaking elite of Flanders; witness the original name of the LNUB, the *Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et la liberté des langues*. As we saw in Chapter 1, they cited Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution, which held that "the use of the languages spoken in Belgium is discretionary [*facultatif*]. It can only be regulated by law, and only for acts of public authority and for judicial proceedings." "Freedom" in language matters was seen as an important heritage of Belgium's struggle for independence from the Netherlands; for the traditional elite, "Article 23 had been written mainly as a reaction against [Dutch King] William I's attempts to require Belgian civil servants to learn Dutch, and was therefore a sort of historic contract to use French."[73] The Francophone elite, especially before World War I, argued that framing language as a matter of personal choice rather than one of heredity reaffirmed the primacy of individual rights over group rights.

This raises the question: can one *choose* one's membership in a language community? Many defenders of French in Flanders argued for the "freedom of the head of the household" (who was universally understood to be the father) to choose the language in which his children would be educated. This rhetoric stems from nineteenth-century domestic Belgian debates on the right of fathers to choose confessional schooling for their children, yet also echoes the provisions of the "Minority Treaty" signed with Poland after World War I, in which "the importance of the father as

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[72] "Vindex," "Les matines gantoises: Comment l'État belge traite ses savants," *Le Flambeau*, November 1931, 510–512.
[73] Arthur Edward Curtis, "New Perspectives on the History of the Language Problem in Belgium" (PhD dissertation, University of Oregon, 1971), 243–244.

head of the family in decisions affecting members of a minority was established as a basic feature in minority protection."[74] This did not sit well with the Polish government, who feared that people who were "really" Polish would be "Germanized" by parents seeking advantages for their children or who felt pressure from German-language political groups. In the mid-1920s, the state removed thousands of children from German-language minority schools in Silesia as an investigation showed that their families did not speak German at home. Representatives of the German minority organization contested this decision, claiming that being a member of a minority was a matter of personal choice. (The Permanent Court of International Justice of the League of Nations found in favor of the German minority.)[75]

This conflict between two visions – language as a matter of personal choice vs. language as an innate quality that needs protection – illustrates J. A. Laponce's assertion that in linguistically mixed territories, "the dominant language preaches liberty and equality; the subordinate language talks of borders, security, exclusivity, privileges."[76] In Flanders, while the Francophones celebrated "free choice of language," the Flemings spoke of "protecting" Dutch. Indeed, for many in the Flemish Movement, the "free choice of language" left open the possibility that, for reasons of economic or social gain, individual Flemings would "choose" French and so be "lost" to the Flemish community.

The use of French on the part of the "French-speakers of Flanders" was not (originally) an ethnic marker but rather a class and status marker *within* "Flemish" society. Before World War I, the groups which sought a protection or even expansion of French in Flanders often did so in the name of Flanders or the Flemish people, as in the case of the Association *flamande* pour la vulgarisation de la langue française, founded in Ghent in 1898, and argued in favor of French in Flanders citing its

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[74] Antony Alcock, *A History of the Protection of Regional Cultural Minorities in Europe: From the Edict of Nantes to the Present Day* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 48.
[75] Carole Fink, "Minority Rights as an International Question," *Contemporary European History* 9, no. 3 (2000): 392–393.
[76] Laponce, *Languages and Their Territories*, 41.

social utility and the "free choice of language." Claiming a "minority" identity would be counterproductive in this frame of mind: rather than using the language "assigned" to them by ancestry or birthplace, these individuals were exercising freedoms long cherished as part of Flemish history, and were as "Flemish" as any Dutch-speaker. In emphasizing their "Flemishness," they stressed that they were *not* outsiders, and thus had the same right to use their "own" language as any other Fleming.

In his inaugural speech as president of the Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et la liberté des langues on 18 May 1924, ULB professor Jules Bordet presented a rather late (and blatant) example of "liberty of language" argument for the role of French in Flanders. Bordet argued that while French-speakers did not begrudge Flemish-speakers the use of their own language, they *did* protest against attempts to "impose" Flemish on the "educated classes," who, if not native-speakers of French, still preferred to use French in their professional activities. He went on to argue that

> for the natural and just principle of liberty and equality of Belgians in linguistic matters, which recognizes a man's right to choose [his] language without being influenced by the fear of any vexations whatsoever, we have substituted the contradictory principle of the equality of languages, which subjects a man to an imposed language… It is thus that with an eye toward paralyzing any linguistic evolution, and annihilating the chances of the penetration of French [in Flanders], we have been forced to freeze the current situation forever in demarcating to each language a domain with intangible boundaries, which cut the country in two parts, disregarding local preferences and the autonomy of the communes.[77]

This particular passage seems to state rather baldly the endgame of some French-speakers' defense of liberty: the eventual Frenchification of Flanders, which is portrayed as the natural result of the struggle between an international language and a small, regional tongue. Thus, this is a classical liberal statement in both its call for the state not to intervene in linguistic matters, and in its somewhat Whiggish view of the "progress" of civilization as represented by the victory of French

[77] "Allocution du M. J. Bordet," *Bulletin mensuel de la Ligue nationale pour la défense de l'Université de Gand et la liberté des langues*, June-July 1924, 3–4. HL.

over Flemish as the aggregate result of free choices made by individuals who naturally gravitate toward the more civilized idiom.

Such discourses were becoming untenable in the face of a growing Flemish Movement which equated Flemishness with speaking Dutch, and assigned Francophones the status of "non-Fleming" or "traitor."[78] "Freedom of language" also came to be understood as a luxury unavailable to the common Fleming. For Alfons van de Perre, the so-called freedom of language "was for the Flemings what liberty is for the worker who is given freedom to be oppressed."[79] Calls for "free choice of language" could now be interpreted as snobbery on the part of a social elite with the time and resources to learn the elite language, or even "treason" toward the Flemish people. In these circumstances, more Francophones in Flanders would come to represent themselves as a "minority" when making claims for language rights.

The complex relationship between the discourses of "free choice" and "minority rights" can be seen in the writings of the Francophone Catholic journalist from Bruges, Daniel Ryelandt. In July 1929, he argued that "*the French-language minority of Flanders* will not resign itself to disappear" should the Flemish majority impose a monolingual status for Flanders.[80] Several months later, however, Ryelandt attacked comparisons of the situation in Flanders to that of Eastern Europe, where racially and linguistically distinct groups live intermingled with one another. In Flanders, however, "there exist. . . a certain number of families, perfectly autochthonous, whose mother tongue is French." Ryelandt argued against comparing the Francophones of Flanders to other minorities, even in an attempt to help them:

> it is posing the problem quite badly to ask if it is suitable to "protect French-language minorities." . . To protect a minority is to isolate it. . . "protecting the French minority" in the Flemish lands would

[78] Céline Préaux, "Les francophones de Flandre: Une identité errant entre l'ethnique et le civique," *FrancoFonie: Revue du Centre d'Étude des Francophones en Flandre* 3 (2011): 33–34.
[79] van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium*, 145.
[80] Daniel Ryelandt, "Peut-on résoudre la question flamande?" *Revue générale*, July 1929, 65, 67. Emphasis added.

> be to remove the families whose mother tongue is French from Flemish life, to make of them a small, closed caste, living in the margins of society.[81]

Moreover, "these families *do not form a group*" in opposition to Flemish-speakers, nor are they a "closed group," as some families have been French-speaking since the Middle Ages while others "Frenchified" only a generation or two ago. Finally, the question of French in Flanders concerns much more than those Flemings who speak French at home; it extends to thousands more who use it as a second language for culture, education, or business.[82] Ryelandt thus argued that the "Francophones of Flanders" were *not* a separate: that is, the line between "Flemings" and "Francophones" was porous, and a (Dutch-speaking) Fleming may opt to *become* a Francophone. Ryelandt made this argument in order to differentiate the situation in Flanders from the Eastern European context, in which "inherently" different ethnolinguistic groups live next to one another in varying degrees of (dis)harmony. Recent historiography has questioned the supposedly stark division between nationalities in Eastern Europe, however. Jeremy King has demonstrated that in the Czech lands, there was *not* a hard-and-fast division between "Czechs" and "Germans" until recently, and that to the extent that individuals accepted these labels, many moved between the two over the course of their lives, for a myriad of personal or social reasons.[83] We may say that the difference between the situation in Flanders and those of Eastern Europe (in regard to "interethnic" relations) was not as wide as Ryelandt claimed, as many places in Eastern Europe, as in Flanders, had *not* had a history of drawing thick lines between various linguistic groups.

The threat to the French language may have actually contributed to the cohesion of the disparate French-language groups in Flanders. As for Ryelandt's assertion that the French-speakers of Flanders "do not form a group," it is true that those individuals were geographically spread out

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[81] Daniel Ryelandt, "Y a-t-il en Flandre un 'problème des minorités'?" *Le Flambeau*, December 1929, 329–332, 338.
[82] *Ibid.*, 329–332. Emphasis added.
[83] Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

across various cities in Flanders, and not located in one compact area (like the Basques in Spain or the Welsh in Britain). However, as Nancy Wingfield wrote regarding the development of "Sudeten German" identity in interwar Czechoslovakia, "the collapsing of the disparate identities of Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian Germans into a single, overarching Sudeten Germandom was as artificial a construct as the majority Czechoslovak identity of the state."[84] Putting this in a Belgian context, we may say that a "Francophone of Flanders" identity embracing scattered groups from cities like Ghent, Antwerp, Bruges, and Leuven was as historically contingent as the creation of a unified "Flemish" identity encompassing both speakers of West Flemish and Limburgish, or a unified "Walloon" identity applicable to both inhabitants of the former Prince-Bishopric of Liège and the former French city of Tournai.

Flemish nationalist historian H. J. Elias claims that in the first decades of independent Belgium's existence, before the breakthrough of the Flemish Movement, "these French-speaking minorities found their weapons and their organization in the state. It was not necessary for them to set up leagues, found unions, or to embrace [any] form of organization or resistance."[85] Indeed, as Gary Cohen argues in his history of the Germans of Prague before 1914, "upper-strata groups generally develop conscious ethnic identities only after being provoked by direct challenges from formerly subordinate groups or adverse changes in political structures."[86]

With the legislative victories of the Flemish Movement and the expansions of suffrage in 1893 and 1919, the Francophones of Flanders faced both of these challenges. French-speakers themselves often remarked that their movements were constructed in opposition to the ("excesses" of the) Flemish Movement. Maurice Vauthier, a liberal Brussels politician, argued that an

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[84] Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 231–232. See also Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*, Cambridge and New York, 2012 for a similar example of the unification of disparate minority populations.
[85] H. J. Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse Beweging 1914/1939*, vol. 1: *De eerste wereldoorlog en zijn onmiddelijke nasleep: Augustus 1914/November 1919* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel), 203–210, citation at 203.
Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*, 2nd ed. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 201–210.

"obligation" to know Dutch would cause French-speakers in Flanders to disdain it, and that they would instead pride themselves on being "champions of 'French culture.'"[87] For Jacques Pirenne, the imposition of Dutch in Flanders led to the creation of "two new movements. . . one for the defense of the population of French expression in Flanders, the other, Walloon separatism."[88]

The partial move from calls for the "free choice of language" to calls for protection of an "ethnic minority" was in part a shift in *strategy*, fashioning a discourse that would be more palatable to both domestic and international opinion. The desirability of "free choice of language" was no longer self-evident in a time when state intervention in social and economic questions was more acceptable. The concept of "minority rights," on the other hand, evoking vague and lofty ideals of support for the disadvantaged, garnered support in word, if not always in deed, from the international community. In this analysis I draw from the Québécoise political scientist Josée Legault's study of the adoption of "minority rhetoric" among the English-speakers of Québec, in which she argues that this discourse was essentially "strategic" and a way for Anglophones in Québec to "reclaim" their previous position of privilege.[89] I am, however, not quite as cynical about the motives of Francophones of Flanders as Legault is of those of the Anglo-Québécois. I argue that this change in the Francophones' discourse was not solely instrumental but also mirrored a (partial) change in how they felt about themselves: they began to consider themselves a group distinct from the majority of the Flemish population, especially as they felt less and less welcome among their "fellow" Flemings.

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[87] Maurice Vauthier, "La Flamandisation de l'Université de Gand," *Le Flambeau* (December 1922): 390–391.
[88] Pirenne, *Il faut doter le pays d'un statut linguistique*, 13.
[89] Josée Legault, *L'invention d'une minorité: Les Anglo-Québécois* (Montréal: Éditions du Boréal, 1992).

The "Minority Rhetoric" of the Francophones of Flanders

The period between the World Wars was propitious for the development of "minority rhetoric" among the Francophones of Flanders. By "minority rhetoric" I mean *asserting that one belongs to a group that is a linguistic, ethnic, or national minority and using that status as a justification for certain political programs and policies*. As I mentioned earlier, except for a few inchoate references to "Flemings whose mother tongue is French" by the AFVLF, there was no real articulation of a separate Francophone-of-Flanders identity before 1918, let alone use of the word "minority" in the sense of a group entitled to certain rights or protections. In the face of the massive social and political challenges of the postwar period, some Francophones of Flanders did adopt the term "minority." While they understood that term in a variety of ways, they all held that their minority status reflected an authentic identity and social reality, in recognition of which the Belgian state should ensure them access to French-language education and public services. This use of "minority rhetoric" affirms Rogers Brubaker's argument that "'national minority'. . . designates a political stance, not an ethnodemographic fact," and that the term "national minority" is "a loose and imperfect designation for a field of competing stances, and that the 'stakes' of the competition concern not only *what* stance to adopt as a national minority but *whether* the 'group'. . . should understand and represent itself as a national minority."[90]

There is an array of examples of French-speakers of Flanders and their supporters using the term "minority" (approvingly), demonstrating the attempt to normalize this nomenclature. The 15 October 1929 issue of *L'Étudiant catholique*, the publication of the French-speaking Association royale générale des étudiants catholiques de Gand ("Gé catholique") at the University of Ghent, carried an advertisement for *Le Bien public*, a French-speaking Ghent newspaper with Catholic sympathies, describing its points of view as "Catholic Life / Liberty of Education / Defense of

[90] Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 5, 62.

Linguistic Minorities."[91] A tract on the "National Unity and the Linguistic Question" argued that the language legislation of the 1930s brought about "the linguistic oppression of the minorities of the upper classes by the popular masses."[92] While not using the actual term "minority," in protesting the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, the liberal periodical *Le Flambeau* claimed to speak for those young Flemings who recognized the value of education in a widely-spoken language as well as "all the Flemings for whom an essentially French culture is *hereditary*."[93]

On the one hand, the development of minority rhetoric among French-speakers in Flanders at the time can be seen as a logical extension of a Europe-wide phenomenon of the interwar years, as "minority rights" found purchase in light of the settlements which ended World War I.[94] On the other hand, any attempt to portray the French-speakers of Flemings – at least in the 1920s and 1930s – as a "minority" would seem to encounter several major conceptual problems. French-speakers were doubtlessly a minority in the mathematical sense of the term, both on the national scale, where they have usually constituted around 40% of the population, and especially in Flanders, where the proportion of the population that spoke French as a mother tongue never reached 10%. In a socioeconomic or political sense, however, they were more often than not seen as members of the ruling elites, a "*minorité majoritaire*," to borrow a term applied to the English-speaking population of Montréal in the first half of the twentieth century.[95] Coversely, linguist Peter Nelde argued that until recently, Flemish-speakers could be considered "the only oppressed majority in Europe" – the oppressors being, of course, the French-speaking "minority."[96]

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[91] Advertisement for *Le Bien public* in *L'Étudiant catholique*, 15 October 1929, 7a. University of Ghent Archive.
[92] Charles de Burlet, *L'unité nationale et la question linguistique dans l'histoire de Belgique* (Brussels: Office de publicité, 1935), 190.
[93] "Gandavus," "Pour l'université française de Gand," *Le Flambeau*, March 1922, 378. Emphasis added.
[94] Alcock, *A History of the Protection of Regional Cultural Minorities in Europe*, 39–87.
[95] Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 147.
[96] Peter H. Nelde, "Le conflit linguistique," in *Confli(c)t*, ed. Peter H. Nelde, ABLA Papers 14 (Brussels: Association Belge de Linguistique appliquée, 1990), 137.

Placing the question of who "really" counts as a minority into an international context, Liliana Riga and James Kennedy have argued that in post-World War I East-Central Europe, the definition of "minorities" along solely cultural or linguistic lines failed to acknowledge the socioeconomic aspects of interethnic relations in the new states. Thus, groups which had previously had majority (or plurality) status, such as the Germans in the Habsburg Empire, underwent an "ethnic reversal" whereby they became a "minority" in new states such as Czechoslovakia; this "minority" status did not however reflect the fact that they had long held the levers of power, and thus did not necessarily face the same challenges as other "minority" groups. Indeed, while elites from "low culture" minority groups had typically wanted to assimilate by learning the majority language, minorities from "high culture" groups were less willing to assimilate to the (new) ruling "low culture."[97] While the Francophones of Flanders did not face an "ethnic reversal" due to changing state borders (Belgium's annexation of a few German villages after the war notwithstanding), the introduction of simple universal manhood suffrage shifted the "balance of power" further away from them.

Further hampering the acceptance of a "minority" label for French-speaking Flemings in the interwar period, many political figures throughout Europe saw "minorities" as a problem exclusive to the supposedly backward regions of East-Central and Eastern Europe.[98] As Tara Zahra has recently demonstrated, in the aftermath of World War I, the regime of protections for ethnolinguistic minorities, as enforced by the League of Nations, was expressly limited to those states for which "minority treaties" had been drafted, all of which were successor states to the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. French diplomats, for example, explicitly claimed that their country had no "minorities" and thus did not need to sign the minority

[97] Liliana Riga and James Kennedy, "Tolerant Majorities, Loyal Minorities and 'Ethnic Reversals': Constructing Minority Rights at Versailles 1919," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 461–482.
[98] Jennifer Jackson Preece, "Minority Rights in Europe: From Westphalia to Helsinki," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 80, 82.

treaties, at the same time claiming (in a reversal of cause and effect) that as they had not signed the minority treaties and so they had no minorities to speak of. Zahra thus argues that France was therefore able to treat ethnic Germans in Alsace-Lorraine much more harshly than Czechoslovakia could treat its ethnic Germans.[99] Likewise, as one of the victors of the First World War, Belgium was not pressured, nor particularly inclined, to develop a framework for "minority protection" for *any* aggrieved group in Belgium that would be similar to those which were instituted by treaties in the new states which emerged from the war.

Despite the conceptual difficulties which went along with the use of minority rhetoric in relation to the French-speakers of Flanders, numerous members of that "community" did adopt it in the interwar period, in varying forms. The case of the Francophones of Flanders certainly fits that of "a minority with a *favored* position which is threatened by pressures toward predominance by the majority," similar to that of "the Swedes of Finland [or] the Germans of Bohemia," as described by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Margaret Woodward. While their position is thus somewhat different than that of a traditionally subaltern minority pressing for its rights, "in both cases … the threatened individuals must react as a group [because they] are either blocked or threatened in their social status *as a group*."[100]

This identification as a "minority" often went hand-in-hand with a (seemingly) paradoxical identification with the Flemish population as a whole. Numerous authors pointed out that the French-speakers of Flanders were not ethnically different from the Flemish-speaking masses, but were rather Flemings whose home language was French, a development stemming from the centuries of "bilingualism" and "linguistic freedom" which had prevailed in the Flemish lands. Armand Wullus, a Fleming from Leuven who was a member of the LNUB and who wrote

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[99] Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17, no. 2 (2008): 137–165.
[100] Ronald F. Inglehart and Margaret Woodward, "Language Conflicts and Political Community," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10, no. 1 (1967): 39. Second emphasis added.

prolifically against Activism and what he perceived to be the extremes of the Flemish Movement,[101] proposed a "solution" to the "language question" in which the "base" language of Flemish life was to be "Flemish" (i.e. Dutch). However, he also stressed that there should be guarantees for the French language in Flanders, given the centuries-old presence of French, as well as "the free will of a very important minority of Flemings (a minority even more important by of its intellectual and social quality than by its number)" to choose French. After all, did not all notable *flamingants* also know and use French from time to time? Wullus hoped that "the day when all Flemish intellectuals will know Flemish" and treat it with respect would see the solution of almost all language problems in Flanders.[102] Thus, those who spoke only (or predominantly) French were "Flemish intellectuals;" not speaking Flemish did not exclude them from the label of Flemish, though Wullus thought it best that they start learning the language anyway.

Jean Halleux, a philosopher at the University of Ghent who came from a French-speaking family in Bruges, argued that seeing French as a "foreign language" in Flanders was "The *Flamingant* Error," to use the title of his 1920 pamphlet on the subject. For Halleux, not only were the "rights" of the Francophone minority "inviolable," but by "depriving" the common people of the benefits of knowing French, the *flamingants* were harming ["*lèsent*"] the rights of the majority as well. He attacked those Flemings suffering from "persecution complex" who compared themselves to the Polish or the Irish. Halleux went on to say that some of the Flemish Movement's demands would be justified "if the Flemings formed a people" of their own, but since Flemings were a subgroup of the Belgian people, the "ahistorical and anti-national" call for Flemish homogeneity threatened to tear Belgium asunder.[103] Halleux's pamphlet thus illustrates *both* the "minority rhetoric" which would come to be more and more prevalent during the interwar period *and* the argument of the necessary free choice

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[101] Hendrik D. Mommaerts and Luc Vandewyer, "Wullus, Armand," *NEVB*.
[102] A. Wullus-Rudiger, "Le Conflit linguistique et sa solution," 19–20.
[103] Jean Halleux, *L'erreur flamingante* (Saint-Bavon: Michel, 1920), 3, 3n1, 5, 11–12.

of language, which he presented as a boon for the Flemish masses. He also tried to undercut the *Flemings'* use of minority rhetoric by arguing that they were not "really" a people who could aspire to the rights of self-determination in the way that the Irish or Polish did.

Another example of the marriage of minority and indigenous discourses comes from a tract against the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent by Pierre Verhaegen. A French-speaking aristocrat from Ghent, he had been a prisoner of the Germans during World War I for distributing clandestine publications; his father, also imprisoned, had died in 1917, weakened by his experiences. Verhaegen was active in the Comité de politique nationale and other "patriotic" organizations after the war.[104] He claimed that in defending the French-language University of Ghent, he was "exercis[ing his] right as a Fleming." When *flamingants* argued that the French-speakers of Flanders constituted "a tiny minority… which does not deserved the privileged situation which it enjoys," Verhaegen countered that French-speakers (he includes here Flemings who speak French as a second language as well as those who speak it as their mother tongue) were a much larger percentage of the Flemish population than *flamingants* claimed (though still a minority). He also maintained that neither their minority status nor their relative privilege allowed the state to deprive them of what he considered their fundamental rights: "A minority, even composed of millionaires, has the same need as the majority to be taught in its [own] language." Indeed, as the *flamingants* were fighting to secure the rights of Flemings who had a "Dietsch [*thiois*, that is, Flemish] mother tongue" to receive education in their own language, how could they deny it to "Flemings whose mother tongue is French?" Verhaegen continues:

> The right of the minority [to receive an education in its own language] is imprescriptible, and any system that would neglect it [*en ferait litière*] would merit but one name, that of tyranny. Sacrificing the rights of Flemings who express themselves in French [*Flamands d'expression française*] for the reason that

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[104] Beaufays, "Aspects du nationalisme belge au lendemain de la Grande Guerre," 159; *ODIS - Database Intermediary Structures Flanders* [online], s.v. "Verhaegen, Pierre (1873-1953)," last modified 30 April 2009, http://www.odis.be/lnk/PS_6652; Verhaegen, *Contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand*.

> they are a minority, and a well-off minority, would be, truthfully, the most monstrous of inequalities.[105]

We see in Verhaegen's pamphlet an interesting interplay of identities, one which reappears in the writings of many French-speakers of Flanders throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Verhaegen uses language relating to minorities to frame his argument, portraying the French-speakers of Flanders in the position of a group whose access to fundamental rights is in danger of attack by the "Dietsch" (Flemish-speaking) majority. At the same time, Verhaegen also makes claims *as a Fleming*, thereby attempting to establish a commonality with the majority in Flanders, and perhaps also trying to deny Flemish-speakers a monopoly on their claim to "Flemish" identity. Verhaegen's reference to the "tyranny" of forcing a group to renounce education in its own language harkens to his experience as a prisoner of war, evoking the specter of the German (and Activist) tyranny during the occupation.

As Verhaegen calls upon the right of Flemings to obtain education in their mother tongue, be it French or Flemish, so too does a circular from the Union patriotique féminine flamande / Vaderlandsche Vlaamsche Vrouwenbeweging (Patriotic Flemish Women's Union) invoke specifically maternalist language in support of the rights of the Francophones of Flanders. Associated with conservative, Francophone Catholics in Ghent, the *Union* argued against attempts to legislate away rights to the mother tongue, French or Flemish (they disputed the identification of Flemish with Dutch). Under the title "*Lied*" (Dutch for "song"), an article (in French) claimed that "[Whether] we first blurted out 'Maman' or 'Moeder,' [French and Dutch, respectively, for 'Mother'] death will put this word back in our mouth, even unconsciously… Our mother tongue is the direct heritage of our parents, who give it to us along with our life." Therefore any attempt by the legislator to "impose" a different language or to "change" it will be met with revolt, and "mothers [who] are the powerful depositories and guardians of it… will be able to conserve and defend it."[106]

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[105] Verhaegen, *Contre la flamandisation de l'Université de Gand*, 6, 10–13.
[106] "Lied," in bulletin issued by the *Union patriotique féminine flamande / Vaderlandsche Vlaamsche Vrouwenbeweging*, [1930], 8. Brochures "Belgique unitaire," FHMW.

The use of "minority" discourse had many other variations among the French-speakers of Flanders during this period. In 1929, a group of Catholic political figures from Ghent – of the more conservative, French-speaking wing of the party – issued a statement on "Ghent Catholics and the Defense of Minorities" which was reproduced in the liberal-leaning journal *Le Flambeau*. Freely using the term "minority" to refer to the population of native French-speakers in Flanders, the document goes on to define this minority in terms that have little to do with the stereotypical image of a downtrodden, marginalized minority. The French-speaking "minority" is the "cement of [Belgian] national unity" which has managed to keep Flanders and Wallonia together not only through the use of a common language but also through business and marital relations with Wallonia. Indeed, this minority "has… contributed to giving the Belgian country its original and pleasing appearance [*physionomie originale et sympathetique*]." They also serve as a "pendulum [*balancier*]" against the potential for the domination of one part of the Belgian population over the other as a result of the "law of the [greatest] number." Indeed, "in defending not only the individual, but also the collective rights of *the Flemish minority* [of French-speakers]" they are "good servants of the Fatherland."[107]

The statement recognizes the necessity of a Flemish-language university, but warns against the abrogation of the "freedom of the head of the household" to choose the language of schooling for his children. Making explicit the link between the original "freedom of the head of household" in the Belgian context and the linguistic meaning it had since acquired, the Francophone Ghent Catholics state that "it is he [the father] who chooses in which language the child born in Flanders will be raised, as it is he who chooses the religious faith that the child will follow." To drive the point home – and take a not-so-subtle swipe at the *flamingants* – the statement boasts that their defense of the "freedom of the head of the household" is supported by "the protestations of HH

[107] de Hemptinne *et al.*, "Les Catholiques gantois et la Défense des Minorités," 269–270. Emphasis added.

[Pope] Pius XI against the pretension of Italian Fascism to attribute to the state the natural prerogatives of the family."[108]

The previous two examples came from the conservative and well-to-do Catholic bourgeoisie of Ghent, but the Catholic Party in interwar Belgium drew much of its support from "Flemish-minded" voters, and such Francophone voices were a distinct minority (no pun intended) within the party. The Liberals were the most dedicated to protecting the Francophones of Flanders during this period. In late 1930, the Liberal Party withdrew its support from the coalition government precisely because they feared that their Catholic coalition partners would not respect the rights of Francophones in Flanders to have French primary and secondary schools (a concession the Liberals had exacted in return for their support of the linguistic transformation of the University of Ghent). This was the first time a Belgian government fell solely because of the language question.[109]

Shortly thereafter, the liberal-leaning magazine *Le Flambeau* published a small satirical vignette entitled "Why We [the Liberals] Overturned the Ministry." In it, the character representing *Le Flambeau*'s editorial staff skewers Belgian Catholic politicians who supported the rights of Catholic minorities in predominantly secular Wallonia, the Flemish minority in Brussels, and, internationally, German minorities in Eastern Europe, but who turned a blind eye to – or even openly called for the assimilation of – Francophone minorities in Flanders. Another character, representing international public opinion, specifically argues that minority rights should not be limited to "successor states of the Dual Monarchy" and that Belgium should learn from Finland's respect for its Swedish-language minority and Czechoslovakia's decision to maintain a German university in Prague alongside the Czech. Once again, we see how "minority rights" are tied to

[108] *Ibid.*, 271–272.
[109] Carl-Henrik Höjer, *Le régime parlementaire belge de 1918 à 1940* (Uppsala and Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1946), 188–189.

specific policy demands: in this case, *Le Flambeau* takes the Belgian state to task for its sanctions against the French-language ÉHÉ, "a minority institution."[110]

The Flemish Movement's Response to "Minority Rhetoric"

Many in the Flemish Movement were disinclined to see the "*fransquillons*" as a "minority" in the sense of a group that needed – or was entitled to – special protection or consideration on the part of the state. Some in the Flemish Movement presented *themselves* as a sociological, if not numerical, minority. Shortly following the Armistice, the "Flemish Committee," a group of former Activists in exile in the Netherlands, attempted to petition a series of American diplomats and even President Wilson himself in order to assure that "Flemish" interests and the "right" of Flanders to autonomy within Belgium would be represented at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference.[111] They attached to their demand a manuscript that provided their take on the "oppression" endured by the Flemings in the current Belgian state:

> Irishmen, Poles, Finns, Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Armenians *e tutti quanti*, all have urged the fact that they speak another language than the people to which they were annexed, and that the latter suppressed and tried to root out their language, in justification of their efforts to liberate themselves and to recover their independence. Why does that principle lose its validity as soon as Flanders urges it? Why is Flanders not allowed to lead its own life? … Because the despotism of *a small but economically and politically powerful minority uses a pretended equality of language with that of Wallonia and France as a blind for its objects* [*sic*]![112]

While the ex-Activist authors do call the Francophones of Flanders a "minority," it is blatantly not the kind of minority deemed worthy of protection in the postwar settlements.

