

The Antwerp Question

The significance of the port city of Antwerp for Germany during
the First World War

Christoph Schmidt-Supprian

Doctor of Philosophy

Submitted to the Department of Modern History
Trinity College Dublin

2006

Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for degree in this or any other university.

Christoph Schmidt-Supprian

Statement

I agree that the Library may lend or copy this thesis upon request.

Christoph Schmidt-Supprian

Summary

This thesis investigates the German relationship to the Belgian port city of Antwerp in the light of both the German war aims debate and the German occupation of Belgium during the First World War. It scrutinises the discourse of the so-called Antwerp Question as well as the German presence in the occupied city itself, highlighting the dynamic between the German perception of Antwerp and the actual German activities there. Using diverse and often little known archival and published primary sources, the thesis intends to contribute to both the long-established historiography on the German war aims and to the more recent research on the occupied territories.

The dual approach is reflected in the structural organisation of the thesis, whereby Part A deals with the German discourse on Antwerp and Part B with the occupation. A 'prologue' and an 'epilogue' provide essential reference points, which highlight the origins, specificities and consequences of the wartime discussions and events.

The prologue argues that before the outbreak of war in August 1914, there had been no plans in Germany to conquer Antwerp or otherwise take control of it. Even the German contingency war plans all but ignored Antwerp and its great fortress. Nevertheless, the increasingly important trading and shipping links provided the raw material for expansionist aspirations once the established political framework was toppled by war. Further, nationalist sentiments were increasingly promoted within the so-called German Colony in Antwerp, inadvertently preparing the ground for its split into pro-German and pro-Belgian factions during the war.

Part A begins with chapter 2 presenting the siege and conquest of Antwerp in early October 1914. Though technically a mere strategic expediency after the German defeat at the battle of the Marne, this conquest drew the Germans' attention to Antwerp. The subsequent chapters present different aspects of the debate about the Antwerp Question that ensued. Chapter 3 details the official plans for the future of Antwerp proposed by a number of key personalities, particularly within the imperial navy and the Bavarian government. The special case of the Hanseatic city-states of Hamburg and Bremen is analysed in Chapter

4. Chapter 5 looks at the contributions from the academic economic experts, while chapter 6 analyses the popular perception of Antwerp in Germany.

These chapters lead to the conclusion that in the complex German engagement with the Antwerp Question the expansionist arguments dominated, even in the face of opposing economic interests. This had the effect of inflating the worth of Antwerp as a German war aim. Due to its geographic position and its economic and historic role as a world port, Antwerp came to stand metonymically for the consolidation and enhancement of the German economic and naval position on the global stage.

Part B starts with a description in chapter 7 of the Antwerp variant of the German occupation regime in Belgium. Chapter 8 investigates the value that Antwerp had for the German war effort in military and economic terms, while chapter 9 looks at the local implementation of the *Flamenpolitik* (Flemish policy) – the most important cultural ‘war effort’ in Belgium. Chapter 10 focuses on the fate of the German Colony, examining to what extent it developed into a vanguard of German expansionism in the city. Chapter 11, finally, gauges the extent to which the Germans made concrete steps to cement their foothold in Antwerp during the war.

Again, these chapters present a complex picture. The German occupation regime in Antwerp had a strong civilian, and often relatively ‘mild’, character. It tended to resist the radical version of *Flamenpolitik* and its military and economic exploitation of Antwerp stopped short of full destruction of the infrastructure. Nevertheless, the German enthusiasm for Antwerp as war aim described in Part A also resulted in – and was partly fuelled by – expansionist developments in the occupied city. Aided by the pro-German faction of the German Colony, the German programme of ‘economic penetration’, notably, was most successful in Antwerp.

Dealing with the end and the aftermath of the war, the epilogue shows two important consequences for the Antwerp-German relationship. Firstly, the pre-war German Colony was destroyed for good. Secondly, German trade and shipping, by contrast, made a gradual comeback despite many obstacles in the first few years after the war.

Acknowledgements

During the course of researching and writing this thesis, I have received invaluable help from a whole host of people: family, friends, colleagues, senior academics, librarians and archivists. I would like to thank them all for their support. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Alan Kramer, for providing encouragement, ideas and a critical eye every step of the way. I would also like to thank: Professor Sophie de Schaepdrijver for her insightful comments on some of my 'work in progress', Dr. Alheide Schmidt-Supprian for her unceasing support and proof reading skills, Margaret Brady for ironing out many of my English language mistakes, and Antoine Giacometti for improving the presentation of my maps. I would like to thank Reinhard Schmidt-Supprian for teaching me Dutch, and Dr. Benoît Majerus for welcoming me in Brussels and introducing me to the Belgian world of historical research. Among the countless librarians and archivists who have made my research possible, I would like to particularly thank the staff of the Hoover Institution in Stanford University, whose enthusiasm in retrieving rare items was truly inspiring. Chapter 5 of this thesis, finally, is based on my contribution to the international conference on Belgium and the First World War in January 2003, the proceedings of which were published in August 2005.

Table of Contents

Introduction	9
(a) General	
(b) Historiographical Review	
(c) Sources	
1. Prologue: Antwerp in German-Belgian relations before 1914	20
(a) Antwerp's economic significance	
(b) The German Colony	
(c) Diplomacy, war plans and the fortress of Antwerp	
(d) Results	
Part A: The German wartime debates about the future of Antwerp	
2. The Conquest of Antwerp, 9 October 1914	38
(a) Before the siege (August-September 1914)	
(b) The siege and conquest	
(c) Consequences	
(d) Results	
3. Antwerp as German war aim	49
(a) General	
(b) Campaigning for a 'German Antwerp' – The German Navy	
(c) Campaigning for a 'German Antwerp' – Bavaria	
(d) Decisions in the Government-General	
(e) Results	
4. The Hanseatic city-states and the prospect of a 'German Antwerp'	64
(a) A Hanseatic administration in occupied Antwerp	
(b) Re-assessing the port competition of Antwerp	
(c) Bremen and the future of Antwerp	
(d) Hamburg and the future of Antwerp	
(e) Decision time in spring 1918?	
(f) Results	
5. Academic economists and the economic conundrum of Antwerp	101
(a) General spectrum of opinion	
(b) Champion for a 'Belgian Antwerp'? Kurt Wiedenfeld	
(c) Wiedenfeld's nemesis: Hermann Schumacher	
(d) Effects of the Wiedenfeld-Schumacher debate	
(e) Results	
6. The perception of Antwerp in the German public sphere	116
(a) German wartime publications on Antwerp	
(b) The special relationship between Antwerp and Germany	
(c) Antwerp as object in the war	
(d) Results	
Part B: Preparations for a 'German Antwerp' during the occupation?	
7. Characteristics of the German occupation regime in Antwerp	147
(a) The Government-General	
(b) The institutions for the province and city of Antwerp	
(c) The local relationship with the Belgians	
(d) Results	
8. Occupied Antwerp and the German war effort	169
(a) The military significance of the fortress and the port of Antwerp	

(b) The economic exploitation (1): requisitions in the port	
(c) The economic exploitation (2): shipping and transport	
(d) Economic exploitation (3): agriculture, industry and finance	
(e) Results	
9. <i>Flamenpolitik</i> in Antwerp	218
(a) General features of <i>Flamenpolitik</i>	
(b) Implementation of <i>Flamenpolitik</i> in Antwerp	
(c) German-Flemish contacts in Antwerp	
(d) Moderation in Antwerp? – The Flemish Belgians	
(e) Moderation in Antwerp? – The Germans	
(f) Results	
10. The German Colony between occupier and occupied	252
(a) Expulsions, August-September 1914	
(b) Exile in Germany	
(c) Return to the occupied city	
(d) The Colony and German war culture	
(e) The Colony as nucleus of a ‘German Antwerp’?	
(f) Results	
11. The German programme of ‘economic penetration’ in Antwerp	285
(a) Commercial enterprises	
(b) Economic penetration	
(c) Results	
12. Epilogue: the end of the war and its aftermath	294
(a) The retreat from Antwerp	
(b) The Antwerp occupation personnel in post-war Germany	
(c) The destruction of the German Colony	
(d) Towards a normalisation of Antwerp-German trade relations?	
(e) Results	
Conclusions	317
Bibliography	328
1. Archives	328
2. Newspapers	336
3. Published Sources	336
4. Works published before 1945	337
5. Works published after 1945	343

Tables

1. Preliminary inventory of goods found in Antwerp port	175
2. Exports from the Government-General to the Netherlands in Belgian Francs, 1917	190
3. Collection of Antwerp port statistics for 1915-1918	198
4. Relative distribution of shipping volume (tonnage) by country	200
5. Distribution of number of ships and their average size (tonnage) by country	201
6. Distribution of employment rates of 228 businesses (including 31 diamond factories) in Antwerp city	205
7. Exports and imports of diamonds to the Netherlands in Belgian Francs	212
8. Value of German-Belgian stock-exchange transactions in Antwerp and Brussels, in German Marks	215
9. Number of students in three German schools	262
10. Reformationskirche: baptisms, confirmations, marriages	263
11. Nationalities in the German School (ADS)	267

Illustrations

1. German illustrated postcard: 'Antwerp we hold fast'	37
2. <i>Ulk</i> cartoon: 'The Shine of the Future'	144
3. German illustrated postcard: 'Occupied'	146
4. Schramm's civilian administration, 1918	154
5. Anti-German graffiti on the cathedral of Antwerp	157
6. Franck's New Year's Day proclamation, Antwerp 1915	165
7. German depot of wood in the port of Antwerp	173
8. The interned German fleet?	183
9. The Hamburg-Bremen <i>Schiffsbesichtigungskommission</i>	183
10. Drawing of the sunken <i>Gneisenau</i> , 1917	185
11. CRB quay in Antwerp port	195
12. Pillaged Factory of Les Grandes Chaudronneries, Hoboken	202
13. Maschmeyer and occupation troops, Hoboken 1916	204
14. Visit of Governor-General von Falkenhausen, May 1917	274

Maps

1. Antwerp's 'hinterland'	24
2. The Belgian Provinces, 1914	36
3. The siege of the fortress of Antwerp	40
4. German occupation zones of Belgium and France (CRB map)	148

Introduction

General

Port cities have always played a particularly important role in the history of settled societies.¹ Water connects at least as much as it divides, and from prehistory to modern times the open sea and inland waterways have been of predominant importance for human communication and trade. Ports are the crucial centres not only of this traffic, but also of much of the road and railway traffic, as they facilitate the ‘transshipment’ of goods from one mode of transport to another. The definition offered by Reginald Loyer is useful: ‘A seaport can best be described as a logistic and industrial junction in the global transport network with a strong maritime character [...]’.² Historically, most ports developed alongside of cities and were managed by them. In large territorial states, these port cities often became known as the ‘gateways to the world’. Indeed, it is traditionally considered a distinct economic and military disadvantage for states to be landlocked. Famous examples for states seeking access to the sea include Peter the Great’s Russia, Serbia before the First World War, and Poland after the First World War, whose access to the sea had been demanded in American President Wilson’s ‘14 Points’.

Wilhelmine Germany is known for its remarkable economic growth, especially from the mid-1890s. Part of this growth was a massive increase of its international trade – the population became to some extent dependent on imported foods, while industry not only increasingly needed to import its raw materials but its profitability came to depend on the exportation of its products.³ While a large portion of Germany’s trade was conducted overland, contemporaries regarded the spectacular rise in sea transport as *the* sign that Germany had arrived on the world market. The parallel growth of the port city of Hamburg, and to a lesser extent Bremen, was one of the most visible symbols for

¹ In recent years, the phenomenon of port cities has come under increased scrutiny from economic historians. See for example the upcoming conference ‘European Port Cities, 17th-20th centuries’, European Association for Urban History, Stockholm 30 Aug. – 2 Sept. 2006. See also Reginald Loyer, ‘Throughput in the Port of Antwerp (1901-2000): an Integrated Functional Approach,’ in Reginald Loyer, Erik Buyst and Greta Devos (eds), *Struggling for Leadership: Antwerp-Rotterdam Port Competition between 1870-2000*, Heidelberg 2003, pp. 275-7.

² Loyer, ‘Throughput,’ p. 30.

³ See for example Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, vol. 1: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist*, Munich 1990.

this development – not only because of the increased transshipment of goods but also because of the success of German shipping companies. The German share of the world shipping tonnage increased from 11% in 1911 to 12% by 1914, signifying a gradual, if slight, emancipation from British shipping and trade.⁴ Moreover, the Kaiser's enthusiasm for everything maritime – epitomised in the civilian sector in his friendship with Albert Ballin, director of the Hamburg Amerika Paketfahrt Aktien-Gesellschaft (HAPAG), then the largest shipping company in the world – brought the German shipping world centre stage in Germany.⁵

The development and growth of a global economy, and Germany's expansion into it, as well as the parallel aspiration of the Kaiser and his government to conduct *Weltpolitik*, also raised an interest in all kinds of global affairs in Germany. In publications there was a sheer inflation of the prefix 'world-' (*welt*). A dictionary of national economy, for example, introduced the following entries in addition to 'world economy' in its edition of 1911: world trade, world traffic and world ports.⁶ Their author, Kurt Wiedenfeld, a pioneer in the economic analysis of seaports, asserted the centrality of the 'world ports' in world traffic and, to a lesser extent, in world trade. More particularly, he maintained that Europe dominated the world economy, and that a group of eight world ports in the north-western corner of Europe formed its centre: London, Liverpool, Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Le Havre.⁷

Germany relied not only on Hamburg and Bremen for its interaction with the world economy, but also on the Belgian and Dutch counterparts, especially Antwerp and Rotterdam. This incongruence of economic geography and political borders – the discrepancy between Germany's economic reliance on the foreign

⁴ BA Berlin, R 901, 76160: Jahresbericht des Vereins Hamburger Rheder 1923/1924. Hermann Schumacher, 'Die Stellung der deutschen Seeschifffahrt im Weltverkehr,' *Technik und Wirtschaft*, 7/7 (July 1914), p. 491.

⁵ See for example Lamar Cecil, *Albert Ballin. Wirtschaft und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1888-1918*, Hamburg 1969, p. 95.

⁶ Ludwig Elster (ed.) *Wörterbuch der Volkswirtschaft*, Jena 1911, vol. 1, p. iv. See also: Werner Conze, 'Imperialismus,' in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 3: Stuttgart 1982, p. 206.

⁷ Kurt Wiedenfeld, *Die nordwesteuropäischen Welthäfen. London - Liverpool - Hamburg - Bremen - Amsterdam - Rotterdam - Antwerpen - Havre in ihrer Verkehrs- und Handelsbedeutung*, Berlin 1903. On Wiedenfeld see chs. 5 and 6 below. See also: Ferry De Goey, *et al.*, 'Trends and Challenges in Comparative Port History: The Case of Antwerp and Rotterdam,' *XIIIth Economic History Conference*, Buenos Aires, July 2002 (<http://eh.net/XIIICongress/>).

ports and its lack of political influence on them – did not lead to any diplomatic problems between Germany and Belgium or the Netherlands. On the contrary, the economic link seemed to improve diplomatic relations. With the exception of some Pan-German voices⁸, neither the German government nor the German public demanded political control of the foreign ports.

During the First World War, by contrast, in governmental circles as well as in the wider public sphere there was a lively discussion about how to tie one of them closer to Germany: Antwerp. World port and Belgian metropolis, Antwerp was considered the second city of the Kingdom of Belgium after Brussels. Together with nine tenths of Belgium, it was occupied by Germany for almost the entire duration of the war. The question of permanent German control over it became early on known in Germany as the Antwerp Question. The aim of the present thesis, then, is to investigate the phenomenon of this Antwerp Question in all its dimensions: its origin and its scope, its military, economic and cultural contexts, and its results. What was the German perception of Antwerp, and what was the actual significance of this port city for Germany during the war?

Following from this research question, it seemed useful to divide the thesis into two parts. Part A deals with the theoretical side of the Antwerp Question, while Part B explores the German activities in the occupied city. Parts A and B are framed by an introductory chapter and an epilogue, respectively giving an overview of the German relationship to Antwerp during approximately a decade before and after the war.

Accordingly, the first chapter (ch. 1) attempts to portray as accurately as possible the economic value for Germany of Antwerp and vice versa. Drawing on the latest research by economic port historians, it lays a basis for subsequent chapters, in which the wartime assertions need to be put into perspective. It also analyses the German presence in Antwerp as represented by the so-called German Colony. Was this immigrant community in any way a harbinger of the military invasion in 1914? At the end, this chapter addresses the question what role, if any, Antwerp played in the war plans of the German army.

⁸ See Winfried Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt: Die Rezeption der Flamenfrage in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit und deutsch-flämische Kontakte 1890-1920*, Melsungen 1989, p. 17. See also ch. 1 below.

Part A starts with a short chapter (ch. 2) on the conquest of Antwerp by the German army in October 1914. It explores the status of Antwerp in the German war strategy before the siege, and it looks at the repercussions of the conquest in Belgium and in Germany. The following four chapters examine the German debates about the future of Antwerp. How did the imperial and federal German governments envision it (ch. 3)? Most intriguingly, how did Germany's own port cities – and sovereign federal states – of Hamburg and Bremen react to the prospect of a German annexation of their Belgian rival (ch. 4)? What was the stance of the impartial experts: academic economists specialising in the world economy (ch. 5)? In what ways, finally, was the Antwerp Question discussed among the German public (ch. 6)?

Part B starts with an introduction of the occupation regime. After a brief description of the German Government-General for occupied Belgium, chapter 7 portrays in detail its local institutions in Antwerp, particularly its local personnel: their self-perception and their interaction with the local population. The subsequent chapters investigate the German policies in the city – as well as in the surrounding province to the extent that they related to the port city. Chapter 8 presents Antwerp as an integral part of the German war effort. What direct use could the Germans get out of Antwerp, in naval, military and economic terms? Chapter 9 looks at the local implementation and relative success of the *Flamenpolitik* – the German wartime policy of winning over the Flemish population of Belgium. Chapter 10 uncovers the fate of the German Colony during the war: did it survive the German invasion of Belgium and to what extent did its members identify with Germany and even become involved in the occupation? Chapter 11 focuses most closely on the extent to which the Germans prepared a long-term conquest of Antwerp.

The epilogue (ch. 12) completes the circle: after looking at how the Germans withdrew from Antwerp, it considers the developments after the war. What was the impact of war and occupation on the relationship between Germany and Antwerp in the immediate post-war period and in the longer term? In other words, was there still an Antwerp Question in Germany after 1918?

Historiographical Review

The topic of this thesis falls into four general areas of the historiography of the First World War: international relations, war aims, occupation, and national minorities. The following paragraphs are intended to give a brief outline of the state of research in these areas as they relate to this thesis, as well as to indicate how it hopes to contribute to them.

The term 'international relations' is meant to refer in the context of this thesis to the general German-Belgian and German-Antwerp relationship in the early twentieth century, particularly before 1914. There is of course a very rich body of works on the foreign policy of Wilhelmine Germany. General studies such as Volker Ullrich's *Die nervöse Großmacht* or Fritz Fischer's *Krieg der Illusionen* have been useful for the pre-war context of this thesis.⁹ On the Belgian side, Henri Pirenne's monumental *Histoire de la Belgique*, and, more recently E.H. Kossmann's *The Low Countries* provide good background information.¹⁰ Directly addressing the German-Belgian relationship are Robert Devleeshower, concentrating mainly on diplomatic and military events, Jacques Willequet, who covers the colonial affairs, José Gotovitch and Winfried Dolderer, who address the German perception of the Flemish emancipation movement, and Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, who very thoroughly deals with the economic relationship before the war.¹¹ There are also several collections of essays which investigate aspects of the cultural relationship.¹² Finally, there are the works that explicitly concentrate on Antwerp and Germany: Karel Veraghtert for the port in the nineteenth century, Reginal Loyen for the port in the twentieth century, and an

⁹ Volker Ullrich, *Die nervöse Großmacht, 1871-1918. Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914*, Bunay 1975.

¹⁰ Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de la Belgique*, vol. 7: *De la Révolution de 1830 à la guerre de 1914*, Brussels 1948. E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, Oxford 1978.

¹¹ Robert Devleeshouwer, *Les Belges et le danger de guerre 1910-1914*, Louvain/Paris 1958. Jacques Willequet, *Le Congo belge et la Weltpolitik (1894-1914)*, Brussels 1962. Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, *La Belgique entre la France et l'Allemagne 1905-1914*, Paris 1994. José Gotovitch, 'La Legation d'Allemagne et le Mouvement Flamand entre 1867 et 1914,' *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 45 (1967). Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*.

¹² Hubert Roland and Ernst Leonardy (eds), *Deutsch-belgische Beziehungen im kulturellen und literarischen Bereich 1890-1940*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999. Rainer Rumold and O.K. Werkmeister (eds), *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism. The Literary and Artistic German War Colony in Belgium 1914-1918*, Columbia 1990.

unpublished Belgian master's thesis on the question of the German 'peaceful conquest' of Antwerp before the war.¹³

There is a substantial amount of literature on German war aims, starting in the 1950s and 1960s with the works of Hans Gatzke, Fritz Fischer, and, specifically on Belgium, Frank Wende. Karl-Heinz Janßen adds an excellent study of the war aims of the German federal states.¹⁴ Since the 1960s, the findings of these authors have been refined and put in internationally comparative perspective by several studies. The work of George-Henri Soutou for the economic dimension and that of David Stevenson for the diplomatic one need to be emphasised in particular.¹⁵ Most of these works point out the particular importance of Antwerp in the German war aims debate. None, however, explores the problematic of the Antwerp Question in all its dimensions. Fischer and Wende provide much detail about the development of the imperial government's position on the future of Antwerp. Yet they hardly deal with the public dimension of the debate and the intervention of the economists.

The German Antwerp Question forms a sub-section of the intellectuals' engagement with the war and with the meaning of the war. Yet most works on this topic concentrate on historians, philosophers and theologians, while the attitudes of economists has been largely neglected.¹⁶ Similarly, there is a

¹³ Karel Veraghtert, 'The growth of the Antwerp port traffic, 1850-1900,' in Herman Van der Wee and Jan Blomme (eds), *The Economic Development of Belgium since 1870*, Cheltenham (1984) 1997. Loyen, 'Throughput.' Gijs Thooft, 'Berlijn-Antwerpen. Economische en politieke aspiraties in Duitsland met betrekking tot de haven van Antwerpen (1886-1918),' unpublished Belgian Masters thesis, Ghent 2001.

¹⁴ Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): a Study of Germany's Western War Aims in the First World War*, Oxford 1966. Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf 1964. Frank Wende, *Die belgische Frage in der deutschen Politik des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Hamburg 1969. Karl-Heinz Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung: Kriegszielpolitik der deutschen Bundesstaaten 1914/18*, Göttingen 1963. See also Jürgen Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate am Ende des Jahres 1917,' *Festschrift für Percy Ernst Schramm*, vol. 2: Wiesbaden 1964. Dietrich Kersten, *Die Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft im Ersten Weltkrieg: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Kriegszielpolitik im kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914-1918*, Hamburg 1963.

¹⁵ Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'Or et le sang: les buts de guerres économiques de la première guerre mondiale*, Paris 1989. David Stevenson, 'Politics of the Alliances,' in Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker and Mary R. Habeck (eds), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, New Haven/London 2000.

¹⁶ A partial exception is Klaus Schwabe's work. Klaus Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Göttingen 1969. Klaus Schwabe, 'Ursprung und Vorbereitung des alldeutschen Annexionismus in der deutschen Professorenenschaft im 1. Weltkrieg,' *VfZ*, 14 (1966). Good insights are also offered by general studies on economists in Wilhelmine Germany, especially: Dieter Krüger, *Nationalökonomien im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, Göttingen 1983. See otherwise for example: Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg*,

growing amount of published research on propaganda and perceptions of the enemy.¹⁷ Yet there is no comprehensive investigation of the wartime portrayal of Belgium in Germany. A number of works address specific aspects, such as the atrocities during the invasion, the Flemish Question during the occupation, and the deportation of Belgian workers.¹⁸ This thesis, then, adds the German image of Antwerp, with particular reference to German economists, to this research.

In general, Belgium in the First World War, despite its contemporary prominence, has been re-discovered by historians only in the past two decades. For a long time few works had been added to the research done in the inter-war period.¹⁹ Recent general works include Sophie de Schaepdrijver's authoritative account and Larry Zuckerman's *The Rape of Belgium*.²⁰ Several detailed studies have been conducted on aspects of the German occupation regime: on *Kirchenpolitik*, *Flamenpolitik* and *Währungspolitik* (policies concerning the church, the Flemish and the currency).²¹ Several works on German industrialists

Berlin 2000. Wolfgang J. Mommsen (ed.) *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Munich 1996. Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*, Cambridge 1990.

¹⁷ For example: David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918: the Sins of Omission*, London 2000. Stefan Kestler, *Die deutsche Auslandsaufklärung und das Bild der Ententemächte im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Propagandaveröffentlichungen während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994. Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 2001. Michael Jeismann, *Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792-1918*, Stuttgart 1992.

¹⁸ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914. A History of Denial*, New Haven/London 2001. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*. Ulrich Tiedau, *[Deutsche Kulturpolitik im besetzten Belgien, 1914-1918]*, forthcoming [2005]. Jens Thiel, 'Belgische Arbeitskräfte für die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft. Deportation, Zwangsarbeit und Anwerbung im Ersten Weltkrieg,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Berlin 2003.

¹⁹ See in particular the Carnegie project: Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale*, Paris/New Haven 1928. Jacques Pirenne and Maurice Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique*, Paris/New Haven 1925. Charles de Kerchove de Denterghem, *L'Industrie belge pendant l'occupation allemande 1914-1918*, Paris/New Haven n.d. [1927]. Fernand Van Langenhove, *L'Action du gouvernement belge en matière économique pendant la guerre*, Louvain 1927. Ludwig von Köhler, *Die Staatsverwaltung der besetzten Gebiete*, vol. 1: *Belgien*, Stuttgart/New Haven 1927. Invaluable bibliographical compilations are: Patrick Lefèvre and Jean Lorette, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale bibliographie*, Brussels 1987. Pierre-Alain Tallier and Sven Soupart, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale. Bibliographie*, vol. 2: *(Ouvrages édités de 1985 à 2000)*, Brussels 2001.

²⁰ Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *De Groot Oorlog: het Koninkrijk België tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam 1997. Larry Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium. The Untold Story of World War I*, New York 2004. See also Sophie De Schaepdrijver, 'Occupation, Propaganda and the Idea of Belgium,' in Aviel Roshvald and Richard Sites (eds), *European Culture in the Great War: the Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 1999.

²¹ Ilse Meseberg-Haubold, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers gegen die deutsche Besetzung Belgiens 1914-1918: ein Beitrag zur politischen Rolle des Katholizismus im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt a.M. 1982. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*. Lode Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme. Vlaanderen tegenover België in de eerste wereldoorlog*, Louvain 1974. Antoon Vrints, *Bezette Stad. Vlaams-nationalistische collaboratie in Antwerpen*

also include significant sections on their activities in occupied Belgium.²² And in the last few years several Ph.D. theses have been completed.²³ Again, the wartime fate of Antwerp has not been analysed comprehensively.²⁴

The term of 'national minorities' concerns the German immigrant community in Antwerp. A range of studies investigate the wartime fate of similar communities in other cities, particularly in Great Britain and in South and North America.²⁵ While there are some studies on the German Colony in Antwerp, most stop their account with the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the expulsion of all German citizens.²⁶ The only exceptions are a chapter in the Belgian master's thesis of Antoon Vrints and two essays by the same author.²⁷ In this way, this thesis intends to close an important gap.

tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog, Brussels 2002. Tiedau, *Kulturpolitik*. Reinhold Zilch, *Okkupation und Währung im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Belgien und Russisch-Polen, 1914-1918*, 1994.

²² For example on Hugo Stinnes: Brigitte Hatke, *Hugo Stinnes und die drei deutsch-belgischen Gesellschaften von 1916. Der Versuch der wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Belgiens im Ersten Weltkrieg durch die Industrie-, Boden- und Verkehrsgesellschaft 1916 m.b.H.*, Stuttgart 1990. On Carl Duisberg: Thomas Portz, *Großindustrie, Kriegszielbewegung und OHL, Siegfrieden und Kanzlersturz: Carl Duisberg und die deutsche Außenpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Lauf a.d. Pegnitz 2000.

²³ On Belgian workers: Thiel, 'Belgische Arbeitskräfte.' On police in Brussels: Benoît Majerus, 'Occupations et logiques policières. La police communale de Bruxelles pendant les première et deuxième guerres mondiales (1914-1918 et 1940-1944),' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Brussels 2004. On German cultural policies Tiedau, *Kulturpolitik*. On institutions and policies of the occupation regime: Christoph Roolf, University of Düsseldorf, thesis in progress.

²⁴ Aspects investigated include for example: Louis Franck: J. Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog,' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Militaire Geschiedenis*, (1977-1978). Flemish collaboration: Vrints, *Bezette Stad*.

²⁵ See for example the works of Panayi and Luebke, especially: Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War*, Oxford 1991. Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I*, Illinois 1974. Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict During World War I*, Louisiana 1987.

²⁶ See for example: Greta Devos, 'Inwijking en ingratie van duitse kooplieden te Antwerpen in de 19de eeuw,' in Hugo Soly and Alfons Thijs (eds), *Minorities in Western European Cities, Sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries*, Brussels 1995. Greta Devos and Hilde Greefs, 'The German Presence in Antwerp in the Nineteenth Century,' *IMIS Beiträge*, 14 (June 2000). See also Geert Pelckmans and Jan van Doorslaer, *De Duitse Kolonie in Antwerpen 1796-1914*, Kapellen 2000. Esther Huhn, 'Die Allgemeine Deutsche Schule: Beitrag zur Geschichte der Auslandsdeutschen in Antwerpen,' unpublished Belgian Masters thesis, Antwerp 1973.

²⁷ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*. Antoon Vrints, 'De Klippen des Nationalismus. De eerste wereldoorlog en de ondergang van de duitse kolonie in Antwerpen,' *Cahiers d'histoire du Temps Présent*, /10 (Oct. 2002). Antoon Vrints, "'Moffen buiten!'. De anti-Duitse rellen in augustus 1914 te Antwerpen,' *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale*, Brussels 2005.

Sources

The same four categories of international relations, war aims, occupation and national minorities can be usefully employed for an overview of the source material on which this thesis is based.

As indicated above, the existing secondary literature has proved useful for the first category, German-Belgian diplomatic and economic relations. I have supplemented this mainly by files from the Belgian Foreign Ministry (MAE Brussels) and the marine department of the Belgian transport ministry (AGR Brussels), as well as by German consular reports on shipping movements in Antwerp during the war (BA Berlin and PA AA Berlin).

Despite the rich literature on German war aims, the second category, I have found it necessary to revisit many of the known primary sources, especially those in the *Bundesarchiv* and in the *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes*, in order to tease out the significance of Antwerp as precisely as possible. In addition, I have assembled less well-known material from regional German archives. Those of Hamburg and Bremen should be highlighted in particular, as the documentation from these city-states is relatively rich. This permitted, almost for the first time, a detailed presentation of a crucial aspect of the Antwerp Question – the stance taken by the ‘sovereign’ city-states of Hamburg and Bremen on the future of their Belgian port rival.

Concerning the public dimension of the Antwerp Question, I have concentrated on the wartime publications: in the first instance those that deal directly with Antwerp, while I have taken samples only of those on Belgium or generally on war aims. This ‘Antwerp Literature’ could be supplemented with newspaper and journal articles, which were mainly found in a number of collections of clippings. The detailed index to the collection of the Belgian *Bureau Documentaire* have been particularly useful (AGR). Further, in order to get at the bottom of the specialised debate among academic economists, a number of their personal papers (*Nachlässe*) have been consulted: particularly that of Hermann Schumacher in the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum*.

My research on the third category, the German occupation of Belgium, faced the challenge of an initial lack of sources: the 70,000 folders of the Government-General housed in the Prussian army archive in Potsdam were almost completely

destroyed at the end of the Second World War.²⁸ I found three types of sources, however, that helped to compensate a little for this loss.

First, the various departments of the Government-General, including the central Civilian Administration, the Bank Department and the Department for Trade and Industry, wrote regular reports on their activities. Many of these reports were widely distributed and thus made their way into a number of today's federal and regional archives in Germany – though complete collections are rare. Other fragments of the occupation files were also found in the *Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv* (BAMA Freiburg) and in the central Belgian archive, the *Archives Générales du Royaume* (AGR Brussels). Unfortunately, hardly any official reports could be found from the provincial administration for Antwerp. This was partially compensated for, however, by the second type of source: Robert Paul Oszwald's unfinished manuscript on the history of the Civilian Administration, copies of large sections of which are stored in the *Hauptstaatsarchiv* Wiesbaden (HStA Wiesbaden). Oszwald worked on this in the late 1920s, when he was an archivist in the Prussian army archive, so he could use the rich material that has since been lost.²⁹

Thirdly, I traced a number of personal papers of the employees of the occupation regime. They range from the leader of the national-liberal party, Ernst Bassermann (BA Koblenz), who was posted to the Military Government of Antwerp for a few months in 1914/1915, to Robert Schulze, the official in the imperial ministry of the interior responsible for liaisons with the Civilian Administration for occupied Belgium (HStA Dresden). Perhaps the most significant ones, however, are those by the three Presidents of the Civilian Administration for Antwerp, the Hamburg senators Justus Strandes, Friedrich Sthamer, and Max Schramm (StA Hamburg). They include fragments of their correspondence as well as a number of confidential reports to the Senate of Hamburg.

For the fourth category, concerning the German Colony in Antwerp, a few 'unusual' archives and 'hidden' sources have been consulted: most noteworthy is

²⁸ Gerhard Schmid, 'Die Verluste des ehemaligen Reichsarchivs im Zweiten Weltkrieg,' *Archivar und Historiker: Studien zur Archiv- und Geschichtswissenschaft. Zum 65. Geburtstag von Otto Meisner*, East-Berlin 1956. Fischer, Griff, p. 865.

²⁹ Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Wiesbaden, 1150 (G. W. Sante), 37: Robert Paul Oszwald, 'Geschichte der deutschen Zivilverwaltung im besetzten Belgien, 1914-1918,' vol. I, 'Vorwort', p. 10.

the *Nachlaß* of Alfred von Tirpitz (BAMA Freiburg), which contains correspondence with three leading members of the Colony, the archives of the German Protestant congregations in Antwerp (OAPK Antwerp), the privately published annual reports of the German School, as well as some of the Belgian files on the German businesses that were sequestered after the war (RA Beveren-Waes). These sources have allowed several interesting glimpses inside the Colony, on the basis of which it has been possible to construct a picture of the wartime mentalities in the Colony.

Chapter 1: Prologue. Antwerp in German-Belgian relations before 1914

The German-Belgian relationship in the two decades or so before the First World War was mostly amicable and constructive. It is true that the increasing antagonism between Germany and the Triple Entente, specifically the nervous sabre-rattling of Wilhelmine *Weltpolitik*, had a negative impact on Germany's diplomatic relations with neutral Belgium as well.³⁰ And culturally, the small country tended to lean towards France – and in the case of Dutch-speakers to the Netherlands – rather than to its eastern neighbour. But there were also many strong currents which brought Germany and Belgium closer together. There was a general mutual high esteem in both countries for the respective achievements in the arts and sciences. Henri Pirenne's great history of Belgium, for example, was published first in Germany.³¹ Politically, too, the Belgian government, dominated by the Catholic party since the 1880s, often looked favourably towards the *Zentrum* in Germany rather than to anti-clerical France.³² Most important of all, however, were the German-Belgian economic links. One of the most prominent elements among these links was the port of Antwerp. Indeed, as some German economists argued during the war, Antwerp played a sort of mediating role between the two countries, as their interests in Antwerp converged to the point of co-dependency.³³ This chapter, accordingly, will outline the significance of Antwerp for Germany before the war of 1914, mostly in economic, but also in cultural and military terms.

Antwerp's economic significance

According to the official statistics, Belgium was before the war the fifth largest commercial nation in the world. Its total external trading volume in 1913

³⁰ Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*, esp. chs. 16, 19, 21. Willequet, *Congo belge*, p. 328. Devleeshouwer, *Les Belges et le danger de guerre 1910-1914*, pp. 123 ff.

³¹ De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 144.

³² Pirenne, *Histoire de la Belgique*, p. 388. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, pp. 517-18. See also Roland and Leonardy (eds), *Deutsch-belgische Beziehungen im kulturellen und literarischen Bereich 1890-1940*.

³³ See chs. 5 and 6 below, particularly the wartime publications by Heinrich Waentig. See also Greta Devos, 'Die Deutschen und die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum ersten Weltkrieg,' in Gustaaf Asaert, A. De Vos, Greta Devos and Fernand Suykens (eds), *Antwerpen und Deutschland: Eine historische Darstellung beider Beziehungen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Antwerp 1990.

amounted to 5,050 million Belgian Francs in imports and 3,716 million Belgian Francs in exports. Germany (with Luxemburg: the *Zollverein*) and France were by far the most important trading partners, each accounting for roughly 20% of this Belgian trade. Next were Great Britain, the Netherlands, the USA, Argentina, Russia and British India.³⁴ In addition, Belgium served as an important ‘turntable’ for international commerce. According to the same statistics, it facilitated the transit of goods worth approximately 2,460 million Belgian Francs in 1913. The German *Zollverein* was the most important contributor to this transit trade. It was the origin of goods worth over 1,000 million Belgian Francs, or 41% of the total. This was almost twice the amount of the French transit, which contributed barely 23%, and more than five times the British transit, which accounted for less than 8%.³⁵ Thus, this quick overview of Belgium’s international trade illustrates the great significance of Germany for the Belgian economy before the war: while Germany was far from playing a dominant role, it was a most important trading partner.

Conversely, Belgium figured less prominently in Germany’s trade compared to other countries. It was considerably eclipsed by the UK, Russia, the USA, Austria-Hungary and France – though its share of approximately 5% was still respectable.³⁶ Indeed, there were many economic links to Belgium, which had a greater significance than this percentage would indicate. Historically, Belgian capital and industrial expertise had played an important role in the industrialisation of the Prussian provinces of Rhineland and Westphalia during the early nineteenth century, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the businesses of heavy industry on both sides of the border were greatly

³⁴ These figures are for Belgium’s ‘general’ trade: the Belgian ‘special’ trade plus the foreign transit trade passing through Belgium (whereby each transit ton is counted twice: in the Belgian ‘general’ import and in the ‘general’ export statistics). Modern research gives the following figures for Belgian special trade in 1913, after removing official and ‘hidden’ transit figures and after adjusting prices: 3,111 and 2,018 mill. Belgian Francs for respectively imports and exports. Edwin Horlings, ‘The International Trade of a Small and Open Economy. Revised Estimates of the Imports and Exports of Belgium (1835-1990),’ *NEHA Jaarboek*, 65 (2002), pp. 110-42. See also the Belgian wartime inquiries, as depicted in Van Langenhove, *L’Action du Gouvernement Belge*, pp. 192 ff. For the above-quoted figures see: Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics. Europe 1750-1993*, London 1998, pp. 576, 591. Otto Quelle, *Belgien und die französischen Nachbargebiete. Eine Landeskunde für das deutsche Volk*, Hamburg 1915, p. 121. See also De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 11.

³⁵ Quelle, *Belgien Landeskunde*, p. 121. Bitsch, *Entre la France et l’Allemagne*, pp. 115-17. See also Heinrich Waentig, ‘Der Handel,’ in Hans Gehrig and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918, pp. 230-1, 238-9.

³⁶ Mitchell, *Historical Statistics*, p. 611. Waentig, ‘Der Handel,’ pp. 236-7.

intermeshed.³⁷ Furthermore, there was the above-mentioned German transit trade through Belgium. Belgian studies before the war showed that the figures in the official Belgian statistics for transit goods were in fact too low. For various reasons, particularly in order to deal with customs expeditiously, large amounts of goods destined for other countries were declared as Belgian imports. The real volume of the transit trade was thus estimated to be approximately 40% larger than officially recorded.³⁸ But even the official figure quoted above for German exports passing through Belgium in 1913, over 1,000 million Belgian Francs, is impressive. Put into context, it is roughly equal to the German exports to Russia, Germany's third largest market, in that year.³⁹ The general mutual commercial importance, and particularly the common interest in this transit trade, found expression and further support in the German-Belgian trade treaties of 1891 and 1904.⁴⁰

How was the Belgian trade facilitated? According to the official Belgian statistics for 1913, approximately 44% of the total general trade (as expressed in their monetary value) was transported by rail, slightly less (43.5%) by seagoing ships, and the interior waterways carried the rest.⁴¹ The Belgian railways and the Belgian seaports, in other words, were crucial to Belgian trade. The seaports were particularly important in the Belgian special imports (57%), and in the export of transit goods (57%). Antwerp took pride of place among the seaports. It was *the* 'national port', accounting for over 80% of the total Belgian shipping tonnage.⁴² Indeed, according to Fernand Baudhuin, the entire Belgian economy

³⁷ See for example: Greta Devos, *Kapitalverflechtungen in der Montanindustrie zwischen dem westlichen Deutschland und Belgien von etwa 1830 bis 1914*, Bonn 1985. Hans Seeling, *Télémaque Fortuné Michiels, der Phoenix und Charles Détilleux. Belgiens Einflüsse auf die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert*, Köln 1996. See also Heinrich Waentig, 'Belgien. Das wirtschaftliche Problem,' in Walter Goetz (ed.) *Deutschland und der Friede. Notwendigkeiten und Möglichkeiten deutscher Zukunft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918.

³⁸ The Belgian seminal work is: Charles De Lannoy, 'La Belgique, pays de transit,' *Revue économique internationale*, (1911). See also: Paul Ehlers, *et al.*, *Die Verkehrswirtschaft des Antwerpener Hafens. Eine zusammenfassende Studie*, Hamburg/Bremen 1915, p. 5. Waentig, 'Der Handel,' p. 231. Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*, pp. 88, 115.

³⁹ Mitchell, *Historical Statistics*, p. 611. See also Paul Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam und die deutsche Rheinmündung*, Stuttgart 1918, p. 50.

⁴⁰ For a detailed description of these treaties and the surrounding negotiations see Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*, chs. 1, 2. See also Mihail N. Cosoiu, *Die belgische Handelspolitik der letzten 40 Jahre*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1914, esp. pp. 22, 44.

⁴¹ Figures taken from Waentig, 'Der Handel,' p. 239. The figures according to weight are different: approximately 43% over land, 31% by sea, 24% on interior waterways, 2% unknown.

⁴² Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*, p. 118, n. 12.

was centred on Antwerp to such an extent that there had been hardly any other national stockpiling centres for raw materials, particularly not for foodstuffs.⁴³

During the nineteenth century the rise of trading volume in Antwerp, and the concomitant physical expansion of its port, had been dramatic. It had become one of the most important ports in the world. New York alone was clearly larger, while the ranking position of Antwerp with respect to Hamburg, London and Rotterdam depended entirely on the type of statistic used.⁴⁴ The statistics for Antwerp were as follows. In 1912, the Antwerp port authority registered the arrival of 6,973 seagoing vessels. Their combined volume was 13,757,000 register tons. The cargo they loaded and discharged had a total mass of 18,156,000 metric tons and a total value of 5,097 million German Marks.⁴⁵ This throughput of cargo was facilitated along the quays of the Scheldt (22 km long in 1910), as well as in the interior docks (water-surface in 1910: 937,450 m²).⁴⁶ To the sea, Antwerp was connected to more than 500 international ports by regular services.⁴⁷ On the landside, Antwerp reached far into the interior of the European continent. As can be seen on Map 1, its ‘hinterland’ included some of the most industrial and populous regions of Europe. Apart from Belgium itself, Antwerp was the dominant port for northern France and for western and southern Germany, while its ‘normal influence’ extended as far as Paris, Vienna, and, to the South, almost as far as Milan.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that Antwerp was primarily a ‘Belgian’ port – not only, of course, in the political sense, but also economically. The import and export needs of Belgium had always provided an irreplaceable critical mass for Antwerp’s traffic.⁴⁹ As the first country to industrialise after Britain, and with an almost equally strong free trade policy, Belgium had been an early player in the ‘first

⁴³ Fernand Baudhuin, *Histoire économique de la Belgique 1914-1939*, vol. 1: *Grandeurs et misères d'un quart de siècle*, Brussels 1944, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Figures taken from Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*, pp. 18, 21, 44.

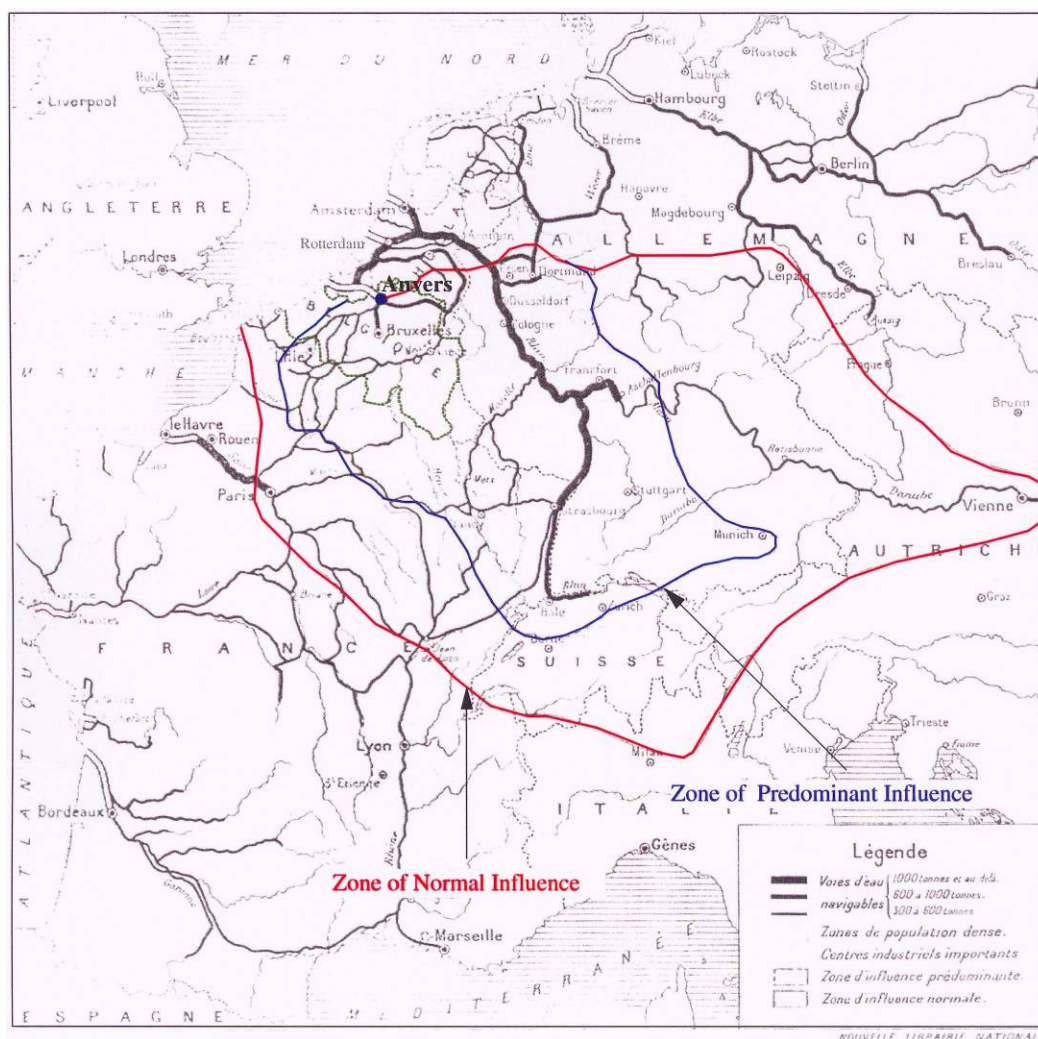
⁴⁶ Jan-Albert Goris, *Antwerpen. Een statistiek handboekje over de jaren 1918-1928*, Antwerp 1930, p. 32. See also: Loyen, 'Throughput,' p. 41.

⁴⁷ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (MAE) Brussels, 4556, III: print ‘Services réguliers de navigation maritime desservant le port d’Anvers (Juin 1914)’. Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Stuttgart, E 130a, 1150: Hecht – Tafel, 22 Oct. 1915.

⁴⁸ Charles Stiénon, *Anvers et l'avenir de l'Entente. De l'influence prépondérante des moyens de transports dans la lutte économique*, Paris 1918, p. 301. See also Wiedenfeld, *Die nordwesteuropäischen Welthäfen*, esp. pp. 303, 313, 349-50.

⁴⁹ According to Loyen this was true until the 1960s. Loyen, 'Throughput,' p. 55. Veraghtert, 'Antwerp port traffic,' p. 264.

Map 1: Antwerp's 'hinterland'



Source: Stiénon, Charles, *Antwerp et l'Avenir de l'Entente. De l'influence prépondérante des moyens de transports dans la lutte économique*, Paris 1918.

globalisation' during the nineteenth century – and it had thus itself created the preconditions for a large 'world port'.⁵⁰ Indeed, even though Belgium's industries were generally somewhat dated and in decline on the eve of the First World War, Belgium managed to increase its share of European exports from 6.7% in 1900 to 7.3% in 1910.⁵¹ Consequently, as Reginald Loyen's recent analysis of Antwerp's 'throughput' – the total 'cargo-flow' – demonstrates, in the same year two-thirds of all goods entering or exiting the port on its landside had a Belgian origin or destination.⁵² Nevertheless, since the turn of the century,

⁵⁰ Loyen, 'Throughput,' p. 40.

⁵¹ Fernand Suykens, *et al.*, *Antwerp. The New Spring*, Antwerp 1991, p. 26.

⁵² Loyen, 'Throughput,' p. 45. See also similar figures in Van Langenhove, *L'Action du Gouvernement Belge*, pp. 199-200.

there had been repeated newspaper campaigns in France and Belgium against the German presence in Antwerp, warning that it was in danger of becoming a 'German port'.⁵³ What were the facts behind this claim?

Belgium had in fact always promoted the port of Antwerp abroad. As noted above, the country successfully attracted large volumes of transit goods, almost half of which were transported through Antwerp. Antwerp was connected to northern France by a dense network of rivers and canals, while it was also close to the estuary of the Rhine – by far the most important commercial waterway in Europe. Its link with the Rhine, however, had the distinct disadvantage that it was located in the Netherlands, where its arch-rival, the port of Rotterdam, would always absorb the lion's share of the traffic.⁵⁴ Consequently, virtually since its independence in 1830, the Belgian state advocated a direct link between Antwerp and the German (Prussian) Rhineland: a railway line, which became quickly known as the 'iron Rhine'. The resulting line between Antwerp and Cologne, one of the first international railway connections, was ceremoniously opened in 1843. Thirty years later another, shorter connection to Mönchengladbach was constructed through Dutch territory.⁵⁵

In addition to this infrastructure, the Belgian transport policy was crucial to making the port of Antwerp attractive in Germany. Not only were the state railways operated at no profit, making freight rates cheap in general; the government also consistently set a particularly low railway tariff for transit goods. This policy was confirmed in the German-Belgian trade treaties of 1891 and 1904. As a result, Antwerp gained a noticeable cost-advantage compared to Bremen and Hamburg: railway transport was cheaper from cities, such as Nuremberg, that were up to 80 km closer to one of the German ports. Of course, these Belgian transit tariffs were not exclusively fashioned because of Germany. They were equally useful for breaking into the highly protectionist French market. Most decisively, they were a reaction to similarly low Dutch tariffs:

⁵³ See for example R. de Rautelin de la Roy, *Les Allemands au port d'Anvers*, Brussels 1912. See further: Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*, esp. pp. 129-32. Devleeshouwer, *Les Belges et le danger de guerre 1910-1914*, pp. 87 ff.

⁵⁴ On the Rhine traffic see: J. F. Bubendey, *Die Rheinschiffahrt und ihre Zukunft*, Hamburg 1915. Ehlers, et al., *Verkehrswirtschaft*, pp. 77-82. Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*.

⁵⁵ Heinrich Waentig, 'Antwerpen-Köln,' *Der Belfried*, 1/8 (Feb. 1917). Hans Schweers and Henning Wall, *Eisenbahnen rund um Aachen. 150 Jahre internationale Strecke Köln-Aachen-Antwerpen*, Aachen 1993.

transport to Rotterdam was cheaper than to the German ports in regions up to even 100 km more distant.⁵⁶

Until 1946, there are no precise, detailed figures for Antwerp's transit trade. In addition, statistics about the origin and destination of goods are generally unreliable.⁵⁷ The statistics for all of Belgium quoted above, however, suggest that the largest contingent of Antwerp's transit trade was German. A German wartime study estimated Antwerp's total trade with Germany – most of which was likely to be transit goods – to amount to 3,865,000 tons in 1912. Importantly, more goods came from Germany than were sent to Germany: 2,269,000 tons compared to 1,596,000 tons. For approximately every 5 tons of goods that were imported to Germany via Antwerp, 7 were exported.⁵⁸ In this way, the German transit contributed to a 'balance of tonnage' in the port of Antwerp. It was a defining characteristic of Antwerp, that the volume of its exports nearly equalled that of its imports. This was an unusual feature for a 'world port' – Hamburg's imports were about twice its exports – and it had far-reaching implications. The high volume of exports attracted a large number of liner services – large freight ships with regular schedules and fixed destinations – because in Antwerp they were usually guaranteed to fill up again the space left by the goods they unloaded. For the producer in the hinterland this translated into cheaper overseas freight rates and the fastest possible delivery. The net result was that Antwerp had become known as a 'naturally cheap' port.⁵⁹

While Germany was thus a very important client of Antwerp, this importance should be put into perspective. According to the statistical time series compiled by Richard Loyen, in the decade before 1914, two-thirds of Antwerp's

⁵⁶ Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*, pp. 66-72. On the Belgian railway budget see for example Josef von Grassmann, 'Verkehrswesen,' in Hans Gehrig and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918, p. 248.

⁵⁷ Horlings, 'Revised Estimates.' Reginald Loyen, Centre of Economic Studies Economic History Workshop, University of Leuven: Port of Antwerp Online Database Timeseries, (in 'Rotterdam-Antwerp. A Century and a Half of Port Competition, 1880-2000') Louvain 2003 (<http://www.econ.kuleuven.ac.be/ew/academic/econhist/realdata.htm> - last accessed: May 2005).

⁵⁸ Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*, p. 45.

⁵⁹ E. Dubois and M. Theunissen, *Les Ports et leur fonction économique. Anvers et la vie économique nationale*, Louvain 1906. Hermann Schumacher, *Antwerpen. Seine Weltstellung und Bedeutung für das deutsche Wirtschaftsleben*, Munich 1916, pp. 38-48. Reginald Loyen, *Macroeconomische Functieverhuivingen in de haven van Antwerpen. Reconstructie van een databank en eerste analyse van de maritieme overslag (1900-1997). Discussion Paper*, Louvain 1998, p. 43.

continental trade was Belgian national trade, while half of the maritime exports, and a third of the maritime imports were with Great Britain.⁶⁰

Similarly, Britain was the most important contributor to the shipping traffic in Antwerp. Approximately 43% of the entire shipping tonnage servicing Antwerp before the war was British. The German fleet came in second place with 32%.⁶¹ This strong foreign domination of Antwerp's shipping had a long tradition, and it was one of the reasons for the small size of the Belgian merchant fleet, which made up only 6% of tonnage in Antwerp. Although the Belgian government had made some attempts to create a larger national fleet, its more consistent policy was to attract the foreign shipping companies to call at Antwerp, often by striking special deals, from reduction of port duties to subsidies.⁶²

In the last decades before 1914, German steamship companies had arguably profited the most from such deals. DDG Kosmos from Hamburg was the first to include Antwerp in its regular steamer itinerary – to the west coast of South America in 1873. The Belgian government granted it financial aid a year later. By the 1890s most of the large German companies had established a presence in Antwerp, with the mighty Hamburg-Amerika Linie and the Norddeutscher Lloyd, its rival from Bremen, taking up the largest share.⁶³ The most important and most loyal company was the Norddeutscher Lloyd. Its local representative in Antwerp was Heinrich Albert von ('de') Bary, a German immigrant and one of the most powerful businessmen in the city. It was in no small degree due to his negotiations with King Leopold II and with Chancellor Bismarck in 1885 and 1886 that the Norddeutscher Lloyd included Antwerp, rather than a Dutch port, on its new government-subsidised route to Australia in 1886. By 1913, the Norddeutscher Lloyd occupied the best berths along the quays of the Scheldt. It

⁶⁰ Loyen, 'Throughput,' p. 45.

⁶¹ Greta Devos, 'German Ocean Shipping and the Port of Antwerp, 1875-1914. An Introduction,' in C. et al Koninckx (ed.) *Proceedings of the International Colloquium "Industrial Revolutions and the Sea," Brussels 28-31 March 1989*, Brussels 1991, p. 220.

⁶² Devos, 'German Ocean Shipping.' Archives Générales du Royaume (AGR) Brussels, T 454, 92; Paul Ehlers, 'Die belgischen Seeschiffahrtsinteressen,' Bericht Nr. 11 der Abt. VII, Politische Abteilung bei dem Generalgouvernement in Belgien, Brussels 1918. See also Greta Devos, 'Belgische overheidsteun aan scheepvaartlijnen, 1867-1914,' *Collectanea Maritima*, 4 (1990).

⁶³ Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Munich, MH 11925: *Reichsamt des Innern* (RdI), 'Wirtschaftliche Verhältnisse in Belgien,' confidential print [June] 1915, p. 34.

was perceived as a quasi-local company, rivalling the Belgian-American Red Star Line for being 'the pride of Antwerp'.⁶⁴

The result of these activities was a remarkable rise in prominence of the German flag in the Belgian port: the proportion in 1913 of 32% quoted above had started off as a mere 7% in 1875. It had gradually broken the dominance of the British flag, which had accounted for almost two-thirds of Antwerp's shipping in the 1870s. Just like the German share in the turnover of goods, however, the significance of the German shipping in Antwerp on the eve of the First World War should not be exaggerated. The British tonnage had not grown as dramatically as the German one, but it was still considerably larger, as mentioned above. Moreover, as Greta Devos concludes, the German lines were not present in all of Antwerp's regular overseas destinations. German companies took little part in services to sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. Most significantly, they were not represented at all in the important North American services.⁶⁵

These important economic links between Antwerp and Germany were further accentuated by the presence of German immigrants in Antwerp, many of whom consciously formed a very self-confident and very visible German Colony in the city. This 'cultural' aspect of the Antwerp-German relationship needs to be looked at next.

The German Colony

According to the official Belgian population statistics for 1910, out of about 38,700 foreigners in Antwerp city (=13% of the city's population), some 8,300 held a German passport.⁶⁶ The Germans formed thus the second largest group of foreigners, after the Dutch, who were numbered at 17,000. The potential membership of the German Colony, however, was much larger. First, if one includes the towns that formed part of the Antwerp agglomeration (total population of 445.000), the number of *Reichsdeutsche* can be comfortably

⁶⁴ Devos, 'German Ocean Shipping,' esp. p. 220. On von Bary and the 'Nordeutscher Lloyd' see in particular Thooft, 'Berlijn-Antwerpen,' pp. 8-22. For a list of the companies' locations in the port see Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*, pp. 171-83.

⁶⁵ Devos, 'German Ocean Shipping,' esp. pp. 118, 225.

⁶⁶ Lieven Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking (1880-1944)*, Tiel 2000, pp. 9, 10, 29.

increased to over 10,000 souls (or 2.4% of this total).⁶⁷ Secondly, it is not entirely clear to what extent the Belgian census counted all family members. Thirdly, many Germans, even of the first generation, had acquired Belgian citizenship. Greta Devos estimates that about 5.000 of these ‘naturalised’ Germans lived in Antwerp on the eve of the First World War.⁶⁸ Finally, there was a sizeable number of transient German residents: from young apprentices to emigrants en-route to the New World. These factors explain why contemporary estimates of the size of the German Colony varied greatly. The German economist Heinrich Waentig, for example, calculated during the war that the ‘German element’ made up about 10% of Antwerp’s population, implying a size of between 30,000 (city) and 45,000 (agglomeration).⁶⁹ His calculation must have included all descendants of all German immigrants since the eighteenth century. Modern historiography usually agrees that around 20,000 people were at least loosely associated with the German Colony.⁷⁰

The single most important reason for the German immigration to Antwerp was the port. This is confirmed by its timing, its geographic spread and its social composition. It is no accident that the first modern immigration of note to Antwerp occurred in the 1790s, after revolutionary France had annexed Belgium (the Southern Netherlands ruled hitherto by Austria) and forced the Dutch to reopen the Scheldt estuary to Belgian shipping.⁷¹ Further, while ‘German’ immigrants came from as far away as East Prussia and Austria, the majority were from Rhineland and Westphalia – in other words from within the ‘natural hinterland’ of Antwerp. The largest professional group, finally, were merchant businessmen.⁷²

The merchants were both the nucleus and the dominant group of the German Colony in Antwerp – and historical research has focused almost exclusively on them. Throughout the ‘long’ nineteenth century, Antwerp was a favourite place

⁶⁷ Hermann Weck, *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, Munich 1916, p. 85, quotes 10,772 Reichsdeutsche for the province of Antwerp.

⁶⁸ Devos, 'Inwijking en ingratie van duitse kooplieden te Antwerpen in de 19de eeuw,' p. 137.

⁶⁹ Waentig, 'Belgien. Das wirtschaftliche Problem,' p. 373. See ch. 5 for more on Waentig.

⁷⁰ Devos, 'Inwijking en ingratie van duitse kooplieden te Antwerpen in de 19de eeuw,' p. 137. Pelckmans and Doorslaer, *De Duitse Kolonie in Antwerpen 1796-1914*, pp. 24-5.

⁷¹ Greta Devos. Devos, 'Die Deutschen,' p. 49. During the eighteenth century, the commercial place of Antwerp was secondary to Brussels and Ghent. Nevertheless, it attracted some German immigration – for example 19 merchants from the city of Iserlohn. Wilfried Reininghaus, *Die Stadt Iserlohn und ihre Kaufleute (1700-1815)*, Dortmund 1995, p. 225.

⁷² Devos and Greefs, 'German Presence,' esp. pp. 107-8.

for west German business families to send their sons as part of their apprenticeship.⁷³ Many of them, usually younger sons, came back later. Often they opened a branch of an international trading house, and then gradually became independent. From the most recent immigrants to the 'old' families who were long-naturalised Belgian citizens, they maintained strong business and family links with Germany. Within Antwerp, like all foreign merchant groups, they apparently preferred forming partnerships amongst themselves, rather than with Belgian firms.⁷⁴

Importantly, they also organised themselves socially, with the express purpose of preserving their German culture. Thus, by 1900, they had a Catholic and two Protestant German-speaking congregations, they managed a large secondary school and several primary schools, and they met in about fifty social and athletic clubs, from choirs to charities to a branch of the German Colonial League. This social life attracted further Germans to the city: clerks, servants, teachers, pastors, doctors, bakers, publicans and hairdressers.⁷⁵

In this way, the Germans were a clearly distinct group in Antwerp public life, and they self-consciously formed a 'colony'. It would be wrong to regard this as a collective failure of integration, however. The activities of the Colony represented only one aspect in the lives of most Germans in Antwerp. The wealthiest merchants formed an integral part of the liberal francophone elite of the city. The same people who supported, for example, a charity that took care of poor German immigrants, could also be generously sponsoring a Belgian children's hospital. Many were reported to have spoken French at home. The second and third generations often considered themselves as Belgians of German origin.⁷⁶ Poorer Germans, on the other hand, especially when they spoke a Low-German dialect, tended to become easily absorbed by the Flemish-speaking lower classes.⁷⁷ This important aspect of the German immigration to Antwerp is

⁷³ See for example: Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv (WWA) Dortmund, Firmenfestschriften: *Zur einhundertjährigen Jubel-Feier des Fabrickgeschäfts von P.C. Turck Wwe am 7. November 1891*, p. 6. See also Devos and Greefs, 'German Presence,' p. 111.

⁷⁴ Devos and Greefs, 'German Presence,' p. 115.

⁷⁵ Pelckmans and Doorslaer, *De Duitse Kolonie in Antwerpen 1796-1914*, p. 25.

⁷⁶ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 301. Robert Paul Oszwald and Franz Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' in Otto Scheel, Paul H. Ruth and Hans Schwalm (eds), *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums*, vol. 1: Breslau 1933.

⁷⁷ Oud-Archief Protestantse Kerk (OAPK) Antwerp, D 9, d: Böcking, Ohlendorff, Eichler to Zivilverwaltung Antwerpen, 14 Jan. 1915.

barely recognised in the historiography, and it is difficult to quantify their numbers. Many of them ended up having little official contact with the institutions of the Colony – and they sent their children to their local Belgian school.

It would be equally a mistake to regard all the different German clubs and institutions as having the same ethos and the same agenda. Nevertheless, since the foundation of the *Kaiserreich* in 1871, there appeared to have been a slight shift from a patriotic to a nationalist attitude in many of the clubs. The main German school (Allgemeine Deutsche Schule, or ADS), for example, was founded in the mid-nineteenth century primarily in order to preserve the German language of the immigrants' children and to instil in them a sense of German culture. By the beginning of the twentieth century it had become an institution designed to integrate its graduates into German, rather than Belgian, society.⁷⁸

In the 1890s, two umbrella groups were founded to better represent the presence and interests of the Germans in Antwerp. One of them, the *Zentralausschuss der deutschen Kolonie*, organised regular feasts and celebrations, such as the Kaiser's birthday (*Kaisergeburtstagsfeier*) every January. Four men in particular were responsible for trying to create a sense of national cohesion among the Germans. These were Heinrich Albert von Bary, mentioned above, the business magnates Wilhelm von Mallinckrodt and Richard Böcking, as well as the director of the German School since 1902, Bernhard Gaster. Their effort is illustrated by an incident that occurred in 1910. During the *Kaisergeburtstagsfeier* a Protestant Pastor made some condescending remarks in his sermon about the backwardness of Catholicism. Bary, though Protestant himself, wrote a furious letter of complaint to the church executive afterwards, accusing the Pastor of sowing disunity among the Germans in Antwerp, and thereby destroying three decades of hard work.⁷⁹ Three years later Bary organised perhaps the most spectacular demonstration of the unity of the Antwerp-Germans and of their German national identity. He publicly called on them to make a voluntary financial contribution for the German army bill of

⁷⁸ HStA Munich, MK 11881: Genehmigung der Stiftung des Vereins Allgemeine Deutsche Schule in Antwerpen, 1913. Bernhard Gaster, *Bericht über das 74. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1914, pp. 11-16. See also Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 127.

⁷⁹ OAPK Antwerp, D 5, a: Bary to Böcking, 4 Feb. 1910.

1913 – and it appears that his appeal met with a generous response. Both Chancellor and Kaiser acknowledged this patriotic contribution from Antwerp.⁸⁰

The increasing nationalism of at least the leadership of the German Colony was arguably also a reflection of the increased self-confidence and nationalist boisterousness of Wilhelmine Germany. In this perspective, it is perhaps important to emphasise that the increased nationalism of the Colony was not aggressive before the war. In neutral Belgium, the Germans actually managed well the art of combining their German identity with loyalty to the Belgian state. This is a point that the leading figures, especially Bary, emphasised on numerous occasions.⁸¹ Similarly, among the German clubs in Antwerp was a branch of the *Alldeutscher Verband* (Pan-German League) since its foundation in 1891. Heinrich Albert von Bary was its president; yet he closed down the branch when the German head office claimed that Belgium should be annexed to Germany, and when it unsuccessfully attempted to link up with the Flemish Movement in Belgium. Nevertheless, this did not end the relationship between the German Colony and the *Alldeutsche*, since another branch subsequently opened in Hoboken, a suburb of Antwerp.⁸² What is clear, however, is that the Antwerp-Germans were in no way involved in clandestine preparations of a German military conquest of Antwerp, as was claimed in some French and Belgian newspaper articles before and during the war.⁸³

Diplomacy, war plans and the fortress of Antwerp

This leads to the final element of this survey of the German-Antwerp relationship: the diplomatic-military aspect. Was Antwerp a target for German territorial expansionism and for German war plans before 1914?

⁸⁰ Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BAMA) Freiburg, N 253 (NL Tirpitz), 425, fols. 1-3: Bethmann Hollweg to Bary 28 March 1913; Kühn (Reich Treasury) to Bary 27 June 1914; Imperial proclamation by Wilhelm II, 14 May 1914.

⁸¹ See for example: Historisches Archiv (HA) Cologne, 1068 (Mallinckrodt), 67: 'Das Festessen bei Herrn und Frau Bary' in *Deutsche Zeitung für Belgien*, (Antwerpen-Brüssel) Oct. 1897. See also Devos, 'Die Deutschen,' p. 68.

⁸² Willequet, *Congo belge*, pp. 74-75. Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 17. Oszwald and Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' p. 363. J. Claes, *The German Mole. A Study of the Art of Peaceful Penetration*, London 1915, p. 76, writes that the Antwerp branch continued to exist 'in secret' after its dissolution. On the *Alldeutsche Verband* and the Flemish Movement see: Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 9-28.

⁸³ Bitsch, *Entre la France et l'Allemagne*. Thoof, 'Berlijn-Antwerpen.'

Just as no German government had seriously envisaged waging a war in order to annex any part of Belgium, Antwerp had not been the object of clandestine plans for German territorial expansion. There actually was a minor territorial dispute between Germany and Belgium concerning ‘neutral Moresnet’, a border strip of a few square kilometres. It had never been allocated to a state at the Congress of Vienna, and was since jointly administered by Prussia and Belgium. Though both sides claimed full sovereignty over the area, neither was prepared to let this diplomatic curiosity impinge on the normally good relations between them.⁸⁴ The increasing antagonism between Germany and the Entente, on the other hand, put great strain on the German-Belgian relationship. Despite its ‘perpetual neutrality’ guaranteed by the ‘five great’ European powers, Belgium was in danger of becoming involved in the event of an armed conflict. On the German side, two factors disquieted the Belgians: the erratic nature of Wilhelm II and reports of the German war plans.

In January 1904 Wilhelm disturbed German-Belgian relations during the state visit of Leopold II to Berlin. According to Belgian reports he had impressed on Leopold that a war between France and Germany was imminent, and further, that Belgium would have to choose sides. Most scandalously, he offered French territory to Leopold should he make the ‘right’ choice – and ended this extraordinary offer with a thinly veiled threat should Leopold not ally with Germany. Leopold, in evading an answer, apparently offered that Wilhelm should make a return visit to Belgium, where he could discuss this issue with the Belgian government. A date was even fixed for 15 August of that year. Interestingly, the meeting was scheduled to take place in Antwerp rather than in Brussels – though the historiography offers no clues to explain this choice of venue. Even more intriguingly, it seems that the meeting was postponed at the intervention of none other than von Bary. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the exact circumstances of von Bary’s intervention, or what he knew about the meeting and what his motivation was. In the end, the meeting never materialised and it rather seems as if it had never been taken very seriously.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Rune Johansson, *Small State in Boundary Conflict. Belgium and the Belgian-German Border 1914-1919*, Lund 1988.

⁸⁵ Devleeshouwer, *Les Belges et le danger de guerre 1910-1914*, pp. 53-55.

The incident did not seem to have had lasting consequences. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the same combination of offer and threat reappeared in the first draft of the German ultimatum to Belgium in July 1914.⁸⁶ Relations between the two monarchies meanwhile improved at the latest with the new Belgian King Albert I in 1909. They were at their height during the mutual royal visits in 1910. During his stay in Belgium Wilhelm did not make it to Antwerp – though he awarded Richard Böcking with an illustrious Prussian medal (the ‘Roter Adlerorden III. Klasse’) to honour his work for *Deutschtum* in Antwerp. It was one of a series of such medals for Böcking, which would culminate with the iron cross during the war.⁸⁷

During the time of peace between 1871 and 1914, both the German and the French armies contemplated at some point marching through Belgium in the course of a future war. But as the French abandoned the idea – and they had primarily considered it as a response to a prior German infringement of Belgian neutrality – the Germans began to embrace it under General von Schlieffen.⁸⁸ In some of the early war plans during this phase, Antwerp was a primary target. A memorandum of 1897, for example, envisaged a swift move through Belgium as well as the Netherlands. Securing Antwerp in order to pre-empt a similar British strike was a top priority.⁸⁹ In Schlieffen’s plans, however, the Belgian fortresses, including Antwerp, played hardly any role in the westward march of the German armies. This tactical mistake was revised by Moltke, though only in respect to Liège and Namur. By the time of the July crisis of 1914, the German war plan still dictated the fatal invasion of Belgium: but purely for geo-strategic reasons in order to defeat the French army. Antwerp, both its fortress and its port, had been relegated to a military object of tertiary importance. And its peacetime economic appeal played certainly no role in the German decision to invade Belgium.⁹⁰

Results

This outline of the Antwerp-German relationship before 1914 leads to the following conclusions. Both Belgium and Germany benefited greatly from close

⁸⁶ Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 17.

⁸⁷ Gaster, *Bericht 1914*, p. 42. Bernhard Gaster, *Bericht über das 76. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1916, p. 27. See also ch. 10.

⁸⁸ Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1: *To Arms*, Oxford 2001, p. 191-4, 179.

⁸⁹ Jonathan Steinberg, 'A German Plan for the Invasion of Holland and Belgium, 1897,' *The Historical Journal*, 6/1 (1963).

⁹⁰ Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan. Critique of a Myth*, London 1958, esp. pp. 137, 161.

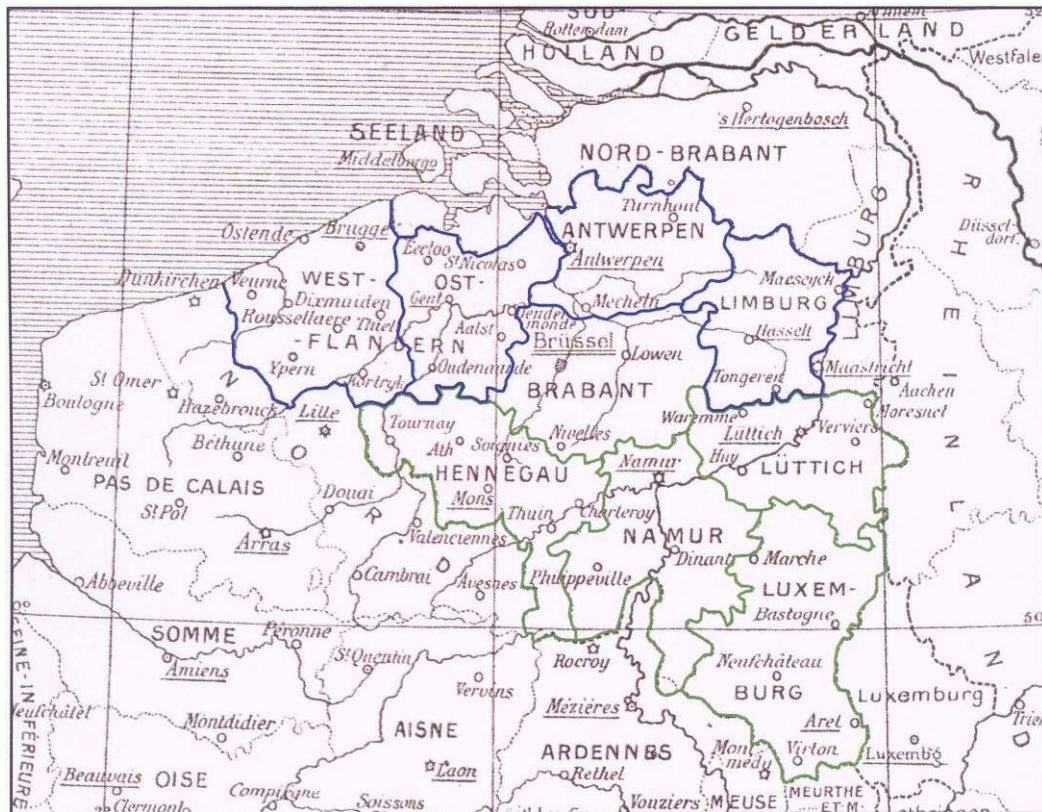
economic cooperation with respect to the port of Antwerp. Most business groups in both countries lobbied for the improvement of Antwerp's infrastructure with its German hinterland. While Antwerp's success meant fierce competition for the German seaports of Bremen and Hamburg, it was also an area of expansion for the latter's shipping companies and merchant houses, many of whom established a base in Antwerp. It could thus be argued that Germany got the best deal out of Antwerp: it had virtually unrestricted access to the port, without having to share any of the costs of running it. Germany benefited from Antwerp in other areas as well, notably as a customer for the raw diamonds from German Southwest Africa.⁹¹

The German Colony, accordingly, was prosperous and peaceful. With the fluent transition of its members' national identity from naturalised Belgian to patriotic German, it arguably played an important 'mediatory' role between the two countries and the two cultures. It is true that in the last years before the war, there was a slight but notable shift towards a more forceful demonstration of a German nationalist identity, pushed in particular by some of its leading figures. Nevertheless, this was still balanced by the continued expressions of solidarity with and loyalty to the Belgian hosts. In military terms, finally, Antwerp had all but disappeared from the German army's maps on the eve of the war. Although sometimes ironically called 'a German port' in both the Belgian and German press, Antwerp played no role in the German decision to invade Belgium in August 1914.

The war, however, took a different course than the German army had hoped and planned for, and it laid siege to the city in late September 1914 – raising the following questions: why did the Germans decide to conquer Antwerp, how was it taken and what were its consequences? This will be examined in the next chapter.

⁹¹ Alfred Eppler, *Der Diamant im deutschen Gewerbe und auf dem Weltmarkt*, Krefeld 1917, p. 8.

Map 2: The Belgian provinces, 1914



Source: Otto Quelle, *Belgien und die französischen Nachbargebiete. Eine Landeskunde für das deutsche Volk*, Hamburg 1915.

Part A: The German wartime debates about the future of Antwerp

Illustration 1. ‘Antwerp we hold fast’

‘Fest halten wir Antwerpen’

Albert, nun ist versunken
 Dein Staat und hat getrunken
 Den Todestrank, den herben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Nun ist es uns gelungen,
 Die Meerbraut ist bezwungen
 Nach heißem, blut’gem Werben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Trutzbollwerk ist gefallen,
 Das stolzeste von allen,
 Und Belgien liegt in Scherben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Wer’s uns will wieder nehmen
 Den soll das bitter grämen.
 Das Fell woll’n wir ihm gerben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Es wollt’ mit seinen Wichten
 Britannien uns vernichten,
 Da ward’s ihm zum Verderben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Riß es noch größere Wunden,
 Nie sei’s uns mehr entwunden,
 Wenn Tausende noch sterben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Protzt nur, Ihr brit’schen Hasser!
 Wir werden auf dem Wasser
 ein Weltreich doch erwerben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Erkaufte ward es so teuer
 Mit Heldenblut und Feuer
 Für uns und unsre Erben –
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.
Nie wollen wir es lassen,
 Ob sie uns auch drum hassen
 Und sich vor Neid verfärben,
 Fest halten wir Antwerpen.

‘Antwerp we hold fast’

*A*lbert, your state is sunk,
*D*eath’s cup has been drunk,
*T*he bitterest repast –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*N*ow we have success
*T*he sea’s bride is possessed.
*T*he bloody courtship past –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*T*umbled is the fortress
*T*hat once of all was proudest.
*I*n shards is Belgium cast –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*W*hoever would from us retake
*W*ould rue most bitter his mistake
*W*e’d tan his hide to last –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*E*ngland and her wights
*O*ur ruin had in sight.
*T*hus was their destruction blast –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*R*egardless of our wounds,
*W*e will never yield this ground,
*I*f thousands more should die –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*P*roud you be, you hateful British!
*B*ut we’ll on the waves establish
A global empire, built to last –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*E*xpensive to acquire
*W*ith hero’s blood and fire
*T*o our heirs it will be passed –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.
*N*ever will we let it go
*E*ven if they hate us so
*A*nd with envy turn aghast –
*A*ntwerp we hold fast.

Chapter 2: The Conquest of Antwerp, 9 October 1914

The German army had strongly considered breaching Belgian neutrality in a war against France ever since Alfred von Schlieffen had been chief of the Prussian General Staff at the turn of the century. As indicated in chapter 1, Schlieffen thought that the great Belgian fortresses of Liège, Namur and Antwerp could be largely ignored by the German troops, as they marched west and south to envelop and engage the French enemy. Moltke the younger, commenting on Schlieffen's 'great memorandum of December 1905', insisted that Namur and especially Liège had to be taken at the earliest stage possible, so that the Germans could fully utilise the dense Belgian railway network. In the case of Antwerp, he urged that a 'formal siege' rather than a loose 'investment' was necessary, though he did not accord the same geo-strategic and logistic importance to Antwerp as to Liège. When Moltke later placed the German transit route through southern and central Belgium only, Antwerp seemed to have moved again to the margins of his military map.⁹² Accordingly, for almost the first two months of the German campaign in 1914, the German army simply sealed off the Belgian government and army in their 'national redoubt' of Antwerp.

Before the siege (August-September 1914)

Even when the Germans set up the Government-General in occupied Belgium on 23 August, they initially did not consider extending it over Antwerp and the rest of northern Belgium. On the contrary, the first guidelines defining purpose and organisation of the Government-General assumed that this area would remain under Belgian control – and a Belgian responsibility. Thus, they included the instruction to deport a large section of the working class population from the industrial areas around Liège and Charleroi to Antwerp. This would remove a security risk to the German army and it would free up Belgian supplies of food for German consumption.⁹³

⁹² Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan. Critique of a Myth*, esp. p. 137. Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 168-9, 176-9.

⁹³ Moltke's 'Grundzüge', 23 Aug. 1914, in Helmut Otto and Karl Schmiedel, *Der erste Weltkrieg. Dokumente*, Berlin (East) 1983, no. 18, esp. p. 78. Telegram Bethmann Hollweg to

The geography of the military campaign did not limit the geographic reach of the war aims plans that the civilian offices of the German Government started to discuss at that time. Bethmann Hollweg's sketch that he sent to Delbrück on 9 September (the 'September programme'), assumed that Germany could do with all of Belgium as it wished, with Antwerp designated for annexation either by Germany or by the Netherlands. Similarly, once the Government-General had been set up, its civilian head, von Sandt, hoped that its jurisdiction could be extended over the entire country before long.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, these civilian plans did not influence the operational objects of the German army. Just as it was military strategy that led the Germans to bypass Antwerp during August, military events drew their attention to it during September. The strategic defeat at the battle of the Marne (ca. 5-12 September) led Falkenhayn, replacing Moltke as chief of the General Staff, to attempt a northward envelopment of the Allied forces (the 'race to the sea'), which quickly directed the German army towards the Belgian coast. In addition to that, the Belgian army in Antwerp, located just north of the extended German flank, demonstrated that it posed a real threat to the German supply and communications lines, especially the important railway connection from Cologne to Brussels. During two sorties, on 25-26 August and on 8-13 September, each coordinated to Allied counter-attacks against the German advance, it pushed back the German defences, retaking Mechelen (Malines) and endangering the German hold over Brussels and Louvain. Accordingly, the order from German General Headquarters to capture Antwerp came on 9 September.⁹⁵

Delbrück, 23 Aug. 1914, in BA Berlin, R 1501, 119339, fol. 7. Falkenhayn's 'Anhaltspunkte', 29 Aug. 1914, in BA Berlin, R 1501, 119340, fol. 83.

⁹⁴ See also ch. 7. Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf special edition 1967 (reprint 1984), pp. 93-4. Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SB PK) Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: 'Verwaltungsbericht des Verwaltungschefs bei dem Generalgouverneur in Belgien' (= report Sandt), 14 Sept. 1914, p. 3; report Sandt, 27 Sept. 1914, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Erich von Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914. Unter Benutzung der amtlichen Quellen des Reichsarchivs*, Oldenburg/Berlin 1925, p. 21. Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 5: *Der Herbst-Feldzug 1914. Im Westen bis zum Stellungskrieg. Im Osten bis zum Rückzug*, Berlin 1929, pp. 221-2. Hans von Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung des Generalgouvernements in Belgien 1914-1918,' in Max Schwarte (ed.) *Der Große Krieg*, vol. 10: Berlin 1923, p. 4. Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 257, 263-70. See also Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 42.

by the natural barrier consisting of rivers – the Scheldt to the west, the Rupel and small Nethe to the south and south-east – as well as of low-lying ground that could easily be flooded, surrounding almost the entire fortress. The Belgian army had calculated that this ‘impregnable’ fortress – said to be the third largest in the world, after Paris and Amsterdam – could withstand an army of siege of 300,000 soldiers for an entire year.⁹⁶ Yet, in 1914, this calculation was flawed in at least three respects.

First, the Belgian defenders expected to be reinforced by a sizeable friendly army. In the event, due to the rapid German advance, neither the British nor the French army commands could send a relief force to Antwerp without dangerously weakening their own positions. Moreover, as France was the original target of the German attack, the French army was more inclined to think in terms of the Belgian army helping them out, rather than vice versa. This subtle difference became more apparent later, when King Albert’s refusal to submit to the joint Allied command put a strain on Belgian-Allied relations. But it was already present in August, when the Belgian Army retreated into Antwerp instead of moving south to link up with the French, as Joffre had expected, and, conversely, when the French did not contribute to the defence of Antwerp.⁹⁷ The British, it is true, toyed with the idea of reviving to some extent the old plan of establishing their operational basis in Antwerp, which had largely been abandoned by 1908. During the last days of August, British marines had started to prepare the landing of troops in Ostend but were quickly withdrawn again.⁹⁸ When on 2 October Churchill misunderstood the Belgian government’s decision to leave Antwerp to mean the military abandonment of the fortress, he campaigned vigorously for sending a large relief force to Antwerp – which the Belgians had urgently requested for days. But although this led to a British-

⁹⁶ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 23. Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 270. See also R. Gils, ‘Antwerpen, nationaal reduit van België (1859-1914),’ *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Militaire Geschiedenis*, 29/7-8 (1992).

⁹⁷ Strachan, *To Arms*, esp. pp. 216-17, 271. Laurence Van Ypersele, ‘Antwerpen,’ in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds), *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, Paderborn (2003) 2004.

⁹⁸ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 19, speaks of ‘three battalions under General Aston’. Yet according to Leonard Sellers, *The Hood Battalion. Royal Naval Division: Antwerp, Gallipoli, France 1914-1918*, London 1995, p. 13, Aston, in charge of the Royal Naval Division, only left England on 19 September. Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 270, speaks of ‘a brief appearance by some British marines at Ostend’, which sparked off exaggerated speculations at German General Headquarters about a large-scale British landing.

French promise to provide more than 50,000 soldiers for Antwerp, the bulk of this force never got farther than Ostend and Ghent.

What remained was Churchill's own 'Antwerp adventure', as he personally accompanied the Royal Naval Division on a mission to 'save Antwerp'. However, this was mostly a moral gesture: it was too little too late to have a notable effect on the course of the siege. The three brigades of the division numbered just under 10,000 men, most of whom were fresh recruits with a minimum of military training, and only one battalion arrived in Antwerp early enough (3 October) to join the Belgians in combat. The other two merely took up positions between the outdated forts of Antwerp's second line of defence during the night of 6/7 October, only to endure the German bombardment of the city and to retreat in the evening of the 8th. Similarly, they did not have time to assemble their big marine guns, some of which consequently fell to the Germans.⁹⁹

The second flaw in the theory of Antwerp's impregnability was that the most modern fortifications had not been fully completed when war broke out. Many forts still lacked structurally crucial parts of their concrete walls, and their most powerful howitzers were still awaiting their delivery from Krupp in Essen. Similarly, the Belgians assumed that the enemy's siege guns had to be limited in size in order to stay mobile. The third flaw was that they did not expect shells larger than 21 cm. The forts stood thus little chance against the 'secret' German 42 cm 'Big Bertha' guns and the 30.5 cm Austrian howitzers.¹⁰⁰

Thus, instead of a year, it took the Germans thirteen days to conquer the famous fortress. On 27 September, General von Beseler's III Reserve Army Corps launched the attack from the southeast; pushing back the advance positions of the Belgian field army and training the big siege guns on the forts along the river Nethe, which they began to hit the next day (Map 3). The Belgian defenders consisted mainly of the field army of 80,000 soldiers and the fortress garrison of 70,000. Von Beseler had originally two reserve and one marine division under his command, but he was gradually reinforced by another six

⁹⁹ See esp.: Sellers, *Hood Battalion*, pp. 14-26. Also: Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 270-2. Mamet, *Le rôle d'Anvers*, Paris 1920, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁰ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, photographic insets. Alexander D. Goltz, *Belagerung von Antwerpen, 1914: Geschosswirkungen der österreichisch-ungarischen 30.5 cm. Motor-Mörserbatterien; 12 Kunstblätter nach Originalen von A. D. Goltz in Antwerpen nach der Natur gemalt, mit Genehmigung des Stellvertretenden Generalstabes in Berlin*, Vienna 1915.

miscellaneous brigades: totalling up to 120,000 soldiers. He also had 173 heavy guns, though only 13 of them were of the 'heaviest' calibres.¹⁰¹

By 2 October, Beseler's troops had stormed the forts Waelhem, Wavre-St.Catherine and Koningshoyckt, forcing the Belgians to abandon fort Lierre, too, and retreat behind the flooded Nethe. By the evening of the 6th, the Germans had secured the crossing on almost the entire line of attack. The Belgian defenders had repulsed several German advances during those four days, and their fierce resistance had resulted in street fighting in the towns of Lierre and Duffel; both sides suffered heavy casualties. At around the same time, Beseler's left flank attempted to cross the Scheldt at Dendermonde, to the southwest of Antwerp. Although the Belgian army prevented this, it tied up a large contingent of its troops and it convinced the Belgian command that there was an immediate danger of being cut off from the Allies. Consequently, most of the field army left for Ostend during the night of 6/7 October, followed by the King a few hours later. The 6th division, the fortress troops, as well as the Royal Naval Division were ordered to continue the defence 'to the very end' (*à outrance*).

Von Beseler, however, dispatched an ultimatum to surrender and started the bombardment of the city at midnight on 7 October. This was to last with varying degrees of intensity for 36 hours. Almost the entire civilian population fled in panic to the Dutch frontier. As Beseler's left flank finally managed to cross the Scheldt near Dendermonde, the Royal Naval Division, the rest of the Belgian field army and a large portion of the garrison also retreated towards Ostend, while the commander of the fortress, General Deguise, took up position in fort St. Marie on the left-hand side of the Scheldt. With no military authority left in Antwerp, the burgomaster and other civilian delegates negotiated the surrender with von Beseler during the afternoon on 9 October in the town of Contich. Threatening to resume the bombardment of the now open city, Beseler blackmailed them into agreeing that the remaining intact forts would surrender unconditionally within a day. Both sides signed the terms of the 'Convention of Contich'; Beseler had conquered Antwerp. On the 10th, Deguise confirmed the

¹⁰¹ Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 270. Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 34. Reichsarchiv, *Der Herbst-Feldzug 1914*, p. 243.

surrender and let himself be taken prisoner. Most of the remaining fortress troops fled to the Netherlands, many in civilian clothes.¹⁰²

Consequences

After the conquest of Antwerp, both Allies and Germans controversially reviewed the event. For the Allies, especially for the Belgians, the question was whether the fortress was abandoned too early, or whether the German advance could have been delayed for another few days. Many Germans, on the other hand, queried why the Belgian field army was allowed to ‘escape’. It is worthwhile to examine these two controversies briefly, as they give a good indication of the military significance of the conquest.

Surveying a selection of the available military literature, there seems little doubt that the Belgians – and the Royal Naval Division – could indeed have held out longer. There is even room for speculation as to whether the outermost forts were given up too quickly.¹⁰³ Early in 1915, the Government-General’s corps of engineers carried out a study of the effect that the bombardment of the heavy artillery had had on six of the seven major forts that had fallen by 7 October. Its perhaps surprising result was that the defensive capacity of these forts in terms of firepower was still high. Despite over 2,000 shells of the 42 and 30.5 cm calibres shot at them, 44 out of their 65 long-range and anti-assault guns (7.5 to 15 cm) in their armoured turrets remained intact – almost 68%. The implied conclusion is spelled out by Erich von Tschischwitz, who was first officer of Beseler’s general staff, ten years later: ‘In the same circumstances, but defended by German troops, Antwerp would not have fallen as quickly.’¹⁰⁴

A close reading of the original study, however, casts doubt on this assertion. If one takes into account only the crucial four forts named above, which were attacked between 28 September and 2 October, the nominal percentage of usable cannons drops to below 58. Further, many of these cannons were in fact not

¹⁰² The ‘Convention of Contich’ is reprinted in: Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, pp. 107-8: appendix 3. See also Beseler’s own accounts in BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler), 52: Beseler to his wife, 10 Oct. 1914. Also: Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, pp. 29-93. Reichsarchiv, *Der Herbst-Feldzug 1914*, pp. 232-41. Tollen, *Étude sur la durée de la résistance de la position fortifiée d’Anvers*, Brussels 1931. Emmanuel De Bom, *Een bladzijde geschiedenis van Antwerpen, 7-9 October 1914, ten bate van het Antwerpsch Comité voor Hulp*, Antwerp 1915, esp. pp. 12-13. Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 270-3. Sellers, *Hood Battalion*, pp. 13-26.

¹⁰³ As previous footnote (102).

¹⁰⁴ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 100.

usable because of the collapse of access corridors to the turrets or because of noxious fumes. Most importantly, while the study suggests that improvements to the forts – such as ventilation systems – could have made them more resistant, overall, such type of forts had become obsolete.¹⁰⁵

Assuming, then, that the Belgian defenders had made the most out of the forts according to their actual condition, there remain two ways in which the defence of Antwerp could have been prolonged. First, after the retreat from the Nethe on the 6th, the Belgian field army could have stayed and created a new line of defence, either in conjunction with the old, but still manned and armed, ring of forts, or on the elevated ground around Contich. This is what von Beseler had expected them to do.¹⁰⁶ However, although it seems likely that this would have postponed the capitulation of the fortress, there would have been serious drawbacks. It would not have postponed the bombardment of the city, which was chiefly conducted by the long-range lighter artillery, and it would have considerably increased the danger for the entire Belgian army to become entrapped in Antwerp. As Hew Strachan argues, even if the British and French contingents, which were assembling in Ghent and Bruges at the time, had advanced into Antwerp, it would have dangerously over-extended the Allied front.¹⁰⁷

Secondly, after the retreat of the Belgian field army, resistance could have continued in the remaining forts of the outer line, particularly on the left-hand side of the Scheldt. While this would have forced the Germans to expend more ammunitions and troops, its strategic value is doubtful: unlike the forts of Liège, the relevant forts of Antwerp did not stand in the way of the German advance and could have been largely ignored by the new 4th army under Duke Albrecht,

¹⁰⁵ Freiburg BAMA, PH 30 I, 252: 'secret' print von Bailer, General des Ingenieur- und Pionierkorps beim General-Gouverneur in Belgien: 'Denkschrift über die Ergebnisse der Beschießung der Festungen Lüttich, Namur, Antwerpen und Maubeuge sowie des Forts Manonviller im Jahre 1914,' Brussels 1915, esp. pp. 15, 52. See also the tables from this study in Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 106, appendix 2b, esp. footnote 2.

¹⁰⁶ BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler), 52: Beseler to his wife, 6 Oct. 1914. Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 272.

which probably would still have incorporated most of Beseler's troops as it marched towards the Yser.¹⁰⁸

This Belgian controversy arguably stems from a sense of humiliation from the rapid fall of the 'national redoubt' but it seems best resolved with the realisation that the retreat from Antwerp had been a skilful undertaking that led to the successful resistance at the Yser. The German controversy, on the other hand, went in the opposite direction. Its starting point was the success of the conquest and it ends with the realisation that the biggest 'prize', the Belgian field army, had escaped.

In fact, when von Beseler bullied the civilian delegates from Antwerp into signing the capitulation of the fortress, the Convention of Contich, he took possession of an emptied city. Troop movements along the Belgian coast had been reported, but the aerial observation at his disposal had been insufficient to realise the full extent of the Belgian retreat. On the 9th and 10th of October, he attempted to set a trap between Antwerp and Ghent, but his troops met only the last Belgian and British contingents and largely failed to engage even them.¹⁰⁹ Thus, although there was a considerable booty of materiel – apart from the raw materials, which will be discussed later, there were 1,300 cannons with 900,000 rounds of ammunition – the Germans made very few prisoners.¹¹⁰ Most tellingly, the Belgian field army was not mentioned for five days in the German army's jubilant press releases after the conquest.¹¹¹

In Germany, the conquest was celebrated as one of the greatest German victories. The 'emperor's bell' (*Kaiserglocke*) was rung in Cologne, crowds celebrated in the streets of Berlin and the imperial flag was raised everywhere – it was one of the last occasions of the manifestation of popular 'war

¹⁰⁸ See in particular the overview of this post-war Belgian controversy in: Tollen, *Étude sur la durée de la résistance de la position fortifiée d'Anvers*, pp. 20-30, esp. p. 29, whose arguments in defence of the Belgian decisions convince the most.

