

MACHINE-WORKERS FROM LIEGE AND NAMUR IN  
THE BORINAGE LATE XVIIIth  
EARLY XIXth CENTURIES.  
CONTRIBUTION TO INDUSTRIAL & SOCIAL HISTORY

by

Marinette BRUIER

The first steam-engines of the continent (Newcomen type) were sent from England as a number of component parts and assembled on the spot. Although historians have attributed engines of this kind in the Borinage to engineers from Liège or Namur, no proof of this has been forthcoming in order to verify the origin of several such engineers and their social background.

Three families appear in this study. The Rorive family from Liège is found to be settled in the Borinage in May 1747. The Rorives were a particularly prolific family and in three generations gave birth to 20 engineers or engine-operators. Members of the family adapted themselves with varying degrees of success to technological innovations and several of them remained at worker level and aspired to no higher social status.

However, the second family studied, the Dorzées from Vedrin (near Namur), where there are leadmines, built machines themselves in the Borinage, in the North of France and near La Louvière and Charleroi and the second generation succeeded in establishing a company which functioned until 1940 : François-Joseph Dorzée of the third generation became so important that between 1859 and 1897 he was mayor of his Commune, Boussu.

The third family studied, the Goffints also came from Namur. Not only did Jean-François Goffint manage the machines under his charge but also owned one of them : he loaned out his machine to coal companies and finally became himself a mine owner. Only one of his sons was an engineer and like his brothers he eventually lived on the income from his property and investments. The fact that the youngest son of Jean-François Goffint became a doctor and one of his daughters married a doctor shows how far the Goffint family had risen in the social scale.

Interesting observations can be made from this study : this new form of industrial technique gave rise to a new social group but since the development of this particular engine was extremely rapid, the handing down of traditional knowledge was insufficient as can be seen in the case of the Rorive family. Moreover it appears that Jean-François Goffint became rich not through being an engineer but through owning a means of production.

THE BELGIAN CATHOLICS, THEIR BISHOPS AND  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
A CATHOLIC PRESS IN BRUSSELS (1831-1843)

by

André CORDEWIENER

The triumph of the belgian revolution in 1830 was followed by a strong development of the liberal (i.e. anticlerical) press. The catholic newspapers were few, weak and had to struggle to survive. This appears more clearly than elsewhere in the capital, Brussels : the one important catholic paper *L'Union*, disappeared in 1838 and no strictly catholic press organ survived.

The catholic laity felt this situation to be nothing short of a political disaster, but when they went for help to the bishops, they found that these, especially the primate of Belgium, archbishop Sterckx of Malines, wanted to stay aloof from catholic journalism. The idea was that a catholic press would interfere with the liberty of action of the episcopate.

Sterckx took the same position when in 1841 Dieudonné Stas started the *Journal de Bruxelles* : the archbishop refused to help develop a new catholic press !

But this was not the view of all the bishops : Mgr. Van Bommel, from Liège, took the opposite stand and he had from 1840 his own newspaper *La Gazette de Liège*. What he wanted was strictly a paper of his own. Indeed there was a catholic paper in Liège, *Le Courrier de la Meuse*, published by the above mentioned Stas, but the bishop and that journalist held different views. This brought Van Bommel to publish *La Gazette de Liège* and drove Stas away from Liège to Brussels.

Actually Stas was thinking farther ahead : he wanted a general coordination of all the catholic papers. According to this, the *Journal de Bruxelles* was supposed to be the leading catholic newspaper of the whole country, giving guidance in the political and religious field to the provincial and local newspapers.

Many bishops supported that plan. Sterckx was adamant in his opposition. At last, he agreed to give Stas some money, but refused to recognize the *Journal de Bruxelles* as an authorized catholic paper. The most he was ready to do, was to denounce the "bad newspapers" as a danger to the faith of the catholics.