Moving to more moderate Flemish opinion, Julien Doms, a Flemish socialist, wrote a pamphlet on "National Minorities in Europe and the Flemish Movement" in 1929 in which he noted that after the end of the war, "the Flemish masses, putting their hope in [*espérant dans*] the Wilsonian Gospel of the right of peoples to self-determination, believed that the time of justice had

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[110] "Fax", (pseud.), "Pourquoi nous avons renversé le ministère", *Le Flambeau*, December 1930, 401–416.
[111] Pieter van Hees, "Vlaamsch Comité," *NEVB*.
[112] Pro Flandria Servanda*: Flanders' Right and Claim for Autonomy, Formulated, Explained, Justified* ([The Hague]: The Flemish Committee, 1919), 88. Emphasis added.

come."[113] Supporting the "Compromise of the Belgians" (on which more below) which the Socialists had proposed that year, Doms argued that cultural autonomy and regional monolingualism in Flanders – and, by way of reciprocity, Wallonia – were the only means to make safeguard the rights of the Flemings to grow and develop in their own "Flemish" culture.[114] Doms takes it as self-evident that the Flemings are a "minority" culture, or at the very least that Flemings can be conceptualized as one; given the history of social and political relations between Flemings and French-speakers in the past, this point of view has a great deal of merit. The Francophones of Flanders – who would as a "minority" be deprived of their rights to development in their own language under the system of regional monolingualism being promoted by Doms and his party – are completely absent from Doms's analysis. The only references to the French language in Flanders describe education in French (presumably of Flemish-language children) as a "pedagogical heresy."[115]

If the Flemings were the "real" minority in Belgium, then the "denationalized" *fransquillons* were the most responsible for their oppression.[116] One Catholic *flamingant* periodical from the 1930s, discussing the development of Flemish consciousness, stated boldly that "the so-called '*flamands de cœur*' have been *personæ non gratæ* for years: nowadays, he who says 'Fleming' also says 'anti-*fransquillon*.'"[117] For many in the Flemish Movement, this antipathy found its sources less in the mere fact that these Francophones (or their ancestors) had "betrayed" their Flemish roots than in their perceived failure to meet their social obligations as the elite of Flanders. This in turn excluded them from consideration for "minority rights." A Walloon historian sympathetic to the Flemish Movement, writing for an American readership in 1931, claimed that "by systematically ignoring the

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[113] Julien Doms, "Les minorités nationales en Europe et le Mouvement Flamand," *L'Églantine* 7, no. 11 (1929): 22.
[114] *Ibid.*, 25–27.
[115] *Ibid.*, 24.
[116] Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse Beweging 1914/1939*, 1:202–203.
[117] *Nieuw Leuven*, July 1932, cited in Jan Hunin, "De Vlaamse Beweging versterkt maar verdeeld. Leuven 1932-1940. I," *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 51, no. 3 (1992): 150.

language of the people, [the ruling classes of Flanders] completely failed in their duties for at least seventy-five years. This is too often forgotten today when a point is made of defending 'the right' of this class to continue to receive instruction in French."[118] A French-speaker of Flanders, drawing from Catholic Thomist philosophy on the common good, claimed that the "duties" of his class in Flanders toward the Flemish people outweighed their "rights" in regard to French culture. While the elite would never "deprive itself of this marvelous instrument of intellectual progress" – that is, French – they needed to leave the "little domestic Versailles which [they] have jealously built up," that shielded them from contact with the common people and which made them "rootless" in their own land.[119]

In a pamphlet (written after 1921) on "The Choice of a Family Language and its Relationship with Christian Morality," an anonymous author writing under the pseudonym "Actio Charitatis [An Act of Charity]" who identifies himself as a person of Flemish background who was raised in French (to his regret) and who identifies very deeply with Catholicism, argues that Catholic morality demands that French *not* be used as a home language in Flanders.[120] Taking a different tack regarding the "freedom of the head of the household" than that espoused by the Conservative (Ghent Francophone) Catholics discussed above, "Actio Charitatis" rebukes the idea that a father can "choose" a language different than that of the general population for raising his children, at least if he wants to conform to a model of Christian charity. Those Flemings who choose a French education for their children are committing an act against natural law, "a sin [*faute*] more grave than voluntary mutilation." "Freedom," linguistic or otherwise, must be tempered by moral considerations, lest it become libertinism. He cites an (apocryphal?) example of a young man from a

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[118] Henri Laurent, "The Language War in Belgium," *Current History* 34, no. 6 (1931): 835.
[119] Luc Scholler, "Pour franchir la barrière linguistique: Les devoirs des Flamands d'expression française," *La Cité chrétienne*, February 1929, 325–328.
[120] Actio Charitatis (pseud.), *Le choix d'une langue familiale et ses rapports avec la moralité chrétienne* ([Brussels]: J. Sieben, [after 1921]). Brochures "Mouvement flamand," FHMW.

Flemish town who defends the "right of minorities" while himself being unable to "visit widows and orphans [and] console them in their tribulations" as he does not know Flemish, and decides to go instead to a social club where French is spoken. Only by speaking Flemish at home can individuals have enough intimate knowledge of the language to become fully active members of the community. French-speaking Flemings' invocation of the so-called "right of minorities" is thus unacceptable, no matter how long ago their family had become Gallicized, "Actio Charitatis" argues with vehemence: "Whatever the utilitarian reasons, the status quo [*situation acquise*], and the number of generations deformed by the initial deviation [*égarement*], it [the existence of a class which speaks French] is a grave error which it is important to denounce."[121]

"Actio Charitatis" compares those who speak Flemish to Jesus, who spoke Aramaic to the common folk, while the Roman invaders and local snobs spoke Latin and Greek respectively, much like the social climbers in Flanders speak French to distinguish themselves from the commoners. Evoking the debates on language use and literary prestige, "Actio Charitatis" compares the humble Guido Gezelle, who in writing in his West Flemish dialect "conquered immortality in spite of himself" to Emile Verhaeren, who while being fêted in Paris was unknown in his home village, and whose works have become sterile and (so he claims) unread because of the linguistic disconnect between him and his "natural" readership.[122]

All of the "three crowing cockerels" of the Flemish Movement criticized the French-speakers' view of themselves as a "minority." The Flemish Liberal Louis Franck, a supporter of the transformation of the University of Ghent, stated that while the upper classes of Flanders spoke French during the *Ancien Régime*, they "never considered themselves linguistic minorities." He reproached those French-speakers in Flanders who identified themselves as a "minority" but who –

[121] *Ibid.*, 11, 25, 28–29.
[122] *Ibid.*, 13–15, 35, 38–39,

he argued – *knew* Dutch but refrained from *using* it.[123] Camille Huysmans compared the situation of the Flemings, who "for many long years [had been] treated like a minority" to "all of the minority questions that have been put to the League of Nations in Geneva: the grievances of the Ukrainians and the Jews in Poland; of the Hungarians in Romania; of the Germans in Czechoslovakia; and of the Alsatians in France…"[124] He did not include the Francophones of Flanders as one of these minorities; indeed, he later likened ethnically-Flemish "*fransquillons*" who disdained the Dutch language to self-hating Jews.[125] Frans Van Cauwelaert stated in 1929 that "we [Flemings] deny any right to existence to language minorities in Flanders. We do not want them to continue to support unhealthy [language] relations in our lands as islands of Frenchification."[126]

Francophones of Flanders knew of and responded to the Flemish Movement's labeling of them as a "minority" as a term of abuse. We have already seen how Daniel Ryelandt rejected Frans Van Cauwelaert's use of "minority" as a way to portray the French-speakers of Flanders as "outsiders." Others were more bold. The newsletter of the LNUB argued that in the city of Antwerp, of which Van Cauwelaert was the mayor, the overwhelming *majority* of businesses had French legal names and conducted most of their business in French.[127] A petition emanating from several student groups at the University of Ghent in late 1929 opposed the total *flamandisation* of the university, in part because "the so-called linguistic minorities represent the great majority of the student population."[128] The authors of such ripostes did not seem to know, or care, that they

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[123] Louis Franck, *La nationalité belge et le mouvement flamand* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1931), 9, 42.
[124] Jules Destrée and Camille Huysmans, "The '*Compromis des Belges*' (1929)," translated by Tanis Guest and Theo Hermans, in Theo Hermans, Louis Vos, and Lode Wils, eds., *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History, 1780-1990* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1992), 278–279.
[125] Huysmans, "The Flemish Question," 682.
[126] Frans Van Cauwelaert at the Congress of the Katholieke Vlaamse Landbond in Tongeren, 4 August 1929, cited in Clement, *Taalvrijheid, bestuurstaal en minderheidsrechten*, 325.
[127] "Les minorités linguistiques," *Pour l'unité: Organe de la Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge* (October 1929): 2.
[128] Paul de Ryckere to President and Members of the Senate, 25 November 1929. Administration de l'Enseignement Supérieur Nouveau Fonds, Emploi des langues, Folder 32, "Université de Gand 1920-1930," AGR.

appeared to justify the Flemish Movement's resentment at the Francophones' disproportionate access to power and resources in Flanders.

Toward Homogeneity: Abandoning the Francophones of Flanders?

In late 1928, Richard Kreglinger, a Liberal (and Francophone) MP from Antwerp died, and there was accordingly a by-election for his seat. Tradition had dictated that in such a case, the other parties would abstain from fielding a candidate, to allow the party of the deceased to replace him. However, while the Catholics and the Socialists did not run anyone, the Liberal candidate, Paul Baelde, a member of Antwerp's French-speaking bourgeoisie, was challenged by none other than August Borms, the prominent Activist leader and member of the wartime "Council of Flanders," who had been drafted by the Front Party to run despite the fact that he was ineligible, sitting in prison and having been stripped of his political rights when sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment) after the war. Borms had become something of a martyr for the radical wing of the Flemish Movement, a symbol of the Belgian state's supposed animus against "Flanders" and a rallying call for those who desired a general amnesty of "political collaborators" from the war period.[129]

The by-election was held on 9 December 1928. Borms won the election with an overwhelming majority: 83,058 votes compared to 44,410 for Baelde, 5,698 for various far-left candidates, and 58,052 blank or spoiled votes (then as now, voting was compulsory in Belgium). While he was unable to take up this mandate and the seat went to Baelde anyway, by far the most important consequence of the "Borms election" was the heightened awareness of the relative strength of Flemish nationalism – or at least appeal to Flemish grievances – as a political force.[130]

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[129] Lode Wils, *Vlaanderen, België, Groot-Nederland: Mythe en geschiedenis* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1994), 321–383.
[130] *Ibid.*

Traditionally, the "Borms election" has been seen as a key "wake-up call" for the Belgian political world for the urgency of the language question. In the next year, Jules Destrée and Camille Huysmans, respectively a prominent Walloon and a prominent Fleming from the Socialist Party, announced the "Compromise of the Belgians" whereby their party would support a program of cultural autonomy for Flanders and Wallonia, allowing each region to determine its own linguistic status without interference from the other.[131] The likely effect of such a policy would be the creation of a monolingual Flanders and a monolingual Wallonia. Indeed, earlier that year, a Christian Democrat labor union proposed a similar solution, which like the "Compromise of the Belgians" made no mention of the Francophones of Flanders.[132] On the eve of the centenary of Belgian independence (1930), many Belgian political figures, including the Prime Minister, the Catholic Henri Jaspar, sought to "settle" the language question once and for all. Such a settlement would require not only the total *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, but also a clear and equitable policy on "linguistic minorities."

As a condition of voting for the *flamandisation* of the University – signed into law by the king on 5 April 1930 – many French-speaking (and usually Liberal) parliamentarians wanted guarantees for the rights of Francophone "minorities" to French-language primary education.[133] Many in the Flemish Movement, even if they begrudgingly acknowledged that the Francophones of Flanders could be considered a minority, argued that they should have no minority rights so long as there were no equivalent protections for Dutch-speakers in Wallonia. The debate over reciprocal rights for Flemings in Wallonia clove the Francophones of Flanders from their erstwhile defenders in the Walloon Movement, breaking Francophone solidarity (such as it was) and opening the way for a "solution" to the language question which would "sacrifice" the Francophones of Flanders.

[131] Destrée and Huysmans, "The '*Compromis des Belges*' (1929)," 274–280.
[132] Wils, *Vlaanderen, België, Groot-Nederland*, 358–359.
[133] Curtis, "New Perspectives on the History of the Language Problem in Belgium," 321.

The Walloon Movement, and Walloon politicians more generally, argued that the Francophone minority in Flanders was "autochthonous" while the Flemish minority in Wallonia was composed solely of immigrants.[134] The division between "native" and "immigrant" minorities – with a concomitant difference of what rights to which they ought to be entitled – is one which still persists today in many discussions of minority linguistic rights. There is typically an expectation that the latter kind *chose* to relocate and should thus be encouraged to assimilate, while the former, living in their ancestral homeland, should be able to use their "native tongue" in a wider variety of situations and are entitled to more protections for their language and culture on the part of the state.

This parallel is not perfect, though; the Flemish migrants in Wallonia were still living in the country of which they were citizens. If French-speakers had a right to feel "at home" in the northern part of their country, how, many Flemings argued, could one deny the same right to Dutch-speakers in the southern part of the country? The division between "native" and "immigrant" minorities, in Belgium as elsewhere, had class overtones: while the French-speakers in Flanders were usually from the educated, well-to-do elite, the Flemish in Wallonia were typically poor agricultural or industrial laborers who had moved there looking for work. Finally, the division between native minority groups and ethnic immigrant groups, such as that made by Will Kymlicka, often supposes that the former have an ancestral homeland that was somehow incorporated into a larger polity.[135] In the case of the Francophones of Flanders, though, not only were they geographically spread among the different cities of Flanders, they were also the descendants of Flemings who had chosen to speak French. Far from being integrated into the Belgian state against their will (or without their knowledge), many Francophones of Flanders participated with great zeal in the Revolution of 1830.

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[134] Maarten Van Ginderachter, *Le chant du coq: Nation et nationalisme en Wallonie depuis 1880* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2005), 47–49. See also the recent collection of essays on Flemish migrants in Wallonia, Idesbald Goddeeris and Roeland Hermans, eds., *Vlaamse migranten in Wallonië, 1850-2000* (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2011), translated into French as *Migrants flamands en Wallonie, 1850-2000* (Brussels: Racine Campus, 2012).

[135] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), vii, 14, 19–21, 25, 63–64, 101.

In fact, given the arguments that the Francophones of Flanders helped keep Belgium together, and that they were the most representative examples of a unique "Belgian" character, one may even have been able to make the case that the Francophones of Flanders, despite their relatively small numbers in the population, constituted the "state-forming nation" of Belgium.[136]

The French-speakers of Flanders themselves had also typically been reluctant to see their situation as parallel to that of the Flemish migrants in Wallonia, perhaps out of a desire to maintain Francophone solidarity with the Walloons, and perhaps to some extent from class prejudice. In Armand Wullus's mid-1920s project for a language statute for Belgium, Wallonia is recognized as exclusively French-speaking.[137] The Union patriotique féminine flamande (see above) argued that while French-speakers of Flanders were "at home," the Flemish minority in Wallonia was "a product of exportation."[138] However, throughout the 1920s, more and more Flemish Francophones were willing to extend minority rights to the Flemish in Wallonia in order to safeguard those rights for themselves in Flanders. Notably, in Jacques Pirenne's 1929 pamphlet outlining a potential system of language laws for Belgium, while he recognized that Wallonia had historically been monolingual while Flanders had been (in his estimation) bilingual, he also held that "if it is legitimate to recognize the right of the French-language population in Flanders to open French schools, it is just as legitimate to recognize the rights of the Flemish minorities in the Walloon land to open Flemish schools."[139] This did not prevent Pirenne from being a key target for the ire of many *flamingants*. One Flemish commentator argued that "each hard-gotten concession to Flemish demands has a tactical value for [Pirenne], that, in the future, he will doggedly exploit for the promotion of an indirect [*loensche*] Frenchification of the defenseless Flemish masses."[140]

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[136] "State-forming nation" is a concept used in studies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia to refer to an ethnic group that feels that it forms the essential "core" of a particular state.
[137] "Le Conflit linguistique et sa solution," 20: "La Wallonie est une contrée unilingue."
[138] Bulletin of the *Union patriotique féminine flamande*, 9.
[139] Jacques Pirenne, *Il faut doter le pays d'un statut linguistique*, 23.
[140] Luc Monteyne, "Een stem uit de Fransche Taalminderheid in Vlaanderen," *De Vlaamsche Gids* 18, no. 7 (1930): 290.

While more Francophones of Flanders came around to the idea of parallel rights for Flemings in Wallonia, few Walloons did. Even before the "Borms election" and the Compromise of the Belgians, the ranks of French-speakers in Belgium began to split on this issue. Notably, the Assemblée Wallonne, the Walloon "shadow parliament" that had come into being on the eve of World War I, was riven when Jules Destrée disagreed with its continued policy of support for the Francophones of Flanders, and exited the institution in 1922 with many of his allies.[141] Destrée, having rediscovered his Belgian patriotism during World War I and served as Minister of Arts and Sciences from 1921 to 1923, came to believe in a solution based on two monolingual regions (plus bilingual Brussels); he would later reiterate that belief as a signatory of the Compromise of the Belgians, described in more detail later. The *Assemblée Wallonne* continued on, with far less support or influence than it had had previously.[142] The Walloon Movement, which had come into existence in the 1880s largely to safeguard the ability of public servants in Flanders to speak (only) French, now attracted the ire of the Francophones of Flanders. The LNUB's newsletter warned against "A Grave Danger for National Unity: The *Wallingant* Movement."[143]

This disagreement manifested itself particularly strongly in the Liberal Party. The Liberals, since before the war, had often been associated with the commercial and linguistic interests of the Francophones of Flanders as well as the anti-clerical tendencies in the Walloon Movement. (Some supporters of the latter had moved to the Socialist Party.) The 1920 program of the Liberal Party used language quite similar to that of the prewar period, recognizing the rights of Flemings to receive government services in Dutch in Flanders, "condemn[ing] any measure tending to introduce bilingualism to the Walloon part of the country," and at the same time maintaining that it was

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[141] J. M Remouchamps, *L'Assemblée Wallonne, 1912-1937: Vingt-cinq ans de lutte contre l'hégémonie flamande et la contrainte linguistique* (Brussels: Éditions de la Défense Wallonne, 1939), 46-47.
[142] Paul Delforge and Sophie Jaminon, "Assemblée Wallonne (1912)," *EMW*; Paul Delforge, *L'Assemblée Wallonne, 1912-1923: Premier parlement de la Wallonie?* (Namur: Institut Jules Destrée, 2013).
[143] "Un grave danger pour l'unité nationale: Le Mouvement wallingant," *Pour l'unité: Organe de la Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge*, August-September 1928, 1

possible to "give satisfaction… to the desiderata of the existent linguistic minorities of the Flemish part of the country."[144] This solution – monolingualism in Wallonia, bilingualism in Flanders – remained a popular one among many members of the Liberal Party. This attitude can be seen as both a reason for and a reflection of the disproportionately large number of French-speakers in the party, compared to the Belgian population at large. Indeed, during one meeting in 1927, the president of the party, Albert Devèze, "thank[ed] … the Flemish delegates for their show of courtesy toward their French colleagues in not demanding the translation of speeches and discussions."[145]

However, more and more voices within the Liberal Party warned that the real or perceived continued lack of respect for the Flemish and their language would hurt the party in the long run, condemning it to die out in most of Flanders. Paul Baelde, the Liberal MP who had "lost" to August Borms in the infamous 1928 by-election, felt that allowing the University of Ghent to become Flemish would not harm the French-speaking minority of Flanders, who had their choice of three other universities (Liège, Leuven, and Brussels) if they wanted a French-language education. However, Baelde warned his fellow Liberals, continued resistance to Flemings' rights had already cost the Liberals seats in Parliament: "Do not afflict [*frappez*] the Liberals with sterility in the Flemish provinces! Remain the party of justice!" Paul-Émile Janson, noting that the overwhelming majority of Flemish MPs supported the *flamandisation* of Ghent, concluded that the Liberals need to go "as far as possible with the concessions to assure the maintenance of Latin culture in Flanders."[146] Not all Francophones of Flanders agreed with this policy. One anonymous letter-writer resigned from the Libéraux unis d'Anvers of which Baelde was the president, worried that Baelde had sold the

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[144] *Le Programme libéral: Résolutions votées par le Congrès libéral des 16, 17 et 18 octobre 1920* (Brussels: Imprimerie Scientifique et Littéraire, 1921), 15. Collection "Congrès et Réunions," CJG.

[145] Minutes of the Assembly of the National Council of the Liberal Party, 13 March 1927, 23. Collection "Congrès et Réunions," CJG.

[146] Minutes of the Special Assembly of the National Council of the Liberal Party, 1 December 1929, 3. Collection "Congrès et Réunions," CJG.

Liberals' principals down the river with his concessions to the *flamingants*. He cited the party's apathy during the affair of the ÉHÉ, claiming that partisanship (Professor Hulin de Loo was a Catholic) trumped the defense of linguistic liberty in this case; he also worried that Baelde would give in on the question of Flemish secondary schooling for French-language children in Flanders.[147]

The Liberal Party, as we have seen, acquiesced to the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent in 1930, albeit with great regret among many of its members. François Bovesse, a Liberal MP from Namur in Wallonia, noted in Parliament that "we will suffer from seeing the French University of Ghent disappear, as we would suffer from seeing French civilization driven out of Canada, as we would suffer from seeing Geneva lose its French sentiment."[148] In exchange for this sacrifice, the Liberal MPs expected that the state would make guarantees for the French minority's right to access primary and secondary education in French in Flanders. One common proposal mooted by the Liberals held that in areas where a certain number of "heads of the household" demanded, schools in the other language (French in Flanders, Dutch in Wallonia) could be established. Bovesse wanted to amend this proposal, restricting it only to heads of households born in the province in which they were making the demand. Without explicitly naming Flanders and Wallonia, this stipulation would clearly have the practical effect of granting rights to French-speaking (or French-preferring) families in Flanders, who were typically native to the regions where they lived, while preventing the establishment of Flemish schools in Wallonia, as the Flemish-speaking population was almost entirely composed of families which had migrated from Flanders. Flemish Liberals accused Bovesse and his supporters of provoking the Flemings.[149]

More and more individuals, though, came to the conclusion that any permanent settlement of the language issue would include a sad but necessary end to the "rights" of the Francophone

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147 [Anonymous?] to [Paul] Baelde, Président des Libéraux Unis d'Anvers, 19 January 1931. Raad van Vlaanderen, Persoonlijk Archief van Jacques Pirenne, AGR.
148 AP, Chamber, 20 February 1930, 669.
149 Minutes of the Permanent Committee of the Liberal Party, 9 February 1930. Collection "Congrès et Réunions," CJG.

minority in Flanders.[150] Many Walloons feared that extending minority rights to Flemings in Wallonia would lead to a gradual "Germanization" of Wallonia. Bovesse had said as early as 1929 that "it is hard, it is bitter to 'abandon' the French [*sic*] of Flanders; it would be that much harder to sacrifice our [=Walloons'] linguistic unity." More prosaically, they also worried about being "shut out" of public service jobs in their own region (if they would need to know Dutch), and Liberal and Socialist Walloons in particular feared that "insular" Flemish communities in Wallonia would remain under the sway of their parish priests.[151] As most Flemish politicians wanted parity – either bilingualism in *all* of Belgium or monolingualism in *both* Flanders and Wallonia – and most of their Walloon counterparts rejected the "imposition" of Dutch in Wallonia at all cost, the Francophones of Flanders, who could command relatively little political power under a system of "one man, one vote," had no parliamentary support left.[152] The defeat of "minority rights" for the Francophones of Flanders is thus often placed at the feet of the Walloon Movement. Camille Huysmans, who had fought for the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, thought nonetheless that the education law of 1932 did not provide enough recognition for the French-speakers in Flanders, accusing the *Walloons* of adopting the "feudal" principle of territorialism in language policy.[153]

We should not see the move toward monolingualism in Flanders as caused solely by Walloons' "abandonment" of the Francophones of Flanders, however. Many of these Francophones – who, I remind the reader, typically knew their local dialect of Flemish, if not standard Dutch – stopped defending these rights on their own. Some individuals raised in French-speaking households had never defended them to begin with, identifying with the Flemish Movement from an early age, like Lode Craeybeckx, one-time Activist and future mayor of Antwerp, and Frans Daels, a leader in

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[150] Herman Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, trans. Ian Connerty (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers for University Press Antwerp, 2011), 159–160.
[151] Chantal Kesteloot, "Alliés ou ennemis? La place des francophones de Flandre dans les combats du Mouvement Wallon," *FrancoFonie: Revue du Centre d'Étude des Francophones en Flandre* 3 (2011): 48–63, citation at 58.
[152] Selma K. Sonntag, *Competition and Compromise amongst Elites in Belgian Language Politics* (Bonn: Dümmler, 1991).
[153] Wils, *Vlaanderen, België, Groot-Nederland*, 370.

the Front Movement and noted proponent of the *flamandisation* of Ghent.[154] There were also Francophones who did not identify (strongly) with the Flemish Movement, but who came to reluctantly support the linguistic homogenization of Flanders. This support, in fact, demonstrates the extent to which a specifically *Belgian* identity predominated among this group: for many of them, losing some of the rights associated with speaking French was a lesser sacrifice than seeing Belgium disappear. So, for example, Bruges native and Francophone François-Louis Ganshof, writing to his fellow medieval historian Henri Pirenne, averred that the only way to prevent Flemish public opinion from going over to the separatists was the "integral *flamandisation* of the Flemish land, [even at the expense of] the liberty of the French-language minorities. In and of itself, it is abominable… and the attacks on linguistic freedom seem odious to me. [But] there is a higher consideration, the unity – and even the existence – of Belgium." As such, Ganshof – who in 1923 had argued against the moderate "Nolf-university," arguing that that the University ought to continue to offer purely French-language curricula for students who so desired – felt obliged six years later to resign his post at the ÉHÉ and to quit the LNUB (Pirenne's son Jacques's organization) as he could no longer "honestly continue to be part of [an organization] whose program is totally different" from that of radical *flamandisation* of Flanders.[155] Ganshof would replace Pirenne at the University of Ghent the next year, when Pirenne left after the implementation of Dutch-only instruction.[156]

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[154] Henri-Floris Jespers, "Franstalige Flaminganten," *De Vos: Uitgave van het verbond V.O.S.* 5, no. 43 (March 20, 1987): 8; Olivier Boehme, "Lode Craeybeckx – Vlaams socialisme en identiteit (1914-1940)," *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine* 36, no. 3–4 (2006): 373–407; Wendy Lisarde, "Omdat ik Vlaming ben: Een biografie van Frans Daels" (Master's thesis, Universiteit Gent, 2012).

[155] Ganshof, "Le nouveau régime de l'Université de Gand;" F[rançois]-L[ouis] Ganshof to Henri Pirenne, 15 September 1929. Henri Pirenne Archive, Box "Correspondance 1926-1929," ULB.

[156] Adriaan Verhulst, "Ganshof, François, Marie, Arthur, Louis," in *Nouvelle biographie nationale*, vol. 5 (Brussels: Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, 1999), 171–174.

An Unfinished Conclusion? The Aftermath of "Regional Monolingualism"

In 1932, two laws, one for public administration (28 June) and one for education (14 July), stipulated that these services were to use only Dutch in Flanders and only French in Wallonia, with Brussels as a bilingual enclave. This, after some legislators had voted for the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent only two years prior with the understanding there would be guarantees for the rights of French-language minorities in education and administration. A law of 15 June 1935 extended the principle of regional monolingualism to the justice system.[157] At first blush, it might seem that the question of French in the Flemish public sphere had been settled in favor of its virtual disappearance: in principle, Dutch was now the language of schooling, administration, and the courts in Flanders. However, there were still several "flies in the ointment" in the opinion of those Flemish who wanted a truly homogenous Flanders. First, the laws on language use in public administration stipulated that the "language regime" of a municipality could change from monolingual to bilingual if the results of the decennial census indicated that speakers of the other official language constituted at least 30% of the population. Second, the laws on language use in schooling provided for "transmutation" courses which allowed speakers of a minority language (typically French in Flanders) to begin their education in their own language, with an increasing amount of coursework in the official language of the region, with an eye towards moving these children to secondary education completely in the language of the region. However, these schools were often designed in such a way as to provide a mostly-French education. In addition, private (unsubsidized) schools were not subject to the same restrictions as the public schools, allowing more affluent individuals in Flanders to continue to send their children to French-language schooling. Third, the Catholic University of Leuven, while located in Flemish territory and counting many *flamingants* among its students and alumni, still offered a full range of courses in French, as well as

[157] Herman Van Goethem, *De Taaltoestanden in Het Vlaams-Belgisch Gerecht, 1795-1935* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1990), 246–262.

special schools in French for the children of the French-language academic staff. Fourth, there was no regulation of the use of languages in private trade and retail, which meant that the preexisting French-speaking economic elite in Flanders continued to have a network of businesses where French was essentially a necessary language. While this conformed to Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution, which limited legislation on languages to public authorities, many in the Flemish Movement argued that this situation continued to relegate Flemish-speakers to second-rank positions in their own land. These issues came to prominence in the years following World War II, and will be discussed more thoroughly in the final two chapters of the text.

Chapter 4

An Uneasy Status Quo, 1932-1960

Taking Stock of the Francophone Public Realm in Flanders after 1932

In 1932, two decades after winning the Nobel Prize in Literature, Maurice Maeterlinck, the French-language playwright from Ghent, was (belatedly) recognized for his services to Belgium's cultural life by being ennobled as a count. This can be seen as an anachronism, especially as Maeterlinck, who had been living in France, had fewer and fewer ties with Belgium. More importantly, and perhaps ironically, in the same year that the king conferred this honor on Maeterlinck, a series of laws were passed that had the express aim of preventing the "creation" of any more individuals like Maeterlinck: that is, Flemings schooled in French.

The laws of 1932 that applied the practice of regional monolingualism in public administration and education, and the law of 1935 which applied regional monolingualism to the courts, would seem to have resolved the question of French in the Flemish public sphere by banishing it altogether. However, the French-speakers of Flanders remained enormously influential in Flemish society even after these laws went into effect, and maintained a kind of parallel public sphere.

While, in the mid-1930s, there were no Francophone writers from Flanders who enjoyed the international popularity that Maeterlinck or Verhaeren had in their prime, there remained a vibrant Francophone cultural sphere in Flanders. There were numerous literary and artistic reviews published in French, French-language novelists, and French-language theater presentations. There was also a kind of Francophone civil society in Flanders, including Francophone cultural organizations, fraternal organizations including Freemasonry, charitable organizations like the

Rotary Club, and French-language recreational and scouting organizations.[1] Finally, the Francophones of Flanders continued to publish several important newspapers, the best-known and most widely-read of which were the *Flandre Libérale* of Ghent and the *Matin* and *Métropole* of Antwerp. While public services in Flanders were now (in theory) solely Dutch, this did not prevent French-speakers in Flanders from holding political office here and there. Notably, the Kortrijk Liberal Robert Gillon, a French-speaker and ardent opponent of "linguistic constraint," served as president of the Senate three times: 1939-1947, 1949-1950, and 1954-1958, the first as a "co-opted Senator" (chosen by elected Senators) and the others as an elected Senator from Kortrijk.[2]

The Francophones of Flanders still controlled a disproportionately large amount of the economy in Flanders. This is not surprising, given the fact that the Francophones of Flanders drew much of their membership from the higher bourgeoisie (and vice versa). The statistics for the use of the "talking clock" service (wherein one calls an official phone number to receive the standard time in order to set clocks and watches) reveal the continuing economic and social disparity between the French- and Dutch-speaking populations in Flanders. The "talking clock" service was available in both Dutch and French. The Minister of Post, Telegraphs, and Telephones reported to the Senate that in 1937, there were 244,920 calls to the French service but only 113,672 to the Dutch from Ghent; in Antwerp, the figures were 508,000 French and 425,000 Dutch.[3] In both cases, these numbers are far out of proportion to the relative amounts of French- and Dutch-speakers in each city. While this figure was cited approvingly by partisans of French as "proof" of the importance of French in Flanders, one might also take this as an indication that speakers of French were more likely to afford telephone service, and live in areas where it was easily available.

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[1] Sophie Wittemans, "Scout Toujours? Scoutisme francophone en terre flamande depuis 1911," *FrancoFonie: Revue du Centre d'Étude des Francophones en Flandre* 2 (2010): 59–79.

[2] Gaby Verbeke, "Robert Paul Gillon: Un libéral modéré mais non modérément libéral," *De Leiegouw* 43, no. 1 (2001): 19–47.

[3] Cited in "Chronique antiflamingante," *Le Pays de Bruxelles: Organe officiel de la "Ligue contre la flamandisation de Bruxelles"* 2, no. 6 (April-May 1938): 2. HL. *Le Pays de Bruxelles* was a publication of a group of French-speakers of Brussels who fought the "*flamandisation*" of the capital.

Still, much of the internal communications, record-keeping, and foreign correspondence of large companies in Flanders was still done in French; especially in those industries which dealt with Belgian colonial interests in the Congo and Rwanda-Urundi as well as those who were heavily involved in foreign trade. This was partly a matter of inertia, but also a reflection of the continued role of French as a world language as well as a "common bond" between the different parts of Belgium. The continued preeminence of French in Flemish economic life would become a key complaint of the Flemish Movement after World War II, motivating calls for a "Dutchification" (*vernederlandsing*) of Flemish industrial and financial life.

The Francophones of Flanders also possessed a network of private schools which continued to teach (mostly) in French.[4] They also had access to the "transmutation classes," primary schools where the earliest years were taught in French, adding more Dutch to the curriculum in each consecutive year, with the intent that students would then be able to following secondary education in Dutch.[5] These transmutation classes had been created by the 1932 law on language use in education as a watered-down version of the French-language schools that had been promised to the Francophones of Flanders in return for supporting the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent in 1930. While the transmutation classes were intended to be a temporary measure, to allow Francophones to better assimilate into (Dutch-speaking) Flemish society, they often served as *de facto* French-language schools, which I will discuss below.