¹⁰⁹ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, pp. 94-5. Reichsarchiv, *Der Herbst-Feldzug 1914*, pp. 243-5. Mamet, *Le rôle d'Anvers*, p. 40. Strachan, *To Arms*, pp. 272-3.

¹¹⁰ 2,500 Belgian soldiers of the field army and 1,500 of the garrison were taken prisoner after the conquest. Approximately 30,000 Belgian fortress troops and 2,000 British soldiers had been forced to flee into the Netherlands, where most of them were interned. BAMA Freiburg, PH 3 (*Generalstab*), 53, report Bartenwerffer, 14 Oct. 1914. See also: Van Ypersele, 'Antwerpen.' Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 93. Hermann Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg 1914. Nach Berichten der Zeitgenossen*, vol. 5: *Antwerpen*, Berlin/Leipzig 1914, p. 23.

¹¹¹ See in particular Mamet, *Le rôle d'Anvers*, pp. 40-1.

enthusiasm'.¹¹² Even though many newspapers cautioned that the battle that decided the war was being waged on the Aisne in France, the conquest of Antwerp was presented as a turning point in the war. Its spectacular aspect ('impenetrable fortress') was fully exploited by the supreme army command to divert attention from the lack of progress since the retreat from the Marne in early September – of which the full significance as a defeat had of course been glossed over. Even Beseler himself, entering Ghent on 13 October, was hopeful that the conquest could prove to be 'the trigger for general military progress'.¹¹³ Once his troops got stuck on the Yser, however, he soon lost this optimism, writing home that: 'Of course, at home everything appears greater and more splendid than here.'¹¹⁴ Significantly, a month later, when it had become clear that the Germans had failed to achieve a breakthrough on the Yser, he complained bitterly that the German army would not be in that situation if only he had been given the means of conquering Antwerp earlier: the siege artillery and an additional army corps.

Indeed, the eighteen days between the supreme army command's order to capture Antwerp and the launch of the attack had been very frustrating for Beseler. Originally, in late August, his III reserve army corps had been stationed north of Brussels to hold the Belgians in Antwerp in check – it was hardly sufficient to break the third largest fortress in the world. The pre-war plans of the German General Staff had envisaged a complete encirclement with eleven divisions, with the main force of the attack directed at the eastern forts, where the terrain was most suitable.¹¹⁵ While Beseler planned his single concentrated attack from the southeast, he was all too aware of the possibility of the Belgian army escaping to the west and requested additional troops to cross the Scheldt at Dendermonde. But most of the troops that were sent to him were immediately re-entrained in Brussels because of the desperate situation at the Marne. Worse, at one point the order to take Antwerp was shelved and Beseler was subordinated to Governor-General von der Goltz. The two ageing generals could not stand each

¹¹² BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler), 52: Beseler to his wife, 10 Oct 1914. *Kölnische Zeitung*, no. 1116 (10 Oct. 1914, 1 morning edition). Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, p. 54. See also Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany*, Cambridge 2000, p. 111.

¹¹³ BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler), 52: letter Beseler [to his wife?], 13 Oct. 1914.

¹¹⁴ BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler), 52: letter Beseler [to his wife?], 19 Oct. 1914.

¹¹⁵ Tschischwitz, *Antwerpen 1914*, p. 25.

other, each accusing the other of bungling.¹¹⁶ The real problem, however, seems to have been not the rivalry between Goltz and Beseler but the pressing lack of manpower in the aftermath of the battle on the Marne. In this way, it seems unlikely that an earlier conquest of Antwerp would have been possible or even desirable within the confines of the German objective of delivering a quick knockout blow against the French army.

Results

The German conquest of Antwerp was the result of the bad turn that the progress of the German army took at the beginning of September. As a side show to the subsequent ‘race to the sea’ movement of the Allied and German armies, the military significance of the conquest was limited. Objectively, the most important aspect of it was that the Belgian army finally joined its allies and formed a formidable line of defence with them. Nevertheless, both the Belgians and the Germans involved in the defence/conquest of Antwerp, speculating whether their side could have got more out of it, seemed to have attributed a greater, quasi-mythical significance to it. This is particularly true of the Germans, who were able to exploit the emotions raised by the conquest in many ways: the half-hearted Allied support for the defence of the fortress was proof of their fundamental egotistic disloyalty to the Belgians, whereas the relatively short bombardment showed the German respect for the city’s cultural heritage;¹¹⁷ the conquest itself was of course proof of German military superiority, and an indication to the Germans that their army was winning; finally, by extending the occupation regime over almost the entire country, the conquest also appeared to be the foundation stone of a more permanent German control of Belgium.

¹¹⁶ There are revealing comments in Beseler’s correspondence and diary: BAMA Freiburg, N 30 (Beseler): 53: letter Beseler 5 Sept. 1915; 67: transcript from his diary, entries for 15 and 28 Sept. 1914. Similarly, see: BAMA Freiburg, N 224 (Truppel), 27, fol. 19: Goltz to Truppel, 5 Jan. 1915. Colmar von der Goltz, *Denkwürdigkeiten, bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Friedrich Freiherr von der Goltz, Oberst a.D. und Wolfgang Foerster, Oberarchivrat am Reichsarchiv Oberstleutnant a.D.*, Berlin 1929, p. 356 ff.

¹¹⁷ On the bombardment and the German attempt to preserve cultural monuments see: Oscar Freiherr von der Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre*, Berlin 1931, p. 128.

Chapter 3: Antwerp as German war aim

Germany went into war in August 1914 without any clearly defined aims.¹¹⁸ The German government's initial objective was simply the military defeat of its enemies. Its primary purpose was to break through the perceived hostile 'encirclement' by the Entente powers. It associated with this breakthrough the hope of making Germany militarily secure within Europe and to consolidate or expand Germany's global position of power. Very soon after the outbreak of war, then, the government confronted the task of translating this very general goal into concrete programmes for the post-war settlement. Importantly, it never committed itself to a fixed programme. Rather than setting specific targets which it wanted to achieve through the war, the government chose to mould its demands according to the eventual military outcome. In this way, it seemingly wavered between various annexationist schemes and the return to the *status quo ante bellum* throughout the war. Yet its deliberations resulted in a general plan which remained constant: the idea of surrounding Germany with small buffer states which would be at least militarily and economically dependent on Germany. This chapter will examine closely the place of Antwerp in this general scheme, using some salient works on German war aims, published source collections, as well as a number of important archival sources.

General

In the west, the prime object was Belgium. It was an outstanding feature of the government's wartime diplomacy that until September 1918 it refused to commit itself to the unconditional and complete restoration of Belgium, even though a public declaration to this effect would have arguably given it much needed moral leverage.¹¹⁹ In fact, hardly anyone in power was in favour of such a declaration. The moderates, like Richard Kühlmann, Foreign Minister from August 1917 to July 1918, thought at the very least that Belgium should be used as a pawn – extracting concessions from the enemies at the future peace conference by threatening to annex the country. Others, like the second

¹¹⁸ See for example, David Stevenson, 'War Aims and Peace Negotiations,' in Hew Strachan (ed.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, Oxford 1998, pp. 205-7.

¹¹⁹ Fischer, *Griff*, pp. 364, 367.

Governor-General in Belgium, Moritz von Bissing, thought that Belgium should indeed be incorporated into the German *Reich*, while probably the majority were in favour of a partial restoration, with German ‘guarantees and securities’ to be created in Belgium itself. The chief advocate of this formula was Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg.

Belgium’s natural resources, its heavy industry, its dense railway network, its military fortifications, its coastline, and the port of Antwerp provided the main pull factors. The most consistent and most radical German demands were perhaps about the area around Liège, adjacent to the German border. The supreme command of the army argued that it was necessary to annex this territory with its important fortress and railway junction in order to secure Germany’s industrial heartland in the Rhineland from a future military attack.¹²⁰ This demand was accepted by most officials, even those in favour of the restoration of Belgian sovereignty.

Antwerp was an equally consistent target of the government’s war aims deliberations. Unlike the case of Liège, however, the Antwerp Question seemed to have conjured up much more controversy. This is illustrated by one of Wilhelm II’s notorious comments on the margins of newspapers. In this case it was an English article in February 1918 about strategic key positions of Antwerp and Constantinople. Wilhelm II wrote beside the accompanying map that it should be enlarged and displayed in the Foreign Ministry, so that ‘my diplomats will finally learn the value of Antwerp from the enemy, since they do not want to believe me. We have to hold on to these “keys”, and we have them now.’¹²¹ Indeed, during the first few months of the war, Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg

¹²⁰ See for example: Gerhard Granier (ed.) *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung im Ersten Weltkrieg. Dokumentation*, vol. 1: Koblenz 1999, doc. 149, n.1 (discussion Tirpitz, Ludendorff, 13 Aug. 1915), p. 409. Jacques Grunewald and André Scherer (eds), *L’Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale. Documents extrait des archives de l’office allemand des affaires étrangères*, vol. 1: *Des origines à la déclaration de la guerre sous-marine à outrance (août 1914 - 31 janvier 1917)*, Paris 1962, doc. 365 (Hindenburg to Bethmann Hollweg, 5 November 1916), p. 548. Jacques Grunewald and André Scherer (eds), *L’Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale. Documents extrait des archives de l’office allemand des affaires étrangères*, vol. 2: *De la guerre sous-marine à outrance à la révolution soviétique (1er février 1917 - 7 novembre 1917)*, Paris 1966, doc. 251 (Hindenburg to Michaelis, 15 Sept. 1917, and memo Ludendorff, 14 Sept. 1917), pp. 430, 434. Liège was also the first concrete territorial war aim voiced in the German press. See Thomas Raithel, *Das "Wunder" der inneren Einheit. Studien zur deutschen und französischen Öffentlichkeit bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Bonn 1996, p. 390.

¹²¹ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA) Berlin, R 21570, fol. 8. The article in question was by *The Sphere* and was reproduced by *Die Post* on 17 Feb. 1918.

was treating Antwerp separately from the rest of Belgium in his war aims considerations. He thought that Antwerp should be carved out of Belgium, and either offered to the Netherlands as part of a comprehensive re-ordering of the Dutch-German relationship, or annexed directly by Germany. His pre-war knowledge of Antwerp, and importantly his pre-war contacts with the German Colony, seemed to have inspired these ideas. In October 1914 he is reported to have remarked that Antwerp was already German-like and that the city could be easily Germanised within a short time.¹²² Thus it seems useful to look at the trajectory of Antwerp in the German war aims deliberations.

Campaigning for a ‘German Antwerp’ – The German Navy

The first documented call from within the government to permanently control Antwerp came from the German Navy. On 28 August 1914 Admiral Tirpitz, secretary of state of the Imperial Naval Office, impressed on Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg the importance of ‘acquiring’ Antwerp.¹²³ In subsequent discussions the two men returned to the subject and agreed that Antwerp was an important factor for the future of Germany. When in January 1915 Bethmann asked Tirpitz for a written summary of his views on the Belgian situation, Tirpitz emphasised once more that the opportunity to gain possession of Antwerp was not to be missed. Similarly, the brother of Wilhelm II, Admiral Heinrich, Prince of Prussia, wrote in April 1915 that it was imperative that Germany was master of Antwerp in the future.¹²⁴ Both Tirpitz and Heinrich give as primary reason the economic advantages that Antwerp had for Germany. In second place, they also asserted that Antwerp had a potentially significant military-naval value for Germany.

Indeed, the first discussion between Bethmann and Tirpitz was mainly about the future, but it seemed to have concerned the current strategic objectives as well. At this early date, the military conquest of the fortress of Antwerp had not

¹²² See points 2 and 6 of his ‘September programme’ (9 Sept. 1914). Reproduced in Werner Basler, *Deutschlands Annexionspolitik in Polen und im Baltikum 1914-1918*, East-Berlin 1962, pp. 382-3. Undated notes Tirpitz on discussion with Bethmann Hollweg on 19 Oct. 1914, in Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, doc. 146.

¹²³ Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, p. 399. Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 26. See also: Holger Herwig, ‘Admirals versus Generals. The War Aims of the Imperial German Navy 1914-1918,’ *Central European History*, 15 (1972).

¹²⁴ Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, doc. 147 (Tirpitz to Bethmann Hollweg, 19 Jan. 1915), p. 406, and doc. 148 (Admiral Prince Heinrich of Prussia to Wilhelm II, 24 April 1915), p. 407.

even yet been decided.¹²⁵ Tirpitz was probably a strong proponent of the extension of military operations to Antwerp. A few days before, he had created a naval division, which was to be deployed on the Belgian and French coast as soon as possible. In the last clause of his directive, he indicated the ‘top secret’ possibility that Antwerp, too, might be included in the division’s area of activity.¹²⁶ Indeed, the naval division participated in the siege and conquest of Antwerp a month later and it was in charge of the city for a few days. It soon moved on to Bruges and the Belgian coast, however, and its area of command remained far removed from Antwerp. With the Scheldt estuary in neutral Dutch control, the direct value of Antwerp for the Navy was very limited in this war. As will be discussed later, the Navy used Antwerp as a tributary base for the war effort on the Flemish coast, but Antwerp never emerged as an important factor in the German naval campaigns.¹²⁷ The question of whether a German-controlled Antwerp would always be as insignificant for the German Navy was investigated in several memoranda during the war.

Crucially, the active leadership of the German Navy were convinced that the Flemish coast, with the naval triangle of Ostende, Bruges and Zeebrugge, was of the utmost significance for Germany’s power on the world stage. The all-important point of reference was always Britain. The Navy’s argument was that a strong German naval base on the Flemish coast was such an acute threat to British military security that it would force Britain to make political and economic concessions to Germany. The Flemish coast, in this view, was the foundation on which Germany could become a true world power, the equal of the British Empire.¹²⁸

The first who analysed in some detail the value that Antwerp could play in the future for Germany’s naval position in Flanders was a nephew of Tirpitz, Erich Edgar Schulze. Schulze was the second-in-command of the Naval Corps Flanders throughout the war, so he knew the local conditions from first-hand

¹²⁵ On the decision to conquer Antwerp see ch. 1.

¹²⁶ Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, doc. 56 (Tirpitz to Zentralabteilung Reichsmarineamt, 23 Aug. 1914), p. 171.

¹²⁷ See below, ch. 8.

¹²⁸ See in particular Tirpitz’ memorandum ‘Die Bedeutung Belgiens und seiner Häfen für unsere Seegeltung’ of 17 Oct. 1915, pp. 2, 4-7. A copy is in, for example: BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 11718, fols. 110 ff. An incomplete copy is in: Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, pp. 409-15.

experience.¹²⁹ In early October 1915, he sent several drafts of a memorandum on the ‘military significance of the Belgian ports for the Navy’ to Tirpitz. It is likely that his uncle had asked for this exposé in order to use it for his own official memorandum, which he completed on 17 October. In his first draft, Schulze named both Antwerp and the Flemish coast as the Navy’s points of interest in Belgium, though he quickly established a clear hierarchy of the coast over Antwerp: even without Antwerp, the Flemish coast was of immense military value, whereas Antwerp without the coast was useless for the Navy. For even if the German Navy had full use of the Scheldt estuary – which was Dutch territory – Schulze argued that the Belgian coastline still controlled the decisive access route from the sea into the estuary. Yet this did not lead Schulze to dismiss the Navy’s interest in Antwerp altogether. He emphasised instead that a German naval station in Antwerp would enhance the value of the coast. If Germany controlled the Scheldt estuary, or if the waterway connection between Antwerp and the Belgian coast was enlarged, the Navy’s biggest warships would be able to use Antwerp. The current port installations along the coast catered for small cruisers, torpedo boats and submarines only. The relatively long and narrow route to the sea would probably still make Antwerp unsuitable as base for a full-scale sea battle against Britain. At the very least, however, Schulze noted that Antwerp would offer the quickest place of refuge and repair for ships that got damaged off the English coast.¹³⁰ Alfred von Tirpitz, who took over much of the material presented by his nephew – sometimes verbatim – took equally great care to point out this potential military value of Antwerp.¹³¹

Admiral Henning von Holtzendorff, chief of staff of the navy, by contrast was not as reluctant to dismiss the naval value of Antwerp in his memorandum of October 1915.¹³² On the positive side, Holtzendorff, too, noted that the great installations of Antwerp’s world port would facilitate the establishment of a naval base, and that its inland position secured the ships from enemy naval

¹²⁹ Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (1)*, doc. 56 (Tirpitz to Zentralabteilung Reichsmarineamt, 23 Aug. 1914), p. 170. See also correspondence by Schulze in: BAMA Freiburg: N 253 (Tirpitz), 170 and 209; N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 1f.

¹³⁰ Erich Edgar Schulze, ‘Die militärische Bedeutung der belgischen Häfen für die Marine’ (first draft, Oct. 1915), in BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 146, fols. 30-31.

¹³¹ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 11718, Tirpitz, ‘Bedeutung Belgiens’, p. 6.

¹³² Holtzendorff, ‘Die Bedeutung der belgischen Seehäfen für unsere Seegeltung, 29 Oct. 1915, in Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (1)*, doc. 150, pp. 416-24.

attack. On the downside, just like Schulze and Tirpitz, Holtzendorff recognised that this last feature was also a disadvantage, as it considerably delayed the fleet's appearance on the open sea. Holtzendorff saw another problem with Antwerp, however, which the other two had not considered. He cautioned that the interests of the great commercial port would violently clash with an adjacent great naval port, especially as they would have to share the narrow access route of the Scheldt. Although Holtzendorff did not elaborate further on this objection, it was a most serious one. It touched on the very essence of Antwerp as a city married to world commerce – in fact, Antwerp citizens had a strong anti-militarist tradition, due to the constraints imposed on its expansion by the fortress of Antwerp.

In an original addition to the German Navy's debate, Holtzendorff consequently argued that a much better suited naval base could be found in Terneuzen: the small Dutch port city located at the point where the canal from Ghent joined the maritime Scheldt, less than half the distance to the open sea than Antwerp (30 instead of 65 sea miles). In his conclusion, Holtzendorff emphasised once more that Antwerp was not suitable as naval base.¹³³

Campaigning for a 'German Antwerp' – Bavaria

Another powerful voice that called for the inclusion of Belgium in the future German sphere of influence early on in the war, and one that focused particularly on the port of Antwerp, came from Bavaria. The Bavarian King Ludwig III was a vigorous lobbyist for the annexation of Belgium during the first year of the war.¹³⁴ During the Christmas period 1914 he talked to Matthias Erzberger about his annexationist scheme, suggesting that Belgium would be best incorporated into Prussia, though Bavaria would be willing to take on the task as well. By way of justification, he referred specifically to Antwerp, arguing that it was the 'natural port' for the whole of western and southern Germany.¹³⁵ The Bavarian insistence on the annexation of Belgium, particularly by Prussia, was also linked

¹³³ Holtzendorff, 'Bedeutung der belgischen Seehäfen', points 11, 12, 27, in Granier (ed.) *Seekriegsleitung (I)*, doc. 150, pp. 418, 423.

¹³⁴ Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, esp. pp. 21, 27, 29, 97.

¹³⁵ PA AA Berlin, R 21427, fols. 40-41: notes on discussion Erzberger with Ludwig III, 31 Dec. 1914. Also reprinted in Grunewald and Scherer (eds), *APP I*, doc. 29.

to the King's scheme of enlarging Bavarian territory into Alsace-Lorraine, which he pursued for most of the war.¹³⁶

In other words, the fascination of Ludwig III with the idea of annexing Belgium had two origins: one lay in diplomatic strategy – compensating Prussia in Belgium for Bavarian gains in the *Reichsland* –, the other lay in direct Bavarian economic interests. This second origin focused almost exclusively on Antwerp. Accordingly, when the Bavarian civil servant Adolf von Lutz was appointed representative of the Chief of the Civilian Administration in the Government-General in occupied Belgium, he was instructed to duly report on any developments about the future of Belgium:

You know how much the King is interested in all that which is now known as the “war aim“ and which one is not supposed to talk about, and that specifically Belgium, or perhaps more accurately Antwerp, signifies the highest war aim for him.¹³⁷

Apparently, the King avidly read all the information about Antwerp that Lutz subsequently sent home – including for example the technically detailed description of the port of Antwerp by the wartime commission from Hamburg and Bremen.¹³⁸ Indeed, he had long been greatly interested in the problems of linking Bavaria to the world economy – Bavaria being one of the most landlocked states of Germany. In particular, he was enthusiastic about the ‘Rhine-Main-Danube’ project, and he patronised its main lobby group, the Bavarian Canal Society. This project involved the construction – or enlargement – of canals on Bavarian territory, with the aim of creating a continuous waterway system from the Black Sea to the North Sea.

On 6 June 1915, when he gave his annual address to the Canal Society, Ludwig III declared in thinly veiled terms that the Society was soon to profit from the annexation of Belgium, and the resulting ‘German estuary of the Rhine’.¹³⁹ His speech was published verbatim by the Pan-German *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* the next day, causing a stir in inner-German diplomacy. According to a Swabian diplomat in Munich, the King had actually intended to put further pressure on Berlin to make a pro-annexationist decision about

¹³⁶ Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, pp. 21 ff.

¹³⁷ Geheimes Hausarchiv der Wittelsbacher (GHA) Munich, Kabinettsakten Ludwig III, 59, folder Baron Lutz: Dandl [Hertling?] to Lutz, 16 Mar. 1915.

¹³⁸ GHA Munich, Kabinettsakten Ludwig III, 59, folder Baron Lutz: esp. Dandl [Hertling?] to Lutz, 16 May 1915. See also ch. 4 for more on this book (Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*).

¹³⁹ Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, pp. 27, 60-1. See also Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*, p. 138.

Belgium. The Bavarian government was quickly forced to distance itself from the King's words, however, and the press censorship substituted a watered-down version of his speech of 6 June.¹⁴⁰

This speech probably represented the peak of Ludwig III's annexationist campaign. He was soon after influenced by his son Rupprecht, crown prince and commander of the sixth army on the western front, who had come to doubt that a full German military victory was possible.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, he was extremely reluctant to let go of the idea of a 'German estuary of the Rhine'. In January 1916, for example, he thought that if the whole of Belgium could not be annexed, then it might still be possible to annex just Antwerp, as well as perhaps the coastline.¹⁴²

Parallel to the King's interest, or possibly prompted by it, the Bavarian Ministry of Transport investigated in detail during the war the importance of Antwerp for the Bavarian economy. The key personality was Josef von Grassmann. A high-ranking civil servant (Ministerialrat) in the Ministry, Grassmann had been a specialist on inland waterways for over a decade.¹⁴³ Furthermore, he had been involved in the commercial link between Bavaria and Antwerp in a most practical way: he was the chairman of the council of the shipping company Allgemeine Fluss-Schiffahrts Gesellschaft, which had its main seat in Antwerp itself.¹⁴⁴ After the outbreak of war and the occupation of Antwerp, the main local agent of the company, Jacob Hecht, kept Grassmann regularly up to date about all developments in the city and in its port.¹⁴⁵ Hecht soon semi-officially acted as a representative for Bavarian interests in Antwerp, a service that he later extended to the other southern German states.¹⁴⁶ For

¹⁴⁰ HStA Stuttgart, E 40/72, 688: Moser to Weizsäcker, 12 June 1915.

¹⁴¹ Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, p. 97.

¹⁴² PA AA Berlin, R 21561, fol. 111: Schoen to Bethmann Hollweg, 28 Jan. 1916. Similarly: PA AA Berlin, R 21428, fol. 37: Treutler to AA, 18 Nov. 1916.

¹⁴³ See HStA Munich, Abt. V, NL Grassmann, 36 (= Aufsätze und Vorträge Grassmanns über Wirtschaftsfragen, besonders über Wasserstrassen. 1897 – 1927).

¹⁴⁴ This company was part of the Rhenania shipping group, of which the Bavarian government was a shareholder. HStA Munich, MH 15520: memorandum Grassmann (prior to 21 Sept. 1915), 'Antwerpens Bedeutung für den deutschen und den bayerischen Verkehr und Handel', p. 15; Allgemeine Fluß-Schiffahrtsgesellschaft AG Antwerpen, *Geschäftsbericht 1916. Ordentliche General-Versammlung am 12 Mai 1917*. See also HStA Munich, MH 15519: Grassmann to Bavarian Foreign Ministry, 30 Dec. 1914.

¹⁴⁵ HStA Munich, MH 15520: correspondence Hecht to Grassmann, 1914-1915. See also ch. 8.

¹⁴⁶ HStA Stuttgart, E 130 a, 1150: Hecht to Tafel, 22 Oct. 1915. In 1918, however, the Württemberg government decided to engage a separate contact in Antwerp, the Swabian Karl Friz, rather than the Bavarian Hecht, since Bavarian and Swabian interests were not always

example, while he was involved in the inventory and disposal of the bulk goods found in the port of Antwerp, he promised south German chambers of commerce to direct as much business to them as possible. Grassmann personally visited Belgium and Antwerp as early as December 1914, and early on he was also consulted on transport questions by the Government-General.¹⁴⁷ Both Hecht and Grassmann advocated strongly the permanent extension of German influence over the port of Antwerp: ‘With respect, only petty minds can be against the establishment of German political influence in Antwerp.’¹⁴⁸

Grassmann produced a detailed memorandum on the ‘importance of Antwerp for German and Bavarian transport and commerce’ in the autumn of 1915. Similar to Hecht, he argued that not only would Bavarian commerce and industry benefit from such an expansion, it would also result in momentous technical and logistical improvements in Antwerp port. He later extended this text into a confidential ‘economic memorandum’ for the ‘brains trust’¹⁴⁹ of Governor-General von Bissing. Again, he concluded this memorandum with an appeal that stopped very short of a demand for territorial annexation:

There is absolutely no reason that could be derived from the economic relations between Germany and Antwerp to assess the annexation [*Angliederung*] of Belgium as undesirable or even damaging for us. The opposite is correct; and it would be an economic blunder of the first order for the future of the German economy if the utmost diplomatic power and art were not employed in order to secure for good this world port for German trade and traffic.¹⁵⁰

Early on, Grassmann also consulted local Bavarian economic interest groups about the significance of Antwerp for them. Specifically, he asked them what impact they thought certain political changes in Antwerp would have on them – for example whether the businesses in question would profit if traffic were redirected from Antwerp and Rotterdam to Bremen and Hamburg. A report by the Chamber of Commerce of Regensburg, dated 12 November 1915, survives. It

identical. HStA Stuttgart, E 40/72, 688: Köhler (the former head of the Government-Generals’ Department for Trade and Industry), Württemberg Interior Ministry to Württemberg Foreign Ministry, 7 July 1918.

¹⁴⁷ HStA Munich, MH 15519: Grassmann to Bavarian Foreign Ministry, 30 Dec. 1914.

¹⁴⁸ HStA Stuttgart, E 130 a, 1150: Hecht memorandum for the Bavarian government (Oct. 1915), ‘Einiges über Belgien und Antwerpen’, p. 7.

¹⁴⁹ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890-1920*, Chicago/London 1984, p. 199. See also ch. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Josef von Grassmann, ‘Antwerpen in Vergangenheit und Zukunft’ (February 1916), p. 122. A copy can be found for example in: Bundesarchiv (BA) Berlin, R 1501, 119551, fols. 84 ff.

concludes that it was overall desirable to strengthen the existing ties between southern Germany and Antwerp. Nevertheless, the report also contains interesting nuances. The ceramics and enamel industry, as well as the mirror glass industry were actually in favour of redirecting their exports towards the German seaports.¹⁵¹

Decisions in the Government-General

The institutions of the German Government General in occupied Belgium became an important influence on the German deliberations about the future of Antwerp soon after they had been established.¹⁵² Although the final decisions about war aims were clearly to be made by the institutions of the federal government in Berlin, the constitutional position of the Governor-General as being subordinate to the Kaiser only, meant that his voice and the work of his institutions could not be ignored.

This was particularly true for the second Governor-General, Moritz von Bissing. His predecessor, Colmar von der Goltz, had been disappointed with this 'administrative' post, and he was only too happy to leave it after three months for a military commission in the Turkish army.¹⁵³ He accordingly had little time to become concerned about the political future of Belgium. Judging from his relatively lenient measures, particularly his reconciliatory proclamation to the Belgian people on 2 September 1914, it seems that he thought that Belgian sovereignty was to be restored after the war.¹⁵⁴ Bissing, by contrast, was a proud holder of the office of Governor-General. He attached great importance to his elevated constitutional position, and, ruling occupied Belgium in the manner of a colonial viceroy, he aspired to put his footprint on all German objectives and policies that concerned Belgium. From the beginning, he was an adamant annexationist and most likely he hoped to continue his office after a victorious end to the war. Although Bissing remained an annexationist at heart until his death in April 1917, he had gradually come to concede that the likely less favourable outcome of the war would necessitate indirect methods of German

¹⁵¹ HStA Munich, MH 11925: Regensburg Chamber of Commerce to Grassmann, 12 Nov. 1915.

¹⁵² See for example, Fischer, *Griff*, p. 329.

¹⁵³ Goltz, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, pp. 351, 378.

¹⁵⁴ See for example Brand Whitlock, *Belgium under the German occupation: a personal narrative*, New York 1919, vol. 1, p. 200. The proclamation is reprinted in: Heinrich Wandt, *Erotik und Spionage in der Etappe Gent*, Berlin 1929, pp. 57-8.

control.¹⁵⁵ Ludwig von Falkenhausen, the third and last Governor-General, had less personal influence on the policies and future designs for Belgium. Often described as a weaker personality compared to Bissing, it should be pointed out that Falkenhausen inherited an advanced situation.¹⁵⁶ In particular, he was surrounded by two power centres, which had become accustomed to shape the German policies in Belgium long before Falkenhausen arrived. These were the third Supreme Army Command of Ludendorff and Hindenburg on the one hand, and the Government-General's own Political Department under Oscar von der Lancken Wakenitz on the other hand. It seems useful to briefly outline the positions of these personalities about the future of Belgium and the role of Antwerp.

Moritz von Bissing expounded his annexationism in a lengthy memorandum in March 1915.¹⁵⁷ Starting with the premise of the 'right of conquest' – though he failed to mention that such a right was not recognised in international law – his reasoning was entirely based on power politics, or *Machtpolitik*. He argued that if Germany did not take control of Belgium, the Entente powers would. In other words it was the kind of offensive reasoning couched in defensive terms which was typical of most of the German formulations of expansionist war aims – as indeed it had been characteristic of the German push towards war in July and August 1914. According to this power-political outlook, military considerations, both strategic-geographic and economic, figured most prominently in this memorandum. In second place, Bissing mentioned the peacetime interests of Germany's trade and industry. Significantly, he used the case of Antwerp to stand symbolically for these interests, and to highlight their 'obvious' vulnerability. Moreover, Bissing used Antwerp to emphasise how the consequences of the control or loss of Belgium would reach beyond the Belgian

¹⁵⁵ On Bissing's style of government see in particular: Meseberg-Haubold, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers*, pp. 51-5. Christoph Roolf, 'Die Deportationen von belgischen Arbeitern nach Deutschland 1916/17,' in Christoph Roolf and Simone Rauthe (eds), *Projekte zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Deutschland und Europa in Düsseldorfer Magister- und Examensarbeiten*, Munich 2000, p. 34.

¹⁵⁶ For a description of Falkenhausen as a mere tool in the hands of the third Supreme Army Command, see for example: Alan Kramer, 'Besatzung (Westen),' in Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds), *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, Paderborn (2003) 2004, p. 383.

¹⁵⁷ I used the (incomplete) translation in: Salomon Grumbach, *Das annexionistische Deutschland*, Lausanne 1917, pp. 478-83. On the dating of the memorandum see Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, p. 245, n. 205.

state itself, that it would have repercussions for Germany's strength in the world economy:

If we lost Antwerp we should lose not only the port and our influence over railway rates, etc., but above all we should lose the powerful influence which Antwerp possesses as a trade and financial centre, especially in South America. All these forces would naturally turn against us as soon as they were released.¹⁵⁸

In this way, Antwerp had a double significance for Bissing: as an actual economic object of considerable importance to Germany, and as an evocative catchword, to stand for all of Belgium and to illustrate the necessity of annexation. Importantly, while Bissing used Antwerp in this symbolic way, he was adamant that the German interests in Belgium could not be reduced to the port of Antwerp, explicitly dismissing the suggestion that securing 'an agreement about Antwerp' would be sufficient.¹⁵⁹

Perhaps the most influential figure in the Government-General in terms of foreign policy – at least from mid 1916, according to Ilse Meseberg-Haubold – was Oscar von der Lancken Wakenitz, who was head of the Political Department from the beginning to the end of the occupation.¹⁶⁰ His central position was reflected for example in the fact that he was the main personality who briefed Falkenhausen about his new job as Governor-General in April 1917. With a regular output of memoranda on the 'Belgian Question', he tried to determine the first principles on the basis of which the future of Belgium was to be shaped.¹⁶¹ Until virtually the end – late summer 1918 – he consistently advocated the expansion of German power over all of Belgium. Similar to Bissing, he reasoned primarily in terms of power politics, and specifically with reference to the German-British antagonism. Unlike Bissing, however, he was against an incorporation of the country into Germany, and, from the beginning, he favoured schemes of destroying the unity of the pre-war Belgian state and controlling the

¹⁵⁸ Bissing's Testament, *The Times History of the War*, vol. 11: London 1917, p. 479.

¹⁵⁹ Bissing's Testament, *The Times History of the War*, p. 481.

¹⁶⁰ Meseberg-Haubold, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers*, p. 125. See also: Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre*.

¹⁶¹ Among the most important are: 'Gedanken über die Zukunft Belgiens', 6 Feb. 1915 (in PA AA Berlin, R 21433), 'Das belgische Problem', April 1915 (PA AA Berlin, R 21401), 'Skizze über die an Belgien zu stellenden Friedensforderungen' 10 Dec. 1916 (PA AA Berlin, R 21568), 'Gesichtspunkte für die Politik in Belgien', 24 April 1917 (PA AA Berlin, R 21568), 'Forderungen an Belgien auf wirtschaftlichem Gebiete', 7 Sept. 1917 (PA AA Berlin, R 21416).

remains indirectly. In his first memorandum, for example, he proposed the creation of four mini-states: Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and Antwerp.¹⁶²

As did Bethmann Hollweg, Lancken initially considered Antwerp as a separate entity from the rest of Belgium, though later he always included Antwerp within Flanders. Concerning the specific German interests in Antwerp, he dismissed the idea of a military or naval significance for Germany, because of the Dutch possession of the Scheldt estuary. Consequently, he emphasised that it was mainly a matter of safeguarding the existing German economic interests. In addition to that, he thought that the economic ties between Antwerp and Germany might play an important role in the *Flamenpolitik*: to help bring about a natural rapprochement of the Flemish population to Germany.¹⁶³

The local German authorities in Antwerp, namely the successive Presidents of the Civilian Administration, finally, were also participants in the dialogue about the future of Antwerp. The first President, Strandes, proposed that the German interests in the port of Antwerp could be taken care of by a new port authority under German control, which was to be given wide-ranging powers.¹⁶⁴ As the Hamburg shipping magnate Albert Ballin proposed a very similar scheme at about the same time in February 1915 – whether independently of Strandes is not clear – this idea became one of the most enduring ones in the German deliberations about Antwerp. Ironically, it was Strandes' successor, Sthamer, who argued most energetically against this scheme, with the result of it getting temporarily shelved in mid 1915. By the end of 1917 it was again at the centre of the German discussions.¹⁶⁵

By far the most important contribution to the German government's war aims discussion from the Government-General was the so-called *Chefkommission*. Under the direction of Lancken, this commission met altogether fourteen times between November 1917 and July 1918, in order to work out precisely the particulars of possible future peace treaties with Belgium. Even though this commission had no decision making powers, and its work was meant to be preparatory only, it set itself the following framework, which it considered as the

¹⁶² PA AA Berlin, R 21433: Lancken, 'Gedanken über die Zukunft Belgiens', 6 Feb. 1915.

¹⁶³ PA AA Berlin, R 21416, fol. 151: postscript Lancken, 8 Sept. 1917, to memorandum for Helfferich (7 Sept. 1917).

¹⁶⁴ See PA AA Berlin, R 21433: Lancken, 'Gedanken über die Zukunft Belgiens', 6 Feb. 1915.

¹⁶⁵ Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 60.

most likely German demands on Belgium: Belgium, probably federalised into two sub-states, would enter a customs and monetary union with Germany, and Germany would get control over the railways and interior waterways. In May, the commission had finalised the following six key points concerning Antwerp:

1. German influence on Antwerp port administration and port construction to the extent that German interests cannot be harmed, on the contrary, that the port management will be utilized in favour of the German interests to the greatest extent possible.
2. Shipping treaty, granting equal rights with Belgian citizens. German ships on the Scheldt and in the docks must not be discriminated against. [...]
3. Continued use of the berths on the quays of the Scheldt, which the German ships had before the war.
4. Changes to or introduction of new shipping duties only with agreement of Germany.
5. Recognition of the regulations of the German *Reich* and the Nautical Association [*Seeberufsgenossenschaft*] on maritime traffic and shipping measurements.
6. These demands are also to be accordingly applied to the other Belgian seaports.¹⁶⁶

These points were remarkably defensive. They seemed designed to preserve the favourable pre-war status quo and to ensure there would be no discrimination against German shipping. Their implementation, however, could have gained Germany a decisive say in the management of the port. Considering the political aims outlined above, within which the *Chefkommission* envisaged these points, this outcome was indeed very likely. The proposed German-dominated port authority, which had been left open for discussion until the end, would then have put an institutional seal on it. The six points and the question of the port authority were to have been debated at a large conference in Brussels and Antwerp with all interested federal and regional government departments, as well as interested commercial organisations attending. However, the date of the conference was continually postponed until the worsening military situation forced the Government-General to shelve it indefinitely.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ A copy of the *Leitsätze* can be found for example in: BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 18, fols. 71 ff (appendix 4 to minutes of the 3rd session of the *Chefkommission*, 24 Jan. 1918). The *Leitsätze* were widely distributed on 8 May 1918. See also: BA Berlin, R 704 (*Spezialbüro Dr. Helfferich*), 19319/1.

¹⁶⁷ Fischer, *Griff*, p. 804.

Results

To conclude, Antwerp was at the centre of much of the official German war aims deliberations throughout the war. Initially, the government thought that Antwerp could be treated separately from the rest of Belgium. Radical demands for the annexation of all of Belgium, as well as economic studies on the economic structure of the port of Antwerp, however, led to Antwerp becoming a fully integrated element of the German 'Belgian Question'. Moreover, many of the annexationist voices, for example Ludwig III of Bavaria and Governor-General Bissing, used the German economic interest in Antwerp in a symbolic way in order to argue for the expansion of German power over Belgium. In the end, the offices of the federal government in Berlin and the institutions of the Government-General produced detailed programmes of how the German interests in Antwerp would be secured after the war, making relatively moderate demands for non-discrimination and leaving open the question of annexation.

Chapter 4: The Hanseatic city-states and the prospect of a 'German Antwerp'

In the historiography on the German war aims, following the German wartime literature on Belgium (see ch. 6), it is routinely emphasised that the city-states of Hamburg and Bremen had a particular interest in how the future of Antwerp, the rival 'world port', would be shaped. However, the extent, complexity and development of this interest have hardly ever been investigated. Karl-Heinz Janßen, in his important work on the particularist war aims of the German federal states, neglects largely the plans of the small states, probably because they pulled little weight in the inter-state rivalries. He mentions the project for a 'Greater Hamburg' – incorporating neighbouring Prussian cities –, but he refers in passing only to the special concern that Bremen and Hamburg had about the future of Antwerp.¹⁶⁸ Jürgen Bolland and Dietrich Kersten provide more detail, both focusing on Hamburg. While Bolland analyses the reaction of the three Hanseatic cities to a proposed petition to the *Kaiser* against a 'soft' peace at the turn of 1917/18, Kersten includes a chapter on the Antwerp Question in his study of the war aims of the Hamburg business community (*Kaufmannschaft*).¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, both stress that Hamburg was remarkably moderate and cautious about its war aims towards Belgium – a finding that will be qualified below. The following chapter, then, will attempt to portray a more complete picture of the attitudes in Hamburg and Bremen towards Antwerp during the war.

A Hanseatic administration in occupied Antwerp

From the beginning of the occupation of Belgium, the extraordinary interest of Hamburg and Bremen in the future of Antwerp was firmly institutionalised. Throughout the war, the civil administration of the Government-General for the city and province of Antwerp was known to be the domain of Hanseatic officials.¹⁷⁰ More particularly, it was dominated by Hamburg. At its top, as

¹⁶⁸ Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, esp. pp. 55, 69.

¹⁶⁹ Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' pp. 216-230. Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, pp. 132-8.

¹⁷⁰ See for example: Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, p. 17. Percy Ernst Schramm, *Neun Generationen. Dreihundert Jahre deutsche "Kulturgeschichte" im Lichte der Schicksale einer Hamburger Bürgerfamilie (1648-1948)*, vol. 2: Göttingen 1964, pp. 491-2.

‘President of the Civil Administration for the province of Antwerp’, was always a member of the sovereign government of Hamburg: senators Justus Strandes (1914-1915), Friedrich Sthamer (1915-1916) and Max Schramm (1916-1918). Many further personalities from the political and economic elite of Hamburg worked in the various departmental sections and often headed them. Erich Diestel, the son of another senator, was for example in charge of ‘trade and industry’ from June 1915 to the end of the occupation. Some of the other institutions of the occupation regime in Antwerp, too, were led by experts from Hamburg: most noteworthy are Rear Admiral Louran for the port headquarters (Hafenkommandantur) and government surveyor Löwer for the river and port surveyor’s office (Strom- und Hafenbauamt).¹⁷¹ Bremen, on the other hand, filled only one senior post permanently in the administration – sometimes described as the representative of the president: first by the Baron von Plettenberg-Mehrum, a director of the Norddeutscher Lloyd, and, from November 1916, by Willy Wätjen, a former president of Bremen’s Chamber of Commerce. Only a few further officials from Bremen were employed in Antwerp.¹⁷² Lübeck, the third and smallest Hanseatic city-state, was not represented at all.¹⁷³

How did this Hanseatic rule of occupied Antwerp come about, and why was Hamburg so preponderant? The initiative had come from neither Hamburg nor Bremen, but from Clemens von Delbrück, vice-chancellor and imperial secretary of state of the interior. The fall of Antwerp had coincided with a meeting of Delbrück and Maximilian von Sandt in Brussels, which had been scheduled to finalise the organisation of Sandt’s civilian wing of the Government-General. Sandt now expected that the Government-General would be extended over all of

¹⁷¹ Louran was *Reich* commissioner in the Hamburg maritime office (*Seeamt*); strictly speaking, he was not a Hamburg citizen. See in particular: Staatsarchiv (StA) Hamburg: 622-1 (*Nachlaß Schramm*), J 84: personnel list ‘Zivilverwaltung für die Provinz Antwerpen’ [1919]; 132-II (*Senatskommission für die Reichs- und Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten*), 3952, fol. 39: ‘Geschäftsverteilungsplan Zivilverwaltung Antwerpen’ [April 1915]. Further: StA Hamburg: 622-1 (NL Schramm): J 92; J 96; 111-2 (*Senat-Kriegsakten*), A IV, a. BA Berlin, R 1501, 119452: fols. 69 ff: ‘Verwaltungsbericht des Verwaltungschefs’ (= report Sandt), 30 Oct. 1914, appendix; fols 149 ff: report Sandt, 13 Jan. 1915, appendix.

¹⁷² Notably Hermann Rodewald (mainly responsible for ‘Ernährungswesen’, 1916-18). See: Staatsarchiv (StA) Hamburg: 622-1 (NL Schramm), J 84: personnel list [1919]. Staatsarchiv (StA) Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 55, fols. 14, 31. Heinrich Binder, *Mit dem Hauptquartier nach Westen. Aufzeichnungen eines Kriegsberichterstatters*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1915, p. 101.

¹⁷³ In the Stadtarchiv Lübeck I found references to Lübeck men being employed in the central offices of the Civilian Administration in Brussels, but not in Antwerp. Stadtarchiv (SA) Lübeck, *Nachlaß Fehling*, G II, 207: report ‘Frontreise West’, June 1917.

Belgium and decided to build up his organisation in the Belgian provinces. Delbrück suggested that a Hanseatic personality should take over in Antwerp. On returning to Berlin, on 16 October 1914, he offered the job to Friedrich Sthamer, the representative of Hamburg in the German upper house of parliament (*Bundesrat*). However, the Senate of Hamburg declared Sthamer indispensable, suggesting instead Justus Strandes, who was duly accepted. A few days later, the Senate of Bremen complained that Bremen should be represented in occupied Antwerp as well. Probably as a result, Sandt appointed Baron Plettenberg – a friend of his – to Strandes' staff.¹⁷⁴

These Hanseatic appointments were reportedly viewed with great suspicion in the South German states. An industrialist from Mannheim, for example, impressed on the imperial Government the fear that a Hamburg-led administration of Antwerp might disadvantage South German interests by striving to divert the German traffic of the rival port to Hamburg.¹⁷⁵ Although Sandt and the imperial Ministry of the Interior took note of the substantial economic interests expressed in the industrialist's letter, they held on to the Hanseatic character of the Antwerp administration. Every time the president or his 'representative' was recalled to Germany, they insisted on a replacement from Hamburg or Bremen respectively.¹⁷⁶

Three reasons prompted Delbrück to his Hanseatic choice.¹⁷⁷ First, he wanted to bolster the civilian wing – which was supervised by his ministry – of the otherwise military Government-General. A Hamburg Senator, who was constitutionally comparable to for example the King of Bavaria¹⁷⁸, would be an authoritative force. Second, it was necessary that the person controlling the administration of Antwerp would be familiar with the specific conditions of a region dominated by a 'world port' – especially since the German Government, in October 1914, still hoped that a certain degree of the international maritime

¹⁷⁴ See: StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fols. 3, 5. StA Hamburg, 111-2, A IV, a, fol. 1. BA Berlin, R 1501, 119339, fols. 24, 32, 64. BA Berlin, R 1501, 119452, fol. 55: report Sandt, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 1. Clemens von Delbrück, *Die wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung in Deutschland 1914*, Munich 1924, pp. 150-63.

¹⁷⁵ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119343, fols. 9-12: J. Weber, 22 Oct. 1914, and its circulation in the Rdl and Civilian Administration of the Government-General.

¹⁷⁶ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 1. StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 55, fol. 14.

¹⁷⁷ StA Hamburg, 111-2, A IV, a, fol. 2: extract from minutes of the Senate, 19 Oct. 1914, concerning Sthamer's negotiations with Delbrück on 17 Oct. 1914.

¹⁷⁸ See Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' pp. 217-18.

traffic in Antwerp could be revived. Third, Delbrück wanted a maritime expert posted in Antwerp in view of the future peace negotiations: in order to gain insight into the economic conditions of the place of Antwerp, so that the most advantageous deal could be struck for Germany after the war.

These were the reasons that Delbrück, supported by the Chancellor¹⁷⁹, expounded to Sthamer. In addition to them, Delbrück was probably motivated by a further, unspoken, consideration in connection with the third reason. At the time, annexationist demands, in particular with respect to Antwerp, had already been voiced, and Delbrück, who was sceptical of such projects, must have favoured a candidate for Antwerp who was removed from the annexationist pressure groups in the Rhineland and Southern Germany. Just as the industrialist from Mannheim suspected, he seems to have deliberately avoided a South German; not, however, in order to benefit Hamburg at the expense of Antwerp and Southern Germany, but to gain a balanced view about the Antwerp Question.¹⁸⁰

Concerning the preponderance of Hamburg over Bremen in the civil administration of Antwerp, it, too, seems to have been due to a mixture of tactical deliberation and practical reasons. Delbrück approached Sthamer, whom he knew personally, because Hamburg was the most powerful of the Free Hanseatic cities and because, much more than Bremen, it embodied the maritime interests of Germany. Perhaps Delbrück took also into consideration that Hamburg was less of a direct rival to Antwerp, so that its representatives might be less compromised. In the end, Hamburg seemed to have more personnel available than Bremen: in 1917, the Bremen Chamber of Commerce was unable to send further men to Antwerp despite the request of the civil administration.¹⁸¹ Lübeck, finally, was neither approached, nor did its Senate develop any particular interest for Antwerp, probably because its economic orientation was almost exclusively concentrated on the Baltic region.¹⁸²

So, Delbrück consciously involved Hamburg and, if only secondarily, Bremen in the occupation of Antwerp: not only for the purposes of wartime

¹⁷⁹ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119341, fol. 64: telegram Riezler, *Großes Hauptquartier* (GHQ), to *Reichskanzlei* (RK), 17 Oct. 1914.

¹⁸⁰ Delbrück, *Die wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung in Deutschland 1914*, p. 171.

¹⁸¹ Archiv der Bremer Handelskammer (HK) Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, loose sheets: correspondence Senate with Chamber of Commerce, April 1917.

¹⁸² See Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung*, p. 198.

administration but also explicitly in order to include them in the organisation of Germany's future relationship with Antwerp. This raises the following questions: what was the stance of Bremen and Hamburg towards the future of Antwerp? Was there a common Hanseatic interest, or were there differences between Hamburg and Bremen on the one hand, and between their respective Senates and their local private interest groups on the other hand?

Re-assessing the port competition of Antwerp

The Antwerp Question was taken very seriously both in Bremen and in Hamburg. The prospect that the war might bring about changes in the relationship between Germany and Antwerp, and that Germany might be able to influence the development of the port of Antwerp, was greeted with mixed feelings in both cities. The first reaction was to use the occupation of Antwerp as an opportunity to 'get even' regarding certain aspects of the fierce competition that the German seaports had encountered from Antwerp before the war. This time, the initiative came from Bremen.

On 7 October 1914, two days before the fortress of Antwerp surrendered, Philipp Heineken, the Director-General of the Norddeutscher Lloyd, contacted the imperial Ministry of the Interior about the following delicate matter. Before the war, the port of Antwerp had often managed to attract German goods even from regions that had geographically better connections to the German ports. Heineken explained that it had been impossible so far to identify a satisfactory cause for this occurrence: the existence of secret agreements and illegal discounts, which had been suspected primarily, had always been denied by all offices and companies involved. The imminent conquest and occupation of Antwerp, however, provided the opportunity to send a team of shipping experts to that city in order to uncover the root causes. If the team were sent out quickly, Heineken hoped that all the relevant documentation might still be seized. He requested that the Government assemble such a team as quickly as possible, and he immediately recommended three men from Bremen, who were linked to the Senate (Dronke), the Chamber of Commerce (Apelt), and his own Norddeutscher Lloyd (Bultmann). He had already received the assent from the Chamber of Commerce, and he was sure that the Senate, too, would cooperate.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119341, fols. 103-5: Heineken to Richter, 8 Oct. 1914.

Five days later, the Bremen Senate sent a letter to the Government to officially request the addition of a ‘commission of experts’ (*Sachverständigenkommission*) to the administration of Antwerp. Reiterating the points raised by Heineken, it emphasised that:

It should be in the national interest to take advantage of the success of the German arms also to this effect, that the obstruction of the German competition [*Wettbewerb*], resulting from this obscurity and uncertainty, be removed if possible.¹⁸⁴

The proposition was warmly received in the Interior Ministry, yet it appears that it delayed the appointment of the commission because it wanted to involve Hamburg as well. The Hamburg Senate readily consented to the project, and the commission started work in Antwerp in the second week of November 1914, consisting of the following members at its core: Bultmann (Norddeutscher Lloyd, Bremen), Dubbers (Bremen Chamber of Commerce), Ehlers (Association of Hamburg Shipping Companies) and Campbell (Levante-Linie, Hamburg).¹⁸⁵

This ‘commission of experts’ investigated most thoroughly the costs, tariffs and other policies of transport connected to the port of Antwerp – apparently finding all the desired documentation.¹⁸⁶ Within a month, they had finished their work and presented a preliminary report to Senator Strandes of the Civil Administration. It soon circulated among the offices in Brussels, Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen. In March 1915, the commission submitted a slightly extended version as their final report to the *Reich* Chancellor. Their findings were disappointing to the project’s initiators in Bremen: the commission did not find any indications of illegal or secret practices in Antwerp with respect to the shipment of goods from Germany. There had been cases where special discounts had been granted, but all of them turned out to be legal, public and relatively isolated events. In fact, the commission concluded that the ‘deviation’ (*Abwanderung*) of German traffic to Antwerp had been less than it had appeared at first sight. Nevertheless, the commission also identified five factors that explained the ‘superiority’ of the port of Antwerp over its German rivals. Apart from a better waterway connection to the Rhine, there were politico-economic

¹⁸⁴ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119341, fol. 106: Bremen Senate to RdI, 12 Oct. 1914. Same in: StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2. No. 9, box 39, fol. 1.

¹⁸⁵ BA Berlin, R 1501: 1192241, fol. 111; 119342, fol. 139.

¹⁸⁶ See HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, loose sheets: John to Bremen Chamber of Commerce, 1 Dec. 1914.

factors that made Antwerp very cheap: state subsidies, non-profit railway tariffs, few port levies and competitive rates for sea freights by the many rivalling lines. In addition to that, trading conditions in Belgium were generally cheap, with low customs and low labour costs.¹⁸⁷

The work of the commission contributed substantially to the development of the German Antwerp Question. The analysis of Antwerp's success might not have been original – certainly not in terms of the Belgian literature on the subject – but it was authoritative. All subsequent discussions about the future of Antwerp concentrated on the key-factors identified by the commission. In addition, the Bremen/Hamburg commission compiled a confidential book on the transport economy of the port of Antwerp. Backed up by a wealth of documentation, it included the macroeconomic aspects, such as the port's profitability, the institutional structure, as well as details about costs and equipment. It was printed and distributed by the Senates of Bremen and Hamburg from April 1915 onwards, and it became an essential reference work for everyone who was interested in how the port of Antwerp was managed just before the war – and how this could or should be altered after the war.¹⁸⁸

Bremen and the future of Antwerp

Meanwhile, Bremen did not content itself with sending the investigative commission to Antwerp.¹⁸⁹ The Senate, the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the shipping companies were greatly concerned about the future of Antwerp, and in October 1914, they felt left in the dark about the imperial Government's intentions. On the 27th, the Senate had their first detailed discussion on this topic. They decided that it was of paramount importance to carefully sound out influential members of the imperial Government about this question and to make sure to get all the relevant updates.

Interestingly, the Senate thought it most likely that Antwerp would be annexed in some form after the war, possibly as a Prussian province. Senator

¹⁸⁷ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, in fol. 32: preliminary report of the commission of experts, 10 Dec. 1914. A copy is also in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119343, fols. 112-116. StA Hamburg, 111-2, A IV, b, fols. 5ff: Commission report for the Chancellor, Hamburg/Bremen, 6 March 1915.

¹⁸⁸ Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*. For its printing and distribution see in particular: StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 35, fols. 29-34. See also ch. 6.

¹⁸⁹ Bremen and Hamburg actually sent two commissions to Antwerp at the end of 1914. The second commission consisted of specialist engineers to inspect the state of the 30-odd German ships in the port. This aspect is dealt with in ch. 8.

Biermann gave a paper on the effect that this would have on the Bremen-Antwerp competition, and concluded that an annexation of Antwerp was ‘an undesirable growth’ (‘ein wenig erwünschter Zuwachs’) from Bremen’s perspective. But rather than wanting to campaign against an annexation, Biermann advised that Bremen should take ‘preventive measures’, which would enable its port, trade and shipping to meet the challenge.¹⁹⁰ During at least the following year, the Senate’s discussion of the Antwerp Question was taken up by the formulation and, subsequently, the promotion of these measures.

A week before, the Bremen bureau for trade and shipping, which was shared by the Senate and the Chamber of Commerce, had appointed another special commission to investigate the future relationship of Antwerp to Germany. This ‘Antwerp Commission’ met for the first time on 2 November 1914. Eighteen men, representing the Senate, the Chamber of Commerce, and the shipping companies, attended. In a report about a recent consultation with Delbrück in Berlin, Senator Biermann confirmed the impression that annexations of Belgian territory were a likely outcome of the war. Concerning Antwerp, Delbrück had given the assurance that, if it ‘became German’, Bremen could expect extra support for its status as a port city. Indeed, Delbrück had asked for a memorandum from Bremen, so that the imperial administration could determine the scope and the specificities of the support needed. After Biermann’s report, there was a general discussion, in which the members of the commission raised their particular concerns. For example, it was cautioned that measures involving tariffs could end up benefiting Hamburg more than Bremen. Significantly, everybody agreed that the best support for Bremen was an improvement and extension of the waterway connections to the German inland. This had the added advantage that it could be presented as being in the *Reich*’s own interest. It reinforced Germany’s internal traffic infrastructure, which, as Lohmann, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, suggested, was necessary for the future economic bloc of *Mittleuropa*.¹⁹¹

Dronke, the legal adviser to the Senate, synthesised the points discussed into a draft memorandum, which was then refined by both the Senate and the

¹⁹⁰ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fol. 3: minutes Senate, 27 Oct. 1914.

¹⁹¹ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 7-9: confidential meeting on Antwerp, 2 Nov. 1914.

Chamber of Commerce, before it was sent to Delbrück on 27 November 1914.¹⁹² It is worth examining this document in detail. Commissioned and approved by the Senate, though not actually signed by it, the memorandum appears to be the only document in which the Government of Bremen officially laid out its ‘war aims’. At least until October 1916, it remained the basis of Bremen’s negotiations with the imperial ministries.¹⁹³

At its heart, the memorandum presented eight measures, which Bremen urgently recommended ‘in the case of an incorporation of Belgium or Antwerp’ into Germany. The first six ones concerned ways in which the *Reich* should support Bremen and its ports. They were each explained in detail, usually with a particular reference to how Bremen had been previously disadvantaged in comparison to Antwerp and Rotterdam – or to Hamburg. First, the memorandum mentioned that the national state should cover all costs for expanding and maintaining the river access to the sea – just as in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Second, it proposed the construction of a canal system that would permit the largest barges to travel from the Rhine to Emden, Bremen, and Hamburg, as well as to the Baltic Sea. If these canals were run toll-free by the *Reich*, they would facilitate overseas trade in wartime, and they would divert German goods and German liners from the Belgian and Dutch ports to the German ones during peace time. Third, Bremen’s existing waterway connections to the German inland should be improved and they should be made toll-free as well: Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg had access to cheap or free waterways. Fourth, Bremen needed financial support for its port railways, as the ones in Antwerp were provided free of charge. Fifth, Bremen requested that the existing special discounted tariffs for the German seaports on the Prussian railways (*Seehafenausnahmetarife*) be maintained and extended to the waterways where applicable. The sixth measure was the expansion of Bremen’s customs-free zone, and the improvement of its legal conditions, so that it would be on a par with that of Hamburg. In addition to these measures to prop up Bremen, the memorandum briefly mentioned two further ones, which concerned direct restrictions to be imposed on Antwerp: no further state support for the expansion of Antwerp’s

¹⁹² StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 9-19: includes a print of the final confidential memorandum.

¹⁹³ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 123-134.

port, and no permits to foreign liners for transporting emigrants from Antwerp. In this context, it also mentioned that the German liners were hit harder by social legislation than their Dutch rivals, but it did not suggest any changes.

These measures, then, were in line with the intention first suggested by Biermann to dramatically improve the attractiveness of Bremen's ports on the German market, so that they would be able to compete with Antwerp, if Antwerp became German territory. Strikingly, when spelling them out, it becomes clear that all eight measures were rooted in pre-war grievances. In a way, they seemed to have little to do with the issue of an annexation of Antwerp – their ostensible precondition. Except for the last two measures, they could be implemented irrespective of the degree of influence that Germany would gain over Belgium after the war.

This is also reflected in the convoluted beginning of the five-page-long memorandum. The introductory paragraph started with the pre-war competition between the continental world ports. However, the potential annexation of one of them, Antwerp, was hinted at only. It was not discussed until the second page, and then rather fleetingly. The authors asserted there that national military, political and economic necessities would dictate whether or not Antwerp was to be annexed. Concerning the impact on the competition with Bremen, they simply posited that Antwerp would be greatly strengthened and that the 'balance' of trading power would unfairly shift in Antwerp's favour. As reasons they mentioned that Antwerp would be backed by a more powerful state, and that its port would undoubtedly benefit from the superior German administration. In other words, they did not present a scientific analysis of the potential changes, for example by investigating to what extent German imports and exports would be drawn towards a 'German' Antwerp more than before.

Instead, the authors inserted after the first paragraph a long section about a seemingly unrelated issue: the economic-military importance of staple markets for all essential raw materials in Germany. The authors argued that the large repositories that such markets created would supply the German national economy in the event of another blockade by the British in the future, just as the Bremen staple markets for cotton and tobacco were securing the German needs for months in the current war. The additional markets, the authors argued further, would have to be of a 'purely national' character and be located in a militarily

secure port. The implication was clearly that they could not be established in Antwerp. In other words, this inserted section was meant to demonstrate the national advantages of Bremen over Antwerp. Moreover, it provided another justification for the first six measures. The authors emphasised at the end of the memorandum, that the proposed measures would not only secure Bremen's position as a world port, but that they would simultaneously hugely benefit the *Reich*: they would improve its position as a maritime power and improve its economic readiness for war.

To conclude, the Bremen memorandum of November 1914 was permeated by the fear that the port rival Antwerp might be annexed and that both the German industry and the *Reich* might then favour it over the 'old' German ports. The extensive programme to channel more of Germany's maritime trade through Bremen, particularly as contained in the first six measures, was undoubtedly designed to offset this threat. It was elaborately packaged by the argument about staple markets, in order to reconcile the interests of Bremen with those of the *Reich*. It seems that the authors adopted this strategy, partly because they hoped it would encounter the least opposition from 'pro-Antwerp' factions in Germany. This also explains why they proposed only marginally the restrictive measures against Antwerp. At the same time, however, it is clear that the six measures were effectively detached from the Antwerp Question in several ways: the demand for staple markets was an independent issue, and Bremen would face fierce competition from Antwerp, whether annexed or not, from Rotterdam, as well as from Hamburg. In this way, the memorandum was in fact less about the Antwerp Question, than about a 'Bremen Question'.

Consequently, it is not surprising that over the next few months following the presentation of the memorandum to the imperial Government, this 'Bremen Question' was gradually emancipated from the Antwerp Question. Around 15 December 1914, the leading members of the Bremen 'Antwerp Commission' had several meetings with Delbrück and other officials of the imperial ministry of the interior.¹⁹⁴ They seemed to have received mixed reactions about the memorandum. Ministerial director Peters mentioned that if Belgium were to be attached to Germany, Germany might attempt reconciliation by economic means,

¹⁹⁴ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 20-25.

particularly with respect to Antwerp. Against this backdrop, he appreciated the importance of the requests from Bremen. He recommended that Bremen coordinate them with Hamburg and the Prussian port city of Emden in order to ensure success. He further recommended enlisting such personalities as Professor Schumacher and Rear-Admiral Tirpitz for additional authoritative support. Delbrück, on the other hand, was more reserved. Perhaps true to his general scepticism concerning annexations in Belgium, he suddenly questioned why Bremen assumed so confidently that Antwerp would be annexed, and he proceeded to downplay the strategic importance of Antwerp for Germany: it lay on the economic ‘periphery’ of Germany, and the Dutch controlled both its access to the sea and its waterway connection with Germany. As a result, Delbrück seemed to have brushed aside the contents of the Bremen memorandum. The Bremen delegation had to affirm that Bremen had indeed no interest in an annexation of Antwerp, and Delbrück simply reiterated that, in any case, Prussia would never allow Hamburg and Bremen to be disadvantaged.

At their following meeting in Bremen, on 29 December, the Antwerp Commission concluded that Bremen should continue to push for the programme of the memorandum, or at least for the first two measures, even if Antwerp was not to be annexed:

Even if Antwerp did not become German, measures would still be urgently necessary against its competition. Further, it needed to be considered that there was always the competition from Rotterdam.

This decision, which was endorsed by the Senate in March 1915, determined the course of the subsequent efforts of the Antwerp Commission.¹⁹⁵ Now sometimes called the ‘Canal Commission’, it no longer investigated the nature of the competition from Antwerp, but focused entirely on the promotion of those two Bremen-centred measures instead. It worked out a second memorandum, which was a technically detailed exposition on the construction of a ‘German Rhine Delta’,¹⁹⁶ and it tried to lobby the support of influential personalities, especially the Bremen-born Professor Schumacher and the industrialist Hugenberg.¹⁹⁷ However, Bremen failed to win the commitment of any of them, and its

¹⁹⁵ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 27, 44.

¹⁹⁶ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fol. 39: ‘Das deutsche Rheindelta’ (authors Dronke, Suling; March 1915, 18 ps.).

¹⁹⁷ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39: fols. 28-34, 120 (correspondence with Schumacher 1915-1916), fols. 35b, 44, 45b, 50c (correspondence with Hugenberg 1915).

negotiations with the imperial Government were not successful either. By April 1916, the project had received a ‘first class burial’, as Senator Biermann wrote from Berlin.¹⁹⁸

Concerning Antwerp, the Senate nevertheless kept a close watch on the development of the Belgian plans in Berlin, initiating meetings with senior imperial officials at regular intervals – but no progress was made during these meetings. At best, it was increasingly confirmed that Bremen itself had no interest in an annexation of Antwerp.¹⁹⁹ The implication that the Senate was perhaps even against an annexation is significant. It seems to confirm the view of Jürgen Bolland, that in the aggressive atmosphere of the war, anti-expansionist attitudes were often silent and hence hard to uncover for the historian.²⁰⁰ For there were voices from Bremen, too, which loudly demanded the annexation of Antwerp. These included Professor Fabarius, the director of the ‘German Colonial School’, and, notably, a certain Dr. Oppel, the legal advisor to the Bremen Cotton Exchange.²⁰¹ Yet, until January 1918, when directly called upon by the imperial interior ministry, neither the Senate, nor the Chamber of Commerce, nor the shipping companies seemed to have sought further active input into the Antwerp Question, as they had done in October 1914. But before continuing with the developments in 1918, it is necessary to turn to Hamburg.

Hamburg and the future of Antwerp

Similar to their sister government of Bremen, from October 1914 onwards, the Senate of Hamburg was keen to know exactly about any preparations concerning the future of Antwerp. Hamburg, however, had a clear advantage over Bremen, which it derived from its senators who became the Presidents of the Civil Administration for the province of Antwerp. These senators continued to be members of the Government of Hamburg: their status was defined as ‘senator on a foreign mission’ (*Senator in auswärtiger Mission*), and they did not receive any salary from either the *Reich* or the Government General.²⁰² All three

¹⁹⁸ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fol., 122b.

¹⁹⁹ StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, box 39, fols. 79-81, 123-134.

²⁰⁰ Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' p. 223.

²⁰¹ See PA AA Berlin, R 21303, fol. 57: memorandum by Fabarius, 1915. BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 272, fols. 5-14: summary of Dr. Oppel, 'Antwerpen, seine Vergangenheit und seine mögliche Zukunft,' *Zeitschrift für Handelswissenschaft und Handelspraxis*, (September 1915).

²⁰² See StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fols. 14, 17.

Presidents sent regular reports about their work to the Senate – many of which are preserved in the state archive of Hamburg.

On 29 October 1914, for example, Civil President Strandes informed the Senate about a discussion he had had the previous week with Foreign Minister von Jagow, and he disclosed that the imperial Government had apparently not yet prepared any plans for the future of Belgium, not even for a best-case scenario.²⁰³ The Hamburg Senate anticipated that its senator would remain in Antwerp at least until the signing of the peace treaty, and it considered this as sufficient guarantee that Hamburg would have a say in the settlement of the Antwerp Question.²⁰⁴ Consequently, in contrast to Bremen, Hamburg did not find it urgent to consult the imperial Government about Antwerp.

How, then, did the Senate view the Antwerp Question? Remarkably, again unlike Bremen, the Hamburg Senate never produced any comprehensive statement concerning its demands with respect to the treatment of Antwerp during the war. Several reasons might have accounted for this silence. As mentioned, Hamburg's representation in occupied Antwerp meant that the Senate could afford a wait-and-see strategy. Further, the economic hinterland of Hamburg and Antwerp overlapped only marginally, so that the competition from Antwerp was never as life-threatening for Hamburg as it was for Bremen.

Another reason was that the Senate was simply divided over the issue of the future of Antwerp. During his conversation with Strandes, minister Jagow had enquired whether the cry for an annexation of Belgium was as loud in Hamburg as in the rest of Germany. This prompted the Senate for a first, tentative round-call of opinion. As Burgomaster Predöhl highlighted in his letter to Strandes, the annexationist attitude was indeed 'vividly represented.' Overall, however, it emerged that the views of senators were too diverse for defining a collective position of the Senate.²⁰⁵ It appears again that those senators who were against an annexation, although they must have been represented as well, kept a lower profile.

The archival sources of Hamburg are a little richer on this issue than those of Bremen. They preserved a few statements by senators, from both sides of the

²⁰³ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 13: Strandes to Burgomaster Predöhl, 29 Oct. 1914.

²⁰⁴ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Schramm), K 12/1: Schramm to his wife Olga, 27 Nov. 1917. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 4: Sthamer to Predöhl, 6 Aug. 1916.

²⁰⁵ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 17: Predöhl to Strandes, 10 Nov. 1914.

divide, which permit an insight into the motivation behind their attitudes. Senator Ottokar Westphal, for example, circulated a private note on the ‘future administration of Antwerp’ in February 1915.²⁰⁶ His premise was that Belgium, or at least Flanders, would be taken into ‘permanent German possession’ and subjected under a military-colonial rule. Antwerp, Westphal proposed, should be given a special status, with its local government being organised along the Hanseatic model. Its highest authority should consist of nine senators, who would be appointed in sets of three by the Antwerp merchants, the *Reich*, and by Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck. In time, with an increasing ‘germanisation’ (*Verdeutschung*) of the city, it should get the same sovereign status as the Hanseatic cities, including representation in the *Bundesrat*.

Westphal considered this a very generous treatment of Antwerp, suggesting that it would lead to its full economic recovery, as well as to reconciliation with Germany. His reasoning revealed a mixture of expansionist motives: racialist, national-economic and parochial. He claimed that it was a ‘racial duty of Germany’ to protect Flanders/Belgium from further ‘romanisation’ – and that Antwerp should become a ‘blooming Low-German city’, just as in the sixteenth century. A strong Antwerp, he maintained further, was necessary for the export industries of Western and Southern Germany. His third motive, however, was not included in his note. In an enclosed letter to a colleague he argued: ‘Hamburg must try to gain direct influence over the conditions in Antwerp.’ Arguably, this was Westphal’s ‘real’ motive. He had written the note at the instigation of Wahnschaffe, undersecretary in the imperial interior ministry. He was therefore anxious to put forward arguments of national importance in order not to be dismissed as a particularist. But in his letter to a fellow senator he was likely to speak more openly.

On the occasion of a visit to Antwerp, ‘R. B.’, probably Senator Brandt, also put down his thoughts on the future of Belgium in writing.²⁰⁷ Starting with an anti-annexationist position, he yet proceeded to list some far-reaching demands, which would reduce Belgium to a satellite state of Germany. Concerning Antwerp, he did not propose any administrative changes. But his demand to put

²⁰⁶ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3956, fols. 2, 2a: Westphal to ‘Max’ [Schramm?], 24 Feb. 1915; confidential note Westphal, end Jan. 1915 (5 ps).

²⁰⁷ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3956, fol. 5: copy of letter from ‘R. B.’, 14 March 1915.

the Belgian economic infrastructure of post, railways and customs under German control, would of course provide indirect influence over the world port. In addition to that, Brandt specified that legal protection of the German merchant fleet was necessary, as well as the construction and German control of the Rhine-Antwerp canal. He was thus in favour of strengthening Antwerp, and improving the German use of its port. Brandt had adopted a national perspective and he did not refer to the interests of Hamburg; presumably, he thought his proposals had no damaging impact on Hamburg's trade. Significantly, his proposals were akin to the 'moderate' programmes circulating at the time. They were of the type which Fritz Fischer has interpreted as differing from the annexationists in degree and strategy only, but not in the aim of German expansion and continental hegemony.²⁰⁸

The most prolific writers about Antwerp and Belgium were Senators Strandes and Sthamer, during their respective time as Civil Presidents in Antwerp. Senator Schramm, the last Civil President, seems to have been more cautious about expressing his own opinion; he seems to have preferred to collect material and to mediate between the various interest groups. The attitudes and influence of the three Civil Presidents are presented in further detail in chapters 3 and 7. At this point, their statements are of interest only as far as they concern Hamburg, and, more generally, as far as they give an indication of the positions represented in the Senate.

In his conversation with Jagow in October 1914, Justus Strandes emphasised, somewhat mistakenly as seen above, that people in Hamburg were sober and cautious people, who would not easily join the annexationist cries. He personally cautioned that an incorporation of Belgium into Germany was only possible if Britain was defeated completely – and even given this precondition, the economic merits of annexation would still have to be scrutinised. Nevertheless, Strandes deemed it possible to break up Belgium and to allocate its German-speaking parts to Germany and its Flemish-speaking parts to the Netherlands.²⁰⁹ This kind of sober calculation, rather than for example moral or nationalist principles, seemed to have been the salient characteristic of Strandes' position.

²⁰⁸ See for example Gerald D. Feldman, *German Imperialism, 1914-1918: the Development of a Historical Debate*, 1975, p. 156.

²⁰⁹ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 13: Strandes to Predöhl, 29 Oct. 1914.

He approved of an annexation of Belgium, once militarily possible and provided it made economic sense. Concerning Antwerp, he thought that an annexation was quite acceptable from Hamburg's perspective. Similar to the Bremen Senate, Strandes reckoned that the Hanseatic cities might require protective measures, but that the competition between the three ports would stabilise in the long term, especially since the general social and economic conditions would be levelled.²¹⁰ On the other hand, Strandes emphasised that the event of 'non-annexation' should be prepared for as well. Perhaps similar to Brandt's position, this meant for Strandes finding ways of gaining influence in an otherwise independent Belgium. Ultimately, Strandes favoured, and actively advocated, Ballin's project of a German-dominated port authority (*Hafenbetriebsgesellschaft*) in Antwerp.²¹¹

Senator Sthamer, by contrast, perhaps akin to his more forceful character, tended to think in absolute terms: 'The current war is a struggle between Germany and England about the economic supremacy on the world market.'²¹² For Sthamer, holding on to Belgium – he favoured an annexation analogous to a self-governing colony – was a true German war aim, one that the soldiers were actually fighting for – though he did not use these words. He was convinced that if Germany did not control Belgium, and Antwerp in particular, Britain would. This meant that 'giving up' Antwerp would seriously damage German shipping and German trade. Further, Sthamer argued against the project of an Antwerp port authority, which he considered unfeasible. His doubts proved influential in the imperial interior ministry, which temporarily dropped the project in the spring of 1916.²¹³

Importantly, Sthamer was also very outspoken about the impact of an annexation of Antwerp on Hamburg and Bremen. Similar to Strandes, he thought that ways could be found, especially concerning railway tariffs, to ensure that the three ports kept their natural hinterlands. Nevertheless, Sthamer made a point of

²¹⁰ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119533, fols. 105-127: memo Strandes ('Die Verkehrs- und Handelsverhältnisse in Antwerpen'), July 1915. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 13: Strandes to Senate Hamburg, 16 Dec. 1914.

²¹¹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (*Nachlaß* Sthamer), 5: memo (*Niederschrift*) Sthamer, Oct. 1915; Strandes to Sthamer, 22 Feb. 1916. See also ch. 3.

²¹² StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, between fols. 6 and 7: memo/letter Sthamer to Bissing (on Bissing's memorandum), 1 Feb. 1916, p. 6.

²¹³ See StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 6: Sthamer to Predöhl, 7 Feb. 1916; between fols. 6 and 7: memo/letter Sthamer to Bissing (on *Hafenbetriebsgesellschaft*), 19 Jan. 1916. See also Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 60.

impressing upon every one of his political visitors that an annexed Antwerp was not to be privileged over Germany's 'old' ports.²¹⁴

Besides the Senate, Hamburg's social elite, its trade and shipping world, had a direct interest in the fate of Antwerp. In order to get a more complete picture of the attitude in Hamburg about the Antwerp Question, it is important to supplement the views of the above senators with the positions taken by some further significant representatives of Hamburg.

The most influential figure was undoubtedly that of shipping tycoon Albert Ballin. Admittedly, given Ballin's rather impetuous character, it is hard to pin him down to one particular position.²¹⁵ For example, he was known to outline enthusiastically grand projects of maritime acquisitions, including Boulogne and the Canary Islands;²¹⁶ yet, at other times he emphasised that even the *status quo ante* would be a German victory.²¹⁷ Concerning Antwerp, Ballin actually played a very important role in the planning of the German war aims in Berlin. At the beginning of February 1915, at the request of Bethmann Hollweg, Ballin sent a long letter about the Belgian Question to the Chancellor, which soon circulated widely as 'Ballin's memorandum'.²¹⁸ Like Strandes, Ballin stressed that Great Britain was the key to any peace settlement with Belgium. Even minor changes of its constitution, as the ones he suggested, depended on Britain at least conceding military superiority in the region to Germany. Dismissing annexation for a number of reasons, Ballin favoured a customs union, the acquisition of the Belgian railways and a lease of the port of Zeebrugge for a naval base. In addition to that, he was the originator of the idea of a German-dominated port authority for Antwerp. As indicated above, this idea was not only taken up by the imperial interior ministry, where it remained the dominant Antwerp-project until 1916, but Ballin was also invited to help work out the details.²¹⁹

Ballin was convinced that decisive German influence in Antwerp was necessary in order to prevent Britain using Antwerp as an anti-German base –

²¹⁴ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 4: Sthamer to Predöhl, 21 Sept. 1915, p. 8.

²¹⁵ See Cecil, *Albert Ballin. Wirtschaft und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1888-1918*, p. 43.

²¹⁶ See for example, Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*, p. 124. See also speech Ballin at AGM Verein Hamburger Rheder, 20 Okt. 1915 in: PA AA Berlin, R 21404, fols. 70-71.

²¹⁷ See for example StA Hamburg, 621-1 (HAPAG), 1472, fol. 65: Ballin to Stinnes, 6 Sept. 1917.

²¹⁸ I used the copy in: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Krogmann), I A., 8: Ballin to Bethmann, 8 Feb. 1915, (6 ps.).

²¹⁹ Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 60.

and he claimed to be speaking for the majority of the Hamburg business community. Moreover, he was confident that this *Hafenbetriebsgesellschaft* would prevent Antwerp becoming a dangerous rival for Hamburg.²²⁰ Later during the war, however, he extended his idea into a radical scheme. He proposed that analogous port authorities should be created in Hamburg and Bremen and that all three companies should then be pooled in a trust.²²¹ His hope was that this complex scheme would find the Allies' approval, as it was no longer a simple matter of unilateral German control, but it gave the Belgians some influence over the German ports as well. Unfortunately, it is not known how the Senate of Hamburg reacted to this proposal. But considering the encroachment of Hamburg sovereignty, it was unlikely to approve. The Senate of Bremen, as will be seen further down, was wary of this scheme; and it does not seem to have been seriously considered in Brussels or Berlin.

Ballin's own HAPAG, meanwhile, formulated a list of 'minimal demands' with respect to the port of Antwerp.²²² I have only found an undated copy, but it was written sometime after 1916, probably in early 1918. Interestingly, this list did not take up any of Ballin's elaborate proposals. Instead, it called for a return to the pre-war conditions, and for their guarantee in the peace treaty. It specified six points, which were aimed at ensuring that there would be no discrimination against German trade and shipping in the port, and that Belgian railway tariffs for transit goods be kept as cheap as possible. Two points, however, went a little further than that: a German commissioner to sit on the Belgian port and railways executives, though with no voting power; and the formal lease of the premium quay berths on the Scheldt for twenty years – before the war they had been routinely allocated to German lines, without legal obligation. In fact, this position seemed to have been dominant in the HAPAG throughout the war. In January 1915, Director Bernhard Huldermann expressed his doubts about the value – from the point of view of the German seaports – of an acquisition or

²²⁰ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 433, fols. 11-13: Ballin to Capelle, 21 Jan. 1915.

²²¹ See HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: summarised in report Gluud, 2 March 1918. BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 18, fol. 101: minutes *Chefkommission*, Brussels, 18 March 1918.

²²² StA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Sthamer), 5: copy of 'Mindesforderungen der Hamburg-Amerika Linie für Antwerpen', n. d. The reference to the German-built railway line to Visé indicates it was written after 1916.

control of the Belgian railways if Belgium was not annexed, and he asserted that the right to veto certain Belgian tariffs would suffice ‘for our purposes’.²²³

Indeed, on the one hand, truly moderate voices had come out of Hamburg early on during the war. Max Warburg, the influential banker, had advised Bethmann Hollweg in early 1915 not only against an annexation, but also against any customs or monetary unions with Belgium. A trade treaty was sufficient in his opinion – even, by implication, concerning Antwerp. Admittedly, Warburg’s moderation stopped in the colonial sphere, as he was in favour of the acquisition of the Congo.²²⁴

Outright annexationist demands by Hamburg businessmen, on the other hand, seemed to have been heard more often than such moderate voices. The ship-owner and vice-president of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce Richard Krogmann, for example, was a convinced annexationist.²²⁵ In February 1915, he wrote to Ballin that his memorandum was too idealistic, that only a strong Germany prevented future wars, and that Belgium provided a source of taxpayers to finance a large navy and army. Concerning Antwerp, Krogmann feared a British domination, which he illustrated particularly vividly in a letter to a friend in July 1917:

It is nonsense to make Belgium completely neutral, because then Belgium will be English and our ships in Antwerp will be subjected to boiler audits [*Kesselrevisionen*], [regulations on] loadline, safety rules, regulations on hygiene, sending along of Belgian doctors, and whatever else there may be, making calling at Antwerp impossible. Then everything that our beautiful Rhine and south Germany produces will be transported into the world on enemy ships.

In October 1917, the See-Berufsgenossenschaft, of which Krogmann was the chairman, unanimously passed a resolution against ‘giving up’ Belgium, which was based on the same arguments.²²⁶

Others actually emphasised that there were direct benefits for Hamburg businesses if Antwerp were annexed. The Forwarding Agents Association (Spediteurverein) of Hamburg wrote to this effect to the Senate in November

²²³ StA Hamburg, 621-1 (HAPAG), 1131: unsigned letter [Huldermann?] to Mogk, 28 Jan. 1915.

²²⁴ PA AA Berlin, R 21433, fols. 147 ff: memo Warburg, 13 Feb. 1915. See also Leo Haupt, *Deutsche Friedenspolitik 1918-1919. Eine Alternative zur Machtpolitik des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Düsseldorf 1976, esp. pp. 110-21.

²²⁵ For the following see: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Krogmann): I A., 7, appendix to war diary: copy of letter Krogmann to Ballin, 13 Feb. 1915; I A., 8: Krogmann to Eckener, 23 July 1917.

²²⁶ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Krogmann), I A., 7, p. 108.

1915. They explained that many of the great forwarding agencies of Hamburg had been reluctant to open branches in Antwerp before the war because of insufficient legal securities abroad. In case of an annexation, these reservations would be removed, and the Hamburg businesses could benefit from the large traffic going through Antwerp.²²⁷

Annexationist demands, finally, were also made in the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce. Rudolf Crasemann, its president until 1916, emphasised on several occasions that Belgium, and Antwerp in particular, had to ‘stay within’ the *Reich*.²²⁸ Dietrich Kersten has interpreted Crasemann’s statements as either an isolated opinion, or as verbal concessions to the belligerent annexationists from the Rhineland.²²⁹ However, in the light of the demands by Krogmann or the Forwarding Agents revealed above, it makes more sense to consider them as genuine expressions, representing a significant part of the Hamburg business world. Consequently, much more than Kersten would have it, the Hamburg businessmen seemed, overall, not only willing to accept an annexation of Antwerp but also to make the extension of German control over Antwerp part of their own war aims wishes. This was also reflected in a series of economic reports about the Belgian and Antwerp Questions, which the Chamber of Commerce – confidentially – produced.

The first report was written for the newly appointed Civil President of Antwerp, Senator Strandes, in November 1914.²³⁰ It was exclusively aimed at ensuring that the rivalry from Antwerp did not increase to the detriment of Hamburg. It recommended measures to keep the expansion of Antwerp in check in the event of either direct annexation or nominal independence. In the first case, it suggested for example the transformation of Antwerp into a free port, coupled with a prohibition against new shipyards. In the second case, it suggested that Germany take control of the tariffs on the Belgian railways and

²²⁷ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 272, fol. 15: Hamburger Spediteurverein, 16 Nov. 1915, forwarded by Schramm to Tirpitz.

²²⁸ Crasemann’s statements on 14 May 1915 at a general session of the Chamber of Commerce, and on 24 November 1915 at a meeting of the *Deutscher Handelstag* are paraphrased in: Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, nos. 342, 345.

²²⁹ Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, pp. 132, 134.

²³⁰ See a summary in: Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, p. 133. Kersten mistakenly names the President as Dr. Sthamer.

interior waterways. Thus, despite the defensive motivation, it is remarkable that even this memorandum advocated the expansion of German power into Belgium.

The second report was a sixteen-page memorandum, which analysed in detail the ‘future relationship of Belgium with the German *Reich*, taking into account the economic interests of Hamburg.’ In January 1917, Senator Schramm, who had become Civil President of occupied Antwerp four months before, had asked the Chamber of Commerce for its position on this matter. The report, dated February 1917, was originally written exclusively in answer to Schramm’s request, but by the summer of 1917, it was also distributed to the imperial Government and its ministries.²³¹

Most of this memorandum was concerned with the ‘main topic’ of the Belgian economy, Antwerp, and the related issue of the railways. It significantly developed and modified the principles outlined in 1914. Having highlighted the necessarily hypothetical character of the memorandum, given the uncertain military and political conditions, the authors argued that Belgium should be subordinated under the political will of Germany. As reasons, they mentioned mainly defensive economic ones, in view of the Belgian Government’s participation at the Paris Economic Conference of 1916, where long-term economic sanctions against Germany were proposed. As means, they clearly favoured the model of a satellite state to that of an annexation. Based on the principle of subordination, the authors assumed that Antwerp could then be considered a German port in terms of economic policy.

As far as safeguarding the interests of Hamburg was concerned, the Chamber of Commerce had dropped all restrictive demands. Shipping in Antwerp should be ruled by free competition, and the chamber did not desire any special rights that would advantage German lines over others. Similarly, concerning the competition between a German Antwerp and Hamburg, the chamber’s examinations amounted to a recommendation of a return to the pre-war conditions, including the preservation of the old railway tariffs. In this context, however, the chamber demanded that Hamburg’s pre-war projects for improving its waterway connections with central Germany should be implemented. The authors ended the section on Antwerp with a paragraph extolling the benefits that

²³¹ See StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fols. 1-9, 28b.

a German-controlled Antwerp would have for Germany and Hamburg on the global stage. It signalled Germany's commitment to the world economy – to an open economic system as opposed to a closed autarchic one; and it meant that Antwerp would be aligned to the German seaports in a common economic policy, thus turning the edge of its competition against London and the other English ports.

The third report was a shorter piece (three pages) on the restoration of the German-Belgian trade treaty at the conclusion of peace. Unfortunately, the circumstances of its incentive are not known. It was printed in January 1918 and, like the previous one, it was distributed in the Senate of Hamburg and among the ministries of the imperial Government.²³² In its introduction, the Chamber of Commerce reiterated its principle aim that Belgium should be subordinated to Germany and that it should enter the German customs union. In that case, the chamber emphasised, a trade treaty would become superfluous. It would become only relevant if Belgium regained its full sovereignty. In this case, the authors recommended that the pre-war treaty be revived unchanged, and that it should only be replaced once the economic development of the post-war world had crystallised. In addition to that, they urged that a shipping treaty was necessary, which should be based on the old Belgian-Prussian treaty of 1863. This should be extended to the effect that Belgium recognised all German measurements and other shipping standards, and that there should be no differential treatment between German ships and ships of other nationalities. Finally, the large Hamburg shipping companies requested that their former quay berths in Antwerp be contracted to them for about thirty years, even if they could not use them during the immediate post-war period. The significance of this third report, then, is that although the Chamber of Commerce reaffirmed its commitment to the expansion of German power over Belgium and Antwerp, it was willing to consider and prepare for the event of a fully restored Belgium.

In June 1918, the Chamber of Commerce produced a fourth report, this time directly about the question of how to secure German influence over the port of Antwerp.²³³ It was the contribution of the Hamburg chamber towards the

²³² StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 12.

²³³ StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 27b: 'Sicherung deutschen Einflusses auf den Antwerpener Hafen', June 1918.

nationwide brainstorming session about the future of Antwerp, which had been inaugurated by the Government-General in the spring of 1918. It will therefore be discussed below, together with the contributions from Bremen. First, however, it is important to return to the attitude of the Senate of Hamburg.

As described above, in 1914, the Senate was completely divided over the issue of the future treatment of Antwerp. It seemed that a common position of the Senate was difficult to reach, particularly because some senators were uncompromising in their annexationist attitude. Given this situation, the Senate thought it wiser not to discuss the issue formally until Hamburg was actually called upon to declare its position.²³⁴ Accordingly, Senators Westphal and even Sthamer emphasised that their statements on Antwerp were merely the expression of their private opinion.²³⁵ At the end of December 1914, one senator, who feared that Antwerp would be incorporated into Prussia, tried to set up a small task force of senators to define Hamburg's position and influence the Senate accordingly.²³⁶ But nothing came of this attempt. In February 1916, the senators' views on Belgium were as divided as ever.²³⁷

It is possible that the moderate senators won the upper hand by the year 1917. At the turn of the year 1917/1918, at the time of the first negotiations of peace with Russia at Brest-Litovsk, the Hamburg Senate refused to give its support to a formal appeal to the *Kaiser* against a general peace.²³⁸ Initiated by the Grand Duke of Oldenburg, and apparently warmly supported by the Senates of Bremen and Lübeck, the appeal requested that the war against the Western powers, namely Britain, should be continued until the future security of Germany, and Germany's status as a sea power, was guaranteed – whereby the guarantee was identified with control over Belgium.

Jürgen Bolland has interpreted Hamburg's persistent refusal to participate in the endeavour – which eventually collapsed because the King of Bavaria

²³⁴ Westphal noted in January 1915 that the Senate had had so far no reason ('*Veranlassung*') to discuss the issue in detail. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3956, fol. 2a.

²³⁵ StA Hamburg, 132-II: 3954, fol. 6; 3956, fol. 2a.

²³⁶ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 5. Senator ? [illegible] to Predöhl, 22. Dec. 1914. The author suggested to team up with Predöhl, Melle, Westphal, Diestel and Sthamer: possibly those senators who were inclined towards expansion.

²³⁷ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 7: Predöhl to Sthamer, 11 Feb. 1916.

²³⁸ StA Hamburg, 111-2, Z II, a 1. I have used the transcription of the documents in: Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' pp. 224-30, here: appendices 1a and 1b: two versions of 'Eingabe an den Kaiser'.

withdrew his support – as proof that Hamburg was fundamentally in favour of an immediate peace, based on an understanding with Britain, and hence also based on the full restoration of Belgium.²³⁹ However, Bolland's inspiring analysis seems a little too much driven by the desire to demonstrate an anti-annexationist attitude of the Hanseatic Senates.²⁴⁰ It is perhaps not necessary to read as much 'in between the lines' as Bolland explicitly does in order to fully explain why Hamburg rejected the appeal. In fact, the reasons that the Hamburg senators gave on 25 and 30 December 1917 to their colleagues from Bremen and Lübeck, which Bolland considered a tactical front, seem entirely satisfactory. These boiled down to two objections: the envisaged appeal had no practical use, and: the possibility of a decisive victory was still in doubt.²⁴¹ In other words, Hamburg's rejection had less to do with war aims than with internal German diplomacy and with a different assessment of Germany's bargaining position at the time. It can thus be concluded that the Senate of Hamburg was principally in favour, as its representatives affirmed, of achieving a peace that extended Germany's power over Belgium. However, in 1917/18, they were not certain if this was still a realistic aim, and they were prepared to consider the next-best options.

This 'moderate' attitude – in favour of expansion if possible, but equally in favour of negotiation and compromise – was also reflected in the Senate's reactions to the reports of the Chamber of Commerce. The distribution of these reports outside Hamburg had to go through the hands of the Senate. In each case, the Senate enclosed a note, stating that the Senate had not taken any position on the contents. The only partial exception, interestingly, concerned the report on the German-Belgian trade treaty. After the standard expression of dissociation, the Senate remarked that they gave their full support to the demands about the conditions for German shipping in Belgium.²⁴² In other words, the Senate explicitly approved of measures concerning Antwerp, which could be agreed

²³⁹ Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' esp. p. 222.

²⁴⁰ On page 221 Bolland suggests that Bremen and Lübeck, too, might really have been critically disposed towards the appeal. He dedicated his essay to Percy Ernst Schramm, Hamburg historian and son of Senator Max Schramm, who had accused Fritz Fischer of 'treason' during the 'Fischer debate'. See Bernd Söseman, 'Rißspuren sind nicht zu übersehen,' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, (14 March 2001).

²⁴¹ See Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' p. 220, appendices 2a, 2b.

²⁴² StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fols. 13, 14: comments Senate on Chamber of Commerce report, 20 Feb. 1918.

between two sovereign states without any recourse to models of domination or control.

Decision time in spring 1918?

As seen in the previous chapter, between January and May 1918, the Government-General in Belgium focused its attention on solving the Antwerp Question under the auspices of its *Chefkommission* for the economic preparation of the peace. This process was intended to culminate in a great conference in Brussels and Antwerp, to which delegates of all interested German states, as well as of economic associations, were invited. The conference was originally scheduled for June, and in early May the Government-General sent out ‘guiding principles’ for the treatment of Antwerp, which the *Chefkommission* had formulated.²⁴³ However, with the deterioration of the military situation at the front, the conference was constantly postponed, until it was called off in September.²⁴⁴ This was the context of a renewed examination of the Antwerp Question both in Hamburg and in Bremen.

As early as 12 January 1918, General Winterfeldt, chief of staff of the Government-General, asked the Senate of Bremen for a depiction of Bremen’s interests and demands, which should be taken into account during the current negotiations about Antwerp. Importantly, he specified the general framework that was envisaged for the peace with Belgium: ‘In setting up these demands, it is requested to proceed from the assumption that an annexation of Belgium will not be pursued, but rather a penetration of Belgium in economic respects.’²⁴⁵

The Senate forwarded the task to the Chamber of Commerce, which also received a similar request from Senator Schramm, the Civil President of Antwerp, about a month later. Schramm had put it succinctly: ‘To what extent is German influence on the management and extension of the port of Antwerp necessary after the war, and to what extent can it be realised?’²⁴⁶ During the following months, the chamber’s commissions for shipping, railways and for trade policy worked on the task, consulting closely with the Bremen association

²⁴³ StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 17: ‘Leitsätze’ May 1918. See ch. 3 for details.

²⁴⁴ See for example, StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 31: RdI to Senate, 4 Sept. 1918. Further: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119243, fols. 68-94: correspondence RdI about the conference, May-June 1918. See also ch. 3.

²⁴⁵ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: Winterfeldt to Senate, 12 Jan. 1918.

²⁴⁶ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: Schramm to Bremen Chamber of Commerce, 26 Feb. 1918.

of shipping companies. Because of the ‘far-reaching significance of the matter’, it was not until mid-June that the chamber sent a comprehensive answer to Senator Schramm.²⁴⁷

Part of the reasons for this long delay was that from the beginning the shipping companies took on an opposing position to the rest of the chamber. Director Petzet of the Norddeutscher Lloyd remarked even in the first meeting that the interests of the shipping companies differed from those of the state of Bremen. Their principle demand was simply that the conditions in the port of Antwerp should remain exactly as they had been before the war, which the companies had found very satisfactory. The majority of the speakers, however, emphasised that Bremen needed significant support from the German state against the Belgian and Dutch competition – just as the joint ‘Antwerp Commission’ of Senate and chamber had done in November 1914. Moreover, more than in 1914, they thought of demanding measures to curtail the influence of Antwerp in Germany directly. They were against the construction of the Antwerp-Rhine Canal, and they suggested that the transit tariffs of the Belgian railways should be limited in its territorial validity to the left of the Rhine and a small strip along the right-hand side.²⁴⁸ Indeed, in the discussions during March and April, leading members of the Chamber of Commerce advocated that the port of Antwerp should become more expensive.²⁴⁹

Most of the chamber’s research went into the project of the German-Belgian port authority for Antwerp. Its legal advisor (*Syndikus*), Dr. Gluud, even developed Ballin’s idea of a pool between Antwerp, Hamburg and Bremen further, suggesting that the Dutch Rotterdam should be induced to join, too. These considerations – on both the port authority and the pool – were based on the assumption of a German victory and the assertion of German military hegemony on the continent. Their aim was twofold: to facilitate the ‘Germanisation of Antwerp’, and, crucially, to give the Hanseatic Senates decisive influence over the port charges in Antwerp. The purpose of this second

²⁴⁷ See HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle: Bremen Chamber of Commerce (Dr. Strube) to Schramm, 5 June 1918.