## BELGIUM AND RUMANIA IN THE 19th CENTURY

by

A. FILIMON

There appear to have existed relations between Rumania and the Netherlands as early as the middle-ages. The Belgian revolution and the very liberal constitution of the new Belgian state were viewed with considerable sympathy in the press of the Danubian principalities. After the revolution was crushed in Rumania in 1848, some of the people fled to the West, including Belgium, and it is in that country that Cetan Boliac and C.A. Rosetti published *La république roumaine* and *L'Etoile du Danube*. Intellectual relations were established after some Rumanians came to Belgium to study at the universities, e.g. the philosopher Basile Conta who achieved a Ph.D. at the university of Brussels. Already in the first years after Belgium became independent, a commercial mission sent to Constantinople gave proof of interest in the possibilities of trading with the Principalities, and indeed very soon - in 1838 - a Belgian consulate was established in Galatz. The foundation of a Belgian vice-consulate in Braila followed in 1855. The consulate of Galatz was brought over to Bucarest and had jurisdiction for the whole of Moldavia-Valachia.

When Rumania became an independant state and was fighting for diplomatic recognition by the powers, Belgium was one of the first states to be considered as the seat of a Rumanian diplomatic mission. The goal was reached in 1880, and commercial treaties were concluded in 1880 and 1894. Thereafter, the economic relations between the two countries thrived.

## THE DWELLING PLACE AS AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PHENOMEN

by

Jules HANNES

L. de Saint-Moulin (*La construction et la propriété des maisons, Seraing depuis le début du 19e siècle*, Brussels, 1969) has stressed in the most convincing way the cohesion between economic movements, the demographical evolution and the rhythm of the construction of dwelling-places. But one should consider another aspect of the human dwelling, one of interest for quantitative social history : the quality of the houses is easy to deduce, as are the totals of houses, from the land registry but the former gives the clearest possible picture of the social rank of each inhabitant. The hierarchy in dwelling places directly reflects

that hierarchy of the inhabitants. It is a technique that is easier and safer than the one based on tax-rolls, professions and indications of wealth.

## ROME AND THE LAURENT-BRASSEUR-CONTROVERSY

by

Emiel LAMBERTS

In the middle of the 19th century, the State-university of Ghent, in Belgium, had on his staff teachers showing strong rationalistic tendencies, especially professor Brasseur and professor H. Laurent. The catholic hierarchy looked on them with much displeasure and in December 1855 a violent incident flared up. It was said that Brasseur, whilst teaching natural law, had openly criticized the church. The ultramontanists claimed that the teaching at a state university had to conform with catholic ideas and wanted Brasseur disciplined. The "unionist" (actually catholic) De Decker cabinet (1855-57) took nevertheless the view that a certain amount of freedom was to be left to the university teachers, but sorely pressed by the ultramontanist, it turned for help to the Pope, hoping to find him more openminded than the Belgian ultra-catholics. Actually, the opposite appeared to be the case.

In September 1856, the bishops of Ghent and Bruges published a harsh proclamation, attacking the university of Ghent. Beforehand, they had managed through the intercession of the jesuits, to make sure of the support of Rome. Their proclamation included a strong condemnation of the cabinet. Of course the result was a flare up of the political fight. More specifically, it gave the impression that catholic opinion was strongly divided between ultra-montanist and liberal-catholics.

The cabinet did believe that Rome was on its side. The Belgian representative in Rome felt that a deep uneasiness existed at the Vatican about that pastoral letter, and wrongly deduced that the mandate was a cause of displeasure with the Curia. Actually Rome, whilst agreeing with the point of view of the bishops as it stood, felt uneasy about the political implications of the matter concerning relations with the Belgian State. This had an unforeseen result : Rome refrained from publishing a condemnation of the rationalist teaching at the Belgian universities. The bishop of Ghent (the most outspoken of the two) incurred the displeasure of the pope, but this did not stop Rome from encouraging the ultramontanistic faction of the Belgian catholics, thus widening the split between the two wings of catholic opinion and making inevitable the fall of the De Decker cabinet.

## SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORY

by

F. LEHOUCK

History and sociology have for a long time been opposed, both producing opposing claims as regards their theoretical approach and social usefulness. In this dispute, the historians can be divided into segregationist and integrationist : the integrationists stress the common ground, doubt the scientific value of sociology, but admit its social usefulness. The segregationist emphasize the deep differences between the two disciplines.

One has to agree that sociology derives important elements from history, e.g. a nomenclature, the influence of the past on the present, important aspects in methodology, the concept of history as a means of understanding the contemporary world.

The opposite, too, is true : sociology has made possible for the historians a deeper insight into the whole of economic and social reality. No historian can claim that the techniques and methods of the sociologist are not to be acknowledged. The sociological approach is an important way to rethinking the past.

History stood her ground and fought back : the *new economic history* and *cliometrics* emulate the sociology in social usefulness.

Unfortunately, the gap is widening : historians started learning sociology, but one tries now to train sociologists without reference to history. Nevertheless, both have so much in common that they should stay together in a unique synthesis. Both approaches are of equal importance. One should try to achieve an empirical philosophy of history and a social philosophy - only a philosophy can bring a global view of mankind. History and sociology should refrain from mutilating that view of mankind by fighting each other.

## THE LUXEMBURG QUESTION AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE AND AFTER

by

Sally MARKS

Historians have closely studied most aspects of the west European settlement in 1919 but have overlooked one piece of the puzzle. The question of Luxemburg was closely related to those of the Rhineland and the Saar Basin, as the diplomats were well aware, but was dealt with quite separately and thus it

has escaped historical attention. The British and American delegations fully supported the Belgian desire for an economic union with Luxemburg and consistently opposed French policy and propaganda in the Grand Duchy. The British in particular had a unique opportunity to make the essential British support of French claims to the Saar Basin conditional upon a Belgian solution of the Luxemburg problem, thereby assuring full Belgian independence and gaining Belgian gratitude. The Foreign Office urged this policy but failed, thanks to poor coordination in the British delegation, Lloyd George's dislike of Belgium and disinclination to read memoranda, and the probable refusal of his secretary to submit key papers to him. Thus, the question of Luxemburg was not settled at the Paris peace conference and, after further British rebuffs in a variety of areas, Belgium reluctantly supported the French occupation of Frankfurt in 1920 and signed a limited military accord with France in order to gain the desired customs union with Luxemburg. These decisions, which constituted the first Belgian move toward the French orbit and the Ruhr occupation of 1923, were a direct consequence of the British inaction at Paris in 1919.

## FOODPLANTS IN FLANDERS DURING THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

by

C. VANDENBROEKE & W. VANDERPIJPEN

One can follow the development of the production of foodplants in Flanders during the 19th century by using the numerous agricultural censuses. They are especially useful for knowing the distribution of given crop over the whole area or for the global quantity produced of a given kind. The situation is not as good for the 18th century : we have to rely on a single assesment made once a year, but we can check on those general indications by the study of the "staten van goed". These registers of all the real estate transactions contain a wealth of information about the crops and production.

The general trend during the 18th century shows a diminishing production of the summer cereals (buckwheat, beans, peas). After the 18th century, their use as foodplants diminished as they were more and more used as fodderplants.

Wheat and rye were the basic cereals for bread. There was no fundamental change as regards the areas of their production between 1700 and 1850. Maslin was much less important except that in the southern part of East Flanders it constituted an important part (up to 30 %) of the cereal used for bread. This was the situation of the 18th century, but even far into the 19th, there was but a small decline. Indeed, there was an extension to the north of the area where it was harvested.

As for the potatoproduction, there was a fast and spectacular growth throughout the 18th century. At the end of that century the potato had reached the proportion of the foodplant production that it held about 1850.

## AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS IN FLANDERS ABOUT 1800

by

Willy VANDERPIJPEN

The statistical material concerning Flanders in the time of emperor Napoleon is extremely abundant, especially in relation to agriculture. Output figures are extremely detailed. Statistics of prices, cattle, areas under cultivation etc. can also be found.