In 1930, the major colleges of the University of Ghent had been made "Flemish;" related trade and engineering institutes underwent *flamandisation* a few years later or were transferred to the (State) University of Liège in Wallonia. Still, students of Romance philology – an important source of teachers of French in Flemish schools – did their studies *in French*. One such student, who

[4] For an evocative description of one such school, see Liliane Wouters, *Paysage flamand avec nonnes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).
[5] Camille Huysmans, "Hoe kan het Vlaamsch Cultuurprobleem opgelost worden?" *De Vlaamsche Gids* 20, no. 3 (1931): 120.

attended the university in the 1950s, told me that almost everyone who completed their studies in this field (including herself) came from a French-speaking home; indeed, some students chose this curriculum for the very reason that it would be easier (or, put another way, that they would have a comparative advantage).[6] We may see this as an unintentional continuation of Francophone privilege, though doubtlessly a small one in the grand scheme of things.

The *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, however, did not end French-language post-secondary education in Flanders. In Antwerp, the St. Ignatius Business School and the Colonial University both offered French-language curricula. In Ghent, the ÉHÉ continued to provide French-language education until the beginning of World War II. Most importantly, the Catholic University of Leuven evolved from a mostly French-language university to essentially two universities – one Dutch, one French – sharing one campus. While, in theory, the French-language division was for Walloons who wanted a Catholic education unavailable in Liège or Brussels, the children of the Francophone Catholic bourgeoisie of Flanders also frequented this establishment. In any case, the French-language division and its academic staff formed the core of a French-speaking population in Leuven, including its own schools. This situation would persist until the 1960s, a decade which was at least as tumultuous for the Catholic University of Leuven as it was for Berkeley or the Sorbonne.

The Belgian coast also maintained a very strong *de facto* presence of French. Though located completely within Flanders, Belgium's coastline on the North Sea contained many resorts, racetracks, and casinos whose clientele was in large part drawn from French-speaking elites. During the warmer months, French became even more important at the coast, as vacationers from Wallonia and northern France came to enjoy the beaches. Local businesses and administrations thus offered

[6] Interview with Claudine Spitaels, Aalst, 30 March 2011.

services in French to accommodate legions of monolingual French-speakers, to the chagrin of many in the Flemish Movement.

Toward "Two Solitudes" in Belgium?

In Canada, discussion of the often strained relations between the English- and French-speaking populations often centers around the idea of the "two solitudes": that is, that each "language community" is closed off to the other, as each has its own set of cultural touchstones, media, and political and civil institutions, preventing the development of a common frame of reference.[7] After the homogenizing laws of the 1930s, way may begin to apply the concept of "two solitudes" to Belgium as well. This had been one of the fears of the pro-French forces in Flanders: as French becomes a "foreign" language in Flanders, so then do the French-speakers in Brussels and Wallonia become more "foreign" to Flemish society. While educated Flemings, even the most devotedly *flamingant*, continued to learn French and typically spoke it quite well, the progressive marginalization of French in Flanders contributed to the development of two separate public spheres in Belgium.

The drifting apart of the Flemish and Francophone "solitudes" became evident in Belgian intellectual life. Henri Pirenne, as we have seen, had been a symbol of Belgian patriotism during World War I, and his historical analysis of Belgian society postulated a hybrid society in which the presence of French in Flanders was both a long-standing reality and a contributing factor to Belgian unity. His son Jacques, who had been a key figure in the defense of French in Flanders and of Belgian unity, served as a lawyer and literary agent for his father. Throughout the early 1930s, the Volksdrukkerij in Ghent, the publisher of the Dutch-language translation of *Histoire de Belgique* maintained a heated correspondence with both father and son. At first, the Volksdrukkerij did not

[7] The term was coined in the novel of the same name: Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (Toronto: Collins, 1945).

wish to continue publishing the series after volume 5 because of the low rate of return; Jacques Pirenne was eventually able to convince the publisher to continue with volumes 6 and 7. Near the end of 1934, Jacques Pirenne wrote to the Volksdrukkerij asking about the royalties from these volumes and questioning the (extremely low) sales numbers which the publisher reported.

In a somewhat exasperated tone, the representative of the Volksdrukkerij responded to the younger Pirenne:

> While out of politeness I have until now only told you as much in veiled terms, you will not begrudge me having to tell you that in Flemish and Dutch circles, and above all in Flemish university circles, people no longer want Professor Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique*, for reasons that I do not have to explain to you, and which you yourself will very easily understand in placing yourself in [their] economic, political, and linguistic point of view.[8]

The publisher here makes clear the decline of the popularity of Henri Pirenne's view of Belgian history among Flemings, who viewed Pirenne's arguments as buttressing the case for a continued French dominance in – or domination of – of Flanders. When Pirenne died late in the following year, the government decided not to have a state funeral for Pirenne so as not to upset much of Flemish political opinion. This was a dramatic change of fortune for the man who, during and immediately after the war, was hailed as a Belgian hero, both for his analyses "proving" the historical basis of the Belgian nation as well as for his resistance to the Germans, which had propelled him to international celebrity.[9]

We can see the fear that new language laws would create a deficit among Flemings in a speech of Albert Lilar, a Francophone Antwerper and liberal politician, given in 1938 in his position as president of the Conférence du Jeune Barreau d'Anvers. Lilar, husband of the noted author Suzanne Lilar, was one of the Francophones who had accepted the "*flamandisation*" of Flanders. Indeed, one Francophone writer would later accuse him of doing so in part to help his political

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[8] See the Henri Pirenne Archive, Box "Édition flamande de *L'Histoire de Belgique*," ULB. The cited letter is signed by someone (I am unable to decipher the name) in the name of R. Vankenhove, the administrator-delegate of the Volksdrukkerij, to Jacques Pirenne, 15 November 1934. The original says "*vous… comprendrez*" (you… will understand), though I suspect he might have meant "*vous… comprendriez*" (you… would understand).
[9] Bryce Dale Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent: E. Story-Scientia, 1974), 392ff.

career.[10] Lilar nevertheless worried that new lawyers in Flanders would feel that they could henceforth ignore the study of French and of French jurisprudence. On the contrary, argued Lilar, the Jeune Barreau had to stimulate the study of French, the "mother tongue of the law," which had a unique ability to express legal concepts, exemplified by the Civil Code and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Citing Rivarol's famous essay on the universality of the French language, Lilar argues that Flemish magistrates cannot afford to abandon the practice of a language which "goes beyond [*déborde*] its homeland to become a necessity for all cultivated men.[11]

The decline of French in Flanders was something which one could quite literally see with one's own eyes. As Pieter Judson has demonstrated in his work on "language activists" in the Habsburg Empire, nationalists in multilingual polities often happen to see "border regions" between areas which speak different languages as sites of both opportunity to "win over" or "maintain" the allegiance of residents of such areas, as well as sources of danger, as the inhabitants of these regions were often unmoved by linguistic nationalism, and were susceptible to being linguistic "amphibians" (bilinguals) or even of going over to the "other side."[12] Florimond "Flor" Grammens, a Flemish schoolteacher in Ronse, a community on the "language border" with Wallonia, would seem to fit the mold of a language activist whose "consciousness" of the language question was heightened by his experience on the "language border." Indeed, he was a leading member of a group of organizations which banded together to "protect" the language border, with the programmatic name of Taalgrens Wakker! (Language Border Awake!) which operated from 1927 to 1931.[13]

Starting in 1937, Grammens extended his activity to the whole of Flanders with his (in)famous campaigns to get rid of French-language signage. Grammens and his collaborators –

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[10] José Vial [Marcel Lachaert], *Bruxelles-Paris, ou le voyage sans retour?* (Ghent: Les Débats, 1959), 26.
[11] "Allocution de M. Albert Lilar, Président de la Conférence du Jeune Barreau d'Anvers," 19 November 1938, 4–7. Albert Lilar Collection, III 1.2., LA.
[12] Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[13] Martina de Moor, "Taalgrens Wakker!," *NEVB*; Lode Wils, "Grammens, Flor (eigenlijk Florimond)," *NEVB*.

often Flemish-minded students from the University of Leuven – working under the name Raad der Daad (Council of the Deed) went through Flanders painting over French texts on bilingual street signs and other public markers. While Grammens was often treated with derision by the Francophone press, his actions made him a folk hero to many in the Flemish Movement who credited them with a stricter application of language laws in Flanders.[14]

In removing French from signs, Grammens was asserting that Flanders was a monolingual society, even if, in reality, (spoken) French continued to play a large role at the time.[15] Indeed, one can easily imagine Grammens saying the words of sovereigntist Québec Premier René Lévesque, *mutatis mutandis*: "in its own way, each bilingual sign says to an immigrant: 'There are two languages here, English and French; you can choose the one you want'. It says to the Anglophone: 'No need to learn French, everything is translated'."[16]

Grammens himself expressed his intentions in a flyer sent out by the Raad der Daad in November 1938 to people living in Flanders who listed a French version of their home address in telephone directories. The flyer stated that while simple negligence was probably the reason for having a French address listed, it was important to change it because now, with the *flamandisation* of public life, such addresses were in fact "incorrect." Beyond that, though, the flyer informed its recipients that "Your region is undeniably a purely Flemish region, and our people are indisputably more Flemish-conscious [*Vlaamsch-bewust*]. What was already natural in Wallonia [i.e.

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[14] Maria Vandeweerd, "Grammens en de kommissie voor taaltoezicht 1940-1944: Haar ontstaan en werking op het onderwijsvlak" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1974); Jan Hunin, "De Vlaamse Beweging versterkt maar verdeeld. Leuven 1932-1940. II," *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* 51, no. 4 (1992): 216–217.
[15] For more on the role of languages and signage in "policing" identities, see Daniel W. Gade, "Language, Identity, and the Scriptorial Landscape in Québec and Catalonia," *Geographical Review* 93, no. 4 (2003): 429–448.
[16] René Lévesque to Eric Maldoff, 5 November 1982, cited in Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 175.

monolingualism] is also finally becoming so here, under penalty of passing for old-fashioned and soon falling under a general boycott."[17]

Rex and the Francophones of Flanders: An Ambivalent Relationship

The parliamentary elections of 7 June 1936 saw the dramatic appearance of the Rexist party on the Belgian political scene. Led by the young and charismatic Walloon Léon Degrelle, the Rexists (whose party name was an abbreviation of "*Christus Rex*"— Latin for "Christ the King") espoused radical Catholicism and deep antipathy toward what they saw as threats to the social order. They attracted the votes of many conservative French-speakers, drawing them from the Catholic Party. Degrelle and the first "Rexists" came from Francophone Catholic circles at the University of Leuven.[18] Indeed, some thought that Degrelle and his party, who seemed to exult the "traditional" hierarchies in Belgian society, would respect the "primacy" of French. Shortly before the elections, Rex issued campaign materials – destined, it is true, for Brussels and not for Flanders *per se* – which declared that as a party, they were against "any spirit of constraint in language matters" and that they supported "the liberty of the head of the household in educational matters [*matière scolaire*]" as well as the "liberty of the litigant" to choose his or her language during court proceedings.[19]

These early Rex-voters were soon to be disappointed. Rexist leaders saw the promotion of Flemish as an affirmation of the "national life" of the Flemings; indeed a pamphlet on Rex in Flanders argued that the previous dominance of French was itself "unnatural" and that the linguistic division between the elite and the masses was responsible for the decadence of the Flemish people. Some of the traditionally French-speaking elite of Flanders had joined Rex, according to the

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[17] Flyer dated "Ronse, November 1938." Documentation collection "Raad der Daad," AMVC. Reproduced in *Daad: Kosteloos strijdblad van den « Raad der Daad »* (January 1939): 7, also found in Documentation collection "Raad der Daad," AMVC.
[18] Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards*, 3rd ed. (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers, 2009), 156–158.
[19] Campaign material cited in *Bulletin de la Ligue contre la flamandisation de Bruxelles* (January 1937): 1. HL.

pamphlet, as they realized that "we live in a time which can no longer permit citizens who are but citizens of luxury [*citoyens de luxe*]." The French-speaking elite needed to stop being "*volksvervreemd* [alienated from the people]" and "reintegrate" themselves into Flemish life. Rex thus recognized "regional monolingualism" as the necessary solution to Belgium's language woes.[20]

As Rex became more and more openly fascist in its tendencies, Degrelle signed a (short-lived) pact with the VNV.[21] The VNV's goals seemed to clash with Degrelle's "Burgundian" ideal (calling back to the state ruled by the Dukes of Burgundy in the late Middle Ages, which enveloped most of the modern Low Countries as well as much of northern and eastern France). On a strategic level, however, Degrelle likely considered that Rex would find little support among the (Dutch-speaking) Flemings, and the VNV considered Bolshevism an even greater threat to Flanders than the *fransquillons*; thus, Rex and the VNV would concentrate their efforts where they thought they would be the most effective.[22] This maneuver backfired badly for Degrelle, losing Rex much of its support from conservative French-speakers in all parts of Belgium, and allowing French-speaking Liberals in Flanders to openly criticize the VNV without seeming overly anti-Flemish.[23]

(Re)Integration of the Francophones into Flemish Society?

Some French-speakers in Flanders read the writing on the wall and adapted their language use accordingly. In Chapter 3, I discussed individuals like François-Louis Ganshof, the historian who abandoned his activity in favor of "protecting" French in Flanders in order to achieve the more pressing goal of preserving Belgian unity. Some French-speakers moved beyond merely accepting the *flamandisation* of Flemish society to actively working toward it.

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[20] Léon Degrelle and Paul [*sic*] de Mont, *REX Et La Flandre* (Brussels: Éditions Rex, 1936), 8, 15–16. Réserve précieuse, ULB.
[21] "L'Unité belge est-elle en péril?" *Revue belge*, 1 December 1936, 427–450.
[22] A. W. Willemsen, *Het Vlaams-Nationalisme 1914-1940* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1958), 366–377.
[23] Biography of Henri Story, 4n11. LA. http://www.liberaalarchief.be/Henri%20Story.pdf.

Pierre d'Ydewalle, a member of a well-known West Flemish noble family, spoke French at home like nearly all of the Flemish nobility of the time, and had also learned the West Flemish dialect. As a young man, he did not understand why many in the Flemish Movement were so violently opposed to French, until he began to work at the Ministry of Agriculture and heard his coworkers spout "enormous[ly] anti-Flemish remarks."[24] Writing shortly before World War II, d'Ydewalle argued for the nobility in Flanders to commit itself to speaking Flemish. His arguments, tellingly, appeal to many of the same interests as earlier arguments for the maintenance of French as an elite language in Flanders. As many proponents of French in Flanders had pointed to the time-honored tradition of the upper classes in Flanders being "bilingual," so too does d'Ydewalle, this time placing emphasis on the Flemish component of such bilingualism. Indeed, he notes, the Flemish Movement was able to achieve such great successes in Flanders because the use of Flemish in public life is a *return* to old traditions. The Flemish nobility must (re)adopt Flemish so as not to deprive "the Flemish population of its *natural guides*" or abandon them to *flamingant* leaders who are all too often ignorant of "the real history of their country." Nobles should learn to speak Flemish "to perfection, in such a way as to affirm *the superiority of the social stratum* [*rang social*] to which [they] belong."[25]

Thus, d'Ydewalle hopes that by adopting Flemish, the nobility can attain what it had wanted to achieve through the continued use of French – recognition as the "natural" leaders of Flanders and continued social prestige. D'Ydewalle's article demonstrates that social control and social standing were among the most important motivating factors in terms of language use in the elite classes. D'Ydewalle, who participated in the Belgian Resistance during the Second World War, went

[24] Marie-Pierre d'Udekem d'Acoz, *Pour le roi et la patrie: la noblesse belge dans la Résistance* (Brussels: Racine, 2002), 47–48.
[25] Pierre van Axel [=Pierre d'Ydewalle], "La noblesse et la question flamande," *Bulletin de l'Association de la noblesse du Royaume de Belgique* no. 3 (April 1939):3–8. Emphases added.

on to be the longest-serving governor of the province of West Flanders (1944-1979), patronizing many Flemish cultural and economic initiatives.[26]

Roger Avermaete, a noted writer and critic from Antwerp, who considered himself a "true bilingual," published *La Belgique se meurt!* (Belgium is Fading Away!), in which he called for a renewed sense of Belgian identity, and decried the tendency to divide Belgian cultural institutions along linguistic lines. Many of his criticisms would rankle more hard-line members of the Flemish Movement, such as his insistence that a separate Flemish Academy for language and literature should not have been created in Ghent in 1886; rather, the *existing* Academy in Brussels (which was, and remains, French-speaking) should have added sections for Dutch-language letters and arts. Avermaete saw this as a way to promote "bilingualism" and avoid cultural separation, which he argued was more dangerous to Belgium than administrative separation. Avermaete also took the Walloons to task for their intransigence in refusing to learn Dutch. The introduction of regional monolingualism in public administration, far from "saving the unity of the country," undermined this unity. Avermaete envisioned a different solution to Belgium's linguistic woes: "It would have sufficed to decree that no official function would be accorded to anyone who did not possess the two national languages. Constraint? Certainly not. No one is obliged to choose an administrative career."[27]

From Francophone to *Flamingant*[28]

Some French-speakers in Flanders went further still, beyond learning Dutch to perfection to becoming *flamingants* in their own right. While the Flemish nationalist historian H. J. Elias argued

[26] In a pamphlet from the 1950s, Pierre d'Ydewalle was listed as a member of the patronage committee of the *Bestendig Studiecentrum voor de Vervlaamsing van het Bedrijfsleven* (Permanent Study Center for the *Flamandisation* of Flemish Business), alongside Lode Craeybeckx, the mayor of Antwerp, also the child of a Francophone Flemish household, as will be discussed below. Pamphlet *Waarom vervlaamsing van het Bedrijfsleven?* II ([1957?]), Documentation collection "Studiecentrum voor de Vervlaamsing van het Bedrijfsleven," AMVC.
[27] Roger Avermaete, *La Belgique se meurt!* (Brussels: Paul Van der Perre, 1938), 8–9; 14–15.
[28] Henri-Floris Jespers, "Franstalige Flaminganten," *De Vos: Uitgave van het verbond V.O.S.* 5, no. 43 (March 20, 1987): 8.

that with the exception of novelist Georges Eekhoud, he knew of "no examples… of French-speakers [in Flanders] who came around to the Flemish point of view," there were in fact several.[29] I look (briefly) at the cases of Frans (François) Daels, Joris (Georges) Van Severen, and Lode (François Fernand Louis) Craeybeckx. While they are, in one sense, "Francophones of Flanders," they all chose – to varying degrees – to reject this identity. Their radical *rejection* of the defense of French in Flanders underlines the way in which the identity of "Francophone of Flanders," is, like most identities, fluid and socially constructed.

Frans Daels was the son of a bourgeois family of Antwerp that spoke French at home. He graduated with a degree in medicine with a specialization in gynecology from the University of Ghent, and gained a teaching position at his *alma mater* in 1909. After the German invasion of 1914, he volunteered as a military doctor. During his service, Daels became increasingly disturbed by the division between the Francophone officer class and the Flemish soldiers. He soon became associated with the Front Movement, and during the interwar years he began to move in more and more radical Flemish nationalist circles, and during World War II he joined the VNV and collaborated with the Germans.[30]

Perhaps even more interesting is the case of Joris Van Severen. Pierre d'Ydewalle called Van Severen "one of the rare *flamingant* personalities who set themselves the task of arousing sympathy for the Flemish cause in non-Flemings and converting Francophone Flemings to the Flemish Movement."[31] Van Severen, whose father had been the mayor of the West Flemish village of Wakken, was educated in French and was studying at the University of Ghent when war broke out in 1914. Like Daels, Van Severen became radicalized at the front, participating in the writing of the

[29] H. J. Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse Beweging 1914/1939*, vol. 1: *De eerste wereldoorlog en zijn onmiddelijke nasleep: Augustus 1914/November 1919* (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel), 206.
[30] Bruno De Wever, "Daels, Frans," *NEVB*; Wendy Lisarde, "Omdat ik Vlaming ben: Een biografie van Frans Daels" (Master's thesis, Universiteit Gent, 2012).
[31] Cited in Pierre Stéphany, *La Flandre aux Flamands: De 860 à 2008* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2008), 157.

"Open Letters" to King Albert and collaborating extensively with the Front Movement, occasionally emitting anti-Belgian sentiments; his espousal of Flemish radicalism earned him a demotion over the course of the war.[32] Lodewijk Dosfel, who had been an Activist during World War I, wrote to Van Severen urging him to stop using his (French) given name, Georges:

> take a restorative bath in Flemish romanticism. You need it. Call yourself Joris, as in the time of the *Blauwvoeterij* [Flemish student movement of the nineteenth century, named after the *blauwvoet*, a kind of seagull] young men were called Zeger, Amaat, Alwijn… we must be Flemish, not Europeans, not citizens of the world.[33]

This iteration of "Flemish" identity, it would seem, rejected the more "open" and "cosmopolitan" version espoused by August Vermeylen, who had argued that Flemings needed to be "Flemings" *in order to be* "Europeans."

Van Severen sat in the Belgian Parliament for most of the 1920s, shocking other MPs with his anti-Belgian sentiments. During a particularly heated speech given in the Chamber on 29 November 1928 – which the Flemish nationalist peppered with Latin phrases and an allusion to the French poet Charles Péguy – he was alleged to have cried "*La Belgique: Qu'elle crève!* [Belgium: Let it die!]," though no trace exists of this in the Parliamentary Records.[34] An avid reader of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras, in 1931 he cofounded a extraparliamentary movement, Verdinaso (*Verbond van Dietsche Nationaal-Solidaristen* [Union of *Dietsch* National Solidarists]), which has often been called a fascist organization. Indeed, Verdinaso espoused Roman Catholic corporatism, the cult of the leader, and from 1937 it had its own paramilitary wing. Verdinaso also had an expansionist ideal: at first, Verdinaso espoused a "Greater-Netherlands [*Dietsch*]" vision, emphasizing the ethnic similarity between Flemings and the Dutch and calling for their (re)union in one state. However, in 1934, Van Severen and Verdinaso made a radical change in their vision of the ideal future state.

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[32] Romain Vanlandschoot, "Severen, Joris van," *NEVB*.
[33] Cited in Marc Reynebeau, *Het klauwen van de leeuw: De Vlaamse identiteit van de 12de tot de 21ste eeuw* (Leuven: Van Halewyck, 1996), 180. Zeger Malfait and Amaat Vyncke were cofounders of *De Vlaamsche Vlagge*, a Flemish student publication dating from 1875.
[34] AP, Chamber, 29 November 1928, 61–62.

Verdinaso now officially called for a "Greater Belgium" under the rule of the Belgian royal family, which would include Belgium (including Wallonia), the Netherlands, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and the parts of northern France which had been part of the Early Modern Low Countries. We may see this as Van Severen moving toward a kind of *Belgian* nationalism, appealing to the ideal of the "Burgundian" state… and thus, perhaps unintentionally, aligning with a certain vision of Belgium held by some French-speakers of Flanders. Indeed, Verdinaso lost many members who felt like the Flemish nationalist aspect of the movement had been betrayed.[35]

Lode Craeybeckx – who used the short form of Lodewijk, the Dutch version of Louis, one of his French given names – was yet another Francophone who became a *flamingant* His father was from Limburg (his grandfather having been the mayor of the village of Ulbeek), and his mother was a Walloon from Liège.[36] Craeybeckx grew up in an essentially French-speaking household, though he and his siblings did speak Limburgish with their father; he did not begin to speak "Dutch" until the age of 14, "under the influence of radical Flemings" whom he met at the Royal Athenaeum of Antwerp. During World War I, he studied at the *Vlaamsche Hoogeschool* in Ghent, and he served a brief prison term after the war for Activist activity. After his release, he joined the BWP, of which he would remain a member until his death.[37]

Craeybeckx's relationship with French remained ambivalent. He often wrote "language exercises" in his private notebooks, a habit he formed when imprisoned and which he would continue until his death; these "language exercises" would be in both Dutch and French. He complained of his lack of "grounding" in his own "mother tongue" (Dutch).[38] In an unpublished series of notes, dated 3 and 4 August 1938, Craeybeckx put to paper some of his innermost language

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[35] Romain Vanlandschoot, "Verbond van Dietsche Nationaal Solidaristen (Verdinaso)," *NEVB*.
[36] Manu Ruys and Gijs Garré, "Craeybeckx, Lode (eigenlijk François F. L.)," *NEVB*.
[37] Olivier Boehme, "Lode Craeybeckx – Vlaams socialisme en identiteit (1914-1940)," *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine* 36, nos. 3–4 (2006): 373–407.
[38] *Ibid.*, 397.

complexes. He recognized that he sometimes regretted that Dutch was his "mother tongue," a feeling that was "all the more acute, as French is not a second, learned language for [him], but a language that is intimately intertwined with [his] being." Looking back on his time in Paris as a journalist, he noted that sometimes he had wanted to stay in France, definitively leaving Flanders. As a lawyer pleading in French, he had sometimes thought that he would not have been able to make the same arguments "so purely, so powerfully, and so loftily" had he done so in Dutch. When he was an MP (1932-1968), he would speak Dutch in on the floor "out of principle" but French in commissions and when talking with colleagues in the halls, as he often felt more comfortable in that language.[39] Historian Olivier Boehme, commenting on these language complexes, noted that in his later life, Craeybeckx would – on principle – drink only water when present at French-speaking gatherings in Flanders, despite being a *bon vivant* at heart. In his postwar career as mayor of Antwerp (1947-1976), Craeybeckx was a patron of the effort to make businesses in Flanders use Dutch, and was part of the campaign to maintain a strong Flemish presence in Brussels.[40]

Away from France

The 1930s also witnessed a change in Belgium's international attitude. In 1936, under pressure from (among others) Flemish nationalist politicians who campaigned under the slogan "*Los van Frankrijk* [Away from France]," Belgium left the defensive alliance it had entered into with France in 1920. While this certainly had no real effect on the day-to-day lives of the Francophones of Flanders (before 1940), it had deep symbolic importance, as it showed not only the strength of Flemish demands as translated into government action, but also the extent to which the camaraderie between France and Belgium that had emerged out of World War I had cooled.[41]

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[39] *Ibid.*, 402.
[40] Ruys and Garré, "Craeybeckx, Lode."
[41] Romain Yakemtchouk, *La Belgique et la France: Amitiés et Rivalités* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010), 76–92.

Many Francophones of Flanders themselves, while not wholeheartedly supportive of this new policy of neutrality, were not as ardently Francophile as was the Walloon Movement. Though appreciative of French culture, the Francophone bourgeoisie of Flanders was rather conservative, and feared the stark republicanism of French official discourse, as well as the Popular Front governments which ruled France during the late 1930s.[42] Likewise, many Francophones of Flanders – some motivated by devout Catholicism and others by concern for their business interests – were wary of Republican Spain and tended to be favorable toward the Nationalist rebels during the Spanish Civil War.[43] Here again the Francophones of Flanders differed from the mainstream of the Walloon Movement, showing that a shared language – even in a country like Belgium, where language is very political – did not guarantee a shared political outlook.

With the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the long-feared new European conflict began. Unlike in 1914, Germany did not violate Belgian neutrality at first, focusing its energy almost completely on the Polish front and then settling in to a "phony war" with France and the British Empire. While many Belgians, especially though certainly not exclusively those who spoke French, sympathized with the Allies, the Belgian government tried to maintain strict neutrality during the "phony war" and discouraged overt expressions of sympathy for either of the sides in the conflict. However, Belgium's policy of "independence" vis-à-vis France ultimately did not save it from the designs of the German war machine. On 10 May 1940, Germany invaded Belgium for the second time in less than three decades.

[42] Reine Meylaerts, *L'aventure flamande de la* Revue belge*: Langues, littératures et cultures dans l'entre-deux-guerres* (Brussels et al.: Peter Lang, 2004), 84–87.
[43] d'Udekem d'Acoz, *Pour le roi et la patrie*, paints a vivid portrait of the social and political engagements of the Flemish nobility during the interwar years.

World War II[44]

The Second World War was not a watershed in language relations in Flanders in the way that the First was. To be sure, World War II irritated old linguistic complaints from both Dutch- and French-speakers, indirectly led to a crisis that would deepen mutual stereotyping and mistrust between Flemings and Walloons, and provided (Francophone) Belgian patriots with "proof" of the perfidy of the Flemish Movement. As in the previous war, Flemish nationalists collaborated with the Germans, but in this case the Germans used them to fight "Bolshevism" on the Eastern Front and not to try to create a monolingually-Dutch vassal state in Flanders. Still, the state of language legislation in Belgium in the fifteen years or so following the end of World War II was not radically different than it had been in the mid-1930s, while the 1920s saw far-reaching changes in language laws as a direct result of the events of the war and occupation of 1914-1918.

The German invasion of Belgium on 10 May was part of a massive coordinated attack on the Western Front. Luxembourg fell by the end of the day, and the Netherlands, whose neutrality had not protected them as it had in 1914, surrendered on 15 May after the devastating bombing of Rotterdam. Meanwhile, the Germans made massive inroads in France. It seemed obvious that the relative stalemate that had prevailed on the Western Front in World War I would not recur.

The Belgian government responded to this violation of its neutrality by declaring war on Germany. Shortly thereafter, Belgian authorities summarily removed a handful of "dangerous" individuals – typically Flemish nationalists, far-right activists, and communists – to France, as a "preventative" measure to prevent internal unrest. Several of these individuals, including Verdinaso leader Joris Van Severen, were killed by French troops in the town of Abbeville on 20 May 1940.

The Belgian military was no match for the German invaders. King Leopold III felt that as commander-in-chief of the Belgian armed forces, he had the final responsibility for decisions of a

[44] On the invasion and occupation of Belgium in 1940, see the monumental work by Jules Gérard-Libois and José Gotovitch, *L'an 40* (Brussels: CRISP, 1971).

military nature; he was inclined to surrender to prevent further deaths, and he wanted to stay in Belgium to "share the fate" of his troops. His cabinet, meanwhile, asserted that as a constitutional monarch, the decision to surrender was not his but rather the government's; they wanted the king to come into exile with the cabinet in order to continue resistance abroad. On 27 May, Leopold III announced the surrender of the Belgian armed forces. This decision – taken without input from his ministers – would come to have enormous consequences. The French and the British mused aloud that Leopold had sacrificed their nations to Germany. The remnants of the cabinet disclaimed any responsibility for the surrender, arguing that the king had acted unconstitutionally. Prime Minister Hubert Pierlot and several other members of the cabinet eventually took up exile in London, and considered themselves the legitimate Belgian government, fighting alongside the Allies, while the king supposedly was unable to rule according to the Belgian Constitution. Maurice Maeterlinck, in exile in Portugal, condemned the king's actions in harsh terms. In a shortwave radio program broadcast shortly after the surrender, the Ghent Francophone and Nobel laureate claimed that "the stupidity of this monstrous act [the surrender] vies only with its baseness, for it can only bring to the one who has committed it eternal shame." More bluntly, upon arriving in New York in the Summer of 1940 (he would spend the remainder of the war in the United States), he called Leopold "a man of treason."[45] Maeterlinck's vituperative comments about Leopold echoed those of many in France (the country where he spent almost all of the interwar years) and the criticisms levied at the king by many in the Walloon Movement after the war. However, while antipathy toward Leopold's actions came to be associated with (left-wing) Walloons and Bruxellois after the war, few other Francophones of Flanders, who often from rather conservative backgrounds, shared this negative attitude, at least at first.

[45] Citations in translation in W. D. Halls, *Maurice Maerterlinck: A Study of His Life and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 152.