²⁴⁸ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: minutes of the Railways- and Canal Commission, 24 Jan. 1918.

²⁴⁹ See for example: HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: minutes Commission for Trade Policy, 2 March 1918, statements by Busch; draft letter Chamber of Commerce to Senate, ‘An die Handelskommission des Senats’, April 1918, p. 8/9.

aim was apparently not to make Antwerp port more expensive than Bremen, but rather to create the opportunity of raising the costs in Bremen, too.²⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, this was a point that the Bremen shipping owners objected to most strenuously.²⁵¹

As a result, the letter that the Bremen Chamber of Commerce sent to Schramm on 5 June 1918 was clearly a compromise.²⁵² In its first half, the letter listed eight points, which described those aspects that the German influence on the port of Antwerp had to take care of. Including such demands as ‘abolition of all measures of an economic war against Germany’ (No. 2) and ‘continuation of the so-called *Naties* [the transshipment companies in the port]’ – that is, no centralisation of the transshipment business (No. 4), these points aimed at re-establishing the pre-war conditions. In fact, they were taken almost directly from a catalogue of demands that the ship owners had prepared in January.²⁵³ The letter then went on to the question how these German interests should be protected. Cautiously, the chamber noted that it could not take up a definitive stance on this until after the conference in Brussels. But it tentatively recommended the creation of a German port authority, which would control the port police, the allocation of berths, and the levy of port charges. Similarly, the Belgian railway tariffs should come under German control. In this way, the chamber stayed very close to the ‘guidelines’ issued by the Government-General in May. It made no reference to a specific Hanseatic influence in Antwerp, and it did not demand that the costs in Antwerp port should be raised. Nevertheless, through its tentative support of the model of a German port authority, it left the door open to introduce both these demands at a later stage.

Despite the cautious tone of this letter to Schramm, the shipping companies were not satisfied with it. They sent their own answer to Schramm ten days

²⁵⁰ See in particular: HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle: Gluud’s exposé: ‘Die Antwerpener Frage’ n.d. [probably April 1918].

²⁵¹ See in particular: HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle: the letter of protest by the Bremer Rhederverein to Chamber of Commerce, 15 June 1918. In a discussion with Gluud on 30 April, ship owner Veith of Argos was in favour of making Antwerp more expensive. Mr. Grothe of the de Bary company from Antwerp approved of a German-Flemish port authority, but was against giving it control over the port charges. See: HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle.

²⁵² HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle: Chamber of Commerce Bremen (Strube) to Schramm, 5 June 1918.

²⁵³ Compare HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: Verein der Reeder des Unterwesergebiets (Dr. Isermeyer) to Chamber of Commerce, 29 Jan. 1918.

later.²⁵⁴ Again, the first section of their letter consisted of a list of demands about the fair treatment of German ships in the port of Antwerp, which was virtually identical to the list sent by the chamber. On the following six pages, however, they launched an attack – not only against the chamber’s attitude towards the Antwerp Question as they had come to know it, but also against the entire concept of controlling Belgium indirectly as proposed by the Government-General. First, they stressed that any ‘artificial changes’ to the Belgian economy and to the economics of the port of Antwerp would be a serious error. In particular, they named the projects of the German port authority and of the pool as examples of such dangerous changes, because their implementation would inevitably make Antwerp more expensive for the ships. Similarly, the ship-owners demanded the continuation of the old railway tariffs – though they conceded that the administration of the railways might be transferred into German hands – and they explicitly spoke out against both a customs and a monetary union with Belgium.

Significantly, while this might seem like a moderate programme, designed for a compromise peace, it was not seen as such by the ship-owners. In order to implement their demands, they considered as essential precondition a German victory resulting in the recognition of German hegemony over Belgium: Belgium might be split into Flanders and Wallonia, and Germany should have the right of military occupation, as well as the right to appoint the most senior posts in the civil service and in the police. Directly rejecting the guidelines of the Government-General, they claimed that any schemes of political and military compromise coupled with economic expansion were an illusion. Politically they were unfeasible and economically they were harmful: ‘At any rate, we regard the future “penetration of Belgium in economic respects” as a slogan, with which nothing is gained for the future of the German economy.’²⁵⁵

The ship-owners’ economic demands were clearly based on a calculation of their own benefit, even though they backed them up with ‘national’ arguments, too. It is significant, however, that they assessed the political and military

²⁵⁴ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle: copy of letter Bremer Rhederverein (Heineken, Isermeyer) to Schramm, 15 June 1918.

²⁵⁵ It seems that the ‘strong man’ behind these assertions was P. Heineken of the Norddeutscher Lloyd. At a meeting of the Bremen *Behörde für Handel und Schiffahrt* on 24 May 1918, he laid down that Germany could choose between two options only: restoration or annexation. See HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle.

necessities completely differently to some of the highest German authorities, and that they were not shy about expressing their disagreement.

How did the Senate react to this dispute between the ship-owners and the Chamber of Commerce? Did it adopt a position of its own? On 25 May, the Bremen bureau for trade and shipping discussed the 'guiding principles' of the Government-General and deliberated about Bremen's answer to them.²⁵⁶ Both the chamber and the ship-owners presented their views to the representatives of the Senate. Senators Nebelthau and Biermann were not convinced by the chamber's proposals about the Antwerp port authority, considering it impracticable in the detail. Just as in November 1914, all senators present stressed that Bremen was only interested in receiving financial support from the *Reich*, thus adjusting the conditions of competition with Antwerp; they had no desire to introduce changes in Antwerp itself. Nevertheless, considering that the project of the Antwerp port authority was supported by powerful personalities in Hamburg and in Brussels, they decided to adopt a noncommittal attitude and wait for the results of the conference in Brussels.

The Bremen Senate phrased its answer to the imperial interior ministry – which had forwarded the Government-General's guidelines and invitation to the conference – accordingly.²⁵⁷ It expressed its principle agreement with the six 'guiding principles' of the Government-General, adding and specifying them according to the eight points which had been formulated by the ship-owners and supported by the chamber. However, it reserved its judgement about the crucial question how these points should be guaranteed – how German influence could be exercised. The Senate of Bremen, consequently, had not moved from its position adopted in November 1914. As also indicated by its support for the Grand Duke of Oldenburg's proposed appeal to the *Kaiser*, it seemed generally in favour of bringing Belgium firmly into the German sphere of influence.²⁵⁸ But apart from taking on board the specific points which the ship-owners had highlighted in order to get fair and equal treatment in Antwerp, it was not interested in advocating creative changes about Antwerp, or about the framework of the Antwerp-Bremen competition.

²⁵⁶ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, second bundle.

²⁵⁷ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119243, fols. 68-69: Senate Bremen (Donandt) to RdI, 31 May 1918.

²⁵⁸ Bolland, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate,' p. 218.

In Hamburg, the ship-owners were more in agreement with the Chamber of Commerce than in Bremen. Possibly this was due to the fact that Ballin, the ‘inventor’ of the German-dominated port authority for Antwerp, was chairman of the Hamburg Ship-Owners Association. The Hamburg ship-owners expressed their views in a letter to the chamber on 10 April 1918.²⁵⁹ They shared with their colleagues from Bremen some general points about the future of Belgium, especially serious reservations about a German-Belgian customs union, as well as approval of a political division of Belgium into Flanders and Wallonia.

Their economic and political assessment of changes in Antwerp, however, differed widely. Their ‘minimal demands’, the standard list for fair and equal treatment, for example, was designed for the case that Germany had to negotiate from a relatively weak position only. If more was achievable, importantly, they advocated Ballin’s project of the port authority. This was conceived of as a share-holding company, whereby 55% of its capital would be held by the future Flemish state, and 45% held by Hamburg and Bremen. The German *Reich* was to be given an option to 10% of the shares in order to intervene whenever the German interests were in danger of being overruled. According to this letter, the ship-owners considered this port authority not as a means to subjugate Antwerp or to discriminate against port users of other nationalities, but simply as an institutionalisation of the existing German – and Hanseatic – interests in the port, so that they could not be harassed. There was not a word about its effects on the costs of Antwerp port, which the Bremen ship-owners were so concerned about.

Overall, these views differed little from the confidential report – the fourth one – that the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce printed at the beginning of June in response to the request of the Government-General.²⁶⁰ The only major discrepancy between ship-owners and chamber concerned the matter of the customs union, of which the chamber approved. Importantly, like the ship-owners, the chamber promoted Ballin’s port authority at the centre of its report. It had thus committed itself to advocating the enforcement of far-reaching changes in the port of Antwerp, whereas in 1917, it had merely demanded the return to pre-war conditions.

²⁵⁹ HK Bremen, Hp II 15, vol. 6, first bundle: Verein Hamburger Rheder (Harms) to Chamber of Commerce Hamburg, 10 April 1918.

²⁶⁰ See also Schramm’s request in: StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 15: Schramm to Senate, 15 March 1918.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the interpretation given by Dietrich Kersten. Kersten uses the chamber's fourth report as proof that the Hamburg businessmen were against an annexation of either Antwerp or Belgium.²⁶¹ He takes this to confirm his thesis that they viewed the Antwerp Question exclusively from an economic perspective, and not from a perspective of national power or prestige.²⁶² However, this seems to be an insufficient analysis of the aims and motivation of the Chamber of Commerce.

It is true that the fourth report, like the second, indirectly condemned the notion of direct annexation. But, as seen above, the chamber had stood firmly for 'integrating a *formally* independent Belgium into the political sphere of Germany' [my emphasis] at least since February 1917.²⁶³ In this way, it could agree fully with the Government-General's guidelines of May, and with the aim of 'economic penetration'. Moreover, numerous instances in the report show that the chamber was not simply making concessions to belligerent expansionist pamphleteers²⁶⁴, or that it was not simply going along with a development that it thought inevitable. For example, it suggested that the peace treaty with Belgium should include clauses to make the Belgian labour force available to German economic needs in wartime.²⁶⁵ Thus, 'power-political' motives definitely played a role in the chamber's attitude towards Belgium.

On the other hand, Kersten is certainly right in stating that the chamber was committed to safeguarding the economic interests of Hamburg above all. In fact, its reiteration in the fourth report, that it expected support from the *Reich* for improving the infrastructure of transport to Hamburg, gives the impression that the chamber hoped to be rewarded for not posing restrictive demands against Antwerp.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, pp. 137-8.

²⁶² See Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, p. 132.

²⁶³ Quote from fourth report, 'Sicherung deutschen Einflusses', p. 2, in: StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 27b.

²⁶⁴ Kersten quotes Felix Hänsch, a Pan-German, who accused Hamburg of resisting the 'acquisition' of Antwerp in his pamphlet of 1917. See Kersten, *Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft*, p. 137.

²⁶⁵ StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 27b, p. 1: 'Sicherung deutschen Einflusses'. Other examples include the suggestion to cut a new province out of Antwerp and West-Flanders, so that city and port of Antwerp would be subordinate to the new Flemish state only; or the thought that a German-controlled Antwerp could be used to get concessions from Rotterdam. See StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 27b, pp. 5, 9.

²⁶⁶ StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fol. 27b, pp. 9/10.

Nevertheless, it is not to be dismissed that the chamber wanted to gain a direct influence for Hamburg on Antwerp through the scheme of the port authority, even if only as secondary priority. Again, this aim was not merely economically or defensively motivated, but it had at least elements of an expansionist drive in it.

Crucially, the Hamburg Senate kept its silence. It forwarded the latest report of the Chamber of Commerce without comment to the imperial authorities. Presumably, the Senate discussed the report, at least informally. Yet, no documentation about such deliberations, not even by individual senators, made it into the central archive.²⁶⁷ Similarly, we are left in the dark about the Senate's reaction to the 'guidelines' of the Government-General. The Senate informed the imperial interior ministry only of the names of those personalities who were to attend the conference in Brussels.²⁶⁸ Perhaps it is significant that in this letter the Senate did not mention the 'guidelines' with a single word – whereas the other states from Baden to Bremen commented extensively on them. Considering that the Senate seemed to be increasingly sceptical about the feasibility of expansionist war aims in Belgium, it is possible that its silence was the expression of fundamental disagreement with the 'guidelines'; and that, as Jürgen Bolland might argue, the Senate was reluctant to voice a direct opposition. However, it is almost equally conceivable that there was still a significant division between expansionists and moderates in the Senate,²⁶⁹ and that it was therefore politically wiser to await developments rather than to provoke an internal power struggle.

Results

What can be concluded about the 'Hanseatic' attitude towards the Antwerp Question? The occupation of Antwerp was significant in at least three ways for Hamburg and Bremen. Firstly, it provided the opportunity to gain an insight into the workings of and practices in Antwerp port. This was thought to be particularly important in view of the illegal methods through which Antwerp was suspected to have made inroads into the traditional hinterlands of both Bremen and Hamburg before the war. An uncovering of such methods could be used to

²⁶⁷ See StA Hamburg, 111-2, D z, 68, fols. 20-26.

²⁶⁸ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119243, fol. 76.

²⁶⁹ As noted above, the last report about such a division dated from February 1916.

better contain and regulate the competition coming from Antwerp after the war. The joint Bremen/Hamburg commission of experts did not confirm these suspicions. Nevertheless, as the commission's detailed study of Antwerp's 'economy of transport' shows, its work was still valuable for the Hanseatic city-states. Its investigation helped define in what ways Antwerp stood in competition with the German ports. It highlighted, for example, that the great financial commitment of the Belgian state to Antwerp port played a decisive role in making this port so attractively cheap for all of its users. This gave Hamburg and Bremen useful ammunition for their long-standing campaigns to get more support from the *Reich*.

Another way in which Hamburg and Bremen could have potentially used the occupation of Antwerp was to establish a foothold in its port. However, the sources I consulted do not give any indication to the effect that either the two states or private Hanseatic companies targeted the acquisition of companies or property in Antwerp. Shareholders of the three 'German-Belgian Companies', like Ballin, did so only indirectly.²⁷⁰ Yet, on a much larger scale, there was Ballin's project of the Antwerp port authority. With the functions of a centralised public body, but legally a share-holding company, it was designed to give Hamburg and Bremen an impressive say on how Antwerp was run, as at least 45% of the shares were to be allocated to them. But this leads on to the third point.

Throughout the war, Hamburg and Bremen were keenly interested in the future relationship between Antwerp and Germany, the 'Antwerp Question' proper. Since Antwerp had been one of the two main foreign rivals, besides Rotterdam, before the war, it is not surprising that they felt that any changes to its political and economic condition would directly affect their own development as port cities. The Senate of Hamburg, therefore, attached great importance to providing the leadership of the German civil administration for Antwerp, estimating that it would guarantee Hamburg a voice when the future of Antwerp was decided on. The Senate of Bremen, which was only secondarily involved in that administration, made sure to stay in touch with the imperial Government about the relevant war aims. Interestingly, secretary of state Delbrück had

²⁷⁰ See StA Hamburg, 621-1 (HAPAG), 1472, fols. 21, 124, 132: correspondence Ballin with Stinnes, 1917. See also Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, esp. p. 83. See also ch. 11.

initiated the 'Hanseatic' administration of Antwerp partially because he hoped to create a buffer against the loud annexationist demands emanating from the industrial Rhineland. Hence, he was taken by surprise when in 1914/15 both Hamburg and Bremen seemed to be in favour of annexation, too.

Indeed, the conclusion of Kersten and Bolland that specifically Hamburg but also Bremen were fundamentally opposed to far-reaching expansionist plans concerning Belgium need to be revised. During the first half of the war at least, a number of influential representatives of the Hanseatic commercial world advocated such plans, including that of outright annexation. The same views were also strongly represented in the Hamburg Senate. The motivations behind this attitude were diverse, ranging from nationalist zeal, sometimes even of a Pan-German colour, to profit-oriented business interests. At least one Hamburg senator also hoped to gain direct influence for his city on Antwerp. In addition to that, there was a defensive argument, which brought even most moderates into the expansionist fold: the sense – later strengthened, for example by the Paris Economic Conference – that a fully restored Belgium, under pressure from Britain, would close its doors to German trade and shipping.

In some cases, however, a tactical consideration was decisive. This was specifically true for the Bremen Senate. From the point of view of Bremen, the Senate was overwhelmingly against an incorporation of Antwerp into the *Reich*. Yet, in 1914/15 it assumed that annexation would take place anyway: due to reasons of military and political defence, which they were ready to accept unquestioningly; as well as due to pressure from the powerful industrial interest groups of Western and Southern Germany, to resist which they considered dangerous. Given these assumptions, it was a case of making the best out of an awkward situation for the senators. Accordingly, the Bremen memorandum of November 1914, which was ostensibly about the Antwerp Question, in fact primarily addressed the pre-war grievances of Bremen. Reducing suggestions about the treatment of Antwerp to a marginal position, the memorandum even radically extended the pre-war demands for the support of Bremen by introducing the project of a 'German Rhine Delta'. Similarly, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce gave the impression in their reports of expecting to be rewarded for their cooperation on the Antwerp Question.

In this way, Hamburg and Bremen certainly considered their first priority to be the improvement of the finances and infrastructure for their own ports. They did not desire to improve their competitive position by insisting on restrictive measures against Antwerp – even though such demands appeared from time to time on the fringes of the ‘Belgian’ war aims catalogues. Indeed, the most remarkable characteristic of virtually all of these catalogues was their aim of re-establishing the pre-war conditions of the port of Antwerp. If German control was demanded, it was not in order to enforce changes, but in order to ensure continuity. Arguably, then, the Hanseatic reaction to the German invasion of Belgium and the prospect of a ‘German Antwerp’ was largely an exercise in *Schadensbegrenzung* – in trying to contain the damage done.

Importantly, the story does not end there. It needs to be highlighted that eventually, at the latest by June 1918, both chambers of commerce, both associations of ship-owners, as well as the Senate of Bremen clearly spoke out in favour of effectively reducing Belgium to a satellite state of Germany – or indeed of splitting it into two satellite states. Moreover, the two chambers of commerce and the Hamburg association of ship-owners advocated Ballin’s scheme of an Antwerp port authority, which would have given the Hanseatic governments a decisive influence on the rival port. It can therefore be concluded that, even if just for defensive reasons, the Hanseates supported Germany’s expansionist ‘drive to the West’ (Gatzke). The only possible exception is the Senate of Hamburg. Their rejection of the Oldenburg petition and their silence on the guidelines of the Government-General could be indications of deep-rooted disagreement with expansionist plans. Yet, this behaviour could also be explained by internal divisions and by a general reluctance to be bound to a definitive position prematurely. Further, it seems that what the Senate disagreed with was not the principle of expansion but its feasibility. As seen above, all the other organisations and individuals, despite agreeing on the desirability of German control, all disagreed with each other about the details. These disagreements were rooted both in differing assessments of the economic effects of the various projects, and in differing assessments of their political and military requirements. In this context, it made sense for the Senate of Hamburg to ‘hold out’ until all the relevant circumstances of the peace were known.

Chapter 5: Academic economists and the economic conundrum of Antwerp

The difficulties encountered by Hamburg and Bremen in assessing their stance on a possible ‘German Antwerp’ have highlighted once more how the Antwerp Question was not a clear-cut case. Indeed, the academic community of ‘expert’ economists was deeply divided over it as well. It even came to a ‘sort of pamphleteering duel’ between two of them, Professors Kurt Wiedenfeld and Hermann Schumacher, as the London *Times* astutely remarked.²⁷¹ Others, especially Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz, Max Weber, Paul Arndt and Heinrich Waentig, added their voices to the debate. This chapter explores in detail their involvement in the Antwerp Question. In their statements and activities, it focuses less on the validity of their economic arguments, than on their political conclusions, their specific motives, the language they employed, and their influence on governmental and popular war aims.

General spectrum of opinion

The Professors’ basic positions on the future of Antwerp ranged from the expansionist assertion of ‘we have to stay in Antwerp’ to the caution that ‘Antwerp will always be a non-German city’.²⁷² The examples of Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz and Max Weber illustrate well this division. Interestingly, both were outspoken ‘liberal imperialists’ before the war, though Weber considered Schulze-Gaevernitz’ support for world policy (*Weltpolitik*) and a German navy exaggerated.²⁷³

Schulze-Gaevernitz became most likely interested in Belgian matters only after the outbreak of war, probably when he was asked to report to the Foreign Ministry about economic conditions in Belgium while he working on provisioning issues in the Netherlands and in Switzerland.²⁷⁴ Thereafter, from mid-1915 onwards, he contributed actively to German policies in occupied

²⁷¹ *The Times*, 4 July 1916, ‘Through German Eyes: Antwerp’s Future’.

²⁷² The statements are by Edgar Jaffé and Max Weber. See: BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 1a: diary Schulze-Gaevernitz, entry before 2 Oct. 1915. Max Weber, *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg: Schriften und Reden 1914-1918*, Tübingen 1984, p. 177.

²⁷³ See especially: Krüger, *Nationalökonomien*, p. 43. See also: Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, ch. 4.

²⁷⁴ See BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 8: ‘Übersicht über eigene Kriegserlebnisse und Tätigkeit’.

Belgium – using his various roles as war volunteer, member of the *Reichstag* and University Professor to gain influence in Brussels and Berlin. He became quickly a strong proponent of the creation of a ‘Kingdom of Flanders’, which would be closely tied to Germany, possibly even as federal state. Yet, his conception of such a Flemish solution to the Belgian problem was very flexible, being primarily concerned about the practical extension of German power and influence in the west.²⁷⁵

In fact, in terms of concrete war aims, his main concern was that Germany kept control over the port of Antwerp. In his letters, newspaper articles and speeches, he put great stress on its economic significance for Germany.²⁷⁶ Holding on to Antwerp was imperative for him, partly for defensive reasons, which were prompted by anglophobia and a fear of Belgian revenge: without protection, the German entrepreneurs would have to fear for their lives and German trade would lose a major asset on the world market to its English rivals, who were preparing to fill the vacuum.

Grander, offensive reasons, however, gave rise to real enthusiasm. Schulze-Gaevernitz assigned a key-role to Antwerp for a general war aim that was widely shared among intellectuals in Germany – the establishment of Germany as a world power (*Weltmacht*) on a firm geo-economic basis.²⁷⁷ In a paper of August 1916, for example, he painted the following picture:

Today, Germany is in possession of Antwerp, one, the more important one, of the two great seaports of the Rhine – a chance that may never return. Only Antwerp and Hamburg together, complementing one another, signify full equality in overseas trade for Germany. The name of Antwerp stands for the side of the German future that is turned towards the world economy, and the often talked about “German line” runs from the estuary of the Rhine to that of the Euphrates, from Antwerp to Basra.²⁷⁸

In this vision, German control of Antwerp stood thus for the crucial link between economic hegemony over the southeastern neighbours (*Mittleuropa*) and fully

²⁷⁵ For Schulze-Gaevernitz as *Flamenpolitiker* see: Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, esp. pp. 100-3.

²⁷⁶ Antwerp played a key element in addresses by Schulze-Gaevernitz in: the *Reichstag* (29 May 1916), Breslau (1 Aug. 1916), Essen (12 Jan. 1917), and Bremen (11 May 1917). See also his letters to Helfferich (8 May 1916) and Zimmermann (4 Jan. 1917). BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 1c. See further: Gerhard von Schulze-Gaevernitz, 'Vlandern,' *Der Panther*, 5/3 (5 March 1917), pp. 307-10.

²⁷⁷ See Fischer, *Griff*, pp. 135-45. See also Schwabe, 'Ursprung und Vorbereitung,' p. 107.

²⁷⁸ BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (NL Schulze-Gaevernitz), 8: lecture in Breslau, 1. Aug. 1916.

developed trade with the western powers (*Weltwirtschaft*). Moreover, it guaranteed that Germany would never be a junior partner in maritime world trade. Until as late as September 1918, Schulze-Gaevernitz insisted on this ‘priceless value of the future’ that Antwerp signified for Germany.²⁷⁹

Interestingly, Schulze-Gaevernitz had used the image of the ‘German line’ as early as August 1914, but with the significant difference of Rotterdam as the northern endpoint.²⁸⁰ This shows that his later fixation on Antwerp was somewhat arbitrary, entirely the coincidental result of the war and of military strategy.

Max Weber approached the Belgian questions quite differently. His first priority was the *rapprochement* with the West, especially with Britain, after the war. According to his sense of political realism, this precluded any changes to the Belgian *status quo ante*, except for temporary military measures to secure Belgium’s neutrality. Thus, unlike Schulze-Gaevernitz, he was not eager to participate in the policies of the occupation regime, even though his name was put forward as possible reporter for the scientific commission that was set up in Brussels in mid-1915 to produce some thirty memoranda on the political, economic and legal effects of an annexation of Belgium. But he preferred to fight annexationist ideas with respect to Belgium, including the special case of Antwerp.²⁸¹

In two essays on war aims, dating from the end of 1915 and from autumn 1916, Weber reflected in concrete economic terms on the benefits that the ‘possession’ of Belgium would have for Germany, both times starting with Antwerp – in order to categorically dismiss the type of arguments used by Schulze-Gaevernitz.²⁸² In the 1915 text, Weber rejected the thesis that its port signified a ‘German Rhine estuary.’ Taking this phrase perhaps more literally than others, he pointed out that all waterway connections between the Rhineland and Antwerp – including a future canal – had to traverse Dutch territory. This,

²⁷⁹ See: Gerhard von Schulze-Gaevernitz, ‘An der Schwelle des dritten Kriegsjahres,’ *Deutsche Politik*, 1/36 (1 Sept. 1916). His lecture in Breslau (1 Aug. 1916) and his report ‘Europalage und Weltlage, Herbst 1918’, in BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 8.

²⁸⁰ The letter is quoted in Krüger, *Nationalökonomien*, p. 309, n. 3.

²⁸¹ A list of these memoranda, dated 8 Sept. 1915, can be found in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119523, fols. 170-6. See also Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, pp. 199 ff.

²⁸² Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, ‘Zur Frage des Friedensschließens’ pp. 58-62, and ‘Deutschland unter den europäischen Weltmächten,’ pp. 176-8. For the following see especially pp. 58, 177.

however, meant clashing with the powerful interests of the Netherlands. A year later, he added more doubts. He observed ethnic-emotional complications, as Antwerp was simply not a 'German' city. In any form of incorporation, Antwerp, just like the Belgian industry, would not integrate smoothly into the German economic body but would retain its character as an alien rival. In line with this view, he also disagreed that Germany had a national economic interest in Antwerp. Precisely those private investments that Schulze-Gaevernitz had singled out for the protecting hand of the German state were merely the profit interests of individual businessmen for Weber – and he evidently did not find them worth the risk of continual enmity with the western powers.

Thus, it was an issue of keen debate among academic economists whether Antwerp constituted a real stake in the war. Its resolution called for thorough studies that clarified the relationship between Antwerp and Germany. Kurt Wiedenfeld was the first one in the war to publish detailed economic descriptions of the port of Antwerp and its role in the global economy. He contributed an essay to the 'Belgium' edition of the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* in April 1915 and he brought out a pamphlet later in the year.²⁸³

Champion for a 'Belgian Antwerp'? – Kurt Wiedenfeld

In the decade before the war, Wiedenfeld had made his name in Germany's academic world as an expert on *Welthäfen* – those ports that constitute 'true centres of world traffic.'²⁸⁴ One of them, the port of Antwerp, had formed an important part of his research. During a festive conference on Antwerp's economic relations with the Rhineland in June 1907, Wiedenfeld addressed the representatives of German and Belgian trade. His paper 'Anvers et son hinterland' was subsequently published in the Belgian journal *Revue Économique Internationale*.²⁸⁵

It is interesting to cast a quick look at this eleven-page essay, as it contains the same interpretations of the Antwerp-German relationship that Wiedenfeld

²⁸³ Kurt Wiedenfeld, 'Deutschlands Seehäfen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Antwerpen,' *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, 12/7 (April 1915). Kurt Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr und Welthandel*, Munich 1915.

²⁸⁴ Elster (ed.) *Wörterbuch der Volkswirtschaft*, p. 1322: entry Wiedenfeld on 'Welthäfen'. Wiedenfeld, *Die nordwesteuropäischen Welthäfen*. See also his autobiography: Kurt Wiedenfeld, *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Staat. Aus den Lebenserinnerungen von Kurt Wiedenfeld*, Berlin 1960.

²⁸⁵ See: Kurt Wiedenfeld, 'Anvers et son hinterland,' *Revue Économique Internationale*, (July 1907), p. 3, n. 1. For the event itself see: Devos, 'Die Deutschen,' p. 68. See ch. 1.

would highlight during the war. No doubt, Wiedenfeld emphasised, Antwerp was at the time ‘one of the great doors of exit for the economic activity of Germany’ and about a third of Germany, its most industrious portion, counted as Antwerp’s hinterland.²⁸⁶ However, although German commercial development had contributed greatly to the stupendous rise of traffic in Antwerp since the abolition of the Scheldt duties in 1863, it was not its actual cause. Rather, the German input was an effect of conditions that had already been created by essentially Belgian factors: the export drive of Belgian industry, the need for fast and secure transport for its finished quality goods – demanding steam liner services, which in turn attracted more commerce –, as well as intelligent financial policies undertaken by the communal and national governments. An energetic business community, aided by the expansion of Belgian capital, had also managed to attract the market for certain bulk imports to Antwerp.²⁸⁷ Further, Wiedenfeld stressed that Antwerp did not have any natural monopoly over its German hinterland; on the contrary, it had to continually struggle against the competition of Rotterdam, which had a much better waterway connection in the Rhine, and against the German seaports, which were favoured by German railway tariffs.²⁸⁸

His conclusion, that Antwerp and Germany each benefited from a close relationship, was of course in keeping with the spirit of the conference. What seems more significant with respect to the later controversies in Germany, are his penultimate statements: Antwerp had acquired an autonomous position in world commerce; and while its entrepreneurial spirit strengthened the German national economy, it remained advantageous for Germany to have a viable choice between Antwerp and other seaports.²⁸⁹ In other words, it made economic sense for Wiedenfeld that Antwerp was located in Belgium and not in Germany.

Eight years later, in his wartime essay for the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, Kurt Wiedenfeld employed a more chauvinistic language. Considering Antwerp among the German North Sea ports, he chose to accentuate the intricate German connections of Antwerp in such a way that an annexationist reader could find ammunition for his/her opinion. Not only did he blur the boundary between

²⁸⁶ Wiedenfeld, 'Anvers et son hinterland,' pp. 7, 10.

²⁸⁷ Wiedenfeld, 'Anvers et son hinterland,' pp. 5-7, 11.

²⁸⁸ Wiedenfeld, 'Anvers et son hinterland,' pp. 8-9.

²⁸⁹ Wiedenfeld, 'Anvers et son hinterland,' pp. 12-13.

politics and economics by adding Antwerp in transport-economical respects to ‘Germany,’ but he also seemed to provide moral claims on its port: ‘The port on the Scheldt, almost even more so than Rotterdam, is economically the result of German entrepreneurship (*Unternehmertätigkeit*).’²⁹⁰ However, attentive reading reveals that Wiedenfeld did not abandon his thesis that Antwerp’s principal base lay in the – independent! – Belgian state, which had been a benefactor of German exports.²⁹¹

On 11 April 1915 Professor Wiedenfeld sent this essay to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, writing that as a long-standing author on Antwerp and with his manifold connections to that city, his descriptions might ‘not be without interest’ to the Ministry.²⁹² He added that the Antwerp Question could only be solved when Belgium’s future was decided on. But he was adamant that there were political as well as severe economic concerns against both an annexation and an economic integration (*Angliederung*), which concerns, significantly, could not be mitigated by the special Antwerp case.

In this way, Wiedenfeld became one of the strongest opponents of Antwerp-centred arguments for aggressive expansion into Belgium. In his brochure of autumn 1915, a description of Antwerp’s port organisation and economic position in the world, he supported his arguments of the 1907 paper on a broader scope. Interestingly, he withdrew most of the overtly nationalistic phrases that he had used in the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*. A striking indication of this change of tone was his frequent use of the epithets ‘the Belgian city’ and ‘the Belgian port.’²⁹³ In fact, Wiedenfeld’s brochure could be read as a conscious and comprehensive refutation of the thesis that the great modern port of Antwerp was just a function of German economic needs.²⁹⁴ Although it ostensibly refrained from discussing possible future developments, in the conclusion Wiedenfeld’s analysis culminated in the clear warning that Germany would be disadvantaged

²⁹⁰ Wiedenfeld, ‘Deutschlands Seehäfen,’ pp. 62, 71.

²⁹¹ Wiedenfeld, ‘Deutschlands Seehäfen,’ p. 69.

²⁹² PA AA Berlin, R 21400, fol. 107. He also sent a brochure in favour of German colonialism.

²⁹³ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, pp. 14, 29, 32, 41, 43, 47.

²⁹⁴ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 12 (primacy of Belgian hinterland), p. 25 (German colony and its success due to vibrant Belgian economic life), p. 38 (exports guaranteed by Belgian industry), p. 47 (prosperity of Antwerp linked to Belgian state).

economically if Antwerp were to be detached from 'the Belgian specificity' in any way.²⁹⁵

In December 1915, Wiedenfeld sent a confidential memorandum to the Government, in which he spelt out how certain conceivable peace arrangements would affect German economic use of Antwerp.²⁹⁶ He considered three eventualities: first, Belgium regained its independence, except that Antwerp, perhaps with a connecting corridor, would be annexed; second, all of Belgium was put under some form of German suzerainty; or third, Belgium was fully restored – possibly bar an eastern frontier strip. Not surprisingly, he rejected the first two options. Even though the second one maintained the decisive union with the Belgian industrial districts, Antwerp's hinterland would still be reduced because of a likely political protest from France and because Germany would not be in a position to focus its transport policies on the needs of Antwerp, as the independent Belgian state had done. A spiral of traffic reduction would set in, to the detriment of German exports and to the benefit of Rotterdam only, but not Hamburg or Bremen. Only the third option, Wiedenfeld maintained, preserved Antwerp's economic position. He then dealt with the main objection, namely the threat posed by Belgian war-induced hatred against the Germans. He countered that the actual effects of this would be very limited because Germany always had the choice of the other North Sea ports to remind the Belgians of their own material self-interest.

As concerned the 'German Colony,' Wiedenfeld took a threat of its elimination quite seriously, since he put great value on personal links in commerce. He reacted in two different ways, calculating on the one hand, that the number of people affected would not be disastrous because many had become politically loyal Belgians. On the other hand, he proceeded to suggest an ingenious way through which Germany would gain some influence over the port

²⁹⁵ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 47: 'Antwerpen aus der belgischen Besonderheit irgendwie herauslösen, heißt Antwerpens wirtschaftliche Bedeutung für Deutschland untergraben.'

²⁹⁶ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Stamer), 5: copy of confidential memorandum Wiedenfeld, 'Antwerpens wirtschaftliche Zukunft', 13 typed pages. Printed copies are in: BA Berlin, 1501/119528, fol. 21-3 (with approving remarks by the RdI), and in the GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 4 (with question marks by the Prussian Ministry of Trade). Schwabe dates the receipt of the memorandum in the Foreign Ministry as early as April 1915, probably confusing it with Wiedenfeld's essay in the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*. Schwabe, 'Ursprung und Vorbereitung,' p. 132, n. 119.

after all. Provided Belgium were to pay a war indemnity, this should be put at the disposal of a newly created Antwerp port authority (*Hafengesellschaft*) that would include German representatives. This, Wiedenfeld reckoned, was a purely economic method of protecting ‘the German work’ in Antwerp and possibly in all of Belgium.²⁹⁷ It is not clear how much importance Wiedenfeld attached to this suggestion; he seemed to intend it as basis for negotiations. He certainly did not want to let it get in the way of his main message, which he formulated again at the very end: ‘In purely economic terms, the interests of Germany in Antwerp are best served by the political independence of Belgium, inclusive of Antwerp.’

How influential was Kurt Wiedenfeld? Although, unlike for example Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz, he apparently did not give many lectures, his brochure was widely reviewed in the German press and the content of his memorandum received some publicity later in the war.²⁹⁸ In the academic world, he formed part of the circle of ‘moderates’ around Hans Delbrück, where his interpretation of the Antwerp question must have strengthened their calls for caution in western war aims – particularly as Antwerp often figured as a reason for annexationist demands.²⁹⁹ Yet, as the example of Schulze-Gaevernitz shows, Wiedenfeld’s impact on convinced expansionists seems to have been small. Finally, in his communications to the Government, Wiedenfeld tried to lend as much force as possible to his arguments by highlighting his long-standing expertise, as shown above.³⁰⁰ Indeed, someone in the Foreign Ministry noted down that Wiedenfeld might perhaps be of use in the preparation of war aims;³⁰¹ and Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg and Secretary of State Karl Helfferich knew his work well at

²⁹⁷ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Sthamer), 5: Wiedenfeld, ‘Antwerpens wirtschaftliche Zukunft’, pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁸ For example in *Vossische Zeitung*, 19 Nov. 1915. The Belgian *Bureau Documentaire Belge*, collected references to an impressive amount of such reviews. See AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’. Schumacher and Waentig quoted from his memorandum: Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 125, 134. Heinrich Waentig, ‘Antwerpen-Literatur,’ *Der Belfried*, 1/12 (June 1917), p. 574.

²⁹⁹ His participation in anti-annexationist events is for example documented in BA Koblenz: N 1199 (Wehberg) 14, fol. 144; KLE 303 (Bassermann), 17, fol. 66. See also: Schwabe, ‘Ursprung und Vorbereitung,’ p.132. Tirpitz and Stresemann could be named as examples of annexationists who often evoked Antwerp in order to call for western annexations. See Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*, p. 85. See also ch. 3.

³⁰⁰ See also: PA AA Berlin, R 21561, fol. 84, Wiedenfeld to AA, 15 Dec. 1915.

³⁰¹ Quoted in: Schwabe, ‘Ursprung und Vorbereitung,’ p. 132, n. 199. Wiedenfeld joined the Foreign Ministry after the war. See Wiedenfeld, *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Staat*, p. 68.

least, for they referred to it extensively in order to assuage a concerned Bremen Senate in late 1915.³⁰²

In September 1915, Wiedenfeld was also recruited by Governor-General von Bissing to work for his ‘braintrust.’³⁰³ His task was to research the profitability of the Belgian state railways, as well as the possible impact that the adoption of the Prussian rail tariffs would have on the Belgian economy. Although he worked avidly in Brussels until early November, he never finished this particular memorandum. The reason lay possibly in the difficulty of gathering all the necessary material, yet it almost seems that Wiedenfeld became reluctant to contribute to Bissing’s annexationist project. As we know, the memorandum on Antwerp that he wrote shortly afterwards sought to disprove any economic benefits of annexation.

No records have been found of any further involvement of Wiedenfeld in the Antwerp debate after spring 1916.³⁰⁴ In November 1915, he had accepted different work in the Prussian Ministry of War, where he stayed until November 1918.³⁰⁵ In addition to that, the vociferous opposition that he encountered from one of his colleagues doubtlessly limited his influence.

Wiedenfeld’s nemesis: Hermann Schumacher

Early in 1916, Professor Hermann Schumacher sent the following letter to the Foreign Ministry:

Herr Professor Wiedenfeld sent out a confidential memorandum on ‘The economic future of Antwerp’ two weeks ago. It contains much that is valuable and correct [...]. Nevertheless, it appears to me incorrect and distorted in its fundamental understanding [*Grundauffassung*] of the significance of Antwerp, and thereby of course also in its conclusions for the future. I am currently working on presenting this in a memorandum, though unfortunately I have been delayed in its completion [...]. Should the question of the future of Antwerp become urgent now, I would be glad to forward you a preliminary expert statement [*gutachtliche Äußerung*].³⁰⁶

³⁰² StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, 39, fols. 79, 81.

³⁰³ BA Berlin, 1501, 119523, fol. 170. Universitätsarchiv (UA) Halle, 17001 (Personalakte Wiedenfeld), Wiedenfeld to the university curator, 16 Oct. 1915. Wiedenfeld, *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Staat*, p. 49.

³⁰⁴ The last one is a summary of his brochure: Kurt Wiedenfeld, ‘Antwerpen im Weltverkehr und Welthandel,’ *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/12 (1916).

³⁰⁵ See UA Halle, 17001: letter Wiedenfeld, 2 Nov. 1915. From autumn 1916 onwards, he worked in the *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*. See Wiedenfeld, *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Staat*, p. 50.

³⁰⁶ PA AA Berlin, R 21561, fol. 98.

So, how did Schumacher differ from Wiedenfeld? Before the war, he was like Wiedenfeld a well-known expert on *Weltwirtschaft*, and it appears that there was a long history of animosity between the two. With the outbreak of war, Schumacher devoted himself untiringly to assisting the war effort wherever he could.³⁰⁷ From September to November 1914, he famously cooperated with the heavy industrialists of the Rhineland in order to develop a wide-ranging war aims programme.³⁰⁸ The territorial and political part of this document recommended the destruction of the current Belgian state. While the precise form of a replacement was thought to be a difficult and divisive issue, there was surprising clarity concerning Antwerp: because of its extraordinary importance for Germany's position in the world economy, the document insisted that Antwerp had to stay under German administration in order to become a new German federal state, analogous to the Hanseatic cities.³⁰⁹ In other words, this was exactly the scenario that Wiedenfeld would warn against during the following year.

Hermann Schumacher studied the Belgian economy intensively from autumn 1915 to spring 1916 – having had little knowledge of Belgium before the war.³¹⁰ As a member of Bissing's braintrust he made several research trips to Brussels, Antwerp and Rotterdam during this time.³¹¹ The most important results of his efforts were a treatise on Antwerp, published in April 1916, and an – initially confidential – memorandum on 'the solution of the Belgian Question.'³¹² Almost half of the 180 pages of his Antwerp-book were taken up by endnotes that formed a direct polemic against Wiedenfeld. Schumacher contended that Wiedenfeld had failed to grasp the 'deeper roots' of Antwerp's special significance.³¹³ His own interpretation emphasised the economic interdependence of Antwerp and its German hinterland, denying that Belgian

³⁰⁷ He worked in the Ministry of Trade, the Treasury and the Ministry of Finance. See his unpublished memoirs, 'Ein Leben in der Weltwirtschaft', pp. 639-665, in: GNM Nuremberg, NL Hermann Schumacher, I, B, 6u.

³⁰⁸ See Soutou, *L'Or et le sang*, pp. 62 ff. Schwabe, 'Ursprung und Vorbereitung,' pp. 114-15.

³⁰⁹ The memorandum is printed for example in: Basler, *Annexionspolitik in Polen*, pp. 367-80, p. 370 for Antwerp.

³¹⁰ GNM Nuremberg, NL Hermann Schumacher, I, B, 6u, p. 641.

³¹¹ BA Berlin 1501, 119523, fol. 171. GNM Nuremberg, NL Hermann Schumacher: II, C, 7d; II, C, 7e.

³¹² Schumacher, *Antwerpen*. Hermann Schumacher, *Die Lösung der belgischen Frage. Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb und seine Regelung*, Leipzig 1918, manuscript printed May 1916.

³¹³ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 118.

political independence was a precondition for the port's growth. Two contradictory principles determined his reasoning. On the one hand, the economic hinterland of a seaport was determined by 'Nature' and not by humans. On the other hand, politics could seriously – if only temporarily – disrupt natural links, and Schumacher believed that a restored Belgian state would be prone to do much damage.³¹⁴

His memorandum took this threat for granted; analysing the German transit trade to Antwerp again, as well as the fierce competition between the German and the Walloon industries, it concluded that a complete separation of Flemish from Walloon Belgium was the best solution to the Antwerp/Flemish/Belgian set of problems. Germany would have an interest in the independent Flanders only, which would join the German Customs League.³¹⁵ Just like Schulze-Gaevernitz, he had discovered Flemish separatism as an indirect means of ensuring the unrestricted availability of the port of Antwerp to the German economy.³¹⁶ Importantly, returning to the primacy of 'Nature' in economics, he also argued at length that the separate Walloon state would have no choice but to continue conducting its maritime trade through Antwerp.³¹⁷

Hermann Schumacher defended and actively promoted this position for the rest of the war.³¹⁸ Was he able to successfully assert it against Wiedenfeld? In his private correspondence, Schumacher repeatedly complained that his colleague was 'manoeuvring' and 'intriguing' against him, and during autumn 1915 he confessed to feeling isolated in Berlin as well as in Brussels.³¹⁹ This was also

³¹⁴ See especially Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 29.

³¹⁵ Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, p.35 (possible Walloon customs union with France), p.42 (separate state of Flanders), pp.46-7 (solving the Antwerp Question by German-Flemish customs union and Prussian-Flemish railway union).

³¹⁶ Consequently, his works were full of lyricisms in praise of the Flemish people, particularly for the hardiness of the Flemish dockworkers. See for example: Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, preface. Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, p. 71.

³¹⁷ Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, p. 46.

³¹⁸ For example, in January 1917, he gave a speech on the subject in front of a Bremen audience of 2,500. GNM Nuremberg, NL Fritz Schumacher, I, C, 13i. As will be seen in chapter 12, he modified his view directly after the war. See Hermann Schumacher, *Die Nordseehäfen. Ihre Bedeutung in der Weltwirtschaft und Stellung im Deutschen Reiche*, Leipzig/Berlin 1919.

³¹⁹ See letters to his wife Edith: GNM Nuremberg, NL Hermann Schumacher: II, C, 7d: 27 Oct. 1915, 13 Nov. 1915; II, C, 7e: 1 Feb. 1916; II, C, 7f: 9 Feb. 1917. In 1916, Gustav Schmoller thought Schumacher was 'kränklich, unverträglich.' Quoted in: Niels Goldschmidt, 'Hermann Schumacher - nur ein weiterer Erbe Schmollers oder der erste Ordoliberal? Anmerkungen zu einem „missing link“ zwischen der Historischen und der Freiburger Schule,' *Economic History Conference*, Erfurt, 28 June 2002 (www.uni-erfurt.de/finanzwissenschaft/konf/ProgrammHistSchools180602.htm).

how he felt initially during an official debate in Berlin in February 1916, at which both he and Wiedenfeld presented papers on Antwerp. But he considered Wiedenfeld's lecture a scholarly disaster and triumphantly reported afterwards that he had 'fought brilliant victories' during subsequent discussions with a 'small group of very influential men.'³²⁰ From then on, Schumacher maintained that he was gaining much support in high places.³²¹ No direct, independent evidence has been found so far to confirm this claim. Wiedenfeld was strikingly silent after mid-1916, while Schumacher continued publishing on the subject. The *Flamenpolitik* was making reasonable progress at the time, which may explain an increased sympathy for Schumacher's model. However, his claim that Germany had no economic interest in the Walloon provinces met with firm resistance, especially in the Foreign Ministry, which delayed the publication of his memorandum for half a year.³²²

Effects of the Wiedenfeld-Schumacher debate

As the article in the *Times* highlights, the disagreement between Wiedenfeld and Schumacher received international press coverage, which generally noted the aggressive implications of Schumacher's position.³²³ In Germany, other economists extended it in further publications. The syndic of the Duisburg Chamber of Commerce, for example, defended one of Wiedenfeld's central proofs for Antwerp's essential Belgian foundations – the traffic movement on the interior waterways – with further statistical information. A student of Schumacher's then differentiated this to the effect that there was a Belgian preponderance in terms of imported goods only, whereas transit from Germany accounted for over half of the weight of the export goods arriving in Antwerp on interior waterways.³²⁴

Professor Paul Arndt compared the economic analyses of Schumacher and Wiedenfeld, concluding diplomatically that they were mostly in agreement. The

³²⁰ It is not clear what format this debate had (organisers, location, audience). See: GNM Nuremberg, NL Hermann Schumacher, II, C, 7e: 1 Feb. 1916. GNM Nuremberg, NL Fritz Schumacher, I, C, 13k: 8 Feb. 1916. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 109, 134, nn. 2, 19.

³²¹ GNM Nuremberg, NL Fritz Schumacher, I, C, 13i.

³²² Until June 1918. See BA Berlin, R 1501, 119533, fols. 180-200.

³²³ See AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers', for international (Belgian, Argentinian, Spanish) reviews.

³²⁴ Dr. Schröter in *Kölnische Zeitung*, 26 July 1916 (No. 751). Siegfried Rosenthal, 'Der Binnenschiffsverkehr Antwerpens,' *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 42 (1916/17), pp. 936-40.

disagreements, according to Arndt, stemmed from several miscalculations by Wiedenfeld, and from Schumacher's exaggerated notion of the role of 'Nature'.³²⁵ Identifying differing political judgements as the real difference between the two, Arndt reviewed the possible future developments. He thought that Antwerp's return to the pre-war situation as 'international port' would be most desirable from the city's own perspective. But, like Schumacher, he believed that wartime animosities would find expression in economic harassments after the war, indeed that in the light of the Allied Economic Conference of Paris in June 1916 Antwerp had only two options: it could either become part of a Western economic bloc – or of *Mittleuropa*.³²⁶ The first case would lead to the decline of Antwerp and to serious problems for Germany, whereas the second one would introduce a new era of prosperity for both. In this way, Arndt was very close to the views of Schumacher and of Schulze-Gaevernitz, although he did not share their strategy of a Flemish state, but rather thought in terms of German-Belgian customs and railways unions.³²⁷

Finally, from 1916 to 1918, Professor Heinrich Waentig published numerous articles on the Belgian economy.³²⁸ Most of them focused on Antwerp and the Antwerp-German relationship, sometimes investigating a particular historical development, sometimes commenting on current policies of the Belgian Government. Waentig followed Schumacher's emphasis of Antwerp's dependence on the German economy;³²⁹ yet, significantly, in contrast to Schumacher, he argued that Germany could theoretically divert its entire transit trade to Rotterdam.³³⁰ Adopting a conciliatory tone, he indicated that an

³²⁵ Paul Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, 8 (1917), pp. 73-96, 258-86, here pp. 55-6. Arndt, too, sent this essay to the Foreign Ministry. PA AA Berlin, R 21563, fol. 31. He extended it into a book (1918): Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*.

³²⁶ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' pp. 279 ff.

³²⁷ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' p. 280. In his book of 1918, he explicitly sides with Schumacher. Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*, pp. 50-1.

³²⁸ Including: Eight contributions to the wartime journal *Der Belfried*. Heinrich Waentig, 'Die Grundfrage der belgischen Volkswirtschaft,' *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 109/2, 5, 6 (Aug., Nov., Dec. 1917). Hans Gehrig and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918. Waentig, 'Belgien. Das wirtschaftliche Problem.'

³²⁹ He used statistical tables to prove that Germany's exports created Antwerp's famous 'balance of tonnage' (= active load factor), which was decisive for Antwerp's attractiveness. See: Heinrich Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/10-11 (April-May 1917), pp. 456-8, 562.

³³⁰ Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' p. 462. Heinrich Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), p. 15.

independent Belgium in control of Antwerp would be best for both parties – thus agreeing politically with Wiedenfeld.³³¹

Waentig was a member of the occupation regime for the entire duration of the war. One of his tasks, as head of a press department, was to coordinate a propaganda effort with the collaborating Belgian press against the idea of a post-war economic war against Germany.³³² His publications on Antwerp clearly formed part of this effort. However, it appears that he was opposed to an aggressive protection of German interests in Belgium.³³³ As advisor to the *Chefkommission* – the special commission for the preparation of the peace that met in Brussels from December 1917 to July 1918 (see ch. 3) – Waentig actually proved to be a moderating force. He spoke up against the suggestion of demanding a ‘preponderant’ German influence on the port-administration in Antwerp, so that a compromise formulation had to be agreed on for the official guidelines (*Leitsätze*), which was defensive rather than offensive.³³⁴

Results

What, then, can be concluded? The above sketches show how many professors of economics became involved in the debate surrounding the Antwerp Question. Using their authority as general experts on economic matters, they wanted to inform public opinion and to influence the Government through a host of publications, talks, letters, and secret memoranda. Their activity was an expression of their own intellectual self-mobilisation, as well as the result of the occupation regime, which employed several of them.

At the centre of their contributions lay the dispute between Wiedenfeld and Schumacher, which embodied a fundamental split in their attitudes towards Antwerp. Simply put, those agreeing with Schumacher campaigned for German control – direct or indirect – over the port of Antwerp, while the ‘Wiedenfeldian’

³³¹ Waentig, 'Belgien. Das wirtschaftliche Problem,' p. 321. See also AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 27 Oct. 1917, report about lecture by Waentig.

³³² See the memoirs of Ludwig von Falkenhausen (Görlitz 1923): BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 310.

³³³ Waentig's role in the Government-General would merit closer investigation. As head of the press section, and president of the 'Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft in Belgien', he seemed to have been an important figure. Governor-General von Falkenhausen thought him not military-minded enough and removed him from the press section in 1917/1918. BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 271. See also Waentig's very critical remarks in a post-war lecture: Heinrich Waentig, *Belgien*, Halle 1919, pp. 26-7.

³³⁴ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 18, esp. fols. 66-68.

side warned against such infringements of Belgian sovereignty. Differing judgements about post-war politics played an important part in their divergent positions. Wiedenfeld, Weber and Waentig generally assumed that it would not be long before normal commercial relations were re-established between Germany and its current Western enemies. But the others believed firmly that Belgium was very likely to discriminate against German trading interests for a considerable time.

Economic arguments seem to have been at the same time motivation for and justification of the respective positions. Thus, for Schulze-Gaevernitz, Schumacher and Arndt the above defensive argument was always accompanied by an offensive vision, whereby a 'German Antwerp' would facilitate considerable economic growth of Germany, and consolidate German power in the world. For Wiedenfeld, however, a 'German Antwerp' would undermine Antwerp's economic foundations. Similarly, the expansionists were emphatically trying to establish the absolute economic interdependence of Antwerp and its German hinterland, while Weber and Wiedenfeld played it down.

It seems that Schumacher 'won' this latter part of the argument. Most publications, even by Waentig, who was moderate in his political conclusions, considered his the better economic analysis, and tended to insist with him that Germany was essential for Antwerp's greatness. Because of this broader consensus, one could even speak of a 'German school' on the port of Antwerp.³³⁵ It was undoubtedly a product of the war and its generation of patriotic enthusiasm – a force that Wiedenfeld initially succumbed to as well. In this way, Schumacher and the 'German school' probably contributed to expansionist hopes much more than Wiedenfeld diminished them.

³³⁵ See De Goey, *et al.*, 'Comparative Port History,').

Chapter 6: The perception of Antwerp in the German public sphere

In addition to the studies of the academic economists, there were numerous other publications featuring Antwerp, which helped to form the German wartime image of this port city. This chapter takes a closer look at them: in which ways did Antwerp emerge as a topic? What was the extent and quality of the German interest in Antwerp, and how was it related to the war aims debate?

German wartime publications on Antwerp

How much attention did Antwerp get from the German public during the war? This is hard to quantify, yet an indication may be obtained from the published material. I identified over 20 booklets and pamphlets which referred to Antwerp in their titles and which dealt almost exclusively with an Antwerp-related topic.³³⁶ In addition to that, many of the more general publications about Belgium – I counted well over 300 books and pamphlets – included significant sections on Antwerp.³³⁷ Newspapers and journals, finally, regularly featured articles on this Belgian metropolis. These publications portray a certain popularity of Antwerp as a topic – even though the details of their dissemination and reception are not clear. Some of the authors, moreover, affirmed that the name of Antwerp was constantly to be heard in Germany.³³⁸ How, then, can this interest be explained, and what forms did it take? Three reasons suggest themselves.

First, from August to October 1914, the Belgian city was frequently in the news. With the outbreak of war, as German troops marched into Belgium, many papers reported that furious Belgian mobs had attacked the German residents of Brussels and Antwerp. In the case of Antwerp, they spread stories of maltreatment, even murder.³³⁹ These were mostly inflated and sensationalist

³³⁶ This and the following counts are based on: *Deutsches Bücherverzeichnis. Eine Zusammenfassung der im deutschen Buchhandel erschienenen Bücher, Zeitschriften und Landkarten*, Leipzig 1911-1925. Review articles in *Der Belfried*, vols.1-3. Lefèvre and Lorette, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale bibliographie*. And library catalogues, especially of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, and the Hoover Library in Stanford University, Palo Alto.

³³⁷ For example: Ulrich Rauscher, *Belgien heute und morgen*, Leipzig 1915. Ernst Zitelmann, *Das Schicksal Belgiens beim Friedensschluß*, Munich/Leipzig 1917.

³³⁸ See for example the preface to Hugo Kehrer, *Alt-Antwerpen. Eine kunsthistorische Studie*, Munich 1917.

³³⁹ Some of these are cited in Emile Waxweiler, *La Belgique neutre et loyale*, Paris/Lausanne 1915, pp. 143-6. Unconfirmed eyewitness reports can be found in: StA Hamburg, 111-2, L z,

tales, which had to be retracted some weeks later. As will be described in chapter 10 below, there had in fact been riots, which had caused damage to property but not any serious bodily injuries. The great exaggerations in the German press were therefore the product of a wartime desire to demonise the enemy. In this way, the city of Antwerp was associated with the emerging German war culture: the victimisation of the peaceful German Colony moreover re-affirmed the German myth of a defensive war. By mid-August 1914, however, the riots in Antwerp (and Brussels) had largely ceased to be a newsworthy subject, partly because most German citizens in Belgium had been quickly evacuated, and partly because they became supplanted by new accounts of ‘Belgian atrocities’ against German soldiers, which were generated by the German ‘*franc-tireur* delusion’ of an insidious Belgian resistance against the invasion.³⁴⁰ Thus, the inflated reports about the riots appeared in the end as a sort of prelude to the supposed large-scale *franc-tireur* terror, rather than something primarily associated with the place of Antwerp.

Second, Antwerp received public notice in the context of the military front, as described in chapter 2: the retreat of the Belgian government and army behind its fortress, the three *sorties* against the German rear defence, and finally the siege and capture of fortress and city by General von Beseler on 9 October 1914. The *Kölnische Zeitung*, for example, featured the headline and a leading article about the siege and fall in at least one of its four editions daily from 4th until 12th October.³⁴¹ The success was cause for national celebration and a show of flags in Germany.³⁴² It must have been doubly impressive because it was the only major military event at the time, and it conveniently drew away attention from the failure of German victory to materialise in France, the full extent of which had been hidden from the German public. Thus, it is safe to assume that most Germans could identify Antwerp, that they linked it to the present war early on, and that they considered its military conquest a significant event. Of course, the front stabilised further west, and Antwerp saw no further military action – so in this respect it all but disappeared from the front-page headlines.

16b: ‘Aussagen über die Behandlung deutscher Staatsbürger in Belgien, 1914’. See also: Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 114, 134, 483 n. 103. The Antwerp riots are discussed in further detail in ch. 10 below.

³⁴⁰ See Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, esp. pp. 134-5.

³⁴¹ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 4 – 12 October 1914 (Nos. 1096-1122).

³⁴² *Kölnische Zeitung*, 10 October 1914 (No. 1116).

Nevertheless, the military capture of Antwerp had a sustained attraction. At least five of the publications mentioned above kept up its glorification: for example, the first volume of Joachim Delbrück's edition of soldiers' letters and a collection of articles, poems and photos edited by Hermann Hillger.³⁴³ In this illustrated way, the reader could retrace every step that led to what was sometimes called a 'world-historical event.'³⁴⁴ Such hyperbole seemed to have primarily a military meaning: it expressed the pride of having swiftly overcome one of the strongest fortresses of the time. It was hence complemented with exaltations of the commanding general, von Beseler, and of 'big Bertha', the decisive 42 mm siege cannon, apparently nicknamed after Friedrich Krupp's wife. A similar fascination with the fall of Antwerp was expressed in an Austrian volume of art sketches, which featured the effect of the Austro-Hungarian mortar batteries.³⁴⁵

A third explanation for the German interest in Antwerp was forcefully articulated in the introduction to one of the later books on Antwerp:

'When our troops marched victoriously into Antwerp on 10th October 1914, many German hearts were filled with the feeling of witnessing the most important day in world history since 1871. This sentiment did not arise so much from the fact that one of Europe's strongest fortresses had been defeated after an astonishingly short battle; rather, it reflected the idea of the great significance that this port city has for world trade and for German economic life.'³⁴⁶

As seen above, this interpretation cannot be substantiated by the publications of October 1914. In the *Kölnische Zeitung*, in Hillger's collection and in the soldiers' letters, references to the economic importance of Antwerp's port were very rare – though it is plausible that a vague idea of it was at the back of people's minds when they talked about the military success. During the following years of the war, however, the economic aspect did indeed come to the fore: most of the published texts focused on it.

³⁴³ Joachim Delbrück (ed.) *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen*, vol. 1: *Lüttich/Namur/Antwerpen. Mit einer Einleitung von Generalleutnant Imhoff z.D.*, Munich 1915. Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*. See also: Joseph-Karlmann Brechenmacher, *Antwerpens Belagerung und Fall. Schilderungen aus dem Weltkrieg dem deutschen Volke und der deutschen Jugend dargeboten*, Donauwörth 1916. Ludwig Ganghofer, *Der offene Weg. Zum Falle von Antwerpen*, Munich 1914. Ernst Niederhausen, *Der Weltkrieg. Eine Sammlung belehrender Jugendschriften*, vol. 4: *Namur und Antwerpen*, Leipzig 1915. Friedrich Schiller, *Belagerung von Antwerpen durch den Prinzen von Parma in den Jahren 1584 und 1585*, Leipzig 1915.

³⁴⁴ See for example Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, p. 47.

³⁴⁵ Goltz, *Belagerung von Antwerpen*.

³⁴⁶ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 7.

It seems reasonable to attribute this shift to the prolonged occupation of the city by Germany. The long-term fact of occupation must have roused some curiosity in Germany about the local features of the occupied country, and the presence of so many Germans in Belgium provided the experts to write about them. No matter what the original focus was, these publications inevitably became involved in the German war aims debate.

Despite public assurances from the Kaiser and the Chancellor, during the first week of August 1914, that Germany was fighting a purely defensive war, the advances of the German armies and the occupation of enemy territory – in the words of Hans Gatzke – set the table for an annexationist feast.³⁴⁷ Far-reaching expansionism was publicly advocated in right-wing newspapers and in many pamphlets, until the public discussion of detailed war aims was banned towards the end of the year – although some loopholes remained, for example in the circulation of private prints. The German governments' refusal to publicly commit itself to specific war aims while rejecting the notion of a complete return to the *status quo ante* further fuelled the speculations and debates about war aims, particularly by leading figures of German political, economic and intellectual life.

There was a remarkable correlation between the objects of German war aims and the areas occupied in the course of the war.³⁴⁸ In the public debate, the 'conquered' enemy territory was arguably a welcome diversion from the stalemate on the front. Consequently, when the censorship directives were relaxed again in late November 1916, the army command stressed that areas not under its control must not be considered for German expansion, except as exchange bargains.³⁴⁹

Ten books and a number of articles have been selected from among the publications on Antwerp in order to illustrate their close connection with the

³⁴⁷ Gatzke, *Drang nach Westen*, p. 9. See also, especially for what follows: Fischer, *Griff*, pp. 87-109. For annexationist literature see: Grumbach, *Das annexionistische Deutschland*, concerning Belgium: pp. 81-90.

³⁴⁸ See ch. 3.

³⁴⁹ Wilhelm Deist (ed.) *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, Düsseldorf 1970, doc. 178 ('Telegramm ... Entwurf der Richtlinien für Freigabe der Kriegszielerörterungen in der Öffentlichkeit' 28.10.1916), Art.3. Other relevant censorship directives: Deist (ed.) *Militär und Innenpolitik*, docs. 20, 40, 178, 180.

occupation and the war aims debate. A short description of their content will also give a useful overview of the topics that the texts addressed.

In 1915, two professors of geography, Hans Praesent and Alfred Rühl, each published a short descriptive work on the geographical position and general economic function of Antwerp.³⁵⁰ Significantly, Praesent's work appeared in the wartime series *Kriegsgeographische Zeitbilder. Land und Leute der Kriegsschauplätze* ('Contemporary Images of the Geography of War. Lands and Peoples of the Theatres of War'). A similarly introductory booklet appeared in 1916 by the war correspondent Heinrich Binder: *Antwerpen: Rückblicke und Ausblicke* ('Antwerp: Retrospectives and Prospects'). It provided an atmospheric narrative of the city's cultural heritage, its political history, its fate during the war, and its relationship with Germany – including, as indicated by the title, a vision of the future. Binder had been among the German troops entering the city on 9th October 1914 – 'pistol in hand, I trekked through the smoking lanes...' – and in 1916, he returned for three months in order to witness the German occupation and to research in the city's archives.³⁵¹ During that time, he befriended the deputy head of the German civil administration in Antwerp, Freiherrn von Plettenberg Mehrum, to whom he dedicated the book. Early in 1917, Hugo Kehrer published a book on the visible remains of sixteenth-century Antwerp. A professor of history of art in civilian life, Kehrer was an officer under the German Fortress Governor of Antwerp during the war. His book was based on two lectures that he had given in the German School of Antwerp to members of the German Colony.³⁵²

Paul Ehlers, legal advisor to the Verein Hamburger Rheder (Association of Hamburg Shipping Companies), wrote a pamphlet on 'England, Antwerp and the Belgian barrier' (1916), in which he argued that Belgium, and particularly Antwerp, had always been the key to British continental politics.³⁵³ Importantly, in the autumn of 1914, Ehlers had been on the Hamburg-Bremen commission to Antwerp, which investigated the reasons for Antwerp's successful competition in attracting German trade before the war. The end-result of its work was a

³⁵⁰ Hans Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung*, Leipzig 1915. Alfred Rühl, *Antwerpen*, Berlin 1915.

³⁵¹ Heinrich Binder, *Antwerpen. Rückblicke und Ausblicke*, Munich 1916, pp. 85, 13.

³⁵² Kehrer, *Alt-Antwerpen*, preface.

³⁵³ Paul Ehlers, *England, Antwerpen und die belgische Barriere*, Hamburg 1916.

thoroughly documented book, describing the *Verkehrswirtschaft* (economy of transport) of the port.³⁵⁴ Later on, Ehlers received further employment in the Government-General, working out a confidential treatise on Belgian shipping interests, using the Belgian Foreign Ministry's records.³⁵⁵

Then there were the publications of the economists discussed in the previous chapter (5), which attempted to unravel the economic conundrum of the Antwerp Question. As seen, these authors, especially Wiedenfeld and Schumacher, intended their writings to be more than treatises on an 'academic' problem and strove to influence the attitude of the imperial government towards the Belgian port city. Due to their central importance in the public debate about Antwerp, their published texts will have to be revisited in this chapter.

In occupied Antwerp itself, there appeared in 1917 a study by the Flemish economist Max Oboussier on the port of Antwerp and the Paris Economic Conference.³⁵⁶ As described in more detail in chapter 9, Oboussier belonged to the small group of Flemish 'nationalist' collaborators, the 'activists'. Accordingly, he argued in his book that a post-war tariff barrier against the central powers, such as the Allied Economic Conference of Paris had proposed in June 1916, would signal the 'death of Antwerp.'³⁵⁷ Oboussier's book was originally only available in Flemish and French but a German propaganda organisation, the German-Flemish Society, commissioned a German translation that appeared in 1919.³⁵⁸ Another activist tract that this Society had translated before the end of the war dealt with 'the economic independence of Flanders.' Using Oboussier and Schumacher, it argued that Antwerp should become the centre of urban activity in the new Flanders.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*. It was only available to interested parties at request. See letter Wiedenfeld, 1 May 1916, in: StA Hamburg, 111-2, A IV, b, fol. 13. See also ch. 4 below.

³⁵⁵ Paul Ehlers, 'Die belgischen Seeschiffahrtsinteressen', (= report no. 11, Section VII, Political Department of the Government-General [= PA GG]), n.d. [1918]. Copies are for example in: AGR Brussels, T 454, 92. StA Hamburg, D z, 68, fol. 29.

³⁵⁶ Max Oboussier, *De Haven van Antwerpen en de economische conferentie te Paris*, Antwerpen 1917. German translation by Karl Mittler, Berlin 1919.

³⁵⁷ This theme was also argued in the Antwerp collaborationist newspaper *Het Vlaamsche Nieuws* in 1917. For secondary reading on 'activism' (and bibliography) see De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, chs. 5, 8. On the Allied Economic Conference see Soutou, *L'Or et le sang*, pp. 233 ff.

³⁵⁸ On the Deutsch-Flämische Gesellschaft, see: Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, ch. 8.

³⁵⁹ Joris Fassotte, *Flanderns Wirtschaftliche Selbständigkeit*, 1918.

Finally, many of the above books and pamphlets were reviewed in newspaper articles that sometimes added critical or original material.³⁶⁰ The most important independent articles seem to have been those of the journal *Der Belfried*. A wartime foundation, it was published by the *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft in Belgien* ('Society for Political Economy in Belgium').³⁶¹ This society had been created in November 1915 by prominent members of the Civilian Administration of the Government-General, with the aim of orchestrating an infiltration of the Belgian economy with German capital.³⁶² Its first correspondences, or *Mitteilungen*, informed its members about its activities and were strictly confidential. These soon became publicly available, however, and the reports were restricted to general economic matters. In the spring of 1916, it printed a series of nine short essays on different aspects of Antwerp: the German Colony, the German seafaring interests, the historical development of the port, its contemporary technical data, and its global economic significance.

From July 1916, then, in cooperation with the Leipzig publishing house *Insel*, the society started to bring out the *Belfried*: a high-quality monthly journal, primarily directed at a German readership to inform them about Belgium. Although it focused on cultural topics, it continued publishing essays on economic aspects as well – among which the 'Antwerp question' assumed a prominent position. This was discussed in terms of the Belgian interior waterways, the political history of the river Scheldt, and the supposed anti-German post-war plans of the Belgian government, contrasted by accounts of the historical development of German-Belgian economic relations. Its most important authors were Josef Grassmann, a councillor in the Bavarian Ministry for Transport, Jakob Strieder, an economic historian who had been sent by the Bavarian Academy of Science to research in Antwerp archives, and Heinrich Waentig, a national economist and the head of a press section in the

³⁶⁰ See for example: Schröter in *Kölnische Zeitung*, 26 Juli 1916. The contributions by Franzius and by Schumacher in *Technik und Wirtschaft*, 9/12 (December) 1916. Pan-German views on Antwerp were for example expressed in: *Das neue Deutschland*, 1 February 1917 (by Schwering and by Schulze-Bahlke).

³⁶¹ On the *Belfried*, see: Ulrich Tiedau, 'Kulturvermittlung in Kriegszeiten? Deutscher Auslandsbuchhandel und Kulturpropaganda in Belgien während des Ersten Weltkrieges,' *Buchhandelsgeschichte*, 14 (1998), pp. 193-5.

³⁶² See Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 125.

Government-General. Waentig, who has already been introduced in chapter 5, was the most prolific contributor, with more than six essays relating to Antwerp.

Several features of the Antwerp publications emerge. The supposed maltreatment of Germans in Antwerp in August 1914, and especially the military conquest of the city, had made Antwerp a household word in Germany that was strongly associated with the war. However, the continual occupation of Belgium was mostly responsible for inspiring and facilitating the production of literature on that country in general and on Antwerp in particular: most of the authors on Antwerp were connected to the occupation regime. The majority of the texts were concerned with the modern port of Antwerp, although some also considered the historical and cultural sides. In the absence of concrete official war aims, the authors were very conscious that, as Heinrich Waentig put it in August 1916: 'Antwerp is a wide field, and the last word about it has not yet been spoken at all.'³⁶³ The texts were intended to clarify Antwerp's position, so that at the end of the war an informed decision could be made about its future.³⁶⁴ In this way, it makes sense to analyse in detail first how they portrayed the Antwerp-German relationship and then how they thought this might change under the impact of the war.

The special relationship between Antwerp and Germany

Taking all the German wartime publications on Antwerp as a total, one can discern two levels on which they explored the relationship between Antwerp and Germany: a personal and a structural one. On the personal level, they depicted the contributions that individual Germans or German organisations had made to the city's cultural and economic life since the sixteenth century. On the structural level, they investigated the ways in which Antwerp was connected to the German economy, especially since the mid-nineteenth century.

The most striking feature on the personal level, which all of the authors remarked upon, was of course the German Colony in Antwerp. What seemed to be the greatest concern of most authors was the question whether this presence of Germans in Antwerp constituted a truly German presence. On the one hand, this

³⁶³ Heinrich Waentig, 'Volkswirtschaftliche Literatur,' *Der Belfried*, 1/2 (August 1916), p. 96.

³⁶⁴ This intention is explicitly stated in several texts, for example: Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, p. 39. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 7.

was constantly affirmed. In the *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, for example, the director of the German School in Antwerp, Bernhard Gaster, talked about the achievements of the German Colony in preserving their German identity, listing a series of institutions and organisations, such as churches, schools and charities.³⁶⁵ Furthermore, the economic success of many Germans – including the assimilated ones – was usually attributed to a specifically German enterprise. Hermann Schumacher, for one, considered Antwerp's resident export trade (*Eigenhandel*) as 'one of the proudest achievements that the German nation [*das Deutschtum*] has to show for abroad.'³⁶⁶ In this way, the German Colony was used to insinuate that Antwerp itself had a certain German quality. This found an expression in the frequently used phrase '*Das deutsche Antwerpen*' – the German Antwerp.³⁶⁷

On the other hand, it was recognised that over time many Germans tended to assimilate and become Belgian instead of giving Antwerp a German identity. Heinrich Waentig, for example, noted that particularly the representatives of the Norddeutscher Lloyd, one of the most powerful German companies in Antwerp, had come to identify with their Belgian host city.³⁶⁸ But while Waentig seemed to welcome such integration, most others spoke with regret of a loss of German identity. Binder and Gaster both raged against 'renegades' who had declared their solidarity with Belgium at the outbreak of war.³⁶⁹ Moreover, Gaster deplored that the German Colony had not been more politically active before the war, for example by supporting the Flemish Movement. However, this view was opposed in a subsequent article in the *Mitteilungen*, which argued that the German Colony in Antwerp was essentially of an economic character, that it was wise not to get involved in Belgian politics and that a political affiliation with Belgium was normal. Nevertheless, the anonymous author claimed, those

³⁶⁵ Bernhard Gaster, 'Das Deutschtum in Antwerpen,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/8 (24 February 1916), p. 2. See also: Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 70-1. Pelckmans and Doorslaer, *De Duitse Kolonie in Antwerpen 1796-1914*.

³⁶⁶ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 13.

³⁶⁷ See for example: Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, p. 60. Delbrück (ed.) *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen*, p. 250.

³⁶⁸ Heinrich Waentig, 'Der Hafen von Antwerpen und der Norddeutsche Lloyd,' *Der Belfried*, 3/3 (Sept. 1918), p. 100. See also: Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 25. Jakob Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft in älterer und jüngerer Vergangenheit,' *Der Belfried*, 1/10-11 (April-May 1917), vol.1, p. 477.

³⁶⁹ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 72. Gaster, 'Das Deutschtum in Antwerpen,' p. 3.

assimilated Germans would still perform a cultural, mediating role, by introducing 'a German way of thinking' into Belgium.³⁷⁰

A parallel was often drawn with Antwerp's heyday in the sixteenth century. Jakob Strieder, in an essay on 'Belgium and the German economy, past and future,' described the input of the German Hanseatic League and the South German merchant-bankers, especially the Fugger, to the city's role as the trading centre of Europe. He acknowledged that this had depended entirely on the coming together of different realms: the Portuguese and Spanish with their colonies, the Italian and Dutch, as well as the various German ones. The position of the latter, however, Strieder constantly asserted, was not only significant but of 'foremost' importance. It is true that Strieder backed up these claims with telling primary sources and that he was careful to place them within specific historical contexts. However, overall, he purveyed the impression that the German presence in Antwerp was the crucial factor for Antwerp's success.³⁷¹

More crudely, Heinrich Binder never doubted the vital importance of the German influence and made no attempt to put it in context: at one point he remarked in passing that Antwerp had the Hanseatic League to thank for its sixteenth-century greatness.³⁷² The main drive of his text was simply to impress on the reader the tremendous prominence of the Germans in the city. In 1558, the Hansa was given its own quay in the harbour, and the Germans were over-represented among the fifty richest foreign merchant families. Importantly, Binder stressed that the Germans, bringing shipping and capital, were warmly welcomed: 'the citizens of Antwerp knew what they owed to [them].'

These accounts of early modern connections between Antwerp and Germany can be seen as part of a more general search for German traces in the Belgian city. The *Belfried*, for example, produced an article on the famous engraver Albrecht Dürer and his stay in Antwerp. Similarly, Hugo Kehrer enjoined his readers to take Dürer's diary as guide to the city's art treasures.³⁷³ Jakob Strieder tried to explain this phenomenon. In introducing an essay on a stained-glass window in the Cathedral of Antwerp that had been endowed by the Fugger

³⁷⁰ Gaster, 'Das Deutschtum in Antwerpen,' pp. 3-4. Die deutsche Kolonie Antwerpens,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/11 (16 March 1916), p. 3.

³⁷¹ Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,' pp. 470-1.

³⁷² Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 9. For the following, see: Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 59-62.

³⁷³ Gustav Pauli, 'Dürer in Antwerpen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), pp. 78-83. Kehrer, *Alt-Antwerpen*, preface.

family, he reflected: ‘in such times as we are currently living in, we are looking for our people [*Volk*] in everything.’³⁷⁴ Every artefact abroad that was linked to the ‘historical life of our people,’ Strieder argued, became imbued with a significance that would seem exaggerated from an objective perspective. He thus recognised the artificial nostalgia involved in this behaviour. What he did not mention was that its fruits, based on such ethnocentric patriotism as he espoused, had potential political consequences: in the eastern occupied territories, similar finds of a ‘German’ past were used to legitimise future control by the *Reich*.³⁷⁵ As will be discussed below, this path to expansion was more constricted in Belgium than in the East. However, the dominant idea behind the depictions of the German Colony and the German connections in the past, that Germans always formed an essential ingredient of a prosperous Antwerp, seems to signify a step along its way.

On the structural level, the parallel idea of the German economy being all-important for the port of Antwerp was similarly dominant – though not uncontested. In addition to that, there was the reverse notion that Antwerp was ‘one of the most important organs of the German national economy,’ as Paul Arndt put it.³⁷⁶ Interestingly, this notion was as strongly denied as it was supported.

Many authors remarked on the paradox that despite Antwerp’s glorious past, it was actually the youngest of the great Northwest-European ports: from the turmoil of the Dutch Revolt until the French Revolution the Scheldt estuary had been closed.³⁷⁷ Everybody agreed that the start of its phenomenal rise could be dated to 1863, when the Dutch removed their toll on the Scheldt in return for a large sum of money, to which, as some pointed out, many of the German states had contributed.³⁷⁸ There was equal agreement that the German use of the port

³⁷⁴ Jakob Strieder, ‘Das Fugger-Fenster in der Kathedrale zu Antwerpen,’ *Der Belfried*, 2/6 (Dec. 1917), p. 241.

³⁷⁵ See for example: Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I*, Cambridge 2000, p. 130.

³⁷⁶ Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 269.

³⁷⁷ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 5. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 9.

³⁷⁸ Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, p. 17. Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 5. Strieder, ‘Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,’ p. 474. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 112. Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 24.

contributed significantly to its status as one of the world's largest ports. However, the authors put forward differing interpretations of this significance.

As seen in the previous chapter, Kurt Wiedenfeld was concerned to demonstrate Antwerp's basic independence of Germany. He formulated his corresponding thesis early on: 'Belgium's economic life is in fact the main pillar of the commercial and transport structure of [Antwerp]; the relations to Germany are just a consequence of the attraction created by Belgium.'³⁷⁹ Referring to the Belgian statistics from the years before the war, he argued that the largest portion of Antwerp's entire canal and railway traffic originated or ended within Belgium. Further, he described in detail three elements of Antwerp's port, which had evolved in Belgium, and which in turn attracted German trade: its powerful import commerce – based on the Belgian need of foreign produce –, the attractiveness to steamship liners – due to the constant availability of Belgian industrial exports –, and the Belgian railway tariffs, which were fine-tuned to facilitating trade for Antwerp, the national port.³⁸⁰

Wiedenfeld's pamphlet, chronologically one of the first, seemed to have encouraged a superficial consensus about Antwerp's economic identity as primarily a Belgian port. Even his opponent Hermann Schumacher agreed on this point.³⁸¹ Jakob Strieder, to name another example, admitted that Antwerp derived its position as a world trading port primarily from the powerful development of the Belgian economy, rather than from that of its German hinterland.³⁸²

Nevertheless, most texts displayed a marked tendency to put more emphasis on the benefits that Antwerp received through the German connections. Waentig and Paul Arndt even tended to supplant the importance of 1863 for Antwerp with that of 1871, the foundation of the German Empire, Arndt calling the latter 'the strongest basis for a brilliant rise of Antwerp.'³⁸³ Waentig in particular, strove to demonstrate the decisive function of the German transit trade through Belgium for the spectacular rate of Antwerp's growth. Using the evidence of official statistics for Belgian commerce, he showed that just before the war Germany

³⁷⁹ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 12.

³⁸⁰ See in particular Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 42.

³⁸¹ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 29.

³⁸² Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,' p. 475.

³⁸³ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' p. 273. Also: Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' p. 18.

was by far the most important origin of Belgium's transit imports – 40% of the total value – and the third most important destination for Belgian transit exports. The total Belgian transit trade, virtually all of which passed through Antwerp, in turn constituted over half of the entire Belgian trading value – whereas in the 1830s it had made up less than 10%.³⁸⁴ This way, 'Antwerp's greatness [was] unthinkable without the German hinterland,' as Jakob Strieder put it in a similar vein, even though he was quick to add the qualification mentioned above.³⁸⁵ Moreover, Waentig explained that Germany's contribution lay not only in the overall quantity of goods; more particularly, the huge amount of German export goods balanced the otherwise uneconomical preponderance of imports in the port of Antwerp. The shipping companies could hence fill their cargo ships to full capacity every time they called at Antwerp, which in turn generated ever more trade.³⁸⁶

As Waentig acknowledged, this last point was taken from Schumacher, who argued first that Antwerp, alone among the great ports, could boast a virtually absolute 'balance of tonnage'. Schumacher considered this a major element of his concept of the '*natürliche Billigkeit*' of the Belgian port – its naturally cheap and favourable condition for trade in goods.³⁸⁷ He was adamant that this condition, just like all other advantages of Antwerp, was fundamentally the work of Nature and had little to do with politics. Accusing Wiedenfeld of seeing only the superficial causes of Antwerp's success, Schumacher set out to uncover the 'deeper roots'.³⁸⁸ His thesis applied especially to Antwerp's connections with Germany, which were irreplaceable because Antwerp was naturally part of the German economic sphere. This had the following consequence, as he categorically stated at the beginning of his book: 'the rise of the western powers coincides with the most miserable times for Antwerp; their power has always weighed heavily upon it. The strengthening and prosperity of Germany only, has always signified a golden age for the city on the Scheldt, too.'³⁸⁹

³⁸⁴ Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' pp. 453-8.

³⁸⁵ Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,' p. 475.

³⁸⁶ Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' p. 458.

³⁸⁷ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 39.

³⁸⁸ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 118.

³⁸⁹ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 10.

Paul Arndt cautioned that Schumacher, despite being correct in his technical points, had gone over the top with his insistence on natural forces.³⁹⁰ Heinrich Waentig on the other hand, was happy to adopt it: he seemed to have a predilection for ending his essays with proverbs, expressing that, in the long-term, politics could not keep apart what God or Nature had joined.³⁹¹ He illustrated this in historical terms. He wrote, for example, that Belgium had concluded the trade and shipping treaty of 1844 with the German Customs League because it had been involuntarily driven by its pressing 'natural interests' – and not because of its 'heart,' which had inclined towards France.³⁹² Antwerp in particular, had served as catalyst in this economic rapprochement. Its Chamber of Commerce had long demanded a direct transport route to the Rhineland, so that in 1839 the Belgian state had started to invest heavily in the Rhenish Railway Company in order to speed up the construction of the 'iron Rhine.'³⁹³ In this way, Waentig and Schumacher were sometimes not far away from the Flemish activist Max Oboussier's 'axiom', which stood at the opposite end from Wiedenfeld: 'the abolition of the foreign hinterland is the death of Antwerp.'³⁹⁴

However, there was an important difference between Waentig and Schumacher. While Schumacher was adamant that Germany was also in many ways dependent on Antwerp, Waentig repeatedly pointed out that Germany would not be dramatically worse off without it. Waentig's main arguments were that the special German-Belgian trade made up only 4.3% of Germany's commerce, whereas it constituted a fifth of Belgium's commerce. As for the German shipping and transit trade, this could always be transferred to Rotterdam.³⁹⁵ Admittedly, Waentig had an obvious strategic motivation. By emphasising the importance of German transit trade for Antwerp and Belgium's dependence on the German economy, he wanted to show that economic links with Germany were an opportunity that Belgium could not afford to miss. It was

³⁹⁰ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' p. 271.

³⁹¹ Waentig, 'Antwerpen-Köln,' p. 372. Waentig, 'Der Hafen von Antwerpen und der Norddeutsche Lloyd,' p. 113.

³⁹² Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' p. 446 (Waentig's emphasis).

³⁹³ Waentig, 'Antwerpen-Köln,' pp. 369-70.

³⁹⁴ Oboussier, *De Haven van Antwerpen*, p. 81.

³⁹⁵ Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' p. 15. and Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' p. 462.

in this sense, that others, too, used the Rotterdam alternative as a threat.³⁹⁶ Above all, it was meant to demonstrate that Belgium had chosen the wrong side in the war – and possibly, it was a journalistic attempt to woo Belgium away from it.

Schumacher was not interested in such tactical manoeuvres. He was far more concerned about the damage that a hostile Belgium might inflict on Germany in peacetime. Giving the specific example of the German Steelworks League, which in 1913/14 had exported 70% of its essential products via Belgian ports, he asserted: 'The entire German nation would feel it grievously, if this transit trade through Belgium were damaged.' Furthermore, he saw the prominent position in the world of German shipping to be based to a large degree on the excellent use German ships of the line could make of Antwerp, and doubted that it could be maintained were they to be excluded from that port. Finally, he was convinced that no other port, including Rotterdam, could replace Antwerp in its formidable role as main port of the Continent's largest export-industries.³⁹⁷ Many of the other authors agreed with this last point. Hans Praesent, for example, indicated that Rotterdam and Antwerp, though rivals to some extent, essentially fulfilled different needs of their hinterland, while Paul Arndt cautioned that a German switch from Antwerp to Rotterdam would involve multiple difficulties.³⁹⁸

Jakob Strieder expressed the extreme end of this view of Antwerp's importance for Germany in the context of the city's long economic decline. During the eighteenth century, the Habsburgs made a few unsuccessful attempts of renewing international trade in what was then the Austrian Netherlands – either at Antwerp again, or relocated at Ostend. Strieder portrayed this as a continual effort to re-establish the significant Antwerp-Germany relationship of the sixteenth century. Exploiting the blurred boundary between Austrian interests and those of the German Empire – with Austria's ruler being the German Emperor – he posited as goal the creation of an early modern 'German world economy', which was to have taken its place alongside those of the colonial powers. This somewhat anachronistic interpretation clearly echoed contemporary

³⁹⁶ For example Josef von Grassmann, 'Belgische Binnenschiffahrtsfragen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/7 (Jan. 1917), p. 337.

³⁹⁷ For the above references and quote, see: Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 40-1 and pp. 28, 32.

³⁹⁸ Praesent, *Antwerpens geografische Lage*, p. 31. Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' p. 282.

claims of Wilhelmine *Weltpolitik*, and thus conjured up a sense of historical continuity. Most importantly, it implied that Antwerp was Germany's key to the longed-for strong position in the world, not only in the past but also in the present and future.³⁹⁹ It remains to be investigated, therefore, how the writers assessed the impact of the war on the German relationship to Antwerp.

Antwerp as object in the war

Hermann Schumacher noted that Antwerp could be described as Europe's 'most political seaport' because throughout its history it had been regarded an important pawn in international power politics.⁴⁰⁰ He and his colleagues clearly thought that this had not changed. The above examination of their portrayal of the special Antwerp-German relationship indicated that often the elements they emphasised depended on the differing political messages they wanted to get across. So, to what extent did they consider Antwerp a stake in the war? In what ways did they think Antwerp's connections with Germany might change? It appears that the authors all saw the German interests in Antwerp under threat, but that most thought it necessary to consolidate and secure them actively.

Although the main body of Kurt Wiedenfeld's pamphlet did not deal with Antwerp's political future at all, it was thinly but firmly framed by precisely this question. At the beginning, Wiedenfeld mentioned that its development was uncertain, and in the very last sentence, he issued the warning that 'to detach Antwerp from its Belgian specificity means to undermine the economic importance of Antwerp for Germany.'⁴⁰¹ The entire argument of his text culminated in this conclusion. With the ban on public war aims discussions still in force when it was published, this negative formulation was probably the furthest Wiedenfeld could go in making concrete proposals about the future. Its implications, however, were clear: it was a plea for the restitution of the *status quo ante*, not only as concerned Antwerp, but the entire Belgian state.⁴⁰² Moreover, it showed that Wiedenfeld was convinced that Germany's beneficial relationship with Antwerp was actually threatened by annexationist tendencies within Germany itself.

³⁹⁹ Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,' p. 472-3.

⁴⁰⁰ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 9.

⁴⁰¹ Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, pp. 5, 47.

⁴⁰² In his strictly confidential memorandum on 'the economic future of Antwerp,' Wiedenfeld argued this explicitly and in depth. See ch. 5.

This view was supported in only one article, published in the *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*. Its author, Ulrich Rauscher, reviewed the Wiedenfeld-Schumacher debate and firmly agreed with Wiedenfeld's political assessment, though he paid lip service to the notion of 'real guarantees' as well. He argued forcefully that a) to change Antwerp's international status was dangerous because a Belgian Antwerp served Germany's interests best, and that b) Belgium would never forgo its lucrative links with the German economy.⁴⁰³

All the other authors on Antwerp considered the threats to come from outside, from Germany's enemies in this war. Arndt and Schumacher agreed that the war had disrupted the German-Belgian relationship of 'good will' and that the Belgian hatred of the Germans would be a force to reckon with in the near future. It was to be expected that without any changes to the pre-war system, German enterprise in Antwerp would constantly run up against some form of Belgian resistance.⁴⁰⁴ Schumacher mentioned, for example, the likelihood of Belgium abolishing the low transit tariff on its railways.⁴⁰⁵ Being constrained by censorship in the same way as Wiedenfeld, Schumacher did not make any concrete proposals for the future either. Like Wiedenfeld, however, he left no doubt in which direction such proposals would have gone: 'Power alone can then contain the evil will,' and such power would have to be used to enforce political measures, as purely economic ones would not suffice.⁴⁰⁶ That this was a strong hint at a destruction of the Belgian state was confirmed in his pamphlet on 'the solution of the Belgian question.' He proposed there, especially in view of the Antwerp question, to create two semi-independent states, Flanders and Wallonia, which would enter into a customs union with Germany and France respectively.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Ulrich Rauscher, 'Antwerpen und die deutsche Wirtschaft,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/24-25 (23 June 1916), p. 4. Maybe it is significant that, according to his biographer, Rauscher did not get on with the leading figures of the General-Government and was sent to the front in 1917. See Kurt Doß, *Zwischen Weimar und Warschau. Ulrich Rauscher: Deutscher Gesandter in Polen 1922-1930. Eine politische Biographie*, Düsseldorf 1984, pp. 25, 28.

⁴⁰⁴ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' p. 281. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 29.

⁴⁰⁵ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 165.

⁴⁰⁶ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 29.

⁴⁰⁷ Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, pp. 44-46.

Similarly, Paul Arndt – writing in 1917 – doubted that Belgium would be able to regain its sovereignty after the war. He admitted that a return to pre-war conditions would be best for Antwerp itself, but he explicitly dismissed Rauscher's stance as untenable. Referring to the Paris Economic Conference for proof, he maintained that Belgium was too much under the sway of the Allies to be trusted. He therefore favoured a 'middle-European' solution, which would bring Belgium under German control – in whichever form – and safeguard German interests in Antwerp.⁴⁰⁸

In several articles Heinrich Waentig drew attention to the Belgian and Allied schemes that seemed calculated to undermine the German position in Antwerp after the war. In particular, he referred to a book by the Belgian economist Robert Billiard,⁴⁰⁹ the Paris Economic Conference, and the Belgian government's foundation of the Lloyd Royal Belge. Billiard had outlined a vision of Belgian economic policy, built on the hypothesis that there would be no trade with Germany for a generation.⁴¹⁰ For Waentig, this seemed to have become practical politics with the Allied conference of June 1916: although he wrote that the Allied programme concerned the transition period from war to peace economy only, he treated it in the same indiscriminate way as Paul Arndt.⁴¹¹ The Lloyd Royal Belge, finally, was Belgium's first national company for commercial shipping. It was to redress the deficiency in Belgian ships (only 495 out of 6973 steamers calling at Antwerp in 1912 flew the Belgian flag) and to replace the German tonnage that might stay away from Antwerp after the war.⁴¹²

Unlike Schumacher and Arndt, Waentig did not ask how Germany should protect itself against these threats. Rather more subtly, he reasoned that their real victim was the Belgian economy itself. In this way, he could defend the German point of view by championing the Belgian cause – which, as seen above, he neatly aligned with the German interests. His main argument was that Belgium could never find adequate compensation for the economic relations with

⁴⁰⁸ Arndt, 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' pp. 278-80.

⁴⁰⁹ Robert Billiard, *La Belgique industrielle et commerciale de demain*, Paris 1915.

⁴¹⁰ Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' p. 10.

⁴¹¹ Heinrich Waentig, 'Eine neue Phase in der belgischen Kriegswirtschaftspolitik,' *Der Belfried*, 1/5 (Nov. 1916), p. 204.

⁴¹² Heinrich Waentig, 'Der Lloyd Royal Belge,' *Der Belfried*, 1/2 (Aug. 1916), pp. 99, 101, 103, 189.

Germany, as Billiard and Belgian ministers had suggested: neither through closer ties with France nor with Britain. Interestingly, he also considered the possibility of French and Belgian annexations, but only to dismiss them immediately as illusory.⁴¹³

In the case of France, he used an impressive series of detailed pre-war statistical tables in order to demonstrate that whereas the Belgian and German economies had been complementary, those of France and Belgium could be described as antagonistic.⁴¹⁴ It would require large concessions on the part of France to even partially replace the role Germany had played in Belgium's economic life. But, Waentig argued, France would only ever make them in return for Belgian political vassalage, as demonstrated by comparative Franco-Belgian negotiations during the nineteenth century, as well as by French protectionist policies during the war.⁴¹⁵ The idea that France was a false friend to the Belgians was reiterated in many of the German Antwerp publications. It often centred on the French *surtaxe d'entrepôt* ('surcharge on imports'), which had discriminated against French transit trade through Antwerp in favour of the French ports since 1892, and which the German authors depicted as the epitome of French selfishness.⁴¹⁶

In the British case, Waentig made hardly any attempt at scientific refutation. Rather, he relied on anglophobic images, conjuring up the spectre of English imperialism, whose help to Belgium would certainly involve the end of Belgian independence.⁴¹⁷ In his reports on the Lloyd Royal Belge Waentig argued again that it did not serve Belgium's best interests: no 'really big name' was among the founding members of the share-holding company, and influential Belgian maritime circles had raised critical voices against it – the charge seemed to be corruption.⁴¹⁸ Most important of all, however, was that 'England' had already secured 'a certain influence over the enterprise' because of its hold over Belgian capital. A likely result would then be, Waentig surmised, that the Lloyd Royal

⁴¹³ Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' p. 10. Grassmann, 'Belgische Binnenschiffahrtsfragen,' p. 337.

⁴¹⁴ Waentig, 'Eine neue Phase in der belgischen Kriegswirtschaftspolitik,' p. 208.

⁴¹⁵ Waentig, 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' p. 17.

⁴¹⁶ See especially Eduard Neuhaus, 'Antwerpen und die Surtaxe d'Entrepôt,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/17-18 (4 May 1916).

⁴¹⁷ Waentig, 'Eine neue Phase in der belgischen Kriegswirtschaftspolitik,' pp. 213-14.

⁴¹⁸ Waentig, 'Der Lloyd Royal Belge,' pp. 99-100, 105.