Of course, one should never accept these figures at their face value. The population distrusted any kind of request for information, the study of statistics was still in its infancy and sources of a dubious validity.

Nevertheless, the figures indicate that the level of agricultural production in Flanders was extremely high and that every year a substantial fraction of the production was available for export. The potato contributed largely to the feeding of the population.

## BISHOPS IN WEST-FLANDERS AND CATHOLIC PRESS

by

Romain VAN EENOO

The problem of developing a catholic press existed in the deeply catholic province of West-Flanders as it existed elsewhere in Belgium, but it was tackled more energetically by the bishops of Bruges than by some of their colleagues. Mgr. Bousset, the first bishop of the new see of Bruges, was first of all an opponent of the ideas of Lamennais. This goes to explain that if he wanted a catholic newspaper in his bishopric, it was at least to some extent to interfere with the fight between conservative and progressive catholics. He was deeply aware of the part that the press could play and gave all the help he could to the endeavours of Plas (see the article by Cordewiener). He had been previously the secretary of the bishop of Ghent. This accounts for the part he played in the struggles in East-Flanders.

As for his own way of using the press as a politico-religious weapon, he did not control narrowly the catholic papers - especially the *Nouvelliste des Flandres* - but went out of his way to help them. He gave money, he forbade the reading of liberal papers, and he encouraged the most distinguished clerics of his diocese to write articles. At least, that is what the bishop did as long as *Le Nouvelliste des Flandres* seemed able to survive. When it became clear that that

catholic paper was on the brink of complete disaster, the bishop took strong measures : the hapless proprietor had to accept stringent directives and a new editor : Pierre Lebrocqy. The name was also changed to *La Patrie* (1848).

But even that did not help : new measures had to be taken by the successor of Mgr. Boussen, Mgr. Malou. This important prelate brought together a number of wealthy catholics, especially members of the nobility and from the old families of the catholic establishment; with their help, he raised the money needed to buy outright the paper. One of the most famous journalists available, Amand Neut, was put in charge. We happen to know all the conditions - ideological and financial - of the agreement concluded between the bishop and the new team of editors.

## POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AT LIEGE UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION (1914-18)

by

Georges VANLOUBBEECK

It was a fairly generally held view that under the German occupation, there was no important political activity. Actually it is just not true that the war was merely a political parenthesis in the occupied country. At Liège, the political organisations - in collaboration with the National Committee for Food and Help - were in charge of the feeding of the population and, for that very reason, survived. But they did not just survive, they worked for the future, for a new political future : the divergent factions of the catholics (conservative and progressive) amalgamated. The socialists were planning agitation. This helps to explain why, immediately after the liberation of the country, they were able to start again. This goes not only for Liège : it was a general phenomenon. In Brussels, the central organisation of the Committee for Food and Help organised political discussions on the highest level (with a view to the post-war situation). There was even a preparation of a modified constitution. And one is not far wrong in claiming that the first post-war Cabinet, the one which came into existence at Lophem, was actually a cabinet comprised of the National Committee members.

HOW THE BELGIAN BISHOPS LAID THEIR HANDS  
ON THE BRUSSELS NEWSPAPER *L'EMANCIPATION*

by

Els WITTE

"Unionism" (the name of a political alliance between catholics and liberals) has been held by some to be a fundamental expression of "faith". Others look at that agreement as purely tactical. An episode in the history of the newspaper *L'Emancipation* goes far to lend credibility to the thesis of the purely tactical move.

As a matter of fact, the catholic movement could boast only a very weak press in the years following 1830. Successive lost elections brought home to the bishops the importance of the political newspaper. This is the way they went to work, or at least the strategy they developed: one should bribe the journalists of a very important, widely-read (slightly left wing) paper, the *Emancipation*. Very cautiously and slowly, one would then modify the party line of the paper, bring it over to unionism, and eventually to the defence of catholicism.

That is what actually happened. The *Emancipation* became the great catholic paper up to the time that the *Journal de Bruxelles* was started (1840).