Max Gevers, a businessman and art critic and frequent contributor to the Antwerp Francophone paper *La Métropole*, kept a near-daily record of his observations and reflections on life in occupied Antwerp during the war. Gevers's "Journal of a Bourgeois of Antwerp" provides a fascinating insight not only on everyday life in the port city, but also in the thoughts of a (rather conservative) Francophone of Flanders. Gevers, who frequently listed to the BBC and other broadcasts which the Germans had forbidden for occupied populations across Europe, reacted with disgust at Maeterlinck's pronouncements from Lisbon, quipping to his journal that "bees suit him better than politics," a reference to Maeterlinck's 1901 text *The Life of Bees*.[46] In fact, Gevers was part of an effort to collect signatures supporting the king from all the mayors of the municipalities of Antwerp province, which were then bound and submitted to the monarch.[47]

In late 1941, Leopold married a commoner, Lilian Baels, daughter of a former governor of West Flanders. Baels did not receive the honorific of "Queen," in part because of her "low" birth and in part out of respect for Leopold's previous wife, Queen Astrid, who had died in a car accident in 1935, just over a year after Leopold's accession to the throne following Albert I's death in a mountaineering accident. This marriage, complicated by the fact that the religious ceremony had antedated the civil ceremony by several months (contrary to Belgian law), hurt his reputation among many Belgians. They saw his courtship and marriage of a woman as contrary to the image he presented of himself as a "prisoner" in Belgium, supposedly sharing the fate of his subjects. Even Gevers, in his journal, notes that the nobility were not pleased with this marriage (to a commoner) while the people were not enthusiastic, coming as it did during a time when many Belgian soldiers were prisoners of war.[48]

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[46] Max Gevers, "Journal d'un bourgeois d'Anvers," unpublished MS, 29 May 1940. CEGESOMA, AB 734.
[47] *Ibid*., 30 May, 8 June, 1 July, 4 July, 25 July, 27 August, and 28 August 1940.
[48] *Ibid*., 7 December and 8 December 1941.

Despite his father's previous support for French in Flanders as a source of national unity, his strong contacts with the Francophone elite in Flanders (his personal secretary was none other than Jacques Pirenne, and his second wife came from a Francophone milieu of West Flanders), and the Francophone elite's characteristically strong monarchism, Leopold had strong words for them in his secret "Political Testament" written in 1944. This document, written to justify his behavior during the war and denigrate that of his political enemies (such as the government-in-exile in London) referred to the imminent arrival of the Allies on Belgian soil as another form of "occupation" displacing that of the Germans. (Churchill's concise review of the testament: "It stinks.") More germane to the question of the Francophones of Flanders, Leopold refers to them as "a narrow-minded and egotistical minority" whose obstinacy threatened to tear Belgium apart.[49]

The Occupation

The German occupation of 1940-1944 did not bring about as radical of changes in language laws and language use as that of 1914-1918 – if only temporarily – had. In part, this difference can be explained by the fact that many of the most important aspects of language use were now, at least on paper, regulated by preexisting *Belgian* legislation, and therefore German intervention would be redundant and perhaps even counterproductive. Werner Warmbrunn argues that the Germans relied on the cooperation of Belgium's economic and bureaucratic elites to govern the country at a low economic cost to Germany, and that a overly-radical anti-French policy would alienate the still overwhelmingly Francophone members of these educated and wealthy classes.[50]

The perception that the German occupier might be "soft" on *fransquillons* was not unknown among Flemish radicals, including collaborators. In his magisterial (and partly autobiographical)

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[49] Cited in translation in Herman Van Goethem, *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, trans. Ian Connerty (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers for University Press Antwerp, 2011), 182.
[50] Werner Warmbrunn, *The German Occupation of Belgium, 1940-1944* (New York *et al.*: Peter Lang, 1993), 134-135.

novel on occupied Flanders during World War II, *The Sorrow of Belgium*, Hugo Claus tells the story of a family who collaborates with the Germans. During a conversation between the father of the narrator and a local policeman, the latter compares the military government of the "current" von Falkenhausen (Alexander von Falkenhausen, German military governor of Belgium from 1940 to 1944) unfavorably to that of his relative, "old von Falkenhausen" (Ludwig von Falkenhausen, German governor-general of Belgium from Von Bissing's death in Spring 1917 to the end of World War I). He laments "all those *Von* Thises and Thats [in the German nobility] getting together and conniving with their Franskiljon relatives. The war practically doesn't exist for these people, or borders either, they stick together, big money and blue blood do."[51]

The German occupier was content to allow many prewar Belgian administrative services to continue their work, thereby saving the Germans the hassle of creating new bureaucratic structures. The Germans' very presence, however, allowed those whose ideology might have made them unacceptable to the prewar Belgian state to gain entrée to bureaucratic positions. One notable case was that of the Standing Commission for Linguistic Supervision, created in 1932 as an advisory board of linguistic experts meant to advise state bureaucracies on the application of language laws relating to education, administration, and justice. With the advent of German rule, the Commission was soon dominated by Flor Grammens, the (in)famous vigilante "enforcer" of legal monolingualism in Flanders. While public opinion, especially that of the Francophones, saw Grammens's Commission as a "creature" of the Germans, Grammens himself insisted he was only applying Belgian law, albeit more strictly than the prewar Commission had.[52] Grammens in fact criticized the use of German, which contravened Belgian legislation, in public administration.[53]

[51] Hugo Claus, *The Sorrow of Belgium*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 375.
[52] Vandeweerd, 41–46.
[53] Grammens to the commander of the Gendarmerie, 4 July 1944, slide 001714. Documents de la Commission du contrôle linguistique, 1940-1944, microfilm no. 101 (hereafter CCL), CEGESOMA.

The archives of the wartime Standing Commission for Linguistic Oversight, a monument to Grammens's prodigious work ethic and mania for record-keeping, provide a rich, if skewed, look at the continued presence of French in public administration and education in Flanders during the occupation. Grammens responded to a series of complaints regarding the continued presence of French in administration, public utilities, and public transit along the Belgian coast, a popular destination for Francophone tourists. He consistently recommended that "Everything must soon become monolingually Dutch."[54] The small West Flemish coastal village of Westende furnished an amusing example of Francophone resistance to (or subversion of) the language laws. Public beaches in Westende were *officially* marked with solely Dutch signage; the local authorities had however sold the old French-language signs to the "Ligue pour le bilinguisme au Littoral [League for Bilingualism on the Coast]" who proceeded to re-place these French signs, adding the words "private property" on them. For Grammens, this was not enough to protect them; he recommended the French signs be removed at the costs of the Ligue or of the municipal administration itself.[55]

Collaboration and Resistance in Flanders during World War II

The Second World War opened opportunities for the Activists of the First. August Borms, the prominent member of the Council of Flanders in 1917-1918, "martyr" for extreme Flemish Nationalism, and victorious (though ineligible) protest candidate in the 1928 parliamentary by-election in Antwerp, was among several who hitched their wagons to the Germans for the second time. Borms sat at the head of a commission to "indemnify" those who had suffered at the hands of

[54] Report of Grammens on visit to Ostend, [16] October 1940, slide 000057; report of Grammens on visit to Blankenberge, 16 October 1940, slide 000060; report of Grammens on visit to Knokke-aan-Zee, 16 October 1940, slide 000062; report of Grammens on visit to "Tramways électriques de la Plage et Extensions" in Ostend, 17 October 1940, slide 000067; report of Grammens on visit to "Gas- en Elektriciteitdienst" of Blankenberghe, 17 October 1940, slide 000068; Meeting of 22/10/1940, coastal municipalities, slide 000136, CCL, CEGESOMA.

[55] Report of Grammens on visit to Westende, 16 October 1940, slide 000063. CCL, CEGESOMA. Westende is today part of the municipality of Middelkerke. I have not found any other references to the Ligue pour le bilinguisme au Littoral.

the Belgian state on account of their actions during World War I.[56] This served to reinforce the conviction among many opponents of the Activists, including the Francophones of Flanders, that Activism had been – and was – essentially a form of servitude to the Germans.[57]

After World War I, Activists and their defenders had noted that unlike Czech and Slovak patriots, some of whom took up arms against the state of which they were citizens, Flemish Activists had not engaged in military action alongside "the enemy." During World War II, though, thousands of Flemish Nationalists volunteered to fight the Soviets on the Eastern Front, for a multitude of reasons: to combat Communism, to ensure the victory of Germany (and thus the defeat of "Belgium"), economic or political opportunism. These "*Oostfronters*" (East-Fronters) were often recruited and organized by way of Flemish Nationalist organizations, such as the VNV or *DeVlag* (German-Flemish Workers' Community); Verdinaso had withered away with the death of Joris Van Severen; more Flemish Nationalist-minded members tended to join the VNV and more "Belgicist" members often joined Royalist resistance groups. The Germans welcomed the influx of fighting men but were reluctant to fully support the aspirations of Flemish nationalists or "pan-Netherlandic" ideologues; this hesistancy again reflects the Germans' primary concern for complete (economic) control of Belgium, unencumbered by potential political rivals in a potential Flemish or Greater-Dutch polity.

There were also several Walloon-branded collaborationist efforts, but these, unlike those in Flanders, tended not to draw on interwar "Walloon" organizations and ideas. Léon Degrelle and Rex persisted under the German occupation but became solely preoccupied with Wallonia and Brussels, sloughing off prewar attempts at organization in Flanders. Rexist volunteers on the Eastern Front fought under the name "La Légion Wallonie." However, while Degrelle was undeniably a Walloon, he had not appealed to specifically "Walloon" imagery and arguments before May 1940. Indeed, the

56 De Jonghe, "De personeelspolitiek van de Militärverwaltung te Brussel…," 16.
57 Gevers, "Journal d'un bourgeois d'Anvers," 8 September 1940.

vision of "Wallonia" promoted by Degrelle was of a land of Germanic tribes who had been acculturated to speaking Romance dialects; such a vision would have been anathema to the mainstream of the interwar Walloon Movement.[58]

Given the ardently Francophile and Germanophobe profile of the interwar Walloon Movement, it was indeed not surprising that its adherents shunned any collaboration with Germany, though a few partisans of "*rattachisme*" toyed with the idea of using the war as an opportunity to appeal to Vichy France to annex Wallonia.[59] For the most part, however, members of the prewar Walloon Movement who remained politically involved during the war did so as part of resistance movements. These tended to be Francophile (choosing De Gaulle's Free France over Pétain's Vichy), republican, and left-wing; the best-known of these *Wallonie Libre*, would go on to claim that it had been founded on 18 June 1940, the very day of Charles De Gaulle's famous radio address exhorting the French to join him in resisting the Germans (it had likely been founded a few weeks before).[60] The identification of "Walloon" identity with the resistance, and the elision of Walloon collaboration in postwar memory, came to dominate the Walloon Movement's self-image after the war, further reinforcing the view that the Walloons – like their French cousins – were the vanguard of democracy, as opposed to the "Germanic" Flemings who once again collaborated with a tyrannical, invading force.[61]

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[58] Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement, 1940-1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). There were a number of other pro-German organizations with "Walloon" or "Wallonia" in their name which saw the light in World War II; they were all small and ephemeral.

[59] Hervé Hasquin, *Les séparatistes wallons et le gouvernement de Vichy (1940-1943): Une histoire d'*omerta (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2004). Catherine Lanneau rebuts Hasquin's claim that these feelers to Vichy France were covered-up as part of a postwar conspiracy of silence. See Catherine Lanneau, "L'affaire Thone: Une « *omerta* » bien bavarde," *Bulletin de la Société Royale Le Vieux-Liège* 14 (2004): 535–551; and "Bruits autour d'un faux silence: À propos du livre de Hervé Hasquin, *Les séparatistes wallons et le gouvernement de Vichy (1940-1943): Une histoire d'*omerta," *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent* 16 (2005): 237–247.

[60] Paul Delforge, "Wallonie Libre Clandestine (1940)" and "Wallonie Libre (1944-1995)," *EMW*.

[61] Chantal Kesteloot, "La résistance: Ciment d'une identité en Wallonie?," in *La résistance et les Européens du Nord* (Brussels: Centre de recherches et d'études historiques de la seconde guerre mondiale, 1994), 406–418; Maarten Van Ginderachter, *Le chant du coq: Nation et nationalisme en Wallonie depuis 1880* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2005), 37–40.

How do the Francophones of Flanders *as a group* fit into this schema? Some *individuals* from Flanders who spoke French at home, as well as "ex-Francophones" like Frans Daels, collaborated on a political or military level. Perhaps more importantly, the "economic collaboration" on the part of business in Flanders perforce implicated members of the French-speaking bourgeoisie. The renowned Belgian filmmaker Henri Storck, a Francophone from Ostend in West Flanders, produced several films during the war. Most important among these was the monumental *Symphonie paysanne*, whose exultation of peasant life and of connection to the "soil," while vaguely right-wing in and of itself, takes on a more ominous tint in light of Storck's patronage by the German occupiers during the war.[62]

However, no collaborationist movement claimed a "Francophone of Flanders" identity for itself. Making claims on the basis of this identity would not fit in with Germans' conceptions of Flanders and of Belgium as a whole. More importantly, though, the identity of being a "Francophone of Flanders," and some might say the very existence of them as a "group," relies on *une certaine idée de la Belgique* which would be totally incompatible with German domination, let alone the partition or annexation of Belgium.

Tellingly, besides the Catholic paper *Le Bien public* of Ghent which appeared from June to September of 1940, there was no "censored" (German-approved) French-language press in Flanders during the occupation; likely reflecting the lack of interest among Francophones of Flanders in *producing* such publications.[63] Max Gevers wrote on 23 June 1940 that "there are no French-language newspapers [anymore] in Antwerp."[64] The Germans had in fact wanted to keep *La Métropole* in print – possibly to maintain a sense of normalcy in Antwerp and to curry favor with the French-speakers – but the management of the paper refused to publish under German censorship, and so, wrote

[62] Bruno Benvindo, *Henri Storck, le cinéma belge et l'Occupation* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2010).
[63] Els de Bens, *De Belgische dagbladpers onder Duitse censuur, 1940-1944* (Antwerp and Utrecht: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1973), 143. Thanks to Lieven Saerens of the CEGESOMA for this reference.
[64] Gevers, "Journal d'un bourgeois d'Anvers," 23 June 1940.

Gevers, "the name of *La Métropole* is saved" – that is, the paper could not be accused of collaboration after the war.[65]

The idea that the Francophones of Flanders were a product of Belgian civilization as well as a necessary component of its existence (as mediators between two monolingual populations), while perhaps outmoded after 1932, still informed many of these Francophones' visions of themselves. It is therefore unsurprising that many Francophones of Flanders participated in the resistance against the Germans. This resistance did not have the deeply pro-French, republican, and radical overtones of groups like *Wallonie Libre*; it tended to be conservative, monarchist, though not always supportive of the person of Leopold III himself, and very "Belgian" in terms of its frame of reference. Indeed, as in World War I, there is no *specific* appeal to "Francophone of Flanders" or "minority" identity among the Francophones' resistance. This absence may be a result of an increased idealized *Belgian* patriotism formed in opposition to the German invader. We may also see this absence in more "pragmatic" terms, as Francophone resistants would have hesitated to draw too much attention to themselves as a group, thereby risking a "re-ignition" of old language quarrels at a time when all effort was to be directed toward combating the Germans.

While there were thus no wartime organizations with easily identifiable names like the *Belle Époque*'s Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française or the 1960s' Association des Francophones de Flandre, we may say that the interventions of the Francophones of Flanders *qua* Francophones of Flanders during World War II were made through their *Belgian* resistance movements and clandestine publications, many of which, as would be expected, had French or bilingual names. We may compare this to the action (and name) of groups like Action patriotique of Ghent in World War I, which, while not advancing a specifically "Francophone of Flanders" identity, adopted a French name and promoted a *Belgian* identity.

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[65] *Ibid.*, 22 November 1940.

One of the Francophone underground papers in Flanders was *Vérités/Truth*, published by members of the Ostend bourgeoisie. Despite its bilingual French and English(!) title, its content was wholly French. According to a number published upon liberation, those responsible for the newspaper also aided those who needed to escape the Germans, and hid Belgian and Polish resistance fighters until they could reach the Allied lines (in the summer of 1944).[66] *Vérités/Truth* embraced a deeply "Belgian patriotic" vision. This vision included a bilingual Flanders: The paper noted that many of the posters and signs put up by the Germans in Ostend were printed in German, French, and Flemish and asked with irony "what will our *flamingants* do faced with such an outrage to their moronic monolingualism??????"[67] However, the opprobrium the paper had for f*lamingants* did not extend to Flemish-speakers as a whole; it went on to praise the "Boerenberveging [*sic*] tegen den Bezetter [Peasant Movement against the Occupier]" in West Flanders which sabotaged German attempts to procure foodstuffs from local farmers.[68] *Vérités/Truth* made similar distinctions among their Walloon compatriots. It criticized movements like *Wallonie Libre* for portraying collaboration as a wholly Flemish affair, thereby (inadvertently) sowing discord among Belgians. Instead, Walloons needed to realized that some of "theirs" (such as Léon Degrelle) were "Fifth Columnists," and that there were brave Flemings and Walloons fighting against the invader.[69]

The paper attacked those who would see (part of) Belgium annexed to a neighboring power, be it France, Germany, or the Netherlands. Interestingly, one of the arguments against such an annexation, aside from the primary appeal to Belgian patriotism, was that once "Flemings or Walloons" were annexed to "some neighboring state, *they would be certain to form no more than a tiny*

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66 "Nos Collaborateurs," *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), September 1944, 2. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.
67 "Ostende," *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), September 1941, 2. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.
68 "Nos paysans de la Flandre Occidentale," *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), March 1943, 4. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.
69 "Reminiscences," *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), July 1942, 1–3. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.

minority confined to the greatest obedience, *the fate reserved for all minorities*."[70] One can only speculate if this usage of the term "minority" had any connection with the interwar use of "minority" as a self-description by some Francophones of Flanders, or if the author(s) even saw any connection between the two.

Planning for the Postwar

Before the war, or at the very least before 1932, the Liberal Party had presented itself as a defender of the rights of the Francophones of Flanders, if not in those exact words. During the war, Francophones of Flanders were active in the underground operations of "the party" – to the extent that we can speak of one "party," as wartime conditions made communication and coordination between groups in different locations nigh impossible. The underground activities of the Liberals during the war included distributing clandestine publications, organizing resistance, and planning the potential reformation of the party and the state after the end of the war. I wish here to examine two such sets of "plans" for the postwar, which posited vastly different outcomes for the Francophones of Flanders: that of Jane Brigode and the "official" Liberal Party in Brussels, and that of Henri Story in Ghent.

The "official" operation of the Liberal Party during the war was centered in Brussels, under the leadership of Jane Brigode. She was officially "co-president" of the party during the war, but, given her seniority (she turned 70 in May 1940), she essentially acted as president. Brigode came from a French-speaking family in Rummel, a small town in the east of Flemish Brabant, but had lived in Brussels for several decades, serving as an alderwoman for the municipality of Forest.[71]

[70] "Le Wallon" (pseud.), "La Question Flamando-Wallonne," *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), March 1944, 1–2. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA. Emphasis added.
[71] Bart D'Hondt, *Gelijke rechten, gelijke plichten: Een portret van vijf liberale vrouwen* (Ghent: Liberaal Archief, 1996), 57–84.

Liberal personalities met at private residences in Brussels, including Brigode's, keeping their numbers down to avoid attracting attention.[72]

The discussions at Brigode's residence touched the "language question" on several occasions. In late 1941, Brigode met with Victor Sabbe – a Flemish-minded Liberal, nephew of the Liberal Flemish historian Maurits Sabbe – so she could gauge Sabbe's points of view on some key issues. Sabbe commented that as the Flemings had "obtained satisfaction, there [was] no place to bring up the language question." He then went on to say that he was an "adversary of bilingualism." The argument here is clear – the language question has been solved by the institution of regional monolingualism (except in Brussels), and reopening this can of worms would be detrimental to the war effort as well as unnecessary in the postwar.[73] This point of view would be reflected in a postwar (1951) Liberal Party statement on doctrine which noted laconically that "Flanders, after numerous ordeals, is of Dutch expression."[74]

Brigode was a prominent proponent of women's suffrage, a goal that was not attained at the national level until 1948. In a 1942 discussion on the political future of Belgium, Brigode opined that it would be impossible to "revisit the question of universal suffrage" after the war.[75] Although the minutes of the discussion are not very detailed, this comment may allude to some Liberals' suggestions that, after the war, the concept of simple, universal (manhood) suffrage should be limited or tempered in one way or another; it may also refer to Brigode's belief that women's suffrage would be a necessity in the postwar political order.

Those (typically French-speaking Flemish) Liberals who opposed universal manhood suffrage had several reasons for doing so. Universal manhood suffrage, both in its tempered form in

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[72] "Séance du Bureau du 30 août 1940: Procès-verbal," 1. Collection "Congrès et Réunions," Gestion du conseil national du parti libéral pendant la guerre 1940-1944, CJG.
[73] Summary of meeting between Victor Sabbe and Jane Brigode, 16 December 1941. Collection "Congrès et réunions," Gestion du conseil national du parti libéral pendant la guerre 1940-1944, CJG.
[74] Brochure *Congrès doctrinal des 28 et 29 avril 1951*, 34. Collection "Congrès et réunions," CJG.
[75] "Parti Libéral: Séance tenue le 10 JANVIER 1942, au domicile du M. Fernand DEMETS," 2. Collection "Congrès et réunions," Gestion du conseil national du parti libéral pendant la guerre 1940-1944, CJG.

1893 and its simple form after World War I, had not been kind to the Liberals, as newly enfranchised voters had typically voted Socialist or Catholic. As discussed in previous chapters, universal manhood suffrage had dealt the French-speakers of Flanders a particularly hard electoral blow: numerically a tiny minority in Flanders, their wealth and education no longer afforded them a disproportionate influence at the ballot box. Finally, the enfranchisement of the "masses" supposedly made possible the rise of radical parties, such as the VNV on the right and the Communists on the left, whose demagoguery allegedly appealed to those with lower educational levels and higher economic insecurity. The expansion of *democracy*, in this optic, was thus detrimental to *freedom*.

Along these lines, the industrialist Henri Story, a Liberal alderman of the city of Ghent, member of the Provincial Council of West Flanders, and director of *La Flandre Libérale*, developed a plan for restructuring the Belgian state that looked much different than that proposed by the circle around Jane Brigode. Story came from a prominent Francophone bourgeois family of Ghent, had been a volunteer on the IJzerfront during World War I, and was deeply involved with French-speaking society in Ghent, as a member of the AFVLF, member of the council of administration of the ÉHÉ, member of Les Amis du Vieux Gand, and treasurer of the Société des Beaux Arts.[76]

During the war, Story wrote a series of documents outlining a new direction both for the Liberal Party and for the Belgian state, markedly different from those espoused by the circle around Jane Brigode in Brussels. Story recognized that it would indeed be impossible to raise the voting age for the Chamber of Representatives (a move he had previously considered), as the participation of men aged 18 to 25 in the armed forces "place[d] the question on a sentimental level," giving them a

[76] Biography of Henri Story, 1–2. I thank Luc Pareyn of the Liberaal Archief for suggesting that I look at Story's papers.

strong claim on the right to participate in the electoral process. However, he hoped that the voting age for the Senate could be raised to 40, and that fully half the Senators should be "co-opted."[77]

Story's skepticism of universal suffrage was almost certainly linked to his view that society needed elites to guide the population and fill many public functions. This role made it incumbent upon the elites in Belgium to know both national languages, though this could not be made a *legal* obligation.[78] Story claimed that the old elite of Flanders – that is, the Francophone classes – had neglected Flemish "dynamism," and by failing to fulfill their "natural" role in society, they left a void that the Flemish Movement would fill. In this, Story echoes the analysis of Pierre d'Ydewalle writing in the 1930s, as well as another d'Ydewalle, Hubert, who wrote clandestinely *during* the war.[79] The new Flemish elite – that produced by the Flemish Movement – lacked any tradition of leadership or political training, and was thus poorly-equipped to engender loyalty to the Belgian state.[80] Story called for a strong and "responsible" elite to reclaim its position in Flemish society. The belief in the necessity of a strong elite and an overarching sense of devotion to Belgian state may be read as growing out of a particular "Francophone of Flanders" identity and its concomitant idea of "Belgium."

Moving more specifically to language issues, Story argued that "the law must not show itself to be indifferent concerning linguistic minorities," and that if there was a given number of families in a town whose mother tongue was the "other" national language, than a school should be provided to accommodate them. This proposal was similar to that advanced by the Liberals before 1932, and (like those proposals) did not differentiate between Wallonia and Flanders, thereby allowing for "pockets" of Flemish minorities in Wallonia. However, Story goes on to argue that

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[77] "Quelques idées personnelles pouvant servir de Préface à l'étude du problème linguistique," unpublished MS (n.d.), 3. Henri Story collection, 4.5.4., LA.
[78] "Note," unpublished MS (n.d.), 1. Henri Story collection, 4.5.4., LA.
[79] Published posthumously as Hubert d'Ydewalle, *Noblesse en Flandre* (Brussels: Éditions Lesigne, 1946).
[80] Ontwerp van een persmededeling betreffende de standpunten van de Liberale Partij na de bevrijding, unpublished MS (n.d.), 1–6. Henri Story collection, 4.7.2., LA.

students in such schools will be taught the language of the region in which they live in order to fit in, and that *all students* in Belgium should learn two languages other than their mother tongue, one of which must be the "other" national language. Here again was a proposal which would have met with the utmost opposition from many Walloon politicians as an "introduction" of Dutch into Wallonia.[81] Story's program for the Liberal Party included a revision of the Constitution, including the (in)famous Article 23 on linguistic freedom. Story argued that over the last few decades the article had been interpreted in such a way as to promote "separatism" in Flanders and Wallonia. It ought to be reworded to afford all citizens of Belgium the right to receive services in their mother tongue, no matter where in the country they lived. This was thus a total rejection of the principle of regional monolingualism on which the laws of 1932 and 1935 had been based, though Story did allow that the *internal* civil service should still be monolingual everywhere except in Brussels and along the linguistic border.[82] Story also said that areas where it was likely that Belgian citizens who did not know the "regional" language would come into contact with the public administration on an occasional basis ought to provide some (but not full) services in both languages. Story listed major cities, the linguistic border (including Brussels), and tourist destinations (such as the Belgian coast) among the areas where such flexibility was warranted.[83]

The Germans arrested Story on 22 October 1943, keeping him in custody in Ghent until he was sent to a series of camps in Germany starting in March 1944, where he died on 5 December 1944. During his time at the camp of Esterwegen, from March to May 1944, he was a member of a clandestine Masonic Lodge, "*La Liberté Chérie*," founded by Belgian POWs. Even until the end of his

[81] Ontwerp van een partijprogramma, unpublished MS ([1943-1944]), 19–20. Henri Story collection, 4.2.1., LA.
[82] *Ibid*., 39–40. See also Story's notes for the "transition period" after liberation: "Période transitoire," unpublished MS (n.d.), 2. Henri Story collection, 4.7.4., LA.
[83] "Quelques idées personnelles pouvant servir de Préface à l'étude du problème linguistique," unpublished MS (n.d.), 2. Henri Story collection, 4.5.4., LA. Left unsaid is whether or not areas like the Ardennes in Wallonia would also be considered tourist areas subject to such mild bilingualism. This note and Story's other writings, however, indicate that he strongly believed that elites from both linguistic "communities" needed to be bilingual.

days, then, we may say that Story held to a model of sociability associated with (liberal) Francophones of Flanders.

What accounts for the differences between the Brigode group in Brussels and Henri Story in Ghent, especially their divergent views on democracy and the language question? The answer to this question will help us understand the way in which Francophones of Flanders' political engagements reflect their social contexts. Jane Brigode, as a women's suffragist, may have been more inclined to resist any attempts to *restrict* voting rights.[84] With prominent Flemish liberals in her entourage, Brigode would be more receptive to the ideal of regional monolingualism as a solution to the language problem. Finally, we should not forget that Brigode, though born into a Francophone family of Flanders, lived in Brussels. From the late nineteenth century onward, many Francophones of Flanders "became" French-speaking Bruxellois upon moving to the capital, essentially "losing" their status as an (unrecognized) minority by joining the French-speaking majority of the city. This might have made it even less likely that they would press for the rights of French-speakers in Flanders, though their action in regard to the linguistic status of the capital and their reaction to Flemish attempts to "reconquer" Brussels are another question, one beyond the scope of this work.[85]

Henri Story, unlike Brigode, spent his professional and associational life deeply implicated in the organizations and circles that would reinforce a "Francophone of Flanders" mentality (if not a specific *identity*), including a certain breed of Belgian patriotism and distrust of majoritarianism. His position as an industrialist and upbringing in a classically liberal milieu likely only furthered his desire to protect freedom from the "excesses" of democracy. In this point of view, too much "democracy" could lead to demagoguery, whether among socialists who wished to attack property rights, Flemish

[84] Granted, this is not always the case. Witness white American women's suffragists who wanted to *repeal* black voting rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
[85] See Chantal Kesteloot, *Au nom de la Wallonie et de Bruxelles français: Les origines du FDF* (Brussels: Éditions Complèxe, 2004).

nationalists who threatened the rights of linguistic minorities, or the Nazis who invaded Belgium in May 1940.

It was not just French-speaking *Liberals* in Flanders (of the Henri Story variety) who looked askance at universal suffrage. Max Gevers, the conservative, Catholic diarist of Antwerp who often cited Maurras approvingly, repeatedly vented his spleen at the institution. During the early days of the Battle of France, Gevers blamed universal suffrage for the Popular Front and "red demagoguery" which had weakened France.[86] On 21 July 1943 – the Belgian national holiday – Gevers wrote that he found it difficult to believe in the discourse of "heroic Belgium" anymore in light of the "great error" of the Belgian state in granting simple universal manhood suffrage after the victory of 1918. Indeed, the nearly religious devotion to democracy in Western Europe had, in Gevers's eyes, fueled the hatred of fascism and the subsequent shunning of Italy, forcing the country into an alliance with Germany. If the outcome of an Allied victory were to *strengthen* universal suffrage, it might be a mixed blessing for the future.[87]

Gevers's deeply conservative Catholicism was in many ways drastically different from Henri Story's somewhat doctrinaire liberalism. Nonetheless, they both kept pure and simple democracy at arm's length. While this may be a case in which two differing ideologies lead to similar policy positions, albeit with different underlying justifications, it is worth noting the social and economic similarities between both individuals. Both Gevers and Story were members of the upper bourgeoisie of their respective Flemish cities (Antwerp and Ghent); they were thus members of the small but affluent (and French-speaking) minority of each place. They also had similar patterns of sociability, with both Gevers and Story joining prominent artistic and literary circles. Perhaps most strikingly, both Gevers and Story played key roles in the French-speaking press in Flanders. Story had been a director of *La Flandre Libérale*, the well-known Ghent Liberal paper, before the war.

[86] Gevers, "Journal d'un bourgeois d'Anvers," 16 May 1940.
[87] *Ibid.*, 21 July 1943.

Gevers, meanwhile, had been important in running *La Métropole*, the Francophone Catholic newspaper of Antwerp; he would have taken over as editor-in-chief following the war if fate had not intervened, as we will see below.

Liberation and Its Aftermath

The French-speaking newspapers of Antwerp and Ghent resumed publication immediately after Liberation. Max Gevers, the assiduous diarist from Antwerp, was to become manager of *La Métropole*. However, after surviving the entire occupation, on 29 December 1944 a German V2 rocket struck the offices of *La Métropole* where Gevers was signing the paperwork for his new position, killing him.[88]

Louis, the narrator of *The Sorrow of Belgium*, writes in his journal that in the immediate aftermath of the Liberation "Belgium, the concept of Belgium, I mean, is gaining ascendency… It's hard to see Belgium written up everywhere now instead of Flanders."[89] As in the months following November 1918, so too was there a wave of renewed "Belgianness" after September 1944. The liberation of Belgium after World War II was somewhat more complex, and less of an unalloyed moment of joy, than that following World War I, on both military and societal levels. The liberation of Belgium in November 1918 mostly coincided with the end of the war itself. During the second conflict, however, while Belgium was (mostly) liberated in September 1944, Belgian troops were then called up (in addition to those in the resistance or who previously joined other Allied armies) and remained involved in fighting until the German surrender of May 1945.

After this war, as after World War I, there was a push to punish those who had collaborated with the German occupier. The supposed harshness and vindictiveness of the "repression [*repressie*]"

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[88] "Max Gevers: Une vie consacrée au culte du beau," *La Semaine d'Anvers* (17 February 1984): 3. Clipped in CEGESOMA, BD KA 695.
[89] Claus, *The Sorrow of Belgium*, 492.

of “uncivic behavior [*incivisme*]” was, and remains, a key source of Flemish Nationalist enmity toward the Belgian state. Many in the Flemish Movement, even those who had opposed collaboration, felt that the state used the “repression” as an excuse to clamp down on the Flemish Movement; arguing that Walloon collaborators were not treated with the same harshness as their Flemish counterparts. It can however be argued that Flemish collaborators were in fact treated with relative clemency compared to those in many other European countries. Indeed, almost all sentences handed down for collaboration were eventually commuted, and numerous postwar elected officials from Flanders had been indicted for collaboration after the war, only to have their political rights restored after a decade or so.[90] This supposed *laxity* was in fact a source of irritation for “Belgian patriotic” groups – many of which, as after World War I, had an overrepresentation of Francophones of Flanders.