Belge became a malleable tool in the hands of the English anti-German shipping policy.⁴¹⁹

This interpretation clearly latched on to the pervasive anglophobic mood in wartime Germany. As Matthew Stibbe has shown, anglophobia was a stock element in the public discourse on the war, providing much of the language used to explain its outbreak and to define the German aims in it, as well as generally mobilising support for reactionary domestic policies and extremist measures in foreign politics.⁴²⁰ Indeed, Antwerp proved to be a major trigger of anti-English sentiment, which in turn gave meaning to the German conquest of the city: in the historical retrospectives of the texts examined here, England's role was particularly highlighted as obstructing the natural development of the city and its port. Jakob Strieder, for example, felt it was important to note that the Dutch were supported by England when they claimed the territory of the Scheldt estuary in the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and closed it to all shipping.⁴²¹ Paul Ehlers documented how the English had always schemed to prevent a great power from taking possession of their closest opposite coastline, and particularly its best port, Antwerp. He maintained that the Belgian government had acted under British pressure when it chose Antwerp as the centre of national defence in the 1850s, and that the citizens of Antwerp had deeply resented this ever since because it limited the natural expansion of port and city.⁴²² Accordingly, Waentig remarked cynically about the possibility of an 'English future' for Antwerp that the port would just be trampled upon.⁴²³

The image of 'perfidious Albion' was perhaps most virulently evoked, in the military context of the war. Heinrich Binder devoted a chapter on 'the English in Antwerp,' in which he claimed – apparently sincerely – that 'England has brought an unspeakable wrong over the city'.⁴²⁴ In short, Binder charged Churchill, who had visited Antwerp during the siege, of betraying the people of Antwerp by giving them false hope and then secretly retreating with the English soldiers at the last minute, causing general panic and a mass exodus from the city. In fact, Binder had not invented this spin on the fall of Antwerp: English

⁴¹⁹ Waentig, 'Der Lloyd Royal Belge,' pp. 105, 190.

⁴²⁰ Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*.

⁴²¹ Strieder, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft,' p. 472.

⁴²² Ehlers, *England, Antwerpen*, esp. pp. 34, 36.

⁴²³ Waentig, 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' p. 463.

⁴²⁴ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 83, and pp. 111-125 for the following.

cowardice and betrayal of their trusting Belgian allies had been a recurring theme in the German newspapers of October 1914.⁴²⁵

Finally, some authors perceived an indirect threat to German interests in Antwerp in connection with the Belgian Flemish-Walloon conflict. Although this conflict was usually considered in cultural terms, they saw a clear economic dimension to it. Waentig supplied an historical dimension again, when he described how the Antwerp-Cologne railway line had been diverted so that it passed through the Walloon industrial districts; a direct connection, which would benefit German industry and Flemish commerce, had still not been built by 1914 because of Walloon resistance.⁴²⁶ Arndt pointed out that this economic struggle could continue in the future, and that certain Belgian politicians – those who agreed with the decisions of the Paris Economic Conference – inclined towards ‘sacrificing’ the Flemish seaport for Walloon protectionism.⁴²⁷ Hermann Schumacher claimed that in the past Walloon interests had failed to support Antwerp in developing a strong industry in its immediate environs, which would expand beyond local needs and forge a powerful link with the port. Only a few years before the war, Belgian-Walloon and French companies had begun to exploit the Limburg coalfields ‘immediately in front of the gates of Antwerp.’ This developing industry, Schumacher obliquely declared, would either become fierce competition for Germany, or it could be brought to harmonise with German interests.⁴²⁸ His meaning becomes clear in his pamphlet on the ‘solution of the Belgian question,’ where he envisaged a fusion of German and Flemish economic interests, secured by the new political structure of a Flemish state within the German Customs League.⁴²⁹

Thus, all the authors on Antwerp clearly thought that the outcome of the war might endanger the favourable Antwerp-German relationship. Wiedenfeld and Schumacher, just as in their economic analysis discussed in chapter 5, stood at the opposite ends in their interpretations of how it could be maintained, with

⁴²⁵ Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, pp. 50-2. See also Delbrück (ed.) *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen*, pp. 242, 263.

⁴²⁶ Waentig, ‘Antwerpen-Köln,’ pp. 370-1.

⁴²⁷ Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 279. See also: Hermann Schumacher, ‘Schumachers Antwerpenbuch,’ *Technik und Wirtschaft*, 9/12 (December 1916), p. 540.

⁴²⁸ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 98-102.

⁴²⁹ See above.

Wiedenfeld holding on to the pre-war political structure, and Schumacher intent on radically changing it. The great majority of the others were to varying degrees on Schumacher's side: through their depiction of how not only the German use of, but also Antwerp itself, was menaced by the Belgian government, Walloon industrialists, the French, and, especially, the British. In fact, in seeming reaction to these enemy threats, they tended to portray a positive consolidation of the link between Antwerp and Germany. These tendencies started with the very ambiguity of the term of wartime 'possession' of the city and peaked with the notion, as already indicated above by Strieder, that Germany had much larger stakes in Antwerp than just commercial interests.

When Antwerp surrendered to the siege army under General von Beseler on 9th October 1914, the official communiqué from Headquarters ran as follows: 'several forts of the inner fortification ring around Antwerp fell today before noon. The city has been in German possession since this afternoon. ... Only a few forts are still occupied by the enemy. This does not affect the possession of Antwerp.'⁴³⁰ In the context of the front, the primary meaning of the key word of this message, 'possession' (*Besitz*), was clearly that of military control. It signified progress in the war, the object of which was military defeat of the enemy. However, 'possession' inevitably also referred to property, and had strong connotations of acquisition by conquest. This suggested that the Germans had some sort of legal or moral right over the city, which went beyond the necessity of its control as a means to winning the war.

Of course, there was no legal foundation for such connotations. International Law had introduced the concept of wartime 'occupation' in the Hague Conventions on War and defined it to the effect that any rights of conquest were removed.⁴³¹ Theoretically, occupied areas had thus no bearing on any territorial changes settled in a peace treaty after the war – as was demonstrated at Versailles in 1919. Nevertheless, as soon as Antwerp had fallen to von Beseler's army, the allure of conquest made itself felt, and there was speculation about whether Germany would ever give up Antwerp. The *Kölnische Zeitung*, for example, reported on 12th October 1914, that 'the English', long jealous of

⁴³⁰ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 10 October 1914 (Nr. 1116).

⁴³¹ James Brown Scott (ed.) *Texts of the Peace Conferences at the Hague, 1899 and 1907*, Boston/London 1908. (Hague Convention on War IV, 1907: Laws and Customs of War on Land. Section III: military authority over the territory of the hostile state, Arts.42-56.)

Antwerp's port, had an interest in its damage or destruction – whether or not Antwerp would 'stay permanently in German possession.'⁴³² In fact, this ambiguous attitude was matched by the official stance of the German authorities towards occupied Belgium, as described further in chapters 3 and 7.

Admittedly, many of the authors examined here did not use the word 'possession'. They were not concerned about the military events, and they took the German occupation of Belgium and Antwerp completely for granted – so it is hard to judge whether they avoided this suggestive term deliberately. However, the few times it was used seem significant enough to merit some attention. Hans Praesent, for example, started his pamphlet by remarking that 'the possession of the city' called for a retrospective on its position before the war.⁴³³ There was no clear indication in the subsequent text what character the reader should ascribe to this wartime 'possession'. On the one hand, Praesent stressed the importance of remembering that Antwerp was the main port for the Belgian economy. On the other hand, he wrote of the 'impossibility of [the Belgian state's] right to exist' – an allusion to the widely believed allegations that Belgium had violated its own neutrality before the war and that it had mobilised its civilian population against the German armies-in-transit.⁴³⁴ At the end of the pamphlet, Praesent cautioned against pondering too much about the future of Antwerp at a premature stage (1915).⁴³⁵

Heinrich Binder, by contrast, was not so cautious. Writing after 'almost two years of German possession,' he wanted to give an overview of the 'scale of the lasting victory.'⁴³⁶ Although Binder was aware that victory and wartime possession had been the contingent products of military strategy, there was no doubt that he attached a transcendental historical significance to it. On the very first page he evoked an historical continuity from a peaceful conquest of Antwerp through 'German commerce and German genius' in the sixteenth century to the conquest through 'the blessing of the sword' in October 1914. This resulted in a situation that went much deeper than matters of control or even

⁴³² *Kölnische Zeitung*, 12 October 1914 (Nr. 1120).

⁴³³ Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, p. 7. He also quoted the 'lapidary words' from General Headquarters, cited above.

⁴³⁴ Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, p. 33.

⁴³⁵ Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, p. 39.

⁴³⁶ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 13.

property: in a phrase that Binder used throughout the book, Antwerp had quite simply ‘become German.’⁴³⁷

Binder’s idea of Antwerp’s German-ness can be seen as an expression of the neo-Rankean notion, so popular in Wilhelmine Germany, that a healthy nation would expand continually.⁴³⁸ As Binder put it: Antwerp ‘was finally taken in battle and victory by that nation, which could apply old rights and claims: the right of the mightier and the right of creative energy.’⁴³⁹ Most significantly, virtually all authors on Antwerp – with the notable exception of Wiedenfeld – indirectly supported this ‘right of creative energy’. Binder was the only one to formulate it in such a brutal form; yet, all the others subscribed to the closely related, widespread belief in the superiority of German *Kultur* over its degenerate cousin, Western *Civilisation*. Their persistent assertion of it was symptomatic of the ‘cultural war’, in which self-mobilised intellectuals from all belligerent countries defended their own political system and its accompanying cultural values.⁴⁴⁰ In the case of Antwerp, they specified the broad antagonism of *Kultur* and *Civilisation* into an opposition between ‘German work’ and ‘Belgian incompetence’.

Thus, many writers commented on the *Parteimißwirtschaft* – that all decisions were subject to lengthy and fruitless squabbles between the political parties – as a defining feature of Belgian domestic politics.⁴⁴¹ Waentig, in his report on the allegedly bitter intra-Belgian fight over the Lloyd Royal Belge, suggested this to be a tenacious characteristic of the Belgian nation, when he remarked sarcastically: ‘Phoenix-like, but not at all cleansed, the political genius of the Belgian people steps out of the ruins of the collapsed state in order to reveal its true spirit.’⁴⁴² Some also considered the Belgians lacking in initiative and energy. Schumacher thought the Belgian upper classes decadent and hence incapable of the extra effort sometimes needed, while Binder shook his head

⁴³⁷ See for example: Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 9, 27, 79, 108.

⁴³⁸ See: John A Moses, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography*, London 1975, pp. 14-15.

⁴³⁹ Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 11, 9.

⁴⁴⁰ See: Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 277-9. Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*, p. 49-50. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ‘Die deutsche Idee der Freiheit,’ *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung. Künstler, Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830-1933*, Frankfurt a.M. 2000, esp. pp. 145-150.

⁴⁴¹ See for example: Eduard Neuhaus, ‘Scheldekorrekturen,’ *Der Belfried*, 1/6 (Dec. 1916), p. 276.

⁴⁴² Waentig, ‘Der Lloyd Royal Belge,’ p. 106.

over the Belgian ‘indolence and negligence.’ Binder even deduced a general low level of intelligence from the fact that a quarter of the population of Antwerp had been illiterate.⁴⁴³

Consequently, the superior ‘German work’ was portrayed as badly needed at the Scheldt, with the German Colony of Antwerp providing the historical proof. It is unlikely that many of the authors would have disagreed in principle with Heinrich Binder when he wrote flamboyantly: ‘Whenever some big question needed to be tackled, the Germans took the stage.’⁴⁴⁴ In keeping with this basic conviction, Arndt, Schumacher, Praesent, Binder and others agreed that Antwerp was already benefiting during the war from the German occupation regime.⁴⁴⁵ They pointed at organisational improvements, such as the creation of a new administrative body for Antwerp and its suburbs,⁴⁴⁶ at the completion of the Canal du Centre, and at the renewed traffic between Antwerp and the Netherlands as well as Germany. Accordingly, Paul Arndt could write that ‘the current masters of Antwerp are convinced that German work enthusiasm, entrepreneurship and adaptability could achieve far greater successes in the port on the Scheldt, which is so well-endowed by nature, than it was hitherto possible for the Belgians.’⁴⁴⁷ Heinrich Binder again went farthest by painting the hypothetical picture of a ‘German Antwerp’ – complete with tunnels under the Scheldt, a new suburb on its left bank, and teeming industries everywhere, out of which would sound the ‘high song of German work.’⁴⁴⁸

Gabriel Liulevicius has shown how in the eastern occupied territories ‘German work’ was a crucial concept for defining the soldiers’ relationship with the foreign lands and peoples, justifying German imperialism as a cultural mission: ‘German Work would brace the inchoate, primitive energies of the ethnicities, surrounding their cultures with German institutions.’⁴⁴⁹ The views described above suggest that in Antwerp, too, despite a general recognition of the

⁴⁴³ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 84. Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 67, 107.

⁴⁴⁴ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 65.

⁴⁴⁵ Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 262. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 125. Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, pp. 7, 38. Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 95, 107. Franz Bock, ‘Die belgischen Wasserstrassen,’ *Der Belfried*, 3/2 (Aug. 1918), p. 75.

⁴⁴⁶ In fact, the ‘Commission Intercommunale’ had been set up before the arrival of the Germans in Antwerp. See ch. 7 below. See also: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 44.

⁴⁴⁷ Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 262.

⁴⁴⁸ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 136.

⁴⁴⁹ Liulevicius, *War Land*, p. 114.

Belgian economic achievements, ‘German work’ could be employed to secure German influence, to maximise the port’s usefulness for Germany, and, ultimately, to make the city increasingly German. For, as Binder’s vision highlighted, the transformative power of ‘German work’, its productive interaction with the local natural surroundings, would inevitably change the city’s cultural and national identity.

However, there was a very important variation of the ‘German work’–‘Belgian incompetence’ dichotomy. It was used particularly by Schumacher, who was in favour of breaking up Belgium into separate Flemish and Walloon states, as seen above. In the custom of the German *Flamenpolitik* (see ch. 9), he repeatedly praised the Flemish attitude towards work and ascribed to the Flemings an industrious nature. For example, he wrote that during the Belgian general strike of 1913 ‘only German and Chinese’ workers could equal the local Flemings in loading and unloading heavy goods.⁴⁵⁰ In other words, Schumacher insinuated that the Flemish Belgians were capable of ‘German work’. Indeed, in a racist interpretation of the war, Schumacher declared the Flemish cause to be of highest importance, apostrophising:

‘May it succeed to fully reach the great goal of saving the long-famous and promising Flemish tribe, for the security of not only all Germans [*des Deutschtums*] but also of all Germanic peoples [*des gesamten Germanentums*], for the preservation of a peace that shields Europe’s culture.’⁴⁵¹

In this way, the *Flamenpolitik* provided another narrative to consolidate the German claim over Antwerp – either directly or indirectly. There was some debate among enthusiasts of the *Flamenpolitik* as to whether the Flemish were in fact ‘Low-Germans’ and therefore part of the German nation. An article in the *Leipziger Tageblatt*, for example, declared after the conquest of Antwerp that the city’s cultural monuments, such as the cathedral, were part of ‘our own’ heritage.⁴⁵² Yet, during the war the notion that German and Flemish were different, if ethnically and linguistically related, identities gradually asserted itself.⁴⁵³ Accordingly, the idea of a revived Flemish-Germanic Antwerp came to

⁴⁵⁰ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 71, 98.

⁴⁵¹ Schumacher, *Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb*, preface.

⁴⁵² In Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, p. 47. Similarly, see the architectural analysis of the cathedral as ‘Germanic’ rather than ‘Romance’: Hessische Landesbibliothek (HLB) Wiesbaden, print [published?] A. Zichner, ‘Die Kathedrale von Antwerpen,’ Wiesbaden, 12 Dec. 1914.

⁴⁵³ Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 66-7.

replace the ‘German Antwerp’ as a more viable alternative. In the vision of the Flemish activist Joris Fassotte, who wrote that ‘Flemish work saved the Flemish character over the centuries,’ Antwerp would become the main pillar of Flemish economic independence; it would be sustained by strong links with Germany, but the city would remain essentially Flemish.⁴⁵⁴ Similarly, the Germans seemed to be particularly concerned about the progress of the *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp. An article in the *Belfried*, for example, described how ‘sons’ of Antwerp played a leading role in ‘reviving the cultural and national-political struggle’ of the Flemish during the war.⁴⁵⁵ As will be seen in chapter 9, this assertion was another German exaggeration about Antwerp.

Thus, the idea that Germany’s influence in Antwerp could and should be consolidated had a very powerful appeal – whether directly by virtue of conquest in war, or indirectly through a Flemish brother/vassal state.⁴⁵⁶ It was legitimised by the necessity to secure vital economic interests, the possibility of advancing the area’s economic and cultural potential, or the support of a suppressed people. In addition, for many of the German authors on Antwerp, the city became a symbolic site of the struggle between Britain and Germany. It has been shown above how ‘England’ was perceived as the main threat to the German position in Antwerp. The counterpart to this perception, however, was a Napoleonic vision, which saw Antwerp precisely as a tool for fighting the British Empire.

Interestingly, revolutionary France received much praise for enforcing the reopening of the Scheldt estuary in 1795. Yet, real admiration focused on the figure of Napoleon, because he recognised Antwerp’s naval possibilities – in addition to its commercial potential. Many authors drew attention to his project of making Antwerp into his chief base from which to launch an attack on Britain, and several quoted his saying that Antwerp was a loaded pistol that was pointed at the heart of England.⁴⁵⁷ In many ways, the implication was that Germany should pick up where Napoleon had left off. Again, only Binder expressed this

⁴⁵⁴ Fassotte, *Flanderns Wirtschaftliche Selbständigkeit*, pp. 8, 107.

⁴⁵⁵ See Gustav Krause, ‘Antwerpen und die Neubelebung des kulturellen und nationalpolitischen Kampfes des Flamenvolks,’ *Der Belfried*, 2/5 (Nov. 1917), pp. 193-203.

⁴⁵⁶ The obvious exception is Wiedenfeld.

⁴⁵⁷ See: Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 273. Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 10. Ehlers, *England, Antwerpen*, pp. 13-19. Karl Hampe, ‘Die Schelde, Belgiens Schicksalsstrom,’ *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), p. 2. Praesent, *Antwerpens geographische Lage*, pp. 21, 36.

explicitly, stating that the first principle of a German Antwerp policy must be to establish a permanent naval base close to the British Isles.⁴⁵⁸

Even for those who did not give the naval scenario any consideration, Antwerp remained an important asset in the economic struggle against Britain. Schumacher, for example, proclaimed: ‘No place in the world is better suited to fight English shipping on the seas.’⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, this theme was disseminated early on. In a cartoon of the satirical magazine *Ulk*, which was reprinted in the Hillger collection, one could see a young, powerful German sailor lifting cargo on an Antwerp quay, while on the far shore an older, fat British sailor (John Bull?) looks on in shock, exclaiming: ‘Oh Dear, here is the German competition right under my nose!’ (Illustration 2). The German sailor’s bent leg and the direction of his gaze give his body a movement that is defiantly directed against John Bull. A similar anglophobic defiance was displayed in the poem entitled ‘Antwerp we hold fast’ on a German illustrated postcard (Illustration 1) which circulated in 1917. Two stanzas explicitly refer to British rage as Antwerp becomes the foundation stone of a German maritime empire.

Thus, Antwerp seemed to assume its most potent significance in relation to Germany’s pre-war trade rival and ‘most hated enemy’.⁴⁶⁰ The historian Karl Hampe expressed this most cogently in an article in the *Belfried*: ‘in the great world opposition Germany-England, ... the Scheldt was again the river of fate, just as in Napoleonic times. German or English influence in Antwerp – an erupting world war could raise this fateful question any time and bring it to a head.’⁴⁶¹ In Hampe’s narrative – which was obviously strongly coloured by the war – Antwerp and the Scheldt had a clear symbolic function. The phrase ‘influence in Antwerp’ undoubtedly referred to a general position of power: either, in England’s case, to continue dominating the seas and keep the European continent weak and largely landlocked, or, in Germany’s case, to break England’s maritime hegemony and emerge as a key player in world trade, as well as world politics. In this way, Antwerp as symbol could be invested with the keenest hopes about the outcome of the war in the West.

⁴⁵⁸ Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 9.

⁴⁵⁹ Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, p. 131.

⁴⁶⁰ See Stibbe, *German Anglophobia*, p. 10.

⁴⁶¹ Hampe, ‘Die Schelde,’ p. 6. See also Ehlers, *England, Antwerpen*, p. 16. Fassotte, *Flanderns Wirtschaftliche Selbständigkeit*, p. 83.

Illustration 2: 'The Shine of the Future'



„Herrgott, nun setzt sich die deutsche Konkurrenz mir gerade vor die Nase.“

‘Oh Dear, here is the German competition right under my nose!’

Source: *Ulk*, n.d., in: Hermann Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg 1914. Nach Berichten der Zeitgenossen*, vol. 5: *Antwerpen*, Berlin/Leipzig 1914, p. 49.

Results

This chapter began with the question of why the Belgian city of Antwerp received considerable public attention in Germany during the war years 1914-1918, as indicated by numerous publications. It was shown that curiosity was most likely triggered by the military conquest of the city, and that the large amount of literature was subsequently facilitated by the long-term occupation of Belgium. Further, it was posited that the German interest was fuelled by the war aims discussion, and that Antwerp was noticed because of the important role that its port played in world trade and for the German economy before the war. It

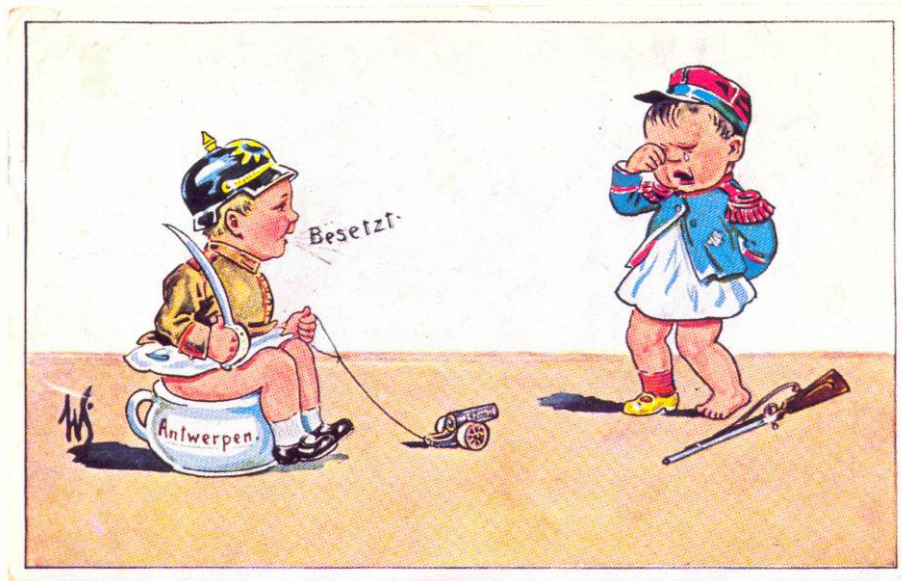
seemed clear that the ultimate purpose of all the German publications on Antwerp was to gauge the extent and nature of Germany's interests – economic or other – in the city.

The chapter ended with the assertion that some of the texts treated Antwerp as a metonymic symbol. Due to its geographical position and its association with the maritime network of world trade, Antwerp's permanent physical 'occupation' by Germany appeared to be the manifestation of the Wilhelmine dream of becoming a world power – equal to, and challenging, Britain and its Empire.

Indeed, the main body of the chapter identified a number of tendencies in the texts, which built up towards this extreme association. These can be encapsulated in two factors: an exaggeration of the historical, economic, and ethnic links between Antwerp and Germany, and a belief in the determination of the Allies, particularly of Britain, to cut all those links completely. However, it is important to stress that in total the texts were heterogeneous, offering varying opinions on different aspects of the Antwerp-German relationship, with some of them directly opposing these dominant expansionist tendencies.

**Part B: Preparations for a 'German Antwerp'
during the occupation?**

Illustration 3. German illustrated postcard, n. d.



'Occupied'

Source: Hans Weigel, Walter Lukan, Max D. Peyfuss (eds), *Jeder Schuss ein Russ, jeder Stoss ein Franzos. Literarische und graphische Kriegspropaganda in Deutschland und Österreich 1914-1918*, Vienna 1983, p. 112.

Chapter 7: Characteristics of the German occupation regime in Antwerp

After the fall of the fortress of Antwerp, the fortress, the city, the port and the entire province were integrated into the German occupation regime in Belgium, the Government-General. The transfer of command from the fighting army to the Government-General occurred swiftly, as General von Beseler pursued the retreating Belgian and British troops across East and West Flanders. It was generally anticipated that the Government-General could now be extended over all nine provinces of Belgium. But with the front stabilising along the Yser, occupied West Flanders, most of East Flanders, as well as parts of Hainault, were put under the jurisdiction of the front armies to serve as their '*Etappe*', their supplies and communications zone.⁴⁶² Antwerp, however, remained in the Government-General until October 1918, when it became *Etappe* to the retreating German armies.⁴⁶³ (See Map 4)

The following chapter will first give an overview of the general features of the Government-General and then focus on Antwerp. Since the most important sub-units of the Government-General were the governments for the Belgian provinces, aspects of the province of Antwerp will be considered in addition to the city. What were the salient features of the institutions of occupation established in Antwerp? What was their relationship with the Belgian authorities and the population of Antwerp?

The Government-General

The German Government-General in Belgium was created on 23 August 1914 by imperial decree.⁴⁶⁴ Its creation was a military measure, necessitated by the advance of the German armies and the widening gap between the front and the German frontier. Functionally, it served four purposes. Its primary function was to safeguard the enemy territories to the rear of the armies, securing supply

⁴⁶² For the fluctuating territorial extension of the Government-General see: Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' pp. 8-9. Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, p. 19.

⁴⁶³ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 33: report Schramm, 26 Oct. 1918.

⁴⁶⁴ See in particular: Robert Paul Oszwald, 'Die Errichtung des deutschen Generalgouvernements in Belgien 1914,' *Staat und Persönlichkeit. Festschrift für Erich Brandenburg*, Leipzig 1928, pp. 234-69. Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, pp. 19-24.

Map 4: German Occupation zones of Belgium and France (CRB map)

This map shows the German administrative divisions (with the largest extent of the Government-General), which often distorted the Belgian provincial frontiers. See Map 2.
Source: George I. Gay, *Statistical review of relief operations*, Stanford 1925, p. 10.

lines and enforcing ‘calm and order’ among the population.⁴⁶⁵ Secondly, the Government-General was responsible for the administration of the occupied country, standing in for the Belgian Government. Thirdly, it was instructed to use and exploit Belgium’s resources as much as possible in order to both support

⁴⁶⁵ Goltz, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, p. 349.

the German armies and relieve the German home front.⁴⁶⁶ The fourth purpose was not fully anticipated during the conception of the Government-General, but it evolved within weeks of its establishment. Generally put, this was the exploitation of the occupation in order to effect economic and political advantages for Germany in the post-war world.

Legally, the rights and duties of an occupying force during wartime were defined by international law in articles 42-56 of the Hague Convention on the 'Laws and Customs of War on Land' of 1907.⁴⁶⁷ Both Belgium and Germany were signatories to this Convention. Hence, it should have been the legally binding basis for all acts of the Government-General. Crucially, however, the Germans never accepted such a strict commitment. As Alan Kramer and John Horne have shown, the German Army had not incorporated the Hague Convention in their operational tactics – with catastrophic consequences during the invasion of Belgium.⁴⁶⁸ Similarly, General von Moltke's 'Fundamentals for the military, financial and economic exploitation of the Kingdom of Belgium' of 23 August 1914, which contained the first programme for the establishment of the Government-General, did not even mention the Hague Convention.⁴⁶⁹ Arguably, the intention at its core, to treat Belgium 'like a conquered country' to the benefit of the entire German war effort, violated the articles of the Convention – at least in spirit.⁴⁷⁰ The subsequent instructions, issued on 29 August to the Governor-General by the Prussian Minister for War, while generally reiterating Moltke's points, included a reference to the Hague Convention: it was to be 'taken into account'.⁴⁷¹ This seemed to imply that if it was deemed in the German interest, then the provisions of the Convention could be disregarded. It is true that the imperial Government, particularly the Foreign Ministry, and the civilian branches of the Government-General were always

⁴⁶⁶ See in particular General von Moltke's outline of the Government-General to Bethmann Hollweg, on which the subsequent instructions and guidelines were based: 'Grundzüge über die militärische, finanzielle und wirtschaftliche Ausnutzung des Königreiches Belgien,' 23 Aug. 1914; printed in: Otto and Schmiedel, *Dokumente*, pp. 77-9.

⁴⁶⁷ Scott (ed.) *Texts of the Peace Conferences*.

⁴⁶⁸ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, esp. pp. 148-50.

⁴⁶⁹ Printed in: Otto and Schmiedel, *Dokumente*, pp. 77-9.

⁴⁷⁰ Article 49, for example, stated that financial contributions introduced by the occupant must not be used for purposes outside the occupied territory. Scott (ed.) *Texts of the Peace Conferences*.

⁴⁷¹ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119340, fol. 83: copy of Falkenhayn's 'Anhaltspunkte für die Geschäftsführung des Generalgouvernements in Belgien,' 29 Aug. 1914.

anxious that acts of the Government-General should stay within the limits of the Convention. But during the four years of occupation, the Government-General operated increasingly outside it. Instances of direct violations include most notoriously the deportation of Belgian workers in 1916/17, as well as the administrative division of Belgium into Flanders and Wallonia in 1917 and the full-scale dismantling of Belgian industries in 1917/18.

The organisation of the Government-General was marked by improvisation and by an ever-increasing profusion of departments, the overlapping assignments of which were often exacerbated by personal antipathies. At its head presided the Governor-General: Colmar von der Goltz (Aug. – Nov. 1914), Moritz von Bissing (Dec. 1914 – April 1917) and Ludwig von Falkenhausen (April 1917 – Nov. 1918). Theoretically accountable to the Kaiser only, he had to coordinate his policies with the imperial Chancellor and the Supreme Command of the Army. His government was divided into a military and a civilian administration. The Military Administration was in charge of the occupation troops, consisting of *Landwehr* and *Landsturm* units. Its tasks included securing the frontier to the Netherlands, keeping the Belgian population in check, and supporting the field armies by, for example, systematically requisitioning Belgian horses.⁴⁷² Its organisation across the occupied country mirrored the Belgian administrative system. The central offices were located in Brussels, while each province was given its own Military Government, headed by a General. These Military Governments in turn consisted of two to four districts based on the Belgian *arrondissements*, and of numerous *Kommandanturen* on the local level.

The Civilian Administration was organised exactly parallel to the Military Administration, each civilian unit being subordinated to the military one. Thus, the 'Chief of the Civilian Administration' in Brussels - Maximilian von Sandt (Aug. 1914 – July 1917), from July 1917 to November 1918 Alexander Schaible for Flanders and Karl Haniel for Wallonia – was subordinate to the Governor-General. The task of the Civilian Administration was mainly the supervision and control of the Belgian administrative apparatus. The Belgian civil servants, except for the most senior ones, resumed their work. The centralised Civilian Administration, however, very quickly fragmented into a handful of institutions,

⁴⁷² Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' esp. p. 28.

each of which was directly subordinated under the Governor-General. They included the Political Department (Feb. 1915), the Bank Section (March 1915), and the Section for Trade and Industry (Aug. 1915).

In the secondary literature, this fragmentation is mostly seen in terms of the conflict between the Military and the Civilian Administrations, and as deliberately pursued by Governor-General von Bissing in order to increase his own power.⁴⁷³ But this interpretation is unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, all eyewitness accounts ascribe the first division, the creation of the Political Department, to the ambitious personality of diplomat Oscar von der Lancken, who, in the hierarchy of the Prussian civil service, was senior to von Sandt and would not suffer being subordinated to him. Second, there is actually no indication that the civilian influence was weakened by this fragmentation; on the contrary, von Sandt had the reputation of bowing too much to the military, and certainly the German Foreign Ministry gained greater influence over the Government-General through the Political Department. A better interpretation of the emancipation of these institutions, if there was a tactical purpose behind it at all, is to see it in terms of the occupier-occupied relationship: unlike the original Civilian Administration, the new institutions were completely independent of the Belgian system, so they could pursue exclusively the German interests.⁴⁷⁴

The institutions for the province and city of Antwerp

The organisation of the institutions of occupation in Antwerp followed the model of the rest of the Government-General. At its head was the Military Governor of the province: von Weller (Nov. 1914 – Nov. 1916), Hans von Zwehl (Dec. 1916 – Nov. 1918). He was represented by ‘district chiefs’ (*Kreischefs*) in the *arrondissements* of Antwerp in the west, Mechelen in the south-west and Turnhout in the north of the province, as well as by the local commanders in the *Kommandanturen*. Constitutionally, he stood in for the Belgian (civilian) Governor of the province. His military administration was mainly concerned with three tasks: the logistics of keeping up a military occupation, including the

⁴⁷³ See: Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, pp. 36-7. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, p. 200. Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, pp. 41-2. A better interpretation is in: Meseberg-Haubold, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers*, pp. 124-5.

⁴⁷⁴ For contemporary accounts see: Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre*, pp. 138-9. GHA Munich, Kabinettsakten Ludwig III, 59: letters Lutz, March-April 1915. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 11: letter Strandes 28 Oct. 1914.

requisitioning of goods;⁴⁷⁵ the policing of the population through patrols and passport offices; and the control of the Belgian public institutions.

In theory, the Military Administration was not concerned with ‘civilian matters’. However, as the first President of the Civilian Administration of Antwerp, Justus Strandes, noted, a clear separation of tasks between the two was not possible. From the beginning, the reach of the military seemed to be all-inclusive. Nevertheless, the day-to-day supervision of the Belgian institutions was conducted by the Civilian Administration. The President, for example, attended the meetings of the ruling body of the province, the Permanent Executive of the Provincial Assembly, ‘in the name of the Military Governor’.⁴⁷⁶ Generally, it appears that the chief responsibility of the Civilian Administration lay in the economic sphere. It dealt with the task of regulating industry, agriculture and trade in the province, as well as with the most diverse requests from Germany about the goods stored in the port of Antwerp since before the war.⁴⁷⁷

According to President Strandes, the Civilian Administration in Antwerp was the most important one in the entire Government-General. This was partly a reflection of a general understanding that Antwerp was one of the more significant provinces.⁴⁷⁸ More particularly, Strandes pointed out that his organisation was the only one that was not completely overshadowed by the military counterpart. As discussed in chapter 4, imperial secretary of state for the interior von Delbrück took care to quickly establish the German civilian authority in Antwerp after the conquest in order to counterbalance the military preponderance in occupied Belgium. Strandes opened his offices a good week before the arrival of the Military Governor von Weller on 1 November 1914 – and at the appointment of Sthamer a year later, the military governors were

⁴⁷⁵ See in particular: PA Antwerp, W.O.I., unsorted German documents, folder ‘W.O. 1914-18, 4’, *Gouvernements-Intendantur Antwerpen, Hauptakten Brasschaat*, ‘Kriegsleistungen’.

⁴⁷⁶ *Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens*, decree of 5 Dec. 1914, art. 2. Referred to in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119551, fol. 297. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fols. 10, 39.

⁴⁷⁷ See esp.: StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952. The regular official reports by the Presidents of Civilian Administration and by the Military Governors were destroyed with the German Army Archive in 1945.

⁴⁷⁸ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 39: report Strandes to Hamburg Senate, 14 April 1915. See also BA Berlin, N 2176 (Lewald), 65, fol. 128: Lewald to Sandt, 14 June 1917.

reminded of the high social status pertaining to the civilian presidents as senators of Hamburg.⁴⁷⁹

All three senators cultivated the civilian character of their office. They expressed this outwardly by wearing their civilian clothes, apparently only donning their uniform when travelling, which they found expedient for passing the numerous checkpoints.⁴⁸⁰ Most of their staff seemed to have followed their example (Illustration 4). In contrast, in the rest of the Government-General the majority of civilian employees seemed to have worn their military uniform – at the very least in Brussels at the beginning of the occupation – and there was considerable pressure to conform. Yet comprehensive research is still outstanding for a complete picture.⁴⁸¹ The senators also tried to do their job as independently of the military governors as possible. For example, when Senator Strandes set up his office in Antwerp in October 1914, he negotiated directly with the City Council about suitable premises, instead of asking General Huene, the Fortress Governor, to make the necessary requisitions. Similarly, Senator Sthamer managed to consult the military governors on important issues in such a way that his subordination was hardly apparent. Whenever a high-ranking officer was posted to one of the military governments of Antwerp, it was the officer who came to Sthamer to pay his respects, and not vice versa.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fols. 5, 11, 31. BA Berlin, N 2176 (Lewald), 65, fol. 112: Lewald to Rantzau-Rastorf, 6 July 1915. See also ch. 4 above.

⁴⁸⁰ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fols. 10, 11: Strandes to Predöhl, 23 and 28 Oct. 1914. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): K 12/1: Schramm to wife Olga, 20 Aug. 1916; L 51: diary P. E. Schramm.

⁴⁸¹ On the pressure to wear military uniform see: KA Munich, HS 937: Ernst Vogt, 'Bayerns Anteil an der Verwaltung in Belgien in den Kriegsjahren 1914/1918,' typescript, Neugreiffenberg 1964, p. 7. GHA Munich, Kabinettsakten Ludwig III, 59: Lutz to Dandl [Hertling?], March 1915. Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre*, p. 127, photo inset after p. 160. See also Christoph Roolf, 'Deutsche Besatzungsbeamte in Belgien 1914-1918 und die Selbstdeutung ihrer neuen biographischen Rolle als Besatzer,' *Besatzungserfahrungen in Europa (1914-1945). Workshop für Doktoranden und Nachwuchswissenschaftler*, Berlin, 10-11 Sept. 2004). I am grateful to Christoph for sending me a copy.

⁴⁸² StA Hamburg, 132-II: 3952, fol. 11, Strandes to Predöhl, 28 Oct. 1914; 3954, fol. 4: Sthamer to Predöhl, 21 Sept. 1915, p. 4.

**Illustration 4: Schramm's civilian administration
(heads of departments), n. d. [1918]**



Left to right: von Schnitzler, Rodewald, **Schramm** (clasped hands), Diestel, Poelchau, Ochwad, von Salpius, von Busse (wearing military uniform), Graf Wartensleben, Wätjen
Source: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 98.

It has often been pointed out that there were significant nuances among the German provincial military and civilian administrations as well as among the smaller units within them. The experience of occupation could hence differ from place to place, especially since the restrictions of movement in occupied Belgium had made life truly local.⁴⁸³ Policy, it is true, was made by the Governor-General and his central offices. The provincial administrations merely implemented the directives from Brussels.⁴⁸⁴ But in practice, this implementation allowed for considerable latitude – even in such a seemingly clear-cut case as the deportation of ‘unemployed’ Belgian workers in 1916/17, as Christoph Roolf has shown.⁴⁸⁵ The autonomy of the provincial and regional administrations, it seems, was most visibly expressed in the degree of repression to which the local populations were subjected. For example, the province of Limburg, where the Pan-German

⁴⁸³ See esp.: De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 116. It is not intended here to give a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Antwerp, as this would merit a separate investigation.

⁴⁸⁴ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (NL Schramm), J 97: P. von Dusch to P. E. Schramm, 20 Aug. 1931.

⁴⁸⁵ Roolf, 'Deportationen,' esp. p. 41.

General von Keim was Military Governor, was notorious for the harshness of its military tribunals dealing with Belgian ‘crimes’ against German interests.⁴⁸⁶ Did the strong Civilian Administration in Antwerp result in a relatively ‘soft’ version of the German occupation?

In the case of Justus Strandes, it seems certain that he tried hard to steer a more lenient course in Antwerp than advocated by the military. In one of his letters to the Hamburg Senate he complained about the habit of the military authorities of requisitioning goods without proper payment, and in another letter he exclaimed: ‘May Hamburg never have an enemy who rules within her gates.’⁴⁸⁷ Strandes also took the needs of the Belgian population seriously. One of his first actions was to free up a portion of the grain supplies that had been requisitioned by the Army and make it available to the Belgians.⁴⁸⁸ The Belgian communal authorities, in turn, often made it a point of preferring to negotiate with Strandes’ offices, rather than with the military.⁴⁸⁹ The extent of Strandes’ independent course, however, was clearly limited. The Antwerp Permanent Executive reported that often when Strandes approved of their decisions, the Military Governor subsequently vetoed them.⁴⁹⁰ In the end, these differences probably led to Strandes’ recall to Hamburg as early as July 1915.⁴⁹¹

The cases of Friedrich Sthamer and Max Schramm are less clear, primarily because less is known about their activities. Both emphasised in their correspondence that they were on excellent terms with the military governors. It is possible that both were also less compromising than Strandes in their dealings with the local Belgian authorities. Sthamer complained at one point that his superiors in Brussels had not approved the stringent measures he had suggested to get the Belgians’ unemployed lists for Antwerp. Schramm displayed a

⁴⁸⁶ See for example: De Schaepe drijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 116.

⁴⁸⁷ StA Hamburg, 132-II: 3952, fol. 29: Strandes to Burgomaster von Melle, 3 Dec. 1914.

⁴⁸⁸ Strandes authorised twice the delivery of 5,000 tons of wheat and corn to the CN. HStA Munich, MH 15520, reports Hecht: 30 Oct. 1914, p. 9; 2 Dec. 1914, p. 2. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 13 Dec. 1914, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁹ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 4: report Sthamer to Hamburg Senate, 21 Sept. 1915, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁰ HA Palo Alto, Stockton Gilchrist Baker Papers, box 1: ‘Report on the Deputation Permanente of Antwerp,’ 26 July 1915, p. 3.

⁴⁹¹ In a letter from Hamburg Burgomaster Predöhl to Sthamer, dated 14 July 1915, there are some mysterious references to ‘die Angelegenheit’ and ‘die Pflicht der Ablösung’, indicating that Strandes had run into problems. When Sthamer became *Reichskommissar für Übergangswirtschaft* a year later, Hamburg suggested to send Strandes again to Antwerp, which was rejected in the imperial Ministry of the Interior as ‘undurchführbar’. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 4.

similarly tough line in a report to the Hamburg Senate in December 1916, when the controversy about the deportations of Belgian workers was at its height. He noted that Germany should simply justify them as ‘military necessity’ rather than try vainly to reconcile them with the Hague Convention.⁴⁹²

In other words, the strong Civilian Administration need not have resulted in a more lenient regime. Whether or not it had a mitigating influence could differ from case to case and depended heavily on the personalities involved. Yet it seems that there were strong tendencies in the Antwerp Civilian Administration towards leniency. Did this result in relatively good relations with the local Belgian authorities and even the local population?

The local relationship with the Belgians

Even though the historiography on occupied Belgium often acknowledges the regional nuances in the German practices of occupation and the Belgian reactions to them, there is still a lack of detailed local and regional studies, which would define the contours of these nuances. For a growing number of Belgian cities and communities, it is true, local history projects have begun to depict their own specific experiences of the war and the occupation. In the case of Antwerp, however, I am aware of only a small article and an exhibition for the entire province in May 2003.⁴⁹³ Thus, it seems useful to provide a brief sketch of the relationship between Germans and Belgians in Antwerp, even though the paucity of the sources consulted make it cursory and provisional. This sketch will focus mostly on the urban agglomeration around the city of Antwerp. Strictly speaking, the large rural areas of the province of Antwerp, as well as the other cities (Mechelen, Turnhout, Lier) represent separate, distinct cases.

In general, it appears that Antwerp was no exception to the picture that is usually drawn about occupied Belgium. In the words of Sophie de Schaepdrijver: ‘As the initial chaos [of the invasion] subsided, occupiers and occupied perforce

⁴⁹² StA Hamburg, 622 1 (Schramm), J 82: Sthamer to Schramm, 28 Oct. 1916. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fols 29, 30: Schramm to Hamburg Senate, 13 Oct. and 22 Dec. 1916.

⁴⁹³ Publications exist for example for Bruges (Luc Schepens, *Brugge bezet. 1914-1918, 1940-1944: het leven in een stad tijdens twee wereldoorlogen*, Tielt 1985.) and the region of Comines-Warneton (numerous articles for the Société d’Histoire de Comines-Warneton et de la Région, Belgique). For Antwerp, see: Luc Vandeweyer and Dirk Martin, ‘Antwerpen in de 20^e eeuw. De wereldoorlogen,’ *Waar is de Tijd*, /29 (1999). I could not visit the exhibition in Antwerp. Requests made about a catalogue to the exhibition centre, the *Hessehuis*, have not been answered (email, July 2004).

settled down into a frail, makeshift *modus vivendi*, fraught with harsh repression and resentment, and characterised by a great deal of mutual icy distance.⁴⁹⁴

On the Belgian side, patriotic defiance and unconcealed hatred seemed to be indeed the predominant attitude towards the Germans throughout the occupation of Antwerp. The anti-German graffiti on Our Lady's Cathedral, photographed after the conquest by the German war correspondent Heinrich Binder, was probably quickly washed off (Illustration 5). But the sentiment was kept alive in countless humorous anecdotes and children's ditties.⁴⁹⁵ As in the rest of occupied Belgium, there was little or no violent resistance, though there was espionage for the Allies, as well as some, probably infrequent, acts of sabotage – for example, attempts to derail German trains.⁴⁹⁶

Illustration 5: Anti-German Graffiti on the Cathedral of Antwerp



Source: Heinrich Binder, *Mit dem Hauptquartier nach Westen*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1915, photo inset.

⁴⁹⁴ De Schaepdrijver, 'Idea of Belgium,' p. 269.

⁴⁹⁵ A collection was later published in: Willem Baekelmans, *Ons Volk tegen den Duitsch, 1914-1918*, Antwerp 1924. The publication date cautions that there is no guarantee of authenticity, especially since this seems to have been an attempt to counteract a 'demobilisation of the mind' in Antwerp and Belgium.

⁴⁹⁶ PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box 'Fonds 1914-1918': *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, 'Verslag,' p. 10. HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 10 Nov. 1914, p. 4. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission* to Schramm, 29 Jan. 1915. Heinrich Binder, *Spionagezentrale Brüssel*, [1919?], pp. 36-8.

The production and distribution of clandestine, anti-German newspapers and pamphlets, however, was a significant resistance activity in Antwerp. The *Vrije Stem* ('Free Voice'), for example, appeared regularly between August 1915 and March 1918 and was a resistance paper of national importance, practically forming the Dutch-language counterpart to the more famous francophone *La Libre Belgique* ('Free Belgium') published in Brussels. Its first publisher-printer, Jozef Buerbaum, also produced 160,000 copies of twenty-eight satirical pamphlets under the pseudonym *Droogstoppel* between January 1915 and December 1916 – the last one written in his prison cell and smuggled out.⁴⁹⁷ The content of this clandestine press was mainly threefold: it reproduced news of Allied successes in the war, as published in non-German newspapers smuggled from the nearby Netherlands; it was uncompromisingly anti-German, reminding its readers of the justness and the necessity of the Belgian and Allied war effort with, for example, articles on Prussian militarism; and it 'named and shamed' locals who worked for the enemy, with the activists soon replacing the denunciators as the main object of scorn. In other words, it fought to uphold morale, maintain the Belgian patriotic spirit and perpetuate the 'icy distance' towards the Germans, counteracting any *rapprochements* prompted by war-weariness and the German-censored press.

It is hard to estimate the influence of this resistance press on people's fundamental attitudes. Perhaps there was no danger of wavering minds adopting a friendlier stance towards the Germans. Nevertheless, not everyone considered the anti-German outlook a forgone conclusion. The Australian nurse Louise Mack was an eyewitness to the entry of the German army of siege into the city. In her wartime publication she described her shock at seeing groups of spectators smiling and waving at the soldiers as they marched by, a woman even throwing flowers to them: 'At that moment I realised I am in for some extraordinary experience, something that Brussels has not in the least prepared me for.'⁴⁹⁸ Admittedly, a few pages later in her narrative, it becomes clear that these 'traitors' were supposed to have been Belgians of German origin. Yet her

⁴⁹⁷ Jozef Buerbaum, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel uit den Duitschen bezettingtijd*, Antwerp 1921, vol. 1, pp. 172-4. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 81. See also L. Lenaers, 'De sluikschriften van Jozef Buerbaum en zijn medewerkers, Antwerpen, 1915-1918,' unpublished Belgian Master's thesis, Louvain 1980.

⁴⁹⁸ Louise Mack, *A Woman's Experiences in the Great War*, London 1915, p. 194.

account is reminiscent of claims made in published letters from German soldiers of the siege army about the voluntary ‘fraternisation’ of sections of the female population with them.⁴⁹⁹ Further, informers undoubtedly existed – and they were certainly not just of German origin –, as Buerbaum’s campaign against them proves.

Most importantly, Mack’s use of Brussels as a foil seems to be a significant and valid one. Almost every single German who left a record of his first impression of occupied Antwerp made a similar comparison, always emphasising how the Antwerp population was ‘significantly calmer’ than the troublesome *Bruxellois*. As late as September 1916, the new president of the provincial Civilian Administration, Max Schramm, made precisely this observation in a letter home.⁵⁰⁰ It is true that there was a certain myth about Brussels. Its inhabitants had won a reputation of excitability and unruliness during the early phase of the occupation, when the war was not yet a month old, when the *franc-tireur* scare and the German terror in Belgium was at its height, and when Burgomaster Max publicly led a policy of non-cooperation.⁵⁰¹ Before the end of the year, this reputation no longer matched the reality in the streets. In December 1914, for example, the Antwerp-German Joseph Hecht remarked that Brussels had quietened down after the deportation of Max, and that the curfew had been extended to 11 p.m., whereas it was still 9 p.m. in Antwerp.⁵⁰² So the persistent comparisons with Brussels had probably less to do with Brussels itself, than with the newly arrived Germans’ surprise that there was little or no disturbance of public order in Antwerp.

Could this restrained behaviour be construed as an indication of goodwill or even friendliness? Karl Sauter, chief of staff of the Antwerp Fortress and Military Government in 1917/1918, drew this conclusion. He acknowledged the uncompromisingly anti-German stance of the city’s Francophile elite, but

⁴⁹⁹ See for example: Delbrück (ed.) *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen*, vol. 1, p. 253. See also: Buerbaum, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel*, vol. 1, p. 49. De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 116.

⁵⁰⁰ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), K 10/4: diary Olga Schramm: excerpts from letter M. Schramm to son P. E. Schramm, 2 Sept. 1916. See also HStA Hamburg, 132-II (SKRA), 3954, fol. 4: report Sthamer, 21 Sept. 1915, p. 2.

⁵⁰¹ De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, p. 121. Whitlock, *Belgium under the German occupation: a personal narrative*, p. 150.

⁵⁰² HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 2 Dec. 1914, p. 1.

concerning the 'Flemish masses', he maintained that they were 'undecided' and that they were merely afraid of showing open sympathy for the Germans.⁵⁰³

In fact, at least during the first months of the occupation it looked like the 'Brussels comparison' could be extended even to Antwerp's elites. To start with, the bodies of local government cooperated to a striking extent with the Germans, namely the Antwerp City Council and the 'Intercommunal Commission' (*Intercommunale Kommissie / Commission Intercommunale*), which was created to coordinate the affairs of the seventy-seven communes within the fortifications of the fortress. Two incidents right at the beginning were particularly prominent.⁵⁰⁴ First, as seen in chapter 2, these civilian authorities, and not the local military commanders, initiated the negotiations of capitulation with General von Beseler and signed the Convention of Contich in the evening of 9 October. This move saved the city from further destruction, but it had also helped the German advance. Second, the same authorities participated in the German effort to encourage the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the Netherlands to return to Antwerp. Backed up by the Dutch, they reassured them that the German guarantees about their personal safety could be trusted. The campaign was successful, so that in 1915, the occupied city had almost 80% of its pre-war population, though it gradually shrank again to about 70% by 1918.⁵⁰⁵ The return of the refugees was necessary for the revival of the local economy, which, again, was in the obvious interest of both the German occupation regime and the Belgian city government.

Not surprisingly, many Belgians, particularly among the refugees, deeply resented these two instances of early cooperation. Their bitterness was aggravated by the suspiciously long delay until the exiled Belgian Government approved of the unprecedented civilians' surrender of the fortress, and, later, in

⁵⁰³ HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c, p.181: diary for mid-September 1917.

⁵⁰⁴ For the following see: Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' esp. pp. 334-7. See also SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 31 July 1915, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁵ These percentages are based on the birth figures provided in: PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box 'Fonds 1914-1918': *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, 'Verslag,' p. 61. It cites the absolute number of births (B) as well as the birth rate (r), from which can be calculated the corresponding population size (P): $P = B * (1,000 \div r)$. The number for 1914, 322,978, seems compatible with the official census of 1910: 301,766. Quelle, *Belgien Landeskunde*, p. 115.

October 1916, by the German deportation programme of the ‘unemployed’, which was a direct contravention of the guarantees made in October 1914.⁵⁰⁶

Nevertheless, the City Council and the Intercommunal Commission cooperated on many further practical issues. This attitude was also echoed in the banking and commercial sector, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. It should probably be seen primarily as the attempt to stay in control of things as much as possible, rather than as an unpatriotically friendly attitude. For example, the City Council negotiated an agreement on the lodging of the German occupation personnel, military and civilian. It provided barracks for the troops, and for officers and civil servants it instituted a system of renting – and paying for – hotel and private rooms, which were registered in the city hall. This way the Council could guarantee that the Belgian property owners were being paid, and it prevented the arbitrary requisitioning of houses by the Germans.⁵⁰⁷

However, one could argue cynically that these actions led potentially to a more ‘German-friendly’ atmosphere by reducing the friction between occupiers and occupied. This seems to have been the case with the decision to approve the re-publication of certain Antwerp newspapers.⁵⁰⁸ Papers like the francophone *Le Matin*, which had engaged in a particularly virulent anti-German campaign before the fall of Antwerp, had decided to continue their struggle from London, and the Germans could not prevent the smuggling of a certain amount of its issues into occupied Belgium. Yet others, mostly Dutch-speaking, re-opened their operations shortly after the conquest, often after being offered financial incentives by the Germans: the *Antwerpsche Tijdingen* in mid-October, and a little later *Het Handelsblad*, the *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *La Presse*.⁵⁰⁹ Not only did these quick re-publications contrast with Brussels and the rest of the country, where virtually all established newspapers preferred to stay closed rather than submit to German censorship, but, according to German sources, these Antwerp

⁵⁰⁶ Mertens, ‘Louis Franck in het verzet,’ pp. 336, 411. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 45-51. Thiel, ‘Belgische Arbeidskräfte,’ esp. pp. 173, 245.

⁵⁰⁷ See correspondence and lists on billeting: SA Antwerp, MA 856, nos. 44-60 (‘inkwartiering’), esp. no. 46: the first agreement, 15 Jan. 1915; and no. 60: Antwerp *Kommandantur* to the City, 26 Dec. 1917, threatening to requisition empty houses.

⁵⁰⁸ Mertens, ‘Louis Franck in het verzet,’ pp. 337-9.

⁵⁰⁹ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, pp. 3309-10. At least the director of the *Handelsblad* accepted German financial ‘aid’. Negotiations were led by Schiff as well as by Lancken. AGR Brussels, T 454, 49, nos. 119-122: telegrams Lancken 17, 20 and 23 Oct. 1914. See also: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119489: report Lancken, 23 May 1915, p. 42. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 93.

papers were quite willing to play by the German rules. The *Handelsblad*, a respected paper in the business world, for example printed all dispatches of the German wire-service *W.T.B.*, called on the refugees to return, and praised the good behaviour of the German troops in Antwerp. Other papers voluntarily complained about British policies. It was apparently only after attacks by the Antwerp exile press that these papers toned down their expressions of goodwill.⁵¹⁰

Importantly, the policy of ‘careful administrative cooperation’⁵¹¹ conducted by Antwerp’s authorities was not a forgone conclusion. True, it was carried by a majority in the City Council and in the Intercommunal Commission, but there was also a vociferous opposition to it. First and foremost Louis Strauss, one of the most experienced and influential city councillors [*schepen*], disagreed with it. Despite his German(-Jewish) parentage, Strauss was most likely against sending a civilian delegation to General von Beseler, and he certainly opposed the call on the refugees to return, as well as the re-publication of Antwerp newspapers under German censorship. Belonging to the francophone business elite in Antwerp – a so-called *fransquillon* –, he was also a contributor to *Le Matin* and he would remain an anti-German force in Antwerp until well after the war.⁵¹²

The driving force behind the ‘careful administrative cooperation’ was Louis Franck. Also of German-Jewish ancestry, he was said to have been at home in six languages. Franck had been a Deputy of the Belgian Parliament since 1906 and a member of the Antwerp Gemeenteraad (City Assembly) since 1911, but he was not made a city councillor until 1915. During the occupation, he assumed a dominant position in Antwerp politics, as head of the Intercommunal Commission and as president of the provincial Comité National de Secours et d’Alimentation (CN). Intriguingly, he was apparently also the representative of the Belgian Government in Antwerp, who seemed to have pushed his

⁵¹⁰ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, pp. 3311, 3312-13, 3315. Oszwald quotes from reports of the provincial administration that were destroyed in the Potsdam *Heeresarchiv* in 1945. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 13 Dec. 1914, p. 19. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 35, concluding report Lancken, 30 June 1920, p. 1400.

⁵¹¹ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 88.

⁵¹² Mertens, ‘Louis Franck in het verzet,’ pp. 338, 344. Saerens, *Vreemdelingen*, p. 31. See also ch. 12.

appointment as head of the Intercommunal Commission before departing into exile in early October.⁵¹³

In this way it is not surprising that there were tight limits to Franck's cooperation. For example, right at the beginning he protested against the 'war contribution' of fifty million Francs imposed by the Government-General on the city. Similarly, just like Louis Strauss, he went to great lengths to complain to the Germans about the unregulated requisitions. Perhaps most illuminating about the limit of his cooperation was his unambiguous opposition to the 'absentee tax' that the Governor-General introduced in February 1915 in order to force the wealthy Belgians still residing in exile to return: two Antwerp city councillors, by contrast, spoke in favour of it, arguing that it coincided with the interests of the city. But Franck considered this tax as illegal interference in Belgian internal affairs, which meant that cooperation on it, even if practical aspects spoke for it, was a step too far. Thus the City Council created a support scheme to cover the extra tax for those refugees who did not want to return.⁵¹⁴

Against the backdrop of this 'legalistic' attitude, Franck came to personify the 'open' resistance in Antwerp. He consistently and vehemently protested against any German measures that were outside the rights of an occupier as defined by international law. Concerning the deportations, for example, it was Franck who drafted the parliamentarians' letters of protest, not only one for Antwerp on 7 November 1916, but also one signed by all deputies and senators present in occupied Belgium on 14 February 1917.⁵¹⁵ In addition to such protests, Franck made several public gestures to uphold patriotic morale. His proclamation posted around Antwerp on New Year's Day 1915, is particularly revealing about his policy between cooperation and resistance (Illustration 6). On the one hand, he combined his appeal to the citizens' patriotism with praise for their calm and dignified behaviour in the face of suffering, which was clearly in accord with the occupiers' demand for public order. On the other hand, the

⁵¹³ Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' pp. 333, 407. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 88, 104. A vivid description of Franck's fame and abilities is given in: Edward Eyre Hunt, *War Bread. A Personal Narrative of the War and Relief in Belgium*, New York 1916, p. 205. Franck's own account of the German occupation disappoints with lack of detail: Louis Franck, *1914-1918. En pays occupé. L'oeuvre de secours et d'alimentation et la résistance civile*, Antwerp 1932.

⁵¹⁴ Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' p. 402. Maurice Gauchez, *Louis Franck. Note biographique suivie d'un choix de discours et essais*, Antwerp 1927, p. 63 ff.

⁵¹⁵ These are reprinted in: Gauchez, *Louis Franck*, pp. 395-412.

proclamation was not only suffused with patriotism but also with defiance: his finishing apostrophe – that Belgium ‘cannot perish’ – was a clear warning against any German designs of permanent subjugation. His subsequent arrest stood thus in a series of clashes with the German authorities.⁵¹⁶

Remarkably, Franck had also identified the German *Flamenpolitik* at the earliest possible moment. As will be shown in detail in chapter 9, this was the German occupation policy intended to strike an alliance with the Flemish half of Belgium. Franck had been known in Belgium before the war primarily for his *flamingantism*: his campaign for the Flemish cultural emancipation, particularly the transformation of the University of Ghent into a Dutch-speaking institution.⁵¹⁷ He was therefore theoretically an ideal partner for the Germans.

Indeed, Louis Franck did not abandon his *flamingant* principles after the occupation. For example, the Antwerp provincial Comité National over which he presided was the only branch where Dutch was the primary language instead of French.⁵¹⁸ Franck even extended his policy of ‘careful administrative cooperation’ to certain low-key aspects of the *Flamenpolitik*. The Antwerp City Council went along with most German decrees and regulations concerning the increasingly exclusive use of Dutch – besides German – as the official language. In one case, a girls’ professional school, they even planned themselves a further displacement of French. City Secretary Hubert Melis seemed to have pushed this ‘flemishisation’ the most, and he had some contact to Flemish collaborators, the so-called activists. Nevertheless, Louis Franck supported him.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ A list of his arrests and fines is provided in: Gauchez, *Louis Franck*, pp. 63-4.

⁵¹⁷ De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, pp. 30-2. See also Gauchez, *Louis Franck*, pp. 77-84.

⁵¹⁸ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 83. Vrints quotes: A. Faingnaert, *Verraad of zelfverdediging? Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de strijd voor de zelfstandigheid van Vlaanderen tijdens den oorlog van 1914-1918*, Kapellen 1933, p. 68.

⁵¹⁹ Mertens, ‘Louis Franck in het verzet,’ pp. 410, 413. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 58, 88-90.

Illustration 6: Franck's New Year's Day proclamation, Antwerp 1915

For Our Fallen Heroes

Fellow citizens,

May our first thought at the start of the New Year go out to our Dead, to our brave soldiers who fell defending our Country and our Rights.

A man is not a man, a people is not a people, who have not done everything in their power for their honour and their duty.

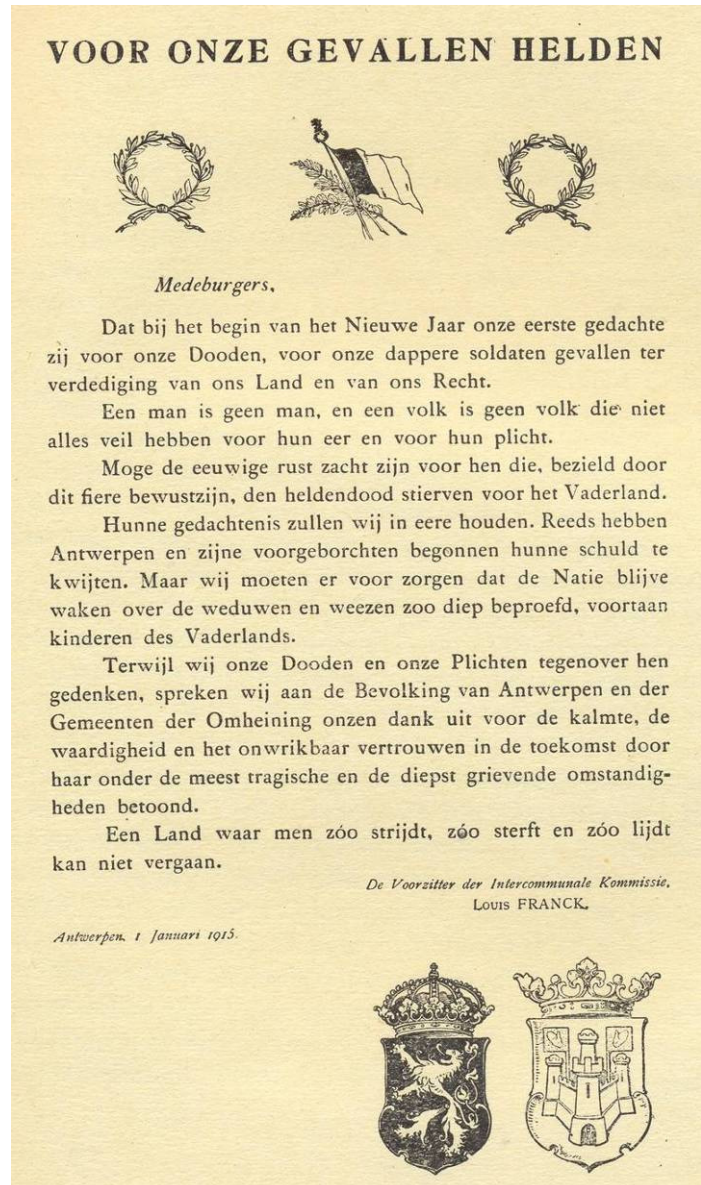
May the eternal peace be blissful for those who, inspired by this proud knowledge, died a hero's death for the Fatherland.

We shall honour their memory. Antwerp and its first-borns have already begun to redeem their sins. But we must ensure that the Nation continues to guard over the widows and the orphans, who suffered so deeply, henceforth children of the Fatherland.

Whilst we honour our Dead and our Duties towards them, we express our thanks to the people of Antwerp and of the neighbouring municipalities for their calm, their dignity and their indestructible trust in the future, which they have shown under the most tragic and the most grave circumstances.

A country where the people fight thus, dies thus en suffers thus cannot perish.

*President of the Intercommunal Commission,
Louis Franck
Antwerp, 1 January 1915*



Source: Maurice Gauchez, *Louis Franck. Note Biographique, suivie d'un choix de Discours et Essais*, Antwerp 1927, p. 72; translation Tanya Moeller, Dublin 2005.

Despite this discreet flamingatism, Franck proved to be one of the earliest and one of the staunchest opponents of the more far-reaching aspects of the *Flamenpolitik*. On 11 February 1915, he sent a letter to Governor-General von Bissing to condemn the preferential treatment of Flemish prisoners of war in Germany, asserting that there was no difference between Flemings and Walloons in terms of their Belgian national identity. Similarly, Franck openly protested against each further major step of the *Flamenpolitik*, always invoking Belgian

patriotism and the Hague Convention.⁵²⁰ As one of *the* leading figures in the Flemish Movement before the war, he had a decisive influence on the attitude of many *flamingants* in Antwerp, discouraging them from becoming involved with the *Flamenpolitik*.⁵²¹ He also tried to curb the collaborating activists' activities on the ground. Most prominently, he was said to have been behind a massive demonstration against the activists on 3 February 1918.⁵²²

Thus, the Germans eventually had to recognise him as a tough opponent. It was his resistance, and not his careful cooperation or his 'flamingatism' that defined their relationship with him in the end. Civilian President Sthamer reckoned that it would be easier if they could just deal with Burgomaster Jan de Vos. Von Hammerstein-Equord, *Kommandant* of the city, disdainfully talked of 'the brothers' Franck and Strauss, not distinguishing between the *flamingant* Franck and the *fransquillon* Strauss. Accordingly, the two of them were arrested together and deported to Germany on 4 March 1918.⁵²³

Importantly, the tight limits of Franck's cooperation seemed to have been symptomatic for the attitude of many public figures in Antwerp. They initially demonstrated goodwill to arrange a *modus vivendi* for the duration of the occupation – perhaps more so than elsewhere in Belgium – but they refused to extend this goodwill to full collaboration. Another case in point was the conduct of the four Antwerp newspapers mentioned above. Even though they went back into print shortly after the conquest, and even though the German Administration claimed they were moving in a 'German-friendly' direction, they collectively stopped their operations again within a year, in June 1915 – in protest over the Press Censor's demand to print a pro-German statement of a Dutch archbishop.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁰ Franck's letter of 11 Feb. 1915 is reprinted in: Gauchez, *Louis Franck*, pp. 383-5. See also: Gauchez, *Louis Franck*, pp. 85-96. Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' p. 406 ff. De Schaepe-drijver, *Groote Oorlog*, pp. 150, 156, 161, 264. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, esp. pp. 80, 89, 103, 131.

⁵²¹ The other two Antwerp leaders of the Flemish Movement, the Catholic Frans van Cauwelaert and the Socialist Kamiel Huysmans, supported Franck's stance from their exile. See chapter 9.

⁵²² Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' pp. 407, 414. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 65, 131. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 98, 222.

⁵²³ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 82: Sthamer to Schramm, 28 Oct. 1918; J 97: Hammerstein-Equord to Schramm, 11 March 1918. Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' p. 415.

⁵²⁴ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119489: report Lancken, July 1915, p. 31. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 93.

This model can probably even be extended to the general population in Antwerp, as illustrated by the following German eyewitness account. A member of the Hamburg *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission* observed early in 1915 how the Sunday parades of the German troops drew ‘thousands’ of curious spectators – and how they left the scene as soon as the soldiers started singing German patriotic songs.⁵²⁵ In this way, Karl Sauter’s claim, quoted above, that the Antwerp populace was ‘undecided’ does not seem to have been a realistic assessment. Nevertheless, it could be explained as a genuine impression – if, to adopt the last case, Sauter noticed the spectators but not the timing of their departure. However, Sauter’s was most likely the minority position among the Germans. All other recorded impressions that I have found emphasised strongly the Antwerpian’s collective antipathy and their staunch ‘passive resistance’.⁵²⁶

Results

The son of the third civilian president of the German occupation regime in Antwerp, the historian Percy Ernst Schramm, included a brief section on his father’s work in his Hamburg family chronicle ‘Nine Generations’. He came to the following conclusion about the administration of Antwerp: ‘An occupation force can behave in different ways – but hardly any better than this regime from Hamburg and Bremen in Antwerp.’⁵²⁷ This chapter has shown both the limits of and the grain of truth in this statement. The personnel from Hamburg and Bremen created an unusually strong Civilian Administration in Antwerp, which often endeavoured to pursue a more ‘Belgian-friendly’ course than generally demanded by the military administration of the Government-General. Especially during the first number of months, relations with the local Belgian authorities were relatively good at least partly as a result of this ‘leniency’. Yet they did not manage to overcome the fundamental antagonism of the majority of Antwerp’s population. Moreover, they neither changed the general policy directives of their

⁵²⁵ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission* to Schramm, 8 Feb. 1915.

⁵²⁶ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 21a: Strandes to Senator Westphal, 8 Nov. 1914. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 4: report Sthamer, 21 Sept. 1915, p. 2. StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959: fol. 28a: report Schramm, 6 Oct. 1916, p. 3; fol. 30: report Schramm, 22 Dec. 1916. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 92: travel report Senator Diestel, 25 Aug. 1918, pp. 23-24. See also: Arndt, ‘Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,’ p. 281. Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 29, 165.

⁵²⁷ Schramm, *Neun Generationen*, p. 492.

superiors, nor did they necessarily want to do so. They regarded it their patriotic duty to fulfil their tasks in the Government-General as their contribution to the German war effort. The ways in which the city, port and wider province of Antwerp played a role in the German war effort will be examined next.

Chapter 8: Occupied Antwerp and the German war effort

As argued at the beginning of the previous chapter, the primary purpose of the German Government-General in Belgium was military: not only in terms of security, but also in terms of contributing to the German economic war effort. This chapter explores in detail the significance that occupied Antwerp played for both these aspects. Chapter 2 has shown that Antwerp played a secondary role during the German invasion of Belgium – but what role did it play in the German war strategy once in German hands? How much did the Germans get out of Antwerp? How did the city's economic landscape fare under the occupation?

The military significance of the fortress and the port of Antwerp

Throughout the occupation, Antwerp remained an important factor in the strategy of the German Army.⁵²⁸ Its first action after the conquest was to set up a Fortress Government, which covered approximately the *arrondissement* of Antwerp, as well as some stretches along the left-hand side of the Scheldt in East Flanders.⁵²⁹ Its principal purpose was to prepare for the event of an attack from the neutral Netherlands, as the border ran just north of Antwerp. Such an attack could have occurred at theoretically any time, either by a Dutch entry into the war on the side of the Entente, or by a sudden British invasion of the Netherlands. The German Army feared this second scenario the most, especially as the British had to go through only a very small stretch of Dutch territory, travelling up the estuary of the river Scheldt, before reaching German controlled Belgium – and Antwerp. If unchecked, the British could have cut off the German field armies, with devastating consequences. Of course, the German Army continually reassessed the probability of this threat, so that there was great fluctuation of the number of troops stationed in the Fortress Government of Antwerp. Significantly, there were times when the Army actually rated this probability very high, for example at the beginning of 1917.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸ See in particular: BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, pp. 173-174: 'Nächst Brüssel [...] war Antwerpen der wichtigste Punkt.'

⁵²⁹ A precise territorial description can be found in: PA Antwerp, W.O.I., unnamed folder: 'Liste der Gemeinden'.

⁵³⁰ HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c, p. 183.

Thus, not surprisingly, the Fortress Government of Antwerp quickly became the most important of the four defensive institutions in the Government-General, the others being Liège, Namur and Brussels. In fact, these last three merged with the Military Governments of their respective provinces during 1915, while a similar merger in Antwerp occurred much later, in February 1917. The fortress of Liège was effectively abandoned during 1916 and Namur was close to a similar fate towards the end of the war.⁵³¹ By contrast, several high ranking officers from the General Staff were stationed in Antwerp right until the end of the war.⁵³² The fortifications of the fortress were partially repaired and manned with troops.⁵³³ These constantly enhanced the defensive capability further by building trenches of the style developed on the Western Front, since the system of isolated forts had proven so ineffective for the Belgians.⁵³⁴ In November 1918, the fortress was readied to serve as a key point of defence along a new frontline, behind which the German armies were retreating.⁵³⁵ But the collapse of the German war effort and the signing of the armistice intervened before the fortress of Antwerp was tested a second time in this war.

The British decision not to launch an attack on German-controlled Belgium through the Netherlands was most likely very little, if at all, influenced by the strong military presence of the Germans in Antwerp. Rather, it was the strength of the Dutch Army and the implications of a breach of Dutch neutrality which were decisive.⁵³⁶ In the Government-General, however, the great importance attached to the Fortress Government of Antwerp extended far beyond the purely military sphere. Certainly in Antwerp, the Fortress Governor was the most senior authority, even though he was theoretically on a par with the Military Governor of the province of Antwerp. When at the end of 1914 it came to negotiations with the Dutch authorities about the return of the Belgian refugees to Antwerp, it was

⁵³¹ Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' pp. 9, 20-21.

⁵³² HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c, p. 190.

⁵³³ Estimates for the troop strength: Nov. 1914: 10,000 (HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 10 Nov. 1914, p. 3); July 1915: 10 Batle. Infanterie, 2 Esk. Kavallerie, 15 Battr. Artillerie, etc. (HStA Stuttgart, M 1/11, 390: Kaiserliches Gouvernement. Sektion Ia. Antwerpen).

⁵³⁴ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), L 51: diary P. E. Schramm, entry Nov. 1916. Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' p. 20.

⁵³⁵ Raoul Van Overstraeten and Tasnier, *La Belgique et la guerre*, vol. 3: *Les opérations militaires*, Brussels 1926, pp. 397-8. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 18 and 27 Oct. 1918. HStA Stuttgart, M 33/2, 848: 'Operation "Vulkan"'.
⁵³⁶ See for example, Marc Frey, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande: Ein neutrales Land im politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kalkül der Kriegsgegner*, Berlin 1999, pp. 31, 70.

Fortress Governor von Huene and not Military Governor von Weller who conducted them.⁵³⁷ Further, Huene and his successor Zwehl, who commanded the merged Government of fortress and province, appeared to have aspired to be the most senior military figure below the Governor-General. Thus Huene stood in for the ailing Bissing during December 1916, and Zwehl was favoured by Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg to succeed Bissing after his death in April 1917; Zwehl also represented von Falkenhausen during an absence in May 1918.⁵³⁸

Apart from the fortress, the other great military – or rather: naval – attraction of Antwerp was its huge port. As seen in chapter 3, the German Navy regarded the port, with its great size and its safe inland location, as a potential key base for a major operation against the British Royal Navy. However, since the neutral Netherlands controlled the Scheldt estuary, this scenario remained hypothetical. In the end, the Navy concentrated on the port triangle of Zeebrugge-Bruges-Ostend in West Flanders, which the ‘Naval Corps Flanders’ developed into an impressive base for U-boats and small cruisers. In Antwerp, a special port *Kommandantur* (*Hafenkommandantur*) was installed, which had authority over the port and the lower Scheldt to the Dutch frontier. It was an agent of the Military Governor, and a subsidiary ‘port office’ (*Hafenamt*) controlled civilian shipping.⁵³⁹

Nevertheless, it also assisted the Navy in some small ways. There was a narrow waterway connection between Antwerp and Zeebrugge via Ghent. During the last few weeks before the armistice in November 1918, dozens of U-boats and torpedo-boats retreated along this route to take refuge in Antwerp; their captains hoped for a free passage through the Netherlands to Germany, but most of them were interned there.⁵⁴⁰ It is not clear to what extent these warships had made the reverse journey from Antwerp to the coast during the war. For example, they could have been assembled or repaired in Antwerp. So far, I have

⁵³⁷ See for example the memoirs of the Dutch consul’s daughter: IWM London, 90, 16, 1, Van den Bergh (Petrie), ‘An Old Lady’s Record,’ p. 10. Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, p. 149.

⁵³⁸ HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c, p. 186. PA AA Berlin: R 22152, fol. 39: telegram Bethmann, 14 April 1917; R 21373: telegram Gr.Hq., 2 May 1918.

⁵³⁹ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5017, fols. 8 ff.

⁵⁴⁰ BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: report Diemer, 12 Dec. 1918, p. 3. BA Berlin, R 901, 85347: AA note, dated 11 July 1919. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Euzkadi* (Bilbao), 21 Oct. 1918.

only found anecdotal evidence for such a practice.⁵⁴¹ In any case, the port *Kommandantur* operated a shipyard, which regularly worked on jobs for the Naval Corps. It constructed, for example, several barges for munitions during 1916.⁵⁴² Starting on a modest scale on the site of the shipyard of the *Antwerp Engineering Company*, the Imperial Naval Shipyard gradually expanded over all available shipyards in Antwerp – which were, admittedly, few and small. By the end of 1917, it had taken over, and revamped, the *De Cockerill* site and one at Cruybeke.⁵⁴³

In addition to this service for the Navy, the port had another, perhaps more important, military function. Quite simply, it was used by the Army as a depot for building materials for the front. Tons of gravel, sand and wood were shipped from Germany through the Netherlands – which was subject to constant negotiations – to Antwerp. This material was then stored in the empty hangars in the port, to be shipped to the front as needed. There is no statistical record of this specific movement in the port, so it is hard to estimate its quantitative significance. Eyewitnesses, however, reported huge stockpiles of material – such as the seemingly endless stacks of planks seen in the photograph of Illustration 7. Certainly from 1917, the Army dramatically increased its use of the Belgian canal system to ease off pressure from the railways. It confiscated the available barges, so that there was little tonnage left for civilian shipping.⁵⁴⁴ The Army's depots in the port of Antwerp increased accordingly, and by 1917/18, it had started to fill a dry dock with building material.⁵⁴⁵ In summary, then, Antwerp

⁵⁴¹ See: confidential print 'Kriegsziele' by F. Hoff M.d.R, Kiel 25 July 1915, in: BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 5. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Il Mattino*, 9 April 1915 (construction of U-boats in Hoboken).

⁵⁴² The first mention of this shipyard I found is in a letter from a member of the *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission*, dated 16 Jan. 1915: 'An baldigen Frieden denkt hier niemand. Man hat noch zu viel vor. Zu diesem Zwecke baut man eine Kaiserliche Werft hier.' StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84. BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5707, fols. 88-286: 'Tätigkeitsberichte der Werften', sections headed 'Marinewerft Antwerpen', 1915-1918. The report for October 1916 (fol. 151) includes an assembly of the first 'A-boot', a small type of torpedo boat.

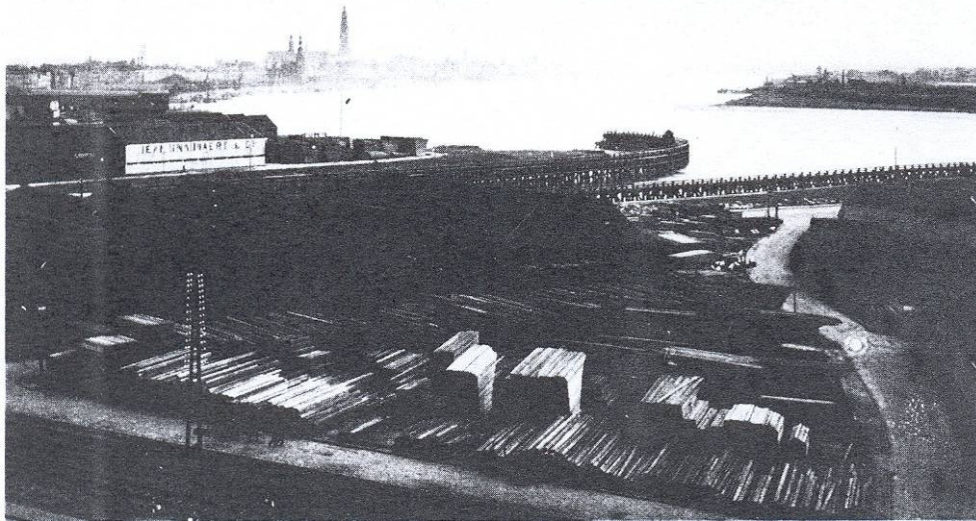
⁵⁴³ AGR Brussels, T 454, 92: Ehlers, 'Die belgischen Seeschiffahrtsinteressen', (= report no. 11, Section VII, PA GG), 1917, p. 11. BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5707, esp. fol. 266.

⁵⁴⁴ SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 3 Aug. 1916, p. 13; 'Verwaltungsbericht der Verwaltungschefs für Flandern und Wallonien' (= report Schaible and Haniel), 31 July 1917, p. 34; 'Verwaltungsbericht des Verwaltungschefs für Flandern' (= report Schaible), 31 July 1918, p. 85. HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 479 ff, report Sandt, 31 January 1917, p. 52. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 43, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung,' vol. XII, p. 3187.

⁵⁴⁵ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 92: travel report Senator Diestel, Aug. 1918, p. 18.

port served merely as a small tributary to the Naval Corps, but it was used as an important transshipment hub for the field armies.

Illustration 7: German supply of wood in the port of Antwerp



Source: Julien Weverbergh and Roland van Opbroecke, *De bezetter bespied*, Antwerpen / Amsterdam 1980, p. 110.

The economic exploitation (1): requisitions in the port

Turning to the economic exploitation of Antwerp in the context of the German war effort, it makes sense to stay within the confines of the port, that single most important economic object in the city. At this point, it is useful to remember the sheer vastness of this port. Not only was it Belgium's 'national port', but it was also one of the largest ports in the world. 70% of Belgium's foodstuff was imported before the war; most of it came through Antwerp. And one of the most heavily industrialised regions in the world – northern France, Belgium, Luxemburg and western Germany – very much relied on Antwerp for its exports. Antwerp offered shipping services with five hundred seaports worldwide; and in 1912, the port registered a turnover of goods weighing about twenty-three million tons.⁵⁴⁶ Consequently, the port could prove significant in two ways for the German economic war effort: as a great reservoir of raw materials, if its stores were to be requisitioned; and as a major traffic node for the transportation needs of the German war economy.

⁵⁴⁶ Rühl, *Antwerpen*, p. 35.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 caught the commerce in the port completely by surprise. Tons of goods in steamers, barges, railway carriages and hangers were trapped in the port. Many consignments destined for Germany were stopped as early as 2 August, possibly because the suspension of the clearance system was proclaimed in Belgium on that day.⁵⁴⁷ It is true that during the ten weeks before the German conquest of Antwerp the Belgian authorities were able to dispose over these goods. For example, they allowed the ships belonging to allied and neutral states to leave the country. So, when the Germans entered the city after 9 October, they were not sure how many supplies they would find in the port. However, the Belgian retreat from the city was ill planned and rushed, and it turned out that the amount of goods left in the port area far exceeded the expectations of the German Army.⁵⁴⁸

Within days of the conquest, the Army installed a 'port commission' in order to investigate the supplies in the port. It was led by Jacob Hecht, a Bavarian who had lived in Antwerp before the war. He was the director of a leading company for inland navigation, so he possessed extensive local knowledge that was valuable for the work of the commission.⁵⁴⁹ The first task of the 'port commission' was to locate the goods in the port, to collate their volume and to secure them, having them provisionally confiscated by the Army. They found that the Belgian Government had left the port overall in a good, orderly state. Very few of the supplies had been removed or destroyed. The only notable exceptions were the oil tanks in Hoboken and some of the ships.

According to one German report, the Belgian Government had ordered the oil companies to open their taps and burn the oil; and that some companies had opted at the last moment to rescue a little. But of course, during the bombardment it was also reported that German shells had hit the tanks.⁵⁵⁰ In any case, the German Army was disappointed with the approximately 2,500 tons of

⁵⁴⁷ See: Zilch, *Okkupation und Wahrung*, p. 101.

⁵⁴⁸ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁹ Hecht was director of the *Allgemeine Fluschiffahrtsgesellschaft AG*, Antwerp, which was linked to the Bavarian *Rhenania* shipping group. Hecht sent several reports about his activities in 1914/15 to Josef von Grassmann of the Bavarian Ministry of Transport, who was on the board of the *Allgemeine Flu*. HStA Munich, MH 15520, folder 'Verteilung der Rohstoffe und Kriegsguter in Belgien, Frankreich und Ruland, 1914,' subfolder 'Staatsministerium [...] des uern. Betreff: Antwerpen-Belgien, 1914-1917,' not foliated.

⁵⁵⁰ See for example photographs of destroyed petroleum tanks in: Bogdan Krieger, *Die Einnahme von Antwerpen und die Eroberung von Ost-Flandern*, Berlin 1916, plates no. 16, 17.

petroleum it seized.⁵⁵¹ Concerning the ships, the Belgians had sunk about sixty barges – apparently Belgian-owned, although German ones had been available – mainly in order to block the locks between the Scheldt and the docks. In addition to that, there was an attempt – apparently by the British naval forces – to sail the thirty-two German steamers to Britain, but the Dutch authorities had denied passage through their territory. As a result, the largest steamer, the *Gneisenau* of the Norddeutscher Lloyd, was sunk on a sandbank in the Scheldt just south of the border. None of the other steamers had left the port, and the Belgians (or the British) merely destroyed their machines.⁵⁵²

The following table is an extract from a preliminary list of the approximate amount of materials inventoried by 30 October 1914:

Table 1. Preliminary inventory of goods found in Antwerp port

Item (food)	Amount (tons)	Item (industrial)	Amount (tons)
Wheat	54,000	Ore	51,000
Corn	33,500	Coals	37,000
Coffee	31,000	Cotton	47,000 bales
Linseed	19,000	Saltpetre	13,000
Rice	8,500	Phosphate	9,000
Barley	6,500	Cement	9,000
Bran	2,250	Iron	8,500
Oilcake	2,000	Fertiliser	1,000
Beans	1,200		

Source: HStA Munich, MH 15520: report J. Hecht, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 7.

To put these numbers into perspective, Hecht complained in December 1914 that the American Commission for Relief in Belgium was not importing enough foodstuffs, estimating that the country needed daily shiploads of three to four thousand tons of grains.⁵⁵³ The Antwerp supplies, following this estimate, could have fed the entire Belgian population for about a month. According to Hecht, the commission finished its inventory in mid-November. By that time, the above figures had probably gone up a little more: many fully loaded lighters that had fled the city during the bombardment were returning only gradually; and Hecht

⁵⁵¹ See: SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515, report Sandt, 13 Dec. 1914, p. 11. There were about seventy tanks with a total capacity of approx. 140 million litres. See: O. Fiedler, *Brüssel und Antwerpen, 1914-1915. Sonderabdruck aus der 14. Auflage von Griebens Reiseführer durch Belgien*, Berlin 1915, p. 77.

⁵⁵² See below for the subsequent investigation of the *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission*. See also: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), L 51, diary entry P. E. Schramm, 22 Nov. 1916. German press reports reproduced in Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, pp. 23, 63.

⁵⁵³ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 2 Dec. 1914, p. 2.

reported that ‘secret stores’ were discovered daily.⁵⁵⁴ Further, the provisional confiscation was not limited to bulk goods. It was total, embracing a vast array of merchandise, from ceramics to ivory to railway tracks.⁵⁵⁵

The second task of the ‘port commission’ was to identify the owner and nationality of the goods. This was the pre-requisite for the all-important question of how these goods were to be disposed of. It was a particularly difficult task, since, for example, not all goods passing through Antwerp had already been paid for by the recipient – though Hecht was satisfied that the commission obtained all the necessary information.⁵⁵⁶ The port commission seemed to have initially assumed that, in accordance with the Hague Convention, only goods belonging to the Belgian state could be seized by the Army as spoils of war. Hecht identified over nine tons of grains in the great granary as the property of the Belgian Army, which tripled the declared total of the German Army’s spoils of war in grains.⁵⁵⁷

However, from the start, the German Army simply took what it needed. For example, it requisitioned the stocks of raw rubber and wood without identifying the owners.⁵⁵⁸ Similarly, the Department for War Raw Materials (*Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*) of the Prussian Ministry of War, which had an office in Brussels, pushed for a wholesale transport of all goods to Germany, except for the materials directly required by the field armies. This was in line with the Government-General’s primacy of exploitation, which had been reinforced by Walther Rathenau’s visit in September 1914.⁵⁵⁹ It was justified morally with reference to the recent agreement with the Allies about the provisioning of the Belgian civilian population by the Belgian Comité National de Secour et d’Alimentation (CN) and the neutral Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), as well as with reference to the British economic blockade.⁵⁶⁰ There seemed to

⁵⁵⁴ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 10 Nov. 1914, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁵ See the claims and requests made by German businesses, in: HStA Munich: MH 15519 and MH 15520 (esp. grain, tobacco). GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5: vol. 1, fols. 140, 216, 157, 259 (esp. clay); vol. 1, fols. 147, 151 (cotton); vol. 1, fol. 232 (vaseline); vol. 2, fol. 1 (*Deutscher Außenhandel*, 20 Jan. 1915: ‘Güter in Antwerpen’). See also the list in Krieger, *Die Einnahme von Antwerpen*, vol. 4, p. 138.

⁵⁵⁶ StA Hamburg StA, 132-II, 3952, Strandes to Hamburg Senate, 19 Nov. 1914, p. 3. HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 10 Nov. 1914, p. 1.

⁵⁵⁷ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 30 Oct. 1914, p. 9.

⁵⁵⁸ *Annuaire de la Chambre de Commerce d’Anvers, 1871-1926*, Antwerp 1927, p. 66.

⁵⁵⁹ Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918*, Princeton 1966, p. 45.

⁵⁶⁰ HStA Munich, MH 15520: reports Hecht, 2 Dec. p. 1; 5 Jan., pp. 2-3.

have been little or no qualms about violating the Hague Convention – article 46, for example, prohibited the seizure of private property.

A combination of logistical difficulties and opposition from the Dutch authorities prevented a swift removal of the goods: while the railway lines to Germany were overburdened with military transports, the Dutch denied free passage of spoils of war or requisitioned goods on the waterway. By December 1914, relatively little of the ‘several hundred thousand tons of goods’ in Antwerp port had been transported to Germany.⁵⁶¹ By that time, agreement had been reached between the Government-General, the Belgian provincial authorities, and a Belgian bank consortium led by the *Société Générale*, about the payment of a monthly ‘war contribution’ to the Government-General by each of the nine Belgian provinces. An integral part of this agreement was that the Germans would stop any irregular appropriations, and that they would pay for all requisitions properly.⁵⁶²

Most goods were transported to Germany between January and March 1915. The second Belgian Commission of Inquiry claimed after the war that the Germans managed not to pay for any of them, renegeing on their agreement.⁵⁶³ This is not entirely accurate. It is true that the Germans hesitated to institute a standard method of payment for the acquired goods. Overall, the process of acquisition itself remained unregulated; and it was certainly not coordinated in advance with the Belgian authorities, as they demanded.⁵⁶⁴ As indicated above, the process depended on the type of merchandise, the German buyer and the means of transportation available. Generally, the Belgian owners were given ‘receipts of requisition’ – which had no immediate value. The policy of the German Administration was not to refund such receipts before the end of the war in order to protect the value of the German currency, since occupied Belgium still functioned as a foreign financial jurisdiction.⁵⁶⁵ According to one – as yet uncorroborated – report, however, the Germans actually established a limited

⁵⁶¹ HStA Munich, MH 15519, letter Grassmann to Bavarian Foreign Ministry, 30 Dec. 1914.

⁵⁶² Zilch, *Okkupation und Währung*, pp. 171-4. Kerchove de Denterghem, *L'Industrie belge pendant l'occupation allemande 1914-1918*, p. 38.

⁵⁶³ Jean Stengers, 'Belgium,' in Keith Wilson (ed.) *Decisions for War 1914*, London 1995, vol. 4, p. 138.

⁵⁶⁴ Edgar Castelein, 'Les Requisitions en masse. Address to the Commission Intercommunale, Antwerp 18 March 1915,' *Le Parlement Anglais et la Belgique*, n.p. (pamphlet in Hoover Library) n.d., p. 23.

⁵⁶⁵ Zilch, *Okkupation und Währung*, p. 131[?]: quotes Karl von Lumm, head of BA.

repayment regime later during 1915: the values of the requisitions were put on frozen accounts in the Berlin *Reichsbank*, and the owners could take out loans from a Belgian Bank of up to a ‘certain percentage’ of these values.⁵⁶⁶

In fact, certain members of the German Administration, both Military and Civilian, had always favoured proper payment, arguing that it would revive the local economy and thus contribute towards the provisioning of Belgium.⁵⁶⁷ In addition to that, paid-for goods were easier to pass by the Dutch controls, allowing the use of the cost-efficient waterways. Thus, Jacob Hecht devised a scheme whereby local ‘confidential agents’ purchased the seized goods in Antwerp and sent them to Germany – via the Netherlands – as private merchandise.⁵⁶⁸ This scheme was applied most extensively in the area of seeds and cereals. A *Getreide-Kommission Aktiengesellschaft*, apparently a German wartime creation in Belgium, largely bought up the relevant stocks – sometimes forcing down prices.⁵⁶⁹

It is conceivable that some businesses of the German Colony were involved either as ‘confidential agents’ or as ‘sellers’ – though it is certain only that Antwerp-German merchants were employed in the Civilian Administration, particularly in departments dealing with the ‘bulk goods’.⁵⁷⁰ Moreover, since Antwerp-German houses dominated the wheat import trade before the war,⁵⁷¹ the suspicion arises that this ‘German connection’ was the vital catalyst that led to any payments being made at all. In any case, according to A. Kreglinger – member of one of the oldest Antwerp-German families, and board member of the *Banque Nationale* in Antwerp – these purchases had already had a noticeably positive impact on the cash flow in the city by the beginning of February. In March 1915, the president of the Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, Edgard Castelein, calculated that the total value of the requisitions in the port amounted

⁵⁶⁶ GHA Munich, Kabinettsakten Ludwig III, 59: report (unsigned, but by Adolf Freiherr von Lutz, Sandt’s representative) on Hertling’s Belgian visit, 3-15 November 1915.

⁵⁶⁷ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht 2 Dec. 1914, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁶⁸ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 5 Jan 1915, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁹ See Castelein, ‘Address to the Commission,’ pp. 11-12, 23. GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 4: ‘secret’ print ‘Materialien zur Frage des Abbaus des Moratoriums in Belgien,’ 1915: deposition A. Kreglinger, 6 Feb. 1915, p. 11.

⁵⁷⁰ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3954, fol. 4.

⁵⁷¹ See for example: Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, p. 25. Devos, ‘German Ocean Shipping,’ p. 69.

to approximately eighty-five million Belgian Francs. Out of this sum, he estimated that about twenty million Francs had been paid.⁵⁷²

Of course, not all of the goods were Belgian-owned. Unfortunately, the proportional distribution of the goods' owners according to nationality has not been established. Many consignments were still the property of then neutral South and North American countries. Large and significant quantities had actually been the property of German companies. Like their Belgian colleagues, they struggled hard in order to repossess their goods, many of them sending agents to Antwerp as early as mid-October.⁵⁷³ But their efforts, too, were rarely met with success. When a company from Munich, *Stern & Sabat*, managed to reclaim thirty tons of Asiatic quality barley with the help of the Bavarian Foreign Ministry, the local shipping agent in Antwerp was impressed: 'You have succeeded where many, many others failed in respect of their [own] goods.'⁵⁷⁴ On 4 December 1914, several west German chambers of commerce raised their concerns at a confidential meeting in Cologne with a representative of the *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung*, Professor Klingenberg.⁵⁷⁵ The result was disappointing for the chambers of commerce, as Klingenberg imperviously explained that firstly, in the case of goods seized by the Army the nationality of the owners was immaterial, and that secondly, the priority concerning the remainder of the goods was to ship them safely out of the enemy's country. Indeed, the deep discontent among German industrialists was vented a month later by their Rhenish-Westphalian spokesman, Wilhelm Hirsch:

The way in which things have been handled so far, no-one [...] actually knows what kind of goods are stored in Antwerp, how many goods there are, to what extent they are requisitioned for the state, what volumes are still at the disposal for [private] industry, how they can be procured, whether they can be procured at all, which agency is in charge, in short: the whole affair has been covered – for months – by a truly impenetrable fog. It comes as no surprise that this kind of treatment has evoked bitter resentments among the concerned circles,

⁵⁷² Castelein, 'Address to the Commission,' p. 16.

⁵⁷³ See for example: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 1, fol 140: Franz Mehlem, earthenware factory Bonn, to Prussian Minister of War, 23 Oct. 1914.

⁵⁷⁴ HStA Munich, MH 15519: exchange of telegrams with company Stern und Sabat, esp. note by Rheinschiffahrt Filiale Antwerpen, 16 Dec 1914.

⁵⁷⁵ The minutes can be found in: WWA Dortmund, K 1, 173, fol. 90 (8 ps.).

especially among those who are the owners of goods stored in Antwerp but who are denied access to them.⁵⁷⁶

In the end, the goods were acquired by the great imperial war companies, such as the *Reichseinkaufs-Gesellschaft* in Hamburg and the *Reichsgetreide-Gesellschaft* in Düsseldorf, as well as by traditional institutions like the Cotton Exchange in Bremen, which were then responsible for the further distribution of the goods. The original German owners – as well as those of neutral countries – were compensated relatively quickly by the *Reichsentschädigungskommission* (the imperial indemnity commission).⁵⁷⁷ However, while the German owners were thus treated much better than the Belgians, many Germans still felt cheated: they complained that the compensation was based on the peacetime value of the goods, as of July 1914, whereas prices had gone up dramatically since then.⁵⁷⁸

Thus, it is possible to present a nuanced picture of the German requisitions in Antwerp port: the Germans actually paid about a fifth of the total value of the goods, which brought some limited relief to the regional economy, while businesses in Germany sustained some losses as a result of the requisitions as well. Nevertheless, this does not change the fundamental facts: the Germans paid little attention to either the stipulations of international law, or to the contracts made with occupied Belgium, and the removal of industrial raw materials and of foodstuffs was another blow to both the Belgian economy and the Belgian population. From the perspective of the German war effort, on the other hand, the requisitions signified a strengthening of the German ‘raw materials position’.⁵⁷⁹ However, they could only ever be a temporary boost to the German war economy. In the long term, the economic worth of Antwerp port for Germany lay in the continuation of its functions as a port: just like the German Navy and Army, the Government General used the port for its needs of trade, storage and transhipment.

⁵⁷⁶ Wilhelm Hirsch, *Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsfragen im Kriege. Vortrag im Industrie-Club Düsseldorf, gehalten am 20. Januar 1915 von Handelskammersyndikus Hirsch (Essen), Mitglied des Hauses der Abgeordneten*, Essen 1915, p. 17.

⁵⁷⁷ HStA Munich, MH 15520, report Hecht, Dec. 1914, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁸ See in particular the complaint by the Vereinigung des Wollhandels, Leipzig, to the imperial Interior Ministry in June 1915. HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 7620, fols. 194-9.

⁵⁷⁹ Karl Helfferich, *Der Weltkrieg*, Berlin 1919, vol. 2, p. 197.

The economic exploitation (2): shipping and transport

When the German Civilian Administration for the province of Antwerp was formed in mid-October 1914, vice-chancellor Delbrück even hoped that Antwerp's maritime trade could be revived to some extent. His principal objective was to allow the occupied country to provide for itself.⁵⁸⁰ Perhaps he was also calculating that it might punch a hole into the British economic blockade of Germany. Regardless of such afterthoughts, the Administration in Antwerp – Strandes, Louran, Hecht – worked on the idea, partially in unison with the Belgian authorities, since it would both create employment and increase revenue. Even after the CN and the CRB had taken charge of the provision problem, the Germans tried to have the CRB supplies imported directly into Antwerp instead of via Rotterdam.⁵⁸¹ But given the simultaneous wholesale German requisitions in Antwerp port – and all over Belgium –, and given that the British Government was deeply suspicious of the Belgian-American relief programme anyway, it is perhaps unsurprising that none of their efforts were successful.⁵⁸²

As a result, virtually no seagoing ships entered or left the port during the occupation and consequently all activities associated with the maritime trade ceased. The eerie emptiness of the entire port, and most particularly of the quays along the Scheldt, was something that struck every visitor to occupied Antwerp.⁵⁸³ The description by Hungarian journalist Ödön Halasi conjures up the scene most vividly. Importantly, Halasi also identified this 'dead port' – its general epithet – as the most telling sign of the war in Antwerp:

In Antwerp city life has reasserted itself; the streets are alive with the continuous hum and stir so characteristic of a large and busy town; crowds are moving along the sidewalks, so that if the casual visitor forms his judgement as to the present state of Antwerp while perambulating certain parts of it, he may easily conclude that the war has left hardly any traces behind. But before coming to this conclusion one ought to look at that district which, in a seaport town, is the most characteristic and the most important, namely, the harbour. And when he has seen the harbour, then, indeed, he will hesitate to assert that the

⁵⁸⁰ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 5. See also chapter 4.

⁵⁸¹ HStA Munich, MH 15520: report Hecht, 10 Nov. 1914, p. 4.

⁵⁸² See for example Liane Ranieri, *Emile Francqui ou l'intelligence creatrice*, 1985, p. 123. Zuckerman, *Rape of Belgium*, pp. 92-4.

⁵⁸³ See for example: Binder, *Hauptquartier Westen*, p. 184. Rauscher, *Belgien heute und morgen*, p. 66.

war has not hit Antwerp. [...] One approaches the harbour and gradually all the stir and commotion die away. The war has paralysed every symptom of maritime life – the rolling of the great ships, the churning of the waves, the screaming of sirens, the clanking of chains, the rattling of cranes, the shouted words of command and the thundering of heavy cars. The crates and boxes, the barrels and the men, have all disappeared. The harbour is silent – silent with that silence which does not rest or heal, but hurts and oppresses.⁵⁸⁴

In one of the interior port basins lay the trapped ocean liners. As another eyewitness noted, it was a ‘considerable interned fleet’, which was seen as a ‘forest of masts and funnels’ in the distance.⁵⁸⁵ (See also Illustration 8.) According to the German wire service, at the time of the conquest, there were four British, two Belgian, two Austrian, one French and one Danish steamer, two German sailing ships, as well as the thirty-two German steamers mentioned above.⁵⁸⁶ One of the first concerns of the German provincial administration was to assess the damage done to the German – and Austrian – steamers. Since most of them were from Bremen and, in second place, from Hamburg, Strandes requested from these city-states a joint commission of ship inspectors, a *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission*, which arrived in Antwerp in mid-November (Illustration 9).⁵⁸⁷ Its task included the settlement of compensation to be awarded to the shipping companies, and to be charged against the Belgian state at the end of the war. Although the inspectors felt that many companies demanded ‘unpleasant’, excessive sums, they encouraged them not to ask for too little. *Kosmos*, for example, had initially claimed 68.000 Marks and was awarded 300.000. In total, the inspectors put a sum of over twelve million Marks to the damaged steamers, not including the *Gneisenau* and the canal boats.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ Ödön Halasi, *Belgium under the German heel*, London/New York 1917, pp. 181-2.

⁵⁸⁵ Robert Withington, *In Occupied Belgium*, Boston 1921, p. 35.

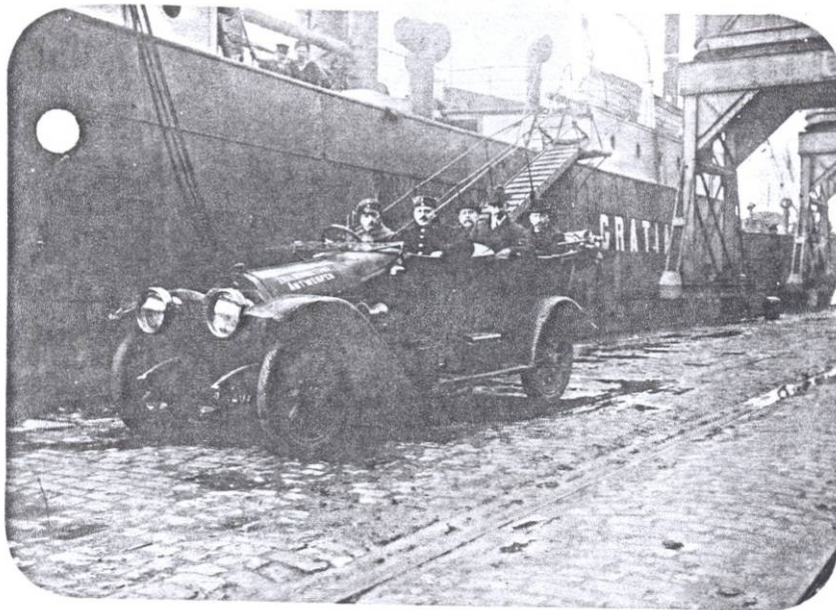
⁵⁸⁶ W.T.B., ‘Unsere Kriegsbeute von Antwerpen’, n.d., reproduced in: Hillger, *Krieg und Sieg*, p. 23. A list of the German and Austrian ships, seized by the Belgians in Aug. 1914, is in: AGR Brussels, I 215, 8063.

⁵⁸⁷ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119341, fol. 137. R 1501, 119342, fols. 23, 139. For the appointments see also: StA Hamburg, 111-2, A IV, b, fols. 1-3. HK Bremen, Hp. II, 15, vol. 6.

⁵⁸⁸ BA Berlin, R 1501, 103414/1, fol. 127: *Schiffsbesichtigungs-Kommission*, ‘Bericht betreffend Schadensersatzansprüche deutscher und österreichischer Reedereien für Beschädigung ihrer in Antwerpen liegenden Schiffe,’ 19 Feb. 1915. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: eight letters *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission* to Schramm, 1914/15. *Korrespondenz Belgien*, 27 Feb. 1915: ‘Die Schiffsschäden in Antwerpen’.

Illustration 8: The interned German fleet?

Source: Julien Weverbergh and Roland van Opbroecke, *De bezetter bespied*, Antwerpen / Amsterdam 1980, p. 110.

Illustration 9: The Hamburg-Bremen *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission*

Source: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84, in: letter *Schiffsbesichtigungskommission*, 29 Jan. 1915

Once the damage was located and valued, the shipping companies set about the repair. This turned out to be difficult because only limited work could be carried out in Antwerp. Some companies towed their ships to Rotterdam, but the Dutch authorities interned them there. Many ended up removing the damaged boilers and machines from their ships and transporting them by rail to shipyards in Germany.⁵⁸⁹ At the end of the war, in one case as early as 21 October 1918, most of the ships sailed to the Netherlands, preferring internment to capture by the Allies.⁵⁹⁰

The biggest undertaking, however, was the recovery of the sunken *Gneisenau*. The provincial administration tried to organise a salvage operation as early as spring 1915, but they failed to import the necessary lifting gear from the Netherlands. It was not until the summer of 1916 that the German construction company Dyckerhoff & Widmann, which had a branch in Antwerp, started works in earnest under the direction of *Oberbaurat* (surveyor) Loewer of the Antwerp port office, who had devised a novel technique of raising the ship. Delayed further by the severe winter of 1916/17, the refloated steamer was finally towed back into the port on 23 May 1917. This day was possibly the greatest highlight for the German Administration in Antwerp. Large crowds were said to have lined the Scheldt quays to watch the *Gneisenau*, adorned for the occasion, as it glided in and docked at its former berth. At least the Germans among them cheered loudly, a military band played music, other ships nearby sounded their horns, and on board the ship itself the German dignitaries celebrated, among them newly appointed Governor-General von Falkenhausen.⁵⁹¹ The chief engineer of the operation, Loewer, was awarded special honours from his home state of Hamburg.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5663, fol. 168: letter *Neptun*, 15 May 1915. BAMA Freiburg, RM 120, ? (Handelsschiffe in den Niederlanden): correspondence Marinekorps Flandern with German shipping lines.

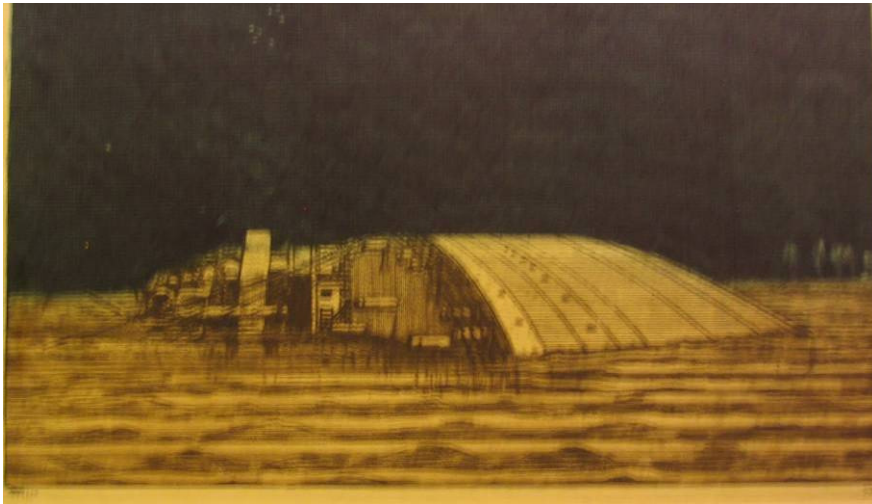
⁵⁹⁰ AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *De Maasbode*: 28 Oct., 11 Nov. 1918; *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*: 21 Oct., 29 Oct. 1918; *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1918.

⁵⁹¹ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5663, fol. 247: report Strandes, 25 March 1915. BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 169. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: 'Programm/Einladung Einschleppen der *Gneisenau*. StA Hamburg, 111-1, Cl. VII, Lit. Cb, No. 5, Vol. 12c, Fasc. 2, Inv. 64, box 1/5. StA Hamburg, 621-1 (HAPAG,) 320/4908: 'Bergung D. *Gneisenau* (Bildband) 1916'. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 43, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', vol. XII, pp. 3187-8. B. Bernhard Gaster, *Bericht über das 77. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1917, p. 22.

⁵⁹² StA Hamburg, 111-1, Cl. VII, Lit. Cb, No. 5, Vol. 12c, Fasc. 2, Inv. 65, box 1/2: 'Titelverleihung' to Loewer for raising of *Gneisenau*.

It could be said that the Germans imbued the event with mythic meaning. Already the sinking of the *Gneisenau*, which had been widely reported in the press in Germany, had touched German sentiment. The Social Democrats Adolph Köster and Gustav Noske, who had actually witnessed the ship's last moments above water, wrote: 'Deeply moved, we saw this masterpiece of German naval engineering perish within half an hour. [...] Will it be possible to bring it back to life, for new voyages across the world's oceans?'⁵⁹³ Later, the sight of the incompletely submerged ocean liner continued to attract attention, even prompting an artist's drawing (Illustration 10).⁵⁹⁴

Illustration 10: Drawing of the sunken *Gneisenau*



Caption: 'For Senator Schramm, with the greatest respect,
from Franz Müller, Antwerp 26 March 1917.'

Source: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 98.

The German Administration fostered this, bringing every official visitor on a trip down the Scheldt to the 'wreck'.⁵⁹⁵ Importantly, the accounts of the sinking usually emphasized British culpability, embedding it in the anglophobic German

⁵⁹³ Gustav Noske and Adolf Koester, *Kriegsfahrten durch Belgien und Nordfrankreich 1914*, Berlin n.d. [1915?], p.87. Most chapters had been previously published in the social-democrat press in Germany and Austria.

⁵⁹⁴ Some relevant articles can be found in: AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 23 Jan. 1917, *Arbeiterzeitung*, 27 Jan. 1917, *Deutsche Wochenzeitung*, 25 Feb. 1917.

⁵⁹⁵ Visitors included for example: journalist Wilhelm Schmidtbonn (March 1915), eight members of parliament (Sept. 1915), Hamburg architect Fritz Schumacher (Aug. 1915), Vice-Chancellor Clemens von Delbrück (Sept. 1915), representatives of German car industry (Feb. 1916) and Hamburg Senator Richard Krogmann (Dec. 1915, Sept. 1916). See: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 8 March 1915 (AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers'); BA Berlin, N 2329 (Westarp), 82; GNM Nuremberg, NL Fritz Schumacher, I, B, 11b, p. 21; Delbrück, *Die wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung in Deutschland 1914*, p. 172. *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 10 Feb. 1916. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Krogmann), 7, vol. 2, pp. 35, 67.

narrative of the conquest of Antwerp.⁵⁹⁶ Thus, here was an almost perfect allegory for what the war was about from the predominant German point of view. The 8185 register tons liner, a product of industrial Germany and a symbol of peaceful German expansion in the world, attracts the jealousy of a rival, 'England', who treacherously attacks it and endeavours to destroy it, either directly or through incitement of the Belgians. So, when the *Gneisenau* was finally salvaged, the allegory seemed to have reached its completion. The refloated liner symbolised German resilience and, for those who wanted to believe it, prophesied German victory in the end. Of course, this allegory was equally relevant to the local Antwerp context. In that case, like the reopening of the German School in January 1915 and like the military conquest itself, the salvage represented German resurgence in the city.

As a postscript it might be added that after its retrieval, the *Gneisenau* was brought into a dry dock for an overhaul. The returning Belgian Government seized it as war booty, and a public sale took place on 20 June 1919 in Antwerp; the sales contract stipulated that the ship must not be resold for five years after the conclusion of peace. It went for 2.8 million Belgian Francs. Meanwhile, a Belgian company had to remove the installations on the bank of the Scheldt used for the salvage.⁵⁹⁷

By the end of 1917, twenty-seven of the thirty-two German steamers had been repaired and were ready to sail. Their combined gross tonnage was roughly 100,000 register tons: a small but respectable fleet.⁵⁹⁸ Even though it could not be used during the war, it was an important asset for Germany: experts predicted a huge demand for shipping tonnage in the post-war period, so a fully functional German merchant fleet in Antwerp could help Germany regain her position on the world market.⁵⁹⁹ Perhaps some Germans were also hoping to immediately assert German shipping dominance in the port of Antwerp. In this context, however, the relatively moderate influence of President Strandes is worth

⁵⁹⁶ See chs. 2 and 6.

⁵⁹⁷ AGR Brussels, I 215, 8067: 'Steamer allemand *Gneisenau*. Dossier relatif à la vente en 1919'. AGR Brussels, T 039, 05, 1157, folder: 'Démolition de l'estacade du *Gneisenau*'.

⁵⁹⁸ The tonnage of the German ships interned in the USA added up to about 600,000. See BA Koblenz, N 1015 (Schwertfeger), 209: letter Ballin, 11 April 1917. In 1912, the entire Belgian merchant fleet consisted of about 97 steamers of 174,000 register tons combined size. AGR Brussels, I 215, 7930: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 8 Aug. 1916, 'Belgische Großschiffahrt?'.

⁵⁹⁹ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 43, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', vol. XII, p. 3191.

highlighting: he resisted the German shipping companies' demand, supported by the port *Kommandantur*, to make Belgian authorities pay the compensation straight away, arguing that freight rates would rise steeply in the post-war period, enabling the companies to cover the costs of repair.⁶⁰⁰

The repair of the German ships as preparation for the post-war world raises the question whether the German Administration made any other such preparations in or to the port of Antwerp. As seen elsewhere, the Administration was involved in the negotiations about the position of Antwerp in German war aims, as it was involved in the detailed study of the economic and the technical conditions of the port.⁶⁰¹ In terms of the port's potential expansion, two pre-war plans in particular were highlighted in the German publications about the port: the gigantic extension of the port basins parallel to the Scheldt up to the Dutch border, and the canal linking Antwerp directly with the German Rhineland. Against this background, there were sporadic rumours in Germany that the occupation regime had started work on these projects.⁶⁰² After all, the German Army had built a new railway line in Liège province to shorten the distance between the Rhineland and the front, and the Belgians had been allowed finish works on a canal to Brussels, making Brussels a seaport in 1915.⁶⁰³ But not only were these rumours unsubstantiated, the German Administration in Antwerp, backed by a decree of the Governor-General, had actually blocked a proposal of the City Council to start work on a new phase of the port's extension, which would have provided work for the unemployed.⁶⁰⁴ The reasoning behind this injunction seems to have been the following: as long as the political future of Antwerp was undecided, the German imperial Government in general, and the 'Hanseatic' Administration of Antwerp in particular, could not contribute to projects that would give Antwerp a competitive advantage over Hamburg and Bremen.

⁶⁰⁰ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 5663, fol. 247.

⁶⁰¹ See ch. 3.

⁶⁰² See for example: StA Bremen, 3-M.2.h.2., 9, 39, fol. 45: correspondence Hans Mann, *Reichsmarineamt*, with his uncle, Bremen Senator Biermann, March 1915.

⁶⁰³ Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' pp. 24, 26. Similarly, in the port of Ghent, works on a new dock were continued. See report Eich and Coels, 'Bereisung der Seehäfen Belgiens in den Tagen vom 30. Oktober bis zum 3. November 1915', 18 Nov. 1915, in: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, C, XIII, 9, no. 9, vol. 36.

⁶⁰⁴ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), L 51: diary entry P. E. Schramm, 22 Nov. 1916. BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 37: *Chefkommission* minutes, meeting in Antwerp, 17 Oct. 1917, p. 5.

However, on the other hand, the imperial Government attached great importance to maintaining the port of Antwerp in working order. In October 1917, Senator Sthamer, as *Reichskommissar für Übergangswirtschaft* (head of the imperial office for the post-war economy), stated clearly that the enormous demand for imports after the war could not be facilitated by Hamburg and Bremen alone, not even in conjunction with Rotterdam.⁶⁰⁵ Consequently, the occupation regime approved of, and even commissioned, a number of structural works in the port. The construction of a dry dock was resumed, and the walls of the quays along the Scheldt were repaired extensively. Most significantly, the Government-General's budget for Flanders in 1918 allocated 2.5 million Belgian Francs for dredging of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the frontier, which task was contracted to the German company *Gruen & Bilfinger* from Mannheim.⁶⁰⁶

One can speculate that the Antwerp port was deliberately spared the systematic removal of machines, tools, and metal objects, to which the German Army subjected all Belgian industries not working for the German war effort from mid 1917 onwards. The same practice of spoliation in the port could have yielded a lot: hundreds of cranes, railway tracks, horse-drawn vehicles, kilometres of metal hangars, and so on. But at the end of the war, all that the Belgians were missing were the loading companies' horses and fourteen electric cranes. Six cranes had been removed already by November 1917; the Belgians later found them in Hanover. The rest were probably taken during the last few months of the war. Some port equipment had also been requisitioned by the Belgian Army before October 1914. In March 1918, the Belgian Foreign Ministry was happy to learn that the port and its equipment was preserved enough to resume its maritime functions. Thus, as early as 29 November 1918,

⁶⁰⁵ BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 37: *Chefkommission* minutes, meeting in Antwerp with *Reichskommissar* Sthamer, 17 Oct. 1917, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁶ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 43 Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', vol. XII, pp. 3191-2. BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 38: Pochhammer, memo on the Flemish and Walloon budget 1918, p. 37. The work on the dry dock was first mentioned by von Sandt in Nov. 1914 (SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515, report Sandt, 13 Nov. 1914, p. 5), but in November 1917 the Civilian Administration debated whether building permission should be given (StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 82: letter Sthamer, 14 Nov. 1917, p. 3). *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* also fought a legal battle against the City Council over this dock (StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 82: letter Sthamer, 14 Nov. 1917, p. 3).

the Belgian Government could announce that Antwerp port was ready to receive ships ‘of all dimensions’.⁶⁰⁷

A practical reason for the Germans to leave Antwerp port and its equipment intact was that it served a significant purpose in the German war effort until the very end. As seen above, the German Army increasingly used the port area for storage and transshipment of materiel. Similarly, transportation needs such as of raw materials requisitioned at the beginning of the occupation and, possibly, of machines and scrap metal resulting from the industrial dismantling during 1917/18, were managed in part via Antwerp. In addition, the port was greatly utilised by the civilian agencies of the Government-General early on.

In particular, the Section for Trade and Industry, with its subsidiaries, controlled the international trade of occupied Belgium. This activity, like other economic measures of the Government-General – such as the reinstatement of a sound monetary system –, cannot be seen exclusively in terms of the German war effort. They were to some extent at an intersection of German and Belgian interests. Thus, the export of Belgian products as regulated by the *Außenhandelsstelle* (the office for foreign trade) no doubt benefitted the Belgian companies involved. One civil servant in the *Außenhandelsstelle* even complained that certain of his colleagues granted too many of the Belgian requests, to the detriment of German interests.⁶⁰⁸ However, overall, it was the strict policy of the Section for Trade and Industry to draw the maximum benefit for Germany from the Belgian trade. For example, in the Netherlands, Belgian products were more or less bartered for import goods to Germany – but only if there was no competition from similar German products. This way the value of the German currency was protected, as no Marks were exported. For the same reason, it was imperative for the Section that the value of exports to the neutral countries exceeded that of the imports from them. Moreover, particularly from the end of 1916 onward, the Section for Trade and Industry dramatically remoulded Belgian industry according to the demands of the German war

⁶⁰⁷ MAE Brussels, 4556, I, folder ‘ports belges’: report Belgian Legation The Hague, 25 March 1918; telegrams Hymans to Washington and Buenos Aires, 29 Nov. 1918. AGR Brussels, I 215, 8062: correspondence with Belgian *Commission de Récupération*, Nov.-Dec. 1919. BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 37: *Chefkommission* minutes, 17 Oct. 1917, p. 5. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 92, report Senator Diestel, 25 Aug. 1918, p. 7. For a description of the port equipment see: Ehlers, *et al.*, *Verkehrswirtschaft*, pp. 24-31.

⁶⁰⁸ BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 4: Le Suire to unnamed Ministerialdirektor, 9 Sept. 1916.

economy, so that, by March 1917, it was reduced to being simply an extension of German industry.⁶⁰⁹

The greatest part of the Government-General's foreign trade was accounted for by Germany, and increasingly so: during the second half of 1917 the 'German' proportion of all exports had risen to 78%, and it rose further to 88% during the next half-year. German imports were not even registered by the Section for Trade and Industry. Trade with the Netherlands came second (12% of exports during the second half of 1917), with Switzerland (6%), Luxemburg, the Scandinavian countries and Austria-Hungary following at a distance. The following table illustrates the nature and scale of exports to the Netherlands, taking the available data for the year 1917. Imports from the Netherlands consisted mainly of grains, fodder and some industrial raw materials. In addition, the Section for Trade and Industry imported considerable amounts of seafood, paying with German and Belgian credits in the Netherlands, often in cooperation with Belgian city governments. The Antwerp City Council, in particular, supplied the entire province with mussels during 1917.⁶¹⁰

Table 2. Exports from the Gov.-General to the Netherlands in Belgian Francs, 1917

	First half of 1917	Second half of 1917
Coal	8,941,856	4,439,535
Lime, Limestone	844,157	2,778,745
Iron, Ironware	7,492,294	4,941,661
Glass	2,270,306	1,819,428
Paper, Paper products	1,806,118	1,568,130
Furniture	758,372	489,972
Diamonds	19,589,663	18,337,605
Lace	1,306,231	1,050,481

Source: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 46.

Importantly, this trade conducted or recorded by the Section for Trade and Industry was to a large extent directed via, and facilitated by, the 'ports of transshipment' – with Antwerp still towering over Ghent and Brussels. This is illustrated by some figures that are available for coal, probably the single most

⁶⁰⁹ See: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 8: Ludwig von Köhler, 'Verwaltungsbericht für die Abteilung Handel und Gewerbe' (= report Köhler), 14 Aug. 1917, pp. 5-9. Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, esp. pp. 115-16, 122. Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre*, p. 201. Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, pp. 45-62.

⁶¹⁰ HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: Welser, 'Verwaltungsbericht für die Abteilung Handel und Gewerbe' (= report Welser), 30 July 1918, p. 65. GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 46. Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, pp. 116, 123.

significant article in terms of volume. Between August 1916 and January 1917 roughly 128,000 tons of coal were exported to Germany, 370,000 to the Netherlands, 304,000 tons to Switzerland, 341,000 to Scandinavia and 58,000 to Austria-Hungary. These exports were transported on the waterways by the following proportions respectively: 44%, 98%, 73%, 84% and 95%. Roughly 448,000 tons were transhipped at Antwerp, and 103,000 tons at Brussels, while Ghent was no longer available to such civilian traffic. Other amounts were probably transported directly on the Meuse to Dutch Limburg, and possibly even via occupied France to Germany.⁶¹¹

As a result of this salient importance of Antwerp for the commercial and infrastructural aspects of the economy of occupied Belgium, some of the Government-General's economic planning actually took place in Antwerp, with the heads of its provincial administration playing a prominent role.⁶¹² Similarly, the unique conditions of Antwerp – the world port, the storage facilities, and the concentration of commercial enterprises, with many of its businessmen belonging to the German Colony – led to the creation of at least two important economic organisations of the Government-General.

First, there was the *Kohlenzentrale*, or coal authority. It was set up in Antwerp in March 1915 by the Antwerp-German magnate Franz Müller in association with the Civilian Administration, particularly Karl Gerstein, the then President for the province of Brabant. According to Gerstein, the initial motivation for its creation was the scarcity of fuel in Belgium, with industries as well as households suffering. So it was necessary not only to get the Belgian mines running again but also to organise a rationalised distribution of the coal. Based on the expertise of Müller, and on the resources of his company, *Société Générale Charbonnière*, the largest Belgian coal trading company, the *Kohlenzentrale* proved a success for the Government-General. Its central offices were moved to Brussels in June 1915, and branches were opened in the coal mining centres of Charleroi, Mons and Liège. Müller resigned from the executive, though he and his company remained an important subcontractor. The *Kohlenzentrale* became the model for an increasing number of similar centralised

⁶¹¹ HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 479 ff, report Sandt, 31 January 1917, p. 52. For equivalent figures for the first half-year of 1916 see: SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515, report Sandt, 3 Aug. 1916, p. 13.

⁶¹² BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 5: minutes, Department for Trade and Industry, 1915.

authorities – effectively invested with a trading monopoly –, through which the Section for Trade and Industry came to control virtually the entire spectrum of Belgian raw material and foodstuff production. However, Gerstein's aim of addressing the needs of the Belgian population, if it was ever the top priority, quickly got sidelined by subservience to the German war effort, as well as by interests of profit. For, similar to the 'war corporations' (*Kriegsgesellschaften*) in Germany, the *Kohlenzentrale* was run as a business operation, which became organisationally fully integrated in the German war economy. Indeed, Müller's company had already been a branch of the powerful *Rheinisch-Westfälisches Kohlsyndikat* in Germany since long before the war. According to Gerstein, by the end of 1916, the *Kohlenzentrale* had made a profit of 45 million German Marks.⁶¹³

Second, another important economic office of the Government-General originating in Antwerp was the *Ölzentrale*, or office for oils. Like the *Kohlenzentrale*, it was set up in Antwerp in June 1915 under the name of *Schmierölzentrale*, office for lubricants, but with its success and expansion, its head office was transferred to Brussels soon after. Branches were created in Liège, Charleroi, Namur, as well as in Antwerp. Again, the impetus came from the urgent need of the Belgian industry for lubricant oils. Until March 1915, the German Army had requisitioned and administered all stocks of oils and fats stored in the port of Antwerp. It transported about 20,000 tons to Germany. When the necessity of supplying the Belgian industry emerged, the Army handed the Civilian Administration 700 tons of lubricants, which resulted in the creation of the special office in Antwerp. More oils and fats were then purchased in the Netherlands and in Romania. Soon, the office was furnished with a number of trading monopolies and expanded into a vast organisation that controlled all production of and trade with oils, fats and related material like soap in occupied Belgium. It even operated several factories, located in Antwerp province, which processed animal bones and cadavers. Again, Belgian industry was actually

⁶¹³ WWA Dortmund, N 23 (Gerstein), 69; Gerstein, 'Meine Tätigkeit in Belgien', 31 May 1917, p. 5. The reports by Sandt and by Köhler contain further detailed information about its business activities. The business books of Müller's Société Générale Charbonnière are in: RA Beveren-Waes, Sekwester te Antwerpen, series I, nos. 84-108. See also: Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, pp. 30-1. Pirenne and Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique*, pp. 37, 42-3.

supplied minimal amounts, while the bulk of the proceeds was fed into the German war economy.⁶¹⁴

During the summer of 1916, the Antwerp branch of the *Ölzentrale* would have been dissolved if it had not been for a new venture that took off in Antwerp at the time. Due to the peculiar geographical shape of the province of Antwerp, German-Dutch smuggling operations across the Dutch border had always been particularly active. The heavily indented frontier, with three ‘knobs’ reaching into the Netherlands, meant that the Germans took shortcuts when they sealed off the frontier with the high-voltage electric fence. This created a ‘frontier zone’ of occupied Belgian territory that had a relatively open border with the Netherlands. As can be seen on the map, there were ‘frontier zones’ in Limburg and Liège provinces, too, but the largest area was in Antwerp (Map 4). As a result, the German provincial administration of Antwerp had the best supply of tobacco in the Government-General.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, when the Dutch Government yielded to British pressure and banned the export of, for example, vegetable oils, the *Ölzentrale* in Antwerp could still procure this product on the Dutch black market. In August 1916, then, it was decided to harvest this source in a systematic and centralised way, and the task was given the Antwerp branch of the *Ölzentrale*.⁶¹⁶

By December 1916, it had already acquired goods on this ‘trade on winding paths’ to the value of about two million Belgian Francs, all of which it transported to Germany. Consequently, it was emancipated into an autonomous institution, euphemistically called *Grenzbewirtschaftung* (‘frontier cultivation’), which answered directly to the Governor-General. It took control of all frontier zones, where it asserted a monopoly over all smuggling activities by the frontier troops – though it had difficulty controlling Belgian smugglers, who continued to offer their ware on the Antwerp black market. Initially, it operated under the cover name of ‘Julius Friedenthal, Antwerpen’, but this soon proved superfluous. In Antwerp city, it moved into large prestigious offices at 14, Place de Meir. By the end of 1917, the *Grenzbewirtschaftung* office employed 182 clerks and

⁶¹⁴ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 3: *Ölzentrale* minutes, 12 October 1915. Again, detailed reports by the *Ölzentrale* are appended to Köhler’s reports. See also: Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, pp. 32-3.

⁶¹⁵ See for example: BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 4: Le Suire to Lappenberg, Aug. 1917.

⁶¹⁶ HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 521 ff: *Ölzentrale* report (appendix 4 to report Sandt, 31 January 1917), pp. 1, 24. Winterfeldt, ‘Die deutsche Verwaltung,’ pp. 103-5.

workers; and it opened branches in Hasselt and Liège at the beginning of 1918. It used at least one large depot in the port of Antwerp, as well as some directly in the frontier zones. The impressive sight of these stocks was soon added to the standard tour on which German visitors to Antwerp were taken. The variety of goods smuggled expanded rapidly from vegetable oil to a long list that included pulses, rice, chocolate, tobacco, leather, textiles and live animals. Virtually everything was handed over to either the German Army or the central war corporations in Germany. According to Winterfeldt, the entire northern sector of the Western Front got all their livestock from the *Grenzwirtschaft*. In statistical terms, the size of this trade is expressed in the following figures. In the second half of 1917 it imported about eight thousand tons of goods to the value of about thirty million Belgian Francs. In the first half of 1918, this rose to about eighty million Belgian Francs, though there was probably not a correspondingly high increase in the actual amount, due to inflation.⁶¹⁷

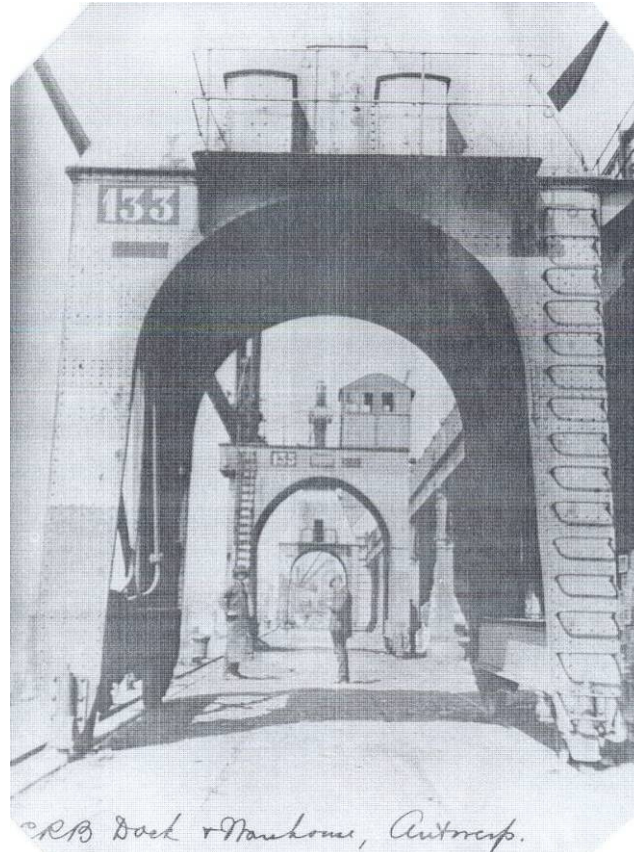
Of course, apart from the Government-General, there was another powerful economic organisation present in Antwerp port, the CRB. On average the CRB brought about 100,000 tons of goods into Belgium per month. In an aside, it should be highlighted that a portion of this actually always found its way to Germany – through German ‘underground channels’ in Belgium.⁶¹⁸ The central offices of the CRB, however, were located in London, Rotterdam and – Brussels. The goods were loaded onto barges in Rotterdam, from where most of them seemed to have travelled directly to their destinations in Belgium. The largest depots were located in the Brussels region. Nevertheless, at least the goods destined for Antwerp province were unloaded in Antwerp (and stored at a depot in Merxem, just north of the port). A limited amount of transshipment also took place. From the caption of a photo it appears that the CRB had the exclusive use of a stretch of the Antwerp quays – though it was still supervised by German soldiers (Illustration 11). Moreover, in November 1915, the CRB, in conjunction

⁶¹⁷ HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 521 ff: *Ölzentrale* report (appendix 4 to report Sandt, 31 January 1917), pp. 24-28. GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: *Ölzentrale* report (appendix 5 to report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918), pp. 25-28. HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, pp. 69-70. Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' p. 104.

⁶¹⁸ Winterfeldt, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung,' p. 96.

with the CN, created a ‘shipping department’ with its base in Antwerp. Its task was to buy river and canal boats in the Netherlands.⁶¹⁹

Illustration 11: The CRB quay in Antwerp port



Source: HA Palo Alto, CRB, photo collection, box 630

Thus, the predominant picture of a dead port is not entirely accurate. It applies only when considering exclusively its seagoing traffic – when comparing the approximately seven thousand steamships that called at Antwerp in 1912 to the less than a handful of steamers that sailed between Antwerp and Vlissingen (Flushing) in the Netherlands during the war.⁶²⁰ By contrast, the port’s inland waterway traffic remained considerable throughout the occupation, even if

⁶¹⁹ HA Palo Alto, CRB, 501: Comité provincial de secours et d’alimentation Anvers, ‘Report about the operation of the shipowning department during the first half-year, Nov. 1915 – May 1916’ (translation). See also: George I. Gay, *Public Relations of the Commission for Relief in Belgium*, vol. 1: *Documents*, Stanford 1929. George I. Gay, *Statistical Review of Relief Operations*, Stanford 1925.

⁶²⁰ For pre-war statistics see for example: Rühl, *Antwerpen*, p. 33. For reports of ocean-going steamers arriving and departing Antwerp see: Frank Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis van de haven van Antwerpen (1930-1950),’ unpublished Ph.D. thesis [since published], Ghent 2001, p. 45.

drastically reduced compared to the pre-war level. So, how large was the traffic volume and the movement of goods in the port during the war?

The statistical record for Antwerp port during the war is very poor. A brief overview of the available material in the Antwerp city archive revealed that entries into many shipping registers were not continued after 1916.⁶²¹ The post-war statistical handbooks simply skip the war years. Contemporary newspapers published in occupied Belgium reported on traffic in Antwerp port from time to time. In a recent study on the political and institutional history of the port, Frank Seberechts used some examples of these reports to give a general indication of the reduced waterway traffic that went through the port during the First World War.⁶²² But these account for individual days or, at most, a month only and are too isolated for establishing a quantifiable pattern. Slightly better, the economic review of the occupation regime, the *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, provided total figures for the year 1915, but the review ceased publication during 1916. The most comprehensive set of figures is the compilation of annual figures from 1910 to 1921 sent to the German Foreign Ministry by the Consulate-General in Antwerp in 1922.⁶²³ However, even this compilation lacks any figures for 1917 or 1918.

In fact, it is possible that the Government-General might have generally discouraged proper statistical registration of traffic by Belgian authorities. For one thing, the Belgian Government in Le Havre instructed its consulate in The Hague to procure monthly lists of the movement of goods in the port of Antwerp; but the consulate could only ever get hold of one such list, for January 1917, 'through luck'. Moreover, the Belgian Ministry for Public Works, which registered ships along the entire network of rivers and canals, noted after the war that movement of ships had not been recorded on an increasing number of sections 'by order of the Germans'.⁶²⁴ It seems likely that those waterways were used by military traffic, and that its observation by Belgians would have come close to espionage in German eyes. Similarly, since the port of Antwerp was

⁶²¹ For example: SA Antwerp: MA 36, 253: stoomboten 1915-1919; MA 36, 217: sluisregisters 1915-1919.

⁶²² Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,' p. 46.

⁶²³ PA AA Berlin, R 123821: report Franoux, 26 July 1922.

⁶²⁴ MAE Brussels, 4556, V, folder 1914-1918: reports Belgian Legation The Hague, 30 March 1917, 24 May 1917. AGR Brussels, T 039, 05, 555: note (1920?) on index to 1917 statistics.

increasingly utilised by the German military, it is likely that the work of the Belgian institutions was increasingly interfered with.

In addition to these difficulties in assessing the traffic via the waterways in the port of Antwerp, absolutely no figures have been found about the traffic via the railways. Before the war, over 60% of the incoming goods were loaded from the sea-ships onto trains.⁶²⁵ But with the entire Belgian railway administration firmly in the hands of the German Army – not even under the control of the Government-General – no records of it seem to have survived. From reports of civilian agencies of the Government General it is nevertheless clear that a good portion of occupied Belgium's 'international' trade still depended on the railways. In the case of Antwerp, for example, the Government-General sent consignments of coal from Mons and Charleroi in the railway wagons returning empty from the front.⁶²⁶ On the other hand, the Government-General put a large effort into transferring as much of its transport needs as possible onto the waterways – in order to free up the railways for the army, but also in part because of constant friction with the military administration of the railways. Thus, one of the Government-General's first building priorities was the repair and clearing of Belgium's canals from the destruction of the invasion. Similarly, it managed to recover 160 Belgian-owned barges which had been travelling on the German Rhine when war broke out and which had been interned since.⁶²⁷

The following table, then, combines the available figures for the port's waterway traffic during the war. For the purpose of comparison, the equivalent figures for the year 1912 are included.

⁶²⁵ See for example: Arndt, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam*, p. 23.

⁶²⁶ HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 479 ff, report Sandt, 31 January 1917, p. 52.

⁶²⁷ SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 12 Jan. 1915, p. 7; report Sandt, 30 April, p. 11. For frictions with the *Militär-Eisenbahn-Generaldirektion* see for example the report by H. Bazille, civilian president for Limburg province, 11 July 1917, in: HStA Stuttgart, E 40/72, 750.

Table 3: Collection of Antwerp port statistics for 1915-1918

Period	Number of Ships (canal, river boats; some fishing vessels)			Weight of goods in 1,000 tons (Tonnage of ships in brackets) ⁶²⁸		
	Arrival	Depart.	Total	Arrival	Departure	Total
1912	43,060	42,969	86,029	4,374.282 (9,697.904)	6,187.642 (9,614.571)	10,561.924 (19,312.48)
1915	10,212	10,463	20,680	(2,509.812)	(2,749.353)	(5,259.166)
1916	12,170	12,007	24,177	(4,182,437)	(4,214.950)	(8,397.387)
1916 ⁶²⁹						Scheldt: (6,369.717)
1917						Scheldt: (5,085.165)
Feb. 1916 – Jan 1917					Coal: 813.751	
June 1916	965	969	1,934	(360.042)	(344.32)	(704.362)
Ca. Aug. 1916						~ 450
Jan. 1917 (Scheldt)				120.258	16.284	136.542 ⁶³⁰
April 1917	838	1,019	1,857	(414.893)	(397.122)	(812.015)

Sources: S. Rosenthal, 'Der Binnenschiffsverkehr Antwerpens,' in: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, vol. 1916/1917, no. 42, pp. 937-939. PA AA Berlin, R 123821: German Consulate-General (Franoux), 26 July 1922. AGR Brussels, T 039, 05, 555. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 3 Aug. 1916, p. 13. HStA Dresden, Ministerium des Innern, 6973, fols. 479 ff, report Sandt, January 1917, p. 52. *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 28 July 1916, p.10. HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Krogmann), 7: diary transcript (Dec. 1919), vol. 2, p. 67. MAE Brussels, 4556, V, 1, report Belgian Legation The Hague, 3 March 1917. *Vrij België*, 18 May 1917, quoted in Seberechts, *Haven van Antwerpen*, p. 46.

Although sparse, these figures still permit a deduction of certain important patterns. The revival of the total volume of the interior waterways traffic in Antwerp port during 1915 was considerable. On average, over fifty vessels either arrived in or departed from the port each day. The year's total number of ships, as well as their combined tonnage, represented about a quarter of the volume in 1912 – a drastic reduction, but still a real presence. The year 1916 saw a notable

⁶²⁸ The standard measurement of ships is the 'register ton' (or Moorsom ton), which equals a volume of 2.8 m³. In trade statistics this is usually a 'net' (as opposed to 'gross') measurement, referring to the actual capacity for loading cargo.

⁶²⁹ 'Absolute Tonnage' of inland waterways ships on the 'Escaut Maritime', from the Rupel to the Dutch frontier. This 1916 figure is lower than that supplied by Franoux, possibly because less individual ships are being counted double for the import and export legs.

⁶³⁰ Not included are imports of 200,897 m³ woods and of 48 live animals. Total value of imports and exports: 4,780,916 Belgian Francs.

increase of this traffic. In terms of tonnage, it reached over 40% of the 1912 level.

The most important indicator for a port's turnover is the weight of the goods, at best in conjunction with their pecuniary value. As the wartime 'Antwerp debate' among German economists highlighted, the shipping tonnage can be a misleading figure, since a ship's tonnage remains the same, whether it carries goods or not.⁶³¹ Unfortunately, none of the official statistics in the above table included figures for weight. There is only one reference from Richard Krogmann, who, visiting Antwerp in September 1916, was informed that the monthly turnover was between four and five hundred thousand tons of goods. If accurate, this would represent about half of the monthly average in 1912. It would mean greater efficiency in the use of ships than before the war, which is plausible, since, as seen in the tables below, there was an increase in both the average size of ships and the proportion of long-distance routes to Germany.

However, the upward trend was reversed again during 1917, as the figures for traffic on the 'maritime' Scheldt, from Rupel south of Antwerp to the Dutch border, indicate. There are no figures for 1918, but one can assume that traffic did not pick up again and probably decreased further. This is also suggested by the constant decline of the total volume of trade supervised by the Section for Industry and Trade during those two years. Thus, the setback in 1917 does not appear to have been due to temporary causes, such as the harsh winter of 1916/17 during which most canals, but not the Scheldt, froze. As the table shows, traffic in April 1917 was again at the level of 1916. Instead, the reasons must lie in long-term economic developments in occupied Belgium: possibly in the pull-out of the American Commission for Relief in Belgium, since the successor Dutch-Spanish organisation did not import as much foodstuffs; and certainly in the systematic destruction of the Belgian industrial landscape by the Germans from 1917 onward.⁶³²

Given the sizeable traffic, especially during 1916, the important question is: who and what generated it? Although the available sources are not detailed and exhaustive enough to give a precise answer, it can be approached indirectly. The

⁶³¹ See especially the essay: Rosenthal, 'Der Binnenschiffsverkehr Antwerpens.'

⁶³² See in particular: HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, p. 65.

next table contains the relative distribution of the shipping tonnage among the main relevant countries, based on the figures provided by the German Consulate-General. Strictly speaking, these figures are distorted because they include most likely the shipments of transit goods, especially to Switzerland and Scandinavia.

Table 4: Relative distribution of shipping volume (tonnage) by country⁶³³

		Germany	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Total
1913	Arrival	30.6% (3,076,014)	60.01% (6,014,094)	1.3% (130,731)	7.99% (801,128)	100% (10,021,967)
	Depart.	24.23% (2,405,495)	57.21% (5,679,007)	2.01% (199,363)	16.55% (1,643,044)	100% (9,926,909)
1915	Arrival	20.4% (511,907)	59.92% (1,503,847)	0.58% (14,454)	19.11% (479,604)	100% (2,509,812)
	Depart.	27.28% (749,901)	53.55% (1,472,332)	0.35% (9,574)	18.82% (517,546)	100% (2,749,353)
1916	Arrival	38.83% (1,623,884)	39.95% (1,670,827)	0.55% (22,809)	20.68% (864,915)	100% (4,182,437)
	Depart.	40.17% (1,693,018)	38.88% (1,638,704)	0.76% (32,243)	20.19% (850,985)	100% (4,214,950)

Calculations based on figures provided in: PA AA Berlin, R 123821: German Consulate-General (Franoux), 26 July 1922.

Remarkably, the relative distribution of Antwerp's shipping volume among these countries showed a very similar picture in 1915 to the normal peacetime one in 1913. The biggest difference is that relatively less (10%) tonnage originated in Germany and relatively more (11%) in the Netherlands. This shift can be attributed to the fundamental change that there was no longer any transshipment onto ocean-going steamers and that the only goods traded overseas were shipped via the Netherlands – with probably a good portion of the imports belonging to the CRB.

Most importantly, the table clearly shows that the notable increase of traffic during 1916 was primarily due to the German route, the volume on which almost overtook that on the Belgian one, which grew only by a little. In second place was the trading volume with the Netherlands, which almost doubled. The French routes, presumably to German-occupied France, more than doubled their traffic, but in absolute numbers they remained negligible compared to the other countries. Thus, if perhaps on a simplistic level, it may be concluded that the main contributor to – and the main beneficiary of – the trade and traffic facilitated by Antwerp port was the German economy.

⁶³³ PA AA Berlin, (Sonderreferat Schiffahrt), R 123821: German Consulate-General (Franoux), 26 July 1922.

Another striking development, concerning the logistics of the waterway traffic in Antwerp, was that, on average, there was a steady increase in the size of the vessels used. This is demonstrated in the next table, which is also based on the figures of the German Consulate-General. Again, the greatest increase in absolute terms occurred on the German route. There is no obvious explanation for this change. One reason is that the Belgian vessels, which were generally small as many of Belgium's canals were limited to barges below five hundred tonnes, refused to sail to Germany for fear of renewed internment. Consequently, the goods bound for Germany were carried mostly on the large 'Rhine boats'.⁶³⁴ But, possibly, the bigger ship sizes were also the result of, on average, larger consignments, and a higher proportion of bulk goods.

Table 5. Distribution of number of ships and their average size (tonnage) by country

		Germany	Belgium	France	Netherlands	Total
1913	Arrival	3,872 (794 t)	33,276 (181 t)	478 (274 t)	6,830 (117 t)	44,456 (225 t)
	Depart.	3,592 (670 t)	32,264 (176 t)	703 (284 t)	7,232 (227 t)	43,791 (227 t)
1915	Arrival	472 (1085 t)	7,280 (207 t)	42 (344 t)	2,418 (198 t)	10,212 (246 t)
	Depart.	650 (1154 t)	7,495 (196 t)	29 (330 t)	2,289 (226 t)	10,463 (263 t)
1916	Arrival	1,306 (1243 t)	8,297 (201 t)	71 (321 t)	2,496 (347 t)	12,170 (344 t)
	Depart.	1,324 (1279 t)	8,198 (200 t)	103 (313 t)	2,382 (357 t)	12,007 (351 t)

Calculations based on figures provided in: PA AA Berlin, R 123821: German Consulate-General (Franoux), 26 July 1922.

Thus, despite the closed access to the seas from Antwerp, it has become clear that the port of Antwerp came to play a role in the German war effort and in the German exploitation of Belgium's resources. In what other ways was Antwerp economically significant for Germany during the war?

Economic exploitation (3): agriculture, industry and finance

The province was largely agricultural. German agricultural policy in Belgium is generally a little-researched topic to this day. Interestingly, as Adolf Solansky noted, the Germans did not 'dismantle' Belgian agriculture to the same extent as Belgian industry.⁶³⁵ Its productive capacity survived the war in a relatively

⁶³⁴ SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 31 Jan. 1916, p. 13.

⁶³⁵ Adolf Solansky, *German Administration in Belgium*, New York 1928, p. 99.

healthier state. Nevertheless, there was a constant struggle between the Belgians, in particular their advocates the CRB and the CN, and the German agencies over the control and distribution of Belgian agricultural produce. The Government-General continually and systematically reneged on its numerous promises and tried to acquire as much of it as possible, in order to ship it to Germany.⁶³⁶ Antwerp seemed to have been no exception in this struggle. It is even possible that the German Administration of Antwerp province was particularly successful in diverting foodstuffs from Belgian to German consumers, as it found the willing cooperation of some influential members of the German Colony there. Romi Goldmuntz, for example, was involved in a business network that secretly acquired 38,000 tons of oats during 1917, which it milled to oatmeal for the German Army in 1918. At the end of the war, Goldmuntz still had a large supply stored in the port of Antwerp.⁶³⁷

In terms of industries, it seems that most of the larger factories did not escape the German policy of ‘spoliation’. The Belgian Commission of Enquiry documented the disembowelment of several ironworks in Hoboken and Hemixen on the Scheldt just south and north of Antwerp city (Illustration 12).⁶³⁸

Illustration 12: Pillaged Factory of Les Grandes Chaudronneries de l’Escaut, Hoboken



Source: Commission d'Enquête, *Rapports et Documents d'Enquête*, vol. 3, part 1: *Rapport sur l'industrie Belge pendant l'occupation*, Brussels 1921, plate 74.

⁶³⁶ In particular, see Oszwald's frank account in this respect in: HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 40, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', vol. V, fol. 772, pp. 194-204.

⁶³⁷ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: correspondence re. 'affaire Goldmuntz'. See also StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84, for a similar case involving W. von Mallinckrodt.

⁶³⁸ Commission d'Enquête, *Rapports et Documents d'Enquête*, vol. 3: *Rapport sur les mesures prises par les allemands a l'égard de l'industrie Belge pendant l'occupation*, Brussels 1921, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 204, 235-6, 263-4.

Even the cement and brick factories in rural Antwerp province, which were working reasonably well during the first half of the war, were closed down in 1917 due to lack of coal fuel; their entire stocks were then militarily requisitioned without payment.⁶³⁹ Those industrial plants that did not have to cease operations were in some way controlled by a German agency and worked exclusively for the German war effort. The shipyards, as mentioned above, were operated by the German Navy. Similarly, the city's gas and water works, owned by a British company, were sequestered; in 1917, the Government-General even enforced a sale of the ship-yards and the gas and water works to a German consortium, as will be discussed below. Minerva in Antwerp town, the largest car manufacturer in Belgium, was taken over by the German Army, which used it as a repair shop for military vehicles. Its pre-war workforce of 3,000 was reduced to 120 in 1920.⁶⁴⁰

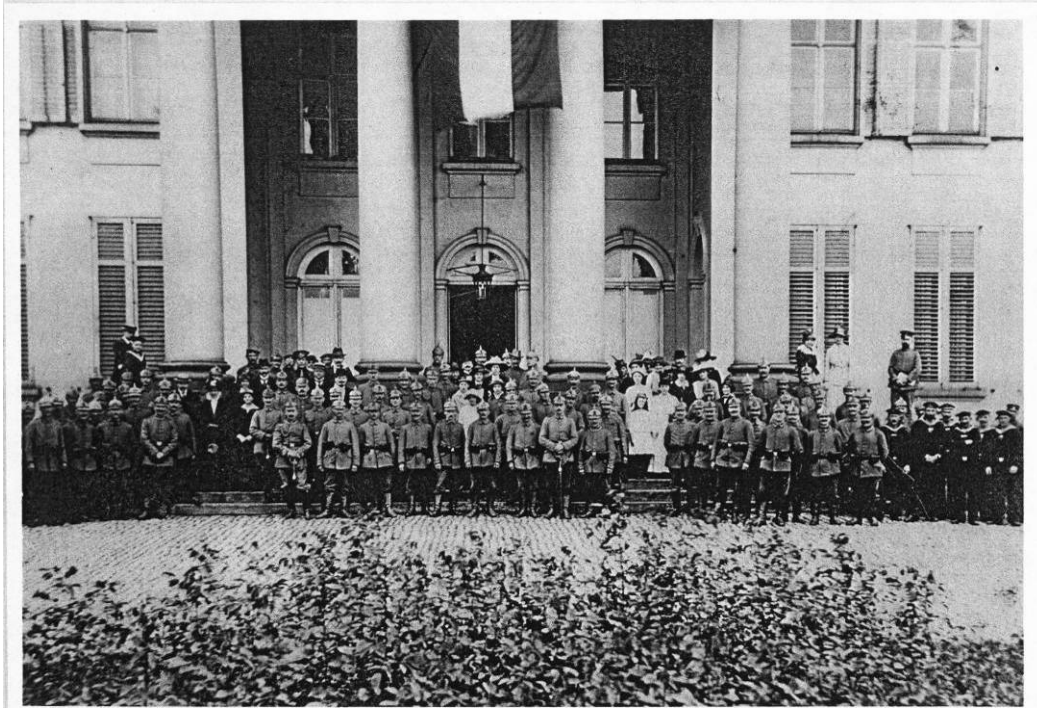
Other, small-scale, industries apparently suffered less. Tobacco factories in the Turnhout region and furniture manufacturers near Mechelen kept up a degree of production – primarily for the German army. It is not clear if there was any coercion involved.⁶⁴¹ Similarly, there were several small plants in the city that survived, particularly in the food processing industry and in the diamond industry. One tobacconist had even increased his workforce from sixty to seventy employees. But there was only one larger industrial establishment that actually prospered during the occupation.

⁶³⁹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Erich Diestel to Schramm, 3 Nov. 1919. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Erich Diestel], 'Die Industrie der Provinz Antwerpen', ca. 1919, pp. 8/9. GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 8: report Köhler, 14 Aug. 1917, pp. 5-9. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 31 Jan. 1916, p. 16.

⁶⁴⁰ AGR Brussels, I 303, 1209. PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box 'Fonds 1914-1918': *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, 'Verslag over de Oorlogsgebeurtenissen in de Stad Antwerpen, 1914-1918,' n.d. [1920], p. 44. *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 10 Feb. 1916, p. 4. On Minerva company see for example Suykens, *et al.*, *Antwerp. The New Spring*, p. 150.

⁶⁴¹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie' p. 9.

Illustration 13: Maschmeyer and occupation troops, Hoboken 1916



Caption on back: 'For Mr. and Mrs. Maschmeyer. In memory of the festive divine service on the grounds of the "Silberschmelze" in Hoboken (i.e. "Moretusburg"): 23 July 1916. Wiedemann, Hauptmann, *Ortskommandant*.'

Source: Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule', p. 8.

On 13 March 1918, at an extraordinary general assembly of the Usine de Désargentation (or 'Silberschmelze' in German), a foundry for smelting lead and zinc in Hoboken, its director Maschmeyer, proposed that the company's capital should be doubled to 600,000 Belgian Francs by creating 3,000 new shares, and that current shareholders should get a bonus of 70%, 'since the current capital is no longer proportionate to the expansion and importance of our business'⁶⁴² The factory was linked to the Frankfurt am Main Metallgesellschaft (Merton) firm, and Maschmeyer had been an active member of the German Colony before the war. The photo of Illustration 13 intimates that he was very popular with the locally stationed German troops, and seems to confirm that he was a pillar of support for the occupation regime. However, while this German background no doubt facilitated the company's success, the precondition must have been that it could work for the German Army. The Antwerp branch of the Leipziger

⁶⁴² RA Beveren-Waes, Sekwester te Antwerpen, series III, no. 147: Usine de Désargentation, extraordinary general assembly minutes, 13 March 1918.

Wollkämmerei, a wool-carding factory in Hoboken, for example, lay mostly idle during the war.⁶⁴³

Overall, when compared to the rest of occupied Belgium, it is possible that the urban agglomeration of Antwerp fared better than the average. J. Pirenne and M. Vauthier calculated that out of approximately 260,000 companies operating in Belgium before the war, some 3,046 were still active at the end of the war – just over 1%.⁶⁴⁴ In their post-war review about the war, the City Council of Antwerp included a list of 228 industrial and commercial enterprises in the city (excluding suburbs), with their number of employees before and just after the war.⁶⁴⁵ Admittedly, this list's value for the history of the German occupation is reduced considerably by the post-war count. But as the only statistic available it is hoped that it indicates at least the trend accurately. At first, it makes depressing reading, with a dramatic drop of the total number of employees from 23,630 to 5,701, or just under a quarter. Nevertheless, if, somewhat arbitrarily, one defined a business as 'active' that kept half or more of its staff, then the 'survival rate' for Antwerp city would be about 24%, as shown in the next table.

Table 6: Distribution of employment rates of 228 businesses (including 31 diamond factories) in Antwerp city

Percent of pre-war level	0	1-24%	25-49%	50-74%	75% +
Number of businesses	32 (14% of 228)	91 (40%)	50 (22%)	38 (17%)	17 (7%)
Number of Diamond workshops	10 (32% of 31)	6 (19%)	4 (13%)	7 (23%)	4 (13%)

Source: PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box 'Fonds 1914-1918': *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, 'Verslag', pp. 34-46.

According to the available literature, there were only three or four branches of the Belgian industry which the Government-General strove to keep alive throughout the time of the occupation. These were the mining industry, particularly concerning coal and quarry stone, the lace industry and the diamond industry.⁶⁴⁶ The mining industry, located chiefly in the Walloon part of Belgium,

⁶⁴³ This is indicated in: HStA Dresden, 7620, fols. 30-60, 80, 123, 135-49.

⁶⁴⁴ Pirenne and Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique*, p. 48.

⁶⁴⁵ PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box 'Fonds 1914-1918': *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, 'Verslag,' pp. 33-46. The report makes not clear what year its post-war figures refers to. It could be either 1919 or 1920.

⁶⁴⁶ See: Köhler, *Staatsverwaltung*, pp. 118, 130.

had an immediate value for the German war effort: the Army consumed a large portion of its output directly, which theoretically also meant that more German miners could be drafted as soldiers. Another large portion was exported to neutral countries, creating revenue and propping up the value of the German currency. The value for Germany of the lace industry, located chiefly in the Flemish part – in Antwerp province mainly in Mechelen, Lier and Turnhout⁶⁴⁷ –, was subtler. Again, much of the product was exported under the supervision of the Government-General, as indicated in table 2. But it seems that the most significant benefit for Germany lay in the sphere of propaganda. Supporting the home-based industry required little material investment, but the commitment of the Government-General, especially of Governor-General von Bissing and his wife, to this traditional craft was widely publicised as testimony to the benevolent, even nurturing intentions of the occupation regime. Moreover, the nature of the work lent itself well to romantic images of Flanders; it was presented as a quintessentially Flemish craft, so that its support by the Government-General also fed into its *Flamenpolitik* – its attempt of wooing the Flemish to the German cause.⁶⁴⁸ The diamond industry, finally, was almost exclusively based in and around the Antwerp agglomeration. It was arguably the industry into which the Germans invested most effort and material. What did the German support consist of and how did it develop?

Before the war, Antwerp shared with Amsterdam virtually a worldwide monopoly in the production and trade of cut diamonds. There is no precise statistical information for Antwerp, but the following contemporary figures give a good indication of the industry's size. Roughly three million carats, half the world production, were said to have been cut in Belgium each year. The raw diamonds came mostly via London from South Africa, though German ones from German South-West Africa (Namibia) were used as well. Estimates of the workforce of the diamond cutters vary between six and twelve thousand – depending on the geographical (city or province of Antwerp) and professional (just diamonds, or jewellery in general) definitions. Workshops varied in size from a dozen to a thousand employees. The owners were usually also directly

⁶⁴⁷ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie' p. 6.

⁶⁴⁸ See for example: Ludwig Volkmann, *Generalgouvernement Belgien. Zwei Jahre Deutsche Arbeit. Auf Grund amtlicher Quellen zusammengestellt.*, Leipzig 1917, p. 53.

involved in the diamond trade. Including the multifaceted trade – which had its official centre in the Diamond Exchange, established in 1904 – it was calculated that the livelihood of between thirty and fifty thousand people in the province depended on the industry.⁶⁴⁹

The success of the industry in Antwerp, which had begun to surpass Amsterdam in importance just before the war, rested principally on the following factors: a long tradition of know-how, a skilled workforce, a culture of relatively low wages and profit margins, an unusually flexible credit system facilitated by the local *Banque Générale Belge*, as well as the immigration of wealthy jewellers and merchants in the 1880s and 1890s. These immigrants, most of whom were Jews from Russia and Austria-Hungary, but also from the Ottoman Empire, Germany and the Netherlands, came to dominate particularly the trade in diamonds. Importantly, this first generation of immigrants, who were still active on the eve of the war, not only brought with them useful business networks, but also triggered a steady flow of further immigrants. This was particularly true for Galician (Polish) Jews from Krakow. Consequently, when in August 1914 the Belgian Government expelled all enemy nationals in response to the German invasion, many of the diamond traders, too, found themselves exiled.⁶⁵⁰

Two months later, the remaining traders and cutters joined the general exodus of the city, fleeing the German bombardment. The majority simply crossed the border into the Netherlands, though several hundred went further, especially to Britain. But while most of the cutters gradually returned to Antwerp, the traders tended to stay put. Many of them had relatives and business partners in the Netherlands, and they formed a colony in Scheveningen, near The Hague. The result was that the entire industry in Antwerp was paralysed: their workers and machines, as well as their considerable bills of debt, were in Antwerp, yet the diamonds, and the other portable assets, were with the traders in

⁶⁴⁹ AGR Brussels, T 476, 54: folder 'Lettres de Ministre, Mars 1918,' not foliated; folder (correspondence summer 1918): E. Pollet, Belgian Consul-General in London, 'Note sur l'industrie du diamant,' 22 July 1918. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie' p. 3. Saerens, *Vreemdelingen*, pp. 11-12, 763 n. 22.

⁶⁵⁰ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 86: memo Lumm, 'Die Banque Générale Belge in ihren Beziehungen zum Antwerpener Diamanthehandel,' Brussels, 22 May 1918, p. 2. Saerens, *Vreemdelingen*, p. 11. Salamon Dembitzer, *Aus engen Gassen*, Berlin 1916, esp. pp. 44-5, 61-3.

exile. Thus, like so many Belgian industries, the diamond industry lacked both raw materials and markets at the beginning of the occupation.⁶⁵¹

Early on, the Government-General established contact with the traders in the Netherlands in order to attempt a revival of the industry. The negotiations were largely conducted by the provincial Civilian Administration, though the primary responsibility was not transferred to it until mid-1917. Coetermans, an influential merchant who had done business with the German Diamond Office (*Diamantregie*) before the war, and Louis van Berckelaer, the chairman of the *Antwerpsche Diamantbewerkerbond*, the largest diamond cutters' union, were the main contacts initially. The Antwerp branch of the Bank Section was also actively involved because of the central role of the *Banque Générale Belge* in the diamond trade. In the context of the abolition of the Belgian moratorium, the diamond traders ('*Diamantäre*') needed to be persuaded to settle their debts, or else the bank would have collapsed.⁶⁵²

To what extent, then, did they manage to revive the industry? The evidence found so far, though fragmentary, allows a rough reconstruction of the development. At the end of March 1915, the diamond workshops were still virtually idle. According to Sandt, the reason was lack of raw material; the little that had been left in Antwerp had provided employment for a fraction of the diamond cutters for a brief period only.⁶⁵³ The situation seemed to have improved over the summer. Historian Antoon Vrints writes that unemployment in the sector had largely disappeared by July, but this assessment seems to be too optimistic: Sandt reported in November 1915, that the – unspecified – employment rate from about three months previously had halved.⁶⁵⁴ Nevertheless, a real breakthrough had been achieved certainly by the beginning of 1916. An arrangement had been found to overcome the spatial separation of production and trade. While the traders stayed in the Netherlands, effectively

⁶⁵¹ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 86: memo Lumm, 'Die Banque Générale Belge,' p. 14. AGR Brussels, T 476, 54: folder (correspondence 1915). Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 264.

⁶⁵² GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 48. BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 86: memo Lumm, 'Die Banque Générale Belge,' esp. pp. 18-19. HStA Munich, MH, 15520, folder 'Notlage der Diamantindustrie, 1915': Solf, *Reichskolonialamt*, to Bavarian foreign ministry, 27 Feb. 1915. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 262.

⁶⁵³ HStA Munich, MH, 15520, folder 'Notlage der Diamantindustrie, 1915': Sandt to Bavarian foreign ministry, 30 March 1915.

⁶⁵⁴ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 262. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 30 Oct. 1915, p. 9.

transferring the Antwerp Diamond Exchange to Scheveningen, they were permitted to have their raw diamonds cut in Antwerp. According to German reports, out of six thousand diamond cutters three, and at its peak four, thousand could be employed again at reduced wages. The raw diamonds came at first from the traders' own pre-war stocks, and then for a while from the German *Diamantregie*. In addition to that, since these supplies were soon exhausted⁶⁵⁵, the traders managed to increasingly purchase South African stones. The most important market for the cut jewels was the USA, where war-induced affluence had brought about a surge in the demand for luxury goods. Even though this export was riddled with British and Dutch restrictions, the traders could usually procure the necessary certificates, for example that the stones were of British and not of German origin. Goods of lesser quality were apparently also sold to Turkey and the Balkans. In the course of these successful transactions, and with the respectable profits made by the traders involved, the *Banque Générale Belge* was also stabilised.⁶⁵⁶

During 1917, the industry declined again. A primary cause is hard to single out from the following contributory factors. On the one hand, the British restrictions got tougher and fewer South African raw diamonds were available on the Dutch market. On the other hand, the German trading regulations, too, got tougher, and the large-scale dismantling of Belgian industries and the scarcity of essential supplies such as coal also had a negative impact on the diamond cutting workshops.⁶⁵⁷ Another factor, not mentioned in the sources, might have been the entry into the war of the USA, which might have made access to the American market more difficult. In his post-war report, the diamond trader Hans van Gulik laid the chief responsibility for the downturn on the inflexibility of the German authorities. Gulik was appointed special advisor on diamonds to the provincial Civilian Administration in December 1917. He claimed that through his interventions the industry was revived, raising the diamond cutter workforce

⁶⁵⁵ Diestel wrote that the German pre-war stocks amounted to 'several hundred thousand' carat, which seems more probable than the 'fifteen million' carat cited by Vrints. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie,' p. 4. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 263.

⁶⁵⁶ BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 6: travel report Fürstenberg, pp. 13-14. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie,' pp. 3-4.

⁶⁵⁷ BAMA Freiburg, PH 30, I, 211: anonymous memo [Rudolf Asmis?], 'Die belgischen Wirtschaftsinteressen in Holland und Holländisch-Indien', (= report no. 6, Section VII, PA GG), n.d. [mid-1917], pp. 27-28. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie,' p. 4.

from 479 to almost five thousand by the end of the war.⁶⁵⁸ Unfortunately, this astonishing achievement could not be corroborated so far. It seems rather doubtful, considering that Erich Diestel did not mention it in his report. Moreover, as shown in table 6, the employment census by Antwerp City Council points to a far less healthy state of the industry.⁶⁵⁹ However, with too many unknowns remaining, van Gulik's claim cannot be dismissed either.

In what ways did the Germans contribute to the revival of the industry? First, the Government-General furnished the diamond traders with all necessary travel visas – though this generosity was not extended to ‘enemy subjects’, which excluded those traders who had Russian passports.⁶⁶⁰ Secondly, it facilitated the transport of all necessary material across the border, often using its own courier service. Of course, this also permitted the Germans a measure of control over import and export of the diamonds. Thirdly, it prohibited the export of any tools or machines of the industry, which could have led to its relocation outside Belgium. This was a real threat: a few Belgians established diamond cutting factories in the Netherlands and in Britain, and at least one of them managed to smuggle his machinery from Antwerp.⁶⁶¹ Fourthly, it supplied raw diamonds. As noted, the German *Diamantregie* gradually shipped its entire reserves to Antwerp. This did not go unnoticed in Germany, as there were small diamond cutting centres in Silesia and the Palatinate, which were apparently neglected during the war.⁶⁶² Fifth, it encouraged the traders to send their American-bound ware on the only German blockade-runners, the commercial submarines: Antwerp diamonds were apparently on board the *Deutschland* on both its successful journeys across the Atlantic in 1916, as well as on board the *Bremen*, which disappeared without a trace on its first attempt. Romi Goldmuntz sent

⁶⁵⁸ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: van Gulik, ‘Tätigkeitsbericht als Sachverständiger für die Diamantindustrie bei der Zivilverwaltung für die Provinz Antwerpen,’ Feb. 1919, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁹ The thirty-one workshops listed employed only 20% (584) of their pre-war workforce of 2,856 after the war [in 1920?], with 11 (35%) workshops employing half or more. The total employment level was thus below the city's average, though there was a bigger discrepancy between ‘winners’ and ‘losers’.

⁶⁶⁰ Unless otherwise indicated see for the following the reports by [Diestel], Lumm, van Gulik, Fürstenberg, and report no. 6 of Section VII, PA GG, cited in footnotes nos. 650, 655-658.

⁶⁶¹ AGR Brussels, T 476, 54: esp. letter Krijn, Birmingham 27 Aug. 1917.

⁶⁶² Complaints were voiced in particular by: Eppler, *Der Diamant*, p. 9. See also HStA Munich, MH, 15520, folder ‘Notlage der Diamantindustrie, 1915’.

jewels worth a million German Marks with these submarines.⁶⁶³ Sixth, and last, it granted the workshops exemptions from the German Army's ruthless requisitioning programme from 1917 onward, which had targeted the copper parts of the diamond cutting machines. As mentioned earlier, although the workshops were not unaffected by the harsh economic measures, by and large these exemptions saved them from destruction.

This protection of the diamond industry at a time when not even private Belgian households were safe from requisitions of metals raises the question of motive and benefit: Why did the occupation regime invest so much effort in the Antwerp diamond industry? A number of different reasons seem to have played a role. The essential precondition, of course, was that the German Army was not interested in any of the raw materials needed for the industry – at least until 1917. On this basis, its revival fitted into the Government-General's aim in 1915 to revive the entire Belgian economy within the constraints imposed by the 'necessities of war'. Certainly the provincial Civilian Administration was hopeful that the diamond industry would reduce unemployment. Yet, clearly, there were also reasons of self-interest involved from the beginning.

The most straightforward one was financial. Since virtually all of the cut diamonds were exported, the industry promised both to generate revenue and to back up the value of the German currency. Unfortunately, there are few 'hard' figures available, and even those do not necessarily reflect accurately the financial impact of the trade, because diamonds were (and are) notoriously hard to control. In May 1916, for example, a range of fees (*Gebühren*) was introduced on international trade. During the second half of 1917 the specific fee for diamonds collected about 43,000 Belgian Francs, which rose to about 58,000 in the following semester, making up roughly one and 3% of the respective total incomes from these fees.⁶⁶⁴ More importantly, as seen in Table 2, the value of diamonds exported was considerable, outstripping all other goods by far.

However, the benefit to the German currency was doubtful at times, as the following table illustrates:

⁶⁶³ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: letter Kussius, 6 July 1918. See also: Hartmut Schwerdtfeger and Erik Herlyn, *Die Handels-U-Boote Deutschland und Bremen*, Bremen 1997, esp. p. 123.

⁶⁶⁴ HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, p. 72.

Table 7: Exports and imports of diamonds to the Netherlands in Belgian Francs

	Jan. – June 1917	July – Dec. 1917	Jan. – June 1918
Export	19,589,663	18,337,605	8,767,458
Import	15,185,671	27,296,664	7,993,820

Sources: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 48. HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, pp. 67, 70.

The required positive trading balance was turned into a huge deficit in the second half of 1917. The traders seemed to have imported unusually large amounts of raw diamonds, possibly, if paradoxically, in reaction to the reduced supply in the Netherlands. Another problem, perhaps related, was that an increasing amount of cut diamonds were smuggled, often by soldiers, from Antwerp to Germany, where there was a growing market for them.⁶⁶⁵ The German response was swift: further importation of the stones was temporarily prohibited and remained more restricted, the granting of travel visas was reduced to selected traders, and it became a criminal offence for soldiers to carry diamonds across the border.⁶⁶⁶ According to Hans van Gulik, the Bank Section and the Section for Trade and Industry were so impressed by the negative figures in late 1917, that they obtained the authorisation to ‘close’ the entire industry. Only the resistance of the provincial Civilian Administration prevented it. Interestingly, Gulik explained that the German statistics for the diamond trade were false: confusing and restricting regulations, as well as ignorance on the part of the controllers, had led the traders to make fake declarations. He calculated that the actual export value for 1917 was at least forty million Francs greater than thought.⁶⁶⁷ Again, Gulik’s claims have not been substantiated. In any case, as the last column of table 7 shows, the trading balance returned to an acceptable positive figure in 1918 – probably also through Gulik’s introduction of appropriate book-keeping.

When the Section for Trade and Industry reported the relative success in re-establishing a positive trading balance, it was also quick to point out once more that ‘the maintenance of the diamond industry in Antwerp lies in German

⁶⁶⁵ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84, esp. letter Kussius, 6 July 1918: documents on the case of soldier Ernst Bahre, who smuggled diamonds to Germany on four occasions, the largest batch valued at 875,000 Marks. He was acting mainly as a courier for Dutch diamond traders, particularly for *Goldmüntz Frères*, owned by the brothers of Romi Goldmüntz.

⁶⁶⁶ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 48. HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, pp. 67-68.

⁶⁶⁷ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: van Gulik, ‘Tätigkeitsbericht’, pp. 2-7. Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 103, stated that the annual diamond export in 1915/1916 was 100 million Francs.

interest'.⁶⁶⁸ Similar to the lace industry, it lent itself well to propaganda purposes, in namely three ways. First, the running diamond workshops were portrayed as proof of the 'success' of the German occupation regime and its supposedly benevolent intentions towards Belgium; a Belgian-owned workshop in the *Lange Beeldekenstraat* was among the 'sights' that the provincial Civilian Administration showed to its visitors.⁶⁶⁹ Second, this was contrasted with reports that Britain was trying to build up its own diamond cutting industry with the help of exiled Belgian experts, thus creating a dangerous rival to Antwerp, betraying its avowed ally. While it is true that two or three Belgian diamond businessmen established workshops, and even diamond cutting schools for British war invalids, it emerges from the documents of the Belgian refugee committee in London that these were private ventures and not pursued in any way by the British Government. Nevertheless, the Belgian Government campaigned vigorously for the closure of these schools – partly because it wanted to prevent any relocation of the industry, but mostly and increasingly because it recognised that the German exploitation of this sensitive issue had a strong impact on the loyalty of the Belgian population, especially in Antwerp itself.⁶⁷⁰ Third, it was an important tool in the local *Flamenpolitik*. As Antoon Vrints discovered, there was a 'striking concentration of activists' – those Belgians willing to collaborate with the occupiers in the name of Flemish autonomy or independence – in the diamond sector. Importantly, Vrints argues convincingly, that it is not sufficient to explain this phenomenon in socio-cultural terms, by the Jewish, German and Austrian origin of so many diamond workers. It is more likely that the economic factor, the concrete German support for the industry, was the crucial impetus.⁶⁷¹

Finally, in addition to these short-term reasons, supporting the German war effort on the material and the propaganda front, the Germans also had long-term economic and political considerations. Politically, the support of the industry, especially with its many old Austro-German links and its new Flemish-activist loyalties, was clearly a great asset in any of the schemes to permanently bind Belgium/Flanders/Antwerp closer to Germany. Economically, on a most basic level, it was hoped that the wartime investment by the *Diamantregie* would

⁶⁶⁸ HStA Dresden, 12783 (Schulze), box 1, folder 2: report Welser, 30 July 1918, p. 68.

⁶⁶⁹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: [Diestel], 'Die Industrie,' p. 5.

⁶⁷⁰ See AGR Brussels, T 476, 54.

⁶⁷¹ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 261 ff.

result in strong business links, securing a production market for the German South-West African diamonds, which before the war had still been struggling to compete with those from British South Africa.⁶⁷² However, as Vrints speculates, perhaps the German Government was also thinking along grander lines: in the case of a German victory, Germany might not just regain its African colony but also expand, in alliance with the Boers, into the South African diamond mines. With Antwerp and its diamond industry also firmly under German control, this would mean a sudden, overwhelming dominance of Germany on the entire diamond market.⁶⁷³

In addition to agriculture and industry, the German economic exploitation of Antwerp extended to the commercial and banking sector. Though overshadowed by Brussels, Antwerp had been Belgium's second banking centre before the war. During its brief period as capital, after the fall of Brussels, Antwerp was also the seat of the Belgian national bank. As vividly recounted in the memoirs of Austrian economist Felix Somary, a delegation of the Government-General's Bank Section entered the city of Antwerp on the very day of its capitulation even before the German soldiers.⁶⁷⁴ Their mission was to secure the Belgian national treasury, but the Belgian Government had moved all state-owned valuables, including the stocks of precious metals and the printing blocks for the Belgian bank notes, in time to London. The disappointing yield for the Bank Section consisted of 2,500 kg of silver bars and 35,000 Belgian Francs of wages for a Belgian regiment, and some minor further finds worth a few thousand Belgian Francs in other Banks, especially the *Banque d'Anvers*.⁶⁷⁵

During the course of the occupation, the banking world in Antwerp seems to have revived quicker than in Brussels. The Antwerp bourse, for example, officially re-opened its doors in mid-1915, whereas the Brussels one operated semi-officially from a café for almost the entire duration of the occupation.⁶⁷⁶ Moreover, Karl von Lumm's reports for the Bank Section give the strong

⁶⁷² StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: letter Kussius, 6 July 1918, p. 2.

⁶⁷³ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 269.

⁶⁷⁴ Felix Somary, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, Zurich n.d., pp. 124-6. Zilch cautions that Somary's memoirs are unreliable. Zilch, *Okkupation und Wahrung*, p. 144.

⁶⁷⁵ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 10/2: fol. 7: Lumm, 'Bericht ber die Tatigkeit der Bankabteilung' (= report Lumm), 11 Oct. 1914; fol. 28: report Lumm, 15 April 1915.

⁶⁷⁶ See for example: *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 9 Dec. 1915, p. 7.

impression that the Antwerp banks worked better in tune with the German war effort. He highlighted on several occasions that a number of Antwerp banks cooperated well with both the Bank Section and the German *Reichsbank*, particularly in two ways: they cashed bills and other claims owed to them in South America, then transferring these sums – ‘radiographically’ – to Belgium; and they sold their Argentinean securities in the Netherlands, having been supplied with the necessary visas by the Germans.⁶⁷⁷ Their pro-German activities found also expression in a German statistic. From May 1916 onward, the Bank Section recorded the Belgian banks’ stock-exchange transactions in order to moderate their effect on Germany’s balance of payments. As the following table shows, Antwerp consistently traded in a better balance for Germany than Brussels. According to Lumm, this strengthened the value of the German currency, whereas the Brussels banks tended to weaken it.

Table 8. Value of German-Belgian stock-exchange transactions in Antwerp and Brussels, in German Marks

	Bought from Germany		Sold to Germany ⁶⁷⁸		German Balance of Payments	
	Antwerp	Brussels	Antwerp	Brussels	Antwerp	Brussels
May 1916	1,367,000	277,000	1,094,000	2,480,000	273,000	-2,203,000
June 1916	2,382,000	369,000	2,623,000	1,032,000	-241,000	-663,000
July 1916	3,283,000	260,000	1,838,000	1,642,000	1,445,000	-1,382,000
July-Dec. 1916	15,302,000	4,636,000	6,311,100	12,237,300	8,990,900	-7,874,300
Jan.-June 1917	13,737,000	2,220,000	5,892,800	4,712,700	7,844,200	-2,492,700
July-Dec. 1917	8,023,900	6,719,800	9,190,600	19,641,600	-1,166,700	-12,921,800
Jan.-June 1918	3,223,500	5,690,400	2,518,900	11,206,000	704,600	-5,515,600

Sources: BA Berlin, N 2181 (NL Lumm), 10/2, fols. 194, 250, 314, 343, 367: reports Lumm, Aug. 1916, Feb. 1917, Aug. 1917, Feb. 1918, Aug. 1918.

⁶⁷⁷ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 10/2: fol. 29: report Lumm, 15 April 1915; fols. 106-7, report Lumm, Nov. 1915; fol. 140: report Lumm, Feb. 1916; fols. 240-1: report Lumm, Feb. 1917; fol. 313: report Lumm, Aug. 1917.

⁶⁷⁸ Some of these securities were from neutral countries, which Germany could therefore sell on.

Admittedly, these figures merely indicate an average tendency of greater cooperation on behalf of the Antwerp banks compared to the ones in Brussels. For a more sophisticated analysis of the extent of cooperation it is necessary to investigate the archive of probably each of the banks concerned, which would require a separate study. This is especially true for a precise examination of the reasons behind this cooperation. Lumm's reports, however, give room for speculation. In some cases, the influence of the German Colony seems to have been crucial. Most travel visas were issued to the 'German directors' of certain banks. And the most prominent case of money-transfer from overseas was conducted by business magnate H. A. 'de' Bary, the 'German burgomaster of Antwerp': by the end of October 1916, he had transferred exactly 93,284,557.50 German Marks from neutral countries to Germany.⁶⁷⁹ Thus, in these cases the cooperation was probably 'ideologically' motivated – and one could speak of outright collaboration. However, in other cases the cooperation might have simply made good business sense, while in many cases it might not have been voluntary, since an increasing number of banks were either strictly supervised or even run by the Bank Section.

Results

The Germans seemed to have successfully exploited Antwerp – the city, port and province – for the German war effort in many ways. Militarily, the great fortress of Antwerp, somewhat adapted according to the latest developments of warfare, was a key element in the rear protection of the German armies. The port, it is true, could not be exploited to the full potential for the Navy and was merely used as a minor support unit for the bases at Ostende, Brugge and Zeebrugge. Nevertheless, it turned out to be of great value for the Army as a huge depot and transshipment centre, which became an increasingly important element in its transportation logistics.

Economically, the main benefit for the German war effort was derived from the port of Antwerp. The supplies of raw materials stocked in the port exceeded the German expectations. Their ruthless and mostly illegal confiscation ensured that they were used almost exclusively to the advantage of the Army and the

⁶⁷⁹ PA AA Berlin, R 21562, fol. 95: Bary to Bethmann Hollweg, 11 Nov. 1916. See also chapter 10.

German home front. Throughout the occupation the port was also a crucial factor in facilitating the Government-General's 'foreign trade'. In addition, the Germans established several institutions that were almost unique to Antwerp, which contributed further to the war effort and to the relief of the German home front: the *Kohlenzentrale*, the *Ölzentrale* and the *Grenzbewirtschaftung*. Lastly, there are indications that the German exploitation of the financial, industrial and agricultural resources was more successful in Antwerp than on average in occupied Belgium, because of the cooperation and even collaboration of members of the German Colony.

It is hard to assess whether the Germans had pushed this exploitation to its limits. In some respects, the German military and economic 'use' of Antwerp was relatively benign. There is room for speculation that the businesses in the urban agglomeration suffered slightly less than the Belgian average. The port, in any case, had received only minor damages by the time the Germans left, even though there were many installations that could have been dismantled. Considering their systematic destruction of Belgian industrial plants, this is a surprising finding. Even more striking was the active German support for the Antwerp diamond industry, without which the industry would have lain idle at best.

These apparently better treatments of certain industrial sectors in Antwerp were possibly linked to the strong local German Civilian Administration and its relatively 'lenient' course, as discussed in chapter 7. In case of the diamond industry at least, the interventions of the Civilian Administration had indeed been crucial for its survival. Of course, the more fundamental reason was that the German war economy benefited from a working port and an intact diamond industry. It also might be asked if such lenient treatment was linked to German hopes of keeping control of Antwerp after the war, a question which will be addressed in chapter 11. Another important reason, at least in the case of the diamond industry, was that Germany could successfully exploit its support for propaganda: as discussed above, it was presented as direct proof of Germany's good intentions, and as proof that Germany made a better economic partner than the Entente. This propaganda was partly tied to the German *Flamenpolitik*. The implementation of this policy in Antwerp will be examined next.

Chapter 9: *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp

General features of *Flamenpolitik*

It seems useful to first give an overview of the most important characteristics and developments of the German ‘Flemish policy’, so that the specificities of the Antwerp case can be better identified. Broadly speaking, *Flamenpolitik* was part of the German global strategy of destabilising the enemy countries – the programme of revolution and insurgency identified by Fritz Fischer –, while at the same time it was a concrete tool for what Hans Gatzke has memorably termed the German ‘Drive to the West’ during the war, the attempted westward expansion of German power, if not territory.⁶⁸⁰

In other words, the Germans intended the *Flamenpolitik* to weaken Belgium internally, possibly culminating in the formal abolition of the Belgian nation state. Externally, the German *Reich* was to become the ‘protector’ of the fledgling Flemish nation, whatever form of government and whatever degree of independence it would get. In addition to that, the *Flamenpolitik* was meant to encourage a closer political association between the Flemish northern half of Belgium and the Netherlands – thus drawing the Netherlands, too, into the German sphere of influence. Accordingly, the Germans had a twofold tactical aim: to alienate the Flemish Belgians from the Walloon Belgians, and to foster the sense of cultural and ethnic kinship between German, Dutch and Flemish. There was also a corresponding ‘Walloon policy’, which aimed at creating a distinct Walloon identity that was defined as at least partly ‘Germanic’ and as culturally and even linguistically different from French. However, the German financial, organisational and ideological effort of this ‘Walloon policy’ was much smaller than its Flemish counterpart, and practical measures were introduced only late in the war.

The German Government decided to exploit the Belgian Flemish Movement and its grievances as early as 2 September 1914 – which signified a complete

⁶⁸⁰ Fischer, *Griff*, passim. Gatzke, *Drang nach Westen*, passim. For the following see: Fischer, *Griff*, esp. pp. 268-80, 327-46, 363-8, 583-92, 801-8. Gatzke, *Drang nach Westen*, esp. pp. 92-9, 158-9. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*. Lode Wils, *Histoire des nations belges*, Ottignies 1996, pp. 215-24. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*. De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, esp. ch. 5, 8. De Schaepdrijver, ‘Idea of Belgium.’ Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, esp. pp. 75-86, 105-24, 168-83. Nationale Bond voor Belgische Eenheid, *Geschiedkundig Overzicht van het Aktivisme*, Brussels 1929.

reversal of the pre-war policy of non-interference and from the tacit support for the francophone nature of official Belgium. After an initial period of preparation, the *Flamenpolitik* started off in early 1915 with a programme of preferential treatments, both in the prisoner of war camps and in the occupied country. French was gradually eliminated as official language in the five northern provinces, with the partial exception of Brabant. In October 1916, the university of Ghent was re-opened as an entirely Dutch-speaking institution – which had been an emotionally laden demand of the Flemish Movement for decades. In March 1917, the Government-General proclaimed its most radical incision into the Belgian constitution, dividing the country's administration into a Flemish and a Walloon part, which were separated territorially along the ancient language border. The seat of the Flemish Administration stayed in Brussels, while that for the Walloon half was moved to Namur. All this time, large amounts of money were poured into Flemish 'cultural' projects, most particularly into Dutch-language pro-German newspapers. Dutch contacts and the infiltration of the Belgian refugee organisations in the Netherlands played an important role in this propaganda effort.

On the Belgian/Flemish side, there was a split in the Flemish Movement between the majority passivists, who refused collaboration with the enemy during the war, and the minority 'activists', who decided that collaboration was justified if it furthered the Flemish cause. Virtually the entire pre-war leadership was on the passivist side and exerted considerable influence over all those who were interested in Flemish emancipation. The activists were a generally amorphous selection of individuals who had played at most a secondary role in the pre-war Flemish Movement, with some of them presiding over small groups of followers. The attitude of the less politicised 'masses', especially in the countryside, is hard to determine, with both sides claiming their sympathy. Virtually the entire Belgian intelligentsia, including the powerful Catholic establishment led by Cardinal Mercier in Mechelen, mobilised opposition to the *Flamenpolitik* and the activists.

While the Germans dealt with individuals and local groups which had relatively little contact among each other during the first half of the war, in February 1917, they combined them all in a Raad van Vlaanderen, a 'Council of Flanders'. For the Germans, the primary purpose of the Raad was to lend

political legitimacy to the *Flamenpolitik*, especially with respect to democrats both abroad and at home. It was to be the proof that the Germans were not suppressing a country but, on the contrary, that they were liberating a people. In theory, the Raad van Vlaanderen was meant to represent at least a large portion of the Flemish population, and it was to become a government in waiting, with increasing influence on, or even autonomy from, the German occupation regime. In practice, the Government-General set very tight limits on its powers and its main activities were its German-funded propaganda effort. Although by the end of the war these efforts registered an increased impact on the attitude of the general Flemish population, they failed to convert a significant number of people: even the apologist Faingnaert could not put the number of adherents to the activist ‘movement’ at more than 125,000, out of about four million Flemish, and even that number was an over-estimate. Modern research confirms the post-war estimate by the Ligue Nationale pour l’Unité Belge of 20,000 committed supporters as a more realistic maximum number.⁶⁸¹

The members of the Raad did not share the same aims about the future of Belgium, or the same views about the nature of their collaboration with the German occupiers. For example, those grouped around the radical ‘Young Flanders’ club from Ghent fervently advocated the destruction of the Belgian state and an independent Flanders that would be at least militarily dependent on Germany, while the moderate ‘Unionists’, based especially in Antwerp, emphasised the need to stay independent of Germany and to keep Belgium at least in the form of the royal court, creating a personal union between the two autonomous states of Flanders and Wallonia.

Similarly, the Government-General’s *Flamenpolitik* was not conducted with a unified voice. As Winfried Dolderer has shown, it was driven to a large extent by individual agents of non-governmental origins. There were serious clashes among the various German institutions over aims and methods, most prominently at first between the Government-General and the *Etappe IV* and later between the Political Department and the Civilian Administration for

⁶⁸¹ Ligue Nationale pour l’Unité Belge, *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandres (Raad van Vlaanderen)*, Brussels 1928, p. ix. De Schaepdrijver, ‘Idea of Belgium,’ p. 292. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 257. A recent figure of 50 to 70,000 supporters put forward by Van Hees is based on the misleading figures for the ‘elections’ to the second Council of Flanders as Vrints demonstrates. P. Van Hees, ‘Activisme,’ in Reginald de Schyver (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, vol. 1: Tiel 1998. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 202-9.

Flanders. In general, however, the Government-General and the imperial Government in Berlin preferred a cautious approach, which would undermine Belgium but which would not preclude a 'negotiated peace' with the Belgian Government. It was this fundamental indecision about Germany's war aims that was the root cause of most of the divergent approaches of the *Flamenpolitik* in occupied Belgium.

In December 1917, the Raad van Vlaanderen single-handedly declared the complete independence of Flanders – to the embarrassment of the Germans, who suppressed the publication of the declaration for a few weeks and then had 'independence' changed to 'self-determination'. As a result, the Raad dissolved itself and planned national elections for a new Raad that was to be more of a proto-government. In view of the popular hostility against the activists, the 'elections' were actually held as 'acclamations' of pre-selected candidates by voters who had signed a declaration of loyalty. Despite this careful orchestration, these 'elections', held locally in January and February 1918 provoked popular riots against the activists, notably in Antwerp city and in Mechelen. The second Raad became ever more radicalised and increasingly clashed with the German authorities. Consequently, and also under the impression of the military setbacks during the summer of 1918, the Germans sidelined the Raad, finally abolishing it in September.