This is not to say that there were not severe consequences for many collaborators. Some fled abroad, especially to Latin America or South Africa, after the end of the war.[91] Léon Degrelle took refuge in Francoist Spain to escape his death sentence, pronounced *in absentia*; he managed to avoid extradition after Spain’s transition to democracy, and he died there at the age of 87 in 1994. August Borms, whose name had been a byword for World War I Activism during the interwar years (both positively, among other former Activists and the more radical wing of the Flemish Movement, and negatively, among the opponents of Activism and of the Flemish Movement in general) had “renewed” his treason during World War II, after having received clemency for his actions in World War I. Thus placed outside the hope of leniency, he was executed on 12 April 1946, thereby creating a new martyr for the most radical portions of the Flemish Movement.[92] Hendrik Elias, the historian and lawyer who was the wartime leader of the VNV and mayor of Ghent under the occupation, had

[90] Koen Aerts, *Repressie zonder maat of einde? De juridische reïntegratie van collaborateurs in de Belgische Staat na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2014).
[91] Frank Seberechts and Frans-Jos Verdoodt, *Leven in twee werelden: Belgische collaborateurs en de diaspora na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 2009).
[92] In addition to annual pilgrimages to his grave on the anniversary of his execution, there exists a non-profit organization promoting Flemish Nationalism called the Bormshuis (Borms House), in Antwerp: http://www.bormshuis.org/.

also been sentenced to death; his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he was released in 1959 for health reasons. Elias went on to pen two massive studies of the Flemish Movement, four volumes each.[93]

In a symbolic turn, the IJzer tower, which had been built in Diksmuide in 1928-1929 to honor the Flemish dead of the Western Front of World War I and which had served as a point of pilgrimage for the Flemish Movement during the 1930s and throughout the German occupation of 1940-1944, was destroyed by explosives during the night of 15-16 March 1946.[94] It is likely that the perpetrators of the bombing were engineers connected with the wartime resistance.[95]

In 1945, the wartime cabinet of the Catholic Hubert Pierlot was succeeded by that of the Socialist Achille Van Acker. Van Acker, from a working-class family of Bruges, had left school at ten years old and was largely self-taught. He was the first Belgian Prime Minister who had not received a French-language education, demonstrating the (slow) rise of Dutch-speaking Flemings to the top positions in Belgian society. In the following year, in another show of Flemish ascendancy, Van Acker was succeeded by the famous Flemish Socialist Camille Huysmans as Prime Minister.[96]

One final conflict that emerged from the war was that engendered by the so-called "Royal Question." King Leopold had been in exile since 1944, as the victorious Allies distrusted him, and his brother Charles ruled as regent. In 1950, a referendum on the King's return resulted in 57% voting for in favor – but this breaks down to 72% in Flanders and only 42% support in Wallonia. Calls for independence or annexation to France moved around in some French-speaking circles. A series of riots convinced the King that his return would be too divisive, and he abdicated in favor of his son, Baudouin, in 1951. The "Royal Question" soured relations between the linguistic

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[93] Bruno De Wever, "Elias, Hendrik J.," *NEVB*. Hendrik Jozef Elias, *Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse gedachte 1780-1914*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1970); Hendrik Jozef Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse Beweging 1914/1939*, 4 vols. (Antwerp: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1969).
[94] Willy Moons, "IJzertoren," *NEVB*.
[95] Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford *et al.*: Oxford University Press, 2012), 254, 257.
[96] The Brussels Socialist Paul-Henri Spaak briefly served as Prime Minister between two separate terms of Van Acker.

communities – Walloons saw Flemish support for the King as evidence that Flemings were "Nazis," and Flemings saw the King's abdication after riots in Wallonia, despite the referendum in his favor, as evidence that the French-speakers would always subvert (Flemish) popular opinion. The Francophones of Flanders did *not* have a marked tendency to be Leopoldist or anti-Leopoldist as a bloc. Rather, their sympathies tended to trend with their political views, Catholics favoring Leopold's return and Liberals rejecting it. We might say that this ideological divide, more than a linguistic one *per se*, is also responsible for the disparity between the (majority Catholic) Flemish and (majority Liberal or Socialist) Walloon results for the referendum, as, for example, very rural, Catholic parts of Wallonia also trended toward a "Leopoldist" vote.[97]

Postwar: Francophone Renewal or Anglo-American Ascendancy?

In a special issue ("*Numéro de la Libération*") of *Vérités/Truth*, celebrating the liberation of Belgium, the clandestine, French-language paper of Ostend during the war printed the names of its editor and publisher, thereby signaling their renewed sense of freedom and security which they felt. The paper also presented tentative guidelines for rebuilding the nation after the war. Echoing the deeply "Belgian" orientation of Francophones of Flanders, *Vérités/Truth* called for "Parents… to inculcate to their children the love of the Fatherland [*Patrie*] which has for too long been abolished at home as well as in school." Intriguingly, they also wanted to "abolish the language borders which have caused us such damage."[98] Unfortunately, the paper seems to have gone out of publication after its celebratory issue, so we cannot see how they would have developed this proposal to undo the linguistic homogeneity laid down in the 1930s.

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[97] E. Ramón Arango, *Leopold III and the Belgian Royal Question* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963); Jacques Van Offelen, *Les libéraux contre Léopold III: Les débats secrets des partisans de l'abdication* (Brussels: Didier Hatier, 1988); Paul Theunissen, *1950, Dénouement de la question royale: Cinq mois qui ébranlèrent la Belgique* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1986); Jan Velaers and Herman Van Goethem, "Koningskwestie," *NEVB*; Micheline Libon, "Question royale et Mouvement Wallon," *EMW*.
[98] *Vérités/Truth* (Ostend), September 1944, 1–2. The Belgian War Press, CEGESOMA.

This special issue of *Vérités/Truth* overflowed with tributes to the liberating Allied forces. France, in particular, received an "homage" as the nation whose liberation was (supposedly) carried out largely by its own strength under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle. France's ups and downs, claimed *Vérités/Truth*, were also those of Belgium: "A nearness [*voisinage*], a centuries-old atavism, a perpetual similarity in misfortune and joy have united the French and the Belgians forever." The paper hoped that "economic borders" between Belgium and her "older sister," France, could be torn down in light of their common sufferings.[99] We see here a deep Francophilia which, however, did not extend to the desire for *political* integration with France, an option which *Vérités/Truth* had vehemently rejected in its wartime issues.

The aftermath of liberation was not to be an unalloyed golden age for France or the French language, however; and the problems of postwar *Francophonie* would affect the power of French in Flanders. France could not play the role of victor in the same way as it had in 1918. France's surrender to and occupation by Germany had eroded the country's prestige, the deeds of the resistance notwithstanding. As David Gordon writes in his history of the French language in the mid-twentieth century, the role of French as the international idiom *par excellence* "was challenged by radically new circumstances – among these Depression… the humiliation of World War II, the collapse of Western empires, and the emergence of superpowers to assume the roles Great Britain and France has once played as world leaders."[100] The economic and cultural influence of the English-speaking world, especially the United States, was on the ascendant; this influence was felt in Belgium as well. While relatively few Belgians at the time of liberation knew English, British theater and American films and music carried a cachet that made them enormously popular. French cultural productions – of which there were relatively few, given the devastation the country had just endured

[99] *Ibid.*
[100] David C. Gordon, *The French Language and National Identity (1930-1975)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 11.

– commanded much less interest in Belgium than they had before 1940.[101] This sea change in cultural hegemony from the French to the English sphere was not unique to Belgium; indeed it was a general rule in the post-1945 world. However, this process slowly sapped the Francophones of Flanders of one of their major arguments in favor of a continuing presence of French in Flanders: namely, the quality and ubiquity of French language and culture.

One of those French-speakers of Flanders who continued to make such arguments was Marcel Lachaert, a Ghent cotton merchant who wrote novels and plays under the pen name José Vial.[102] In the late 1940s, he founded a French-language literary review, *Épîtres*, which frequently commented on the linguistic situation in Flanders. Well into the 1950s, Vial and *Épîtres* lamented the continuing decline of French in the Flemish public sphere. On several occasions, editorial comments in *Épîtres* accused Flemish radicals of preferring English to French, in order to curry favor with the new Anglo-American powers and also to spite France and French culture. The attraction of *flamingants* to English, claimed *Épîtres*, proved the French-speakers of Flanders correct in one crucial aspect: it was necessary for the Flemings to have access to an international language. But, asked the review, how could the *flamingants*, who accused those Flemings who used French of being "anti-national," turn around and use a language which had *no* historical presence in Flanders? Did not they run the risk of becoming "denationalized" even more by English than by French?[103]

Of course, some Flemings, in the same vein as Alfons van de Perre writing at the end of World War I, not only acknowledged but seemed to celebrate French losing ground. The Flemish Catholic daily newspaper *De Standaard* ran an article on "Why French Is Losing Its Importance" in 1952. The piece presents a somewhat more nuanced narrative than the "rise of English = fall of

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[101] Peter Schrijvers, *Liberators: The Allies and Belgian Society, 1944-1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 61, 125–132, 204–206.
[102] Frans Heymans and Philippe Proost, "Vial, José," *Literair Gent*, 6 October 2008, http://www.literair.gent.be/html/lexicondetail.asp?ID=5&AID=643.
[103] "Les trois langues européennes," *Épîtres* no. 11 (1947): 17; "Lettres belges d'expression anglaise," *Épîtres* no. 24 (1950-1951): 56.

French" seen in other such analyses. For *De Standaard*, *French* is losing ground as a language because *France* is losing power as a state, and because *French culture* is losing its allure. Even forty years ago, when French books supposedly sold as well as Spanish books in Buenos Aires, it was mostly editions of "Marcel Prévost, René Bazin, Gyp, and Zola" which even then certainly did not represent "the '*fine fleur*' of the French genius." (These authors likely ran afoul of *De Standaard*'s very conservative sensibilities.) Vernaculars were replacing elite languages across the globe, and even "Dietsch" was gaining ground in South Africa (in the form of Afrikaans). *De Standaard* predicted (rather erroneously, perhaps) that no language will ever be able to achieve what French had in its prime, and that French itself could reclaim its former glory, "not through a simpler orthography and neither through a kind of new 'Sun King policy'" – one suspects they mean what we today call "cultural diplomacy" or "soft power" – "whether or not plated with American gold."[104]

Finally, I want to note that the ups and downs of the Francophones of Flanders may have had a very plain impact on the concept of "francophone" itself. Writing in 1985, one activist for the French language in Belgium and in Europe mused that Belgium in the first half of the twentieth century was "a particularly fertile terrain for the rediscovery (or the rebirth) of the word *francophone*." The Flemish Movement, with its "objective [of] the elimination of French in Flanders" created an environment that was "favorable to the appearance of a specific term [*vocable propre*] to designate these poor condemned individuals, the 'Francophones' of Flanders."[105] Indeed, José Vial gave his brief definition of "francophone" as follows:

> expression intended, in Belgium, to designate Flemings who speak mainly, if not solely, in French. By family tradition or by reaction against the *flamandisation* imposed by the laws voted on between the two wars (1914-1940). [*sic*] Do not confuse this term with "*fransquillon*" or **FrancopPHILE** Fleming, who conspicuously turns away from Flemish culture and language.[106]

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[104] "Waarom het Frans aan het betekenis verliest," *De Standaard*, 31 August 1952. Clipped in Lodewijk de Raet-stichting collection, BR VII 1, AMVB.

[105] Stéphane Brabant, *Francophonie, francité et ethnie française: Essai de définition* (Brussels: Fondation Charles Plisnier, 1985), 12.

[106] Vial, *Bruxelles-Paris*, 73n2. Bold text in original.

The word was not always well-received: the Francophone journalist from Bruges, Charles d'Ydewalle, noted that when his mother (who lived from 1875 to 1961) heard the word "francophone" late in her life as a term to describe the class to which she belonged, she "found [it] absurd, somewhere between 'telephone' and 'saxophone.'"[107]

I would not presume to attribute the twentieth-century "rediscovery" of the terms "*francophonie*" and "*francophone*," coined by the French geographer Onésime Reclus in 1880, primarily to the internal dynamics of the language question in Flanders. Nevertheless, their use in this case demonstrates the complex relationship between the French language and its speakers outside of France. While the act of speaking French set these "Francophones" apart from "Flemings," despite their self-identification *as* Flemings; they were also *not* French, or even Walloon. In this sense, "Francophone" is a kind of "last resort" identity that describes, albeit awkwardly, these individuals.

During the war, the Germans closed down the ÉHÉ in Ghent and destroyed or appropriated all the books in its library. The campus was occupied by the Comité voor Dietsche Actie, a small collaborationist group with "pan-Netherlandic" and national socialist tendencies.[108] This Francophone counterweight to the (Flemish) University of Ghent reopened after the war, but not, despite the wishes of the French ambassador to Belgium, as a degree-granting university. Instead, the ÉHÉ became a "partner" of the University of Ghent, offering courses in French language for the public as well as French-language lecture series.[109] (José Vial called it with some bitterness "a simple 'conference club.'")[110] These Francophone activities – often sponsored by the AFVLF or the Alliance française – still disquieted some members of the Flemish Movement, but the

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[107] Charles d'Ydewalle, *Confession d'un Flamand* (Brussels: Pierre de Méyère, 1967), 19.
[108] Anne-Marie van der Meersch, "Ecole des Hautes Etudes," *NEVB*; Frans van der Elst and Bruno de Wever, "Comité voor Dietsche Actie (CDA)," *NEVB*.
[109] Catherine Lanneau, *L'inconnue française: la France et les Belges francophones, 1944-1945* (Brussels *et al.*: Peter Lang, 2008), 454–455, 482–483.
[110] José Vial [Marcel Lachaert], "Critique de l'explication du francophone," *Épîtres* no. 23 (1950): 109.

ÉHÉ was no longer engaging in "disloyal competition" with the academic offerings of the hard-won Flemish University of Ghent.[111]

The Walloon Movement Permanently Abandons the Francophones of Flanders

As detailed in the last chapter, the Walloon Movement – though not all inhabitants of Wallonia – had for the most part been willing to "sacrifice" the Francophones of Flanders in return for a guarantee of monolingualism in Wallonia. This position was even more entrenched after the war. A meeting of disproportionately Liberal and Socialist Walloon politicians, intellectuals, and professionals, the "Walloon National Congress" of 20-21 October 1945 gave itself the goal to determine what, if any, change should be made in Wallonia's relationship to the Belgian state as a whole. One speaker who called for the maintenance of the unitary Belgian state was former Socialist Senator Albert Renard, who, before the war, had authored a pamphlet calling for "obligatory trilingualism" (in French, Dutch, and German) as the solution to Belgium's language woes.[112] He cited the works of Edmond Picard, Godefroid Kurth, and Henri Pirenne in support of Belgian unity, repeated his call for Walloons to learn Dutch, and accused other Walloon activists of desiring to become French. He was booed offstage.[113] When it came time to vote on the path which Wallonia ought to take – maintenance of a unitary Belgium with some modifications, Walloon autonomy within Belgium (federalism), an independent Wallonia, or "reattachment" to France – a plurality of the delegates chose the latter option.[114] While this vote was soon followed by a second vote (the "vote of reason" as opposed to the earlier "vote of the heart") in favor of federalism, it

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[111] J. Vandevelde-Winant, "L'École des Hautes Études: Hier, aujourd'hui et demain," in *Études historiques*, Annales de L'École des Hautes Études de Gand 5 (Ghent: École des Hautes Études, 1963), 7–13; Herman Maes, "De Rijksuniversiteit te Gent en de 'École des Hautes Études à Gand' in 1945-1946," in *Opstellen voor een inspirerende non-conformist: Een huldeboek voor Werner Vandenabeele (1926-2000)*, ed. Nico Van Campenhout (Lokeren: Stad Lokeren, 2002), 210–215.

[112] Albert Renard, *Le trilinguisme obligatoire en Belgique* (Malmedy: Gerson, 1937). CEGESOMA, BA 20.831.

[113] Philippe Raxhon, *Histoire du Congrès wallon d'octobre 1945: Un avenir politique pour la Wallonie?* (Charleroi: Institut Jules Destrée, 1995), 63; Paul Delforge, "Renard, Albert," *EMW*.

[114] Raxhon, *Histoire du Congrès wallon d'octobre 1945*.

was obvious that goings-on in Flanders were not important to the majority of Walloon activists unless they directly affected Wallonia.

Soliciting public servants' support for the Assemblée Wallonne, Henri Putanier, Secretary of the Assemblée immediately following the war, said that the "*flamingants*" had "expelled the French language from public services in Flanders" and were now threatening to make Brussels "Flemish" and saddle Wallonia with a "useless and vexatious bilingualism."[115] The reference to French in Flanders was not meant, as it would have been before World War I, as a call to action to defend the place of French and French-speakers north of the language border. Instead, Putanier was cautioning his correspondents that *their* livelihoods in Brussels and Wallonia could be at stake, using the example of Flanders as a cautionary tale about the single-mindedness of the *flamingants*. This example from the Assemblée Wallonne, one of the more moderate "Walloon" political groups, demonstrates that the postwar Walloon Movement would only discuss the Francophones of Flanders in the past tense. A meeting between Walloon and Flemish federalists in 1952, part of a (failed) attempt to create a common front against the "centralized" Belgian state, came to a tentative agreement that in a hypothetical future, federalized Belgium, "both [sides] agree to exclude any protection of minorities, in the Flemish part as well as in the Walloon part of the country," and that "to prevent minorities of one group from allying with minorities of another… no decision shall be able to be taken by the central Parliament if half of the deputies from one of the groups is opposed thereto."[116]

By and large, the Walloon Movement would have no further truck with the Francophones of Flanders. There was only one major exception, the Leuven Affair of the 1960s, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Even there, however, the Walloon Movement's interest was more focused on

[115] Henri Putanier to "Monsieur le PRÉSIDENT GÉNÉRAL DE L'ASSOCIATION WALLONNE DES SERVICES PUBLICS," 8 February 1945, 2. Henri Putanier collection (F0042), Box 13, "Assemblée wallonne 1944-1949," Folder "1945," FHMW.

[116] "Note sur la réunion d'information entre des délégués du 'Vlaams Comite voor Federalisme' et des représentants du 'Mouvement Fédéraliste Wallon'," typescript (stamped as received by Davidsfonds 27 February [1952]), 2. Davidsfonds, Central Administration collection, "Fotokopieën archivalia," 9.87/8, KADOC. On the failure of these talks, see George Armstrong Kelly, "Belgium: New Nationalism in an Old World," *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3 (1969): 358.

the Walloon students at the University than on the position of French or French-speakers in Flanders *per se*. The rather definitive break between the Francophones of Flanders and the Walloon Movement also reflects not only their differing approaches to the language question (the Francophones of Flanders promoting bilingualism while the Walloon Movement promoted regional monolingualism) but also the divergent social, political, and economic concerns of each group. While the Francophones of Flanders were upper-class, and divided between business-friendly Liberals and socially conservative Catholics politically, the Walloon Movement's membership was overwhelmingly left-wing and cultivated a working-class identity. Nevertheless, the French-speaking television journalist and writer from Ghent, Luc Beyer de Ryke, claims that when he met with the popular Walloon union leader and federalist André Renard, the latter promised the former that he would fight for the "protection of minorities" in a federal Belgium, this despite the wide division between the "very bourgeois" Francophones of Flanders and Renard's working-class constituents. Renard, however, died in 1962 at the age of 51, his death perhaps hastened by his participation in a series of labor demonstrations of the winter of 1960-1961. Whether his promises to Beyer were sincere, and whether he could have made them a reality, thus remains unknown.[117]

The Growing Power of Dutch

During the postwar period, as French in Flanders was facing competition "from above" as English became an increasingly important international language (at the expense of French), so too was French facing competition "from below" in the form of Dutch. Certainly, there had already been the legislation of the 1930s concerning language use in state institutions. However – as some French-speakers had previously said – it is not possible to legislate *de facto* equality of language, and the fact remains that at that time French still held a massive advantage in Flanders over "Flemish,"

[117] Luc Beyer de Ryke, *Les lys de Flandre: Vie et mort des francophones de Flandre (1302-2002)* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2002), 81–82.

which remained at many levels a collective of partially-mutually-intelligible dialects, as standard Dutch was still the preserve of a small elite which had formed in opposition to the French-speaking elite. As late as World War II, for example, Max Gevers complained that while radio broadcasts made by the Dutch government-in-exile were quite good, Belgian broadcasts on the BBC for the benefit of the Flemish were delivered "in the most wretched Antwerp *patois*."[118] After the Second World War, though, standard Dutch gained more and more ground in Flemish society, thereby providing a viable common tongue and language of higher culture.

Several factors contributed to the postwar spread of standard Dutch, which I will address very briefly here. First, the operation of the University of Ghent as a wholly Dutch-speaking institution since 1930, as well as the Dutch-language section of the Catholic University of Leuven, had created a professional and bureaucratic class who shared a common Dutch education and standardized technical vocabulary. Second, the increasing cooperation between the "Benelux" countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) in the aftermath of the war increased opportunities for Flemings and Dutch people to have contact, and streamlined cross-border trade in books and other cultural products in the Dutch "language sphere."[119]

Perhaps most significant, however, was the rapid expansion of mass media, including television, in the decades following the war. The spread of television, ushered in by the general prosperity of the 1950s, afforded the mass of Flemings access to spoken standard Dutch on a daily basis. In addition, the images of "Flanders" presented in historical fiction as well as in news broadcasts served as a more technologically advanced version of novels and newspapers in Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" schema, fostering a common "Flemish" identity.[120] Early

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[118] Gevers, "Journal d'un bourgeois d'Anvers," 17 February 1941.
[119] Joris de Deurwaerder and Arend Jan Boekestijn, "Benelux," *NEVB*.
[120] Hilde Van den Bulck, "De rol van de publieke omroep in het project van de moderniteit: Een analyse van de bijdrage van de Vlaamse publieke televisie tot de creatie van een nationale cultuur en identiteit (1953-1973)" (Doctoral dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2000); Alexander Dhoest, "Negotiating Images of the Nation: The Production of Flemish TV Drama, 1953-89," *Media, Culture & Society* 26, no. 3 (2004): 393–408.

Flemish television producers consciously adopted the spread of standard Dutch as a mission. Regional dialects were used sparingly for "local flavor" or comedic effect. Flemish television producers felt that they could not afford the luxury that the French-speaking broadcasters allowed themselves, when the latter occasionally broadcast programs in Walloon dialects for the benefit of transplanted Walloons in Brussels.[121] While French, a world language with hundreds of millions of speakers and a long cultural tradition, would not be threatened by a few dialectal programs, standard Dutch, whose implantation in Flanders was still in progress, could not spare broadcasting time to "mere" dialectal programs, especially when "Flemish" was still a byword for a second-rate collection of *patois* in the minds of many Francophones.

The continued adoption of standard Dutch by the Flemish masses is also important for the story of the French-speakers of Flanders in that many, though not all, of these Francophones also spoke the local Flemish dialect. As we have seen in previous chapters, the diversity of dialects in Flanders had been used as an argument against *flamandisation* of Flemish public life: if a common language was necessary, why not just use French, which had the added benefit of being a world language and which was already supplanting the dialects of Wallonia? That argument held less sway when standard Dutch was a viable alternative. In fact, some Flemish media mocked French-speakers' use of local dialects (so-called "*Vloms*") instead of standard Dutch to portray the *Francophones* as backward and behind the times.[122]

Continued Complaints

Despite the spread of Dutch after the war, there remained several issues which vexed the Flemish Movement, which we may see as signs of the continuing importance of French in Flanders.

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[121] Van den Bulck, 182.
[122] A. van der Ley [Arthur de Bruyne], "Franskiljons van morgen: Hebben de optimisten gelijk?" unpublished MS, [1955?], [2]. Written for but not published by *Het Handelsblad* (Antwerp). Arthur de Bruyne collection, ADVN.

One of these was the continued of existence of "transmutation classes" in several large Flemish cities throughout the 1950s, more than twenty years after they had been introduced in an attempt to ease the adaptation of French-speakers to Flemish life by preparing Francophone children to attend Dutch-language secondary schools. The transmutation classes were not working as intended, according to a left-wing Flemish cultural organization, because French-speaking parents refused their "loyal cooperation" with the system, and in fact used these classes a way to obtain a partly-French primary education for their children before sending them to French-language secondary schools.[123] Some schools, for example, would not introduce the legally-mandated coursework in Dutch to the extent required by the law. Furthermore, upon finishing the transmutation classes, the children of French-speaking families were occasionally sent to schools in Wallonia or Brussels (or, more rarely, abroad) to complete their secondary education *in French*, as day students or as boarders.[124] Some parents sent their children to unsubsidized (thus expensive) private secondary schools in Flanders that taught in French. In one case, a publically-subsidized private transmutation class was housed in *the same building* as an unsubsidized French-language secondary school![125] While children from Dutch-speaking households could not attend transmutation classes, thereby preventing the creation of "new *fransquillons*," Flemish activists complained that the transmutation classes allowed for the continued existence of "Frenchified islands" within Flanders.[126]

The adaptation of language use in municipal administration as triggered by census results did not affect the Francophones of cities such as Ghent, Antwerp, and Bruges, as they never constituted

[123] *De transmutatieklassen* ([Brussels]: August Vermeylen-Fonds, 1956), 17. KBR, B 9792 5.
[124] Interview with Daniel Destobbeleir, Anderlecht, 9 March 2011.
[125] *De transmutatieklassen*, 15, 17.
[126] On conditions of admission to the transmutation classes, see Jean Dassesse, "La Vie du Droit: Les « classes de transmutation » de l'enseignement primaire," *Journal des Tribunaux* 73, no. 4196 (1 June 1958): 359–360.

30% of the population in these areas; *Assemblée wallonne* leader Henri Putanier claimed that "the figure of 30% was imposed *because* no French minority in Flanders reached that ceiling."[127]

As a brief counterpoint, I note that I have not been able to find any complaints on the part of the Flemish Movement about the foundation of the College of Europe in Bruges in 1949, though this does not necessarily mean that there were none. A small post-secondary institution devoted solely to delivering master's degrees in European studies, all teaching at the College is done in French and English. Bruges was chosen as the location for this experiment in creating a Europe-wide elite partly because, in the words of an informational brochure, "The capital of West Flanders is not located in one of the great linguistic areas. Thus there can be no suspicion of 'cultural imperialism.'"[128] The College has been and still is subsidized in part by the city of Bruges and the province of West Flanders. Given the determination with which the Flemish Movement had fought for the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, and would later fight for the total *flamandisation* of the Catholic University of Leuven, the Flemish attitude toward the College of Europe at first seems contradictory. However, the College of Europe, while admitting Belgian students, does not serve a primarily Belgian student body or have a "Belgian" educational mission; indeed, as a solely post-graduate institution with a very small enrollment, it is not the location of students' "primary" university education. There was therefore little chance that it could serve as a way to perpetuate the existence of the French-speaking elite in Flanders. Instead, it serves as an economic motor for Bruges and a source of regional pride.

[127] "RÉGIME ADMINISTRATIF," unpublished MS ([1945?]), 1. Henri Putanier collection, Box 13 "Assemblée wallonne 1944-1949," Folder "1945," FHMW. Emphasis added.
[128] *The College of Europe* (Bruges: D. Walleyn, [ca. 1950]), 3. Documentation collection "Europa-College," AMVC.

A Final Frontier? Language Use in Business

The business world was one of the remaining "bastions" of French in Flanders. Many businesses in Flanders had been traditionally owned and administered by the French-speaking elite, and, in turn, this access to capital provided the means for French-speakers to maintain a parallel social system in French in the absence of state support.[129] Observers of various political stripes saw the continued economic clout of the French-speaking class in Flanders as an impediment to a definitive settlement of the Flemish question. On the Flemish Nationalist side, journalist and popular historian Arthur de Bruyne, a former VNV member and campaigner for amnesty on the part of those punished for collaboration during World War II, argued in the mid-1950s that the "optimists" in the Flemish press (he singled out *De Standaard*, the Catholic daily which enjoyed the largest circulation of all Flemish papers) were unfortunately mistaken when they saw "*fransquillonisme*" on the decline. French still exercised an enormous social magnetism on the social climbers, many of whom still sent their children to French-language private schools if they could afford the money. It was these "*nouveaux riches*" in business and industry who *aspired* to be "French," and not "*fransquillons*" whose maternal language was French but who were trying to fit in to Flemish society by speaking Dutch, who presented the real danger to Flanders's linguistic future.[130]

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, the Belgian Trotskyist of German Jewish origin Ernest Mandel and the Walloon union leader Jacques Yerna penned an article together in 1958 analyzing "socialist perspectives on the Flemish Question" in which they claimed that the Francophone bourgeoisie, contrary to some of their pretty rhetoric, never *wanted* to Frenchify the masses, as the internal language barrier served to protect their privileged position. The (capitalist) economic structure of Belgium meant that the Francophone minority still wielded an enormously

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[129] Luigi Gandi, "Îlots minoritaires atypiques: Les francophones de Flandre," in *Isole linguistiche e culturali: isole linguistiche e culturali all'interno di culture minoritarie: problemi psico-linguistici, socio-linguistici, educativi*, ed. Nereo Perini (Udine: Consorzio per la costituzione e lo sviluppo degli insegnamenti universitari, 1988), 222.
[130] A. van der Ley, "Franskiljons van morgen." On de Bruyne, see Lode Wils, "Bruyne, Arthur de," *NEVB*.

disproportionate influence in Flemish society, even if they had adapted themselves to the *flamandisation* of much of public life. Even though – by Mandel and Yerna's Marxist analysis – the basis of the "Flemish Question" was thus essentially economic, the traditional Flemish Movement failed to address it, because of a long tradition of (Catholic and lower middle-class) anti-socialism. A nationalization of industry, which would be a prelude to *flamandisation*, would solve this problem, as "Frenchification" happened not because parents wanted their children to be able to read Proust in the original but because they wanted their children to have better social chances. This incentive would wither away with the *flamandisation* of industry. Likewise, the removal of this pesky linguistic question would deny Flemish *nationalists* many of their recruits.[131]

Between these two ideological extremes, the *flamandisation* of business and industry became a significant demand of much of the Flemish Movement during the decades following World War II. The continued dominance of French in the higher ranks of business administration was seen as a hindrance to the upward mobility of young Flemish professionals, as knowledge of French was often required for promotion, the higher one went up the organizational ladder. In addition, Flemish workers were often provided French-language forms, and answered to French-language superiors. In the latter case, Flemish workers had internalized expectations that they would speak French in such a situation, out of "politeness" and to avoid "political" troubles. The Flemish Movement argued that the language divide between employees and (higher) management was not only a societal injustice, but also a drain on firms' productivity.[132]

The emphasis on a *monolingually* Dutch-language workplace evinces concern for the economic and social chances of the "average" Fleming, who might have to compete with a French-speaker of Flanders who also speaks good Dutch. Because of the 1932 law on schooling, notes a

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[131] Ernest Mandel and Jacques Yerna, "Perspectives socialistes sur la question flamande," *La Gauche* no. 16 (1958), reproduced at http://www.ernestmandel.org/fr/ecrits/txt/1958/perspectives_socialistes_sur_la_question_flamand.htm [*sic*].
[132] Brigitte Henau, "Bedrijfsleven," *NEVB*.

1959 pamphlet by the Vlaams Economisch Verbond (Flemish Economic Union), "young people speaking French at home also have a rather good and deep knowledge of Dutch. These are the new 'bilinguals' who [are preferred for most jobs], to which, incidentally, they are typically named by the old French-speaking generation." To remedy this "unjust" situation, "it would be appropriate to confide certain executive functions to persons belonging to the Flemish community [*sic*]." In addition, knowledge of French (or other foreign languages), though advantageous, should not be a reason to give preference to "a Francophone Fleming."[133] Another Flemish commentator worried "if the positive consequences of the democratization of education are not partly counteracted by the state of Frenchification in our business world."[134]

For the time being, the Flemish Movement's campaign for the *flamandisation* of business in Flanders would have to rely on boycotts and moral suasion; a legislative remedy was out of the question. Efforts to boycott firms that did not use Dutch (or that used French "unnecessarily") came to be known by the shorthand "*Geen Vlaams, Geen Centen* [No Flemish, No Cents]." French-speakers, as might be imagined, did not always receive these efforts well. José Vial complained that "foreign commerce [was] subjugated by the '*geen Vlaams, geen centen*' campaign [that] came from ignorant petty Flemish circles," cowed into producing products for sale in Flanders with solely Dutch labeling. Vial mused that the "80,000" Francophones in Flanders ought to organize counter-boycotts, writing to such companies and informing them that they would abstain from purchasing such products "until more amply informed, in the French language."[135]

Private enterprise, by definition, seemed to escape the remit of language legislation in Belgium, limited to "acts of public authority and … judicial proceedings" by Article 23 of the

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[133] Centre d'études pour la flamandisation de la vie économique en Flandre, *Recommandations concernant l'emploi des langues dans les entreprises, dans les groupements professionnels, les fédérations et les chambres de commerce*, IV ([Brussels]: Vlaams Economisch Verbond, 1959), 13–14. Brochures "Mouvement flamand," FHMW.
[134] Herman Deleeck, *De taaltoestanden in het Vlaams bedrijfsleven: Een onderzoek in de grote ondernemingen van Oost-Vlaanderen en een geheel van voorstellen* (Brussels: Arbeiderspers, 1959), 11.
[135] J[osé] V[ial] [Marcel Lachaert], "Le Courrier d'*Épîtres*," *Épîtres* no. 21 (1949-1950): 62–63.

Constitution. There was indeed no legislation on language use in business until the 1970s, as discussed in the next chapter. Flemish analysts, though, wanted to blur the distinction between the public and the private spheres; or rather to include the business world as part of the "public sphere." The Flemish Christian Democrat economist Herman Deleeck argued in 1959 against the lack of legislation regulating language use in business: "In our complex modern society, business has come to occupy such an important place that it is unthinkable that this sector is still portrayed as a private matter." Article 23 should be interpreted in a much different manner than it had been in the 1830s, as "*the public sphere has truly broadened considerably* since the introduction of our Constitution."[136]

Conclusion: A Fragile Balance

While in Belgium, as in the United States, the 1950s have been subject to a kind of selective memory, romanticized as a golden era of social tranquility, it is nonetheless fair to say that in the realm of language use and legislation, the linguistic equilibrium reached in 1932 and temporarily shaken by the Second World War and the Royal Question seemed to be holding at the end of the decade. However, much as the Europe-wide trend toward universal manhood suffrage at the end of the nineteenth century had important repercussions for the language question in Belgian politics, so too did the global economic, social, and cultural upheavals of the 1960s sometimes manifest themselves in a particularly "linguistic" fashion in Belgium. These developments, discussed in the next chapter, ultimately helped end the meaningful presence of French in Flemish public life.

[136] Deleeck, *De taaltoestanden in het Vlaams bedrijfsleven*, 99–100. Emphasis added.

CHAPTER 5

DECLINE AND FALL: THE LAST FIGHTS FOR FRENCH IN FLANDERS, 1960-1975

From the Golden 1950s to the Tumultuous 1960s

In 1958, Brussels hosted Expo 1958, an international celebration of scientific and economic development that embodied the triumphal optimism of the postwar West. Pavilions from across the world showcased technological and commercial marvels, as well as less savory exhibits like Belgium's own "Congolese village" that recalled the "human zoos" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The iconic Atomium, a massive model of an iron crystal rendered in stainless steel and now a well-known symbol of Belgium, remains as a reminder of the spirit of "progress" represented at the exposition. Shortly thereafter, though, a number of events upended this relatively tranquility. As the Liégeois essayist Paul Dresse so breathlessly put it:

> June 1960: Lumumba takes off the mask and turns the Congo against its metropole; because of suffered or foreseeable losses, our government (in the following December) voted for the Unitary Law [a massive austerity measure]; this (at the end of December) served as a pretext for the beginning of the General Strike; [Walloon labor leader] André Renard took advantage of [the strike] (the following 2 January) to spread the federalist idea among the Walloon masses, [which was] soon taken up by the *flamingants*. Thereafter, the latter multiplied their demonstrations of intolerance and laid the groundwork for the subversion of Leuven, the victory of which led to, in return, the success of the M[ouvement] P[opulaire] W[allon] [a Walloon federalist party], etc.…[1]

The relative quiescence of the 1950s in regards to language politics thus gave way to a decade of pitched political battles fought on linguistic terrain. During the 1960s, various groups of Francophones of Flanders attempted to stake a claim, however small, to institutional recognition, with arguments strikingly similar to those used in the 1920s: Belgian patriotism and minority rhetoric. By 1970, in an attempt to manage these conflicts, Belgian political leadership would take the first steps in an process that transformed the unitary Belgian state into a decentralized state. The multilayered federalism that emerged as the new administrative system of Belgium – based on the

[1] Paul Dresse, *Le complexe belge*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Pierre de Méyère, 1969), 111–112.

preexisting ideal of a bilingual Brussels and monolingual Wallonia and Flanders but drastically extending its consequences – did not have any institutional recognition for the Francophones of Flanders. The new language legislation of the 1960s, combined with social and economic pressures, led to the disappearance of a French-language public life in Flanders by the middle of the 1970s.

"Fixing" the Linguistic Border

While the linguistic laws of 1932 were intended to promote linguistic homogeneity in Flanders, one clause allowed a municipality to adopt a bilingual administration if the most recent census showed a "minority" of 30 percent or more who spoke the other national language among the population. This threshold was far too high for any of the populations of Francophones of Flanders in cities like Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, and the like to attain. Nevertheless, the Flemish Movement feared that reapportionment would have a deleterious effect on the "linguistic border," as individuals in border municipalities, out of a desire for social mobility and prestige via French or under the pressure of Francophone interests, would falsely claim to speak French as their primary language on the census forms. Indeed, after the census of 1947, numerous municipalities along the "linguistic border" reported such minorities for the first time, and the Brussels agglomeration came to include three new municipalities based on the proportion of French-speakers countered therein.[2]

The Flemish Movement called for an end to questions about language use in the census in large part to keep the linguistic border from creeping northward, thereby undermining the territorial principle at the heart of the language laws of 1932. In 1961, the language census was definitively ended. For the Flemish Movement, this was a victory that prevented Flemings from listing their language as "French" out of Francophone pressure or a misplaced sense of pride. In the eyes of the

[2] On the census and its discontents see Paul M. G. Lévy, *La Querelle du recensement* (Brussels: Institut belge de science politique, 1960), a detailed study which is somewhat biased toward a Francophone point of view. On the "language border," see Stéphane Rillaerts, "La frontière linguistique, 1878-1963," *Courrier hébdomadaire du CRISP* nos. 2069–2070 (2010).

Francophones of Flanders, however, this crippled their ability to count themselves: because the numbers put the lie to the Flemish Movement's claim to a monolingual Flanders, Flemish politicians (and Walloons who feared bilingualism in Wallonia) made the Francophones of Flanders institutionally invisible.

The language border was definitively fixed (both in the sense of "corrected" and "made permanent") by a law of 8 November 1962, sponsored by the Social Christian (Catholic) MP Arthur Gilson. Gilson, who represented Brussels, was one of many Francophones of Flanders – he was born to a French-speaking family in Antwerp – who "became" Bruxellois over the course of his lifetime. There was a fair amount of haggling over how exactly the border was to be drawn; a few cases along the border and in the Brussels periphery posed thorny issues and in some instances continue to do so today.[3] These areas fall outside the scope of this dissertation, however. The cessation of the linguistic census and the fixing of the language border did correspond with a series of laws that would interest the Francophones of Flanders, however.[4]

Despite the meticulous – sometimes street-by-street – attempts to draw a permanent and "valid" language border across Belgium, a handful of municipalities (outside of the 19 municipalities of the "Brussels conglomeration") were too mixed to be neatly severed. Policy-makers envisioned that these areas – the Brussels periphery, some towns on the language border, and the German-speaking "Eastern Cantons" – would have "language facilities" that would provide a wide array of administrative services to the inhabitants who spoke the "minority" language. Much has been written about the differing conceptions of these facilities (which still exist today). Broadly, Flemish politicians view them as a kind of temporary measure meant to "facilitate" the assimilation of the

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[3] Beside the Brussels periphery, the Voeren/Fouron municipalities (agglomerated to one municipality in 1977), which were transferred from the Walloon province of Liège to the Flemish province of Limburg, have remained a bone of contention. See Pierre Ubac [pseud.], ed., *Génération Fourons* (Brussels: De Boeck-Université, 1993).
[4] On the language laws of 1962-1963, see Pierre Maroy, "L'évolution de la législation linguistique belge," *Revue du droit public et de la science politique en France et à l'étranger* 82, no. 3 (1966): 474–491.

minority group to the regional language. For many Francophones, however, these facilities are a permanent right to which the speakers of the minority language are entitled. During the debates leading up to the adoption of the law on language use in administration on 2 August 1963, however, some Francophones of Flanders claimed that certain towns in Flanders (and not just in "border" areas) also deserved language facilities. I will return to this shortly.

The law on language use in administration came hot on the heels of the 30 July 1963 law on the use of languages in education. This law eliminated the "transmutation" classes, and declared that institutions that did not teach in the language of the region could not receive subsidies, nor could their diplomas be recognized by the Belgian state. These provisions would ultimately lead to the "Belgian Language Case" that was brought by French-speaking parents in Flanders before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which I will discuss below. The law also allowed for minority schools in the municipalities with linguistic facilities, for children of non-citizens who worked at international organizations, and for children of individuals connected to the French-language section of the Catholic University of Leuven. These provisions also lead to a reaction, this time on the part of the Flemish Movement.

Throughout 1962, as these laws were introduced and debate in the Belgian legislature, some Francophone politicians of Flanders attempted to gain facilities for municipalities deep within Flanders, and to maintain transmutation classes. Chief among these was Baron Paul Kronacker, a Liberal Francophone MP from Leuven.[5] In the Spring and Summer of 1962, Kronacker exchanged a series of letters with the mayor of Tienen and the Minister of National Education and Culture, attempting to maintain the transmutation classes in the city, ostensibly for the benefit of the many Walloons who worked in the sugar refineries for which Tienen was renowned. Political figures in Tienen even created an ephemeral "ligue pour l'unité nationale et la liberté linguistique: Association,

[5] See correspondence in Paul Kronacker collection, 6.4.7. "Stukken m.b.t. de taalwetgeving," LA.

pour Tirlemont et environs, indépendante de tout parti politique et de toute confession [League for National Unity and Linguistic Liberty: Association for Tienen and environs, independent of any political party or confession]," whose name was reminiscent of the interwar LNUB.[6]

Kronacker also attempted to get a special status for Leuven, appealing in part to the status of the city as the seat of a bilingual university.[7] Ultimately, he was one of the few MPs from Flanders who voted against the fixing of the language border. Explaining his vote, Kronacker described himself as "a resolute adversary of intolerance" and a "convinced partisan of bilingualism" who opposed a measure that would increase the divisions between the linguistic communities in Belgium.[8]

Social Campaigns against French in Flanders

The Flemish Movement renewed its emphasis on making the Flemish public sphere "more Flemish" in the 1960s, expanding its action to non-state sectors with sustained press and activism campaigns, such as the protest against "*Franse preken*" (French sermons) in Catholic Churches throughout Flanders and the boycott of retail businesses which exclusively or primarily served clients in French: the so-called "*Geen Vlaams, geen centen*" (No Flemish, no cents) campaign.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 officially sanctioned Catholic masses in vernacular languages. In Flanders, while the vernacular was Dutch, there were also French masses for Francophone populations (especially in Antwerp) and for French-speaking visitors to coastal resort towns. French-speakers portrayed these French-language services as a private matter, dealing with one of the most intimate aspects of human existence. The Flemish Movement claimed that

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[6] "Bulletin d'adhésion confidentiel, non destiné à la publication." Paul Kronacker collection, 6.4.7.5. "Stukken m.b.t. de taalwetgeving, 1962-1965," LA.
[7] Henri Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Les libéraux et l'amendement Kronacker," *Le Matin*, 18 April 1962. Clipped in Paul Kronacker collection, 6.4.7.3. "Stukken m.b.t. de taalwetgeving, 1961-1966," LA.
[8] "Contre le « clichage »," *Le Soir*, 5 Nov 1962. Clipped in Paul Kronacker collection, 6.4.7.5. "Stukken m.b.t. de taalwetgeving, 1962-1965," LA.

these masses expressed a "caste mentality" among *fransquillons* who frequented them, and that even French-language masses for Francophone tourists were an unnecessary "accommodation," as English and German tourists (for example) did not have the luxury of masses in *their* languages. This point of view imagined French as a language as inherently "foreign" to Flanders as English and German; a view that the Francophone minorities of course did not share, pointing out for example that there were Flemish masses in Wallonia where numbers made them viable.[9] Flemish actions against the "*Franse preken*" attracted a fair amount of publicity, both within and outside of Belgium.[10] These included marches in major Flemish cities and coastal hotspots, as well as interrupting services.[11] These actions managed to put an end to the French-language services in Flanders by the end of the 1960s.

As Flanders's economy began to grow in the postwar era – at the same time that Wallonia's was on the decline – many in the Flemish Movement saw the chance to use their newfound prosperity and demographic majority to put pressure on the Francophone establishment of Flanders. In a report on the "cleaning up of centers of Frenchification in Flanders" given at a meeting of the *Vlaamse Volksbeweging* (a Flemish nationalist pressure group) in 1962, lawyer and Flemish activist Edgar Van Cauwelaert argued that many French-speakers in Flanders were economically and financially vulnerable, and that this presented an opportunity for the Flemish Movement:

> To the French-speakers in Flanders and to those who wish to follow them, we propose the following choice from here on out: become Flemish [*sic*] or leave Flanders. To be sure, the constitution guarantees the freedom of language, but it also guarantees our freedom, and we can use this to disregard them [the Francophones of Flanders], to ignore them, to not give them our patronage… in a word, to isolate them. He who does not wish to live with us, must be able to live without us.[12]

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[9] "Notre action au littoral," *Nos droits: Périodique bimensuel édité par l'Association des Francophones de Flandre* (November 1965): 1–3. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.

[10] "Belgian Police End Riot over Language," *New York Times*, 23 August 1965, 12.

[11] "Franse preken te Antwerpen," journal of J. Nuyts, 1962. CEGESOMA AB 2322.

[12] Edgar Van Cauwelaert, "De opruiming van de verfransingshaarden in Vlaanderen," in *Vlaamse opbouw: Tweede algemeen kongres van de Vlaamse Volksbeweging, Antwerpen, 4 februari 1962* ([Ghent]: Informatiedienst van de V.V.B., 1962), 66. Brochures "Mouvement flamand," FHMW.

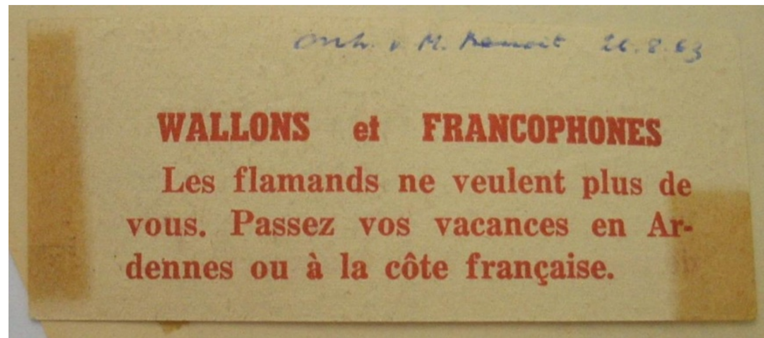

Figure 5.1. Anti-Francophone Propaganda at the Flemish Coast
"Walloons and Francophones: The Flemings don't want anything more to do with you. Go spend your vacation in the Ardennes or at the French coast." Sticker distributed in the 1960s.
Source: Davidsfonds, Central Administration collection, "Taalwetgeving (Kust)," 9.66.6, KADOC.

The Leuven Affair

From the 1930s onward, there had been a complete Dutch-language university in Flanders at the State University of Ghent; the "free" (private) universities in Leuven and Brussels also provided classes in Dutch, often with the possibility of doing one's whole degree in that language. However, the Catholic University of Leuven (hereafter KUL/UCL, after its Dutch and French abbreviations) soon became a flashpoint for confrontations between supporters of the Flemish Movement with different Francophone groups in Belgium, both Walloons and Francophones of Flanders. The "Leuven Affair" loomed over the politics of the 1960s much as the question of the University of Ghent did in the 1920s, although they played out in vastly different social and political circumstances. It is not my intention to detail the entirety of the Leuven Affair here; there have been several excellent works on the topic, including the book by Willy Jonckheere and Herman Todts and that of Christian Laporte.[13] I am particularly interested in the way that the Leuven Affair reflected the Flemish Movement's concern about the Francophones of Flanders, and how the Affair influenced the Francophones of Flanders' perception of the Flemish Movement. While the question of Leuven was not as intimately tied to the "cause" of the Francophones of Flanders as the campaign for "*Gand français*" had been, it still evoked many of the same emotional and political responses from both Francophones and Flemings as the earlier debate had.

The tumult around the (French-language section of the) university, which made itself felt with a vengeance in the 1960s, did not arrive completely out of the blue. Leuven had long been a hotbed of Flemish student activism, and some saw this as a prelude to a full *flamandisation* of the Catholic University.[14] In the year following the *flamandisation* of the University of Ghent, one

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[13] Willy Jonckheere and Herman Todts, *Leuven Vlaams: Splitsingsgeschiedenis van de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1979); Christian Laporte, *L'Affaire de Louvain 1960-1968* (Paris and Brussels: DeBoeck Université, 1999).
[14] M. Verleyen, "'Vlaamse leergangen' en het begin van de vernederlandsing te Leuven, 1924-1935," *Onze Alma Mater* 26 (1972): 189–196, 247–263; 27 (1973): 123–135, 182–200. P. F Beeckman, *De studentenrevolte van 1924/25 te Leuven* (Antwerp: Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1975); Louis Vos, *Bloei en ondergang van het A.K.V.S.: Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Vlaamse studentenbeweging, 1914-1935*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1982);

Walloon periodical predicted that the *flamingants* would soon set their sights on the KUL/UCL: the students "do not see that the old French university [*sic*] of Leuven is condemned. The courses are already doubled. A day will come when the Walloons will no longer have anything to do at Mister Peeterman's [=Leuven]. The last remnants of the *Alma Mater* will be transferred to Namur [which hosted, and continues to host, a Catholic French-language university college]."[15] In 1953, a Flemish newspaper of Brussels wrote laconically that "it will doubtlessly be necessary to transfer the French section to Wallonia one day."[16] Such statements reflected extreme viewpoints, however; few Belgians of either linguistic community envisioned such a future for the KUL/UCL. After all, the university was a private institution, and its linguistic status could not be legislatively transformed with the same ease as had been done in Ghent. Public opinion – especially among the Flemings – would change in favor of the "split" of the university throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.

The KUL/UCL was the only complete Catholic university in Belgium, among the most renowned in the world. The French section was thus mostly peopled with Walloons, Francophone Bruxellois, and international students who sought a prestigious, Catholic education. There were however a handful of Francophones of Flanders who enrolled in French classes in Leuven, to the consternation of the Flemish Movement.[17] Indeed, given the view of the "*fransquillon*" as an asocial and a "traitor" to the Flemish community, it is not surprising that their continuing patronage of the French courses was taken in a particularly negative light.

Flemish students' uneasiness at this situation made itself known in a student governance debate in 1958. That year, the members of the national student organization elected Francis Monheim to the presidency of the organization. Monheim – who had been nominated by the

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[15] "La haine de la France," *La Wallonie nouvelle*, 1-7 July 1934, cited in Micheline Libon and Paul Delforge, "Université wallonne," *EMW*.
[16] *De Brusselse Post*, 15 April 1953, cited in translation in Laporte, *L'Affaire de Louvain*, 45.
[17] Pol Coetsier and André Bonte, *Evolutie van de bevolking van het universitair onderwijs in België en werfkracht van het franstalig universitair onderwijs in Vlaanderen*, Mededelingen van het Laboratorium voor Toegepaste Psychologie Rijksuniversiteit te Gent 31 ([Ghent], 1969), 7, 46.

French-language union of students (Union générale) of the KUL/UCL – was a Francophone of Antwerp. Student leaders from the Flemish section of the KUL/UCL and the University of Ghent found the choice of a "*fransquillon*" to be unacceptable, and refused to participate in the validation of the elections, thereby denying the necessary quorum for Monheim to be installed. Monheim eventually ceased pressing his claim in the interest of "conciliation and national unity."[18] He was seemingly not worse for the wear, though; he went on to become a confidant and biographer of the Congolese general (and later dictator) Joseph Mobutu, later known as Mobutu Sese Seko.[19]

In the years following World War II, however, many in the Flemish Movement became increasingly uneasy with the institutional arrangement at the KUL/UCL. For them, the university remained an essentially Francophone institution, with Dutch courses offered as concessions to Flemings. What was most alarming to the Flemish Movement were the numerous administrative services and schools offered for the French-language academic staff and their families, as well as French-language physicians- and teachers-in-training, in the Flemish city of Leuven. These "caste schools" and services seemed to pose the threat of further Frenchification in Flemish Brabant, a process all the more feared because of Leuven's proximity to the other engine of Flemish "denationalization," Brussels.[20]

These concerns reached a head with the 1962 and 1963 language laws. Despite the efforts of politicians such as Paul Kronacker to have the city classified as a "municipality with facilities" for French-speakers (see above), Leuven was now immutably on the "Flemish" side of the linguistic frontier. The only schools which could teach in French were those intended for children of the French-language academic staff. In 1962, members of the faculty and staff of the French section of the KUL/UCL formed the Association du corps académique et du personnel scientifique de

[18] *L'Ergot* (Leuven), Special Number, November 1958, 1–2 . Student Life Archive, KUL.
[19] Francis Monheim, *Mobutu, l'homme seul* (Brussels: Éditions Actuelles, 1962).
[20] Johan De Mol, "De splitsing van de Leuvense universiteit in het kader van de strijd voor taalintegriteit in Vlaanderen (periode 1960-1970)" (Licentiate thesis, Universiteit Gent, 1972).

l'Université de Louvain (Association of the Academic Corps and Scholarly Personnel of the University of Leuven, or ACAPSUL) to defend their interests. Its first president was Georges Lemaître, a Walloon physicist who taught in the French section, known internationally for having developed the "Big Bang" theory of the origins of the universe in the 1930s. As Chrisitan Laporte astutely notes, the choice of Lemaître was not "an accident."[21] Indeed, by choosing someone of such international prestige, ACAPSUL was implicitly (as well as explicitly) defending the right of the French section to exist, as it produced scholars and scholarship of such cosmic importance. Lemaître's visibility as "leader" of the Francophone professoriate of Leuven earned him a series of broken windows at his home.

The debate about the viability of the French section within the city of Leuven was also informed by the Europe-wide trends of the democratization of education and the explosion of the student population. The growing number of students in both sections of the KUL/UCL led to calls for the expansion of the university's physical footprint – a proposition which might have not have been controversial, if it had not included plans for expanding services to French-language faculty, staff, and students. Flemish student leaders as well as political figures began to increase their calls for a split of the university. When, in May 1966, the Belgian bishops reiterated their stance that both linguistic sections ought to remain at Leuven, the Flemish student body increased their militant demonstrations against the French section, organizing a "Meredith March" (borrowing the name of James Meredith, the first black student at the previously-segregated University of Mississippi) and singing "We Shall Overcome" at the same time that they carried signs labeled "*Walen buiten!* [Walloons Get Out!]" and "Franse ratten, rol uw matten [French rats, roll up your carpets]." Throughout 1967 and 1968, the Flemish students' demonstrations became more broadly political,

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[21] Laporte, *L'Affaire de Louvain*, 69n14.

calling for the bishops to ease their grip on the administration of the university; they were sometimes peppered with anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist language.[22]

The juxtaposition of imagery and language borrowed from the American Civil Rights movement with seemingly "exclusionary" messages directed at the French-speakers strikes the contemporary reader as odd. Flemish leaders responded to similar criticisms by claiming that they were fighting against a "cultural genocide" engendered by French-speakers in the area surrounding Brussels. Some French-speaking students, meanwhile, wore yellow Stars of David, to "shame" the *flamingants* for acting like "Nazis."[23] Indeed, one pseudonymous Jewish contributor to the newsletter of the Association des Francophones de Flandre (on which more below) voiced his concern that "*Walen buiten*! [Walloons Get Out!]," was eerily reminiscent of the cry "*Juden heraus*!" by Nazis boycotting Jewish businesses. Indeed, he argued, "by their racial hatred of French, [*flamingants*] are also trying to shut the Francophones of Flanders into a kind of linguistic ghetto."[24]

By 1968, the decision was made to construct an entirely new university campus and town in the village of Ottignies in Walloon Brabant, slightly to the south of Brussels. This "Louvain-la-Neuve" now houses the French-language Université Catholique de Louvain, after a transitional period lasting through the 1970s, during which material, library holdings, and faculty were moved south.

One observer, a Belgian expat returning to study in Leuven in 1979, noted that those employees of the French section who were still in the medieval city of Leuven reacted to his Dutch small talk with mute bewilderment:

> More than a decade after the decision had been [made] to move the Université Catholique de Louvain from Leuven to the new campus of Louvain-La-Neuve, there were still people who worked in a Flemish city and who could not utter a single sentence in the language spoken by the majority of

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[22] *De Januarirevolte te Leuven* (Bruges and Antwerp: De Galge, 1968).
[23] Laporte, *L'Affaire de Louvain*, 179–180.
[24] "Salomon," "Réflexions d'un Israélite," *Nos droits: Périodique mensuel édité par l'Association des Francophones de Flandre* (June 1966): 4. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.

> Belgians [which] goes a long way to explaining [*sic*] why, at present, Leuven is the seat of only one [Dutch-speaking] university.[25]

The Last Hurrah of "*La Belgique de Papa*"[26]: The Francophones of Flanders and "Belgian Unity" Movements

The fixation of the linguistic frontier, the stricter regulations regarding language use in education, and the "Leuven Affair," among others, seemed to indicate that Belgians would be more and more separated by language, leading to the development of two hermetically sealed public spheres, one Flemish (in Flanders) and one Francophone (in Brussels and Wallonia). In reaction, a series of organizations came into existence whose express goal was to foster unity among Belgian citizens, casting off "artificial" distinctions based on criteria such as language.

One of the most influential of these groups was the Comité d'action nationale pour l'unité du pays et la liberté linguistique / Nationale Aktiekomitee voor de eenheid van het land en de taalvrijheid (Committee for National Action for the Unity of the Country and for Linguistic Liberty, hereafter "CAN," following its French abbreviation). Here again we see the themes of Belgian unity and linguistic liberty that were so common in the rhetoric of the Francophones of Flanders; compare Jacques Pirenne's Ligue nationale pour l'unité belge et la liberté linguistique (later LNUB) of the interwar years. The CAN was created in 1962 by members of the Francophone communities of Flanders who were opposed to the newly-proposed language legislation regarding the linguistic frontier and the use of language in education.[27]

That these Francophones organized themselves into a group advocating "Belgian unity" should not be surprising, as the Francophones of Flanders had used the specter of a disunited

[25] Adrian T. van den Hoven, "Editorial: From Leuven to Louvain-la-Neuve," *Canadian Journal for Netherlandic Studies* 1, no. 2 (1980): iv.
[26] The French-language epithet "*La Belgique de Papa* [Grandpa's Belgium]" refers to an idealized vision of an earlier, bourgeois, unitary (and, perhaps, predominantly Francophone) Belgium. It can be a term of endearment or derision depending on the speaker. See André Mean, *La Belgique de papa: 1970, le commencement de la fin* (Brussels: Politique et histoire, 1989).
[27] "Positions et mouvements en faveur de l'unité belge," *Courrier hébdomadaire du CRISP* no. 191 (1963): 6.

Belgium to counter efforts to banish French from Flemish public life on numerous occasions, as seen both before and after World War I. In the 1960s, though, the strident "French supremacist" tone of previous appeals to Belgian unity became much more subdued in favor of a more thoroughgoing adherence to bilingualism as the cure for Belgium's ills. CAN's newsletter frequently inserted little blurbs in favor of bilingualism: "Francophones, educate your children as perfect bilinguals;" "Dutch-speakers, do you want respect for your language? Take care to respect it first: Speak and write it correctly."[28] The CAN contrasted the new (proposed) language laws unfavorable with those of Finland, claiming (with some exaggeration) that Finland practices "the most total linguistic liberty," allowing for the use of both Swedish and Finnish in both public and private anywhere in the land. The CAN promoted the "freedom of the head of the household" (an idea that was an old saw by then) and the "practical and reasonable bilingualism of individuals." Throughout Belgium, they argued, there ought to be monolingual schools in the "other" language established if there was sufficient demand.[29]

A Return to "Minority Rhetoric:" The Association des Francophones de Flandre

The CAN and other such organizations appealed to a very "traditional" mode of action for the Francophones of Flanders: invoking the need for a strong "*Belgian*" identity and attacking both Flemish and Walloon "separatists" who threatened the unity of the nation. In addition to the proliferation of "Belgian unity" movements during the 1960s, however, we also see the a return to "minority rhetoric." The 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the development of by far the most explicit expressions of "minority" identity and attempts at organization *qua* Francophones of Flanders, surpassing those which bubbled up during the 1920s and early 1930s. In this case,

[28] *Unité et liberté/Eenheid en vrijheid*, September–October 1965,1. CEGESOMA BC Re 2119. The first citation is in French, the second in Dutch.
[29] Flyer of the *Comité d'action nationale pour l'unité du pays et la liberté linguistique*, 1, 3 (ca. 1962). Frank Olof Ödberg collection, CEGESOMA.

however, it was too little, too late. As we shall see, the numbers involved in these efforts were not particularly large, and, in the end, were ultimately ineffectual. Let us now turn to what circumstances precipitated this return to “minority rhetoric.”

The decade and a half following the end of World War I had witnessed the flourishing of “minority rhetoric” among the Francophones of Flanders, as many portrayed themselves as members of an ethnolinguistic minority in need of protection. When the language question was provisionally “settled” with the laws of 1932 and 1935, claiming “minority rights” became a far less productive means by which to pursue political demands. Between the mid-1930s and the beginning of the 1960s, discourses framing the Francophones of Flanders as a minority were essentially absent from the Belgian political scene. Though irked by the “inconveniences” of linguistic legislation, the Francophones, as members of the elite, had the wherewithal to support a series of French-language schools and clubs. French also continued to play a disproportional role in the business life of Flanders. A new round of language legislation in the early 1960s, however, gave rise to a renewed interest in minority rhetoric on the part of Francophone spokespersons.

More importantly, the 1963 law on language use in education dealt a severe blow to the viability of French-language education in Flanders, above and beyond that of 1932. The transmutation classes – long a bugbear of the Flemish Movement – were scheduled to disappear over the course of several years. Private schools in Flanders which taught in French, or which had sections which taught in French, could no longer receive state subsidies. Finally, the diplomas from French-language private schools in Flanders would no longer be “homologated” – that is, they were no longer automatically declared valid like diplomas from state schools or Dutch-language private schools. Students who finished secondary school without a “homologated” diploma had to pass a rigorous examination by a central board in order to get the equivalent of a diploma – necessary for admission to university, and for employment in many white-collar jobs. Thus, the “oppression” or

"disadvantage" associated with membership in the Francophone "minority" in Flanders became far more keenly felt than it had been previously.

International developments also played a part in encouraging the use of "minority rhetoric" among the Francophones of Flanders. In the interwar period, "minority rights" existed as an aspect of international law only to the extent that treaties made with (or forced on) certain Eastern European states provided avenues for aggrieved minorities in these states to petition League of Nations organs for a redress of grievances. As discussed in Chapter 3, this was system was flawed in two major respects. First, many of the states who had minority treaty obligations viewed them as a "punitive" intrusion on their sovereignty. Second, minority groups in other states, whose social and political condition was comparable to that of groups in the "minority treaty" states, did not have recourse to this system.