Lode Wils, an authority on '*Flamenpolitik* and activism' since the 1960s, assesses the German-Flemish venture as a total failure in the short term; it never got a real foothold in Flanders and its measures could only be implemented under the protection of the German arms. Indeed, as Sophie de Schaepdrijver points out, the bluntly anti-Belgian actions and rhetoric alienated the vast majority of the Belgian population, cancelling out the more subtle work to erode popular patriotism and hatred of the occupier. In the long term, however, Wils argues that it contributed decisively to the radicalisation of the Flemish Movement, profoundly altering the course of Belgian history. Memories of measures of the *Flamenpolitik*, such as the 'flemishisation' of the University of Ghent, combined in the post-war period with the emancipation movement of Flemish soldiers in the Belgian Army (the *frontbeweging*) to put the spotlight on the Belgian government's continued sluggishness in addressing the Flemish grievances. Indeed, the stubborn insistence of the activists – who assumed the

role of persecuted martyrs after the war – that they had been right suddenly became credible. As a result, the Flemish identity was increasingly constructed in opposition to, and no longer as a part of, the Belgian identity.⁶⁸²

Not least because of these direct repercussions to the present day, the *Flamenpolitik* and, even more so, the activist phenomenon, probably constitute the most researched aspect of Belgium in the First World War.⁶⁸³ Until the 1960s the historiography in both Belgium and Germany was marked by partisan prejudice and circulated around questions of origin and guilt. Thanks to the subsequent scholarship, it is today generally accepted that: 1) the *Flamenpolitik* was intended to serve German expansionism and had little to do with helping an oppressed people; and 2) the Flemish activism was born primarily as a result of *Flamenpolitik* – it was neither the logical result of the pre-war Flemish Movement, nor was it a reaction to alleged francophone Belgian-nationalist provocations. The only exception, as Daniel Vanacker has shown, were the founders of the ‘Young Flanders’ group in Ghent, who had a pre-war radical, anti-Belgian history and who became ‘active’ independently of the Germans.⁶⁸⁴ Further research, notably as published in the journal *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*, has diversified the field of investigation, bringing to light biographical, local, social and psychological details and differentiations.

The case of Antwerp has been analysed in several Belgian ‘licentiaat’ theses. Antoon Vrints’ *Bezette Stad. Vlaams-nationalistische collaboratie in Antwerpen tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, which was published in 2002, is the most recent, and probably the most comprehensive one.⁶⁸⁵ However, while Vrints naturally concentrates on the Flemish side, the following pages intend to put the German perspective more centre stage – as far as the scarce source material permits. How did the occupation regime implement the *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp? How

⁶⁸² Wils, *Nations belges*, pp. 222-3. De Schaepdrijver, ‘Idea of Belgium,’ p. 287. Sophie De Schaepdrijver, ‘The Dangers of Idealism. Conflicting Memories of the German Occupation in Belgium,’ *14/18: Aujourd’hui. Today. Heute*, 4 (2002). Geert Buelens, ‘Like Seeds in the Sand. On (the absence of) Flemish War Poets,’ in Michaël Amara, Serge Jaumain, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une Guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale*, Brussels 2005, p. 605-6.

⁶⁸³ Reginald de Schyver (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, Tielt 1998, vol. 1, p. 126. Lefèvre and Lorette, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale bibliographie*, pp. 376-98.

⁶⁸⁴ Daniël Vanacker, *Het aktivistisch avontuur*, Ghent 1991, esp. pp. 224 ff., 369-70.

⁶⁸⁵ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*.

responsive were the Antwerp *flamingants* to it, and how did the Germans working in Antwerp relate to this policy and to the activists?

Implementation of *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp

Just as in the rest of Flemish Belgium, the *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp consisted of two distinguishable strands. The first strand consisted of those measures that the Germans could take ‘unilaterally’. Promoting Dutch at the expense of French, they were intended to win the sympathy of the Flemish Movement: Lode Wils called them the ‘baits’. For example, in accordance with a directive of the Governor-General of 6 October 1914, all official announcements posted in Antwerp put the Dutch text in second place, after the German but before the French one. From January 1916 onwards, the French version was left out completely in Antwerp.⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, French was discouraged in all communications with the local Belgian authorities. Then there were the Governor-General’s successive language decrees, targeting first schools and later all public institutions. While they created endless difficulties in Brussels, which had been predominantly francophone, few problems were reported from the rest of the Flemish provinces. The Antwerp City Council seemed to have been particularly cooperative in this matter— though this signified merely the continuation of a pre-war trend in this ‘most Flemish city of Belgium’. In fact, according to the civilian president, the decrees hardly needed to be implemented in Antwerp. Most of the few francophone institutions left were closed because of the war anyway – and the most influential of them, the Chamber of Commerce, was shut down by order of von Bissing in late 1915.⁶⁸⁷

A corollary of these measures was that many Germans employed in the occupation regime learnt Dutch. As a guide for German soldiers, printed in Brussels in November 1917, put it: ‘Whoever speaks French in Flanders offends

⁶⁸⁶ *Sammlung der Bekanntmachungen und Verordnungen der deutschen Behörden in Antwerpen. 9. Oktober 1914 - Ende September 1916*, n.p. n.d. [1916]. See also: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 40.

⁶⁸⁷ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 41, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, p. 2195: Oszwald quotes specific reports by president Schramm in 1917. PA Antwerp, W.O.I., box ‘Fonds 1914-1918’: *Gemeentebestuur* Antwerp, ‘Verslag,’ p. 30: description of the effect of the language decrees in 1917 and 1918 on some primary and secondary schools. *Annuaire de la Chambre*, p. 82. See also ch. 7.

grossly against his duty as a German and as a soldier.’⁶⁸⁸ Curiously, knowledge of Dutch was not formally required for employment in the Military or the Civilian Administration, and there does not appear to have been a centralised system for learning it – which was symptomatic of the improvised nature of *Flamenpolitik*. In Antwerp, the director of the German School, Bernhard Gaster, took on the task of spreading knowledge of the Flemish language and literature among the Germans. He wrote several learners’ guides, which went through several editions during the war. His first, a booklet with grammar and phrases, appeared in December 1915.⁶⁸⁹ In addition, he organised language classes for the occupation regime in his school: in the autumn of 1916, 394 soldiers and 390 officers and civil servants had enrolled in them.⁶⁹⁰ This attendance level is impressive, suggesting that a good proportion of soldiers and civilians stationed in Antwerp gained at least a working knowledge of Dutch – which is of course a relatively easy feat for most German speakers.

Exact figures are not known, however, and it is not clear to what extent the Germans used Dutch in their official dealings with the locals in Antwerp. A common complaint coming from the local resistance was that there were few who did, and that the Germans too often communicated simply in German – even in the German courts, apparently to the effect that Belgians often did not know what they were accused of.⁶⁹¹ While this claim has not been fully verified, it seemed to have been at least the case that the German correspondence with Antwerp City Council was usually in German and had to be translated by the Belgians.⁶⁹² It also seems unlikely that any of the Germans in the top positions of

⁶⁸⁸ PA GG [Oszwald], *Merkblatt für deutsche Heeresangehörige in Flandern*, Brussels Nov. 1917. A copy is for example in: BAMA Freiburg, N 523 (Schulze-Gaevernitz), 1a. See also Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 42.

⁶⁸⁹ A list of Gaster’s wartime Flemish publications is in: Théodore Heyse, ‘La Pénétration des Allemands en Belgique,’ *Revue Belge des Livres, Documents et Archives de la Guerre 1914-1918*, 5-9 (1928-1933), vol. IV, p. 172. They include: Bernhard Gaster, *Leitfaden zur schnellen Erlernung der vlämischen Sprache*, Wolfenbüttel 1916. (3rd ed. 1917; 1st ed. Dec. 1915, according to Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 307.) Bernhard Gaster, *Vlämische Lesebuch für Deutsche*, Wolfenbüttel 1916. Bernhard Gaster, ‘Einführung in die vlämische Sprache,’ *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, (Aug. 1916). Reproduced in: *Vlamenland. Vereinsblatt der Deutsch-Flämischen Gesellschaft*, 2/2 (1918) (Information Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 306.). Bernhard Gaster, *Metoula Sprachführer: Flämisch*, Berlin 1917.

⁶⁹⁰ *Belgischer Kurier*, 31 Oct. 1916. See also: Robert Paul Oszwald, ‘Wendung zur Wirklichkeit. Politik und Krieg,’ *Deutsch-Niederländische Symphonie*, Wolfshagen-Scharbeutz 1937, p. 189.

⁶⁹¹ See for example: Buerbaum, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel*, vol. 1, pp. 124-5, vol. 2, pp. 113, 183.

⁶⁹² SA Antwerp, MA 856, nos. 72-79: ‘vertalingsdienst’.

both Military and Civilian Administration had prior knowledge of Dutch. Civilian president Max Schramm, for one, in office since August 1916, only started to learn it in February 1917.⁶⁹³ Most embarrassingly, according to Robert Paul Oszwald, a certain Pringsheim was well versed in English and French but had not a word of Dutch: yet, in April 1918, he was appointed press officer for Antwerp, a crucial post for the *Flamenpolitik*.⁶⁹⁴ It is thus conceivable that some German-Belgian negotiations in Antwerp were held in French until the very end. In other words, the ‘bait’ of the deferential adoption of Dutch by the Germans in Antwerp, though presented with some enthusiasm, was not followed through consistently and can only have been a partial success.

Another type of ‘bait’ was more ‘stick’ than ‘carrot’. It was the deliberate provocation of the Flemish Movement with allegations that the Allies, Walloons and *fransquillons* had conspired to destroy Flanders and to suppress the Flemish language and culture forever. The Germans propagated different variants of this theme throughout the war, but they had landed their most spectacular ‘coup’ at the beginning of 1915 – and it concerned Antwerp. In February, countless copies of a pamphlet entitled ‘the truth about the capitulation of Antwerp’ (*La vérité sur la capitulation d’Anvers*) suddenly appeared all over occupied Belgium.⁶⁹⁵ It accused Antwerp of high treason for having surrendered to the German army of siege too early, contrary to military orders and with grave consequences for the Belgian and Allied war effort. Further, reviving the old Franco-Belgian charge that the Flemish Movement was nothing but a branch of Pan-Germanism, it posited that the entire *flamingant* city of Antwerp had acted as an agent of the Germans in the war. Consequently, it not only claimed that the Belgian Government would try the civilian authorities who had signed the Convention of Contich, but it also threatened that the entire city would be punished, it would be reconquered and razed to the ground by the Allies. This, the final lines of the pamphlet declared, would signify the end of the Flemish Movement. Though the pamphlet was anonymous, the author was clearly meant to be an influential Belgian exile, and it purported to be a reprint of an article that had appeared in a Dutch or French newspaper – there were different versions.

⁶⁹³ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), K 12, 1: Schramm to daughter Ruth, 16 Feb. 1917.

⁶⁹⁴ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, p. 3373.

⁶⁹⁵ For the following see especially: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 51-3, 77-8.

Lode Wils has convincingly demonstrated that the pamphlet most likely originated from the circle around the newspaper *Gazet van Brussel*, a wartime foundation that was not only controlled but also largely written by the Germans. Its arguments were intended to latch on to complaints and accusations raised in the Belgian exile press during October and November 1914, though the Allied intention of destroying Antwerp was a uniquely German claim, which had first appeared in the newspaper coverage of the bombardment and which was later reiterated in the *Gazet van Brussel*. In Antwerp, the German authorities, somewhat disingenuously, helped Louis Franck to distribute posters protesting against the allegations made in the pamphlet and asserting that the civilian authorities of Antwerp had received the full support of the Belgian Government.⁶⁹⁶ Yet, the effect of the pamphlet on many Flemish was profound: while modern research has shown that the original complaints in the exile press had not amounted to an anti-Flemish campaign, the *Vérité sur la capitulation d'Anvers* had provided the final proof for many in occupied Belgium, that such a campaign was indeed being waged. In this way the pamphlet had contributed greatly to the creation of an atmosphere that made the emergence of activism possible.⁶⁹⁷

German-Flemish contacts in Antwerp

The second strand of *Flamenpolitik* consisted of the actual contacts and interactions with the Flemish Movement. In terms of the German administrative organisation of the Belgian provinces, it fell in the domain of the press and censorship officers to instigate, foster and coordinate such contacts. This made sense, since the Flemish Movement was primarily a linguistic and cultural emancipation movement, with artists and intellectuals at its forefront. However, both press and *Flamenpolitik* were carved out of the Civilian Administration and allocated to the Political Department at its formation in February 1915. The provincial press officers became the latter's 'delegates' and were no longer subordinated to the civilian presidents. The constant inter-departmental conflict between Political Department and Civilian Administration, which intensified after the administrative separation in the summer of 1917, particularly over the

⁶⁹⁶ Mertens, 'Louis Franck in het verzet,' pp. 404-5.

⁶⁹⁷ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 51.

direction of the *Flamenpolitik*, resulted in the return of both responsibilities to the Civilian Administration in January 1918. After a transitional period, the press officers were fully integrated into the provincial Civilian Administrations, maximising the involvement and control of the civilian presidents, who had long complained about being excluded from the direction of *Flamenpolitik* in their own provinces.⁶⁹⁸ Generally, in the often-delicate dealings with the Flemish Movement – both activist and passivist – personality was an important factor.⁶⁹⁹ So potentially, these institutional changes had a substantial impact on how *Flamenpolitik* was conducted on the ground: for example, which strand of activism was supported and encouraged.

At the beginning, from the conquest to February 1915, *Flamenpolitik* was still accorded relatively low priority in Antwerp. Characteristically, the two press officers appointed by civilian president Justus Strandes had both been reporters in Paris before the war: most likely, they had little knowledge of Dutch or of the Flemish Movement.⁷⁰⁰ One of Governor-General von Bissing's earliest directives of *Flamenpolitik* concerned press censorship, recommending leniency towards Dutch-language papers in order to encourage the Flemish Movement to take up again its struggle for emancipation.⁷⁰¹ Yet the civilian censors in Antwerp reportedly adopted a relatively lenient approach anyway, which, as seen in chapter 7, led to the successful re-opening of a number of established newspapers, including some francophone ones.

The press officers' principal objective was to steer the papers on a German-friendly course. It is true that the Germans financed and held considerable sway over the *Vlaamsche Gazet*, which published four strongly *flamingant* – though not activist – articles before the end of 1914. In fact, the German influence was present from the very beginning, when it was launched on 20 November as successor to the well-known liberal paper *Het Laatste Nieuws*, and not, as

⁶⁹⁸ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', pp. 3279 ff, 3308-17, 3368-9. For such a complaint see for example the report of Bazille, civilian president of Limburg, in: HStA Stuttgart, E 40/72, 750: report Bazille, June 1917, p. 11.

⁶⁹⁹ This is also argued by Oszwald. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', p. 3368, referring to the press activity.

⁷⁰⁰ They were *Regierungsrat* Schiff and Dr. Epstein. HStA Hamburg, 132-II, 3952, fol. 27: report Strandes, 19 Nov. 1914. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', p. 3309.

⁷⁰¹ Grunewald and Scherer (eds), *APP I*, vol. 1 p. 48: Bissing to Bethmann Hollweg, 10 Jan. 1915. See also Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 36.

hitherto assumed, from mid-January on, when the exiled proprietor of the *Laatste Nieuws* withdrew his support and the paper was reincarnated as the ever-more radical *Vlaamsche Nieuws*. However, the Antwerp press office sought to control not only a Dutch-language paper but also a francophone one: by December, it had created *L'Avenir Belge*. According to the description of Robert Oszwald, the internal German guidelines for both papers showed primarily the desire to combat the Belgians' loyalty to the Entente and to soften their hostility towards Germany and the occupation regime – the Flemish struggle against the *fransquillons* was of secondary importance only. Indeed, a third newspaper, which was to raise support for the Flemish Movement among the Germans – both in Antwerp and beyond –, never left the planning stage.⁷⁰²

Nevertheless, from about December 1914 a number of Germans started to fuel the *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp. They were what Winfried Dolderer has identified as 'non-state agents' [*nichtstaatliche Akteure*]: initially not linked to any governmental institution, they became involved because of their own enthusiasm for the Flemish cause, as they perceived it, which usually dated from before the war. In Antwerp, many of them had actually belonged to the German Colony.

Among the vanguard were two pastors. The Catholic Ludwig Hürter had been chaplain in a Dutch-speaking vocational school in Antwerp since 1907. Presumably expelled in August 1914, he returned in October as the chaplain to the German garrison. Nothing is known about his opinions and activities before the war, but within the first months of the war he apparently published some articles on the Flemish Movement.⁷⁰³ It seems likely that he also had relatively easy access to members of the Flemish Movement in Antwerp and that he helped to build up the local network of 'confidential contacts' (*Vertrauensmänner*) for the *Flamenpolitik*. Certainly in 1917 and 1918, he was a significant agent who was involved in the recruitment of activists and who facilitated contact between

⁷⁰² HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', pp. 3310, 3313-15. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 13 Dec. 1914, p. 19. See also: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 89-90. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 66-7.

⁷⁰³ See Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 46. These articles have not been identified; Hürter refers to them in his later publication: Ludwig Hürter, *Die Flamen*, Mönchen-Gladbach 1918, p. 5 n. 1.

Germans and activists in Antwerp.⁷⁰⁴ By February 1915, he was a member of the first working-group of *Flamenpolitik*, the Committee for Flemish Affairs, and by April 1915 he had met Jan Derk Domela Nieuwenhuis Nyegaard, the leader of the radical Young Flemish group in Ghent.⁷⁰⁵

His Protestant colleague August Schowalter was similarly active. He came to Antwerp in mid-November as the pastor for the German Military Government for the province. A member of the 'Flemish Committee' since January 1915, he became known for his good relations with Young Flemish activists: not only with Domela in Ghent but also with Reimond Kimpe in Lier, a city in the district of Antwerp. Importantly, Schowalter had long been a convinced Pan-German. He spoke Dutch fluently since his student years in Utrecht, and at the turn of the century he had been an ardent campaigner for the 'liberation' of both the Flemish and the Boers.⁷⁰⁶ He had thus clearly come to Antwerp with a political as well as a spiritual mission.

It is not certain to what extent other 'non-state agents' were active in Antwerp as early as Hürter and Schowalter. A certain Herr Lücker worked in the press office from at least February 1917 until the very end, where he was specifically responsible for monitoring the Flemish Movement. He was a German national who had been a senior executive (*Prokurist*) in the old and prestigious Antwerp-German Firm Osterrieth & Co. before the war. His local knowledge and possibly even pre-war contacts made him an ideal choice for the wartime job, but it is not known when and how he was hired, or what his personal attitude was.⁷⁰⁷ Two further members of the German Colony had got involved in the *Flamenpolitik* by the beginning of 1915: Bernhard Gaster, the director of the German School, and Pastor Eichler of the Reformationskirche.

⁷⁰⁴ See especially Hürter's correspondence with Conrad Beyerle in: BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle): 2, fols. 161, 162; 7, fol. 200; 22, fol. 40. See also Hürter's presence at Schramm's dinner invitations with activists: HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 86.

⁷⁰⁵ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 46. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 69. The *Ausschuss für vlämische Angelegenheiten* was formed on 11 January 1915; it was added to the Political Department in February. Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, pp. 79-80.

⁷⁰⁶ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 47-50.

⁷⁰⁷ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): K 12, 1: Schramm to wife Olga, 11 Dec. 1917; J 86: Schramm's Table. The extended Osterrieth family was committed in their loyalty to the Belgian state during the war. It is possible that the company did not employ Lücker during the war for political reasons, and not just because of wartime lack of work. See Vrints, 'Klippen,' pp. 15, 31.

As shown in chapter 1, Gaster had been one of the driving forces behind the increased nationalism amongst the German Colony before the war. With the outbreak of war, he became an annexationist. As early as 28 October 1914, he sent a printed memorandum about a reform of the Belgian school system to the German Government. It was based on the assumption that the current German administration of Belgium would be made ‘permanent’, and contained a far-reaching programme of germanisation of Belgium: ‘It is necessary to considerably advance the language border between German and French; it is necessary to withdraw five million Low Germans from Romance influence.’ At the heart of his proposals, accordingly, was the creation of two bilingual school systems in Belgium: one with German and French in the Walloon parts, and one with German and Dutch in the Flemish parts, including Brussels. ‘Moderate’ leaders of the Flemish Movement were to be involved in the construction of the new system in Flanders. However, Gaster also called for a revision of Dutch orthography to make it more similar to German, and he consistently equated Flemish, both the language and the people, with ‘Low-German’.⁷⁰⁸ In other words, this programme was not yet *Flamenpolitik*: it was closer to certain Pan-German demands of the 1890s.⁷⁰⁹

By the time he produced the Flemish language guides and organised the lessons mentioned above, he seemed to have modified at least his strategy according the rules of *Flamenpolitik*: not telling the Flemish they were German, and concentrating on the Flemish Movement’s own goals first. Nevertheless, he seemed to stay somewhat aloof of the Flemish, and it is unlikely that Gaster ever provided a link of any significance to activists. Father Hürter introduced him to Domela in April 1915, and, in 1918 at least, he was present at two of president Schramm’s meetings with activists; but it is telling that, in November 1917, he was vehemently against including activists in the Belgian branches of the

⁷⁰⁸ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539: Gaster, ‘Grundzüge einer Denkschrift über die Gestaltung des belgischen Schulwesens unter deutscher Verwaltung. Aufgestellt nach Besprechung mit MdR und LA Oberlandesgerichtsrat Marx, Düsseldorf, und Geh. Justizrat Trimborn, Köln,’ confidential print dated Düsseldorf, 18 Oct. 1914, sent to AA on 28 Oct. 1914. For the history of a common Dutch-Low German orthography see Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 21.

⁷⁰⁹ See Winfried Dolderer, ‘Alldeutscher Verband,’ in Reginald de Schyver (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, vol. 1: Tiel 1998, vol. 1, p. 266. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, esp. pp. 12-13.

German-Flemish Association (Deutsch-Flämische Gesellschaft).⁷¹⁰ Accordingly, Gaster always concentrated his efforts on converting the Germans, rather than the Flemish, to the cause of *Flamenpolitik*. Early in 1915, he used his public appearances in front of members of the Colony and the occupation regime to invoke the racial bond between Germans and the Flemish – the common ‘Germanic-ness’ (*Germanentum*) – and to conjure up a close alliance for the future. Later, in 1917 and 1918, he campaigned in many German cities for German control of Belgium, specifically of Flanders and Antwerp.⁷¹¹

Protestant Pastor Eichler, too, was involved in the pro-activist propaganda among the Germans in Antwerp. As head of the book commission of the Colony’s wartime Welfare Commission (Wohlfahrtsausschuß der deutschen Kolonie), formed in February 1915, he made sure to send activist brochures and literature of the Flemish Movement to the local Soldiers’ Home.⁷¹² He seemed to have more direct contact with activists than Gaster, though there is no indication that he had had an inside knowledge of the Flemish Movement before the war. Like Gaster, he had been a major proponent of German nationalism in the Colony, and during the war he viewed the Flemish Question primarily from the perspective of a German nationalist and expansionist.⁷¹³ He joined the Committee for Flemish Affairs in 1915.⁷¹⁴ His main activist contact seemed to have been the radical Domela, whom he met in April of that year. The two Protestant Pastors got on exceptionally well. They seemed to have shared much of their political as well as religious outlook and they kept a regular correspondence.⁷¹⁵

Thus, Hürter, Schowalter, Eichler, Gaster and possibly others spread the idea and practice of *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp at the turn of 1914/1915. However, the most significant agent was Max Robert Gerstenhauer, who arrived in Antwerp in February 1915. Gerstenhauer had been one of the experts on Flanders within the

⁷¹⁰ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 304. BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 18: letter von Bary, 15 March 1918, p. 1. BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle), 22, fols. 424-32: correspondence Gaster with Beyerle. See also Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 218. See further down for more on this.

⁷¹¹ Bernhard Gaster, *Bericht über das 75. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1915, p. 14. Heyse, 'La pénétration,' vol. V, p. 342, vol. VI, p. 171.

⁷¹² Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 307 n. 1169. See also ch. 10.

⁷¹³ See chapters 1 (pre-war colony) and 10 (wartime colony).

⁷¹⁴ OAPK Antwerp, D, 4e: Eichler to Leo Meert, 31 Oct. 1918.

⁷¹⁵ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 323-4.

Pan-German League since the 1890s, and he had lived in Antwerp and Brussels. Although an advocate and theorist of ‘racial hygiene’, he had been among those in the League who had vehemently defended the right of the Flemish and Dutch to their own linguistic and cultural identity, which, he had argued, was separate from the (High-) German one but nevertheless part of the greater German nation.⁷¹⁶ In August/September 1914, as a *Landwehr* captain stationed in Flanders, he was one of the ‘non-state agents’ who urged that the ‘Low-German Flemish’ could be won over if treated correctly – and he recommended his own expertise, since he personally knew many of the leaders of the Flemish Movement.⁷¹⁷ The further circumstances of his appointment to the Government-General are not known, but by February 1915 he was the new ‘press delegate’ of the Political Department to Antwerp, taking over the press office there.

One of Gerstenhauer’s contacts from before the war was Pol de Mont, curator of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp since 1904 and a well-known poet and *flamingant*.⁷¹⁸ Interestingly, although de Mont never openly joined the activists during the war, he seemed to have been a sympathiser and gave moral support to some of them. Without ever fully collaborating, he also kept promoting Flemish culture in Antwerp. He seemed to have a relatively good relationship with the Germans, who considered him to be on their side.⁷¹⁹ Most significantly, according to Antoon Vrints, de Mont acted as a ‘mentor’ to August Borms in early 1915. Borms, teacher in Antwerp’s Athenaeum, had made a name for himself in the Flemish Movement as an untiring and flamboyant propagandist by 1914. He became Antwerp’s first and most radical activist.⁷²⁰ On 23 January 1915, Borms published an article in the *Handelsblad* entitled ‘Vlaamingen Waakt!’ (‘Flemings awake!’), which was also reprinted in *Het Vlaamsche Nieuws*. Pointing at the supposed anti-*flamingant* campaign by the francophone

⁷¹⁶ See Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 21-23. See also Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 96.

⁷¹⁷ BA Berlin, R 43, 2463, RK 144: Gerstenhauer to the Government of Sachsen-Meinigen, 30 Aug. 1914, circulating in Berlin and Brussels shortly thereafter.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid. See also Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, esp. p. 12.

⁷¹⁹ See for example BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 17: von Bary to unidentified [Tirpitz?], 19 Feb. 1918, p. 4: ‘Ein Lichtblick ist Pol de Mont, der eigentlich kein Aktivist ist, aber doch Vorträge im Interesse des Flamentums hält.’ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 42. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 58-9.

⁷²⁰ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 62. There is a lot of literature on Borms, particularly because he became *the* symbol for the Belgian persecution of radical *flamingants* after the war. See for example: De Schaepdrijver, ‘Dangers of Idealism.’ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 29.

Belgians, he called for the renewal of the Flemish struggle as a necessity of self-defence. In a follow-up article in the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* on 13 February, he set the example and demanded the proper implementation of the existing Belgian language laws. The paper's following issue the next day carried the response of Max Gerstenhauer: no Fleming should be looked down on for cooperating with the Germans in order to improve the conditions of his people. There is hardly any doubt that the latter two articles were planned and coordinated in advance.⁷²¹ Thus, Gerstenhauer had easily found his way into the world of potential activists in Antwerp.

It seems that virtually from his arrival, Gerstenhauer was able to push the *Flamenpolitik* forward in Antwerp. In particular, he managed to secure the collaboration of Borms and a small group of followers. Of course, Gerstenhauer did not operate in a vacuum. He could build on the work done by his predecessors in the press office and by the other 'non-state agents'. Further, in order for most potential activists to collaborate, the right atmosphere needed to exist among them. Crucially, this atmosphere was shaped by many factors outside the German provincial administration: especially by the fundamental steps of *Flamenpolitik* decided in the central offices in Brussels and by the attitude of the exiled Belgian government. Thus, it seems useful at this point to give a brief overview of the history of activism in Antwerp during the war.

Moderation in Antwerp? – The Flemish Belgians

At the outbreak of war, even those, like Borms, who later became the most virulent anti-Belgian activists, were caught up in the patriotic fervour. Most importantly, appalled by the German ultimatum, invasion and subsequent atrocities, they were adamantly anti-German.⁷²² According to Vrints, this consensus amongst the Flemish Movement lasted longer in Antwerp than in Ghent and Brussels. Domela's new 'Young Flanders' group in Ghent and several individuals in Brussels were willing to secretly collaborate with the occupier as

⁷²¹ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 96-7. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 60-1.

⁷²² Stengers, 'Belgium,' pp. 161-2. A nuanced account of the popular reactions to the war in Brussels is provided by Benoît Majerus, "'L'Âme de la résistance sort des pavés mêmes"?' Quelques réflexions sur la manière dont les Bruxellois sont entrés en guerre (fin juillet 1914 - mi-août 1914),' in Serge Jaumain, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une Guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale*, Brussels 2005. See also: Gerrit Borgers, *Paul Van Ostaijen. Een documentatie*, The Hague 1971, vol. 1, p. 84. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 35, 39. De Schaepdrijver, *Groote Oorlog*, esp. pp. 60-2.

early as October/November 1914, whereas all Antwerp *flamingants* stayed loyal until January/February 1915.⁷²³

However, as could be shown above, a low level of collaboration took place in Antwerp earlier than usually assumed, with the founding of the *Vlaamsche Gazet/Het Laatste Nieuws* in November. Even though this was not a specifically activist move, but part of the Germans' general attempt to steer the Antwerp press on a German-friendly course, it was nonetheless an important first step towards activism: by the end of June 1915, after two transformations, the paper had become openly activist and collaborationist. On 14 January, the paper was renamed into *Het Vlaamsche Nieuws* after the original owner had withdrawn his support, and it programmatically launched a (Liberal-) *flamingant* agenda, thus breaking with the Belgian patriotic *godsvrede* ('God's Peace'), the 'sacred union' that had suspended all domestic struggles.⁷²⁴

In June, its editors – Antoon van Opstraet and Alfons Baeyens, in charge since November – sided with the other Antwerp papers in their dispute with the German press office and stopped publication. August Borms 'rescued' the paper and took over. He secured the continued cooperation of the poet Raffaël Verhulst, and a number of journalists agreed to contribute anonymously. They republished the paper with a new, vaguely federalist, programme. With the other Antwerp papers on strike, it was now obvious to everyone that the paper was an instrument of the German *Flamenpolitik*.⁷²⁵ So, what was the reaction among the *flamingants* of Antwerp?

Lode Wils stresses the advances that activism had made in Antwerp within the first year of the war. He considers August Borms' open collaboration particularly significant: at this stage, Borms was the only well-known *flamingant* to have done so. In addition to his work with, and eventual take-over of the *Vlaamsche Nieuws*, he had launched a bi-weekly paper in April, *Antwerpen boven*, and he regularly spoke in favour of renewed agitation in several

⁷²³ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 40-1. See also: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 60, 73-5. Vanacker, *Het aktivistisch avontuur*, pp. 27-32.

⁷²⁴ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', p. 3310. SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 13 Dec. 1914, p. 19. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 89-90.

⁷²⁵ August Borms, 'Kameradschaft. Einsatz und Vertrauen,' *Deutsch-Niederländische Symphonie*, Wolfshagen-Scharbeutz 1937, p. 215 ff. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 88-94. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 55-72.

flamingant clubs as they were cautiously re-assembling after the shock of the conquest. Some of them became indeed the first in the country to call off the ‘God’s Peace’: namely Borms’ own branch of the *Groeningewacht*, a Catholic youth organisation, in the northern Antwerp suburb of Merxem, and the branch of the Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond (General Dutch League) in the nearby city of Lier.⁷²⁶

Antoon Vrints, by contrast, emphasises the failure to form an activist organisation. After Borms’ first ‘Flemings awake!’ article, on 14 February 1915, there was a meeting of leading *flamingants* at Pol de Mont’s house, at which those present, among others the Catholic Deputy and later activist Adelfons Henderickx, agreed that the ‘God’s Peace’ should not be broken. Similarly, attempts by Domela to recruit members in Antwerp for ‘Young Flanders’ were almost a total failure. This overwhelmingly passivist attitude was also clearly expressed when no-one celebrated the Flemish-*flamingant* holiday on 11 July – whereas most Antwerpians marked the Belgian national holiday ten days later.⁷²⁷ Indeed, as Wils notes too, the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* was generally boycotted: despite its quasi-monopoly in Antwerp after June, only about 15,000 copies were sold, including sales outside Antwerp.⁷²⁸

A turning point occurred at the end of 1915. Mainly under the impact of two events, a ‘second wave’ of *flamingants* turned to activism. The first event occurred in October 1915 when the Belgian government struck two well-known *flamingants*, the poet René de Clercq and the young Antwerpian philologist Antoon Jacob, from the civil service payroll because of their strongly activist articles in the refugee paper *De Vlaamsche Stem* (The Flemish Voice). Many *flamingants* took this as proof that their government was intent on destroying the Flemish Movement – just as the (German-fabricated) pamphlet *La Vérite sur la capitulation* had threatened. In December, 290 Antwerpians, mostly young men, signed a declaration of solidarity with de Clercq and Jacob in the *Vlaamsche Stem*. What few knew, was that between May and September this paper had been

⁷²⁶ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, esp. p. 104.

⁷²⁷ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, esp. pp. 56-9, 61, 66. For marking of the 21 July 1915, see for example: René Vermandere, *De Duitse furie te Antwerpen: indrukken, toestanden en voorvallen tijdens de bezetting*, Antwerpen 1919, pp. 28-35.

⁷²⁸ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 101. See also HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, p. 3316: in January 1915 17,000 copies were printed, and it was hoped to gradually increase circulation to 40,000.

bought up by a pro-German Dutch agent, the poet Frederik Gerretson – a feat that was not only secretly funded with German money but also secretly coordinated by the German press office in Antwerp with Borms' simultaneous take-over of the *Vlaamsche Nieuws*. Accordingly, the Germans could fully exploit this event, especially since they persuaded Jacob to return from his Dutch exile to Antwerp and work for the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* – de Clercq similarly went to Ghent. Importantly, Jacob was an advocate of a moderate, federalist programme, which he successfully promoted amongst the activists in Antwerp.⁷²⁹

The second event was Governor-General von Bissing's 'Christmas gift' to the Flemish people: his announcement that he intended to reopen the University of Ghent as an entirely Dutch-speaking institution. This announcement sent shock waves through the Flemish Movement: it meant the realisation of their number one aim. Of course, Louis Franck and most other pre-war leaders of the Movement publicly rejected the 'gift' immediately as an unwarranted interference in Belgian affairs. Nevertheless, it contributed decisively to a significant growth of activism in Antwerp during the following year. For example, the activists gained control over the local branch of the Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond. They also set up several new organisations, such as the federalist Vlaamsch Verbond (Flemish Ligue), and on 11 July 1916, there was once again a celebration for the Flemish national day in the Flemish Opera. Finally, a number of men of high social standing joined their ranks: notably two Deputies, the Catholic Adelfons Henderickx and the Liberal Leo Augusteyns, the professors of medicine Arthur Claus and Jozef de Keersmaecker, and the economist Max Oboussier, Claus' son-in-law. Of Augusteyns it is known that he would have kept his distance to the activists had it not been for Bissing's 'gift'.⁷³⁰

Overall, Antwerp activism remained a weak force, not only in absolute terms, but also in comparison to Ghent. Using the archive of the Raad van Vlaanderen, Antoon Vrints counted 1,698 named activists from the agglomeration of Antwerp. Taking other organisations that were close to activism into account,

⁷²⁹ Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 116 ff, 136. Borgers, *Van Ostaijen*, vol. 1, p. 102.

Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 70, 74-8, 94.

⁷³⁰ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 92, 97-8.

especially the charity *Volksopbeuring*, a rival to the CN, he calculated a maximum of 2,065 activists. Their proportion of the total population was about four times lower than in Ghent, according to the calculations by Daniël Vanacker: roughly 0.5% compared to about 2% in 1917/1918.⁷³¹ The core of the activists of the agglomeration was made up of low-ranking civil servants and other white-collar workers, many coming from the education and the art sectors. With the exception of some skilled workers, notably in the diamond sector, activism received hardly any support from the working class, and there were very few women activists. While Antwerp activism as a whole cannot be described as a ‘youth movement’, most activists were relatively young: approximately two thirds were under the age of 40, more than a third were under 30.⁷³² The youthful aspect, moreover, was disproportionately visible: the important Flemish Propaganda Bureau in Antwerp was dominated by the very young, and the dynamic avant-garde scene grouped around Paul van Ostaijen, who was twenty-two in 1918, was activist.⁷³³ Politically, the background of the activists from the Antwerp agglomeration was very diverse. All three traditional Belgian political currents, Liberalism, Catholicism and Socialism were represented.⁷³⁴

In general, the second generation of activists in Antwerp was markedly more moderate than the first group around August Borms and Raf Verhulst. They were less anti-Belgian and more sceptical of the Germans. Instead of an independent Flanders closely attached to Germany, they subscribed to the federalist aim, an autonomous Flanders within a fully independent and sovereign Belgium.⁷³⁵ At the beginning, the radicals had advocated the same views as the moderates in public, but only for tactical reasons, which they abandoned over time. Thus, in 1917 and 1918, the *Vlaamsche Nieuws* expressed ever-more anti-Belgian views. The division between radicals and moderates deepened accordingly. Max Oboussier, for example, refused to share a public platform with Borms during a

⁷³¹ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 201-6. Vrints’ figure is 0.46%, but his number for the total population, based on the 1920 census, is most likely too big.

⁷³² Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, esp. pp. 239, 258.

⁷³³ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 240. De Schaepdrijver, ‘Idea of Belgium,’ p. 279. See also: Borgers, *Van Ostaijen*, pp. 81-186. Paul van Ostaijen is today known as the most important and influential Flemish modernist writer.

⁷³⁴ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 253-4.

⁷³⁵ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, esp. p. 105.

lecture tour of Germany in July 1918.⁷³⁶ Importantly, the moderate group was numerically dominant in Antwerp and its programme became identified with Antwerp activism. However, in all of Flanders, they were outnumbered by the radicals who dominated in Ghent and in Brussels, which was especially reflected in the Raad van Vlaanderen.

While the announcement of ‘Ghent’ had boosted the appeal of activism, the Raad van Vlaanderen received a mixed reception in Antwerp, even among the converted. Some deliberately shunned it from the beginning. Augusteyns was outraged that its first public action, in March, was to send a delegation to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg in Berlin. Almost twenty activists from Antwerp joined the ninety members strong Council by July, though, strictly speaking, Borms had moved to Brussels and Jacob to Ghent by then. Most of them quickly found themselves in opposition against the majority radicals and formed the loosely organised ‘Unionist’ party under the leadership of Claus and de Keersmaecker.⁷³⁷ In January 1918, three of them, including Jacob, left the Council in protest over the proclamation of Flemish autonomy, mostly because of the way it was manipulated by the Germans.⁷³⁸ Others refused to participate in the succeeding second Council where the relationship with the occupiers continued to be a major cause of friction between moderates and radicals. Claus in particular, complained often that the Council was a mere tool in the hands of the Germans. Eventually, in August 1918, this led to the resignation of a further five Antwerp moderates, including Claus and Oboussier.⁷³⁹

On the local level, the same moderate activists from Antwerp actually became increasingly radical in their activities. Still relatively moderate was their campaign to make a number of educational establishments exclusively Dutch speaking. The most important object was Antwerp’s Higher Institute of Commerce (Hooger Handelsgesticht / Institut Supérieur de Commerce), an entirely francophone institution, which had had a very good reputation internationally before the war. Germans and activists prepared its Flemish-Dutch reopening since October 1917. Activists, among them Deputy Augusteyns, took over the

⁷³⁶ BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle), 22, fol. 156: Oboussier to Beyerle, 21 July 1918.

⁷³⁷ Nationale Bond voor Belgische Eenheid, *Overzicht van het Activisme*, pp. 39-40. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 103-6. The official name of the Unionists’ party within the Council was: ‘Vlaamsche Zelfstandige Groep’ (Flemish Autonomous Group), founded in September 1917.

⁷³⁸ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 115-16.

⁷³⁹ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 181.

governing board and replaced the entire staff. The Antwerp City Council, which normally appointed three members to the board, apparently did not intervene in any way. In July 1918 the institute was officially reopened with a celebratory ceremony. Courses were scheduled to start in October, ‘numerous’ students had already enrolled – but lectures had to be immediately postponed due to the retreat of the German front. Similar activist takeovers were planned for the Royal Academy, the Royal Flemish Academy of Music and a few small professional schools, yet with little success.⁷⁴⁰

More radically, the Antwerp activists attempted to gain control of local government. Their colleagues in Ghent set the example: in June 1917, the Ghent activists founded a ‘Gouwraad’ (Regional Council) for East Flanders, a provincial equivalent to the Council of Flanders, with the intention of replacing the old Belgian provincial assembly; and in April 1918, they took over the City Council, albeit under a German burgomaster.⁷⁴¹ In Antwerp, however, the activists failed to achieve similar successes. The creation of a Gouwraad for the province of Antwerp was constantly delayed. Elections for it finally took place simultaneously with the elections/acclamations for the second Council of Flanders in early February 1918. As noted earlier, this event proved a total disaster in Antwerp: the massive counter-demonstrations illustrated all too clearly the numerical weakness of the activists and their utter dependence on German military protection. The ‘elected’ Gouwraad became never fully active.⁷⁴² Similarly, although the activists worked on many plans for overthrowing Antwerp City Council, they got nowhere. The Germans deported Franck and Strauss at their request, but otherwise showed little willingness to cooperate in this matter.⁷⁴³

Moderation in Antwerp? – The Germans

How did the local German authorities relate to these developments of activism in Antwerp? Paradoxically, the German *Flamenpolitik*, especially as formulated by the Political Department, favoured the moderate activists over the extremely German-friendly radicals – both for tactical and for strategic reasons.

⁷⁴⁰ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, pp. 3130-6. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 156-66.

⁷⁴¹ Vanacker, *Het activistisch avontuur*, p. 205.

⁷⁴² Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 126-38.

⁷⁴³ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 148-56.

Tactically, they were afraid that the radicals would alienate most *flamingants* and make it impossible to gain the support of a large segment of the Flemish population. Strategically, the political aim of the radicals – complete destruction of Belgium and creation of a Flemish state, closely linked to Germany – was not compatible with the German government's desire to keep all options open until the beginning of the peace negotiations.⁷⁴⁴ However, there were several personalities in the German administration for Antwerp whose sympathies were with the radicals. Two of them were the above-mentioned August Schowalter and Max Robert Gerstenhauer in Antwerp. Interestingly, both were removed from their posts before the end of 1915, giving rise to the theory, postulated by Antoon Vrints, that they had overstepped the cautious limits set by the Political Department.

Yet this analysis seems to be accurate for Schowalter only. A report of the Political Department spelled out that Schowalter's stubborn ways threatened the 'cautious, practical work' done, and in September 1915 he was sent back to his congregation in Wittenberge. Of course, this did not prevent Schowalter from making *Flamenpolitik*: he managed to get a role in the activist propaganda among the Flemish prisoners of war camps in Germany, and he contributed to the German debate about the 'Flemish Question' with several publications, including a translation of a pamphlet by Domela. In one of his articles, he proposed that Antwerp, not Brussels, be made the seat of the provisional government of the new state of Flanders.⁷⁴⁵

The situation is not as clear concerning Gerstenhauer, who was probably replaced at the end of June 1915. Although there is no doubt that he was – and remained – a sympathiser of Borms as well as of Domela, there is no proof that he did not proceed cautiously in his actual work in Antwerp. The *Vlaamsche Nieuws*, for example, including articles written by Gerstenhauer himself, stayed clearly within the cautious approach of *Flamenpolitik* during Gerstenhauer's time as press officer; even Borms, who had long turned anti-Belgian, stayed

⁷⁴⁴ Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, pp. 80-5, 180-3. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 85. For Bissing's distancing from Domela and Young Flanders see Bissing's letter to Bethmann Hollweg on 10 Jan. 1915 in: Grunewald and Scherer (eds), *APP I*, vol. 1 pp. 49-50.

⁷⁴⁵ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 49, 50, 72. AGR Brussels, T 180, 50, entries for 'Schowalter': articles in *Tägliche Rundschau*, 22 March 1917 and *Norddeutsche Monatshefte*, August 1916.

moderate in his publications.⁷⁴⁶ Accordingly, Gerstenhauer stayed in the Political Department after he left Antwerp and continued to play a prominent role in the formulation and implementation of the *Flamenpolitik*: first in Ghent and then in Brussels, the political centre of the German administration. Moreover, there is no indication that his successor, Robert Paul Oszwald, one of the key authors of *Flamenpolitik* from beginning to end, instituted any changes regarding the German relationship with the activists in Antwerp. And Oszwald's career path in the Government-General actually followed that of Gerstenhauer: Antwerp (1915-1916) – Ghent (1916-1917) – Brussels (1917-1918).⁷⁴⁷ In this way, it seems more likely that the replacement of Gerstenhauer as press officer in Antwerp was part of the normal reshuffling of posts and it might have even constituted a promotion.

Nevertheless, given that Gerstenhauer was actually moderate in his actions, the essential implication of Vrints' analysis remains: that the generally moderate character of Antwerp activism was matched by the moderate version of *Flamenpolitik*. This would be again a contrast to at least Ghent, where both the military authorities of the *Etappe*, and the civilian president Ecker, who was a delegate of the Government-General, supported the radicals more than the Political Department wanted.⁷⁴⁸ To what extent can the thesis about the marked moderate approach in Antwerp be substantiated?

Very little is known about the actual relationship between the various activists in Antwerp and the local German Administration, particularly the press office. Of Oszwald it is known that he was against the complete destruction of Belgium, preferring a federalist Belgium under German hegemony. As Winfried Dolderer has shown, Oszwald had a profound and 'realistic' understanding of the

⁷⁴⁶ For Gerstenhauer's articles see in particular Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 71. For Borms see: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 94, 100. Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 82 n. 208.

⁷⁴⁷ See esp. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 255 n. 59, 258 n. 1. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 79. Vrints paraphrases Jos Vinks, Borms' apologetic biographer (*Borms*, 1974), who claimed that Gerstenhauer was dismissed in July and only Borms' intervention prevented him being sent to the front, so that he was posted to Ghent instead. The details of this implausible story (date of dismissal: 20 July; reason: lax censorship), however, are in conflict with other depictions of its context. See Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 70. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 71. Nationale Bond voor Belgische Eenheid, *Overzicht van het Aktivisme*, p. 15.

⁷⁴⁸ See BAMA Freiburg, PH 30 I (Government-General in Belgium), 156: report Ecker, civilian president East Flanders (Ghent), 27 July 1917, Appendix, political part. Vanacker, *Het aktivistisch avontuur*, pp. 244, 250.

Flemish Movement since before the war, and he was a chief proponent of the subtle cultural support for it during the war. In one of his post-war publications, he described this aspect of his work in Antwerp: promoting the production of Flemish and Dutch plays in the theatres, and of Flemish and German music in the concert halls, reviving a local Flemish tradition of puppet theatre, encouraging publications and lectures on Flemish art, and banning any public francophone events. In this work his Flemish ‘partners’ did not even have to be activists in an explicitly political sense – a very important contact was Pol de Mont, who never became openly activist and never openly discussed the political implications of his cultural activities.⁷⁴⁹ With this background, it can be assumed that Oszwald did not foster the radical elements in Antwerp activism.

Almost nothing is known about the subsequent press officers in Antwerp. The last one, Pringsheim, was apparently unfamiliar with the Flemish language and culture, as mentioned above. His predecessor, Anderheiden, refused to work under civilian president Max Schramm when the presidents were given chief responsibility for the *Flamenpolitik* in the provinces at the beginning of 1918 – though Anderheiden’s reasons are not known. Another important figure in the press office, at least since 1917, was Lücker, a member of the pre-war German Colony.⁷⁵⁰ Importantly, according to Antoon Vrints, the Antwerp activists repeatedly cited both the German Colony and Max Schramm as impediments to their cause in general and to their more ambitious political demands in particular.⁷⁵¹

As seen in chapter 1, the charge against the German Colony as a whole, that it had no sympathy for the Flemish Movement before the war, is exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is true that the Colony’s elite was associated with francophone Belgium, and that many of the leading men looked down on Flemish culture. Indeed, they continued to express their anti-Flemish opinions during the war, which could take the form of denigrating, racist judgements against the Flemish people. The most striking statement came from Richard F. Peltzer. Though not one of the ‘leaders’ of the Colony, he was an important German shipping agent

⁷⁴⁹ Oszwald, ‘Wendung zur Wirklichkeit,’ pp. 194-7. Krause, ‘Antwerpen und die Neubelebung,’ pp. 194-5.

⁷⁵⁰ For Lücker see footnote 707 above. For Anderheiden see: HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung,’ p. 3373.

⁷⁵¹ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, esp. pp. 152-5.

in Antwerp before the war. He moved to Hamburg after the outbreak of war, but he visited Antwerp a few times during it, was consulted as an Antwerp-expert by the German Government, and he was in good contact with members of the Government-General in Brussels as well as in Antwerp. In February 1916, he wrote to a friend in Brussels that he was sceptical about the chances of success of the *Flamenpolitik*, arguing:

The Flemish-Germanic culture has fallen behind the French-Romance one because it was inferior and, above all, because the races which represented the two orientations in Belgium stood in the same hierarchy. Because of his sluggishness the Fleming is, alas, an utterly inferior representative of the Germanic race [...].⁷⁵²

Similar statements were voiced by two of the leading personalities of the Colony. Richard Böcking characterised ‘the Flemish’ as ‘thick, apathetic and dull-witted’, while H. Albert von (‘de’) Bary readily confessed his dislike of the Dutch and the *flamingants*.⁷⁵³ Crucially, these men had regular contact with the directors of the German Administration of Antwerp, of both the military and the civilian branches: there were numerous reciprocal dinner invitations, and at times the men of the Colony seemed to have served as informal advisors.⁷⁵⁴ (See also Illustration 14.) In this way, it is possible that their anti-*flamingant* attitude imparted the Germans of the Antwerp Administration with some scepticism about the *Flamenpolitik*. *Stadtkommandant* Hammerstein-Equord took a similar view of the ‘lethargic’ Flemish and he considered the activist leaders ‘ephemeral’. Governor-General von Falkenhausen claimed in his memoirs that he had to personally dissuade the Military Governor of the province, Zwehl, of his anti-*flamingant* prejudices, which he had apparently learned from the Antwerp Colony.⁷⁵⁵

Other important members of the Colony were enthusiastic supporters of the *Flamenpolitik*. As seen above, men like Hürter, Eichler and Gaster were among

⁷⁵² PA AA Berlin, NL Asmis, box 23, VII/7, fol. 6: Peltzer to Asmis, 3 Feb 1916.

⁷⁵³ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 146, fol. 75 ff: letter Böcking, n.d. [betw. July 1915 and July 1916], pp. 2, 6. BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 21: letter Bary, n.d. [spring 1918?].

⁷⁵⁴ See for example: HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 86. HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c: p. 183: transcription of letter Sauter to General von Hügel, 2 Oct. 1917; pp. 202, 205: diary entries 8, 27 Feb. 1918. HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), Übergröße II, folder with photos from Antwerp 1917, 1918: photo ‘Bei Familie Peter Fuhrmann in ihrem Garten in Antwerpen’, summer 1918.

⁷⁵⁵ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: Hammerstein-Equord to Schramm, 11 March 1918. BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 162. Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 156. Vrints mistakenly identifies ‘the governor of the province’ with Schramm.

the pioneers of *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp. According to the memoirs of a student of the German School, Gaster's animated activities had also infected most of the school's adolescent boys by 1916. They now studied the Flemish Movement in their spare time and joined in activist demonstrations.⁷⁵⁶ Significantly, all influential members of the Colony were convinced that it was necessary to maintain German control over Belgium for at least a decade after the end of the war in order to ensure their safety in Antwerp.⁷⁵⁷ And it seems that in the end, many of them, even H. A. von Bary, were 'converted' to *Flamenpolitik* as the best political method for both creating permanent German influence and ensuring the survival of the Colony.

As a result of these deliberations, many of them considered the logical outcome of the *Flamenpolitik* to be the destruction of Belgium and the creation of some kind of Flemish state that would be closely allied to Germany. However, even though this model seems closer to the aim of the radical Young Flemish group than to the moderate federalists, it is misleading to portray them as chiefly influenced by or even as supporters of the radical Young Flemish, as Antoon Vrints does.⁷⁵⁸ On the contrary, it seems that in Antwerp they had much better contact with the moderates. The only exception was probably Pastor Eichler. During 1918, he pushed – unsuccessfully – for the replacement of French with Dutch as the administrative language of the joint German-Dutch church, and, together with Domela in Ghent, he worked on a plan to break up the Belgian Protestant Synod and create a Flemish one.⁷⁵⁹

In Bary's case, he did not personally know any of the activists – except for the Antwerp federalists Arthur Claus and Max Oboussier. He had been on friendly terms with both of them since long before the war, and during the war he had regular discussions with them. Indeed, in February 1918 he wrote that Claus

⁷⁵⁶ Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 132. See also: PA Antwerp, W.O.I., Fonds German prints: '*Bilder aus der neueren vlämischen Literatur, Donnerstag, d. 20. Jan 1916*' – Programme: 'Literatur-geschichtliche Betrachtungen: Dr. Bernhard Gaster, Direktor [...]; Gesang vlämischer Lieder und Gedichte: Fräulein Leni Preetorius, frühere Schülerin der Deutschen Schule; Vortrag von Proben vlämischer Poesie und Prosa: Emilienne de Kock, Schülerin der Deutschen Schule'.

⁷⁵⁷ See chapter 10. See also for example: HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 92: travel report Senator Diestel, 25 Aug. 1918, p. 19. BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 37: meeting Antwerp Civilian Administration, German Colony and Sthamer as 'Reichskommissar für Übergangswirtschaft', minutes, 10 Oct. 1917.

⁷⁵⁸ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 320 (Bary), 305 (Gaster), 326 (Bary, Mallinckrodt, Gaster, Eichler, Hürter).

⁷⁵⁹ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 324.

was the only respectable personality among the activist leaders in Antwerp; of the radical Verhulst, for example, he had heard that he was frequently drunk.⁷⁶⁰ Bary's contact with Claus and Oboussier was also crucial for his 'conversion'. Bary was at first particularly critical of what he considered the too obvious interference of *Flamenpolitik* with the Flemish Movement. But during the first half of 1918, Claus and Oboussier convinced him that the potential support for the activists among the Flemish population was huge and that all they needed was the firm commitment on behalf of Germany not to abandon the activist cause. It was only thereafter that Bary called on the German Government to create a 'Duchy of Flanders' and to immediately declare this intention to the world.⁷⁶¹

The tactical preference for the moderates was most clearly expressed by Bernhard Gaster. At the end of October 1917, the German-Flemish Association, newly founded by the fusion of two similar rivalling organisations, appointed Gaster to establish a network of confidential contacts for the society in the Government-General. As indicated above, Gaster had in mind to initially recruit Germans only, starting with 'an impressive list' of gentlemen from the Antwerp Colony and the Antwerp Administration.⁷⁶² However, other members in Brussels, particularly Gaster's colleague Lohmeyer, the director of the German school of Brussels, and Gerstenhauer, wanted to create straightaway a number of local branches with mixed German-Flemish membership. In Ghent, there was already a local branch of one of the society's predecessors, with a mainly Flemish membership of more than 70. Yet Gaster remained adamant that it was too early for working together with the Flemish in the same organisation; and in the ensuing row with the Brussels faction he declared that they could do what they wanted in Brussels – in Antwerp things were different at any rate. Importantly, Gaster explicitly mentioned the 'radical Flemish' when he explained in a letter that he thought it was against the German interest to liaise too intimately with the activists.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶⁰ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 17: von Bary to unidentified [Tirpitz?], 19 Feb. 1918, p. 4.

⁷⁶¹ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425: fol. 29: Bary to Ludendorff, 15 May 1918, p. 4; fol. 38: Bary to Hertling, 14 Sep. 1918, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶² BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle), 22, fol. 432: Beyerle to Unger, 12 Nov. 1917.

⁷⁶³ BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle), 22, fol. 424: Gaster to Beyerle, 19 Nov. 1917.

When in 1918 Max Schramm became more actively involved in the *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp, he too, seemed to have favoured the moderates. Schramm's custom was to invite 'interesting people' to dinner once a week. In his personal papers, the plans for the seating arrangements for approximately thirty of these parties survive, dating from November 1916 to October 1918.⁷⁶⁴ The names on these plans thus give a good indication of Schramm's networking policy. On six occasions his special guests were activists – though not before 1918, which confirms Schramm's increased role in the *Flamenpolitik* during that year. The relevant dates were: 6 March, 19 April, 29 May, early in June, 28 July and 24 August 1918. Of course, Schramm had met certain activists before 1918, but not in such a targeted way. His most frequent activist guests were Claus and Oboussier, who were each present on four of the six occasions. Next were their federalist colleagues Henderickx and de Keersmaecker, with three appearances each. There were ten further activists who appeared once or twice.⁷⁶⁵ Only two of them belonged to the radical faction in Antwerp: Raf Verhulst, who was invited twice, and the Young Flemish Lode Severijns, who came once. Considering the importance of Raf Verhulst as co-editor of the *Vlaamsche Nieuws*, this pattern strongly suggests a preferential treatment of the moderates.

In his private letters, Schramm revealed some of his thoughts about both the *Flamenpolitik* and the activists. The activists did not seem to have impressed him much, at least initially. At the end of 1916, he complained to his son that none of them had the necessary political experience for their self-appointed role – and that, even though many of them were lawyers and medical doctors, they looked grubby and had dirty fingernails.⁷⁶⁶ Further, in December 1917, after a meeting with Lückner and several activists, he explained that the *Flamenpolitik* did not mean for him any emotional attachment to Flemish emancipation, that he considered it exclusively an instrument of German control and expansion: 'I am and will always be a supporter of the Flemish movement – to be sure, not out of idealism but simply for this reason: *divide et impera* [divide and rule].'⁷⁶⁷ Indeed,

⁷⁶⁴ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 86 (= 'Schramm's Table').

⁷⁶⁵ Eduard Joris, Antoon Jacob, Leo Augusteyns, Simon Lindeken, Marten Rudelsheim, Lode Severijns, Raf Verhulst, Antoon Mortgat, Hendrik Mommaerts and Herman Vos.

⁷⁶⁶ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), L 51: diary P. E. Schramm.

⁷⁶⁷ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), K 12, 1: Schramm to wife Olga, 11 Dec. 1917. He had formulated this view already shortly after arriving in Antwerp: HStA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 28a: report Schramm, 6 Oct. 1916, pp. 4-5.

according to the recollection of a colleague in 1927, Schramm thought that the Council of Flanders should be more independent of the German Administration and even stand seemingly in opposition to it, so that neither side would be compromised.⁷⁶⁸ Similar to the German chancellors, Schramm seemed to have considered it paramount not to bind Germany prematurely to political changes in Belgium, particularly as long as a negotiated peace, rather than a peace dictated by Germany, seemed the more likely outcome of the war.⁷⁶⁹ Thus, it appears that there was substance to the activists' complaints, that Schramm was actually an obstacle to the advancement of their agenda in the city.

Arthur Claus, in particular, did not hesitate to voice this complaint, even to the Germans themselves. His 'outbursts' ruined at least one of Schramm's dinner parties.⁷⁷⁰ However, until mid-1918, there are no concrete cases known in which Schramm did not support activist projects in Antwerp. Claus' complaints thus seemed to be as much directed at the German Government's waning public commitment to the Flemish activists in 1917 and 1918, as at the attitude of the German Administration in Antwerp. Yet, as seen above, Schramm was more than hesitant to go along with the activists' attempt to seize power of local government in Antwerp in mid-1918. Similarly, he apparently delayed his support for the flemishization and reopening of the Higher Institute of Commerce, and he gave little or no support to similar projects, which eventually failed.⁷⁷¹ As a result, the activists' dissatisfaction became more confrontational during 1918. Jozef de Keersmaecker, who was especially involved in the plans concerning the Royal Academy of Music and the Higher Institute of Commerce, vented his frustration in the Council of Flanders on 18 July 1918. Blaming Schramm personally for the lack of progress, he demanded that he should be

⁷⁶⁸ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 82: Blunck to Schramm, 5 Feb. 1927. Hans Friedrich Blunck, poet and literary advocate of the 'Nordic' idea in the 1920s, was a 'non-state agent' of *Flamenpolitik* during the war. See: Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 46-7. Hans-Jürgen Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland, 1920-1940*, Stuttgart 1971, p. 236.

⁷⁶⁹ No direct proof has been found for Schramm's level-headedness and relative scepticism about the German military and political situation. Hammerstein-Equord, with whom Schramm had developed a close friendship in Antwerp, expressed such scepticism very strongly in two letters to Schramm: HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: 9 Feb. 1918, and 11 March 1918. See also Schramm, *Neun Generationen*, pp. 492-3.

⁷⁷⁰ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), K 12, 1: Schramm to wife Olga, 11 Dec. 1917. BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 21: letter Bary, n.d. [spring 1918?], p. 2; Ligue Nationale pour l'Unité Belge, *Raad van Vlaanderen*, p. 53.

⁷⁷¹ See footnotes 742-5 above. See also Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 161, 163, 173.

replaced with a different civilian president. Interestingly, de Keersmaecker conceded that Schramm had ‘the best intentions’ but that he did not comprehend ‘our movement’ and hence he constantly ran counter to the activists’ work.⁷⁷²

Read between the lines, de Keersmaecker’s complaint seems to confirm the above analysis of Schramm’s attitude towards the activists. He developed an interest in the Flemish Movement – which he kept up beyond the end of the war. In early 1919 he predicted that the Flemish Movement would yet transform Belgium in the long term.⁷⁷³ Yet he thought that German interference, the *Flamenpolitik*, should only go as far as it clearly yielded beneficial results for Germany. His hesitant and obstructionist attitude concerning the activists’ projects in Antwerp in 1918 thus seemed to have been based on a realistic assessment of their chances of success in the long run and of their compatibility with the German Government’s current stance on the future of Belgium – and not on an insufficient understanding of the activists.⁷⁷⁴

Indeed, from the German perspective, the *Flamenpolitik* had achieved much in Antwerp. In November 1917, there was an exuberant article by a certain Gustav Krause in the high-quality propaganda periodical of the Government-General, *Der Belfried*, which argued that during the war Antwerp had revived the cultural and national struggle of the Flemish people ‘like no other city of the country.’⁷⁷⁵ Some of Krause’s claims were clearly inaccurate and exaggerated, especially his assertion that the ‘sons of Antwerp’ had initiated the activist movement. As suggested in chapter 6, this was the symptom of a tendency in the German publications on Belgium to focus on Antwerp as a key object of German expansionism in the west. Yet, it seems that at least in the cultural sphere – the main angle of approach of the cautious *Flamenpolitik* – Antwerp had indeed made an important contribution to the spread of activism.

By the end of the war, Germans, activists and German-friendly *flamingants* had revived and newly created an extensive and sometimes vibrant Flemish-Dutch cultural programme in Antwerp, ranging from expressionist-inspired literary production and performances of theatre and music to public lectures on

⁷⁷² Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 153.

⁷⁷³ HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Schramm to Stadtmayer, 8 Feb. 1919. Schramm also remained an active member of the German-Flemish Association. See Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 156.

⁷⁷⁴ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, p. 156. Vrints merely notices the apparent contradiction between Schramm’s *Flamenpolitik* interest and the activists’ accusations.

⁷⁷⁵ Krause, ‘Antwerpen und die Neubelebung,’ esp. p. 196.

Flemish art and a greatly increased distribution of books in Dutch and German through the public libraries as well as the book shops. The German press office in Antwerp had even made inroads into cinemas, imposing the screening of German war films. This was a considerable success, not only because French dominance had been virtually unchallenged, but also because attendance figures had increased manifold during the war.⁷⁷⁶

Significant progress had also been made in the world of journalism since 1915. In 1918, Antwerp had three daily newspapers: apart from the ever-more radical activist *Vlaamsche Nieuws*, which had a relatively small distribution of 11,300, there was its moderately *flamingant* off-shoot the *Antwerpsche Courant*, and, since 1917, the *Nieuwsblad van Antwerpen*, with daily distributions of 38,000 and 32,000, respectively. The *Courant* increasingly represented the federalist-unionist point of view. The *Nieuwsblad* was targeted at the Antwerp working class and put its main emphasis on criticising the food distribution regime by the CN and local government, though it, too, published regular *flamingant* features. Then there were over ten smaller dailies and periodicals, which were all to varying degrees *flamingant*, activist and German-friendly. It appears that the last francophone publication, the *Lloyd Anversois*, a specialist paper for finance and economics, closed down in March 1918; it was supplanted by the Dutch-language *Het Beursblad* in May.⁷⁷⁷

Crucially, the two largest dailies in Antwerp were under contract to continue printing in a pro-German sense for at least five years after the end of the war. And as the Germans started to prepare the evacuation of Belgium, they planned

⁷⁷⁶ Krause, 'Antwerpen und die Neubelebung.' HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', p. 3487. HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 35, Lancken, 'Politische Abteilung', pp. 1442 ff. HStA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 82: theatre programmes. Oszwald, 'Wendung zur Wirklichkeit,' pp. 194-8. See also: Guido Convents, 'Cinema and German Politics in Occupied Belgium,' in Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (eds), *Film and the First World War*, Amsterdam 1995. Guido Convents, 'Film en de duitse inval en bezetting in België 1914-1918. Of op welke wijze de overheid film als machtsinstrument ontwikkelde,' in Serge Jaumain, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale*, Brussels 2005.

⁷⁷⁷ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', pp. 3450-4. According to Oszwald, the titles, affiliations and distribution of the periodicals were: *Het Beursblad* (commerce/finance; 1,700 daily?), *Ons Land* (radical, successor of *Antwerpen boven*; 5,000 daily?), *De Eendracht* (Catholic, federalist?; 3,500 daily?), *De Nieuwe Tijd* (Socialist, moderate activist; 2,500 daily?), *Syndikaal-Mededeelingsblad* (Diamond workers' union, 'pacifist'; 6,000 weekly); *Ons Volk* (democratic unions; monthly), *De Stroom* (literary-expressionist, activist; monthly), *Het Toneel* (theatre review; 3,000 weekly), *Onze Leestafel* (book review; 1,200 biweekly), *Sportgazet* (sports review; twice weekly), and the children's weeklies *Kinderfriend* and *Geïllustreerde Kinderwereld* (16,000; 28,000).

to dismantle all printers and transport them to Germany, except for those belonging to the these dailies, in order to delay the anti-German ‘smear campaign’ for as long as possible.⁷⁷⁸ These measures corresponded to the generally defiant attitude of the disintegrating Government-General, which also led Governor-General von Falkenhausen to deposit 10,000 Marks in a German bank for the continuation of a *Flamenpolitik* after the war.⁷⁷⁹ In this way, even in defeat, the Germans tried to perpetuate a legacy of *Flamenpolitik*.

Results

Flamenpolitik in Antwerp displayed many of the typical characteristics: it started off on an improvised note, was partially in competition with other cultural and social occupation policies, and was initially mostly carried by self-motivated ‘non-state’ agents. It could also boast only a very limited success, in terms of converting a large number of either the population or its elite to activism and to an alliance with the occupier. In significant ways, however, the Antwerp case was special.

A number of factors made Antwerp favourable to the launch of *Flamenpolitik*. It was the ‘most Flemish city’ of Belgium, where the Flemish Movement had made considerable progress before the war. The city authorities, which had adopted a course of ‘cautious administrative cooperation’, were inclined to agree to many decrees of *Flamenpolitik* concerning the promotion of the Dutch language. The local German occupation authorities, in turn, created a comparatively relaxed regime in the sphere of culture and censorship. The Germans could also exploit wartime events that related specifically to Antwerp in order to conjure up resentment against the Belgian government: especially the traumatic conquest of the fortress and city in October 1914. Finally, in 1915-1916, the local *Flamenpolitik* was in the hands of two experts of the Flemish Movement: Max Robert Gerstenhauer and Robert Paul Oszwald.

Paradoxically perhaps, the same factors contributed to the marked moderation – either by conviction or by their actions – both of the majority of the local agents of *Flamenpolitik*, and of the majority of their activist counterparts. The self-confidence of the local Flemish Movement meant that Antwerpians

⁷⁷⁸ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150 (Sante), 44, Oszwald, ‘Zivilverwaltung’, p. 3433.

⁷⁷⁹ Nationale Bond voor Belgische Eenheid, *Overzicht van het Activisme*, pp. 147-8.

could resist the overtures of *Flamenpolitik* and that they had more to lose by collaborating with the enemy, while the slight conciliatory stance of the German administration, and the local expertise of some of its members favoured a cautious approach and the correspondingly moderate expressions of activism.

Two further factors are often cited as impediments to a radical development of *Flamenpolitik* in Antwerp: the German Colony and civilian president Max Schramm. It could be shown that Schramm's attitude was indeed marked not by idealism but by a sense of *Realpolitik*. Accordingly, he only blocked those activist ventures that he considered had little chance of lasting success. In this way, the *Flamenpolitik* had scored considerable successes in infiltrating Antwerp's educational, cultural and social life.

Concerning the German Colony, it is true that many leading figures had had little interest in the Flemish Movement before the war, and some of them continued to spread scepticism about its activist offshoot and about the *Flamenpolitik* during the war. Yet most gradually changed their mind, while other important leaders became significant agents for *Flamenpolitik* shortly after the conquest. The question of the attitude towards the *Flamenpolitik* of the Colony at large, as well its wartime fate, however, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 10: The German Colony between occupier and occupied

As shown in the first chapter, the Germans and German-Belgians in Antwerp formed a German Colony before the war – an identifiable ethnic minority that constituted a significant facet of Antwerp’s cosmopolitan character. While German nationalistic sentiments were increasingly promoted by some of its leading members, the Colony as a whole was characterised by a hybrid German-Belgian identity. The relatively large ‘elite’ of businessmen also played a key role in creating the excellent economic relationship between their adopted city and its German hinterland.

The war threw the Colony into a dilemma of conflicting loyalties. From the Belgian perspective, any signs of cooperation with the enemy would be interpreted as disloyalty to the country, making it unlikely that they could resume business in a restored Belgian state. From the German perspective, they were natural allies, providing expertise in the occupied country and, possibly, a form of legitimacy for German control over post-war Belgium. The attitude that the Colony would display during the war and the occupation would thus not only determine its own future fate, but also influence the nature of the commercial connections between Antwerp and Germany after the war.

This chapter will trace the ways in which important sections of the Colony dealt with it. It will start with two sections on the expulsion of the German nationals and on their fate as refugees in Germany. It will then focus on the revival of the Colony during the German occupation of Antwerp. In particular, it will explore the following questions: how successful was the revival of the Colony? What were their collective activities? To what extent did they collaborate with the occupation authorities and to what extent did they identify with the German ‘cause’?

Expulsions, August-September 1914

With the German declaration of war on Russia on 1 August 1914, the German Colony in Antwerp was immediately affected. A number of German residents and cafés demonstratively displayed the German colours to show their solidarity. Many young men were either officially mobilised or decided to join

the German forces voluntarily and left for Germany. Very little is known about their number or their backgrounds.⁷⁸⁰ The eyewitness Salomon Dembitzer described in his memoirs of 1915 how a group of them marched to the central train station, singing ‘Die Wacht am Rhein’, the then favourite song of belligerent German nationalism.⁷⁸¹ Another group of such vocal German males caused the first incidence of ‘ethnic violence’ on 2 August, when they clashed with offended Belgians in the streets of Antwerp.⁷⁸² Until 4 August, the Belgian authorities registered about two hundred Germans leaving the city because of the war; the officials in the central station had been advised to let them go even without tickets.⁷⁸³

Presumably, most of them belonged to that transient group of the Colony, those clerks and apprentices who had come to Antwerp as part of their commercial training. But, possibly, a few had also closer ties to the city – at least in the fictional world of *Pflicht* (‘Duty’): a contemporary German play that dramatised the ‘last days of Belgian rule in the city of Antwerp.’ Hannah Ilse Nebinger, the author, was very likely from Antwerp herself.⁷⁸⁴ She presented a stereotypical family of the German Colony. The *pater familias* has emigrated from Germany in the 1870s, marries a Belgian, adopts Belgian nationality, runs a successful trading empire and belongs to Antwerp’s social elite. He has a son and a daughter, who feel Belgian. The daughter, however, is married with child to a young German immigrant, Eberhard. The play’s narrative starts on 1 August 1914, with Eberhard shocking his entire family by announcing that he has to follow the call of duty and fight for his Kaiser. No appeals to his responsibilities to his family or to his host city, not even the imminent award of Belgian citizenship, can change his mind. He returns in the closing scene of the play – triumphantly at the head of the German army as it ‘liberates’ Antwerp on 9 October.⁷⁸⁵ In its moral bluntness, the play reflects more German war culture

⁷⁸⁰ Maarten Van Alstein, ‘Belegerde stad. Het Antwerps stadsbestuur 4 augustus - 10 oktober 1914,’ Ghent 2000, p. 145. Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ p. 14.

⁷⁸¹ Dembitzer, *Aus engen Gassen*, p. 58.

⁷⁸² Vrints, ‘De anti-Duitse rellen,’ pp. 54, 56. Van Alstein, ‘Belegerde Stad,’ p. 145.

⁷⁸³ Van Alstein, ‘Belegerde Stad,’ p. 147.

⁷⁸⁴ This conjecture is turned into a working hypothesis by the fact that there was a German Nebinger family in Antwerp, whose business was sequestered after the war. See RA Beveren-Waes, *Sequester te Antwerpen, 1914-1918: Inventory, Series I*, no. 1543.

⁷⁸⁵ Hannah Ilse Nebinger, *Pflicht. Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen aus den letzten Tagen belgischer Herrschaft in der Stadt Antwerpen*, Gotha 1915.

than historical accuracy. Yet, the opening scene seems to illustrate well how even before the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and Belgium the state of war in the neighbouring 'fatherland' put immense pressure on the hybrid identity of the German Colony.

Its position threatened to become intolerable after the German invasion on 4 August 1914.⁷⁸⁶ Given the prevalent social demand of unconditional loyalty to the nation-at-war, the members of the Colony now had to make a clear choice: were they Belgian or German? For many, the anti-German riots and the expulsions took the decision out of their hands. Since the Antwerp fortress was Belgium's national redoubt, the presence of enemy aliens, regarded as potential spies, was deemed unacceptable by the military commander of the fortress. The decree of their expulsion had been ready since 31 July. On 4 August, then, German and Austrian nationals (even though Austria-Hungary was legally not yet at war with Belgium) were given until midnight on 6 August to leave. After that, they would be imprisoned and prosecuted. At the same time, angry crowds of Antwerp citizens proceeded to purge their city of the symbols of the German presence: ripping off German shop signs, throwing bricks into the windows of the German School, and destroying the furnishings of German-owned cafés. Waiters and servants seemed to have felt most directly victimised. Weeks later, as refugees in Germany, they related their traumatic experiences to the German commission of enquiry investigating the matter. Some testified they had seen ghastly murders of women and children, though the commissioner diagnosed such lurid accounts as 'war psychosis'.⁷⁸⁷ In fact, neither was anyone seriously injured during these riots, nor had this been the intention of the rioters. The actions of the 'mobs' are best interpreted in the tradition of the charivari, as Vrints has convincingly argued. Punishment and expulsion, according to the logic of guilt by association, were important aims, but the primary objective was the enforcement of national homogeneity.

⁷⁸⁶ For the following see especially: Vrints, 'De anti-Duitse rellen.' Van Alstein, 'Belegerde Stad.' Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, pp. 40-2. See also: Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 114-15, 134.

⁷⁸⁷ The Hamburg police for example had collected over one hundred interviews for all of Belgium by September 1914. See StA Hamburg, 111-2, L z, 16b. For the scepticism of the official German enquiries see in particular the report by the *Reichskommissar zur Erörterung von Gewalttätigkeiten gegen deutsche Zivilpersonen im Feindesland* from 16 Feb. 1916, p. 26, in: StA Hamburg, 111-2, L z, 16a.

Proof of loyalty to Belgium and expressions of distance to the *Reich* seems to have been all that the Antwerp public demanded. Thus, café-owners could sometimes prevent the worst vandalism by dressing their establishment in the Belgian colours, as did the famous Café Weber.⁷⁸⁸ Similarly, the 'old' families (e.g. Bunge, Osterrieth), who had belonged to Antwerp's social elite for generations, publicly assured their co-citizens of their Belgian patriotism, after a newspaper had interpreted their association with the Colony as support for German irredentism.⁷⁸⁹ Some went so far as to cut all links to the Colony. Eduard Karcher, for example, resigned from the board of the German School immediately after the war broke out.⁷⁹⁰ Others, according to the German journalist Heinrich Binder, tried to hide their German origin by modifying their surname.⁷⁹¹ Of course, such affirmations of a Belgian identity were not just opportunistic reactions to the riots and to social pressure; it has to be assumed that more often than not they were genuinely felt expressions.

The sources on attitudes in the German Colony at the beginning of the war are very scarce. Even the statistical data on their movements is rather sketchy. Yet the little information available already presents a complex picture. As shown above, a few hundred Germans left Antwerp before 4 August. They were likely to be apprentices and servants with no family connections in Belgium. Many of them had also shown themselves as German patriots. However, a former student of the German School, Heinz Roscher, remembered in 1971 that a number of Germans chose to flee to Britain or America in order to escape German conscription.⁷⁹² Theoretically, the remainder of Antwerp's roughly 10,000 German nationals were forced to leave during a few days following the invasion of the German Army. Yet many tried to avoid deportation and to stay in their home city: on 7 August, the police expelled about a hundred Germans who had tried to hide in their houses or in parks. By the same date, about eighty Germans had been granted special permission to stay; they had to register only. As Maarten van Alstein has discovered, the city government was inclined to be generous with the categories of exemption, but the military command insisted on

⁷⁸⁸ Vrints, 'De anti-Duitse rellen,' p. 9.

⁷⁸⁹ Vrints, 'Klippen,' p. 15.

⁷⁹⁰ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 26.

⁷⁹¹ Binder, *Antwerpen*, pp. 72-3.

⁷⁹² Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 129.

keeping the limits tight. At the beginning of September, it restricted them to Germans whose sons fought in the Belgian Army. At the same time, the Government annulled the Belgian citizenship of recently naturalised Germans, so that another ‘wave’ of the Colony was forced to leave the country.⁷⁹³

Exile in Germany

Thus, within two months of the war, the Colony had disappeared from Antwerp. But how did its members fare afterwards? The expellees were transported across the Dutch border. Most of them seemed to have crossed into Germany soon after. Their ‘flight’ was possibly more damaging to their health than the riots: two refugees from Antwerp were the only Germans from Belgium reported to be treated in Hamburg hospitals, and not for injuries but for diseases caught during the journey.⁷⁹⁴ They arrived in Germany as refugees, and due to their precipitous departure, most of them had little luggage and little money. The story of a certain Paul Jäger illustrates their predicament well. On 28 October 1914, he wrote to the Württemberg government, inquiring whether he could return to Antwerp and resume his work there:

I, the undersigned, had to flee from Antwerp this 5 August in consequence of the outbreak of war and live [in Württemberg] since 12 August. Since that day I live on state charity because I am unemployed and because it had not been possible to bring any funds with me on my flight.⁷⁹⁵

Many similar letters to the Württemberg Foreign Ministry suggest that the refugees tended to return to the federal states of which they were citizens, and to the towns where they had family to support them. They tended to assemble in the large cities, especially when they had to rely on state welfare and private charities. In Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt a.M., Hamburg and Berlin they set up self-help organisations. The group in Berlin printed biannual reports, which have, together with some correspondence, survived in the files of the imperial Ministry of the Interior. These sources allow some insight into the situation of the Antwerp Colony in their German exile and they reveal how – just as before

⁷⁹³ Van Alstein, 'Belegerde Stad,' pp. 148-50.

⁷⁹⁴ StA Hamburg, 111-2, Lz, 16a: letter Hafenkrankenhaus to Senate, 6 Nov. 1914.

⁷⁹⁵ HStA Stuttgart, E 40/72, 721: folder 'Paul Jäger'.

the war – they took the lead in lobbying for the interests of all expelled *Auslanddeutsche*.⁷⁹⁶

The ‘Berliner Hilfsvereinigung für aus Belgien ausgewiesene Deutsche’ (Berlin Support Union for Germans expelled from Belgium) seemed to have been set up and dominated by enterprising Antwerp-Germans. Its first representatives were from Antwerp, and so was the chairman: first J. Timmermanns and then O. Schulz; Timmermanns subsequently became secretary of the sister organisation in Antwerp, the Welfare Commission of the German Colony. And when in March 1918 the Red Cross recommended a member of the Hilfsvereinigung for a medal of distinction, it was M. Alexander, a shopkeeper from Antwerp.⁷⁹⁷

The association first made an appearance on 24 October 1914, when it petitioned Secretary of State for the Interior von Delbrück for financial support for the ‘first victims of the war.’ A month later, it reiterated the request and suggested that funds could be taken from the money levied in occupied Belgium (*Kriegskontributionen*). Around the same time, Commissioner Just, who was responsible for the victimised *Auslanddeutsche*, reported that the predicament of the expellees in Berlin was getting worse by the day as winter was approaching. Apparently, the situation was a little better in the other cities, where the municipal authorities and private charities had swiftly organised support networks. In Berlin, too, the Red Cross and the Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland (League for the Promotion of Germandom Abroad) had donated some money, and the German institutions in Antwerp had sent some of the expellees’ luggage, but these measures had not been sufficient.

It is not clear to what extent Just, Delbrück and the Hilfsvereinigung cooperated, but by 1 December, the Hilfsvereinigung had grown into a professional organisation. They opened up an office in the Prussian House of Deputies and started an impressive fundraising campaign. Their public appeal for donations was underpinned by the names of an ‘honorary committee’ (*Ehrenausschuss*) of high-profile figures from politics, government, industry,

⁷⁹⁶ For the following, see: BA Berlin, R 1501, 113037: Fürsorge für deutsche Flüchtlinge aus Belgien.

⁷⁹⁷ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 89, 15632, fols. 55-6.

trade and banking.⁷⁹⁸ Eleven banks had agreed to channel the donations, which added up to over 30,000 Marks by May 1915. The association more than doubled these funds through the proceeds of concerts and talks. For example, it had the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra play in Brussels, and they invited Baroness Bissing, wife of the Governor-General, to speak in Berlin. Overall, by July 1918, the association had made 120,000 Marks. In November 1916, they moved their office into the Ministry of the Interior, which suggests that at least at this stage the Ministry had assumed a role of patronage. Nevertheless, commissioner Just in the Ministry conducted his own relief activity parallel to that of the association – he had helped 800 refugees by May 1918. Yet, even though Just gradually took care of refugees from other countries as well, it seems that he operated on a much smaller scale: according to his special ministerial funds he spent five times less money than the association during the war.⁷⁹⁹

So, how did the Hilfsvereinigung spend its money, what were its activities, and what does this tell about the state of the Antwerp Colony? From the start, as expressed in the letter to Delbrück and in the public appeal, the association had two objectives: to address the immediate material needs of the expellees who had come to Berlin, and to help them to sort out their affairs in Belgium. Concerning the first task, the association offered credit, cash, and food- and milk coupons. It also provided free medical consultation, and it acted as an apparently very successful job-procurement agency.

Interestingly, the association built up a small archive of more than 600 records on those individuals and families who received cash payments. The statistics compiled in the biannual reports deserve some attention, as they give a good indication of the social background of the most needy refugees. A relative majority were from Antwerp – 45%; refugees from Brussels formed only the second largest group with 35%. This is somewhat surprising, because before the war, the Brussels Colony was not only larger but it was also considered less ‘well off’ than the one in Antwerp.⁸⁰⁰ There is no further evidence to clarify to what extent Antwerp-Germans preferred the German capital as their refuge, and whether this was due to a sort of community bond with their city-fellows who

⁷⁹⁸ They included Erzberger, Südekum, Dryander, Kaempf, Mendelssohn, Gwinner.

⁷⁹⁹ Just seems to have concentrated his efforts on facilitating travel to and from Belgium.

⁸⁰⁰ See for example: Devos, 'Inwijking en ingratie van duitse kooplieden te Antwerpen in de 19de eeuw,' p. 137.

ran the Hilfsvereinigung. The other demographic statistics were not differentiated according to place of origin, so that they should be applied to Antwerp only very tentatively. Nevertheless, the following examples demonstrate some important general features. Most of the recipients were Prussian citizens; 55% had lived in Belgium for less than five years, but over a quarter had been there for at least ten years. Almost two thirds were married with up to eight children. The largest professional group were merchants, followed by artisans and businessmen; 41% had been self-employed, and 44% had had an annual income in excess of 3,000 Belgian Francs. The middle-class element was thus strikingly large. Moreover, the statistics were clearly designed to emphasise that these hapless refugees represented a valuable section of German society, who had conquered an honourable and affluent position in Belgium. This argument was closely connected to the second objective of the association.

The Hilfsvereinigung helped expellees to look after their affairs in Belgium in several ways. It acted as a communications centre between them and the German institutions in Belgium and it offered expert legal advice concerning for example damaged property or loss of employment. Ideally, the refugees wanted to return to their homes in the occupied country and find work there. The above-mentioned Paul Jäger, for example, wrote that he felt very ill at ease being a burden on the public coffers, and would like to take up any job back in Antwerp if the factory he used to work for was still closed. However, until the end of 1914, both the Government and the Government-General thought a large-scale return to be ‘undesirable’ – probably for security reasons. Thereafter, they were reluctant to let anyone back in if they could not support themselves.⁸⁰¹ The solution that both the Hilfsvereinigung and commissioner Just adopted was to enable those destitute (*‘mittellos’*) expellees means to return to Belgium temporarily. In March and May 1915, the association organised group trips of altogether 124 expellees to Belgium (45 went to Antwerp, 69 to Brussels) for a week. In addition to those, it provided free and reduced train tickets. During their temporary stay, the refugees could then look after their properties and organise their finances so that they were no longer dependent on charity in Germany.

⁸⁰¹ See: *Kölnische Zeitung*, 1 Oct. 1914 (in AGR Brussels, T 454, 68). BA Berlin, R 1501, 113037: letter Just, 23 Nov. 1914; BA Berlin, R 1501, 119534: letter Sandt, 27 March 1915.

Significantly however, from the beginning, the Hilfsvereinigung had a much more ambitious agenda: they wanted to award the expellees financial compensation, which would not only cover their material losses, but also give them a head-start in rebuilding their livelihoods abroad. A returning phrase that they used was that the expellees should come out of the war ‘*schadlos*’ – without any damage.⁸⁰² Backed up by the statistics discussed above, they argued that Germany had a moral obligation to help them. As they formulated in the public appeal of December 1914:

It is imperative to be active for our compatriots who, as champions [*Vorkämpfer*] of German character and German culture, with German diligence have paved the way for Germany’s industry and trade in Belgium. Substantial funds are required in order to pay for the bare necessities. It is a matter of looking after the upkeep of the refugees as long as they are prevented from returning to Belgium, as well as helping them to rebuild their upset or destroyed homes and livelihoods, in particular, to enable, as far as possible, the small and middling traders [*kleineres und mittleres Gewerbe*] to continue or reinstall their businesses.

Throughout the war, the association lobbied persistently on this question of compensation (*Kriegsschadenersatz*). On 10 March, it invited all representative groups of expellees from other countries to a conference in order to define their common interests and to coordinate their efforts – in particular on the issue of compensation.⁸⁰³ More meetings and petitions to the *Reichstag* followed. Organisations like the Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland helped in the publicity campaign. In the Government, Commissioner Just supported their claim. In a report of February 1916, he concluded that for a restoration of the German world economy the business network of Germans abroad was at least as important as the German merchant fleet.⁸⁰⁴ It seems that Just was alluding to the deal that Ballin had successfully negotiated for the German shipping companies by the end of 1915.

However, the problem with the expellees’ claim was that their cases crossed national jurisdictions. Any settlement based on a legal assessment of who was to pay the compensation had to wait for the peace negotiations. Besides, as the

⁸⁰² For example in the letter to Delbrück, dated 24. Oct. 1914, in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 113037.

⁸⁰³ This conference and a subsequent one in Frankfurt a. M. produced a list of guiding principles (*Leitsätze*), which were published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*: ‘Denkschrift über den Kriegsschaden der Auslandsdeutschen,’ a copy of which is in: GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 89, 15632, fols. 11 ff.

⁸⁰⁴ StA Hamburg, 111-2, L z, 16a: report Just, pp. 107-8.

Ministry of the Interior pointed out in rejecting a particular claim, the expulsions as such had been within international law.⁸⁰⁵ In the end, the Hilfsvereinigung had to be content with the Kaiser's verbose promise for the future: 'A stronger *Reich* and a more understanding people will attend to our expatriate (*auslandsdeutsche*) brothers when they want to rebuild the workshops of German diligence (*Fleiß*) and German spirit (*Geistesleben*).'⁸⁰⁶

Return to the occupied city

Meanwhile, many expellees managed to return to Antwerp under the protection of the German occupation regime. In the *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums* of 1933, Robert Paul Oszwald and Franz Petri described their return as a last 'bloom' of the Colony.⁸⁰⁷ They based this claim on the impressive activities of the main German school, the religious congregations and of the Colony's newly created central institution, the Welfare Commission. Indeed, a number of records from these organisations have survived, which allow a closer investigation into this notion of a blooming Colony during the war. First, some statistics give an indication of the numerical size to which the Colony grew again. Then, the relationship with the occupation regime and the attitudes within this Colony towards the German war aims and wartime policies in Belgium can be delineated.

The first Antwerp Germans actually 'returned' with the German army of siege. Dr. Georg Frank, a teacher of the German School since 1910, was on one of the heavy artillery formations. On 8 October 1914, a day before the takeover, he apparently put his insider knowledge to use and boldly cycled into the city on a reconnaissance tour – a story that might have to be taken with a pinch of salt.⁸⁰⁸ But soldiers like Frank were of course soon posted elsewhere; Frank fell in July 1918. Until Christmas 1914, only very few expellees came back, mostly those wealthy enough to afford the journey and to command sufficient authority to get

⁸⁰⁵ BA Berlin, R 1501, 113037: letter to Bavarian ambassador, 11 May 1915.

⁸⁰⁶ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 89, 15632, fol. 114: Statement quoted in newspaper article ('Der Kaiser und die Vertriebenen Auslandsdeutschen'), probably from May 1918.

⁸⁰⁷ Oszwald and Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' p. 366.

⁸⁰⁸ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 19. Doubts arise especially in view of the heavy bombardment of the city on that day. Frank's dates can be found in Ernst Lindenborn, *Geschichte einer deutschen Auslandschule (Antwerpen)*, Wolfenbüttel 1929, pp. 90, 94.

all the necessary passes.⁸⁰⁹ As seen above, this was partly due to the policy of the German authorities. In addition, Antwerp resembled a ghost town after the bombardment. About 90% of its population had fled, and it was only after these Belgian refugees gradually returned home – after their safety had been officially guaranteed – that the city became inhabitable again for civilians.⁸¹⁰

So, it was not until after Christmas that larger numbers of Antwerp's German inhabitants reappeared in the city. A good indication of the subsequent rapid growth of the Colony can be obtained from attendance figures of the German schools. On 11 January 1915, the German school (ADS) reopened its doors to about 120 pupils. A little later, the Reformationskirche started its primary school again.⁸¹¹ It is not clear whether the other German-speaking educational institutions stayed closed: in particular, the middle school in suburban Hoboken, and the Jewish *Jesodé Hatorah*.⁸¹² Later during 1915, the Catholic Germans set up a new primary school.⁸¹³

Table 9. Number of students in three German schools

	1913/ 1914	1915	1915/ 1916	1916/ 1917	1917/ 1918
Allgemeine Dte Schule	853	323	477	531	533
Dte Evang. Volksschule	220	74	119	94	52
Dte Kath. Volksschule	-	(60)	100	125	158
Total	1073	397	696	750	743

Sources: Gaster, *Berichte*: 1915, p. 23; 1916, p. 24; 1917, p. 25; 1918, p.15.

According to these totals, the number of children attending the Colony's own schools had reached about two thirds of the pre-war level during the second half of the war. Even though this proportion cannot be projected onto the Colony as a

⁸⁰⁹ OAPK Antwerp, D, 1b: Reformationskirche Kirchenvorstand (executive) minutes, 24 Nov. 1914. See also Walter Bloem, 'Die deutsche Kolonie in Antwerpen,' *Die Woche*, 17/26 (26 June 1915), p. 902.

⁸¹⁰ See for example: Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme*, p. 46. Pastor Eichler called Antwerp a 'dead city' in November 1914. OAPK Antwerp, D, 1b: minutes 24 Nov. 1914. A. J. van den Bergh estimates in her memoirs that about 300 people had stayed in the city during the bombardment. IWM London, 90, 16, 1: A. J. van den Bergh (Petrie), 'An Old Lady's Record,' London 1990, p. 8.

⁸¹¹ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 13. OAPK Antwerp, D, 9d: Böcking, Ohlendorff and Eichler to Strandes, 14 Jan. 1915.

⁸¹² I have found a note about a report by Schramm on the school in Hoboken, dated March 1917; unfortunately, the report itself is absent. See: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539.

⁸¹³ It was set up in May and it opened in September. OAPK Antwerp, F, 7. BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539, letter Sandt, 3 Aug. 1915. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, p. 24. *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 20 Oct. 1915: 'Im Gegenteil' (in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119538).

whole, especially since transfers from (and to) other schools are not factored in, it demonstrates a sizable presence of German families and proves that the Colony had been revived indeed. But does it validate the image of a ‘blooming’ community?

Further insight can be gained from the registries of the two Protestant Churches, the Reformationskirche and the Christuskirche. They contain records of the baptisms, confirmations, marriages and deaths that occurred in each congregation. It can be assumed that a high number of baptisms and marriages are indicative of a demographically healthy community. Equally, in any community, these numbers can be expected to decline during a war – as they did overall in the city of Antwerp in 1914/18.⁸¹⁴ In the case of the two congregations at hand, the annual average of marriages decreased about sevenfold, and that of baptisms about threefold, during the war years compared to the last few peace years. Nevertheless, as with the schools, the absolute figures are impressive, considering the extreme circumstances: altogether there were eighty-eight baptisms (about fifty-five of these children were born after 1915) and nineteen marriages.⁸¹⁵ Interestingly, the annual breakdown of the figures of the Reformationskirche shows a conspicuous peak of activity in 1917, suggesting an increasing confidence within the Colony about its future – perhaps it even indicates a budding ‘bloom’.

Table 10. Reformationskirche

	Average 1908-13	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Baptisms	34	27	9	11	22	9
Confirmations	35	28	5	16	22	2
Marriages		9	1	1	5	-

Sources: OAPK Antwerp, D: 2a; 2b; 2d.

What about the other religious groups? The statistics of the German School suggest that the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish Germans (and Austrians) returned in the same proportions: during the war, as before it, about half of the pupils were Protestant, while Catholics and Jews made up about a quarter each. So far, no sources have been found on the religious organisation and practices of

⁸¹⁴ PA Antwerp, W.O.I., Fonds 1914-1918, typescript: Gemeentebestuur Antwerpen, *Verlag over de oorlogsgebeurtenissen*, n.d. [1920], p. 61.

⁸¹⁵ OAPK Antwerp: D, 2a; D, 2b; D, 2f; E, 2c; E, 2d; E, 2f.

the German and Austrian Jews during the war. Of course, before the war, the majority of the German immigrants in Antwerp had been Catholic – even though the Protestants could be regarded as the principle agents behind the formation of the Colony as a self-conscious ethnic minority. Now, during the war, the Catholics followed the Protestant model and set up their own German institutions: a congregation, separated from the Belgian brethren, as well as the primary school already mentioned.⁸¹⁶ In this way, these Catholics reinforced their German identity even when practising the same religion as the overwhelming majority of Belgians, and thus they moved closer to the centre of the Colony.

Finally, apart from education and religion, the Colony constituted itself before the war in the field of leisure and charity. It is not clear how many of the fifty-odd clubs and societies were revived during the war and to what extent they could take up their former activities. For example, the invitation list of the Protestant churches for the *Kaisergeburtstagsfeier* in January 1916 mentioned eight societies, including the gymnastics club. But early in 1915, this club had given away its premises for the creation of a home for German soldiers, which must have limited its pursuit of physical exercises.⁸¹⁷ The Deutsche Liedertafel, on the other hand, continued to play an active role. On numerous occasions, its performances of patriotic songs were well received by wounded soldiers, dignitaries of the occupation regime and members of the Colony alike.⁸¹⁸ So, it appears as if those clubs were most active, whose purpose could be adapted best to the demands of the war effort.

Accordingly, charitable work moved to the forefront of the Colony's 'extracurricular' activities. In addition to the existing help-organisations for poor Germans in Antwerp, Hand in Hand and Deutscher Unterstützungsverein, new charities were set up as specific responses to the war: the Women's Association for Gifts of Love (Frauenvereinigung für Liebesgaben) and the Welfare Commission. The Welfare Commission was the most impressive institution of the Colony during the war. Established in March 1915, it had raised over 50,000 Francs for its work by November 1915; and according to Oszwald and Petri, its

⁸¹⁶ Oszwald and Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' p. 366.

⁸¹⁷ OAPK Antwerp, E, 3d. OAPK Antwerp, F, 5c: report Welfare Commission, 20 Nov. 1915.