The post-1945 international framework seemed – at first – not to provide *any* minority protections. Many Eastern European states had "solved" their minority problems by deporting members of minority groups to their "kin state," as in the case of, for example, German-speakers. The new treaties and organizations that emerged from World War II spoke in universalist terms, acknowledging rights to the abstract "individual" and not to "groups" *per se*. These "individual" rights, however, could be read in such a way as to guarantee "minority" rights; we will examine this in further detail in the discussion of the European Court of Human Rights case concerning Belgian language legislation.

Despite the relative decline of "minority" rhetoric on an international scale in comparison to its ubiquity in the interwar period, a number of international civic society organizations came to represent "minorities" in an international context, following World War II. The most germane for the Francophones of Flanders would be the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN, whose other official names, Union fédéraliste des communautés éthniques européennes in French

and Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen in German, have slightly different connotations than the more politically-charged "nationalities,"), which emerged from a series of meetings in 1949 between representatives of various "national minorities" from across Europe who wanted to create an international pressure group, especially when the Council of Europe (founded the same year) seemed to represent a coalition of the established states (and thus, the status quo with regard to internal minorities). The FUEN operated – and continues to operate – through cooperation between representatives of regional and minority pressure groups or political movements in European states. This has occasionally caused trouble for the FUEN, especially as the groups representing German minorities (or German displaced persons) have been accused of harboring latent pro-Nazi tendencies. Nevertheless, we should not see the FUEN as a "right-wing" institution *per se*; during the 1960s the very left-wing Wallonie Libre movement from Wallonia was one of the FUEN's member organizations.[30]

[30] Jørgen Kühl, *The Federal Union of European Nationalities: An Outline History 1949-1999* (Aabenraa, Denmark: Institut for grænseregionsforskning, 2000).

Association des Francophones de Flandre

VOUS HABITEZ LA REGION FLAMANDE..

LE FRANÇAIS EST-IL VOTRE LANGUE MATERNELLE, LA LANGUE QUE VOUS PARLEZ A LA MAISON ?

VOUS ETES DONC UN FRANCOPHONE DE FLANDRE.

Acceptez-vous la situation qui résulte des nouvelles lois linguistiques ? Ou au contraire, êtes-vous de ceux qui comptent sortir de leur isolement, prendre conscience de l'état de péril, s'organiser et se défendre ?

Si oui, faites partie de notre organisation, apportez-y votre soutien, votre adhésion sur le fond, votre collaboration.

L' **A. F. F.** UNIT les Belges francophones de la région flamande, les REPRESENTE devant l'opinion, les pouvoirs, les instances internationales, pour défendre leurs intérêts et libertés ; elle est OUVERTE à toutes les opinions et convictions philosophiques et religieuses,

L' **A. F. F.** est VOTRE association.

Les récentes lois linguistiques et administratives ont divisé le pays en régions de langue française et flamande. L'application de ces lois et la suppression du recensement linguistique ont créé une minorité que l'on entend tout à la fois nier et brimer.

Le législateur ne reconnaît plus les quelque 200.000 francophones (*) de Flandre, il les ignore.

Il faut tout craindre du législateur qui a promulgué des lois contraires aux Droits de l'Homme.

Face à une autre minorité, organisée et active, que sommes-nous ?

Notre minorité ne sortira de son isolement, de son inertie, que si elle s'organise et se cherche des alliés.

(*) Chiffres basés sur les résultats du recensement de 1947.

voici ce que nous voulons

— **Créer une prise de conscience** des francophones de Flandre, leur faire savoir qu'ils forment dorénavant une minorité organisée ; que cette minorité est la SEULE EN EUROPE qui n'a pas d'écoles subsidiées ni le droit d'utiliser sa langue dans les églises paroissiales.

— **Exiger des écoles de langue française** avec diplôme reconnu, l'usage du français dans les offices religieux.

— **Réformer les lois** sur la flamandisation des entreprises dans un esprit européen.

— **Maintenir nos foyers culturels,** même sous un régime d'autonomie culturelle régionale.

— **Faire pression sur les politiciens,** surtout sur nos élus, afin qu'à l'avenir ils nous représentent réellement et luttent au Parlement pour satisfaire nos aspirations légitimes dans les domaines linguistique et culturel, à l'instar du député Schyns (P.S.C.), qui représente la minorité allemande (60.000 personnes).

— **Faire connaître,** par tous les moyens possibles, en Belgique et en Europe, notre existence, notre originalité, et le mépris dans lequel sont laissés nos droits.

POSITION DE L'A.F.F. VIS-A-VIS DU NEERLANDAIS :

La poursuite de ces buts n'exclut pas la reconnaissance de la primauté du néerlandais en Flandre dans le domaine officiel. L'A.F.F. considère qu'il est indispensable que nous pratiquions cette langue, afin de mieux servir la communauté. Nous ne sommes pas des asociaux.

FORMES D'ACTION :

Nous sommes un groupement d'action. Nous nous organisons. Déjà nous avons nos cadres, nos délégués locaux, nos experts. Parmi eux, des hommes influents sur le plan européen.

Soyez des nôtres. Nous donnerons de l'ampleur à cette organisation dans la mesure où VOUS lui accorderez votre coopération active et efficace.

COMMENT ?

En établissant des contacts avec vos amis francophones. Qu'ils se joignent à nous.

Adressez-vous au délégué de l'A.F.F. Il vous donnera les détails voulus.

Tenant compte du boycot auquel vous pourriez être exposé, votre anonymat sera respecté. Vous n'avez pas à craindre de préjudices à la suite de votre adhésion.

Vous serez tenu au courant. Vos efforts ne seront pas perdus et vous ne ressentirez pas la déception d'avoir donné votre approbation à un mouvement mort-né.

ATTENTION !

La discrétion s'impose pour des raisons fort compréhensibles. Discrétion n'est pas inaction. Nous le prouverons lors des prochaines élections législatives.

Nous mettrons ce délai à profit pour parfaire notre structure. Pour cela il faut des moyens financiers.

Vous voulez être défendu ? Alors, défendez-vous !
Comment ? En nous apportant une contribution.
A chacun selon ses moyens.
C'est la condition du succès. Le VOTRE.

C. C. P. 982 de la Banque de la Soc. Gén. de Belgique Louvain pour compte N° 164.159 "A.F.F."

Prenez contact avec GUY DE BISSCHOP II, Av. Baron Casier MARIAKERKE - GAND

Le secret vous est assuré ! Tél. 26.33.85

Figure 5.2. Flyer of the Association des Francophones de Flandre (ca. 1964)
The flyer appeals to anyone living in Flanders who speaks French at home to join the association, asking them to tell their friends. It promises to pursue the right to French-language schools and cultural activities and a "European" approach to language use in private enterprise, to put pressure on politicians to recognize the grievances of the Francophones of Flanders, and to raise awareness about the Francophones of Flanders as a group both at home and abroad. Regarding Dutch, the AFF remarks that it is "indispensible" to speak it, as they are not "asocials." Tellingly, the flyer also promises the utmost discretion regarding its members' identities, to avoid boycotts and for other "very understandable reasons."
Source: Frank Olof Ödberg collection, CEGESOMA.

In the year following the language laws of 1962-1963, a group of Francophones of Flanders, lead in part by Antwerp physician Yves Goffin, founded the Association des Francophones de Flandre (AFF). Marcel Lachaert (alias José Vial) wrote under yet another pseudonym, "Frank O'Phone," for the AFF newsletter until his death in 1967.[31] The AFF's activities consisted mainly of trying to obtain political representation by sponsoring candidates of differing parties who would support their principles, publishing a monthly newsletter (*Nos droits* [Our Rights], which was renamed in 1970 to *Droits et devoirs* [Rights and Duties]), and taking part in the meetings of the aforementioned FUEN.

The AFF, through its membership in FUEN, appealed to international opinion far more explicitly that any Francophones of Flanders had done in the past. While, in the interwar years, Francophones of Flanders often used international comparisons, contrasting the Finnish state's more "liberal" treatment of its Swedophone minority or the existence of the German University of Prague to the "fanaticism" of the *flamingants*, these were rhetorical flourishes intended for domestic consumption. The AFF, as well as the Francophone parents who brought a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights in Strabourg, went far beyond this.

Remarking on the "fact-finding" mission to Ghent undertaken by Povl Skådegard, the Secretary-General of the FUEN, and his wife in April 1966, as well as to the Francophones' pending case before the ECHR, the newsletter of the AFF declared:

> The Francophones have been cornered into looking for all possible sources of help, even if they are exterior, like the [ECHR] in Strasbourg. They… would have preferred to clean their dirty laundry at home, but when the civil and even religious authorities blithely sacrifice them to the ravenous ogre of *flaningantisme*, when their own press defends them with only a guilty softness, can one be surprised by their attitude?[32]

The argument has many peculiar similarities to those advanced by the Activists during World War I: The Belgian state has *forced* us to "internationalize" the language problem in Flanders by its

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[31] F[ernanrd] R[igot], "Adieu, José!," *Nos droits: Périodique mensuel édité par l'Association des Francophones de Flandre*, May 1967, 1. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.

[32] "L'enquête de M. Skadegard," *Nos droits*, June 1966, 1, 3. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.

continued intransigence. Indeed, it is interesting to see how the adoption of such extreme language is a function of perceived powerlessness within the political structure. In 1914-1918, the Activists (a minority of Flemings) used the supposedly subaltern position of the Flemish people in Belgium as an "excuse" for their collaboration with the Germans. In the 1960s, the AFF (which was, as we will see, representative of only a small number of "Francophones of Flanders") appealed to the institutional invisibility of their population in the Belgian system to justify bringing in outside observers in an effort to bring outside pressure on the Belgian state. I should note, though, that unlike the Germans, neither the ECHR nor the FUEN ever invaded and occupied Belgium…

The AFF suffered, among other problems, from the fact that many who may have sympathized with them did not do so publicly, for fear of reprisals. In the aftermath of a vote on moving the French section of the UCL/KUL to Wallonia in July 1966, the AFF wrote to a BWP senator from West Flanders, Hubert De Groote, asking why he voted against the motion (a vote which the AFF approved but did not understand). De Groote responded that he acted out of his belief in the "freedom of the head of the household," as a "pure Fleming" who believed in a unified Belgium, and as a veteran of both world wars who firmly believed in Belgian unity. (De Groote had been an extremely active member of the resistance during World War II, and some suspected him of having participated in the dynamiting of the IJzer Tower in 1946. The fallout from this rumor made him move from the Catholics to the Socialists.) Nevertheless, he then asked the AFF not to make this public: "I already receive enough threatening letters."[33]

The AFF was heading into rough waters. In 1970, the FUEN sponsored the publication of a "Handbook of European Minorities," including an entry on the Francophones of Flanders co-written by Yves Goffin and J. Lachaert (perhaps a relative of Marcel Lachaert, *alias* José Vial?).[34]

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[33] AFF to De Groote, 29 July 1966; De Groote to AFF, 17 August 1966. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[34] Y[ves] Goffin and J. Lachaert, "Die Francophonen Flanderns," in *Handbuch der europäischen Volksgruppen*, ed. Manfred Straka (Vienna and Stuttgart: Braumüller, 1970), 169–173.

This, however, would be one of the last acts of the AFF as a member of the FUEN. This split reflected deeper problems in the AFF's operation. The AFF was having difficulty enlisting and retaining members, and further trouble collecting dues from those members that they *did* have; these financial troubles affected their ability to pay their dues to the FUEN.

Yves Goffin, who believed that his professional duties (and residence in Brussels) made him unable to continue as secretary-general, wrote to the secretary of the AFF on 3 November 1969 stating his intention to resign, hoping that he could find others to fill his role. However, he noted with some gloom, "if the Flemish Francophones cannot defend themselves, neither God nor anybody will help them."[35] Goffin would resign in early 1970. In a report of 2 December 1969, the treasurer of the AFF stated that the organization had only 627 paying members in 1969, of whom 201 had not renewed their membership. Only 23 new members joined in 1969 (64 in 1968), and over the course of the year there were 14 official resignations and 27 "disappearances" from the membership rolls. The AFF was left with a negative balance of 8,926 Belgian Francs.[36]

In January of 1970, Goffin wrote to Povl Skådegard, the Secretary-General of the FUEN, claiming that the fact that the FUEN accepted Were Di (a radical Flemish nationalist organization) as a member, combined with the "new policy of the AFF, less oriented toward ethnic consciousness than previously," made it unlikely that the AFF could continue its association with the FUEN.[37] The irony is that the admission of the AFF to the FUEN in 1966 caused the Vlaamse Volksbeweging (a moderate Flemish group) to withdraw from the FUEN.[38] The AFF would indeed withdraw from the FUEN in December 1970, though by 31 December 1971 it had yet to pay its final year's worth of back dues to the FUEN.[39] Reflecting on its efforts, the Executive Committee of the AFF noted

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[35] Goffin to Ivan Carette, Secretary of the AFF, 3 November 1969. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[36] Report of Treasure of AFF, dated "Anvers, le 2.12.1969." Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[37] Goffin to Skådegard, 6 January 1970. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[38] Frank O'Phone [Marcel Lachaert], "Le procédé par « Contre-Vérités »," *Nos droits*, June 1966, 1. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[39] Skådegard to Octave Lagneau, Secretary-General of the AFF, 31 December 1971. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.

tersely in its newsletter of February-March 1972: "Let us be honest: Our expectations were disappointed."[40]

The Francophones' Day in Court: Strasbourg, 1962-1968

In the aftermath of the laws relating to language use in education in of 1963, several groups of Francophone families from across Flanders addressed petitions to the European Commission on Human Rights, set up under the European Convention on Human Rights, claiming that they were victims of discrimination as understood in the Convention and its protocols.[41] While the Belgian government tried to argue that these complaints were outside the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)'s jurisdiction, the Strasbourg court agreed to hear the case, with the Commission representing the complainants against the representatives of the Belgian government. (The Commission was abolished in 1998, allowing individuals direct access to the ECHR.)

The Francophone parents argued that the European Convention on Human Rights and its protocols, by forbidding discrimination on the basis of language and guaranteeing a right to education, thereby required that education be provided *in* a minority language. They also argued that the Convention's protection of philosophical convictions covered the (in)famous "freedom of the head of the household." Here again we see the fluctuation between "minority rhetoric" and "linguistic freedom" that also emerged in the 1920s. There were also, as in the 1920s, appeals to the "Flemish" identity of the complainants. One Walloon publication, commenting on a Flemish newspaper's criticisms of the plaintiffs in the case, retorted that "the majority of the plaintiffs at

[40] "Faisons le point…," *Droits et devoirs*, February-March 1972, 1. Yves Goffin collection, CEFF-SFV.
[41] On this case, see Robert Pelloux, "L'arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme dans l'affaire linguistique belge (exception préliminaire)," *Annuaire français de droit international* 13 (1967): 205–216; Robert Pelloux, "L'arrêt de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme dans l'affaire linguistique belge (fond)," *Annuaire français de droit international* 14 (1968): 201–216; E. Suy, "Het arrest van Straatsburg over de taalregeling in het Belgisch onderwijs," *Tijdschrift voor bestuurswetenschappen en publiekrecht* 24, no. 4 (1969): 240–247; Andreas Khol, "Zur Diskriminierung im Erziehungswesen. Das Sachurteil des Europäischen Gerichtshofes für Menschenrechte vom 23. Juli 1968 in den belgischen Sprachenfällen," *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht (Heidelberg Journal of International Law)* 30 (1970): 263–320.

Strasbourg are Flemings, French-language Flemings who intend to preserve the use of their language, like the *flamingant* Flemings want to preserve the use of their own."[42]

The plaintiffs argued that the Belgian government was trying to "eradicate" the Francophone minority in Flanders. A Francophone lawyer from Antwerp who represented several of the groups of parents attacked what he called the "Hegelian" formula of politics, in which "men dissolve into representation." Majoritarianism such as that exercised by the Flemish Movement and their legislative fellow-travelers led to tyranny and a lack of respect for the rights of minorities such as those of the Francophones of Flanders. To the supposed "*jus soli*" of the Flemish Movement, Marquet opposed the opinions of Catholic political thinkers who emphasized the primacy of the individual as the subject of law, and argued that attempts to create a linguistically homogeneous society fell outside of the proper functions of a state.[43]

Ultimately, with one small exception concerning schools in the Brussels periphery, the ECHR rejected the complaints of the Francophone parents of Flanders. The Belgian government, ruled the court, was not required to provide *any particular kind* of education, just to offer it equally to all of its inhabitants. The fact that it chose Dutch-language education in the Dutch-language "region" reflected a legitimate state interest in creating an elite who was fluent in the language of the majority. In addition, Francophone parents were still free to send their children to schools in Wallonia or Brussels (or France) or to set up unrecognized French-medium schools; the Belgian government's refusal to subsidize education which ran counter to the kind of state it wished to promote fell within its prerogative.

[42] "Revue de presse," *Ethnie française*, March-April 1967, 71.
[43] Fernand Marquet, *Le régime linguistique de l'enseignement en Belgique et les libertés fondamentales*, Document de la "Ligue des Intérêts familiaux en matière d'enseignement, L.I.F.E." (Antwerp: The Author, 1966), 12, 53–58, 62-69.

Toward *Francophonie?*

Perhaps perversely, the Francophones of Flanders – who, as we saw earlier, were among the first to revive the epithet to denote their identities as non-French French-speakers – lost much of their institutional coherence and public visibility at the same time that "*Francophonie*," both as a phenomenon and as an institutional reality, became more pronounced on the global scale. The 1960s and 1970s also witnessed a flourishing of contacts between francophone minority groups across the globe, such as the Walloons, the Québécois and Acadians in Canada, the Francophone Swiss, and the French-speaking inhabitants of the Val d'Aoste in Italy. In addition to their own positions as a "minority" vis-à-vis their state, organizations representing these populations, as well as post-colonial French-speaking states in Africa and Asia, began to construct an identity based on their shared "Frenchness" and the perceived threat of worldwide English hegemony. Indeed, the very term "*Francophonie*" – coined by geographer Onésime Reclus in 1880 to designate the French-speaking world as a whole – was rescued from obscurity by the Senegalese poet and politician Léopold Sedar Senghor in 1962. Shortly thereafter, this concept received institutional recognition in the form of the intergovernmental *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*, founded in 1970.

The Francophones of Flanders are conspicuous by their absence from such developments. Part of this may be attributed to their own internal weaknesses, as mentioned earlier. I also suspect that the organizational structure of this new francophone renaissance hindered its recognition of the Francophones of Flanders. While the Québécois were the majority population of a well-defined substate unit, the Acadians had official recognition in New Brunswick, the Jurassians (eventually) had their own Swiss canton, and the like, there was no official government body that recognized the Francophones of Flanders. Neither the Walloon regional government nor the French Cultural Council in Belgium had constitutional jurisdiction over them, and the Belgian state – whose

language policies and constitutional reforms were premised largely on denying the existence of such internal minorities – could hardly be expected to represent their interests.

The Francophones of Flanders were not forgotten by the early proponents of *Francophonie*. For the most part, they were remembered in a nostalgic mode or as a cautionary tale. Indeed, the (French) Secretary-General of the *Alliance française*, Marc Blancpain, remarked rather apoplectically in 1967: "That one can, in the twentieth century, in the heart of Europe, and after the crushing of Hitlerian Germany, legislate in function of the '*droit du sol*'" was proof positive of the "deranged" mentality of the *flamingants*.[44] Whether Blancpain would have allowed for Breton and Occitan schools and public servants in the Hexagon in service to a more "personalist" view of language rights is left as a thought experiment for the reader.

One final anecdote demonstrates that Flanders might be considered "francophone" in a manner similar to that of post-colonial societies. Author Pierre Martens recounts that in a conversation between Senghor and the noted Ghent Francophone author Suzanne Lilar, the former observed that one of (the few) things they had in common was that they both wrote "in the same French language." This shared usage of French, in fact, mirrored their shared status as relatively privileged members of their respective societies. Senghor asked if Lilar knew Flemish. She replied that she did, having learned it "from [her] cleaning lady," to which Senghor replied that he, in a similar fashion, had learned Wolof and Fula from his "domestics."[45]

The Francophones of Flanders in a Federal Belgium: Institutionally Invisible

During the 1960s, the division of Belgium as expressed in the new linguistic frontier came to be reflected in the organization of the Belgian state. In 1960, the Belgian state radio and television

[44] Marc Blancpain, *Les Lumières de la France: Le français dans le monde* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1967), 22–25.
[45] Pierre Mertens and Jacques Franck, "La littérature française de Belgique et le français," in *Le Français et les Belges*, ed. Jacques Lemaire (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1989), 89.

broadcaster was divided into two separate institutions, one Flemish and one Francophone. In 1966, the Ministry of Culture was divided into two ministries, followed by the Ministry of Education in 1968.[46] In 1970, this evolution culminated in the first of several major state reforms, consecrated by constitutional changes that made Belgium a federal state. As Gaston Eyskens, the Flemish Catholic politician and Prime Minister at the time noted, "*La Belgique de Papa a vécu* [Grandpa's Belgium has breathed its last.]"

Two new kinds of federal subjects were created: the "communities" and the "regions." This division was a compromise: the "overlap" of Flemish and Francophones in Brussels made including Brussels in either a homogeneously French or Flemish federal subject impossible, yet many Flemings feared having a majority-French Brussels become a fully-fledged federal subdivision alongside Flanders or Wallonia. While the competences, powers, and method of electing the representatives of these different subdivisions have changed since 1970, the basic system remains the same. The three "communities" – Flemish, "French," and German-speaking – have authority, broadly speaking, over "individual" or "cultural" matters, such as education. The three "regions" – Flanders, Wallonia, and "Brussels-Capital," – have authority over more concretely territorial matters, such as environmental policy.

The communities and regions are not congruent – in the Walloon region, one can either be a member of the Francophone community or, in the Eastern villages, part of the German community; in the Brussels-Capital region, one can be a member of the Francophone or Flemish community. In the Flemish region, however, one is automatically part of the Flemish community.[47] This

[46] Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards*, 3rd ed. (Brussels: Academic & Scientific Publishers, 2009), 376.
[47] In 1980, the institutions of the Flemish region and the Flemish community were fused into one organ, the Flemish government, which has responsibility for both cultural and territorial matters in Flanders, as well as Flemish cultural matters in Brussels.

arrangement precluded any institutional recognition of the Francophones of Flanders in federal Belgium.

Nevertheless, this division of powers has had important legal consequences for the Francophones of Flanders, one of the first of which came about in 1973. The "Council for the Dutch Cultural Community" – which, at the time, was composed of all members of the federal Chamber and Senate who came from districts in Flanders – in one of its earliest acts as a legislative body, passed a law requiring that businesses in Flanders use Dutch exclusively with their employees. French-speakers in Belgium came to call this law the "September Decree" because it was promulgated in the official journal of Belgian laws in September 1973, even though it was adopted in July.[48] To the Flemish Movement, the September Decree ensured that the linguistic homogeneity created in public administration and in education would be replicated in non-state environments. For French-speakers, the September Decree was a blatant intrusion into a milieu which should fall outside the power of the state. One Walloon sympathizer of the Francophones of Flanders, repulsed by this law, argued that unlike the Flemings, "even Hitler did not oblige the peoples whom he enslaved to speak German."[49]

In addition to the "official" federalization of the Belgian state, many civic organizations began to split into Francophone and Flemish bodies; notably, all three of the major political parties in Belgium did so during the 1970s. The Leuven Affair exacerbated the preexisting linguistic tensions in the Catholic party; the party divided into two autonomous wings in 1968, the PSC (Parti Social Chrétien), for French-speakers, and the CVP (Christelijke Volkspartij) for Dutch-speakers; in

[48] Jacqueline Cocquereaux, *De vernederlandsing van het bedrijfsleven: Het september decreet van de Nederlandse cultuurraad* (Berchem: M. Kluwer, 1977).

[49] Norbert Brassine, pamphlet offprint of editorial from *La Feuille des commerçants* (Genappe, Belgium), 28 September 1973. Documentation collection "Francité," Box 3: "Mois de la Francité, Liège 15/09 au 15/10/1973," FHMW.

1972 these became fully independent parties. The Liberals followed suit in 1972, and the Socialists in 1978.[50]

With a Whimper: The Sudden Disappearance of the Francophone Daily Press in Flanders and the End of an Era

By the 1970s, the Francophone community in Flanders had been hard-hit by the social upheavals of the 1960s, their failure at the European Court of Human Rights in 1968, and the legal and constitutional entrenchment of regional monolingualism in a federal Belgium. In an event whose timing may be read as symbolic, Jacques Pirenne, the great tribune of the Francophones of Flanders during the interwar years, passed away in 1972, a year before the "September Decree" and a few short years before the French-language daily newspapers in Flanders ceased publication. The younger Pirenne, born in Ghent, had lived much of his adult life in Brussels.[51] While this made sense for him professionally – he had long been a professor at the ULB – it also reflected a tendency of notable Francophones of Flanders to migrate to the capital. As they landed in Brussels for one reason or another, several Francophones of Flanders decided that Brussels was the only city left that reflected their ideals of a "bilingual" Belgium, and remained.

Perhaps the most notable sign of Francophone decline – and the moment where I choose to end this narrative – is the abrupt disappearance of the last three French-language dailies in Flanders, *La Flandre libérale* in Ghent and *Le Matin* and *La Métropole* in Antwerp, in June 1974.[52] According to an informational sheet prepared for potential advertisers in 1973, *La Métropole* had a daily printing of 14,300 (not counting the expanded Wednesday editions); the national readership for this printing

[50] Sarah Schotte, "Partijfederalisme: De splitsing van de eenheidspartijen naar aanleiding van communautaire tegenstellingen (1960-1980)" (Licentiate thesis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2002).
[51] Claire Préaux, "Notice sur Jacques Pirenne," *Annuaire de l'Académie Royale de Belgique* (1974): 157–195.
[52] Michel Bousse, "La presse francophone d'Anvers: Sa survivance, son rôle social, ses perspectives" (Licentiate thesis, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1970); Steve Van Hassel, "Le Matin (1894-1974): Vie et mort d'un quotidien francophone à Anvers" (Licentiate thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1998).

was distributed heavily in Antwerp province (63.65%), East Flanders (where Ghent is located, 23.75%), and Brabant (where Brussels and Leuven are located, 8.87%).[53] The three papers were all being printed by a Brussels-based publisher in their last few years, so the extent to which they were "really" representative of the Francophones of Flanders is questionable. Still, many of the contributors to these dailies were Francophones of Flanders, and they geared their content toward such an audience.

Eventually, the papers ceased printing, because of a lack of readership as well as lack of funds. Jean Eeckhout, the editor-in-chief of *La Métropole*, reflected bitterly in its last issue:

> The Francophone dailies of Flanders are not the only victims of a sympathy as verbal as it is ineffective. Volunteer, non-profit associations that organize performances, concerts, conferences, expositions, language courses, and other activities are just as much [victims]. Our disappearance will cause them a certain prejudice. Their events risk… no long being announced or reviewed as they should be. They will not be again unless the number of active members of these groups increases constantly.[54]

Unsurprisingly, *'t Pallieterke*, an irreverent Flemish nationalist weekly (a *flamingant Canard enchaîné*, if you will), saw the disappearance of the Francophone dailies quite differently. These papers were mostly written and printed in Brussels, marketed to "the last incorrigible *fransquillons*," an "asocial caste" whom the papers provided with "a battle-axe for the defense of the privileges of a minority group who, as they became less numerous, became more fierce and implacable in their attitude." Few Flemings, *'t Pallieterke* claimed, would "wipe away a tear" in reaction to the papers' disappearance. On the contrary: the closing of these papers provided a convenient "barometer reading of [Flemish] emancipation: Before World War I there were still three French-language newspapers in Ghent. Now: None!"[55]

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[53] Union des Journaux Belges, "Tarif 'U.J.B.,' « La Métropole »." ([1 January 1973]). Jean-Marie De Wulf collection, CEGESOMA.
[54] Jean Eeckhout, "P.P.C.," *La Métropole*, 29-30 June 1974, 1. Clipped in Documentation collection "*La Métropole*," AMVC.
[55] "R.I.P: Matin - Métropole - Flandre," *'t Pallieterke*, 6 June 1974. AMVC, press clippings.

A Swan Song for the Francophones of Flanders

As a particularly musical coda to this chapter, and a way to bring the narrative full-circle, I want to end with a brief discussion of Jacques Brel. Brel, the Brussels-born son of a Francophone Flemish father, holds a privileged place in the pantheon of French *chanson*; indeed, he is one of Belgium's most famous cultural exports, along with Tintin and the Smurfs. Brel's attraction, much like that of writers like Maurice Maeterlinck, drew some of its power from his unique voice (quite literally in Brel's case), distinct from those of French artists. He often referred to himself as "Flemish," and songs like "Le Plat Pays" and "Marieke," used French words to evoke particularly Flemish landscapes, as Emile Verhaeren did at the beginning of the century.

Brel's artistry did not always sit well with his "fellow" Flemings, however. Brel often compared "good" Flemings to "bad" *flamingants* in interviews, including among the latter those who lacked "good sense" and riled the populace up over language issues. Indeed, how many listeners would know the beauties of Flanders if Brel had sung about them only in Dutch? (Brel did, on occasion, sing Dutch translations of some of his more popular songs.) In another move which seemed calculated to raise Flemish ire, Brel poked fun at rural, Catholic Flanders in his song "Les Flamandes," which describes Flemish women as concerned primarily with marrying and having large families, and being under the control of the local parish priest. When challenged for this "stereotypical" portrayal, Brel responded that "no one ever thought of reproaching Brueghel for painting Flemish women as they were."[56]

Brel's most pointed statement on the complexities of Flemish identity was his 1977 song, "Les F…" – that is, "the *f*[*lamingants*]."[57] The use of the ellipsis in the title suggests a "dirty" word, and Brel seems to treat "*flamingant*" as if it were one. After kicking off the upbeat disco number by

[56] Translated from the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* (4 November 1966), in "Revue de Presse," *Ethnie française* (January-February 1967): 88.
[57] Jacques Brel, "Les F…," *Les Marquises* (Barclay Records, 1977).

announcing it as a "*chanson comique*," Brel vents his spleen at "Messieurs les *Flamingants*" (please forgive my decidedly unpoetic translation):

Nazis durant les guerres	Nazis during the wars
Et catholiques entre elles	And Catholics between them
Vous oscillez sans cesse	You go back and forth
Du fusil au missel	Between the rifle and the prayer book
Vos regards sont lointains	Your outlook is myopic
Votre humour est exsangue	Your humor is bloodless
Bien qu'il y aient des rues à Gand	Even though there are streets in Ghent
Qui pissent dans les deux langues	That piss in both languages
Tu vois quand je pense à vous	You see, when I think about you
J'aime que rien ne se perde	I want to be clear:
Messieurs les Flamingants	Messrs. les *flamingants*
Je vous emmerde	You can go to Hell

Brel goes on to castigate the *flamingants* for their supposed linguistic hypocrisy:

Et je vous interdis	And I forbid you
D'espérer que jamais à Londres	From hoping that, in London
Sous la pluie on puisse	Under the rain, one can ever
Vous croire anglais	Take you for an Englishman
Et je vous interdis	And I forbid you
À New-York ou Milan	In New York or Milan
D'éructer, Messieurs	To belch, gentlemen,
Autrement qu'en flamand	In anything other than Flemish
Vous n'aurez pas l'air cons	You don't seem stupid
Vraiment pas cons du tout	Not stupid at all
Et moi je m'interdis	And I forbid myself
De dire que je m'en fous	To say that I don't care
Et je vous interdis	And I forbid you
D'obliger nos enfants	To require our children
Qui ne vous ont rien fait	Who never did anything to you
À aboyer flamand	To bark in Flemish
Et si mes frères se taisent	And if my brothers stay quiet
Et bien tant pis pour elles.	Well too bad for them
Je chante persiste et signe:	I sing in spite of everything:
Je m'appelle Jacques Brel	I'm Jacques Brel!