⁸¹⁸ See for example article in *Belgischer Kurier*, 25 June 1918 (in: BA Berlin, N 2022 (Beyerle), 13).

collected funds totalled nearly a million by the end of the war.⁸¹⁹ Its principle purpose was to support the needy Antwerp-Germans and to help them resettle in the city. By the end of 1916, 218 men and 360 women had sought its assistance for getting employment; only twenty-five of them were not successful. It also operated a soup kitchen and it sold thousands of food coupons at reduced prices. In addition to taking care of the German residents, the Welfare Commission played a major role in the welfare programme of the German soldiers stationed – or recovering – in the area. One of its two soldiers' homes (Soldatenheime) – the one in the gymnastics club – was said to have been unparalleled in its comfort and luxury.⁸²⁰

Even though it is not possible to establish exact figures, it is clear that a significant proportion of the expellees returned to Antwerp during the war. They reassembled as a Colony, reviving their most important institutions: their schools and churches. As far as wartime conditions permitted, they also went back to their characteristic club culture. New marriages, families with small children, and efficient self-help organisations indicate a certain confidence about the future, and the new Catholic organisations suggest that the Colony was even strengthened by the war, since they integrated more Antwerp-Germans into the system of preserving a German identity.

However, two factors speak strongly against Oszwald's and Petri's notion that the Colony was in full 'bloom' during the war. First, things were not as rosy as some of the official reports suggested. The German school had an increasing disciplinary problem, which was only glossed over in Gaster's annual reports. But Gaster and Böcking informed the parents in a letter that it had been necessary to impose more punishments than previously, and that parents should be stricter with their children about loitering in the streets and frequenting cinemas and cafés.⁸²¹ More seriously, many expellees who had returned to Antwerp actually did not 'make it' and decided to go back to Germany for good. Table 1 above shows a dramatic decline in the student numbers of the Protestant primary school after 1916. Possibly, many students simply transferred to the new

⁸¹⁹ Two printed reports of the Welfare Commission, from Nov. 1915 and Dec. 1916, are in: OAPK Antwerp, F, 5c.

⁸²⁰ Bloem, 'Die deutsche Kolonie,' p. 907.

⁸²¹ OAPK Antwerp, D, 9h: printed letter, 'An die Eltern unserer Schulkinder,' 12 Feb. 1916. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, p.17.

Catholic primary school. But Pastor Eichler maintained that the families of most children who left the school had departed entirely from the city.⁸²² This is plausible, because traditionally the school had accommodated children from poorer backgrounds, whereas wealthier families had sent their children directly to the primary section of the German School. Indeed, we know from the Berlin Hilfsvereinigung that there was a constant trickle of 'refugees' returning from Belgium, which is also confirmed by a correspondence between civilian president Sthamer and commissioner Just at the end of 1915.⁸²³

Second, and most importantly, as briefly discussed above, large sections of the pre-war Colony had 'opted' for the Belgian side at the beginning of the conflict. During the occupation, many Belgians of German origin were prominent representatives of the Belgian cause. Louis Franck and Louis Strauss, the two 'strong men' of Antwerp's local government during the war, were deported to Germany in spring 1918 for their resistance against the German authorities. Edouard Bunge, whose family had still been closely associated with the Colony before the war, provided his villa to house Belgian spies.⁸²⁴ Most of the other families of Belgian nationality who had been an integral part of the Colony seemed to have kept their distance during the war. Again, the sources from the German School and the Protestant Churches illuminate their behaviour.

The German school's statistics included the language spoken by the students' parents, with the purpose of indicating how many spoke German at home. During the war years, there was also a breakdown of student numbers according to nationality. These figures are collected in Table 3. They prove that indeed very few non-German-speakers returned to the school, making it noticeably more predominantly 'German' than before.

⁸²² OAPK Antwerp, D, 9h: report Deutsche Evangelische Volksschule, Jan.-July 1917.

⁸²³ BA Berlin, R 1501, 113037: Berliner Hilfsvereinigung, 2nd report, Feb. 1916. BA Berlin, R 1501, 119534: Sthamer to Just.

⁸²⁴ Vrints, 'Klippen,' p. 17.

Table 11. Nationalities in the German School (ADS)

	1913/1914	1915	1915/1916	1916/1917	1917/1918
Total No. of students	853	323	477	531	533
Total at end of each year (100%)	811	312	433	501	504
Both parents German-speaking	466 (57%)	239 (77%)	332 (75%)	381 (76%)	387 (77%)
One parent German-speaking	170 (22%)	57 (18%)	97 (22%)	108 (22%)	101 (20%)
Flemish/Dutch-speaking	68	10	11	10	13
French-speaking	62	6	3	2	3
Reichsdeutsch		234	339	374	360
Austrian		40	55	86	104
Belgian		25	26	24	21
Other⁸²⁵		13	23	17	19

Source: Gaster, Berichte, 1914-1918.

The proportion of children both of whose parents were German-speakers jumped from 57% to 77%, while that of children with no German spoken at home dropped from 20% to under 5%. Nevertheless, these figures also show that it is not true, as has sometimes been claimed, that there were no Belgian children at all during the war.⁸²⁶ As will be discussed below, the school remained explicitly open to Belgians. There was a consistent presence of over twenty children of Belgian nationality – there were even a British and two American children – and there continued to be a significant proportion (20%) of children of mixed marriages.

This pattern of an incomplete destruction of the Colony's hybrid constitution can also be made out in the Protestant churches. In the files of the Christuskirche five letters of withdrawal survive. They were written in September 1918, in response to a reminder from the executive to the lapsed members about membership moneys. They all mentioned the war in more or less explicit terms as the reason for their separation. Interestingly, one of them qualified this separation as a temporary measure. It was written by 'Frau Paul Kreglinger', who belonged to one of the oldest and most famous families of the Colony:

My late husband did not pay the church contribution [*Kirchenbeitrag*] either in 1915 or in 1916 and I intend to follow his example and will equally not pay any contribution to the German

⁸²⁵ 1915-1918: Swiss, Dutch, Romanian, American, Turkish, Russian/Polish, English, Italian.

⁸²⁶ Oszwald and Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' p. 366.

church for the duration of the war. After the war, I will gladly reconsider the matter.⁸²⁷

Concerning the Reformationskirche, Pastor Eichler stated in March 1916 that the congregation consisted ‘almost exclusively of *Reichsdeutsche*’. The ‘Belgian’ families had stayed away; yet, significantly, only three families had officially withdrawn their membership.⁸²⁸ By October 1918, the church executive drew the following balance: of the 287 families who had paid membership in 1914, ninety-five had moved to Germany and seventy-four had turned out to be ‘Belgian-minded’ – ‘belgisch gesinnt.’ However, by now many of these Belgians had completed their secession by founding their own French-speaking Protestant congregation.⁸²⁹ This loss hit the Reformationskirche hard, as many of them had been generous contributors to the church coffers. Further, when in December 1915 the owner of the building of the Deutsches Heim, a charitable institution of the church, died, it was promptly closed by her ‘Belgian-minded’ heirs.⁸³⁰

Thus, the image of a blooming German Colony for the war period is clearly inadequate. While the reassembly of so many expellees in Antwerp and the restitution of the Colony’s most important institutions was undoubtedly a great achievement, it cannot be denied that this wartime Colony was only a shadow of its former self. It was especially weakened by the dissociation of all those who felt more ‘Belgian’ than ‘German’. This threatened the Colony’s hybrid nature and with it its ability to fit smoothly into Belgian society. In this way, it was in the Colony’s interest to re-affiliate these Belgians.

The polarisation of national identities in this war, however, also affected the Colony and put further pressure on its hybrid identity. The difficulty in this sense started with the presence of the Colony’s ‘motherland’ in the city: the wartime successes of the Colony obviously depended on the goodwill of the German occupation authorities. This raises a crucial question: to what extent was the Colony revived by these authorities? To answer this question is the first step of a delineation of the relationship between Colony and occupation regime; a second

⁸²⁷ OAPK Antwerp, E, 4: letter Frau P. Kreglinger, 30 Sept. 1918. Paul Kreglinger had also been in the ‘Schulvorstands-Wahlausschuss’ of the ADS until 1914; Gaster, *Bericht 1914*, p. 31.

⁸²⁸ OAPK Antwerp, D, 1b: Kirchenvorstand minutes, 28 March 1916.

⁸²⁹ OAPK Antwerp, D, 4e: Kirchenvorstand to Schaible, 22 Oct. 1918, p. 4.

⁸³⁰ OAPK Antwerp, D, 1b: Kirchenvorstand minutes, 14 Jan. 1916.

step will be an analysis of the extent of Colony's integration in the German war culture.

The Colony and German war culture

On the one hand, it is highly significant that all the institutions mentioned above – the German School, the Protestant and Catholic primary schools, the Churches and the Welfare Commission – were reopened or founded exclusively at the initiative of members of the Colony. Only after they had taken the first steps did the governmental authorities become involved. Admittedly, the evidence is rather thin, consisting of documents originating from within the Colony and resting on the fact that the relevant files in the Foreign and Interior Ministries contained no hints of a more active role on behalf of the Government. The case of the German School (ADS) is accounted for in most detail and it illustrates well the dynamism displayed by prominent Antwerp-Germans and their commitment to save their Colony.⁸³¹

Director Bernhard Gaster prepared the reopening of his school as soon as the end of August 1914. His first move was to re-establish contact with his staff, who were scattered throughout Germany. It was of course his duty as principal to keep them informed about the fate of the school; after all, war had broken out during the holidays, and the new academic year had been scheduled to start on 21 September.⁸³² However, rather than awaiting developments, Gaster exuded confidence that they could return in the near future. In his first correspondence of 31 August, he asked his colleagues not to take up any permanent jobs in Germany, and to be ready to resume work in Antwerp any time. There is nothing to suggest that Gaster was acting on anyone else's instructions. It is true that the German Government-General in Belgium had been established a week before, but at that time the capture of Antwerp was not even on the military agenda. As seen previously, the great success of the German School had been largely due to Gaster's work of a decade; he must have been desperately motivated to save his school and he probably drew hope from the seeming successes of the German Army. Characteristically, his letter was bursting with patriotic language:

⁸³¹ For the following see: Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, pp. 12-13. Lindenborn, *Auslandsschule (Antwerpen)*, pp. 47-8. Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' pp. 56-62.

⁸³² Gaster, *Bericht 1914*, p. 36.

We have to be ready to return to Antwerp as soon as the fatherland calls. After all, we too should like to find the opportunity to heartily serve our fatherland in these great times. Ever forward! Until we meet in Antwerp!⁸³³

Gaster's conduct was certainly a case of genuinely patriotic self-mobilisation. But by aligning the reopening of the school with the German war effort, Gaster's appeal to his colleagues' patriotic duty also usefully reinforced their loyalty to him. More importantly, similar to the Berliner Hilfsvereinigung, he in effect single-handedly defined the restitution of the Colony as a German national interest. Thus, if necessary, this reasoning was well suited to put pressure on the Government.

Gaster did not hesitate to lobby influential personalities and to plead his case with the Government. He got in contact with Karl Trimborn, who was responsible for educational matters in the Government-General. As a result, Gaster conceived of the idea of reforming the entire Belgian educational system, which was to be modelled on the organisation of the German School (ADS) and its sister-schools. He outlined his proposals in a 'confidential draft memorandum', which he printed on 18 October to send to the Foreign Ministry. Its annexationist assumptions have been indicated in the previous chapter; what is important here is that Gaster stressed the necessity of governmental support for the German schools, and that he claimed that the ones in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent could reopen as early as the beginning of December.⁸³⁴ It is not known what kind of feedback Gaster received.

Three members of the schools' board, the eminent Antwerp-Germans Richard Böcking, Franz Müller and Wilhelm von Mallinckrodt, joined forces with him during October. At the end of the month, Gaster and Böcking travelled in a military car to Antwerp to inspect the condition of the school's buildings. They also negotiated with the Administration in Brussels, and it was principally agreed to reopen the school the following year. But according to Gaster's account, the final decision was taken by a conference at the end of November, which was attended by members of the teaching staff and of the board only. It

⁸³³ Quoted in: Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 12.

⁸³⁴ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539: Gaster to AA, 28 Oct. 1914; Gaster, 'Grundzüge einer Denkschrift über die Gestaltung des belgischen Schulwesens unter deutscher Verwaltung,' 18 Oct. 1914, esp. pp. 6, 11. See also footnote 708.

was only thereafter, that permission to open the school was received from the imperial Interior Ministry and the Civil Administration of Antwerp.⁸³⁵

Thus, the revival of the Colony was not artificially initiated from the outside; it was clearly driven by committed members of the Colony itself. The Government merely reacted to their impetus and encouraged their efforts only after a slight delay. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the Colony – its institutions as well as many individuals – depended on the support of the German occupation authorities for their survival: namely in terms of security, finances and employment.

Observers noted that if it were not for the German bayonets in the city, the population of Antwerp would riot against their German co-citizens once again.⁸³⁶ The predominant mood in Antwerp stayed anti-German throughout the war, and the Colony continued to be perceived not only as the representatives of the enemy, but also as their insidious agents. In this way, the Antwerp-Germans depended at least indirectly on the physical protection of the security forces of the occupation regime. It is not known whether there were actually any attacks against returned expellees,⁸³⁷ yet it appears that they did not require any specific protection. I have not come across any suggestion that the system of sentries guarding the offices of the German administration was extended to important buildings of the Colony. Indeed, director Gaster highlighted in one of his reports that the conduct of the Belgians towards his pupils was remarkably decent. The worst crime that Walter Bloem could find was some boys shouting 'Boche!' after the German children.⁸³⁸

One of the main problems mentioned in the reports and minutes of the German School and the Protestant churches was that of regaining their income. Before the war, these institutions had largely financed themselves through voluntary donations and fees from their members. The schools (including the Protestant primary school) had also received an annual sum from the German Foreign Ministry, whereas the churches, forming part of the Belgian Protestant

⁸³⁵ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, pp. 12-13.

⁸³⁶ See for example: Reisebericht Mathies, August 1918, in: BA Koblenz, KLE 546 (Mathies), 2, fol. 478.

⁸³⁷ The owner of a food processing factory claimed that his storehouse was robbed several times: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Eduard Neuhaus to Schramm, 11 June 1921.

⁸³⁸ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 22. Bloem, 'Die deutsche Kolonie,' p. 902.

synod, had received some support from the Belgian state.⁸³⁹ At the time of the reinstallations, the respective revenues were cut noticeably. The German school cut its school fees by about 20%, although there had been many additional costs, such as the cleaning and repair of the damaged school buildings. Further, the donation of almost 33,000 Francs from 285 individuals and companies in 1914 dropped by a third to about 23,000 Francs from 137 people in 1915, rising only slightly to 26,400 Francs and just under 200 people by 1917.⁸⁴⁰

In the case of the churches, the voluntary contributions declined similarly, and, not surprisingly, the Belgian state struck the pastors off its payroll. It was with these financial difficulties that the German Administration helped relatively quickly. The Government-General took over the payment of the pastors.⁸⁴¹ The Foreign Ministry resumed its payments to the German schools. By 1917, it had almost doubled the pre-war amount for the German School (ADS) to 30,000 Marks. The Civil Administration of the Government-General added 25,000 Marks in that year.⁸⁴² Its successive presidents for the province of Antwerp were particularly supportive, starting with Justus Strandes, who helped in the initial lobbying during January 1915. In addition to that, there were once-off donations, notably 10,000 Marks from Governor-General von Bissing when he visited the school on 28 January 1915. As Bernhard Gaster acknowledged in his first report, this generous financial support facilitated the reopening and running of the school in wartime.⁸⁴³ Nevertheless, it should be highlighted again that the Colony itself continued to bear much of the costs of its institutions. Richard Böcking loaned several thousand Francs to the Protestant primary school.⁸⁴⁴

Finally, the occupation regime generated employment for the Antwerp-Germans. This was significant not only because of the high unemployment rate in all of occupied Belgium, but also because, as seen above, a viable source of income was normally a condition for the expellees to be allowed to come back.

⁸³⁹ 17,500 Marks for the ADS and 6,000 Marks for the Ev. Volksschule. See BA Berlin, R 1501, 119548: memo 'Die deutschen Schulen in Belgien' (1917?). OAPK Antwerp, D, 4e: Kirchenvorstand to Zivilverwaltungschef Flandern, 22 Oct. 1918. OAPK Antwerp, E, 4: letter Frick, 30 Jan. 1918.

⁸⁴⁰ 1918: 27,000 Francs from about 160 donors. See Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 28. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, p. 29. Gaster, *Bericht 1917*, p. 31. Bernhard Gaster, *Bericht über das 78. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1918, p. 17.

⁸⁴¹ OAPK Antwerp, E, 4: letter Frick to *Verwaltungsrat* Christuskirche, 30 Jan. 1918.

⁸⁴² BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539: letter Sandt 27 March 1917.

⁸⁴³ BA Berlin, R 1501, 112754. Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 15.

⁸⁴⁴ OAPK Antwerp, D, 4e.

A number of Antwerp-Germans must have directly joined one of the numerous branches of the military and civil authorities in the city – though very few details about numbers or type of work have come to light so far. In the registry of baptisms of the Reformationskirche, one child's father was recorded to have worked for the local Civilian Administration.⁸⁴⁵ A few also worked in the central offices in Brussels. Heinrich, a son of Richard Böcking, for example rose to a top position in the Press Department.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁵ OAPK Antwerp, D, 2a.

⁸⁴⁶ HStA Wiesbaden, 1150, 44: Oszwald, 'Zivilverwaltung', p. 3280. Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 21. The lawyer and Antwerp-German J. Rieth, too, rose to relative prominence in the Civilian Administration of the Government-General.

Illustration 14: Visit of Governor-General von Falkenhausen (8), May 1917



German Colony: [Mariano?] Bary (1), Müller (2), Ohlendorff (3), Fuhrmann (4), Gaster (5)
 German Administration: Louran (6), Hammerstein-Equord (7), Schramm (9), Zwehl (10)
 Source: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 98.

In its memorandum on the war of 1920, the City Council of Antwerp listed eighty-two names of mainly German citizens – it also included some Belgian, Dutch and French – who had become guilty of ‘misdeeds’ while working for the

enemy. Many of them were noted to have been in the Police.⁸⁴⁷ Indeed, Jozef Buerbaum, the author of Antwerp's most important wartime Belgian secret publications, witnessed in his memoirs that many of the young clerks from the maritime trading houses entered the local German (political) police during the war, where their knowledge of the city was highly valued.⁸⁴⁸ Furthermore, the occupation regime probably maintained many 'German' jobs by privileging the German-owned companies. Admittedly, it is not clear to what extent they were favoured over ordinary Belgian companies. But undoubtedly there was close collaboration between wealthy Antwerp-German businessmen and the institutions of occupation – as is also suggested in the group photo of Illustration 14. Early on, the Welfare Commission compiled a 'confidential list' of German businesses in Antwerp and handed it to the occupation authorities – 'for consideration when making purchases.'⁸⁴⁹ Wilhelm von Mallinckrodt, Otto Garrells, Romi Goldmuntz and Karl Bombe can be named as businessmen who sold coal and foodstuffs to the German Administration.⁸⁵⁰

The Colony as nucleus of a 'German Antwerp'?

Thus, the following problem for the Colony crystallises: with most of the Colony's 'Belgian' section staying away, and with the obvious and often public dependence of its 'German' section, as well as of its revived institutions, on the support of the German invader-occupier, did the wartime Colony become completely *Reichsdeutsch*? To what extent did it continue to honour its former Belgian hosts and to what extent did it partake in the German 'war culture'?

Perhaps surprisingly, it appears that for the most part the reassembled Colony first conceived of itself as providing a bridge between Germans and Belgians. Director Gaster expressed this literally in his letter to the parents in which he announced the reopening of the school:

Our school is an enterprise of peace [*Werk des Friedens*] and it should work as such in the future. May our school, which will accept both German and Belgian children as before, contribute to bridge the

⁸⁴⁷ PA Antwerp, W.O.I., Fonds 1914-1918, typescript: Gemeentebestuur Antwerpen, *Verslag*, p. 18 ff.

⁸⁴⁸ Buerbaum, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel*, vol. 2, pp. 16, 69, 103, 231. Buerbaum, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel*, vol. 3, p. 105.

⁸⁴⁹ OAPK Antwerp, F, 5c: first report Welfare Commission, 20 Nov. 1915.

⁸⁵⁰ See Schramm's correspondence with these men in: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84.

antipathies raised by the war and to reconcile the minds
[*Gemüter*].⁸⁵¹

Even more remarkably, on the first day of school, Gaster admonished the assembled pupils to ‘avoid everything that could hurt the feelings of those who have different opinions.’ Indeed, as mentioned above, the school managed to attract a few children of Belgian nationality throughout the war. Similarly, the Reformationskirche prayed for the Belgian King as well as the German Emperor during services, apparently until the beginning of 1916.⁸⁵²

However, as the war went on, the tone in the German School changed: statements of reconciliation became overshadowed by the identification with the German cause. In his first report, Gaster clarified that reconciliation could not occur by ‘denying one’s blood or the German ancestry’. This pride of heritage and of national identity translated for Gaster into loyalty to the German state. Just as in his letters quoted above, he described the reopening of the school as a ‘patriotic act’ and juxtaposed it within the same sentence to Wilhelm II’s picture of the entire German people rising in defence against a world of enemies.⁸⁵³ Accordingly, this and the subsequent annual reports extolled ‘our German people’ and its virtues, whereas Belgium is somewhat patronisingly referred to as this ‘much troubled Belgian country’.⁸⁵⁴

The German Army in particular was frequently glorified; its strategy, technological power and martial bravery admired. The school invited officers to give talks to the pupils, and it organised outings to the battle sites of the siege of Antwerp. Representatives of the local occupation forces were always present at official events in the school. In addition to that, there seemed to have been a certain degree of fraternisation between soldiers and pupils, especially of the senior classes. A school choir performed in the Army hospital, and cigarettes and cigars were given to departing troops at a little farewell party. Of course, some teachers and about seventy-six former students were in the German Army by 1915. Every spring, a few more boys – virtually all male graduates – joined up voluntarily or were drafted. The school decided to erect a marble plaque after the

⁸⁵¹ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 13.

⁸⁵² Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 13. OAPK Antwerp, D, 1b: minutes 28 March 1916.

⁸⁵³ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 22.

⁸⁵⁴ For the German people see: Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, pp. 17, 21, 22. For Belgium see: Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 21.

war, to those among them who had ‘given their lives for the fatherland.’ Their names were to be eternalised in golden letters. A fund to finance this project was already opened during the war. However, in Gaster’s reports, it does not become clear whether the names of those pupils who had fought in and died for the Belgian Army would be inscribed as well. In his first report, Gaster praised the wounded Belgians as much as he praised the wounded on the German side. However, he revealed a racist pro-German bias in the report of 1918, when he wrote the obituary for Otto Rieniets, who had fallen in the Belgian Army in October 1914. Rather than exalting the virtues of duty and bravery, as he had done in the other obituaries, Gaster lamented in this case the ‘tragic fate’ that Rieniets, a grandson of the first director of the school, ‘had to give his life to a cause that was foreign to his blood.’⁸⁵⁵

In this way, even though its former pupils were fighting on both sides, the school consciously allied itself to the German war effort. This also permeated the everyday running of the school. For example, on several occasions, the pupils collected money and gold for the German Reichsbank or the *Ludendorffspende*. Further, the school displayed many signs of a German ‘war culture’. More classes were given in German, and not in French, than previously. Small fines were introduced against the use of foreign words, and the German script was made compulsory in 1916 – a move that would certainly not have occurred in peacetime. anglophobic propaganda also seems to have been spread: in the English exam of 1916 the graduating class was asked to delineate Britain’s ‘real reasons’ for entering the war.⁸⁵⁶

In the final analysis, however, the ‘war culture’ of the school as a whole might still be judged to have been moderate. After all, the anglophobic edge in the exam question could have been repeated each year, yet it occurred only once. Moreover, the principal source, the annual reports, were strongly coloured by the views of Bernhard Gaster; they did not necessarily reflect the mood of the staff and pupils. On the contrary, if the memory of one of the pupils fifty years later is to be trusted, there might have been significant discrepancies of views. Hermann Roscher recalled:

⁸⁵⁵ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, pp. 15, 17, 21. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, p. 21. Gaster, *Bericht 1918*, p. 14. For military hospital (*Lazarett*) see: OAPK Antwerp, F, 5a.

⁸⁵⁶ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 20. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, pp. 10, 17. Gaster, *Bericht 1917*, p. 18.

The remarkable thing was the pronounced defeatism that broke out among most of the seventeen year-old schoolboys and girls, especially in the years 1917/18. We bought leftist German newspapers (*Vorwärts* and the paper of the independent Social-Democrats) and we read eagerly the *Rotterdamsche Courant* with its foreign war bulletins [...].⁸⁵⁷

More contemporary evidence would be desirable to confirm if this was indeed a widespread attitude. On its own, Roscher's recollection indicates at least that Gaster's patriotic enthusiasm was not unequivocally shared by all of his pupils.

A similar picture emerges from the sources of the Protestant churches. On the one hand, even more than the German School, the churches were physically linked to the German occupation regime: Pastor Eichler of the Reformationskirche initially opened his church for the German troops in the city, and the Christuskirche remained an important garrison church for the occupation forces throughout the war. Its pastor, Frick, also became a military pastor in Liège and commuted to Antwerp from there. Thus, at least the buildings and the officials of the two churches were mobilised in the religious services for Germany. Carl Fritz, a senior figure on the executive of the Reformationskirche, bemoaned that he was 'overladen with tasks from the *Reich*'.⁸⁵⁸ In addition, the leading figures in the churches increasingly displayed a German nationalistic attitude. Richard Böcking filed a complaint about the admission of an allegedly Belgian lady (she turned out to be Dutch) into the home for the elderly that was run by the Reformationskirche. Most strikingly, the latter's executive (Kirchenvorstand) agreed in March 1916 to Pastor Eichler's suggestion no longer to pray for the Belgian King during services.⁸⁵⁹

On the other hand, there was a certain level of dissent against this pro-German allegiance. In 1917, Fritz made some enquiries amongst the congregation concerning a voluntary contribution towards expenses, including Eichler's salary. Unexpectedly, he came across much dissatisfaction with the Pastor. Many members told him that Eichler was not doing anything for the church and that they would not mind if he left altogether. In the context of the

⁸⁵⁷ Quoted in: Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 129.

⁸⁵⁸ OAPK Antwerp, D, 5a.

⁸⁵⁹ OAPK Antwerp: D, 4g, 1: letter A. Valois, 8 Oct. 1916; D, 1b: Kirchenvorstand minutes, 28 March 1916.

war, this was likely to be an implicit criticism of Eichler's partisan policy.⁸⁶⁰ In the Christuskirche, there was even some open resistance.⁸⁶¹ It centred on the belligerent vice-chairman of the administrative council (Verwaltungsrat), Alfred Schuchard. A Belgian national, Schuchard had reportedly sacked his German employees in August 1914.⁸⁶² Throughout the time of occupation, he protested against the openly pro-German expressions by Pastor Frick and the executive, complaining, for example, that the *Kaisergeburtstagsfeiern* were offensive to Belgian members in wartime.⁸⁶³ Moreover, he actually tried to steer the church on a pro-Belgian course. Like other members, he felt that the church had always been an entirely Belgian institution, albeit a German-speaking one.⁸⁶⁴ He pointed out that the Christuskirche was a member of the Belgian Synod and that it was subsidised by the Belgian state. Thus, from early 1915 on, he campaigned to call a general assembly in order to vote on this 'national question'. However, when in May 1918 the council, who had been reluctant to have a general discussion about this divisive issue, finally called the assembly, only one of the members who turned up supported Schuchard. The vast majority agreed with Frick that the Christuskirche was German 'in character': it had been founded by Germans, it was still largely run by Germans, and its German identity was enshrined in its official name: 'German Protestant Evangelical Congregation'. Consequently, Frick argued, it was only natural to show loyalty to Germany in times of war.⁸⁶⁵ Following this defeat, Schuchard was relieved of his post on the administrative council by August 1918.

Thus, overall, the main institutions of the German Colony, the German School (ADS) and the two Protestant churches, failed to bridge the gap of animosity that the war had generated between German and Belgian, between those loyal to the country of origin and those loyal to the host country. In all three cases, the *Reichsdeutsche* in charge pushed their institutions further along a pro-German course than their inevitable entanglement with the German Army and the occupation authorities seemed to have required. Nevertheless, there were

⁸⁶⁰ OAPK Antwerp, D, 5a: Fritz to Böcking, 20 Dec. 1917.

⁸⁶¹ Vrints, 'Klippen,' pp. 24-6.

⁸⁶² Binder, *Antwerpen*, p. 73.

⁸⁶³ OAPK Antwerp, E, 1d: Kirchenvorstand minutes, 30 Jan. 1918.

⁸⁶⁴ OAPK Antwerp, E, 1d: Kirchenvorstand minutes, 30 Jan. 1918. See also OAPK Antwerp, E, 4: Mrs. Michelis to Kirchenvorstand, 6 Oct. 1918.

⁸⁶⁵ See also OAPK Antwerp, E, 4: Frick to *Verwaltungsrat*, 30 Jan. 1918.

some instances of reconciliation and the pre-war hybrid identity was still present at the 'grassroots' level. So conceivably, these institutions could have adopted both a more neutral as well as a more virulently pro-German position. Privately, many of the most eminent members of the Colony campaigned for the expansion of German influence in Belgium up to an outright annexation. In this context, they also became involved in the *Flamenpolitik* of the occupation regime.

One of the most passionate campaigners was probably Heinrich Albert von Bary. The head of an expansive trading empire, he had been the key figure of the German Colony in Antwerp for forty years; the Belgians had humorously called him 'the German burgomaster of Antwerp' – and the city had named a street in his honour.⁸⁶⁶ During the war, he had fled to Berlin and Wiesbaden, but he also returned to Antwerp for several extended stays. He visited both the heads of the German administration and his former Belgian friends. But he kept a low profile, because, as he stressed in his letters, it would damage his business interests if his name became associated with the German occupation or the war aims policies. Nevertheless, throughout the war, he sought contact with the most high-ranking members of the Government in order to discuss Belgium: he knew Bethmann Hollweg and Tirpitz personally, and he wrote letters to, among others, Ludendorff and Hertling.

At the end of August 1914, when the Government-General was set up, the Minister of the Interior consulted closely with Bary as an expert on Belgium.⁸⁶⁷ In September, von Bary corresponded with Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, sending him translations of several articles in Belgian newspapers, which accused him of having prepared the German invasion and which celebrated the expulsion of the German Colony. In his reply, Bethmann agreed with Bary that 'the German work, which had been invested in Belgium for a generation, must not be wasted.'⁸⁶⁸ If Bary had any particular solution to this 'Belgian Problem' at this stage, he did not find it necessary to spell it out. It seems likely that he favoured a form of German military protectorate. As indicated, his reasoning was primarily defensive: his concern was the survival of the German Colonies, especially the one in Antwerp, the prosperity of their businesses and the

⁸⁶⁶ Devos, 'Die Deutschen,' p. 61.

⁸⁶⁷ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119339, fol. 3: telegram Delbrück to Bethmann, 23 Aug. 1914.

⁸⁶⁸ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 5: Bethmann to Bary, 6 Sept. 1914.

continued availability of Antwerp for German trade. Bary would claim later that his concern was purely patriotically motivated: as a rich man he could live wherever it pleased him.⁸⁶⁹ But quite clearly, Bary's patriotism went hand in hand with his own business interests. In November 1916, he sent Bethmann more Belgian newspapers as proof of their hatred against the Germans and, consequently, of the necessity to keep Belgium 'under the strictest German control' after the war.⁸⁷⁰ During 1918, then, Bary became increasingly interested in the scheme of creating an 'independent' Flanders. Although he had been extremely sceptical at first, and had criticised the German *Flamenpolitik* for its lack of subtlety, the Antwerp 'activists' Claus and Oboussier convinced him that the majority of the Flemish people could be won over easily as soon as it was certain that the Belgian Government would not return. The following passage from one of his letters shows Bary's – naïve – enthusiasm for the project, despite his natural disinclinations:

As far as I am concerned, I readily admit that I have little sympathy for the *flamingantism* and that I regard French language and culture as much higher than the Flemish one, just as I find the Dutch people quite disagreeable – but I would consider this solution such a fortunate one for Germany that I would like to support it with all my strength. Germany cannot and will not annex Belgium, which is only right, but a Flanders that is completely under [Germany's] influence and that is thankful to [Germany] for its freedom, even conceding the management of its ports and railways, would be such a wonderful solution to the questions of both the 'freedom of Belgium' and the 'real guarantees' that I do not understand that there are still Germans, very sensible [*kluge*] Germans at that, who are critical of it [*sich ablehnend dagegen verhalten*].⁸⁷¹

As late as September 1918, Bary campaigned for the creation of this 'independent Duchy of Flanders' – which he now fitted with a border strip to connect with Germany, ceding the rest of Wallonia to France. Appealing to Ludendorff and complaining to Hertling about the German declarations in favour of a restored Belgium, H. A. von Bary, the otherwise astute businessman, apparently did not realise that Germany was losing the war and would not be able to enforce such a creation.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ PA AA Berlin, R 21567: Bary to Hertling, 14 Sept. 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁷⁰ PA AA Berlin, R 21562, fol. 95-96: Bary to Bethmann, 11 Nov. 1916.

⁸⁷¹ BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fol. 21: Bary to Tirpitz (?), n. d. [spring 1918].

⁸⁷² See BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 425, fols. 29 – 46: letters Bary to Ludendorff (15 May 1918) and to Hertling (14 Sept. 1918).

Similar to Bary, if not as persistent, other wealthy members of the Colony wrote to Berlin in order to speak out in favour of an aggressive and expansionist policy towards Belgium: Wilhelm von Mallinckrodt, Richard Böcking and Carlito Grisar.⁸⁷³ Grisar's case is particularly significant, since he was a Belgian national, belonging to one of the oldest families of the German Colony. He felt compelled to withdraw from the board of the German School as it reopened in January 1915. Less publicly, however, he became the coordinator of the school's association of former pupils, which published newsletters throughout the war.⁸⁷⁴ In January 1916, he sent a pamphlet entitled 'Germany and Belgium' to a friend in the German Naval Ministry, in which he proposed the creation of a 'Kingdom of Brabant'. This would consist roughly of Belgium without the populous Walloon province of Hainault, and it would join the German *Reich*. Interestingly, although this proposal was much more annexationist than the models espoused by Bary and the others, Grisar envisioned his project as an act of reconciliation – the new kingdom would be an equal among the German states. Accordingly, Grisar's pamphlet was also strikingly more 'pro-Belgian' in attitude: he derided some of the German stereotypes about the Belgians, and he cautioned that the Allied propaganda about German militarism was so successful because it hit some real flaws in German society.⁸⁷⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly, in all these 'war aims' by the elite of the Colony, Antwerp was destined to become the greatest port city on the European continent.⁸⁷⁶

Results

One can discern several significant aspects about the German Colony in Antwerp from the above facets of its wartime history. First, the outbreak of war between Germany and Belgium clearly shattered the basis of its existence. While before the war the Colony could generally integrate the entire spectrum of German-Belgian identities, it now disintegrated along the national divide. This

⁸⁷³ See BAMA Freiburg, N 253 (Tirpitz), 146, fols. 75-85; Böcking, n.d. [1915/1916]. BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 10311, fols. 64-107; Grisar, Jan. 1916. Letter Mallinckrodt, 28 July 1918, paraphrased in Vrints, 'Klippen,' p. 29.

⁸⁷⁴ Gaster, *Bericht 1915*, p. 26. Gaster, *Bericht 1916*, p. 16. Unfortunately, no traces of the newsletter have been found.

⁸⁷⁵ BAMA Freiburg, RM 3, 10311, fols. 64 ff; Grisar, 'Deutschland und Belgien,' esp. pp. 18, 50, 54.

⁸⁷⁶ See also StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 92: travel report Senator Diestel, 25 Aug. 1918, p. 20.

opposition of differing loyalties was exacerbated further by two factors: on the one hand the anti-German riots and the expulsion of the German nationals at the beginning of the war, and on the other hand, the fraternisation of these Antwerp-Germans with the occupation authorities, and their increasingly open rejection of their former host, the Belgian state, during the occupation. Nevertheless, throughout the war, this widening gap was still crossed in many small ways: from the German nationals who tried to stay in their home city during the expulsions, to the Belgian pupils who kept attending the German School, from the complaints against Eichler's and Frick's overt German nationalism, to Grisar's pro-German war aim, mixed with his criticism of German authoritarianism.

Second, a large proportion of the expellees returned to Antwerp after its conquest and integration into the German Government-General, forming a wartime colony. This group was but a pale shadow of the large and diverse German Colony before the war. It was shunned by most of the members who were Belgian nationals, the range of its social activities was greatly restricted by the conditions of war, and, overall, it was struggling economically, increasingly losing its less well-off members. On the other hand, it probably integrated more Antwerp-Germans than before the war, as the new Catholic organisations show. There was also a sense that the war and the Belgian animosity produced a greater cohesion between the German nationals of different backgrounds than before. Significantly, it demonstrated great organisational skills, both as refugees in Germany and as minority in Antwerp, and it proved to be very efficient in helping itself and in defending its interests.

Third, the expulsion of the Antwerp-Germans in August 1914, as well as the unprecedented public interest in Belgium during the occupation, increased the awareness in Germany about these *Auslanddeutsche* in Antwerp. The government, too, seemed to commit itself to supporting them more in the future than before the war. However, its support during the war remained rather minimal. Even though a strong German presence in Antwerp was bound to be conducive for an expansion of German influence into post-war Belgium, the government did not actively promote the permanent return of the expellees to Antwerp. All steps of the revival of the Colony in Antwerp were initiated by

Antwerp-Germans themselves. The government in Berlin and the General-Government in Brussels backed them up only subsequently.

Finally, the wartime Colony became to a large degree integrated in the German occupation regime – to the benefit of both. Many members provided valuable expertise on local conditions for the German administration, and the administration, in turn, became an important employer at a time when important sections of Antwerp's trade and industry lay dormant. Some of the wealthy Antwerp-German merchants also seemed to have been able to profiteer from the privileged treatment their businesses received from the German administration. In the end, many of the Colony's elite campaigned for the continuation of the occupation and for some kind of German suzerainty over Belgium. Their principal motivation, however, was not the expansion of the German *Reich* as such, but the preservation of their own position in Antwerp. While their ends thus differed subtly from those of expansionist campaigners in Germany, the proposed means and their practical outcome were identical. In this way, the Colony had also become deeply involved in the *Flamenpolitik* of the occupation regime.

Chapter 11: The German programme of ‘economic penetration’ in Antwerp

Part A of this thesis has teased out the various ways in which the future of Antwerp was contemplated in Germany, highlighting the predominant determination to ‘hold on’ to it. The first four chapters of part B described many of the ambiguities of the local occupation regime: its relative administrative leniency, its full integration in the German military and economic war effort, its hesitant support for consolidating the German Colony, and its adoption of the ‘moderate’ strain of *Flamenpolitik*, backing those activists who were sceptical of a close political union with Germany. These ambiguities demonstrate that there were three ‘levels’ to the activities of the occupation regime: relatively impartial administration, exploitation for Germany, and permanent German conquest. Depending on the context, these levels could either be in conflict – for example the requisition of mass goods was in the interest of the war effort but caused legal, administrative problems – or they could reinforce each other as with the diamond industry. While chapters 7 and 8 have concentrated on the tensions between ‘administration’ and ‘exploitation’, chapters 9 and 10 have investigated to what extent the occupation authorities managed to prepare a ‘conquest’ with the help of local allies: the activists and the German Colony. This could be described as a mainly psychological and cultural approach. What remains to be investigated, therefore, is to what extent the Germans managed to lay foundations of conquest in the material, economic sense. This chapter identifies two strands: the study and prospective taking over of some of Antwerp’s large commercial houses, and the actual wartime transfer of ownership of industrial and other properties to German citizens: the implementation of a programme of ‘economic penetration’.

Commercial enterprises

The great Antwerp houses of overseas commerce had played a significant role in the pre-war Belgian economy.⁸⁷⁷ Their development during the war has not yet been investigated in detail, but it is possible to provide a superficial picture here. On the one hand, the war had a devastating effect on them: not just

⁸⁷⁷ See for example: Wiedenfeld, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr*, esp. pp. 13 ff. See also ch. 1.

because of the closure of the Scheldt, but also because of the seizure and requisition of their considerable stocks by the Germans.⁸⁷⁸ On the other hand, they were not destroyed in the way that the German dismantling programme destroyed many Belgian industrial plants. Given the right conditions, they were set to restart their trade as soon as the war ended – and possibly profit from the expected huge demand for import goods in Europe. Moreover, their branches and investments overseas seemed to continue to operate. For example, the bank *Crédit foncier Sud-Américain*, on the board of which were represented some of Antwerp's largest companies, recorded a net profit of 2.12 billion Belgian Francs for the year 1914/1915.⁸⁷⁹ Even in occupied Belgium, there might have been a very limited recovery. Through the eventual payment for some of the requisitioned goods (see ch. 8), and through the abolition of the Belgian moratorium on payments, the firms and their banks were reported to have been financially liquid.⁸⁸⁰ As seen in chapters 8 and 10, some firms, particularly those linked to the German Colony, even managed to branch into the internal Belgian trade of agricultural produce during the war.

The German Civilian Administration scrutinised their activities as much as it could. The detailed extent of its interference remains yet to be fully explored. The Antwerp Chamber of Commerce, which had been closed since the conquest, became active again in January 1915, during the struggle over the German requisitions of the bulk goods in the port. By the end of that year, however, it officially shut its doors again in reaction to the decreed German supervision.⁸⁸¹ Generally, the German system of control – supervision and forced management (*Zwangsverwaltung*) – was initially limited to those companies that were running on 'enemy capital', and whenever there was a 'military necessity'. From 1917 onwards, the system was increasingly extended to Belgian companies. Apart from monitoring the companies' wartime activities, binding them to the German war effort as much as possible, the Germans strove to prepare closer ties between Antwerp and Germany in the future. To this purpose, the Bank Section conducted detailed studies of the pre-war record of individual companies as well

⁸⁷⁸ See in particular: SB PK Berlin, 4 Krieg 1914/28515: report Sandt, 13 Nov. 1914, p. 6.

⁸⁷⁹ *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 30 Dec. 1915, p. 7.

⁸⁸⁰ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 7: Lumm, 'Die Finanzierung des Antwerpener Einfuhr-Handels vor dem Krieg,' confidential memorandum, 20 May 1917, p. 38.

⁸⁸¹ *Annuaire de la Chambre*, pp. 65, 82.

as of the commercial place of Antwerp as a whole.⁸⁸² Similarly, Antwerp companies figured prominently in at least two of the studies on the Belgian economic interests abroad conducted by Section VII of the Political Department under Rudolf Asmis: in number six on Holland and the Dutch East-Indies, and in number eight on South and Central America.⁸⁸³

The general aim of all of these studies was, as Asmis explained in a letter, to make sure that Belgian foreign trade relations would be included in the German economic plans for Belgium.⁸⁸⁴ With regard to Antwerp, one can discern four strategies. First, the Government-General were concerned about the Belgian refugees transferring their businesses to the Netherlands and other host countries. They were especially afraid that this might lead to the permanent relocation of Antwerp's specialised markets, such as for wool, vulcanised rubber, wheat, saltpetre, hides and diamonds. The Antwerp provincial Civilian Administration monitored the new business ventures of Antwerp companies abroad. As seen in chapter 8, in the case of the diamond industry they even took successful counter-measures to prevent relocation. By mid-1917, they reported that none of the Antwerp companies had 'really grown roots' abroad – with the possible exception of the hide trade. Here, the wartime move of commercial giants the Grisar family to Rotterdam had helped set up a Dutch Leather Exchange which could permanently damage the markets in Antwerp and Brussels.⁸⁸⁵

Secondly, in getting to know the Belgian connections abroad, particularly in South America, they were partly considering their displacement by the German competition. Thirdly, they were hoping that the existing links of the Belgian commercial houses to Germany could be intensified to the effect that the Belgian presence in South America could be used as a front for German commerce wherever there was antipathy to Germany.⁸⁸⁶ Fourth and last, they wanted to assess the companies for potential German takeovers, as part of the programme of 'economic penetration'.

⁸⁸² A number of them can be found in: BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm): nos. 70, 84-86, 98, 99, 131, 139.

⁸⁸³ BAMA Freiburg, PH 30, I: 80, 81.

⁸⁸⁴ PA AA Berlin, NL Rudolf Asmis, box 23, VII/7, fol. 93: Asmis to Voss, 13 April 1918.

⁸⁸⁵ BAMA Freiburg, PH 30, I, 211: anonymous [Rudolf Asmis?], 'Die belgischen Wirtschaftsinteressen in Holland,' pp. 25, 29.

⁸⁸⁶ GStA PK Berlin, I, HA Rep. 120, C/XIII/9/no. 9/vol. 36: letter Lancken, 6 Feb. 1918, accompanying E. L. Voss, 'Die belgischen Wirtschaftsinteressen in Süd- und Mittelamerika', (= report no. 8, Sektion VII, PA GG), 1917.

Economic Penetration

The concept of ‘economic penetration’ was developed relatively early on, and it remained the most concrete plan for consolidating the German position in Belgium during the occupation. Its main proponent was Karl von Lumm, head of the Bank Section. The first step toward the development of a concrete programme was undertaken with the foundation of the Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft für Belgien, the ‘Society of National Economy for Belgium’. Its 550 members were exclusively drawn from the personnel of the Government-General. On 20 November 1915, Ludwig von Köhler, head of the Department for Trade and Industry, in addressing the first general assembly defined the aims of ‘economic penetration’ in unequivocal terms: to secure that, in the future, German trade and industry would be the determining factor in the Belgian national economy – irrespective of how the German-Belgian relationship would be settled in international law. In particular, this would be achieved by the spread of German private capital, which would specifically replace the ‘many millions of enemy capital’ in Belgium. In this way, German capital would one day relieve the German occupation troops.⁸⁸⁷ Unfortunately, very little is known about the Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft: no archival material seems to have survived, and its fortnightly publication did not inform readers about its ‘confidential’ activities. These appear to have consisted mainly in the identification and advertisement of the most ‘interesting’ economic objects for German investors.⁸⁸⁸

The most important instrument for implementing the programme were the so-called ‘three German-Belgian companies of 1916’: the Industrie-, Boden-, and Verkehrsgesellschaft 1916 m.b.H., on which Brigitte Hatke has written an excellent study.⁸⁸⁹ They were founded – virtually in secret – by representatives of the German heavy and electrical industries in conjunction with the German occupation regime, and they became active in spring 1917. As shareholding companies they tried to absorb any other German investors, though they did not formally get the ‘monopoly’ in occupied Belgium that they aspired to. Their

⁸⁸⁷ *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft*, 20 Nov. 1915, p. 2. See also: Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, pp. 125 ff. Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, p. 65.

⁸⁸⁸ See in particular: *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft*, 13 Jan. 1916, p. 8: report of the executive.

⁸⁸⁹ Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*.

purchases were confined to objects running mostly on 'enemy capital', with British-owned companies targeted first. Any Belgian shareholders received financial compensation. The sales profit went into the coffers of the German state. The Government-General had started a gradual process of supervision, sequestration, liquidation and expropriation of the relevant companies as early as 1915. Initially, this was intended simply as retribution for similar acts in Great Britain, and for creating trump cards for the anticipated peace negotiations about the restitution of German properties abroad. But this process was soon smoothly incorporated into the programme of 'economic penetration'. In the long run, it was anticipated that Belgian capital would be appropriated as well, starting with the coal mining companies in the huge 'Campine' coal field in Limburg and Antwerp provinces, the mining of which had only started just before the war. But resistance from certain sections of the Civilian Administration, backed by the Foreign Ministry, delayed any such projects until the end of the war.

A striking feature of the three German-Belgian companies' purchases that Hatke identified by name was that most of them were located in Antwerp. These were: the shipyards of the Antwerp Engineering Co. Ltd. and of Guthrie, Murdoch & Co., a series of eleven British and French commercial properties (the bulk purchase of which was not finalised), and the water and gas works, which served the entire agglomeration, belonging to the Antwerp Water Works Co. Ltd. London and the Compagnie du Gaz d'Anvers, a subsidiary of the Imperial Continental Gas Association in London E.C.⁸⁹⁰ Even the liquidation projects in the Campine, in which the 'Industry Company' was heavily involved, can be partly counted among the Antwerp objects. It is true that the interest of the German heavy industrialists stemmed mostly from the desire to contain or absorb a potentially powerful rival, but the political motivation for putting the coalfields in German control, as everybody knew, was to a large degree their inevitable influence on the development of the nearby port of Antwerp.⁸⁹¹ The other objects were two gas and electricity works in Brussels, also subsidiaries of Imperial Continental Gas. Later, further purchases were envisaged concerning smaller, mainly French-owned, gas and electricity works all over Belgium, but the retreat

⁸⁹⁰ Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, pp. 89, 110, 125.

⁸⁹¹ Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, esp. p. 94. See also for example: Schumacher, *Antwerpen*, pp. 100-2.

of the German armies prompted the German industrialists to quickly withdraw from these projects.⁸⁹²

This apparent preference, at least initially, for Antwerp needs yet to be investigated further. For example, it might be possible to find out where the sixty-three companies that were being liquidated by August 1917 were located.⁸⁹³ However, as some contemporaries attest, the trend was real. Two reasons suggest themselves for it. First, it might have simply been that more of the ‘enemy capital’ available for expropriation was located in Antwerp than elsewhere. Fifty of the aforementioned sixty-three companies were British-owned, and British investment in Belgium before the war was particularly concentrated in Antwerp.⁸⁹⁴ Second, the German investors possibly felt that acquisitions in Antwerp were more likely to survive the end of the war than anywhere else in Belgium. In other words, they felt that in a geographical hierarchy of what the German Government would strive to control politically the most, Antwerp came first. This reason is more speculative, but several sources speak for it.

Generally, the German businessmen were not prepared to participate in projects if they had to carry the risks resulting from a non-ratification in the peace treaty – and equally not if the projects threatened to run a deficit for the duration of the war. One of the important conclusions of Brigitte Hatke is that despite their rhetoric to the contrary, the industrialists involved in the three German-Belgian companies unequivocally put their business interests before their patriotism.⁸⁹⁵ All of their contracts of purchase accordingly stipulated that they would not incur any losses from an annulment of the transactions enforced by a defeat. This mentality in the background gives added weight to the following two statements about the progress of the liquidations and expropriations. The first is a memorandum by a certain von Kühling of the Section for Trade and Industry, dated 13 April 1917:

The German buyers show great interest, particularly for Antwerp which, as one can assume with certainty, will stay in German hands. The imperial government purposefully works towards transferring as

⁸⁹² Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, esp. pp. 146-9.

⁸⁹³ See: Wende, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 130.

⁸⁹⁴ History Section Foreign Office, *Peace Handbooks*, vol. V: *The Netherlands*, London 1920, p. 154.

⁸⁹⁵ Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, esp. p. 155.

much property as possible in Antwerp and East Flanders into German hands.⁸⁹⁶

The second is by Ludwig von Köhler, and is taken from his report for the Department for Trade and Industry for the second half of 1917:

The uncertainty about the political fate of the country [Belgium] has made the task of attracting and firmly establishing German interests much more difficult. While the liquidation of movable property was carried out smoothly from the beginning, the German merchants and industrialists shied away from acquiring fixed properties, particularly factories [...]. There has been a gradual improvement. Numerous industrial companies, merchant houses and real estate properties have been sold to Germans. [...] In Antwerp, it is nearly always possible to sell the liquidated objects to Germans [...]. Germans have placed far less confidence in the liquidation of real estate in Brussels and Wallonia. It was possible to conclude sales to Germans in only a few cases.⁸⁹⁷

Given this concentrated interest of German buyers on Antwerp, how extensive were the expropriations there? The consulted sources do not reveal the complete particulars. Usually they merely highlight the big cases of the shipyards and of the gas and water works. Nevertheless, it has been possible to assemble an impressive list. The publication of the *Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft* reported on the value and the most recent profits of altogether seven companies in Antwerp.⁸⁹⁸ Karl von Lumm compiled a report on one of them in June 1916, the *Société Financière des Caoutchoucs S.A.*, which belonged to the Bunge group – one of the ‘renegade’ Antwerp-German houses. It owned nine rubber plantations in the Dutch East Indies (as well as seven in British Malaysia). Since French banks had invested part of its capital it was put under German supervision. Lumm recommended its acquisition as being in the future German national interest.⁸⁹⁹ Its eventual fate, however, has not come to light. Similarly, among the other ‘enemy’ companies in Antwerp city and province that were either supervised or put under forced management (*Zwangsverwaltung*) but whose

⁸⁹⁶ BA Koblenz, N 1294 (Schacht), 1: memo Kühling, 13 April 1917, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁷ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, VIII, 1, no. 84, adh. 5, vol. 9: report Köhler, 26 Jan. 1918, p. 53.

⁸⁹⁸ *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft*: 30 Dec. 1915 (*Crédit foncier Sud-Américain*), 30 March 1916 (*Crédit Anversoise, Banque de Crédit Commercial*), 30 June 1916 (*Compagnie nationale de Transports maritimes*), 23 June 1916 (*Société financière des Caoutchoucs*), 21 July 1916 (*Nafta, Société pour l'Exploitation du Pétrole, Société des Ciments de l'Europe Orientale*).

⁸⁹⁹ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 139, esp. fols. 2, 13.

further fate is not known were: French and British factories for linoleum, tobacco and machines, as well as a forwarding company and one for ship supplies.⁹⁰⁰

Concerning the known expropriations and sales, there were, first of all, a number of them in and around the port of Antwerp. In terms of fixed properties, there are some hints that apart from the two shipyards already mentioned some more plots were sold to Germans. Generally, the Government-General intended to commit German shipbuilding companies to construct large shipyards along the Scheldt as soon as the war was over.⁹⁰¹ In terms of vessels, too, there were many sales. One example was the Belgian schooling ship *Comte de Smet de Nayer*, seized as spoils of war, which was sold far below market value to the *Deutscher Schulschiff-Verein* in Bremen.⁹⁰² The Government-General also conducted a clandestine programme of buying up Belgian river and canal boats in the Netherlands – they had secured 115 by April 1916 – not only for wartime purposes but also particularly with the aim of increasing the German dominance in Antwerp's inland waterway traffic. Similarly, a Belgian refugee in The Hague warned his government in March 1917 that a German Rhine shipping company pressured him to sell his shares of the company.⁹⁰³

On land, by far the largest purchase was that of the gas and water works mentioned above. In addition to that, the following properties were expropriated: a candle factory, a French nickel foundry, the British Liebig meat-extraction plant, and a French department store.⁹⁰⁴ They were all acquired by companies based in Germany – probably at a price far below their value, as Hatke has shown. The Frankfurt am Main Metallgesellschaft, for example, purchased the nickel foundry. Most of the personnel managing the sequestration, however,

⁹⁰⁰ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 96: report Schramm, 'Zwangsverwaltung', 20 June 1919, p. 3.

⁹⁰¹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 96: report Schramm, 'Zwangsverwaltung', 20 June 1919, p. 9. BA Koblenz, N 1143 (Le Suire), 5: minutes, Department for Trade and Industry, 9 March 1916, p. 18.

⁹⁰² BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: correspondence on the sale and subsequent repayment, 1918-1919. See also: Hatke, *Deutsch-belgische Gesellschaften*, p. 91.

⁹⁰³ PA AA Berlin, R 123851: esp. Kühlmann to Bethmann Hollweg, 27 April 1916. MAE Brussels, 4556, V, folder I (1914-1918): correspondence Fierens with Beyens, esp. 14 May 1917. The company in question was probably the *Badische Aktien Gesellschaft für Rheinschiffahrt und Seetransport*.

⁹⁰⁴ BA Koblenz, N 1294 (Schacht), 1: memorandum Kühling, 13 April 1917, p. 1. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 96, report Schramm, 'Zwangsverwaltung', 20 June 1919, p. 9.

were recruited from the German Colony in Antwerp.⁹⁰⁵ In this way, it is conceivable that some of the unnamed ‘smaller objects’ were actually acquired by German businesses already established in Antwerp.

Thus, despite the absence of complete lists, the available evidence suggests that the expropriation of ‘enemy capital’ and the concomitant settling of German investments in Antwerp had indeed been extensive and had developed to a very advanced stage by the end of the war. In his post-war report on the sequestrations, Max Schramm wrote that the British and French industrial and commercial influence in Antwerp had been ‘largely extinguished’ – with far-reaching consequences ‘had the war been won’.⁹⁰⁶

Results

Despite the relative paucity of available sources, it is clear that the ‘level’ of conquest assumed important proportions in the Government-General’s activities in Antwerp. The implementation of the material, economic foundations for a permanent German influence over Belgium went further in Antwerp than elsewhere, which is a particularly significant finding. As argued above, some of this phenomenon may be attributed to pragmatic reasons: the availability of desirable objects, and the existing presence of German interests in the form of the German Colony. Given a certain obsession among influential German circles with the Antwerp Question, as detailed in part A, however, the hope and intention of keeping control of Antwerp and its port after the war must have been at least as important an explanation. All of this lends substance to the speculation in previous chapters that some of the local occupation authorities’ seemingly ‘innocent’ acts of administration – such as the raising of the *Gneisenau* or the support for the diamond industry – were also signs of the Germans settling down, signs of conquest.

⁹⁰⁵ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 96, report Schramm, ‘Zwangsverwaltung’, 20 June 1919, p. 4.

⁹⁰⁶ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 96, report Schramm, ‘Zwangsverwaltung’, 20 June 1919, p. 9.

Chapter 12: Epilogue. The end of the war and its aftermath

Defeat in the war was followed by the peace treaty of 28 June 1919 which imposed heavy financial, material and territorial losses on Germany.⁹⁰⁷ Rather than realising its expansionist schemes, the German delegation at Versailles was not able to preserve even the full territorial integrity of the ‘Second *Reich*’, while revolution had overthrown the old political system within. It remains to be asked, however, how this radical transformation affected the Antwerp-German relationship. How did the Germans in Antwerp, both the Colony and the occupation personnel, experience the end of the war? Were the members of the Colony able to stay in Antwerp? How did the occupation personnel remember their time there? More generally, what were the economic repercussions of the occupation on Antwerp’s German links from before the war? Did German fears about the closure of Antwerp port to everything German become true? Did the relationship ‘normalise’ again before the Second World War?

The retreat from Antwerp

Like most people in Germany itself, the Germans in Antwerp had not expected the end of the war in October/November 1918. The news of the German government suing for peace was a surprise for many, while the terms of the armistice and the aftermath up to the signing of the treaty of Versailles came as a real shock to everybody. According to a few letters dating from the last few months of the war, it appears that at least until the end of September most Germans in Antwerp were confident that Germany could still win the war – at the very least in the sense that it would be in a strong position at the eventual peace conference, and that it could negotiate favourable terms in a ‘compromise peace’.

Thus von Bary wrote a long letter to Chancellor Hertling on 14 September, calling for the creation of a Duchy of Flanders that would be closely associated with the German *Reich* – and a week later he sent a copy to the Foreign

⁹⁰⁷ This is not to mean that Germany was completely ruined by punitive ‘victor’s justice’. Modern research has highlighted the limits of the restrictions that the treaty imposed on Germany, interpreting the treaty as a real attempt to create a lasting peace in Europe.

Ministry.⁹⁰⁸ On 30 September, Senator Schramm wrote to Lieutenant-General Sauter, who had just been transferred to the front from a post in Antwerp, that the war would not end any time soon, but that the German arms would prevail – so that he expected Sauter to be able to visit Antwerp again.⁹⁰⁹ And in a similarly confident outlook, the German School started its new school year of 1918/1919 as planned on 17 September with 508 pupils attending – 4 more than in the previous May.⁹¹⁰ Other sources, it is true, indicate that the Germans' optimism was not completely naïve, and that many were sceptical about the outcome of the war. In February 1918, Major-General von Hammerstein-Equord, a former commandant of the city of Antwerp, was very cautious about a German victory, writing to his friend Schramm that the Entente would keep on fighting even if Paris fell. In March he consequently spoke out in favour of returning to the *status quo ante bellum*, with undefined 'minor' territorial changes.⁹¹¹ In retrospect, a number of members of the local Antwerp Civilian Administration attested to their relative pessimism at the end of the war. In the most extreme case, a former senior student of the German School claimed to have been certain that the war was lost – though his testimony is not entirely reliable, dating from the 1970s.⁹¹² In any case, all of Schramm's colleagues who wrote to him after the war confessed in horror that they had never imagined the kind of defeat that materialised in the end.⁹¹³

In this way, it is important to note that the members of the occupation regime seemed to have been no wiser about the real situation at the front than the ordinary population in Germany. Karl Sauter experienced this first hand. On 5 September 1918, three days after his transfer to the front, he noted in his diary: 'Here one quickly gets a different understanding of the events of the past few

⁹⁰⁸ PA AA Berlin, R 21567: Bary to Hertling, 14 Sept. 1918; Bary to AA, 30 Sept. 1918. See also ch. 10.

⁹⁰⁹ HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), Übergröße II, folder 'Photos, Briefe': Schramm to Sauter, 30 Sept. 1918.

⁹¹⁰ Lindenborn, *Auslandsschule (Antwerpen)*, p. 50. The number is for 10 October. Gaster, *Bericht 1918*, p. 15.

⁹¹¹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: correspondence with Hammerstein-Equord: letters 9 Feb. 1918, 11 March 1918. He might be referring specifically to the eastern *status quo*, as he dismissed the (expansionist!) eastern peace treaty (of Brest-Litowsk) as ephemeral.

⁹¹² See StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 82: Pauli to Schramm, June 1923. Oral testimony Roscher in: Huhn, 'Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,' p. 131.

⁹¹³ See for example: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: Hammerstein-Equord to Schramm, 25 Jan. 1919. BA Koblenz, N 1015 (Schwertfeger), 453, fol. 194: Schwertfeger to Waentig, 31 July 1919.

months than people had far back in Antwerp.’ Indeed, at the end of August 1918, he had still been superciliously mocking the notion of not annexing Belgium as defeatist – even though it had come from a member of the imperial government visiting Antwerp. But within a week of his transfer he realised perhaps for the first time that a German defeat was a real possibility. Moreover, in his almost daily diary entries, he recorded more and more pessimistic insights, including the fact that the Allies under Marshal Foch had gained the strategic initiative since July.⁹¹⁴

The realisation that the war had taken a bad turn for Germany and was coming to an end must have set in for the Germans in Antwerp by the first week of October: with Germany’s note to President Wilson, suing for peace. Lancken Wakenitz at least, head of the Political Department in Brussels, was under no illusions that Germany’s bargaining power had decreased dramatically. On the 4th, he emphatically advised the new Chancellor Max von Baden not to indicate even veiled German interests in Belgium in his upcoming *Reichstag* speech, but to simply announce the full restoration of Belgium, as well as Germany’s readiness to negotiate about reparations.⁹¹⁵ Even more tellingly, people in Antwerp could increasingly hear the fighting at the front lines, as the German armies retreated. Army sections and transports of the wounded began to pass through Antwerp on a daily – and nightly – basis. On 18 October, Antwerp had officially become *Etappe*, the army zone behind the front.⁹¹⁶

Nevertheless, the month of October was marked by great uncertainty for both the Government-General and the German Colony. Most members were very reluctant to leave Antwerp and give up their respective claims on and livelihoods in the city. As seen particularly in chapters 3 and 11, the Government-General was determined to preserve as many of the changes it had introduced in Belgium as possible – and it had long studied how to integrate these *‘faits accomplis’* into

⁹¹⁴ HStA Stuttgart, M 660, 300 (Sauter), box I, 3c, pp. 225-31: esp. entries: 18 Aug. (on visit of von Stein, head of the *Reichswirtschaftsamt*), 30 Aug., 5, 6 and 9 Sept. 1918. On 5 Sept. he concluded his diary entry with: ‘Ich vertraue noch unserem guten Stern.’ But on 6 Oct. he writes: ‘Jedes weitere Blutvergiessen ist jetzt zwecklos und geschieht nur, weil die Führung des Reiches nicht mehr ein noch aus weiss. – Wir werden Frieden machen müssen, – wahrscheinlich Frieden um jeden Preis.’

⁹¹⁵ PA AA Berlin, R 21567: note Lancken, 4 Oct. 1918.

⁹¹⁶ Lindenborn, *Auslandschule (Antwerpen)*, p. 50. BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 10/2, fol. 414: report Lumm, ‘Die letzte Tätigkeit und der Abbau der BA in Belgien,’ 7 Feb. 1919, p. 35.

the peace treaty.⁹¹⁷ Concerning Antwerp and its port, new schemes were also considered in order to at least preserve the German presence. Rudolf Asmis in Brussels, for example, suggested on 16 October that Germany could bully a restored Belgium into concessions in Antwerp by threatening to move all its business to Rotterdam.⁹¹⁸ The institutions of the Colony, meanwhile, thought of ways of securely anchoring their positions in Antwerp in order to survive the restitution of the Belgian government. The executive of the Reformationskirche, for example, proposed to Alexander Schaible, Chief of the Civilian Administration for Flanders (Verwaltungschef für Flandern), on 22 October to establish a German synod in Belgium, independent of Belgian institutions and under the protection of Germany.⁹¹⁹

Nothing much was made of these plans, however. On 1 October, the General-Government had still decided against preparing any type of evacuation. This decision was reversed about a week later, when the personnel were advised to send their luggage home and to start packing up their offices.⁹²⁰ But it was not until the third week that it advised the members of the Colony in Antwerp to leave. This resulted in the second ‘mass exodus’ of Germans from Antwerp since the outbreak of war. The subsequent rapid fall of student numbers in the German School can again be taken as indicator for the Colony as a whole: from 508 students on 10 October, to 452 on Monday 21st, to 280 on Friday of that week, with only 82 turning up the following Monday. The Civilian Administration organised trains for the Colony, who had effectively become refugees once more.⁹²¹

Similar to the expellees in 1914, there are no overall statistics for these refugees concerning their numbers or their destinations. The majority seems to have left already by 1 November. Members in responsible positions, such as Director Gaster and Pastor Eichler, went with them in order to help organise

⁹¹⁷ See for example: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119496: Kraus, ‘Konservatorische Massnahmen bezüglich des während der Besetzung Belgiens geschaffenen Werks,’ 1917 (p. 72: ‘Schaffung möglichst zahlreicher “faits accomplis”’). BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 370: Hintze to Falkenhausen, 20 Sept. 1918 (‘Wirtschaftliche Ziele mögen sich noch bei direkten Verhandlungen mit Belgischer Regierung erreichen.’).

⁹¹⁸ PA AA Berlin, NL Asmis, box 23, VII, 9-10: Asmis to Peltzer, 16 Oct. 1918.

⁹¹⁹ OAPK Antwerp, D, e: Kirchenvorstand to Verwaltungschef Flandern, 22 Oct. 1918. This was also the culmination of deliberations throughout the war. See ch. 10.

⁹²⁰ BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 10/ 2, fol. 410: report Lumm, ‘Die letzte Tätigkeit’, 7 Feb. 1919, p.31. See also: KA Munich, HS 2261 (Hurt): Hurt to Falkenhausen, 11 Oct. 1918.

⁹²¹ Lindenborn, *Auslandschule (Antwerpen)*, pp. 50-51.

lodging and employment.⁹²² Many waited longer and left with the last personnel of the Civilian Administration on 13 November.⁹²³ A good number, however, had decided to stay put and await developments. One can imagine that these were people who had built up a livelihood in Antwerp: owners of small businesses, and those who had nowhere to go outside Belgium. Yet most of them were expelled by the Belgian authorities during 1919. The German embassy in The Hague reported in January that almost 6,000 Germans were awaiting this fate in Belgium.⁹²⁴ Just as these successive waves of refugees and expellees resembled the situation in 1914, so did their destinations: in the first instance neighbouring Holland and Rhineland-Westphalia. Many congregated in cities like Cologne, Wiesbaden (in Hesse), and Amsterdam where they set up self-help organisations.⁹²⁵

The armistice, signed on 11 November, gave the Germans two weeks to evacuate the occupied territories in the West.⁹²⁶ Some of it had already been re-conquered by the Belgian and Allied armies: by 5 November the Germans had retreated behind a 'secured line of the Meuse', which ran east of Antwerp, Namur and Fumay.⁹²⁷ On both sides of this line, the Germans had faced the logistical nightmare of packing not only their personal belongings, but also the contents of the entire bureaucratic machinery of the occupation before the arrival of the enemy. Trainloads of sealed boxes with documents were sent to Germany. In Antwerp, Senator Schramm remarked tongue in cheek that he pitied the

⁹²² Lindenborn, *Auslandschule (Antwerpen)*, p. 51. He writes that 'the last' left that day, which is clearly inaccurate. OAPK Antwerp, D, e: note Kirchenvorstand, 31 Oct. 1918. They planned to return in order to guard their institutions. Gaster only made it to Brussels. See also correspondence Gaster in: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119539: 18 Oct., 6 Nov. 1918.

⁹²³ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 94: report Schramm, [18?] November 1918. See also below.

⁹²⁴ PA AA Berlin, R 4367: report Behrens, 18 Jan. 1919. Caestecker puts the figure at 9,000. Frank Caestecker, 'Wie was nu de vijand? De constructie van de "Duitser" bij het aflijnen van ongewenste vreemdelingen (1918-1919),' in Serge Jaumain, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale*, Brussels 2005, p. 530. According to a correspondent of Schramm, 130 were brought across the frontier on 14 April and ended up in Altena in Westphalia, among them 'several from Antwerp'. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: [illegible: Paul Doerrer?] to Schramm, 21 April 1918. An enquiry at the city archive of Altena has yielded no further results. See correspondence Biroth, City Altena (Westf.), 22 April 2002.

⁹²⁵ See in particular correspondence in: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 82, J 84, J 97. See also BA Berlin, N 2181 (Lumm), 10/ 2, fols. 380 ff: Lumm, 'Die letzte Tätigkeit', 7 Feb. 1919.

⁹²⁶ KA Munich, HS 2261 (Hurt): excerpt from armistice terms, 12 Nov. 1918.

⁹²⁷ BAMA Freiburg, N 21 (Falkenhausen), 2, p. 378. The Belgians had re-conquered Bruges on 21 October but would not officially enter Brussels until 22 November. Van Overstraeten and Tasnier, *Les opérations militaires*, pp. 397-401. Zuckerman, *Rape of Belgium*, p. 215.

person who would have to sort this material.⁹²⁸ In this way, the Government-General moved first to Harzburg and later to Berlin, where the Civilian Administration (*Abwicklungsstelle*) wrapped up its affairs within the Imperial Office of the Interior.⁹²⁹ In Antwerp, as in most centres of the occupation regime, the Germans did not manage to save all their inventory: large amounts of documents, among them many marked ‘secret’ were burnt in the courtyards of their offices. And despite their precautions, the Germans inadvertently left some boxes behind, which were inevitably ‘captured’ by the returning Belgian authorities.⁹³⁰

In addition to this paperwork, the Civilian Administration was also helping in the flight of members of the German Colony, as noted above, as well as that of Belgian collaborators, notably the Flemish activists.⁹³¹ While the Germans did not appear to have carried out any type of ‘scorched earth’ retreat in Antwerp, they opened all border crossings and dropped all customs checks. In this way, goods of great value, notably diamonds, were taken out of Belgium.⁹³² Max Schramm and 2,000 employees finally left Antwerp on 13 November 1918.⁹³³

From mid-October to mid-November Antwerp was again predominantly a centre of the theatre of war. The buildings of the German School were converted into a military hospital – with dozens of wounded soldiers and German nurses staying on until the beginning of 1919.⁹³⁴ At first it even looked like the fortress would once again play a role, this time to be defended by the Germans. As noted in chapter 8, the military governments of Antwerp had maintained the fortifications ready for battle throughout the war. According to newspaper reports, they were stepping up preparations for a full-scale defence during October 1918, for example by flooding some of the foreland. Indeed, the officers

⁹²⁸ StA Hamburg, 132-II, 3959, fol. 33: report Schramm, 26 Oct. 1918.

⁹²⁹ Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 233.

⁹³⁰ For Belgian finds of German documents in Antwerp see: PA AA Berlin, R 70450: Consulate-General (Brussels) to AA, 22 March 1922 (on report in *L’Etoile Belge*, 20 March 1922).

⁹³¹ On the Flemish activist refugees see esp. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 226-32.

⁹³² Most of them were taken by the traders themselves. Brussels AGR, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *De Telegraaf* 31 Oct. 1918. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Offenbach to RdI, 30 Nov. 1920 (copy). ‘Scorched earth’ programmes were carried out further west, nearly including the destruction of the Hainault coalmines. See for example: Zuckerman, *Rape of Belgium*, p. 216.

⁹³³ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 94: report Schramm, [18?] November 1918.

⁹³⁴ Lindenborn, *Auslandsschule (Antwerpen)*, p. 51.

in Antwerp were concerned with the possibility of a siege until the armistice.⁹³⁵ Further, Antwerp was all this time performing a different important military function for the Germans. It facilitated the retreat of the Fourth Army and the Naval Corps. The port, which had long been an important element in the German supply routes, became now a massive assembly point for the armies' materiel. Of course, the problem remained that unless the goods were transhipped onto the railways, they had to take the waterway via the Netherlands. But, perhaps similar to the Belgian defenders in 1914, the German army preferred to get its military equipment, its torpedo boats and U-boats as well as its staff, interned in the Netherlands, rather than letting it become the enemy's war booty.⁹³⁶

The orderly organisation of this retreat, however, was greatly disturbed by the arrival of the German soldiers' revolution in Antwerp. While there are some small studies on the revolutionaries in Brussels, the extent and development of revolutionary scenes in Antwerp remain to be investigated.⁹³⁷ The following is a rough outline, using a German officer's account and Dutch newspaper reports. At the latest since the early morning of Monday 11 November, the day of the armistice, military discipline was breaking down in many army units stationed in and passing through the port city. Many soldiers abandoned their posts, took to drink and pillaged the army depots. Officers lost control and soldiers' councils (Soldatenräte) were created. One of them apparently attempted to assert itself as the new highest German authority in the city. Its 'reign' lasted four days, until the retreat from the city and the entry of the Belgian army. It is not clear if it had similar political ambitions to its Brussels counterpart, especially concerning spreading the revolution to the Belgians. Unlike Brussels, however, there seem to

⁹³⁵ AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* 18 Oct. 1918 (Germans flood Polders of Calloo, west of Antwerp); *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 8 Oct. 1918. BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: major Diemer to Ministry of war, 13 Feb. 1919.

⁹³⁶ See in particular: BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: major Diemer to Ministry of war, 13 Feb. 1919; report Diemer, 'Bericht über meine Tätigkeit vor meiner Abreise aus Brüssel bis zum Eintreffen in Berlin (12 bis 25 November 1918)', 10 Dec. 1918. See also the reports in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in: AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers'.

⁹³⁷ On Brussels see: José Gotovitch, '[German Revolution in Brussels],' in Hubert Roland and Roland Baumann (eds), *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1998. Carl Einstein in Brüssel: Dialoge über Grenzen*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001. Klaus H. Kiefer, 'Carl Einstein and the Revolutionary Soldiers' Councils in Brussels,' in Rainer Rumold and O.K. Werkmeister (eds), *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism. The Literary and Artistic German War Colony in Belgium 1914-1918*, Columbia 1990. Maurice Van Vollenhoven, *Les vraies ambassades. Considerations sur la vie. Souvenirs d'un Diplomate*, Paris/Brussels 1954, pp. 234-42. See further: KA Munich NL Hurt, 2262, folders 'Persönliches' and 'Fall Freund'. KA Munich, HS 2154: Ernst Vogt, 'Erinnerungen aus Brüssels letzten Besatzungstagen, Juli bis November 1918,' Bad Tölz Juli 1934.

have been no serious street fighting between German revolutionaries and Belgians who were reluctant to fraternise with them.⁹³⁸

A particular problem for the German army was, as Major Diemer saw it, that there was still a considerable amount of army materiel in the port of Antwerp: 11 torpedo boats (class A), more than 60 tugboats, many with a full cargo, and at least 15,000 m³ of wood. In addition to the unruly soldiers, many of the Belgians who had been working for the German army 'ran away'. Many also joined in the looting of the depots. In the end, Diemer managed to 'rescue' most tugboats and the torpedo boats. He also organised the transit through Holland for Admiral Schroeder of the Naval Corps, who had taken over the Antwerp port *Kommandantur* in the last few weeks, and 1,500 men of his staff. Diemer crossed the Dutch frontier in the evening of 14 November. Enterprising Belgian workers in the port, however, prevented the departure of those vessels loaded with the wood – which was subsequently confiscated by the Belgian army.⁹³⁹ Some Belgian advance troops entered the city the very next day. It was officially re-taken on the 17th and King Albert's royal entry was celebrated a few days later still.⁹⁴⁰

With this full retreat from Antwerp, and from Belgium as a whole, the incentive that had sparked off such great interest in Antwerp and that had given rise to the Antwerp Question disappeared. What was the aftermath of the wartime discussions and events? Was there an Antwerp Question in Germany after the war?

The Antwerp occupation personnel in post-war Germany

On returning home, most of the German civilians and soldiers who had been involved in the occupation of Antwerp did not forget their time there easily.

⁹³⁸ Articles in, among others: *De Maasbode*, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, ca. 10 – 30 Nov. 1918, summarised in: AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers'. In particular: *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 12 Nov. 1918 (Creation of Soldiers' Council in Antwerp), 18 Nov. 1918 (Four days under regime of German *Soldatenrat* in Antwerp); *De Maasbode*, 30 Nov. 1918 (German Revolutionary Movement in Antwerp and Brussels. Street fights between Germans and Belgians in Brussels, 40 injured). IWM London, 90, 16, 1 (Miss A. J. van den Bergh): 'An Old Lady's Record,' 1990, p. 19.

⁹³⁹ BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: report Diemer, 10 Dec. 1918, p. 6. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, 'Anvers': *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 17 Nov. 1918 (Since 16 Nov. loaded ships can no longer leave Antwerp).

⁹⁴⁰ Diemer claims Albert entered Antwerp on 16 Nov. BA Berlin, R 901, 85346: report Diemer, 10 Dec. 1918, p. 7. This is not reflected in the historiography. Van Overstraeten and Tasnier, *Les opérations militaires*, p. 401.

One of them at least, General Hans von Zwehl, set about writing a section on Antwerp for his memoirs in the spring of 1919.⁹⁴¹ Soldiers who had been part of Beseler's army of siege commemorated the day of conquest, 9 October – a practice that had been established during the war in Antwerp and elsewhere. At least one regiment organised an official celebration on the tenth anniversary in October 1924.⁹⁴² Senator Max Schramm was perhaps the most active in keeping up the memory, at least during the first two years after the war. He not only kept up a lively correspondence with a wide range of his former colleagues, both civilian and military, he also invited them to Hamburg for social gatherings. He organised at least two such 'Antwerp evenings': on 14 December 1918 and on 22 May 1920.⁹⁴³

In post-war Germany, Schramm's network played an important function for its 'members'. In this time of tumult, revolution and economic insecurities, it could provide support and contacts. Thus Schramm wrote references for many of his former employees and tried to be of assistance in their search for a new job. In addition to that, there was the moral support which probably resulted from the exchange of news. Virtually every letter from (and to) every correspondent bemoaned the terrible end to the war – in contrast to which many evoked the 'beautiful time in Antwerp'. None expressed any retrospective moral reflections about the German invasion and occupation of Belgium – and their own role in it. Nevertheless, they were certainly confronted with this question: early in 1920, they had to fear being included on the Allied list of war criminals. Indeed, Schramm wrote a reference for the former 'civilian commissar' (Zivilkommissar) for St. Niklaas, Hermann von Pfaff, who was included even though he had apparently died in December 1918. Schramm testified that a naval division there had indeed been misbehaving, but not von Pfaff. This reference

⁹⁴¹ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: correspondence Zwehl with Schramm, esp. 7, 31 May, 6 Nov., 14 Dec. 1919. Unfortunately, Zwehl's published memoirs end before his appointment to Antwerp (Hans von Zwehl, *Maubeuge-Aisne-Verdun*, [n.p.] 1921.). I have not found the manuscript for his time in Antwerp, although he sent drafts to Schramm.

⁹⁴² SB PK Berlin, *Erinnerungs-Blatt an die Antwerpen-Feier der 6. Reserve-Division im Landwehr-Offizier-Kasino am Zoo am Freitag, den 31. Oktober 1924, anlässlich der 10jährigen Wiederkehr des Tages der Einnahme von Antwerpen am 9. Oktober 1914*. For commemorations during the war see for example: *An Flanderns Küste. Kriegszeitung für das Marinekorps*, 1/15 (1916), p. 117.

⁹⁴³ See Schramm's correspondence in: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 82, J 84 and J 97; 'Antwerpenabende': J 84, Schramm to Waetjen, 11 Dec. 1918; J 97, Schramm to Schnitzler, 8 Feb. 1919; Hammerstein-Equord to Schramm, 14 May 1920.

was the closest that Schramm's extant post-war correspondence came to discussing the ambiguous role of the occupation personnel.⁹⁴⁴

In general terms, it appears that the personnel of the Government-General did not change the political positions that they had developed during the occupation. Moderate sceptics, like Heinrich Waentig, felt that they could now voice their criticism more freely.⁹⁴⁵ But many found it hard to give up on projects in which they had invested so much work. This was especially true of the *Flamenpolitik*. Even though the German Foreign Ministry demanded that there should be no public expressions of a German interest in the Flemish Movement, the last director of the *Flamenpolitik*, Rudolf Asmis, attempted to continue the programme from Germany.⁹⁴⁶ Max Schramm and Bernhard Gaster, too, kept up their membership of the Deutsch-Flämische Gesellschaft, until it informally dissolved in 1922.⁹⁴⁷ In this way, many also believed that the four-year long occupation would leave in the long-term a German imprint on Belgium, to the advantage of Germany.⁹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the public German interest in Belgium virtually disappeared after the war. In the first year, there were still some minor publications, some of them, in the spirit of a new democratic Germany, very critical of the German wartime policies and expansionist attitudes.⁹⁴⁹ As mentioned, discussions of the 'Flemish Question' were actively suppressed. They re-emerged in the mid 1920s with slightly different parameters.⁹⁵⁰ Similarly, interest in Antwerp dropped sharply compared to the level of intensity and range that it had reached at times

⁹⁴⁴ See Schramm's correspondence in: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 82, J 84 and J 97; on Allied Lists: J 97, von Busse, 4 Feb. 1920; Pfaff, Feb. 1920.

⁹⁴⁵ Waentig, *Belgien*, see esp. the footnotes.

⁹⁴⁶ *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie A: 1918-1925*, vol. 1: Göttingen 1982, no. 90 (note Hatzfeld, 29 Dec. 1918). *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie A: 1918-1925*, vol. 3: Göttingen 1985, p. 68, n. 5 (Lewald to AA, 15 March 1920).

⁹⁴⁷ Vrints, *Bezette Stad*, pp. 156, 306. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, pp. 239-240.

⁹⁴⁸ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 84, Schramm to Stadtmayer, 8 Feb. 1919; J 97, Lutz to Schramm, 1923.

⁹⁴⁹ BA Koblenz, N 1015 (Schwertfeger), 193, fol. 41: Hampe to Schwertfeger, 21 Sept. 1926 ('... das deutsche allgemeine Interesse an diesen Dingen brach ja auch jäh zusammen, als sachlich berechtigt war.'). I counted two pamphlets, both of them critical: Waentig, *Belgien*. Heinrich Gerland, *Die belgische Frage*, Berlin 1919. Gerland, *Die belgische Frage*, p. 7: '... England wußte, daß ein Deutschland mit Antwerpen den letzten Endkampf mit England vorbereitete ...'

⁹⁵⁰ According to Dolderer, there was less emphasis on common heritage, and more on commonality of interests between Germans and the Flemish. Winfried Dolderer, 'Deutsch-Flämische Beziehungen, 1890-1940,' in Hubert Roland and Ernst Leonardy (eds), *Deutsch-belgische Beziehungen im kulturellen und literarischen Bereich 1890-1940*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999, p. 54. Dolderer, *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt*, p. 232 ff.

during the war. Heinrich Waentig wrote another work on Antwerp after the war, a synthesis of his wartime studies. The fact that he never published this book, at least two thirds of which he had completed by the end of 1919, may be taken as a symptom of the changed climate.⁹⁵¹ The ‘Antwerp Question’, however, did not disappear completely either from the attention of the public or from the concerns of the economic and political leadership. It was obviously no longer a question of German expansionism: but the issues of the German presence in Antwerp, the German access to the port, and the relevance of the port for the German economy continued to be current. In the following, I will discuss these issues, including their reception in Germany, first in terms of the German Colony, and then in terms of the general state of the economic relationship between Antwerp and Germany.

The destruction of the German Colony

Despite their flight with the retreating German army, many members of the Antwerp Colony were initially convinced they could return to their home city once things had quietened down. Director Gaster firmly planned to re-open his German school between January and Easter 1919. Indeed, the school board had still received the annual subsidy from the German government in November. Schramm, too, expected Gaster to go back. Even when it transpired that Gaster was personally too ‘compromised’ due to his wartime activities, there was talk of opening the school under a different director.⁹⁵² It seems, finally, that there would have been enough children to fill some classes: many of the businessmen had also hoped to return.⁹⁵³

Developments in Belgium, however, were not in favour of the German Colony. The hatred against the Germans, stored up during the four years of occupation, erupted in Antwerp virtually on the heels of the last German soldiers

⁹⁵¹ BA Koblenz, N 1015 (Schwertfeger): 453, fol. 19; 454: Waentig to Schwertfeger, 2 Aug. 1919, 28 Sept. 1920: ‘Ein Buch über Antwerpen habe ich vorläufig nicht zu Ende geführt, da mir die Zeit dazu noch nicht gekommen scheint [...]’. See also: Wilhelm Warsch, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam und ein Rhein-Maas-Schelde-Kanal*, Duisburg 1920. This Ph.D. thesis can be regarded as a late product of the war.

⁹⁵² BA Berlin, R 1501, 11939: Gaster to RdI, 18 Oct. 1918; Schaible to RdI, 2 Nov. 1918. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 97: Böcking to Schramm, 6 Dec. 1918; Schramm to Gaster, 17 Dec. 1918; Gaster to Schramm, March 1919. Lindenborn, *Auslandschule (Antwerpen)*, p. 52.

⁹⁵³ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm): J 84: Barkhausen to Schramm, 30 March 1919; Garrels to Schramm, 24 Nov. 1919; J 97: Schramm to Gaster, 17 Dec. 1918. GStA. PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, C, XIII, 9, no. 9, vol. 36: German consulate Rotterdam to AA, 16 Jan. 1919.

leaving the city. For a few days in late November many properties owned by Antwerp-Germans were attacked and ransacked. This outbreak of the ‘Belgian fury’, as activist Raf Verhulst called it, was reminiscent of the scenes of August 1914, though they did not seem to have reached the same proportions of riotousness. According to German newspaper reports, Belgian officers gave soldiers lists of 400 houses of Germans and collaborators in order to systematically destroy them.⁹⁵⁴ This claim has not been verified and was probably an exaggeration – again similar to 1914.

Importantly, the anti-German mood in the city did not abate quickly after the tumultuous time of liberation. The Belgian national newspapers kept up an anti-German ethos throughout the inter-war period.⁹⁵⁵ In Antwerp, at least *La Métropole*, exiled in London during the war, continued its wartime campaign against the Colony.⁹⁵⁶ Its editor, J. Claes, had founded the patriotic organisation ‘Ligue du Souvenir’ in early 1917 in order to combat the German presence in Antwerp after the war.⁹⁵⁷ Accordingly, when news broke in 1920 that the Belgian government was allowing some Antwerp-German refugees to come back, the Ligue du Souvenir organised a large anti-German demonstration on 13 June under the banner of ‘Never Forget’ (*Nooit Vergeten*). Prominent local politicians, including the burgomaster Jan de Vos, the Chamber of Commerce, and the ship owners’ organisation Fédération Maritime supported the demonstration, and it attracted a crowd of up to 20,000 people. In the evening a mob destroyed two German properties.⁹⁵⁸ This event was widely reported in the German media. Its repercussions will be discussed further below.

The Belgian government, meanwhile, was working on the legal and economic dismantling of all the ‘German colonies’ in the country. The nationality laws were tightened: Belgian citizenship was more strictly defined

⁹⁵⁴ See AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 21 Nov. 1918, *De Toorts*, 30 Nov. 1918 (Raf. Verhulst, “Furis belge” à Anvers’).

⁹⁵⁵ For example *Le XXe Siècle* and *Le Soir*. Caestecker, ‘Constructie van de “Duitser”,’ pp. 530-1.

⁹⁵⁶ See for example AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *La Métropole*, April 1920. See also Claes, *The German mole*.

⁹⁵⁷ AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Hamburger Nachrichten*, 25 Feb. 1917. Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ p. 40, using publications of the ‘Ligue’, writes it was founded on 22 April 1920.

⁹⁵⁸ Among them the offices of the German company ‘Fichs’. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Der Tag*, 19 June 1920. PA Antwerp, W.O.I., Fonds 1914-1918, typescript: Gemeentebestuur Antwerpen, *Verslag*, p. 40: List of collaborators and wartime criminals: Josef Fichs, born in Mannheim 1856, grain merchant, Larmonièrestraat 50. Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ p. 40. Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ p. 165.

than before the war, with much stronger emphasis on both ethnic background and moral worthiness – as proven during the war. As a result, foreigners who had acquired Belgian citizenship before 1914 had it withdrawn again – and the same went for their children. Further, all citizens of former enemy countries still resident in Belgium were subjected to an ever-more rigorous control system from December 1918. Starting with mandatory registration and regular reporting duty, early on it also involved arrests on the basis of denunciations, and soon internment in special camps. It finally culminated in several waves of ‘voluntary’ and forced expulsions during the first half of 1919.⁹⁵⁹

There were two significant opportunistic and humanitarian loopholes to this practice of ‘ethnic cleansing’. First, the decision of who was to be German rested on the new national borders drawn up at Versailles. This meant that many who had been German citizens before 1914, were now regarded as French (Alsatian) or Polish, or indeed Belgian, if from the annexed territories of Eupen-Malmédy.⁹⁶⁰ Second, those who had proved their loyalty to the Belgian state could stay. A son in the Belgian army, for example, was sufficient evidence. Alternatively, at least in Antwerp, Germans could stay if they had two honourable Belgian citizens vouch for their integrity. In this way, by the end of 1920 – in other words after the ‘purges’ – there were still 8,000 people of German nationality in Belgium (ca. 14% of the 1910 census).⁹⁶¹

Frank Caestecker has identified these comparatively generous exceptions as a significant departure from the more rigid thinking of the Belgian establishment during the war. They were also a milder approach than the Belgian ‘street’ still demanded.⁹⁶² Nevertheless, they did not signify a general relaxation about the treatment of the former German ‘colonies’. As most ‘exiled’ Antwerp-Germans had to discover, not only were they forbidden to move back, they were

⁹⁵⁹ Caestecker, 'Constructie van de "Duitser"', pp. 529-30. See also: Vrints, 'Klippen,' pp. 32-40. On the general turn to a ‘restrictionist’ immigration policy in Belgium see: Frank Caestecker, *Alien Policy in Belgium, 1840-1940. The Creation of Guest Workers, Refugees and Illegal Aliens*, Oxford 2000, pp. 55 ff.

⁹⁶⁰ The same principle applied to former citizens of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (a number of Armenians worked in the Antwerp Diamond sector). Caestecker, 'Constructie van de "Duitser"', p. 523, more detailed in conference version, p. 6.

⁹⁶¹ Caestecker, 'Constructie van de "Duitser"', esp. p. 530. Both Minister for Justice Vandervelde and Archbishop Mercier were advocates of the ‘humanitarian’ exceptions.

⁹⁶² Caestecker, 'Constructie van de "Duitser"', p. 530.

also denied temporary visas in order to look after the households and businesses that they had left behind.⁹⁶³

Indeed, the Belgian authorities seized German properties and businesses and put them under sequester. Many of them, from the inventory of the German School to the villas of the wealthy Antwerp-German merchants, were sold at public auction from spring 1919. The desperate appeals of the owners to the German Foreign Ministry to intervene came to nothing. The Belgian actions were not only based on a law of 10 November 1918, they were also covered by specific terms (esp. art. 297) of the treaty of Versailles.⁹⁶⁴ When the records of the sequester administration were handed over to the Belgian national archive in 1964, they contained roughly 4,000 dossiers on Antwerp-German companies and personal possessions. It is a testimony to the severe blow that the Colony received after the war. With a pre-war count of over 10,000 German citizens in the agglomeration of Antwerp, however, it seems that the number of dossiers could have been considerably higher.⁹⁶⁵

It is important to highlight, finally, that with this sequestration programme the Belgian authorities also unravelled important elements of the German wartime 'economic penetration'. Creations such as the 'Antwerpener Schiff- und Maschinenbau A.G.' were seized and their assets sold. In the case of the 'Antwerpener Schiff', interestingly, all Belgian attempts to contact the German managers ended in dead ends: perhaps another reflection of the dubious legality of this wartime venture. Further, allied properties forcibly sold to Germans during the occupation were returned to their original owners, while any contracts

⁹⁶³ See for example the case of Josef Söckler: BA Berlin, R 1501, 119540: Söckler to RdI, 4 July 1919. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: MAE to Villalobar and Van Vollenhoven, 22 Sept. 1919.

⁹⁶⁴ BA Berlin, R 1501, 119540: esp. Pochammer to RdI, 4 Aug. 1919 on art. 297 of the Versailles Treaty. RA Beveren-Waes, Sekwester te Antwerpen, Asaert, 'Inventaris,' 1964. These measures against the Germans did not apply to the annexed regions of Eupen-Malmédy.

⁹⁶⁵ RA Beveren-Waes, Sekwester te Antwerpen, Asaert, 'Inventaris,' 1964. H. Coppejans-Desmedt, 'De sekwesteraarchieven met betrekking tot de eerste wereldoorlog: historiek en algemeen overzicht,' *Bibliotheek- en Archivgids*, 60/1 (1984). It is not clear if these records represent the totality of cases. Some dossiers overlap. They are clearly a source of great significance for the study of the Colony: the contents of many dossiers include wartime and pre-war material. For a long time, however, they had been neglected. Archivists were only starting to make them accessible for research when I briefly checked them in February 2003. Some more progress had been made with the equivalent records in Brussels: See for example: Christophe Bulte, 'L'Implantation et le séquestre des biens allemands à Bruxelles,' *Une Guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale*. Kristof Carrein, *Fonds van sekwesteraarchieven, VII. Inventaris van het archief van Allianz-Aktien-Gesellschaft in Berlin. Agentschappen Brussel (1889-1924)*, Brussels 2001.

made during the war – for example with the German insurance company ‘Allianz’ – were annulled.⁹⁶⁶

The Belgian measures of 1918 and 1919 thoroughly destroyed the German Colony in Antwerp. Segments of it kept up a sense of the old community in various locations, not all of which were physical. The German school lived on in the Past Pupils’ Union and its quarterly newsletter until the time of Gaster’s death in the 1930s. It organised at least two reunions in 1920 and 1922 in Weimar, the traditional destination of the school’s great summer trips. On Gaster’s initiative, in 1922 the ‘German Schiller League’ erected a memorial stone in the city’s cemetery for its German members from abroad who had fallen in the war: it contained the name of seventeen students from Antwerp, three from Brussels and one from Barcelona.⁹⁶⁷ Similarly, as seen above, many other Antwerp-Germans kept up a correspondence and support network for at least the first few years, and many were active in such self-help organisations as the ‘Cologne Union of German-Belgian refugees’.⁹⁶⁸ Many of the wealthy merchant families, finally, re-settled virtually as a group in the Netherlands: for example the (Franz) Müllers, the Böckings, the Mallinckrochts, and the Barys. According to a letter from Franz Müller to Max Schramm, they were all ‘doing well’, even when they had to start their businesses almost from scratch.⁹⁶⁹

As already indicated, a small remainder of Belgium’s pre-war German citizens were able to stay after 1918. In the case of Antwerp, moreover, a few families managed to return before 1920. This provoked some protests, culminating in the great demonstration of the Ligue du Souvenir.⁹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, according to the Antwerp shipping newspaper *Neptune*, by mid-1920 about 500 Germans had returned to Antwerp, mostly from Holland.⁹⁷¹ As

⁹⁶⁶ RA Beveren-Waes, Sekwester te Antwerpen, series I, no. 675: ‘Antwerpener Schiff- und Maschinenbau A.G.’. AGR Brussels, I 303: 1066 (Antwerp Engineering Company S.A.), Hampson to Allianz, 8 Dec. 1919; 1067 (Antwerp Water Works Cie Ltd), letter to solicitor, 12 Feb. 1921.