Brel recorded this song in when his health was failing; perhaps he felt more creative license and less need to care about public opinion when facing his own mortality. Like Maurice Maeterlinck, he had spent much of his adult life living and traveling outside of Belgium, and like Maeterlinck, he died in France (1979 to Maeterlinck's 1949). It is likely that his death had more to do with the myriad health problems brought on by his chronic smoking than with his disappointment at the disappearance of the Belgium he had known as a child. Nevertheless, there are some poetic parallels

here (if I may indulge): Like Emile Verhaeren before him, Brel was a French-speaker whose work was imbued with a particularly Flemish feel. Both men also had their lives cut short – Brel by a pulmonary embolism at the age of 49, Verhaeren in a railway accident at the age of 61. Could we say that, like these artists, the Francophone communities of Flanders were themselves gone before their time?

Figure C.1. Bilingual Street Sign, Antwerp (Present Day)
An old bilingual street sign on the Hoogstraat in Antwerp, a city long considered one of the main hotbeds of the Flemish Movement.
Source: Photo courtesy of Vincent Scheltiens, taken 12 May 2014.

A Hidden Population[1]

The disappearance of French from public life in Flanders has not meant that the French-speakers themselves have disappeared. Many of them moved to Brussels, where they fit in seamlessly among the Francophone majority of the capital. Let us cite, for example, the Antwerp-born Liberal politician Jacques Van Offelen who became involved with municipal politics in the tony Brussels commune of Uccle, or Jacques Pirenne, the defender of the Francophones of Flanders who pursued his academic career at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.[2] The presence of those who remain in Flanders, however, is much harder to attest than it had been in the heyday of the French language's dominance. Today, they almost all know excellent Dutch, having received their schooling in that language, and use it in public when shopping, talking to bureaucrats, and the like. As Flemish journalist Guido Fonteyn puts it, "among the Francophones of Flanders, French has taken the place that [local] dialects take among many Flemings. A doctor or lawyer whose first language is French still speaks his French at home, but the greater part [*het essentiële*] of his life occurs in Dutch, the language that he has learned and acquired."[3] This reflects, in part, their acceptance of the *flamandisation* of Flanders. Indeed, some Francophones of Flanders have said that they are not "*fransquillons*," and in fact that "*fransquillons*," in the sense of people who refuse to use Dutch, or who haughtily use French to display their superiority, no longer exist.[4] Many of these Francophones, however, also want to avoid broadcasting the fact that they speak French as a first language. One

[1] For studies of the contemporary Francophones of Flanders, especially in Ghent, see Anne Cnops, "Un cas de flamands géographiques: Les francophones de Gand. Que sont-ils devenus après la législation linguistique consacrant l'unilinguisme flamand en Flandre?" (Licentiate thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1985); Bart Duquène, "Die frankophone Minderheit in der flämische Stadt Gent: Eine soziolinguistische Studie" (Master's thesis, Universität Salzburg, 2002); Paul Janssens, "De culturele identiteit van de Belgische adel: Taalkennis en taalgebruik in de 19de en de 20ste eeuw," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 88, no. 2 (2010): 541–556; Alix Dassargues, "Être jeune et franstalig à Gand: Enquête sociolinguistique exploratoire au sein de la communauté des francophones de Flandre" (Master's thesis, Université de Liège, 2011); Amandine Rahier, "Evolution générationnelle de l'identité linguistique et du langage des francophones gantois" (Master's thesis, Hogeschool Gent, 2011).
[2] Jacques Van Offelen, *La ronde du pouvoir: Mémoires politiques* (Brussels: Didier Hatier, 1987).
[3] Guido Fonteyn, "Een bewusteloze wereld," *De Standaard*, 16 July 2002. Clipped in documentation collection "Francofonen in Vlaanderen," ADVN.
[4] Jean Kestergat, "Des malaises, des anxiétés," in an offprint of *La Libre Belgique*'s investigation of the Francophones of Flanders, 17-24 May 1983. Documentation Collection "Francofonen in Vlaanderen," ADVN.

person whom I interviewed, from a long-established French-speaking family in Antwerp, asked that I not print his name, for fear of attracting negative attention to himself and his family.[5]

Though French-language dailies disappeared in the mid-1970s, the *Courrier de Gand* and the *Semaine d'Anvers*, Francophone weeklies from Ghent and Antwerp, respectively, appeared within a few weeks of each other in 1975. The former ceased publication in 1994, followed by a short-lived series of successors which closed up definitively by 1999. The latter continues to this day, having expanded its remit to cover the Francophones of Ghent and changing its name to *Les Cahiers de la Semaine*. Francophone cultural and social organizations still exist in Flanders, though these typically keep a low profile.[6] The Cercle royal artistique et littéraire in Ghent and Philotaxe in Antwerp, mentioned in Chapter 1, continue their activities. There are still French-language scouting troops, amateur sports leagues, Lions and Rotary Clubs, and theater groups scattered among Flanders. However, these Francophone cultural organizations operate without the aid of subsidies, unlike many Dutch-language cultural organizations in Flanders. These problems demonstrate the ways in which the federalization of Belgium has typically been to the detriment of the Francophones of Flanders. Attempts by the "French Community" (the federal body responsible for cultural and educational policy among French-speakers in Wallonia and Brussels) to provide such subsidies have met with opposition from the Flemish regional government, which has accused the French Community of "interfering" in a solely Flemish matter.[7] Indeed, a 1998 opinion of the Standing Commission for Linguistic Supervision (a Belgian federal institution charged with upholding the language laws) held that the neither the French Community nor the Walloon regional government

[5] Interview with anonymous informant, Antwerp, 20 April 2011.
[6] See the report on the Francophones of Flanders produced by the Flemish network TV1 (precursor of today's "Een" network), "Omdat ik Vlaming Ben," *Panorama* (TV1, 18 April 1996), accessed on DVD at ADVN.
[7] Nicole Verschoore, "Francophonie en Flandre," *Revue générale*, May 2006, 35–41; Inverview with Edgar Fonck, director of the Association pour la promotion de la francophonie en Flandre, Anderlecht, 8 July 2011.

had the standing to lodge complaints against the Flemish regional government for any possible violations of Francophones' rights in Flanders.[8]

Political Engagements of the Francophones of Flanders after 1975

The Liberals, who had traditionally been among the most fervent supporters of the Francophones of Flanders, continued to be a natural political "home" for many French-speakers. In October 1976, 6 out of 10 liberal members of the Ghent municipal council were French-speaking. One of these was the quixotic proponent of the Francophone cause in Flanders, the journalist Luc Beyer de Ryke.[9] Beyer actually served as member of the European Parliament for two terms in the 1980s for the Francophone Belgian Liberals, despite being from Flanders, until he was ejected from the party.[10] Beyer has written a series of books attacking the radical Flemish movement, as well as personal "essay" on the Francophones of Flanders, *Les lys de Flandre* (The Lilies of Flanders), a rather idiosyncratic take on the history of the Francophone community in Flanders.[11]

For the most part, though, Francophones, Liberal or otherwise, have been a bit more discreet. After the split of the main political parties in Belgium into "Flemish" and "Francophone" organizations, the Flemish Liberals, the PVV (Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang [Party for Freedom and Progress]) muted the anti-clericalism traditionally prominent in Belgian liberalism, in part to make the PVV a "big tent" party that would attract Catholic Francophones in Flanders, especially as the Flemish Catholic party was, and is, the most "*flamingant*" of the traditional parties.[12] Flemish activists, meanwhile, joked that PVV stood for "*Peste voor Vlaanderen* [A Plague for Flanders]."

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8 Theo Van Santen, *Het taalprobleem in België: (G)een oplossing mogelijk(?)* (Bruges: Vanden Broele, 2002), Chapter 3.
9 Jean Ellen Kane, "Flemish and Walloon Nationalism in Belgium: The Path towards an 'Immobilist' Democracy?" (PhD dissertation, Tufts University, 1983), 97–98.
10 Fonteyn, "Een bewusteloze wereld."
11 Luc Beyer de Ryke, *Les lys de Flandre: Vie et mort des francophones de Flandre (1302-2002)* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2002).
12 "Omdat ik Vlaming ben," *Panorama*.

Figure C.2. Anti-Francophone Electoral Material (1988)
"*Gand français* is coming back to life! This is the real face of the 'Flemish?' P.V.V."
An electoral advertisement for the Flemish nationalist *Volksunie*, highlighting the fact that candidates from the Flemish Liberal Party printed French-language campaign material in publications like the *Courrier de Gand*, a French-language weekly in Ghent.
Source: *De Streekkrant* (6 October 1988). Clipped in Jean-Marie De Wulf Collection, CEGESOMA. Reproduced with permission.

That said, many Francophones of Flanders feel themselves, at least politically, closer to the Flemings than to Francophone Bruxellois or Walloons. Indeed, someone like Luc Beyer de Ryke, the former journalist and liberal politician from Ghent, is a bit of a rare bird among the Francophones of Flanders, both for his outspoken defense of Francophone rights and his very deep Francophilia: He now lives in France, where he is the president of the Académie de Gaullisme. The late Walloon *rattachiste* (partisan of Wallonia's annexation to France) Lucien Outers admitted "sympathy" for the Francophones of Flanders, but remarked that they were "Above all *Flemings*."[13] Indeed, their economic interests are now often aligned with that of Flanders in general, and numerous Francophones of Flanders repeat the same clichés about "lazy" Walloons who live off of Flemish largesse that are found in the mouths of many "*flamingant*" politicians.

Perhaps the most extreme (or egregious) example of the attempt by some Francophones of Flanders to appeal to the Flemish Movement was an anonymous "message from a Francophone of Flanders" printed in the Belgian National Front's Dutch-language newsletter in 1993. The Belgian National Front is, in many ways, a copy of its more well-known French homologue, down to a tricolor flame that features the Belgian black, yellow, and red instead of the French blue, white, and red. The National Front supports a unitary Belgium; its rather meager support is concentrated in some parts of Wallonia. In its support of a unitary state, the National Front would obviously not appeal to many on the Flemish radical right. However, the "message from a Francophone of Flanders" attempts to address commonalities between the Francophones and the Flemish Movement in the face of an Islamic "invasion" of Flanders: "The Fleming must react, without fear, without complex, but worthy of his own originality! Also without those who make no difference between a criminal of North African origin and a peaceful French-speaking inhabitant of

[13] J[ean] K[estergat], "Lucien Outers: 'Ils sont flamands avant tout,'" in an offprint of *La Libre Belgique*'s investigation of the Francophones of Flanders (17-24 May 1983). Documentation collection "Francofonen in Vlaanderen," ADVN. Emphasis added.

Kraainem!," referring to A municipality of the contested "Brussels periphery."[14] Whether or not this piece was actually written by a Francophone of Flanders, the subtext is obvious: Francophones have much more right to live in Flanders, and are much more "autochthonous," than the "strange," Islamic, "other" represented by Maghrebi immigrants.

The Eternal Internal Enemy? The Persistence of "Anti-*Fransquillon*" Language

One Flemish essayist wrote in the 1960s that "with the exception of the Brussels question, there will be no more 'Belgian linguistic problem' from the instant when there is no more Francophone minority in Flanders."[15] Brussels and its environs are, indeed, the major site of the "Belgian linguistic problem" as it exists today. The current conflict – such as it is – between "Flemings" and "Walloons," so easily cited abroad as evidence for the "artificiality" of the Belgian state or the perils of multilingualism, centers largely not on language but on a more common bone of political contention, money. Namely, the issue of "financial transfers" between the economically-booming but historically poor Flemish provinces and the unemployment-ridden but formerly dynamic Walloon provinces continues to overshadow other "communitarian" political conflicts, and to color debates that are ostensibly not about regional or cultural differences. Still, returning to the second half of the quotation that opened this paragraph, the Francophone minority in Flanders continues to exist, albeit with much less vigor or visibility than the period under question in this study. Given the continued animus that certain circles in the Flemish Movement continue to demonstrate against this group, spurring them on to political action and demonstrations, it seems that if the *fransquillons* did not exist, it would be necessary to invent them. Georges Clerfayt, a Francophone politician from Sint-Genesius-Rode (a municipality in the Brussels periphery with

[14] "Boodschap van een Franstalige Vlaming!!!," *Ons Land: Maandelijhks informatieblad uitgegeven door het NATIONAAL FRONT-Vlaanderen*, December 1993. Clipped in Clipped in Jean-Marie De Wulf Collection, CEGESOMA.
[15] Dirk Wilmars [Jozef van Alsenoy], *Le problème belge: La minorité francophone en Flandre*, trans. Edmond Knaeps ([Antwerp]: Éditions Érasme, 1968), 209.

"facilities" for French-speakers), accused the Flemish Movement of using "*fransquillon*" as a term of abuse in order to discredit the French-speakers of the Brussels periphery, and ultimately of Brussels itself:

> You have to understand that the Flemish will to *flamandiser* the Francophones of the periphery and to forcibly count them as French-speaking Flemings, by calling them "*fransquillons*," as they did for one hundred years for the Francophones of Ghent, of Antwerp, or elsewhere, is nothing other than the foretaste of what awaits the French-speakers of Brussels tomorrow, if they do not react urgently.[16]

Clerfayt, admittedly, is not the most unbiased observer, and his claim that the Flemish Movement wants to "reconquer" Brussels itself is hyperbolic. Still, this citation demonstrates the way in which the specter of the "*fransquillon*" haunts not only the rhetoric of the Flemish Movement, but also of Francophone political life – Clerfayt's bitterness at the treatment of the Francophones of Ghent and Antwerp is readily apparent in this passage.

In the early 1990s, Ghent-based cultural organizations like Exploration du Monde and Connaissance et Vie d'Aujourd'hui became the target of demonstrations by Flemish activists connected with the Taal Aktiekomitee (Language Action Committee) and Vlaamse Volksbeweging (Flemish Popular Movement), allegedly because these organizations received financial support from the city of Ghent.[17] The Flemish nationalist journal *'t Pallieterke*, commenting approvingly on these demonstrations, bemoaned the presence of these Francophones in the "city of Van Artevelde:" "The Francophone class in Ghent has… its own schools and until recently its own newspaper (*Le Courrier de Gand*). There is thus still a lot of work for the Flemings to do in Ghent [*Er valt dus in Gent nog heel wat aan de Vlaamse weg te timmeren*]."[18] Marginalizing the already-marginalized "*fransquillons*" thus *still* remains a project for some of the more radical members of the Flemish Movement.

Sometimes, of course, the *fransquillon*'s mere existence is not the only "proof" of their "misdeeds." In 2004, the Ghent Court of Appeals ordered the Flemish nationalist Vlaams Blok party

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[16] Georges Clerfayt, *La fraude à la frontière linguistique: L'avenir des francophones à Bruxelles* (Brussels: Le Cri, 1988), 154–155.
[17] Céline Préaux, "Les Francophones de Flandre: Les années d'affrontement. Étude du cas d'Exploration du Monde" (DÉA thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2007).
[18] "Exploration du Monde," *'t Pallieterke* (19 October 1994). Clipped in Jean-Marie De Wulf Collection, CEGESOMA.

to disband, arguing that the party's xenophobic statements violated Belgian laws against the incitement of racial hatred. One of the judges sitting on the court, Alain Smetrijns, was president of the (Francophone) Lions' Club of Ghent, and allegedly spoke Dutch with a French accent. This fell into a very convenient narrative for the radical Flemish Movement: a *fransquillon*, member of the old establishment as evinced by his social milieu and position in the legal system, metes out injustice from behind the judicial bench, yet again proving that Flemings are "really" second-class citizens of the unnatural Belgian state, which is itself still "secretly" a vehicle for Francophone interests. Indeed, one article in a secessionist Flemish journal drew a straight line from the Coucke and Goethals case of the nineteenth century, through the "repressions" of Flemings following the World Wars, to the banning of the Blok.[19] As it turned out, the Blok was little worse for the wear: though it had to dissolve, its members and organization quickly reformed into the Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), a party that continues to this day.

The Unexpected Return of "Minority Rights?"

The current state of Belgian politics makes it unlikely that there will be rights for the French language in government service or education in Flanders in the foreseeable future, regardless of which discourses are used to demand them. Indeed, the historical use of "minority rhetoric" as a way for the Francophones of Flanders to make claims on the Belgian state has led many contemporary Flemish scholars and politicians to caution the Belgian government against ratifying the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities without significant reservations, lest French-speakers in Flanders try to advance such claims again.[20] (As of

[19] Erik Martens, "Vlamingen voor de rechter," *Secessie: Kwartaalblad voor de studie van separatisme en directe democratie*, no. 17 (2004): 3–15, http://www.secessie.nu/pdf/17-2.pdf.
[20] Van Santen, *Het taalprobleem in België*, 115–129; Hendrik Vuye, *Language and Territoriality in Flanders in a Historical and International Context* (Wemmel: Vlaamse Overheid, 2010).

this writing, Belgium has signed but not ratified the Convention.) The journalist and later Vlaams Blok politician Guido Tastenhoye warned in 1997 that

> if [French-speakers in Flanders] succeed in making Belgium sign the Framework Convention on Minorities [*sic*], they will soon ask for minority status not only for the Francophones in the Brussels periphery, but also for the *fransquillon* cores in Antwerp, Ghent, and so forth. In other words: the whole of Belgian language legislation [and] the Flemish Movement's 150-year-long struggle would be undone with the stroke of a pen.[21]

In 1998 and 2001, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe undertook fact-finding missions in Belgium in order to assess the alleged lack of protections for French-speaking minorities in the Brussels periphery. In both cases, the complaints originated from Georges Clerfayt, the Francophone politician of the Brussels periphery quoted above. The first report, that of the Swiss parliamentarian Dumeni Columberg, and the accompanying resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly, made a small splash in Belgium in 1998.[22] Perhaps more important for the question of the Francophones of Flanders was the second report and resolution, prepared in 2001-2002 by another Swiss parliamentarian, Lili Nabholz-Heidegger.[23]

Nabholz-Heidegger's report, urging Belgium to ratify the Framework Convention, contained several suggestions that, if adopted, would have radical implications for the situation in Belgium. She argued that not only should the German-speakers in Belgium be considered a "minority" on the federal level but also that French-speakers should be considered a "minority" on the regional level in Flanders, and Dutch-speakers as a "minority" in Wallonia. This went against Belgian jurisprudence (and much of Flemish political opinion) that argued that the German-speakers were the only "minority" in Belgium. Nabholz-Heidegger argued that, given the complexities of Belgian federalism, making the terms of the Framework Convention only apply to the Belgian federal

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[21] Guido Tastenhoye, "Kritisch bekeken: Minderheden," *Gazet van Antwerpen* (26 July 1997). Clipped in AMVC, collection "Taalminderheden."

[22] André Alen and Patrick Peeters, "The Columberg Report on the Belgian Linguistic Legislation: A Storm in a Teacup," *European Public Law* 5, no. 2 (1999): 155–166.

[23] Lili Nabholz-Heidegger, "Protection of Minorities in Belgium," document no. 9536 (Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, 5 September 2002), http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=9826&Language=en; "Protection of Minorities in Belgium," Resolution 1301 (Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, 26 September 2002), http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta02/ERES1301.htm.

government (and not the regional governments) would undermine the spirit of the Framework Convention. Perhaps most inflammatory (in Flemish eyes) was this passage, which advocated for minority rights both for old Francophone populations throughout Flanders as well as for Francophone migrants to Flanders:

> [T]he Belgian population censi [*sic*] (which included, until 1947, data on language) prove that even in communes which later became "Flemish" communes on the Brussels periphery, many communes already had percentages of (exclusive) French-speakers in the region between over 20% and up to 46% in 1947; not to speak of the deeply rooted French-speaking communities in such Flemish cities as Antwerpen (Anvers), Brugge (Bruges), Gent (Gand) or Oostende (Ostende)… French-speakers in Belgium cannot be considered in the same way as foreigners – after all, they have always had Belgian citizenship, have always and still do constitute 40% of the population of that state, and have been living there since its creation more than 170 years ago… in a centralised, unitary state (which Belgium was until 1980), one cannot speak of "migration" from one region to another. Immigration across national borders cannot be put on par with migration within one state.

Nabholz-Heidegger claimed that "both the hopes French-speakers invest in the effect of [ratifying the Framework Convention], and the fears that Dutch-speakers associate with it, are overdone." While she did not argue that Flanders would be required to provide French-language schools in Flanders, she did recommend that subsidies for cultural activities in French in Flanders were justified. Because the Belgian courts had decided that the French Community could not subsidize French-language cultural life in Flanders, the French Community and the Flemish regional government ought to sign a cultural accord (especially as Flanders and the French Republic had already signed such an accord). She also allowed that the Flemish regional government itself might be required to subsidize such cultural life.[24]

Indeed, the perceived disdain for French-language cultural activities in Flanders, while manifestations of other world cultures are supposedly tolerated or even encouraged by the Flemish government, is the number one, if not the only complaint of the Francophones of Flanders today. Edgar Fonck, director of the Association pour la promotion de la francophonie en Flandre (APFF), argued that "Organiz[ing] something in Chinese or English or Swahili: that is not a problem," while

[24] Nabholz-Heidegger, "Protection of Minorities in Belgium."

attempts to do so in French meet stiff resistance from the Flemish government.[25] The APFF and its online and quarterly print organ, *Nouvelles de Flandre*, claim that while they do not want to put the linguistic settlement in Belgium into question regarding administration and education, they want Belgium to sign the Framework Convention to prevent "a speeding-up of the decline of French culture, and, into the bargain [*sic*], a real cultural genocide."[26]

Flemish politicians and academics tend to view the situation a bit differently. The Flemish legal scholar – and sitting judge on the Belgian Constitutional Court – André Alen argued that both the Columberg and Nabholz-Heidegger reports evinced fundamental misunderstanding about the Belgian constitutional system. The principle of territorialism was a key to institutional stability, and any attempt to return to a "personalist" solution not connected to regional boundaries would upset the equilibrium in the Belgian federal system. Besides, argued Alen, does not Switzerland also organize its own linguistic policy along territorial lines, canton by canton?[27] André Monteyne, a key figure in the Brussels Flemish Movement, responded to Nabholz-Heidegger's report in a particularly theatrical manner, petitioning the Council of Europe to address the supposed "oppression" of Italian-, French-, and Rhaeto-Romanch speaking "minorities" in the (monolingually German) Canton of Zurich.[28]

Finally, I should mention one final political project that may interest the Francophones of Flanders. Voting for the Federal Parliament in Belgium occurs on the level of electoral districts

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[25] Erwin Verhoeven, "Waarom zijn de Vlamingen bang van ons?," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, 22-24 March 2008, 15. Clipped in ADVN, Documentation Collection "Francofonen in Vlaanderen." I also draw on my interview with Fonck of 8 July 2011.

[26] "Presentation," *Nouvelles de Flandre*, http://www.francophonie.be/ndf/main/en/pgsten/presen.html.

[27] André Alen, "Deux rapporteurs suisses sur les minorités nationales belges," in *L'homme et l'État: Mélanges offerts par la Faculté de droit de l'Université de Fribourg pour Thomas Fleiner à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire*, ed. Peter Hänni (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 2003), 239–257. See also Wilfried Swenden, "Personality vs. Territoriality: Belgium and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities," *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 2, no. 3 (2003): 331–356.

[28] See the correspondence in André Monteyne collection, Folder "Petitie Rapport Nabholz-Haidegger | Klacht Kanton Zurich," AMVB. I thank Mr. Monteyne for granting me permission to access his archives. Nabholz-Heidegger attempted to address such comparisons between Belgium and Switzerland, claiming that cantons were free to recognize internal minorities. Nabholz-Heidegger, "Protection of Minorities in Belgium."

where parties present lists; with the exception of Brussels and its environs, these districts are either wholly "Walloon" or wholly "Flemish." This has compounded the political isolation of the two main communities of Belgium from one another, a process that began in earnest with the split of the three major parties (Catholic, Liberal, and Socialist), later followed by the Greens, into "Flemish" and "Francophone" organizations, who thus do not have to appeal to voters from the "other" language community. Several analysts and politicians have advanced the idea of a Belgian-wide federal electoral district from which a set proportion of legislators would be chosen. As such, political parties looking gain seats from this district would have more incentive to appeal both Flemings and French-speakers.[29] More concretely, it means that French-speakers living in Flanders would thus have the ability to vote for French-speaking candidates, thereby perhaps regaining some of their "lost" representation in the federal legislature.

The Paradox of the French-Speakers of Flanders

In retrospect, it seems that the Francophones of Flanders had little hope of being recognized as a "minority" group. The Flemish Movement, especially following World War I, saw the creation of a linguistically homogeneous Flanders as its most important goal and the Francophones of Flanders ("*fransquillons*") as the largest impediment to that goal. The role of the *fransquillon* as an internal enemy, as "asocial Flemings," was so central to the Flemish Movement's self-image that it could not brook the recognition of the French-speakers as a "legitimate" group with rights in Flanders. Indeed, the appeal of a unified society arranged around the use of the demotic language (or a centralized, standardized variant thereof) seemed to be irresistible across the Western world in the modern age.

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[29] Dave Sinardet, "La circonscription électorale fédérale," *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP* no. 2142 (2012).

What, then, can we glean from the story of the Francophones of Flanders and their ultimately unsuccessful attempts to keep a place for French in public life in Flanders? This narrative, as I mentioned in the introduction, allows us to analyze three distinct but interrelated themes. First, their story is one of the ebb and flow of an identity. The Francophones of Flanders' understanding of themselves as a separate group ("minority" or otherwise), with varying connections to (Dutch-speaking) Flemings, Walloons, or a platonic ideal of "Belgians" *tout court*, varies with different social and political pressures. In the aftermath of the Belgian Revolution, with Belgian patriotism at a high (and few Belgians having the vote), it was very easy for the Francophones of Flanders to see themselves as plain and simple "Belgians," especially as all of the other members of the *pays légal* were French-speaking, no matter what part of Belgium they hailed from. As the Flemish Movement began to cast the Francophones of Flanders as the "other," the Francophones of Flanders, in return, attempted to answer this challenge with appeals to "freedom of language" or their own "minority identity," in function of their own power and influence in society as well as international trends. Second, the story of the Francophones of Flanders is intimately connected with the fortunes of French as an international language. When French was the unquestioned language of high culture, science, and diplomacy across much of Western Europe, those in Flanders who spoke it as a native tongue (or by choice) could claim to be following the path of progress, while the Flemish Movements was being obstinate and obscurantist. As the twentieth century saw challenges to elite languages like French across the globe from below (in the form of vernaculars) and from "above" (or perhaps "the side") in the form of English as a "mass elite" language, the French-speakers were hard-pressed to keep up their "triumphant" and "universalist" defense of French, thereby moving, again, toward a "minority" identity. Finally, the story of the Francophones of Flanders demonstrates the changing conception of "liberty" in the contemporary age. Nineteenth-century understandings of liberty as "freedom to be left alone" – which protected the French-speakers of Flanders from

state intervention in their linguistic practices – gave way to ideas of liberty as "freedom to grow" or "freedom to achieve." In this optic, the Francophones of Flanders, and the power of the French language, were *obstacles* to the Flemings' freedom to grow and develop in their own "Flemish" way. Thus, the Francophones of Flanders were no longer the vanguard of progress and liberty, but rather robber barons and oppressors.

Belgium – which has been called a "microcosm of Europe" by historians from Henri Pirenne onward – provides an interesting linguistic parallel to modern Europe.[30] The attempts to make French a *lingua franca* for Belgium have failed; in fact, many scholars and political figures have argued that Belgium should adopt English as a common language, mirroring the European Union as a whole.[31] Is this not, however, just exchanging one privileged language for another? Historian Peter Burke points out that numerous radical writers in early modern Europe attacked the use of Latin and other non-native languages in teaching, law, and liturgy: "The main point of these critiques was that the use of foreign languages allowed professionals to mystify and so to dominate ordinary people."[32] There is already a debate over the "democratic deficit" of European institutions; will the development of an Anglophone Eurocracy help or hinder the transparency of the European Union? Will the Flemings, having successfully disposed of the preponderance of the French in Flanders, accept a new ruling class which uses yet another foreign language, in this case English? Put crudely, will they exchange *Franskiljons* for *Engelskiljons*?[33]

Returning to the case of Flanders, Québécois political scientist J. A. Laponce has argued that "Paradoxically, English would have a better chance of being well received in an independent Quebec than in the province of Quebec; English would then be considered more a step-ladder than an

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[30] Annick Jamart, "La Belgique, microcosme de l'Europe?," *Esprit*, June 2010, 74–82.
[31] Philippe van Parijs, *Linguistic Justice for Europe and for the World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[32] Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.
[33] I thought I had coined this term, but alas, as of 13 May 2014 a Google search for it turns up around 10 hits.

invader, and less as identity-diminishing than as facilitating communication."[34] Replacing "French" for "English" and "Flanders" for "Québec," one wonders if we might be able to make a similar argument. Albert Salon, a former French diplomat and proponent of the French language as a bulwark against English has argued just that, saying that an independent Flanders would be less "threatened" by French and less likely to turn to English in order to spite it.[35] Leaving aside the fact that this ignores enormous international economic, political, and cultural pressures which advocate in favor of English, it also assumes that an independent Flanders would easily come into existence. I – at the risk of making a fool of myself in a few years if events prove me wrong – do not see such a thing happening in the future. Many voices have proclaimed the imminent demise of Belgium, but it has yet to occur, perhaps because, to paraphrase Tony Judt, it is not clear where it would go.[36]

Still, the Belgium of 2014 would be scarce recognizable to the Belgians of 1830. The debates over language have been addressed, as we have seen, by dividing Belgium into discrete, linguistically-defined territories. Much of this development stemmed from the fear that the Francophones of Flanders would serve to "Frenchify" Flanders if such borders were not put in place. So, instead of the unitary state of 1830, held together by a French-speaking elite, the Belgium of today consists of a set of "statelets" who have comparatively little in common. This, then, is the paradox of the Francophones of Flanders. The class that, in the nineteenth century, saw itself as incarnating the Belgian nation and assuring its existence, inadvertently served as the impetus to split it apart.

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[34] J. A. Laponce, *Languages and Their Territories*, trans. Anthony Martin-Sperry (Toronto and Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 52.

[35] Albert Salon, *France, Québec, Wallonie, même combat! Libérons-nous tous de l'empire américain et retrouvons ensemble notre monde humain!* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008), 65-67, 76.

[36] Tony Judt, "Is There a Belgium?," in *How Can One Not Be Interested in Belgian History? War, Language and Consensus in Belgium since 1830* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2005), 32n2.

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Georges Hulin de Loo collection

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II. B.: Encyclopedias and Other Reference Works

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Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging. CD-ROM. Tielt: Lannoo, 1998.
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<u>II.C.: Personal Communications</u>

Wils, Lode. Interview with the author. Leuven, 27 June 2011.

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Education

2014 PhD, History, Pennsylvania State University
2008 MA, History, Pennsylvania State University
2005 Certificate, Studies in History, Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium)
2004 BA, History, Alma College

Publications (selected)

2013 "An Unlikely Minority? The Development and Use of 'Minority Rhetoric' among the Francophones of Flanders, 1918–1932." *Journal of Belgian History* 43, no. 4 (2013): 80–107.

2012 Review of *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration*, by Herman Van Goethem. *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Countries Studies* 36, no. 1 (2012): 91–93.

Conference Presentations and Talks (selected)

2014 "Defending French from the 'Jacobins': The Francophones of Flanders and Arguments against the State Regulation of Language, 1918-1974." 60th Annual Meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, Université du Québec à Montréal.

2011 "'*La plus honorable des dépendances*': French Civilization and Linguistic Conflict in Flanders in the First Half of the Twentieth Century." "The Idea of France" Conference, University of Pittsburgh.

2011 "Between a *Rocher* and a Hard Place: Belgium, Europe, and the Search for a Common Language, from French to English." Research in Political Philosophy Leuven (RIPPLE) Seminar, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.

2010 "Le discours changeant de la défense francophone: Les francophones de Flandre entre l'universalisme triomphal et la rhétorique minoritaire" 24th Annual Congress of the Council of International Francophone Studies, Montréal, Québec.

Fellowships and Awards (selected)

2013 Dissertation Support Grant, Penn State College of the Liberal Arts
2012 Hill Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Penn State Department of History
2011 Dissertation Fellowship, Penn State Institute for the Arts and Humanities
2010 Belgian American Educational Foundation Fellowship
2006 Milton B. Dolinger Graduate Fellow in the World War II Era, Penn State College of the Liberal Arts
2004 Fulbright Student Grant