⁹⁶⁷ It read ‘Heimatlose aus deutschem Stamm’. Lindenborn, *Auslandsschule (Antwerpen)*, pp. 41, 57, 72-73. Huhn, ‘Allgemeine Deutsche Schule,’ p. 30.

⁹⁶⁸ BA Berlin, N 2176 (Lewald), 66, fol. 261: Vereinigung der Deutsch-Belgischen Flüchtlinge zu Köln, 28 May 1919.

⁹⁶⁹ Correspondence in the Schramm papers, esp.: StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Müller to Schramm 19 July 1920.

⁹⁷⁰ There were for example objections against the return of Otto Reckers. AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Nieuwe Gazet*, 29 Dec. 1919.

⁹⁷¹ AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Neptune*, 17 March 1920. The same figure is cited in: Oszwald and Petri, ‘Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,’ p. 366. Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ p.

the German embassy in Brussels found out, however, this number did not signify the kernel of a ‘colony’: these Germans ‘kept quiet’ and were not inclined to associate in any type of formal organisation.⁹⁷² On the contrary, most attempted to seamlessly assimilate into Belgian society: they ceased speaking German at home, or ‘belgicised’ their surnames.⁹⁷³ In terms of the urban history of Antwerp, Antoon Vrints has diagnosed a significant decline in the city’s cosmopolitan outlook with this disappearance of the German Colony.⁹⁷⁴

In 1933, Robert Paul Oszwald and Franz Petri claimed that the ‘spirit of reconciliation’ had been advanced the most in Antwerp.⁹⁷⁵ It is not clear if this is an exuberant statement, made on selective evidence. Even in 1919, reports filtered into Germany that in Antwerp there were voices in favour of a full-scale return of the German Colony. It seems likely, however, that such reports came mainly from a few personal friends of members of the Colony.⁹⁷⁶ Yet by the very end of the 1920s there had indeed been a sort of mini-renaissance of the Colony. An estimated 1,200 Germans now lived in the city, though only a handful of them were independent businessmen permanently established in the city. Similar to before the war, there were many young men on a temporary business traineeship, except now they represented a much higher proportion of the Colony. Nevertheless, a German school had been set up in the rooms of the consulate for some thirty children, and there were two or three further organisations, such as a choir. In 1932, at the occasion of the Goethe centenary, this community appeared for the first time in public as a ‘colony’. By 1933, even before Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor, there had even been a small branch of the NSDAP with twenty-odd members.⁹⁷⁷ This, however, is the endpoint of the present study.

40 cites a much smaller number: 319 in 1924. The discrepancy might be due to different definitions of ‘German’.

⁹⁷² PA AA Berlin, R 60026: report German Legation Brussels (Landsberg), [1920?].

⁹⁷³ Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ pp. 38-9. Caestecker, ‘Constructie van de “Duitser”,’ p. 531.

⁹⁷⁴ Vrints, ‘Klippen,’ p. 41.

⁹⁷⁵ Oszwald and Petri, ‘Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,’ p. 366.

⁹⁷⁶ GStA PK Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120, C, XIII, 9, no. 9, vol. 36: Consulate Rotterdam to AA, 16 Jan. 1919. PA AA Berlin, R 4367: Behrens (German Embassy The Hague) to AA, 18 Jan. 1919. StA Hamburg, 722-1 (Schramm), J 84: Gulik to Schramm, 30 Jan. 1920 (on van Berkelaere, the head of the diamond cutters’ union). One source even reported that phrases such as ‘it was better under the Germans’ could be heard in the streets of Antwerp – which was probably taken out of context. PA AA Berlin, R 4367: Behrens (German Embassy The Hague) to AA, 6 Jan. 1919.

⁹⁷⁷ PA AA Berlin, R 60026: Consulate-General Antwerp to AA, 6 Sept. 1929; German Legation Brussels to AA, 1 July 1933. Oszwald and Petri, ‘Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener

Towards a normalisation of Antwerp-German trade relations?

Thus, as far as the German Colony was concerned, the German wartime fears about the treatment of German affairs in a restored Belgium had turned out to be fairly accurate predictions. But was the same true in the area of trade and shipping?

During the war, there had indeed been strong tendencies within the Belgian government to emancipate the port of Antwerp as much as possible from Germany. They were in part motivated by demands from within Belgium to punish the invader, and in part by the wartime alliance with the western powers, and the desire to take part in any future economic bloc that these might form. Their political expression found its peak at the inter-allied Paris Economic Conference of June 1916, at which France and Britain resolved to not only continue and expand their wartime economic cooperation after the war, but also to actively exclude Germany from the world economy for an indefinite transitional period. Belgium had been a participant of the conference and decided to adhere to its resolutions on 15 July.⁹⁷⁸ Even though all subsequent attempts to implement them directly led into a diplomatic cul-de-sac, Georges-Henri Soutou convincingly argues that they still animated the Allied economic and political goals in the immediate post-war period – so that much of them re-emerged in the treaty of Versailles.⁹⁷⁹ Accordingly, in 1919, the Belgian government was still aiming to control, limit and discriminate against German trade and traffic in the port of Antwerp.⁹⁸⁰

It needs to be clarified that this aim had always rested on two important pre-conditions: territorial changes to the western German frontier and a relaxation of the French economic protectionism. The first precondition was largely met by the treaty of Versailles. Alsace-Lorraine was re-attached to France and Luxemburg dropped out of the German Customs League and instead formed

Deutschtum,' p. 366. K[arl?] Schneider, *Festschrift zum Gedenktage des 100-jährigen Bestehens einer Deutschen Schule in Antwerpen, 1840-1940*, Antwerp 1940. *Deutsche Schule Antwerpen, Mechelsche Steenweg*, 206. *Stundenplan*, Antwerp 1937.

⁹⁷⁸ Soutou, *L'Or et le sang*, esp. pp. 269-71, 273. Sally Marks, *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, Chapel Hill 1981, p. 51. Horst Lademacher, 'Neutralität - Territorium, Wirtschaft,' in Dermot Bradley and Ulrich Marwedel (eds), *Militärgeschichte, Militärwissenschaft und Konfliktforschung, Festschrift für Werner Hahlweg*, Osnabrück 1977.

⁹⁷⁹ Soutou, *L'Or et le sang*, p. 271.

⁹⁸⁰ See for example AGR Brussels, I 215, 7949: Belgian department of the marine (Transport Ministry), memo on the future of the merchant marine and the port of Antwerp, Brussels 24 June 1919, esp. pp. 22-23, points 8-10.

an economic union with Belgium in 1922.⁹⁸¹ The Rhineland, though not formed into an autonomous state as some Belgian ministers had hoped during the war, came to a certain extent under the economic influence of the occupying powers France, Britain and Belgium.⁹⁸² These changes meant that important parts of Antwerp's pre-war 'German' hinterland would not be affected by most measures undertaken to close the port to Germany. The effect can be illustrated by an example that resulted from changes to Germany's eastern frontier: while German ships still often had a myriad of problems in the port of Antwerp by 1921, those from the free city of Danzig had reportedly no complaints about their treatment.⁹⁸³

In addition to these economic repercussions of the territorial changes, further terms of Versailles helped compensate for any loss of the direct contacts between Antwerp and Germany. For example, Belgium received a share of the confiscated German merchant fleet, thus potentially reducing its dependence on the ocean liner services of German shipping companies. The amount of tonnage Belgium received in the end, however, proved disappointing for the government.⁹⁸⁴ Another form of German reparation was therefore more important: the delivery of coal, a good portion of which the Belgians re-exported via the port of Antwerp.⁹⁸⁵ Further, the treaty prohibited Germany from favouring its own seaports with special transport tariffs until 1925, and it stipulated that a certain amount of its relief imports had to come via Antwerp.⁹⁸⁶

The second precondition proved more problematic. Franco-Belgian economic negotiations repeatedly broke down during the war and after because of, on the one hand, French unwillingness to put Antwerp on a par with the French ports in terms of customs tariffs, and, on the other hand, the Belgian refusal to enter into any economic agreement that implied a French

⁹⁸¹ Baudhuin, *Histoire économique de la Belgique 1914-1939*, p. 12. Economic Union Treaty signed July 1921, but did not come into effect until May 1922.

⁹⁸² On the link between the Belgian Rhineland policies and Antwerp see: Christoph Wilhelm Wolfgang Jacobs, *Belgien und die Rhein-Ruhrfrage 1918 - 1923*, Bonn 1976, esp. pp. 16, 46-7, 91-2, 282.

⁹⁸³ MAE Brussels, 4556, V, sixth folder: information De Leeuw & Philippsen, 3 Feb. 1921.

⁹⁸⁴ See AGR Brussels, I 215, 8062: esp. letters Transport Ministry dated 15 Sept. 1919 and 2 March 1920.

⁹⁸⁵ Loyen, *Functieverschuivingen*, p. 48.

⁹⁸⁶ Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,' p. 165. MAE Brussels, 4556, II, folder 'Allemagne' 2: *L'indépendance Belge*, 23 Sept. 1928, article by Georges De Leener. See also: John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, New York 1971, pp. 105-6.

encroachment on Belgium's political independence.⁹⁸⁷ In this way, there was even the danger that Alsace would effectively cease to be a customer of Antwerp, though the French agreed in 1921 to partially suspend the *surtaxe d'entrepôt* in Alsace for Antwerp.⁹⁸⁸ Similarly, the Belgians campaigned successfully against a French proposal in 1921 to erect, in accordance with the treaty of Versailles, a punitive customs frontier between the Rhineland and unoccupied Germany.⁹⁸⁹

Thus, partly as a result of this failure to integrate France fully into Antwerp's hinterland, Belgium started to turn to Germany again relatively quickly – just as the German wartime 'moderates', or 'optimists', had hoped. Other factors played an important part as well, though it is not the task of this study to establish an order of precedence: the fact that Britain and France, too, started to re-establish commercial relations with Germany, the visible benefit which Antwerp's archrival Rotterdam got from increased German trade, and 'pure and simple' business opportunities. In late 1920, the editors of the directory for the Belgian ports, *Annuaire des Ports Belges*, carried out 'confidential enquiries' with the result that the majority of businesspersons wanted to re-establish links with Germany. Requesting permission from the government to include advertisements of German companies, they pointed out: 'On the one hand, there is the memory of the terrible war, on the other hand, nothing can negate the immense interest that the [...] re-establishment of normal economic relations with Germany represents for our country.' Significantly, the Foreign Ministry consented.⁹⁹⁰

The quotation is a good illustration of Antwerp's dual approach to relations with Germany in the early 1920s. The memory of the war ensured that the physical presence of Germans in the city was hardly tolerated. In addition to the destruction of the German Colony discussed above, streets and harbour quays with German references were renamed, the quality berths along the Scheldt

⁹⁸⁷ Soutou, *L'Or et le sang*, pp. 794-6.

⁹⁸⁸ Frank Seberechts, 'Le Port d'Anvers et le trafic des potasses d'Alsace, 1920-1950. Influences politiques en période de haute conjoncture économique et en période de crise,' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis / Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, 29 (1999).

⁹⁸⁹ Jacobs, *Belgien und die Rhein-Ruhrfrage 1918 - 1923*, p. 92. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, p. 104.

⁹⁹⁰ MAE Brussels, 4556, I, folder 'Ports Belges': Leclecq and de Ridder to MAE, Antwerp 15 Dec. 1920; reply MAE, 27 Dec. 1920.

quays previously occupied by German shipping companies were re-assigned to British and American ones, and the German ships and their crews calling at Antwerp were subjected to a rigorous control system.⁹⁹¹ Yet, these measures did not preclude doing business with Germany. German ships were allowed to call at Antwerp in principle since 1920. Inland shipping had started even earlier, and, as demonstrated by the *Annuaire des Ports Belges*, German companies were encouraged to conduct their trade through Antwerp. In contrast to before the war, however, the Antwerp end of such transactions was now normally handled by Belgians.⁹⁹² The underlying attitude was perhaps encapsulated by a statement made by city councillor Louis Strauss, head of the shipping department after the war, in autumn 1920 – even if phrased in terms of contemporary racism: ‘Since we do business with the savages of Africa, we might as well do the same with the Germans.’⁹⁹³ Trade with Germany was actively encouraged, finally, under burgomaster Frans van Cauwelaert, the wartime Flemish passivist leader, from November 1921.⁹⁹⁴ What, then, was the response in Germany to these overtures?

Between 1919 and 1921 the German press reported widely on the anti-German incidents in Antwerp. According to Belgian observers, these reports were frequently exaggerated or untrue. The Germans were therefore probably at times led to believe that matters were much worse in Antwerp than they actually were.⁹⁹⁵ Overall, this had a noticeably negative effect on the German business relations with Antwerp during these years.

A number of personalities and newspapers actively campaigned against the use of the Belgian port. In a sense, it was the economist Hermann Schumacher who made the start. In a public lecture early in 1919 on the North Sea ports he re-affirmed the importance of Antwerp for the German economy. But speaking

⁹⁹¹ MAE Brussels, 4556, III: Strauss, ‘Liste des lignes de navigation’, 17 Jan. 1919. StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 93: report Schramm 1919, ‘Hafen und Handel von Antwerpen,’ p. 10. MAE Brussels, 4556, II, folder ‘Allemagne’ 2: correspondence Moulaert to MAE, 1921-1922, esp. information Police Maritime, Antwerp, 24 Sept. 1921. See also Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ p. 166.

⁹⁹² AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Neptune*, 30 Oct. 1919. RWWA Cologne, 20 (IHK Duisburg), 522, 8: Tack to Hartwig, 13 Jan. 1921. Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ p. 167.

⁹⁹³ MAE Brussels, 4556, V: Comte della Faille, Belgian ambassador Berlin, to MAE 8 Oct. 1920.

⁹⁹⁴ Suykens, *et al.*, *Antwerp. The New Spring*, p. 53. Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ pp. 168-9.

⁹⁹⁵ MAE Brussels, 4556, V: *Neptune*, 15 Jan. 1921 (false reporting in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and especially *Der Tag*).

before the proclamation of the peace treaty, he found it very likely that in the future Germany would not have equal access there – again a continuity of his wartime reasoning. The consequence Schumacher drew from this, however, was a new departure for him: there should be a concerted national effort to expand the German seaports and the entire German transport system should be centred on them. This way it would be possible to gradually direct the entire sea-borne trade through them – and Germany could regain its old position in the world economy without the help of Antwerp.⁹⁹⁶

Yet it appears that, once again, Schumacher's programme was the extreme end of the subsequent general trend. Most campaigners against Antwerp proposed to switch to Rotterdam, and most regarded such a boycott of Antwerp as a temporary measure only. Senator Max Schramm in Hamburg was so appalled by the string of bad news from Antwerp that he always recommended giving preference to Rotterdam. He believed that this 'red rag' would eventually force the Belgians to make concessions.⁹⁹⁷ In February 1921, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce suggested to the German Foreign Ministry that all German banks, industries and commercial houses should co-ordinate a boycott of Antwerp of five to six months duration with the aim of enforcing equality with all nations in that port. It seems that such a concerted effort was subsequently not undertaken, but the Hamburg proposal circulated at least among the chambers of commerce of Rhineland and Westphalia.⁹⁹⁸ Moreover, this call from Hamburg was only the culmination of similar appeals that had been regularly made in a range of German newspapers during the two previous years.⁹⁹⁹

Even though there was never a wholesale German boycott of Antwerp, the protests were nevertheless noticeable in the port.¹⁰⁰⁰ In 1920, a number of German grain import companies transferred their business from Antwerp to Rotterdam. This artificially accelerated a pre-war trend – the Dutch port installations had become superior – with the result that this important German

⁹⁹⁶ Schumacher, *Die Nordseehäfen*, pp. 17, 23.

⁹⁹⁷ StA Hamburg, 622-1 (Schramm), J 84: Schramm to von Arnim, 6 March 1920.

⁹⁹⁸ WWA Dortmund, K 1, 1354: Chamber of Commerce Hamburg, 2 Feb 1921; Chamber of Commerce Essen, 9 Feb. 1921.

⁹⁹⁹ For example: MAE Brussels, 4556, V: *Neue Badische Landeszeitung*, 25 June 1919; *Hamburgischer Korrespondent*, 13 Aug. 1920; *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 3 Aug. 1920.

¹⁰⁰⁰ The representation of the chambers of commerce of the occupied zone decided that they could not persuade all exporters to boycott Antwerp. RWWA Cologne, 20 (IHK Duisburg), 522, 8: extract from minutes *Geschäftsführerbesprechung*, 25 Aug. 1920.

transit good all but disappeared from Antwerp.¹⁰⁰¹ Similarly, the imports commissioned by the German government were principally divided between Hamburg/Bremen (70%) and Rotterdam (30%), virtually ignoring Antwerp.¹⁰⁰²

This development raised indeed concern in Belgium, especially since at the time the Belgian government was fighting hard against the preference exhibited initially by the Allies for Rotterdam.¹⁰⁰³ Belgian diplomats in Germany, especially the consul in Hamburg, tried to mediate between the two sides. Interestingly, they found that contrary to some newspaper articles the main concern of German companies was not so much specific anti-German incidents in Antwerp, than the right of the Belgian government under the treaty of Versailles (especially paragraph 18 of article 244, appendix II) to seize private German property. Consequently, after some protracted negotiations, in 1922 the Belgian government followed the example of the British and declared that it would not make use of this article.¹⁰⁰⁴

In this way, an important step had been made towards a normalisation of the Antwerp-German trading relations. The occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, it is true, proved to be a setback, but it was a temporary one.¹⁰⁰⁵ At the latest from 1925 – also against the background of the Locarno *rapprochement* – both sides were eager to increase the Antwerp-German trade and traffic. While there were still some anti-German incidents in Belgium, and while the German government introduced a transport tariff regime that favoured the German ports more than before the war, both the number of German ships calling at Antwerp and the amount of German goods passing through increased steadily. Gradually, the German shipping companies also regained their prestigious berths on the quays of the Scheldt.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus, the Antwerp-German relationship had relatively

¹⁰⁰¹ RWWA Cologne, 20 (IHK Duisburg): 522, 8: *Vossische Ztg*, 14 Aug. 1920 ('Die Umgehung von Antwerpen'); 573, 2: copy of anonymous memo, 8 Sept. 1922. MAE Brussels, 4556, V: report Belgian Consulate-General Rotterdam, 1 Oct. 1920. AGR Brussels, I 215, 7948: *Raad-gevende Zeevaartkommissie*, confidential report [1915], section 8 hypotheses, point 4. Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,' p. 169.

¹⁰⁰² MAE Brussels, 4556, V: 'Navex' to Cauwelaert, 16 May 1922, containing copy of letter by Willem Böcking.

¹⁰⁰³ MAE Brussels, 4556, V: third folder ('1919, Jan. à Mars'). See also Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,' pp. 76-91.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See MAE Brussels, 4556, V, fifth and sixth folders, esp.: von Simson, AA, to della Faille, Berlin 10 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,' pp. 171-7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ On the German ships see for example: BA Berlin, R 901, 76729: Hallwig (Consulate-General, Antwerp) to AA, 10 May 1926. Generally see: Seberechts, 'Politieke en institutionele

normalised by 1929 – ironically shortly before the world economic crisis would open another chapter in history, which included the gradual German withdrawal from Antwerp.¹⁰⁰⁷

Results

The post-war development of the German-Antwerp relationship was symbolically marked by two great events in Antwerp: the Olympic games in 1920 and the world exhibition in 1930.¹⁰⁰⁸ While the Belgians deliberately did not invite the Germans to the Olympics, they tried to facilitate a German representation at the world fair ten years later. Indeed, there was another circularity: just as before the war, by 1929/1930 there were once more newspaper articles which described the port of Antwerp as essentially a ‘German port.’¹⁰⁰⁹ Nevertheless, despite this gradual normalisation, not everything returned to their pre-war conditions. Most importantly, Antwerp’s German Colony had been effectively destroyed, despite the most determined attempts of its members during the war to secure their foothold in their adoptive home city, and despite their hope in the immediate post-war period to be able to return to a restored Belgium.

geschiedenis,' pp. 177-80. Some first steps towards normalisation were already undertaken in 1919/1920. See for example: AGR Brussels, T 180, 62, ‘Anvers’: *Het Vaderland* (Paris), 11 Sept. 1919 (‘Allgemeine Fluss-Schiffahrts-Gesellschaft’ has reopened offices in Antwerp); *Action nationale*, 24 Oct. 1920 (return of German steamers). MAE Brussels, 4556, III: Strauss to Peltzer, Dec. 1920 (inviting the Norddeutscher Lloyd and the HAPAG back to Antwerp).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ p. 181. See also Loyen’s more critical assessment: Loyen, ‘Throughput,’ p. 48.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Seberechts, ‘Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis,’ p. 179. Seberechts implies that the Germans attended – yet it seems that they declined in the end. MAE Brussels, 4556, I, folder ‘Administration Communale’: *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 22 May 1929, morning edition.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See for example MAE Brussels, 4556, I, folder ‘Administration Communale’: *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 5 July 1930, evening ed., supplement ‘See- und Binnenschiffahrt’, ‘Ein ständig aufstrebender Hafen: Antwerpen im Weltverkehr – Die Scheldestadt als “deutscher Hafen“.’

Conclusions

The overall conclusion of the thesis is twofold. First, Antwerp became a significant focus of the German war aims debates. The future of this Belgian port city was not only of great concern to both the German imperial government and the governments of several of the federal states, it also generated an entire 'Antwerp literature' and it sparked off scientific research by a number of academic economists. Despite many prominent moderate voices, the expansionist discourse proved dominant. It was dominant, however, not because of the intrinsic value of Antwerp, but because of its powerful symbolic association as a bridge to the world economy and as a weapon in Germany's economic and naval struggle against Britain.

Second, and at least partly as a consequence, the German concrete preparations of expansionism in Belgium had the most success in Antwerp. The thesis has shown that in Antwerp there was a relatively lenient implementation of the German occupation policies in Belgium. It seems that the main factors responsible for this leniency – the civilian Hanseatic administration and the expertise provided by the many 'collaborators' of the German Colony – also facilitated, or even drove, the great extent of the German wartime acquisitions in the city.

In order to tease out the special significance of Antwerp for Germany during the war, the thesis opened with an overview on the relationship between the two before the war. Indeed, industries and commercial companies in western and southern Germany had a centuries-old relationship with the Flemish city, which greatly intensified during the era of the 'first globalisation', particularly the last two to three decades before the outbreak of war. Even though there were some special transport tariffs to favour the German seaports, the use of the port of Antwerp for German import and export purposes was encouraged in Germany almost as much as it was promoted by the Belgian state. However, while there was a certain co-dependency between the two, this thesis has drawn on modern as well as contemporary economic research to demonstrate that the slogan of Antwerp as 'a German port' was inaccurate and misleading: Antwerp was built

on Belgian foundations, and Britain was at least as important a client as Germany.

An important side-effect of the economic relationship was German emigration to Antwerp, especially and increasingly since the early nineteenth century. On the eve of the war, there was a self-confident German Colony in the Belgian city. They were highly organised and they played an important part in the economic and social affairs of Antwerp. While traditionally they had fostered a hybrid German-Belgian identity, close examination of the attitudes of a number of leading personalities indicate a slight shift towards a more pronounced German nationalism in the last years before the war.

It remains true that despite French and Belgian claims, the Antwerp-Germans had not been involved in any clandestine preparations for a German military conquest of their adoptive city. The imperial German government had equally never harboured such plans. Of course, the General Staff of the German Army had become increasingly fixed on the idea of opening a future war against France by a massive invasion of Belgium, but the invasion had always been seen purely a means to an end. Consequently, the successive German war plans increasingly envisaged bypassing the great Belgian fortress around Antwerp.

The first chapter of part A of the thesis showed that this German 'indifference' towards Antwerp continued into the first phase of the war of 1914. A relatively weak army corps of the German invasion force simply 'sealed off' the Belgian positions in Antwerp for almost two months. The German Government-General in Belgium initially envisaged administering Belgium only to a line south of these positions, leaving a good third of the country unoccupied. The conquest of the fortifications and the city on 9 October was the result of the German setback in France in early September and had two important consequences. First, it led to the extension of the Government-General over about nine-tenths of the country. Second, the official celebrations and newspaper reports drew the attention of the German public to Antwerp, offering a diversion from the failure of the German war plan. The combined effect served to fuel ideas of an expansion of Germany over Belgium in general and Antwerp in particular, which had already started to appear among both the public and the government. The development of these ideas was explored in the subsequent chapters.

Many of the early war aims programmes suggested treating Antwerp separately to the rest of Belgium: it was to be carved out of the Belgian state and offered to the Dutch, left as a nominally independent mini-republic, or directly incorporated into the German *Reich*. Such schemes were proposed by various personalities, from the economist Schumacher and heavy industrialist Stinnes, to the head of the Political Department of the Government-General Lancken, and the Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg. Antwerp was thus accorded top priority on the German annexationist wish-list on Belgium – right after Liège. But while the case for Liège was relatively straightforward, both in terms of geography and the overwhelming military reasons, the ‘Antwerp Question’ proved more complex and gave rise to much controversy.

It emerged quickly that the Dutch government was not prepared to enter into any negotiations involving ‘conquered’ Belgian territory, and a German annexation of Antwerp alone was geographically impractical. The foremost reason for an annexation was economic: to secure and expand the German interests in the port. The impact of an annexation on the economy of Antwerp, however, was not at all clear. The issue sparked off a bitter public dispute between two economists in 1915 and 1916. In essence, Wiedenfeld argued that a separation of Antwerp from Belgium would undermine the very foundations of its prosperity, and further, that the pre-war conditions – with Antwerp in an independent Belgium – had been ideal for Germany’s relationship with the port on the Scheldt, and should be disrupted as little as possible. Schumacher, however, countered that the war had made a simple return to the *status quo ante* impossible and maintained forcefully that Germany had to establish control over Antwerp in order to prevent the Belgians from closing it to German trade and traffic. Wiedenfeld and Schumacher’s positions – which were elaborated and refined by other economists – also exemplify the general division of German academics with respect to the Belgian-British complex: whether German expansion into Belgium was to be avoided in order to make a future *rapprochement* with Britain possible, or whether it was a necessity in order to be able to face up to Britain economically in peacetime and militarily in wartime. Eventually, the notion of separating Antwerp from its Belgian hinterland was dropped as economically unfeasible, while the arguments in favour of a German expansion over Antwerp remained dominant, thus strengthening the idea of

extending German control over all of Belgium. In this way the 'Antwerp Question' became an integral part of the 'Belgian Question' and its later subset, the 'Flemish Question'.

The interest in Germany in the 'Antwerp Question' remained widespread throughout the war. On the 'official' level, even the government of Saxony, which was on the margins of Antwerp's hinterland and had little or no shipping interests there, wanted to have a say in the future of that port city. Powerful interest groups in western and southern Germany supported the idea of a 'German Antwerp', particularly during the first half of the war. Most prominent among them was the King of Bavaria, Ludwig III. Others included Gustav Stresemann and the Chamber of Commerce of Mannheim. The government of the Grand Duchy of Hesse demanded an annexation as late as summer 1918. The motivation of these interest groups was economic. Ludwig III saw in it the culmination of the Bavarian waterways policy: as the potential end-point of the Rhine-Main-Danube connection it would give Bavaria access to the world economy, and it would make it an important country of transit for trade between the Black Sea and the Atlantic. Indeed, liberal economists like Schulze-Gaevernitz envisioned a German-controlled Antwerp as guarantee that the new German-dominated *Mitteleuropa* would not become isolated but remain linked to the world economy.

The Imperial Navy added military arguments. Despite Antwerp's unsuitability as a great naval port as long as the Scheldt estuary remained in Dutch hands, they wanted to include it in their plans for establishing a permanent base on the Belgian coastline. Finally, many personalities of the 'annexationist' camp, for example Governor-General Bissing, used the economic and military arguments for a 'German Antwerp' to push the idea of a complete annexation of Belgium.

In the public sphere, Antwerp was the subject of a continuous stream of booklets, newspaper articles and semi-private lectures throughout the war. The interest was generated by a number of factors. The military conquest and the occupation provided the background. The occupation brought several journalists and academics to the city, either employed by the occupation regime or commissioned to carry out research. Antwerp proved an interesting and multi-faceted subject for the Germans: apart from economic issues, there was its rich

history and artistic heritage to explore. Most of them strove to find a 'German angle' in their presentations of Antwerp, which often brought the German Colony to the fore.

The vast majority of these publications and lectures were clearly part of the German 'war culture' and expressions of an 'intellectual self-mobilisation'. Their aggregate effect was to strengthen the expansionist mentality. This thesis has identified two 'messages' in particular, which the texts either directly expressed or at least insinuated.

- 1) They associated Antwerp with the great Wilhelmine goal of Germany becoming a world power, the equal of Great Britain. This was expressed in the insistence on and perhaps exaggeration of Antwerp's role as crucial link between Germany and the world economy. It was also expressed in a consistently anglophobic language, which posited a common German-Belgian interest in Antwerp's prosperity and a malicious British aim of undermining it.
- 2) The texts evoked the notion that Antwerp had a quintessential German quality. The writers exaggerated and elevated the significance of the German traces in the city, frequently employing the concept of 'German work', which, as Liulevicius identified in the occupied Baltic region of 'Ober-Ost', affirmed a sense of German superiority. Negative aspects were accordingly often ascribed to Belgian inefficiency. In this way, the two messages asserted that Germany had an historic, economic, political and moral claim on the city and its port. This assertion was further affirmed by the frequent use of the word 'possession' and terms like 'the German Antwerp'.

While the expansionist trend was dominant in both the German war aims plans about Belgium and the wartime German 'Antwerp literature', there were also a number of cautionary voices. For example, influential personalities like the historian Hans Delbrück and the sociologist Max Weber used 'Wiedenfeldian' arguments about the dangers of German control over the Belgian ports, to deflate the idea of annexing Belgium. Moreover, two important constituent parts of the German *Reich*, which had had an intimate pre-war relationship with Antwerp, were potentially opposed to any plans of a 'German Antwerp': the Hanseatic city-states of Hamburg and Bremen. As many

contemporaries speculated, they may have been afraid of losing out if the Belgian rival became German.

Because of their special and ambiguous status for the German 'Antwerp Question', the thesis has devoted particular attention to these Hanseatic positions. A number of important tendencies can be identified.

- 1) Both Senates – the city-state governments – exploited the occupation of Antwerp in order to study in detail the infrastructure and economic workings of the rival port, so that they could assess the nature of its competition and thus formulate their demands on its future treatment by Germany. There seemed to have been very few attempts, however, to use the occupation in order to acquire properties or trading rights in Antwerp. A notable exception was a scheme proposed by shipping magnate Ballin to create an Antwerp port authority as a share-holding company – with 45% of shares owned by Hamburg and Bremen.
- 2) The two Senates as well as representatives of the cities' commerce and shipping took a very active interest in the German plans about the future of Antwerp and, especially in 1914-1915, they were very supportive of the annexationist idea. This has so far been underestimated in the historiography. As elsewhere, senators and businessmen were motivated by a mixture of nationalist zeal, business opportunism, and the fear of Allied and Belgian retribution.
- 3) By June 1918, both chambers of commerce, both associations of ship-owners, and also the Senate of Bremen spoke out in favour of the destruction of Belgium and the creation of Flanders and Wallonia as German satellite states. Ballin's scheme of an Antwerp port authority partially controlled by Hamburg and Bremen had also found widespread support in the two cities. Only the Senate of Hamburg preferred not to advocate any political and economic programme: partially because there was dissension among its senators, and partially because it considered it politically imprudent to make premature commitments.
- 4) Initially at least, a tactical consideration had been decisive in the Hanseatic positions: both Hamburg and Bremen hoped to be substantially 'rewarded' for their support of a 'German Antwerp'. Instead of opposing expansion – which was likely to be overruled in any case – or demanding the imposition

of special restrictions on Antwerp, they concentrated their efforts on gaining assurances from the imperial government about improvements in the finances and infrastructure of their own ports. In this way, their reactions to the prospect of a 'German Antwerp' was mostly one of trying to contain the damage.

Returning to the national level, the study has identified and examined the most important and most advanced German plans for the future of Antwerp. Developed in the course of the last year of the war in the institutions of the Government-General and the Imperial Government, they were to operate within the following larger framework: the political but not economic separation of Belgium into Wallonia and Flanders, an economic and customs agreement of both with Germany (the details of this remained disputed until the end), and, crucial for the German relationship with Antwerp, the acquisition or at least control of the Belgian railways. Concerning Antwerp specifically, the relevant successor state of Belgium was to sign treaties to secure the pre-war status of the German shipping and business interests in the port. A German-dominated port authority, as inspired by Ballin, was also envisaged, though never firmly decided on.

In the first instance, these measures were intended to guarantee the continuity of the favourable pre-war conditions for the Germans in the port of Antwerp. In effect, however, they were a far-reaching encroachment on Belgian sovereignty, and, most significantly, they contained the possibility for Germany to exercise full control over the port, creating a powerful economic base in Antwerp.

Part B of the thesis investigated the German activities in occupied Antwerp. It examined the military and economic benefits that the Germans could derive from the city and its surrounding province for their war effort. Then it analysed the local institutions of the occupation regime, their relationship with the Antwerp authorities and population, and their participation in the German *Flamenpolitik*. The fate of the German Colony was highlighted in detail. Finally, it looked at the concrete economic changes that the German occupation had brought about in Antwerp.

In terms of the war effort, Antwerp proved useful to the Germans in many ways. It had a particularly important status within the Government-General.

Militarily, the fortress was a key element in the potential defence of the German rear and supply lines at the Dutch frontier. The port played a minor role as a support unit for the German naval positions at the Belgian coast. More importantly, it was an increasingly used transshipment centre for the army's supplies and large stores of raw materials and foodstuffs were requisitioned after the conquest. In addition, the port was an important centre of the 'foreign trade' of the Government-General throughout the war, facilitating the generation of financial credit and the procurement of further raw materials. Apart from the port, the Germans could exploit the financial, industrial and agricultural sector of the city and the surrounding province – possibly with the help of members of the German Colony.

An examination of the measures and attitudes of the occupation regime institutions in Antwerp, particularly of the Civilian Administration, has led to the conclusion that they were often relatively lenient in their rule over the occupied city and province. This conclusion is provisional, as more research needs to be carried out on the other regional and local authorities. However, it is possible to say that the civilian branch of the occupation regime was particularly strong in Antwerp, that at least the first Civilian President of the province attempted to reach a non-confrontational accommodation with the Belgians, that this was met with a policy of 'administrative cooperation' on behalf of the Antwerp City Council, that the success of the German support for the local diamond industry was virtually unique, and that the port's infrastructure and installations suffered only minor damages and requisitions.

The relative moderation of the Germans in Antwerp arguably also found expression in their local handling of the *Flamenpolitik*. A few 'non-state agents' who had lived in Antwerp before the war or who had had contacts with the Flemish Movement promoted the most radical wing of the Flemish 'activists' in Antwerp, particularly during the first months of the occupation. The majority of those in charge of the local *Flamenpolitik*, however, notably the third Civilian President, Schramm, consistently favoured the moderate branch of activism. It probably strengthened this branch, contributing to its dominance among the Antwerp activists, while in the rest of Belgium the radicals tended to be dominant. Towards the end of the war, Antwerp moderates attempted to adopt

more radical measures as well, especially by taking over the Belgian institutions of local government, but Schramm and his colleagues blocked these moves.

The wartime fate of the German Colony throws a particularly interesting light on the German occupation policies and long-term aims in Antwerp. After all, they potentially represented the true kernel of a 'German Antwerp'. Four important aspects have been identified.

- 1) The war brought about a profound rupture of the German Colony. Their pre-war hybrid identity was shattered. The anti-German riots and expulsions at the beginning of the war, as well as the manifold collaboration with the German authorities during the occupation generally split their members into Belgian and German factions. The research of this thesis, however, has also identified many instances in which the hybrid identity survived the war.
- 2) The wartime German Colony was dominated by the German faction, most of whom were returned expellees. Most of the 'Belgians' had fled abroad or stayed away from the congregations, clubs and societies which constituted the Colony. The wartime Colony was thus a pale shadow of its pre-war existence. Nevertheless, it was more successful than before in recruiting and integrating Germans of all backgrounds into its fold. In this way, it could be said that it had developed more of a 'colonial mentality' – one of separateness and perhaps superiority – during the war.
- 3) The German government and the occupation regime did not initiate the re-establishment of the Colony. In fact, they allowed only those to return who were enough well off to support themselves. This is surprising given the German aim of securing the German presence in Antwerp. But it was likely influenced by wartime security concerns about introducing a volatile element into an occupied city. On the other hand, once the Colony had reorganised themselves with remarkable organisational skill, they received much support – financially, legally and 'morally' – from Berlin and the German authorities in Brussels and Antwerp.
- 4) This led to an increasing dependence of the Colony on the German state in general and the occupation regime in particular. Many of its members found employment in the occupation institutions, while others put their commercial and industrial businesses at the service of the Government-General. The Colony's institutions, particularly the German School and the religious

congregations, put gradually increasing emphasis on the German identity and attempted to tie themselves legally to the German rather than the Belgian state – so that they were no longer Belgian institutions promoting German language and culture but actually small pieces of Germany in Belgium. Significantly, many prominent members also constantly lobbied the German authorities to prolong the military occupation of the city after the war, and to permanently establish some sort of control by the German state. Their motivation, however, was inspired less by German nationalism than by self-preservation, fearing that the Belgian state would expel them once again. In this way, many members also came to support the German *Flamenpolitik*.

It follows, then, that the wartime German Colony promoted the consolidation and expansion of the German foothold in Antwerp during the war and the economic measures of the Government-General made important inroads in this direction. The policy of ‘economic penetration’ which the Government-General attempted to implement in all of Belgium was in fact most successful in Antwerp. Important industrial properties in and near the city were bought by Germans in 1917 and 1918. Some of the buyers were probably members of the Colony, though the largest objects were bought by German companies created during the war, particularly representing heavy industrialists from western Germany. This success demonstrated that German businessmen were more confident about Antwerp staying in German control than the rest of Belgium. Thus, as mentioned above, Antwerp was not merely a powerful symbol but also turned out to be one of the most significant objects in Belgium, on which German expansionism was tested during the war.

There were two long-term consequences of the war on the German relationship with Antwerp. On the one hand, as feared, the restored Belgian government destroyed the German Colony completely. Germans continued to live in the city, but their numbers were small and they did not form any formal associations. They also had to have a ‘clean’ wartime record, and most attempted to fully assimilate into Belgian society. It was not until the late 1920s that small and timid expressions of a ‘colony’ started to appear again. On the other hand, the commercial and shipping relations revived again relatively quickly. Appeals for a boycott of the port were initially widespread in Germany, but were never wholly successful. At the latest after the occupation of the Ruhr, both sides

attempted to increase the German use of Antwerp port. While some of the German traffic had permanently moved to Rotterdam, Germany was once more a prime customer of Antwerp by 1929.

Bibliography

1. Archives

Germany

Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BA)

Nachlässe:

- N 2022 (Konrad Beyerle): 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 22
 N 2049 (Herbert von Dirksen): 53838, 53839
 N 2058 (Walter von Dyck): 1-3, 6
 N 2106 (Otto Hammann): 81
 N 2176 (Theodor Lewald): 65, 66, 67
 N 2181 (Karl von Lumm): 10/1, 10/2, 17, 18, 70, 84-86, 131, 139
 N 2329 (Kuno von Westarp): 82, 136, 137, 138
 N 2331 (Kurt von Wilmowski): 1
 N 2349 (Hans von Zwehl): 14

Reichskanzlei (RK)

- R 43: 1976, 1977, 2463, 2464

Reichsamt des Innern (RdI)

- R 1501: 102776, 103414, 103414/1, 112754, 113037, 113083, 119193, 119194, 119228, 119243, 119337, 119339-119345, 119355, 119382, 119435, 119452, 119457-119459, 119487-119489, 119496, 119516, 119522-119540, 119551, 119557

Auswärtiges Amt (AA)

- R 901: 11924/1, 11924/2, 76107, 75190, 76160, 76213, 76722, 76729, 76730, 80886, 80887, 80890-80895, 81094, 85346-85348, 91067

Spezialbüro Dr. Helfferich

- R 704: 19319/1, 19320, 19324, 19325, 19325/a, 19325/b, 53404

Reichsjustizministerium

- R 3001: 7155, 7701

Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Den Haag

- R 9209: 1

Alldeutscher Verband

- R 8048: 631, 632, 648

Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (BA)

Nachlässe:

- N 1001 (Lujo Brentano): 7, 47, 54, 56, 64, 162, 163, 163a, 210, 211, 229, 244,

- N 1015 (Bernhard Schwertfeger): 66-68, 71, 72, 170, 193, 209, 446, 453-455
 N 1017 (Hans Delbrück): 18, 20, 21, 38, 43, 44
 N 1053 (Solf): 51, 54, 116
 N 1107 (Richard Fester): 21-23, 79, 122, 128, 170, 178, 230-232
 N 1097 (Mathias Erzberger): 35
 N 1199 (Hans Wehberg): 14, 40
 N 1143 (Günther von Le Suire): 4-6, 9, 10, 13, 19, 29, 36-38, 51
 N 1210 (Familie Sering): 105, 116
 N 1231 (Alfred Hugenberg): 13, 18, 27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 76, 160
 N 1294: (Hjalmar Schacht): 1
 N 1408: (Rohrbach): 25, 112

Kleine Erwerbungen

- KLE 303 (*Nationalliberale Partei*, Ernst Bassermann): 11, 12, 17
 KLE 546 (Mathies): 2

Deutsches Auslandsinstitut

- R 57: *Findbuch* (ed. Rainer Hofmann, 1994)

Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (BAMA)

Nachlässe

- N 21 (Ludwig von Falkenhausen): 1, 2, 3
 N 30 (Hans von Beseler): 2, 41, 46, 48, 52-55, 63, 67, 70, 81
 N 31 (Walter Bloem): 3, 11
 N 78 (Helmuth von Moltke): 34
 N 224 (Oskar von Truppel): 13, 27, 42
 N 253 (Alfred von Tirpitz): 146, 156, 170, 209, 272, 334, 425, 433, 436
 N 523 (Gerhard von Schulze-Gaevernitz): 1a-1f, 5, 8, 17, 21-23, 25

Generalstab

- PH 3: 53

Reichsmarineamt

- RM 3: 25, 45, 5017, 5663, 5664, 5705, 5707, 10310, 10311, 11697, 11718

Generalgouvernement Belgien

- PH 30 I: 1, 5, 7, 9, 16, 18, 69, 73, 80, 81, 88, 90, 104, 111, 116, 118, 119, 124, 131, 211, 222, 242, 149, 151, 156, 157, 226, 227, 231, 233, 250, 251, 252

Generalkommando des Marinekorps

- RM 120: ? (Schiffsbewegungen), ? (Handelsschiffe in den Niederlanden), ? (Marinewerft)

Landstreitkräfte der kaiserlichen Marine

- RM 121 I: 201, 875

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin (PA AA)

Nachlaß Rudolf Asmis: 23, 24 (=VII/7-VII/17)

Personalakte Kurt Wiedenfeld

Personalakte Julius von Schnitzler

Sonderreferat *Schiffahrt*

R 123821, R 123851

(General-)Konsulate (Niederlande, Belgien)

R 141076, R 141089, R 142411

Other

R 634, R 2303, R 2304, R 4367, R 4499, R 60026, R 70450

R 4486-4497: 'Beziehungen zu den Niederlanden (Die vlämische Bewegung in Belgien)'

R 21561-21571: 'Die Zukunft der besetzten Gebiete: Belgien'

R 21362-21375: 'Die Verwaltung der besetzten Gebiete: Belgien'

R 21395-21433: 'Material zu den Friedensverhandlungen'

R 22151-22153: 'Großes Hauptquartier'

Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem (GStA PK)

Kultusministerium

I. HA Rep. 76: IV/41, IV/42, XX/7

Handelsministerium

I. HA Rep. 120: C/XIII/9/no.9/vol.36, VIII/1/no.84/adh.5/vols.1-11

Zivilkabinett

I. HA Rep. 89: 15630-15634, 25638

Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (SB PK)

4 Krieg 1914/28515-1914/1918: Maximilian von Sandt, Verwaltungsberichte, 1914-1917;

Alexander Schaible, Verwaltungsberichte, 1917-1918.

4 Krieg 1914/28245: *Erinnerungs-Blatt an die Antwerpen-Feier der 6. Reserve-Division im*

Landwehr-Offizier-Kasino am Zoo am Freitag, den 31. Oktober 1924, anlässlich der

10jährigen Wiederkehr des Tages der Einnahme von Antwerpen am 9. Oktober 1914

Krieg 1914/306211914: Zivilkanzlei, General-Gouvernement Belgien, *Personal- und Geschäfts-*

übersicht der dem General-Gouverneur in Belgien unmittelbar unterstellten

Zivilbehörden, n. p. November 1917

Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Hamburg (StA)

Nachlässe

622-1 (Friedrich Sthamer): 5, 6, 10

622-1 (Familie Schramm): J/82-J/98, K/10/2, K/10/4, K/12/1, L/51

622-1 (Familie Krogmann): I/A/7/vol.2, I/A/8

622-1 (Familie Diestel): 1

Firmen

621-1 (HAPAG): 163/vol.14, 179/UA/10, 179/UA/11, 320/4908, 1131, 1141, 1225, 1472, 1581

Senatsregistratur

111-1: Cl.VI/no.4/vol.1/fax.37b/inv.7/box1/2, Cl.VII/lit.Cb/no.5/vol.12c/fasc.2/inv.64/box1/5,
Cl.VII/lit.Cb/no.5/vol.12c/fasc.2/inv.65/box1/2

Senat-Kriegsakten

111-2: A/I/z/29, A/IV/a-A/IV/c, A/IV/h, A/IV/i, A/IV/m, A/IV/o, A/IV/q, A/IV/r,
B/II/b/172/UA/66, B/II/b/1061, D/z/65, D/z/68, I/t/1/b/vol.2, L/z/16/a, L/z/16/b, Q/b, W/z/72,
Z/II/a/1

Senatskommission für die Reichs- und Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten

132-II: 3952, 3954, 3956, 3957, 3959, 3961, 3962

Deputation für Handel, Schiffahrt und Gewerbe

371-8 II: S/XIX/C/9/4a, S/XIX/C/9/13, S/XXXIV/20.e.1.anl.1, S/XXXIV/68, S/XXXIV/127.c,
S/XXXIV/185, S/XXXIV/221

Weltwirtschaftsarchiv, Hamburg (WWA)

A10g SM 5 III: newspaper clippings on Belgium, 1914-1918

Staatsarchiv Bremen, Bremen (StA)

Krieg 1914-1918

3-M.2.h.2.: 54/1, 54/16, 55, 9/35, 9/39, 9/53/16

Archiv der Handelskammer Bremen, Bremen (HK)

Handelspolitik II. Belgien

Hp II, 15: vols. 3, 6

Stadtarchiv Lübeck (SA), Lübeck

Nachlaß *Famille Fehling*: G II: 185, 207, 213

Hanseatische Gesandtschaft Berlin: 11.11: M/I/e/7/2b

Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (HStA)

Nachlässe (Abteilung V)

NL Jakob Strieder: 3, 5

NL Josef von Grassmann: 36, 38, 52, 53

Ministerium für Kunst

MK: 3773, 14864, 11881

Staatsministerium des königlichen Hauses und des Äußern

MA: 97555, 97556, 92075, 95067, 95069

Ministerium für Handel, Industrie und Gewerbe

MH: 11925, 15519, 15520

Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abteilung IV: Kriegsarchiv, Munich (KA)

Nachlässe (Handschriften)

HS (Ernst Vogt): 937, 2154

HS (Harrach): 1952, 1953

HS (Hurt): 2259-2262

Geheimes Hausarchiv der Wittelsbacher, Munich (GHA)

Kabinettsakten Ludwig III

Nos. 26, 59, 84

Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (GNM)

Nachlässe

NL Hermann Schumacher: I/B/4/d, I/B/4/e, I/B/6/a, I/B/6/m, I/B/6/n, I/B/6/u, I/B/6/w, I/B/6/x, I/B/8/e, I/B/42, I/B/63/c, I/C/168, I/C/236, I/C/101, II/C/4/f, II/C/4/g, II/C/7/d - II/C/7/g

NL Fritz Schumacher: I/B/11/b, I/C/13/I - I/C/13/m

Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden (HStA)

Nachlässe

Abt. 1150 (G. W. Sante): 28-33, 35, 37-45, 54, 55

Nos. 28-33, 35 = concluding report Oscar von der Lancken, 30 June 1920.

Nos. 37-45 = incomplete copy of manuscript: Robert Paul Oszwald, 'Geschichte der deutschen Zivilverwaltung im besetzten Belgien, 1914-1918,' [Berlin] 1926-1933

Abt. 1088 (Gustav Schmoller): 7, 12

Hessische Landesbibliothek, Wiesbaden (HLB)

Print [published?]: dipl. ing. A. Zichner, 'Die Kathedrale von Antwerpen,' Wiesbaden, 12 Dec. 1914 (7 ps).

Nachlaß Erich Liesegang: HS 329

Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden (HStA)

Nachlaß

12783 (Robert Schulze): box 1

Ministerium des Innern

Nos. 3873, 6972-6974, 6976-6978, 7607, 7608, 7620, 7632, 7953, 9437

Ministerium Auswärtiges

Nos. 2114, 6825

Württembergisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Stuttgart (HStA)

Nachlaß

M 660 300 (Karl Sauter): *Übergröße* II, boxes I, IV, VI

Staatsministerium

E 40/72: 687-689, 721, 750-752

E 74: 171, E 130a: 1150, E 130b: 2331, E 130b: 3467

Kriegsministerium

M 1/2: 56, 109, 133,

M 1/11: 390

Stiftung Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, Dortmund (WWA)

Nachlaß

N 23 (Karl Gerstein): 69, 75

Handelskammern

K 1 (IHK Dortmund): 145, 147, 173, 181, 183, 189, 273, 1354

K 2 (IHK Bochum): 572, 967

S 6 (annual reports): 1023

Stiftung Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, Cologne (RWVA)

Abt. 20 (IHK Duisburg): 132/2, 137/5, 283/6, 352/4, 364/3, 364/9, 366/1, 522/8, 573/2

Gutehoffnungshütte: 3001/258, 3001/900/0, 3001/93000/4

Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln, Cologne (HA)

Nachlässe

1068 (Familie Mallinckrodt): 14, 23, 67, 76, 88, 102-104

1114 (Hermann Stübgen): 32, 44

Archiv der Universität Halle, Halle (UA)

Personalakte Kurt Wiedenfeld: Nr.17001

Personalakte Heinrich Waentig: Nr. 16541

Belgium:

Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Brussels (MAE)

Archives Diplomatiques

'Port Anvers': 4556/I-4556/VI

'Escaut': 11966/I

'Réquisitions': 5411

Archives Générales du Royaume / Algemeen Rijksarchief, Brussels (AGR)

Raad van Vlaanderen

A 052: D1/1/2, D/1/1, D/1/2, D/3, D5/1/2, D/5/2/24, D38/1/2, D110/1, D110/2, D/135

Bestuur van het Zeewezen

I 215: 7928-7930, 7936-7938, 7942-7949, 8062-8064, 8067

Consulat Maastricht

T 522/135

Comité Belge pour l'Angleterre

T 476: 53, 54

Ministerie van Openbare Werken

T 039/05: 555, 1157, 1186

Sekwesterarchieven

I 303 (Allianz AG): 63, 435, 1066-1068, 1086, 1204, 1209, 1211, 1242, 1363

Documents Leopold-Klein

T 454: 14, 15, 18, 21, 24, 38, 39, 45, 49, 68, 73, 79, 83, 85-87, 92

Commission d'enquête sur la violation des règles du droit des gens,...

I 298: 43

Bureau Documentaire Belge (BDB)

T 179: 90, 93, 100, 198

T 180: 50, 53, 62, 70, 141

Rijksarchief Beveren-Waes, Beveren (RA)

Sekwester te Antwerpen

Gustaaf Asaert, 'Inventaris van het Sekwester te Antwerpen, 1914-1918,' Antwerp 1964

Series I: 57, 71, 189, 675, 1543

Series III: 38, 93, 147

Stadsarchief Antwerpen, Antwerp (SA)

Intercommunale Kommissie, Gemeentebestuur. Oorlog 1914-1918

MA 856/35: 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12

MA 856: 44-46, 60/10, 76/1, 76/2, 76/4, 72-79

Haven

MA 36: 217, 253

Provinciearchief Antwerpen, Antwerp (PA)

Wereldoorlog I (1914-1918)

Unsorted material (>10 boxes) of Belgian and German provenance

Box 'Fonds 1914-1918', contains: Gemeentebestuur Antwerpen, 'Verslag over de Oorloggebeurtenissen in de Stad Antwerpen 1914-1918,' Antwerp n.d. [1920]

Archief- en Documentatiecentrum voor het Vlaams-nationalisme, Antwerp (ADV N)

Papers Jan Derk Domela Nyegaard Nieuwenhuis: D/8859/3/1, D/8859/4/1, D/8862/1/2, D/8862/2/3

Oud-Archief Protestantse Kerk te Antwerpen, Antwerp (OAPK)

Deutsche Evangelische Protestantische Kirche (Reformationskirche), 1873-1918

D: 1/b, 2/a, 2/b, 2/d, 2/f, 3/g, 4/e, 4/g, 4/h, 5/a, 5/c, 5/d, 7/b, 9/d, 9/e, 9/h

Christuskirche (2. Deutsche Gemeinde), 1878-1918

E: 1/d, 2/c, 2/d, 2/f, 2/g, 3/d, 4

Duitse vereenigingen voor 1918

F: 5/a, 5/c, 5/d, 7

UK:

Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, London (IWM)

90/16/1 (Miss. A. J. van den Bergh): typescript A. J. Petrie, 'An Old Lady's Record of her and her Family's experiences during the 1914-1918 war', London 1990.

USA:

Archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto CA (HA)

German Documents, 1914-1918

Oberste Heeresleitung: boxes 1, 2

German Subject Collection: 8/46

Commission of Relief for Belgium (CRB)

CRB: boxes 444, 501, 630, 633

Personal Papers

Hugh Gibson: 96-98

Joseph Green: 4-6

R. Arrowsmith: box 2 [map]

Edward Hunt: typescript on the fall of Antwerp

Henry Cord Meyer: box 1

Konrad Haenisch: 186, 189

Fr. P. Monkemöller, war collection: index

Gilchrist B. Stockton: box 1

2. Newspapers

Der Belfried, 1916-1918

An Flanderns Küste. Kriegszeitung für das Marinekorps, 1916

Kölnische Zeitung, August – December 1914

Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien, 1915-1916

Times (London): printed index and Times Digital Archive, 1900-1920

3. Published Sources

Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie A: 1918-1925, vol. 1: Göttingen 1982

Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie A: 1918-1925, vol. 3: Göttingen 1985

Granier, Gerhard (ed.) *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung im Ersten Weltkrieg. Dokumentation*, vol. 1: Koblenz 1999

Grunewald, Jacques and André Scherer (eds), *L'Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale. Documents extrait des archives de l'office allemand des affaires étrangères*, vol. 2: *De la guerre sous-marine a outrance à la révolution soviétique (1er février 1917 - 7 novembre 1917)*, Paris 1966

--- (eds), *L'Allemagne et les problèmes de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale. documents extrait des archives de l'office allemand des affaires étrangères*, vol. 1: *Des origines a la déclaration de la guerre sous-marine a outrance (août 1914 - 31 janvier 1917)*, Paris 1962

Lefèvre, Patrick and Jean Lorette, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale bibliographie*, Brussels 1987

Mitchell, Brian R., *International Historical Statistics. Europe 1750-1993*, London 1998 (4th ed.)

Otto, Helmut and Karl Schmiedel, *Der erste Weltkrieg. Dokumente, Berlin (East)*, (1977) 1983.

Sammlung der Bekanntmachungen und Verordnungen der deutschen Behörden in Antwerpen. 9. Oktober 1914 - Ende September 1916, n.p. n.d. [1916]

Scott, James Brown (ed.), *Texts of the Peace Conferences at The Hague, 1899 and 1907*, Boston/London 1908

Tallier, Pierre-Alain and Sven Soupard, *La Belgique et la première guerre mondiale. Bibliographie.*, vol. 2: *Ouvrages édités de 1985 à 2000*, Brussels 2001

Weber, Max, *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg: Schriften und Reden 1914-1918*, Tübingen 1984

Weigel, Hans, Walter Lukan and Max D. Peyfuss (eds), *Jeder Schuss ein Russ, jeder Stoss ein Franzos. Literarische und graphische Kriegspropaganda in Deutschland und Österreich 1914-1918*, Vienna 1983

Julien Weverbergh and Roland van Opbroeck, *De bezetter bespied*, Antwerpen/Amsterdam 1980

4. Works published before 1945

- Annuaire de la Chambre de Commerce d'Anvers, 1871-1926*, Antwerp 1927
- Arndt, Paul, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam und die deutsche Rheinmündung*, Stuttgart 1918
- , 'Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Antwerpens,' *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, 8 (1917), pp. 73-96, 258-286
- Baekelmans, Willem, *Ons Volk tegen den Duitsch, 1914-1918*, Antwerp 1924
- Baudhuin, Fernand, *Histoire économique de la Belgique 1914-1939*, vol. 1: *Grandeurs et misères d'un quart de siècle*, Brussels 1944
- Billiard, Robert, *La Belgique industrielle et commerciale de demain*, Paris 1915
- Binder, Heinrich, *Antwerpen. Rückblicke und Ausblicke*, Munich 1916
- , *Mit dem Hauptquartier nach Westen. Aufzeichnungen eines Kriegsberichterstatters*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1915 (2nd ed.)
- , *Spionagezentrale Brüssel*, Berlin 1919
- Bloem, Walter, 'Die deutsche Kolonie in Antwerpen,' *Die Woche*, 17/26 (26 June 1915)
- Bock, Franz, 'Die belgischen Wasserstrassen,' *Der Belfried*, 3/2 (Aug. 1918), pp. 73-79
- Bolland, Jürgen, 'Kriegszieldebatten der Hanseatischen Senate am Ende des Jahres 1917,' in *Festschrift für Percy Ernst Schramm*, vol. 2: Wiesbaden 1964
- Brechenmacher, Joseph-Karlmann, *Antwerpens Belagerung und Fall. Schilderungen aus dem Weltkrieg dem deutschen Volke und der deutschen Jugend dargeboten*, Donauwörth 1916
- Bubendey, J. F., *Die Rheinschiffahrt und ihre Zukunft*, Hamburg 1915
- Buerbaum, Jozef, *Gedenkschriften van Janus Droogstoppel uit den Duitschen bezettingtijd*, Antwerp 1921
- Castelein, Edgar, 'Les requisitions en masse. Address to the Commission Intercommunale, Antwerp 18 March 1915,' in *Le Parlement Anglais et la Belgique*, n.p. (pamphlet in Hoover Library) n.d.
- Claes, J., *The German Mole. A Study of the Art of Peaceful Penetration*, London 1915
- Commission d'Enquête, *Rapports et documents d'enquête*, vol. 2: *Rapports sur les deportations des ouvriers belges et sur les traitements infligés aux prisonniers de guerre et aux prisonniers civils Belges*, Brussels 1923
- Commission d'Enquête, *Rapports et documents d'enquête*, vol. 3: *Rapport sur les mesures prises par les allemands a l'égard de l'industrie belge pendant l'occupation*, Brussels 1921
- Cosoiu, Mihail N., *Die belgische Handelspolitik der letzten 40 Jahre*, Stuttgart/Berlin 1914
- De Bom, Emmanuel, *Een bladzijde geschiedenis van Antwerpen, 7-9 October 1914, ten bate van het Antwerpsch Comité voor Hulp*, Antwerp (first published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 31 Jan. 1915) 1915
- De Lannoy, Charles, 'La Belgique, pays de transit,' *Revue Économique Internationale*, (1911), pp. 248-273
- Delbrück, Clemens von, *Die wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung in Deutschland 1914*, Munich 1924

- Delbrück, Joachim (ed.) *Der deutsche Krieg in Feldpostbriefen*, vol. 1:
Lüttich/Namur/Antwerpen. Mit einer Einleitung von Generalleutnant Imhoff z.D.,
 Munich 1915
- Dembitzer, Salamon, *Aus engen Gassen*, Berlin 1916
- Deutsche Schule Antwerpen, Mechelsche Steenweg, 206. Stundenplan*, Antwerp 1937
- Deutsches Bücherverzeichnis. Eine Zusammenfassung der im deutschen Buchhandel
 erschienenen Bücher, Zeitschriften und Landkarten*, Leipzig 1911-1925
- 'Die deutsche Kolonie Antwerpens,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in
 Belgien*, 2/11 (16 March 1916)
- Dubois, E. and M. Theunissen, *Les Ports et leur fonction économique. Anvers et la vie
 économique nationale*, Louvain 1906
- Ehlers, Paul, *England, Antwerpen und die belgische Barriere*, Hamburg 1916
- Ehlers, Paul, H. Bultmann, C. Campbell and A. Dubbers, *Die Verkehrswirtschaft des
 Antwerpener Hafens. Eine zusammenfassende Studie*, Hamburg/Bremen 1915
- Elster, Ludwig (ed.) *Wörterbuch der Volkswirtschaft*, Jena 1911 (3rd ed.)
- Eppler, Alfred, *Der Diamant im deutschen Gewerbe und auf dem Weltmarkt*, Krefeld 1917
- Faingnaert, A., *Verraad of zelfverdediging? Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de strijd voor de
 zelfstandigheid van Vlaanderen tijdens den oorlog van 1914-1918*, Kapellen 1933
- Fassotte, Joris, *Flanderns Wirtschaftliche Selbständigkeit*, 1918
- Fiedler, O., *Brüssel und Antwerpen, 1914-1915. Sonderabdruck aus der 14. Auflage von
 Griebens Reiseführer durch Belgien*, vol. 84: Berlin 1915
- Foreign Office, History Section, *Peace Handbooks*, vol. V: *The Netherlands*, London 1920
- Franck, Louis, *1914-1918. En pays occupé. L'oeuvre de secours et d'alimentation et la résistance
 civile*, Antwerp 1932
- Frey, Marc, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande: Ein neutrales Land im politischen und
 wirtschaftlichen Kalkül der Kriegsgegner*, Berlin 1999
- Ganghofer, Ludwig, *Der offene Weg. Zum Falle von Antwerpen.*, Munich 1914
- Gaster, Bernhard, *Bericht über das 74. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu
 Antwerpen*, Antwerp 1914
- , *Bericht über das 75. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp
 1915
- , *Bericht über das 76. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp
 1916
- , *Bericht über das 77. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp
 1917
- , *Bericht über das 78. Schuljahr der Allgemeinen Deutschen Schule zu Antwerpen*, Antwerp
 1918
- , 'Das Deutschtum in Antwerpen,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in
 Belgien*, 2/8 (24 February 1916)
- , 'Einführung in die vlämische Sprache,' *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, (Aug. 1916)

- , *Leitfaden zur schnellen Erlernung der vlämischen Sprache*, Wolfenbüttel 1916
- , *Metoula Sprachführer: Flämisch*, Berlin 1917
- , *Vlämisches Lesebuch für Deutsche*, Wolfenbüttel 1916
- Gatzke, Hans W., *Germany's Drive to the West (Drang nach Westen): a Study of Germany's Western War Aims in the First World War*, Oxford (1950) 1966
- Gaucheux, Maurice, *Louis Franck. Note biographique suivie d'un choix de discours et essais*, Antwerp 1927
- Gay, George I., *Public Relations of the Commission for Relief in Belgium*, vol. 1: *Documents*, Stanford 1929
- , *Statistical Review of Relief Operations*, Stanford 1925
- Gehrig, Hans and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918
- Gerland, Heinrich, *Die belgische Frage*, Berlin 1919
- Gils, R., 'Antwerpen, nationaal reduit van België (1859-1914),' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Militaire Geschiedenis*, 29/7-8 (1992), pp. 465-488, 537-560
- Goltz, Alexander D., *Belagerung von Antwerpen, 1914: Geschosswirkungen der österreichisch-ungarischen 30.5 cm. Motor-Mörserbatterien; 12 Kunstblätter nach Originalen von A. D. Goltz in Antwerpen nach der Natur gemalt, mit Genehmigung des Stellvertretenden Generalstabes in Berlin*, Vienna 1915
- Goltz, Colmar von der, *Denkwürdigkeiten, bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Friedrich Freiherr von der Goltz, Oberst a.D. und Wolfgang Foerster, Oberarchivrat am Reichsarchiv Oberstleutnant a.D.*, Berlin 1929
- Goris, Jan-Albert, *Antwerpen. Een statistiek handboekje over de jaren 1918-1928*, Antwerp 1930
- Grassmann, Josef von, 'Belgische Binnenschiffsfragen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/7 (Jan. 1917), pp. 337-348
- , 'Verkehrswesen,' in Gehrig, Hans and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918
- Grumbach, Salomon, *Das annexionistische Deutschland*, Lausanne 1917
- Halasi, Ödön, *Belgium under the German Heel*, London/New York 1917
- Hampe, Karl, 'Die Schelde, Belgiens Schicksalsstrom,' *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), pp. 1-8
- Helfferich, Karl, *Der Weltkrieg*, Berlin 1919
- Herwig, Holger, 'Admirals versus generals. The war aims of the Imperial German Navy 1914-1918,' *Central European History*, 15 (1972)
- Heyse, Théodore, 'La pénétration des Allemands en Belgique,' *Revue Belge des Livres, Documents et Archives de la Guerre 1914-1918*, 5-9 (1928-1933), pp. 338-48, 161-77, 321-50, 360-2, 410-26, 270-2, 224, 256-9, 218-25, 232-37
- Hillger, Hermann, *Krieg und Sieg 1914. Nach Berichten der Zeitgenossen*, vol. 5: *Antwerpen*, Berlin/Leipzig 1914
- Hirsch, Wilhelm, *Wirtschafts- und Verkehrsfragen im Kriege. Vortrag im Industrie-Club Düsseldorf, gehalten am 20. Januar 1915 von Handelskammersyndikus Hirsch (Essen), Mitglied des Hauses der Abgeordneten*, Essen 1915

- Hunt, Edward Eyre, *War Bread. A Personal Narrative of the War and Relief in Belgium*, New York 1916
- Hürter, Ludwig, *Die Flamen*, Mönchen-Gladbach 1918
- Kehrer, Hugo, *Alt-Antwerpen. Eine kunsthistorische Studie*, Munich 1917
- Kerchove de Denterghem, Charles de, *L'Industrie belge pendant l'occupation allemande 1914-1918*, Paris/New Haven n.d. [1927]
- Keynes, John Maynard, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, New York (1920) 1971
- Köhler, Ludwig von, *Die Staatsverwaltung der besetzten Gebiete*, vol. 1: *Belgien*, Stuttgart/New Haven 1927
- Krause, Gustav, 'Antwerpen und die Neubelebung des kulturellen und nationalpolitischen Kampfes des Flamenvolks,' *Der Belfried*, 2/5 (Nov. 1917), pp. 193-203
- Krieger, Bogdan, *Die Einnahme von Antwerpen und die Eroberung von Ost-Flandern*, Berlin 1916
- Lancken Wakenitz, Oscar Freiherr von der, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre*, Berlin 1931
- Ligue Nationale pour l'Unité Belge, *Les Archives du Conseil de Flandres (Raad van Vlaanderen)*, Brussels 1928
- Lindenborn, Ernst, *Geschichte einer deutschen Auslandsschule (Antwerpen)*, Wolfenbüttel 1929
- Mack, Louise, *A Woman's Experiences in the Great War*, London 1915
- Mamet, *Le Rôle d'Anvers*, Paris 1920
- Nationale Bond voor Belgische Eenheid, *Geschiedkundig overzicht van het aktivisme*, Brussels 1929
- Nebinger, Hannah Ilse, *Pflicht. Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen aus den letzten Tagen belgischer Herrschaft in der Stadt Antwerpen*, Gotha 1915
- Neuhaus, Eduard, 'Antwerpen und die Surtaxe d'Entrepôt,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/17-18 (4 May 1916)
- , 'Scheldekorrekturen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/6 (Dec. 1916), pp. 274-280
- Niederhausen, Ernst, *Der Weltkrieg. Eine Sammlung belehrender Jugendschriften*, vol. 4: *Namur und Antwerpen*, Leipzig 1915
- Noske, Gustav and Adolf Koester, *Kriegsfahrten durch Belgien und Nordfrankreich 1914*, Berlin n.d. [1915?]
- Oboussier, Max, *De Haven van Antwerpen en de economische conferentie te Paris*, Antwerpen 1917
- Oppel, Dr., 'Antwerpen, seine Vergangenheit und seine mögliche Zukunft,' *Zeitschrift für Handelswissenschaft und Handelspraxis*, (September 1915)
- Oswald, Robert Paul, 'Die Errichtung des deutschen Generalgouvernements in Belgien 1914,' in *Staat und Persönlichkeit. Festschrift für Erich Brandenburg*, Leipzig 1928
- , 'Wendung zur Wirklichkeit. Politik und Krieg,' in *Deutsch-Niederländische Symphonie*, Wolfshagen-Scharbeutz 1937

- Oszwald, Robert Paul and Franz Petri, 'Provinz Antwerpen - Antwerpener Deutschtum,' in Scheel, Otto, Paul H. Ruth and Hans Schwalm (eds), *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums*, vol. 1: Breslau 1933
- Pauli, Gustav, 'Dürer in Antwerpen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), pp. 78-82
- Pirenne, Henri, *Histoire de la Belgique*, vol. 7: *De la Révolution de 1830 à la guerre de 1914*, Brussels (1931) 1948
- , *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale*, Paris/New Haven 1928
- Pirenne, Jacque and Maurice Vauthier, *La Législation et l'administration allemande en Belgique*, Paris/New Haven 1925
- Praesent, Hans, *Antwerpens geographische Lage und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung*, Leipzig 1915
- Quelle, Otto, *Belgien und die französischen Nachbargebiete. Eine Landeskunde für das deutsche Volk*, Hamburg 1915
- Rauscher, Ulrich, 'Antwerpen und die deutsche Wirtschaft,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/24-25 (23 June 1916)
- , *Belgien heute und morgen*, Leipzig 1915
- Rautelin de la Roy, R. de, *Les Allemands au port d'Anvers*, Brussels 1912
- Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918*, vol. 5: *Der Herbst-Feldzug 1914. Im Westen bis zum Stellungskrieg. Im Osten bis zum Rückzug*, Berlin 1929
- Rosenthal, Siegfried, 'Der Binnenschiffsverkehr Antwerpens,' *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 42 (1916/17)
- Rühl, Alfred, *Antwerpen*, Berlin 1915
- Schiller, Friedrich, *Belagerung von Antwerpen durch den Prinzen von Parma in den Jahren 1584 und 1585*, Leipzig 1915
- Schneider, K[arl?], *Festschrift zum Gedenktage des 100-jährigen Bestehens einer Deutschen Schule in Antwerpen, 1840-1940*, Antwerp 1940
- Schulze-Gaevernitz, Gerhard von, 'An der Schwelle des dritten Kriegsjahres,' *Deutsche Politik*, 1/36 (1 Sept. 1916)
- , 'Vlandern,' *Der Panther*, 5/3 (5 March 1917), pp. 307-310
- Schumacher, Hermann, *Antwerpen. Seine Weltstellung und Bedeutung für das deutsche Wirtschaftsleben*, Munich 1916
- , *Die Lösung der belgischen Frage. Der deutsch-belgische Wettbewerb und seine Regelung*, Leipzig 1918
- , *Die Nordseehäfen. Ihre Bedeutung in der Weltwirtschaft und Stellung im Deutschen Reiche*, Leipzig/Berlin 1919
- , 'Die Stellung der deutschen Seeschifffahrt im Weltverkehr,' *Technik und Wirtschaft*, 7/7 (July 1914)
- , 'Schumachers Antwerpenbuch,' *Technik und Wirtschaft*, 9/12 (December 1916)
- Solansky, Adolf, *German Administration in Belgium*, New York 1928
- Stiénon, Charles, *Anvers et l'avenir de l'Entente. De l'influence prépondérante des moyens de transports dans la lutte économique*, Paris 1918

- Strieder, Jakob, 'Belgien und die deutsche Volkswirtschaft in älterer und jüngerer Vergangenheit,' *Der Belfried*, 1/10-11 (April-May 1917), pp. 464-476
- , 'Das Fugger-Fenster in der Kathedrale zu Antwerpen,' *Der Belfried*, 2/6 (Dec. 1917), pp. 241-244
- The Times History of the War*, vol. 11: London 1917
- Tollen, *Étude sur la durée de la résistance de la position fortifiée d'Anvers*, Brussels 1931
- Tschischwitz, Erich von, *Antwerpen 1914. Unter Benutzung der amtlichen Quellen des Reichsarchivs*, Oldenburg/Berlin 1925
- Van Langenhove, Fernand, *L'Action du gouvernement belge en matière économique pendant la guerre*, Louvain 1927
- Van Overstraeten, Raoul and Tasnier, *La Belgique et la guerre*, vol. 3: *Les opérations militaires*, Brussels 1926
- Vermandere, René, *De Duitse furie te Antwerpen: indrukken, toestanden en voorvallen tijdens de bezetting*, Antwerpen 1919
- Volkman, Ludwig, *Generalgouvernement Belgien. Zwei Jahre deutsche Arbeit. Auf Grund amtlicher Quellen zusammengestellt.*, Leipzig 1917
- Waentig, Heinrich, 'Antwerpen-Köln,' *Der Belfried*, 1/8 (Feb. 1917), pp. 366-372
- , 'Antwerpen-Literatur,' *Der Belfried*, 1/12 (June 1917), pp. 570-576
- , *Belgien*, Halle 1919
- , 'Belgien. Das wirtschaftliche Problem,' in Goetz, Walter (ed.) *Deutschland und der Friede. Notwendigkeiten und Möglichkeiten deutscher Zukunft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918
- , 'Belgiens Handel und Antwerpen,' *Der Belfried*, 1/10-11 (April-May 1917), pp. 445-464
- , 'Der Hafen von Antwerpen und der Norddeutsche Lloyd,' *Der Belfried*, 3/3 (Sept. 1918), pp. 97-113
- , 'Der Handel,' in Gehrig, Hans and Heinrich Waentig (eds), *Belgiens Volkswirtschaft*, Leipzig/Berlin 1918
- , 'Der Lloyd Royal Belge,' *Der Belfried*, 1/2 (Aug. 1916), pp. 99-106
- , 'Die Grundfrage der belgischen Volkswirtschaft,' *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, 109/2, 5, 6 (Aug., Nov., Dec. 1917), pp. 129-157, 513-543, 641-677
- , 'Die Zukunftspläne des Herrn Billiard,' *Der Belfried*, 1/1 (July 1916), pp. 9-18
- , 'Eine neue Phase in der belgischen Kriegswirtschaftspolitik,' *Der Belfried*, 1/5 (Nov. 1916), pp. 204-214
- , 'Volkswirtschaftliche Literatur,' *Der Belfried*, 1/2 (August 1916), pp. 92-96
- Wandt, Heinrich, *Erotik und Spionage in der Etappe Gent*, Berlin 1929
- Warsch, Wilhelm, *Antwerpen, Rotterdam und ein Rhein-Maas-Schelde-Kanal*, Duisburg 1920
- Waxweiler, Emile, *La Belgique neutre et loyale*, Paris/Lausanne 1915
- Weck, Hermann, *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, Munich (1915) 1916 (2nd ed.)
- Whitlock, Brand, *Belgium under the German Occupation: a Personal Narrative*, New York 1919
- Wiedenfeld, Kurt, *Antwerpen im Weltverkehr und Welthandel*, Munich 1915

- , 'Antwerpen im Weltverkehr und Welthandel,' *Mitteilungen der Volkswirtschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Belgien*, 2/12 (1916), pp. 23 March
- , 'Anvers et son hinterland,' *Revue Économique Internationale*, (July 1907), pp. (special print)
- , 'Deutschlands Seehäfen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Antwerpen,' *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, 12/7 (April 1915)
- , *Die nordwesteuropäischen Welthäfen. London - Liverpool - Hamburg - Bremen - Amsterdam - Rotterdam - Antwerpen - Havre in ihrer Verkehrs- und Handelsbedeutung*, Berlin 1903
- , *Zwischen Wirtschaft und Staat. Aus den Lebenserinnerungen von Kurt Wiedenfeld*, Berlin 1960
- Winterfeldt, Hans von, 'Die deutsche Verwaltung des Generalgouvernements in Belgien 1914-1918,' in Schwarte, Max (ed.) *Der Große Krieg*, vol. 10: *Die Organisation der Kriegsführung, part 3: Die Organisation für das geistige Leben im Heere*, Berlin 1923
- Withington, Robert, *In Occupied Belgium*, Boston 1921
- Zitelmann, Ernst, *Das Schicksal Belgiens beim Friedensschluß*, Munich/Leipzig 1917
- Zwehl, Hans von, *Maubeuge-Aisne-Verdun*, [n.p.] 1921

5. Works published after 1945

- Basler, Werner, *Deutschlands Annexionspolitik in Polen und im Baltikum 1914-1918*, East-Berlin 1962
- Bitsch, Marie-Thérèse, *La Belgique entre la France et l'Allemagne 1905-1914*, Paris 1994
- Borgers, Gerrit, *Paul Van Ostaijen. Een documentatie*, The Hague 1971
- Borms, August, 'Kameradschaft. Einsatz und Vertrauen,' in *Deutsch-Niederländische Symphonie*, Wolfshagen-Scharbeutz 1937
- Buelens, Geert, 'Like seeds in the sand. On (the absence of) Flemish War Poets,' in Amara, Michaël, Serge Jaumain, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'ULB du 15 au 17 janvier 2003*, Brussels 2005
- Bulte, Christophe, 'L'implantation et le séquestre des biens allemands à Bruxelles, 1914-1918, a total war? Belgium and the First World War. International Colloquium, Brussels Jan. 2003.
- Caestecker, Frank, *Alien Policy in Belgium, 1840-1940. The Creation of Guest workers, Refugees and Illegal Aliens*, Oxford 2000
- , 'Wie was nu de vijand? De constructie van de "Duitser" bij het aflijnen van ongewenste vreemdelingen (1918-1919),' in Jaumain, Serge, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'ULB du 15 au 17 janvier 2003*, Brussels 2005
- Carrein, Kristof, *Fonds van sekwesteraarchieven, VII. Inventaris van het archief van Allianz-Aktien-Gesellschaft in Berlin. Agentschappen Brussel (1889-1924)*, Brussels 2001

- Cecil, Lamar, *Albert Ballin. Wirtschaft und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1888-1918*, Hamburg 1969
- Convents, Guido, 'Cinema and German Politics in Occupied Belgium,' in Dibbets, Karel and Bert Hogenkamp (eds), *Film and the First World War*, Amsterdam 1995
- , 'Film en de Duitse inval en bezetting in België 1914-1918. Of op welke wijze de overheid film als machtsinstrument ontwikkelde,' in Jaumain, Serge, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'ULB du 15 au 17 janvier 2003*, Brussels 2005
- Conze, Werner, 'Imperialismus,' in Brunner, Otto, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 3: Stuttgart 1982
- Coppejans-Desmedt, H., 'De sekwesteraerarchie met betrekking tot de eerste wereldoorlog: historiek en algemeen overzicht,' *Bibliotheek- en Archivgids*, 60/1 (1984), pp. 63-73
- De Goey, Ferry, Reginald Loyen and Hugo Van Driel, 'Trends and Challenges in Comparative Port History: The Case of Antwerp and Rotterdam,' *XIIIth Economic History Conference*, Buenos Aires, July 2002 (<http://eh.net/XIIICongress/>)
- De Schaepdrijver, Sophie, 'The dangers of idealism. Conflicting memories of the German occupation in Belgium,' *14/18: Aujourd'hui. Today. Heute*, 4 (2002)
- , *De Groote Oorlog: Het Koninkrijk België tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam 1997 (1999: 2nd ed.)
- , 'Occupation, propaganda and the idea of Belgium,' in Roshvald, Aviel and Richard Stites (eds), *European Culture in the Great War: the Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 1999
- de Schyver, Reginald (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, Tiel 1998
- Deist, Wilhelm (ed.) *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, Düsseldorf 1970
- Devleeshouwer, Robert, *Les Belges et le danger de guerre 1910-1914*, Louvain/Paris 1958
- Devos, Greta, 'Belgische overheidsteun aan scheepvaartlijnen, 1867-1914,' *Collectanea Maritima*, 4 (1990)
- , 'Die Deutschen und die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum ersten Weltkrieg,' in Asaert, Gustaaf, A. De Vos, Greta Devos and Fernand Suykens (eds), *Antwerpen und Deutschland: eine historische Darstellung beider Beziehungen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Antwerp 1990
- , 'German Ocean Shipping and the Port of Antwerp, 1875-1914. An introduction,' in Koninckx, C. et al (ed.) *Proceedings of the International Colloquium "Industrial Revolutions and the Sea," Brussels 28-31 March 1989*, Brussels 1991
- , 'Inwijking en ingratie van duitse kooplieden te Antwerpen in de 19de eeuw,' in Soly, Hugo and Alfons Thijs (eds), *Minorities in Western European Cities, Sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries*, Brussels 1995

- , *Kapitalverflechtungen in der Montanindustrie zwischen dem westlichen Deutschland und Belgien von etwa 1830 bis 1914*, Bonn 1985
- Devos, Greta and Hilde Greefs, 'The German Presence in Antwerp in the Nineteenth Century,' *IMIS Beiträge*, 14 (June 2000), pp. 105-128
- Dolderer, Winfried, 'Alld deutscher Verband,' in de Schyver, Reginald (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, vol. 1: Tielt 1998
- , 'Deutsch-Flämische Beziehungen, 1890-1940,' in Roland, Hubert and Ernst Leonardy (eds), *Deutsch-belgische Beziehungen im kulturellen und literarischen Bereich 1890-1940*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999
- , *Deutscher Imperialismus und belgischer Nationalitätenkonflikt: Die Rezeption der Flamenfrage in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit und deutsch-flämische Kontakte 1890-1920*, Melsungen 1989
- Doß, Kurt, *Zwischen Weimar und Warschau. Ulrich Rauscher: Deutscher Gesandter in Polen 1922-1930. Eine politische Biographie*, Düsseldorf 1984
- Feldman, Gerald D., *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918*, Princeton 1966
- , *German Imperialism, 1914-1918: the Development of a Historical Debate*, 1975
- Fischer, Fritz, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf special edition 1967 (reprint 1984)
- , *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf (1961) 1964 (3rd ed.)
- , *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914*, Bunay (1969) 1975
- Flasch, Kurt, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Berlin 2000
- Goldschmidt, Niels, 'Hermann Schumacher - nur ein weiterer Erbe Schmollers oder der erste Ordoliberaler? Anmerkungen zu einem „missing link“ zwischen der Historischen und der Freiburger Schule,' *Economic History Conference*, Erfurt, 28 June 2002 (www.uni-erfurt.de/finanzwissenschaft/konf/ProgrammHistSchools180602.htm)
- Gotovitch, José, '[German Revolution in Brussels],' in Roland, Hubert and Roland Baumann (eds), *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1998. Carl Einstein in Brüssel: Dialoge über Grenzen*, Frankfurt a.M. 2001
- , 'La Legation d'Allemagne et le Mouvement Flamand entre 1867 et 1914,' *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 45 (1967), pp. 438-478
- Hatke, Brigitte, *Hugo Stinnes und die drei deutsch-belgischen Gesellschaften von 1916. Der Versuch der wirtschaftlichen Durchdringung Belgiens im Ersten Weltkrieg durch die Industrie-, Boden- und Verkehrsgesellschaft 1916 m.b.H.*, Stuttgart 1990
- Haupts, Leo, *Deutsche Friedenspolitik 1918-1919. Eine Alternative zur Machtpolitik des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Düsseldorf 1976
- Horlings, Edwin, 'The International Trade of a Small and Open Economy. Revised Estimates of the Imports and Exports of Belgium (1835-1990),' *NEHA Jaarboek*, 65 (2002), pp. 110-142

- Horne, John and Alan Kramer, *German Aatrocities 1914. A History of Denial*, New Haven/London 2001
- Huhn, Esther, 'Die Allgemeine Deutsche Schule: Beitrag zur Geschichte der Auslandsdeutschen in Antwerpen,' unpublished Belgian Masters thesis, Antwerp 1973
- Jacobs, Christoph Wilhelm Wolfgang, *Belgien und die Rhein-Ruhrfrage 1918 - 1923*, Bonn 1976
- Janßen, Karl-Heinz, *Macht und Verblendung: Kriegszielpolitik der deutschen Bundesstaaten 1914/18*, Göttingen 1963
- Jeismann, Michael, *Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792-1918*, Stuttgart 1992
- Johansson, Rune, *Small State in Boundary Conflict. Belgium and the Belgian-German Border 1914-1919*, Lund 1988
- Kersten, Dietrich, *Die Kriegsziele der Hamburger Kaufmannschaft im Ersten Weltkrieg: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Kriegszielpolitik im kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914-1918*, Hamburg 1963
- Kestler, Stefan, *Die deutsche Auslandsaufklärung und das Bild der Ententemächte im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Propagandaveröffentlichungen während des Ersten Weltrkrieges*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994
- Kiefer, Klaus H., 'Carl Einstein and the Revolutionary Soldiers' Councils in Brussels,' in Rumold, Rainer and O.K. Werkmeister (eds), *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism. The Literary and Artistic German War Colony in Belgium 1914-1918*, Columbia 1990
- Kossmann, E. H., *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, Oxford 1978
- Kramer, Alan, 'Besatzung (Westen),' in Hirschfeld, Gerhard, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds), *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, Paderborn (2003) 2004 (2nd ed.)
- Krüger, Dieter, *Nationalökonomien im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, Göttingen 1983
- Lademacher, Horst, 'Neutralität - Territorium, Wirtschaft,' in Bradley, Dermot and Ulrich Marwedel (eds), *Militärgeschichte, Militärwissenschaft und Konfliktforschung, Festschrift für Werner Hahlweg*, Osnabrück 1977
- Lenaers, L., 'De sluikschiften van Jozef Buerbaum en zijn medewerkers, Antwerpen, 1915-1918,' unpublished Belgian Master's thesis, Louvain 1980
- Liulevicius, Vejas Gabriel, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I*, Cambridge 2000
- Loyen, Reginald, *Macro-economische functieverschuivingen in de haven van Antwerpen. Reconstructie van een databank en eerste analyse van de maritieme overslag (1900-1997). Discussion Paper*, Louvain 1998
- (Economic History Workshop, Centre of Economic Studies, University of Leuven), Port of Antwerp Online Database Timeseries, (in 'Rotterdam-Antwerp. A Century and a Half of Port Competition, 1880-2000') Louvain 2003 (<http://www.econ.kuleuven.ac.be/ew/academic/econhist/realdata.htm> - last accessed: May 2005)

- , 'Throughput in the Port of Antwerp (1901-2000): an Integrated Functional Approach,' in Loyen, Reginald, Erik Buyst and Greta Devos (eds), *Struggling for Leadership: Antwerp-Rotterdam Port Competition between 1870-2000*, Heidelberg 2003
- Luebke, Frederick C., *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I*, Illinois 1974
- , *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict During World War I*, Louisiana 1987
- Lutzhöft, Hans-Jürgen, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland, 1920-1940*, Stuttgart 1971
- Majerus, Benoît, "'L'Âme de la résistance sort des pavés mêmes"? Quelques réflexions sur la manière dont les Bruxellois sont entrés en guerre (fin juillet 1914 - mi-août 1914),' in Jaumain, Serge, Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus and Antoon Vrints (eds), *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'ULB du 15 au 17 janvier 2003*, Brussels 2005
- , 'Occupations et logiques policières. La police communale de Bruxelles pendant les première et deuxième guerres mondiales (1914-1918 et 1940-1944),' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Brussels 2004
- Marks, Sally, *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, Chapel Hill 1981
- Mertens, J., 'Louis Franck in het verzet tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog,' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Militaire Geschiedenis*, (1977-1978), pp. 331-346, 399-418
- Meseberg-Haubold, Ilse, *Der Widerstand Kardinal Merciers gegen die deutsche Besetzung Belgiens 1914-1918: ein Beitrag zur politischen Rolle des Katholizismus im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt a.M. 1982
- Mommsen, Wolfgang J., 'Die deutsche Idee der Freiheit,' in *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung. Künstler, Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830-1933*, Frankfurt a.M. 2000
- (ed.) *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Munich 1996
- , *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890-1920*, Chicago/London (1959) 1984
- Moses, John A, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography*, London 1975
- Nipperdey, Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918*, vol. 1: *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist*, Munich 1990
- Panayi, Panikos, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War*, Oxford 1991
- Pelckmans, Geert and Jan van Doorslaer, *De Duitse Kolonie in Antwerpen 1796-1914*, Kapellen 2000
- Portz, Thomas, *Großindustrie, Kriegszielbewegung und OHL, Siegfrieden und Kanzlersturz: Carl Duisberg und die deutsche Außenpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Lauf a.d. Pegnitz 2000

- Raithel, Thomas, *Das "Wunder" der inneren Einheit. Studien zur deutschen und französischen Öffentlichkeit bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Bonn 1996
- Ranieri, Liane, *Emile Francqui ou l'intelligence creatrice*, 1985
- Reininghaus, Wilfried, *Die Stadt Iserlohn und ihre Kaufleute (1700-1815)*, Dortmund 1995
- Ringer, Fritz K., *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*, Cambridge (1969) 1990
- Ritter, Gerhard, *The Schlieffen Plan. Critique of a Myth*, London (1956) 1958
- Roland, Hubert and Ernst Leonardy (eds), *Deutsch-belgische Beziehungen im kulturellen und literarischen Bereich 1890-1940*, Frankfurt a.M. 1999
- Roof, Christoph, 'Deutsche Besatzungsbeamte in Belgien 1914-1918 und die Selbstdeutung ihrer neuen biographischen Rolle als Besatzer,' *Besatzungserfahrungen in Europa (1914-1945). Workshop für Doktoranden und Nachwuchswissenschaftler*, Berlin, 10-11 Sept. 2004)
- , 'Die Deportationen von belgischen Arbeitern nach Deutschland 1916/17,' in Roof, Christoph and Simone Rauthe (eds), *Projekte zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Deutschland und Europa in Düsseldorfer Magister- und Examensarbeiten*, Munich 2000
- Rumold, Rainer and O.K. Werkmeister (eds), *The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism. The Literary and Artistic German War Colony in Belgium 1914-1918*, Columbia 1990
- Saerens, Lieven, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking (1880-1944)*, Tiel 2000
- Schepens, Luc, *Brugge bezet. 1914-1918, 1940-1944: het leven in een stad tijdens twee wereldoorlogen*, Tiel 1985
- Schmid, Gerhard, 'Die Verluste des ehemaligen Reichsarchivs im Zweiten Weltkrieg,' in *Archivar und Historiker: Studien zur Archiv- und Geschichtswissenschaft. Zum 65. Geburtstag von Otto Meisner*, East-Berlin 1956
- Schramm, Percy Ernst, *Neun Generationen. Dreihundert Jahre deutsche "Kulturgeschichte" im Lichte der Schicksale einer Hamburger Bürgerfamilie (1648-1948)*, vol. 2: Göttingen 1964
- Schwabe, Klaus, 'Ursprung und Vorbereitung des alldeutschen Annexionismus in der deutschen Professorenschaft im 1. Weltkrieg,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 14 (1966)
- , *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Göttingen 1969
- Schweers, Hans and Henning Wall, *Eisenbahnen rund um Aachen. 150 Jahre internationale Strecke Köln-Aachen-Antwerpen*, Aachen 1993
- Schwerdtfeger, Hartmut and Erik Herlyn, *Die Handels-U-Boote Deutschland und Bremen*, Bremen 1997
- Seberechts, Frank, 'Le Port d'Anvers et le trafic des potasses d'Alsace, 1920-1950. Influences politiques en période de haute conjoncture économique et en période de crise,' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis / Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 29 (1999), pp. 91-143

- , 'Politieke en institutionele geschiedenis van de haven van Antwerpen (1930-1950),' unpublished Ph.D. thesis [since published], Ghent 2001
- Seeling, Hans, *Télémaque Fortuné Michiels, der Phoenix und Charles Déthillieux. Belgiens Einflüsse auf die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert*, Köln 1996
- Sellers, Leonard, *The Hood Battalion. Royal Naval Division: Antwerp, Gallipoli, France 1914-1918*, London 1995
- Somary, Felix, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, Zurich n.d.
- Sösemann, Bernd, 'Rißspuren sind nicht zu übersehen,' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, (14 March 2001)
- Soutou, Georges-Henri, *L'Or et le sang: Les buts de guerres économiques de la première guerre mondiale*, Paris 1989
- Steinberg, Jonathan, 'A German Plan for the Invasion of Holland and Belgium, 1897,' *The Historical Journal*, 6/1 (1963), pp. 107-119
- Stengers, Jean, 'Belgium,' in Wilson, Keith (ed.) *Decisions for War 1914*, London 1995
- Stevenson, David, 'Politics of the Alliances,' in Winter, Jay, Geoffrey Parker and Mary R. Habeck (eds), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, New Haven/London 2000
- , 'War Aims and Peace Negotiations,' in Strachan, Hew (ed.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, Oxford 1998
- Stibbe, Matthew, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914-1918*, Cambridge 2001
- Strachan, Hew, *The First World War*, vol. 1: *To Arms*, Oxford 2001
- Suykens, Fernand, Guido De Brabander and Jean F. Buyck, *Antwerp. The New Spring*, Antwerp 1991
- Thiel, Jens, 'Belgische Arbeitskräfte für die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft. Deportation, Zwangsarbeit und Anwerbung im Ersten Weltkrieg,' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Berlin 2003
- Thooft, Gijs, 'Berlijn-Antwerpen. Economische en politieke aspiraties in Duitsland met betrekking tot de haven van Antwerpen (1886-1918),' unpublished Belgian Masters thesis, Ghent 2001
- Tiedau, Ulrich, *[Deutsche Kulturpolitik im besetzten Belgien, 1914-1918]*, forthcoming [2005]
- , 'Kulturvermittlung in Kriegszeiten? Deutscher Auslandsbuchhandel und Kulturpropaganda in Belgien während des Ersten Weltkrieges,' *Buchhandelsgeschichte*, 4 (1998)
- Ullrich, Volker, *Die nervöse Großmacht, 1871-1918. Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997
- Van Alstein, Maarten, 'Belegerde Stad. Het Antwerps stadsbestuur 4 augustus - 10 oktober 1914,' Ghent 2000
- Van Hees, P, 'Activisme,' in de Schyver, Reginald (ed.) *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, vol. 1: Tielt 1998
- Van Vollenhoven, Maurice, *Les vraies ambassades. Considerations sur la vie. Souvenirs d'un diplomate*, Paris/Brussels 1954

- Van Ypersele, Laurence, 'Antwerpen,' in Hirschfeld, Gerhard, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (eds), *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, Paderborn (2003) 2004 (2nd ed.)
- Vanacker, Daniël, *Het Aktivistisch avontuur*, Ghent 1991
- Vandeweyer, Luc and Dirk Martin, 'Antwerpen in de 20^e eeuw. De wereldoorlogen,' *Waar is de Tijd*, 29 (1999), pp. 690-712
- Veraghtert, Karel, 'The Growth of the Antwerp Port Traffic, 1850-1900,' in Van der Wee, Herman and Jan Blomme (eds), *The Economic Development of Belgium since 1870*, Cheltenham (1984) 1997
- Verhey, Jeffrey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany*, Cambridge 2000
- Vrints, Antoon, *Bezette Stad. Vlaams-nationalistische collaboratie in Antwerpen tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog*, Brussels 2002
- , 'De Klippen des Nationalismus. De eerste wereldoorlog en de ondergang van de duitse kolonie in Antwerpen,' *Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, 10 (Oct. 2002), pp. 7-41
- , "'Moffen buiten!'. De Anti-Duitse rellen in augustus 1914 te Antwerpen,' in *Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la première guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'ULB du 15 au 17 janvier 2003*, Brussels 2005
- Welch, David, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918: The Sins of Omission*, London 2000
- Wende, Frank, *Die belgische Frage in der deutschen Politik des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Hamburg 1969
- Willequet, Jacques, *Le Congo belge et la Weltpolitik (1894-1914)*, Brussels 1962
- Wils, Lode, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme. Vlaanderen tegenover België in de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, Louvain 1974
- , *Histoire des nations belges*, Ottignies 1996
- Zilch, Reinhold, *Okkupation und Währung im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Belgien und Russisch-Polen, 1914-1918*, 1994
- Zuckerman, Larry, *The Rape of Belgium. The Untold Story of World War I*, New York 2004