VOL. I.

BELGIUM: MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY CRISIS
1961-1981

by

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Abbreviations used in the text

Political parties

Social Christians
CVP - Christelijke Volkspartij
PSC - Parti Social-chrétien

Socialists
PSB - Parti Socialiste Belge
BSP - Belgische Socialistische Partij
PS - Parti Socialiste (French Socialists after 1978)
VS - Vlaamse Socialisten (Flemish Socialists after 1978)

Liberals
PVV - Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (1961-)
PLP - Parti de la Liberté et Progrès (1961-1976)
PL - Parti Libéral (Brussels Liberals 1971-79 only)
PLDP - Parti Libéral, Démocrate et Pluraliste (Brussels 1971-9 only)
PRLW - Parti des Réformes et de la Liberté en Wallonie (1976-9)
PRL - Parti Réformateur Libéral (reunified Liberal party of all French-speakers, 1979-)

Community parties
VU - Volksunie
VLB - Vlaamsche Blok
FDF - Front Démocratique des Francophones (Brussels)
RB - Rassemblement Bruxellois
RW - Rassemblement Wallon

Social and political organisations and institutions
ACW - Algemeen Christelijk Werkersverbond (Flemish Christian TUs)
MOC - Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien
ABVW - Algemeen Belgische vakverbond (Flemish Socialist TUs)
FGTB - Fédération Générale de Travail de Belgique
MPW - Mouvement Populaire Wallon
VVB - Vlaamse Volksbeweging
UCL - Université Catholique de Louvain
ULB - Université Libre de Bruxelles
Maps giving location of places mentioned in the text.

1. Belgium - showing linguistic boundary after 1963
2. Brussels and its periphery - 1932
1. Voeren-Fourons (formerly in Liège province but transferred to Limburg in 1963 and then to Brabant in 1984)
2. Mouscron (to Hainault)
3. German-speaking zone

= commune with facilities in language different from that of the zone in which it is situated.
Brussels and its surroundings after 1932

- Dutch zone
- French zone

Communes with facilités

A. Linkebeek
B. Drogenbos
C. Berchem Ste Agathe
D. Ganshoren
E. Wemmel
F. Evere
G. Kraainem

- bilingual zone of Brussels-Capital
- language zone boundary
- communes with facilités
Brussels and its surroundings after 1963

6 communes with facilités in French
A. Rhode-St-Genèse
B. Linkebeek
C. Drogenbos
D. Wemmel
E. Kraainem
F. Wezembeek-Oppem

19 communes of Brussels-Capital
1. Brussels
2. Evere
3. Schaerbeek
4. St. Josse-ten-Noode
5. Woluwe-St-Lambert
6. Woluwe-St-Pierre
7. Etterbeek
8. Auderghem
9. Watermael-Buïtsfort
10. Ixelles
11. Forest
12. Uccle
13. St. Gilles
14. Anderlecht
15. Molenbeek-St-Jean
16. Koekelberg
17. Jette
18. Ganshoren
Brussels and its surroundings according to the Egmont proposals of 1977

Communes and parts of communes with 'droit d'élection de domicile' (voting rights) in the capital

1. Alsemberg
2. Beersel
3. Negenmanneke & Duivelshoek
4. Dilbeek
5. Grand Bigard
6. Strombeek-Bever
7. Beauval & Mutsaart
8. Woluwe-St-Etienne
9. Sterrebeek
10. N.D.-au-Bois

Communes and parts of communes with 'droit d'élection de domicile' (voting rights) in the capital

= bilingual zone

= language zone boundary

= communes with facilités
CHAPTER 1

CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY IN BELGIUM -
the nature of the political system
before 1961 and the relevance of the
consociational model.
During the period 1961 to 1981 the political system of Belgium was subject to severe tension which arose from the intensification of the problem of the relations between the two communities, Flemish and Walloon, which make up Belgian society. The problems reached crisis proportions in 1968 and they may not have been fully resolved by the reforms of 1980.

The Belgian system prior to 1961 has sometimes been categorized as a consociational democracy in which political conflicts were resolved by accommodation and compromises arrived at among political leaders before they reached danger point. In this study of Belgium during this period it is suggested that pre-1961 Belgium was not a good example of the consociational model. It was a three-party system in which normal politics were competitive. The consociational model was only applicable to extreme crisis management. It is maintained that although some of the conditions for consociational democracy existed, such as the segmented nature of Belgian society and the habit of compromise acquired by politicians long accustomed to the problems of coalition-formation, those conditions were not sufficient to enable the country to be placed squarely in the consociational category.

It is further argued that the Community Problem of the 1960s and 1970s weakened the ascendancy of the three traditional parties. They had provided the real base for political stability in the country in the 20th century and before. This development
made it difficult for the parties to continue normal competitive politics and difficult also to resolve the crisis of the 1960s by using the consociational approach which had been used successfully by those same parties in 1958 to manage the Schools Crisis.

By 1981, however, a range of reforms had been introduced to resolve the Community Problem by establishing a degree of regional and cultural autonomy. In the course of the 1960s and in the process of trying to pass the reforms the three traditionally dominant parties split into three pairs of allied but separate regional parties. Three community parties had also joined the system. These two important developments by 1981 brought about the establishment of more of the conditions necessary for consociational democracy than existed in 1961. Accommodation and compromise became more important and the segments into which the society is divided more homogeneous.

It is not intended as the thesis of this work to prove that Belgian politics after 1981 must inevitably become a model of consociationalism, in times of normal politics as well as those of crisis management. It is suggested, however, that as the number of necessary pre-conditions has increased the consociational model has become possibly more relevant than before 1961. The tradition of competition between the parties remains strong and this suggests that the conditions for consociational politics which exist in the 1980s are not sufficient to make this development inevitable. The
competitive element in Belgium before 1961 which led to reservations about the fit of the consociational model in the earlier period continues. The changed circumstances, however, may force the system somewhat closer to the model as Belgium politicians find the necessity to seek compromises and accommodation increases.
The most appropriate theoretical framework in a study of Belgian politics is the model known as consociational democracy. This framework is chosen because it offers an explanation of how such potentially fragmented societies as the Netherlands and Belgium could have preserved the stability of their political systems over a considerable period of time. The concept of consociational democracy is best described by Arend Lijphart. This type of democracy relies heavily upon responsible elite leadership. The leadership of the political elites and the willingness of their followers to give them regular and consistent support are crucial to the whole system. Lijphart suggests that the leaders must have four essential attributes: "the ability to recognize the dangers inherent in a fragmented system, commitment to system maintenance, ability to transcend sub-cultural cleavages at elite level and ability to forge appropriate solutions for the demands of the sub-cultures." The elites must therefore have a certain psychological attitude to politics. They should not see politics as a zero sum game nor approach political issues in an adversary spirit. They should rather see politics as a process of compromise and accommodation, especially when faced with crises in the political system. Lijphart assumes that in a given system where the political elites adopt this approach over a period of time the system as a whole will be modified and the intensity of the cleavages between the fragmented sub-cultures will be weakened. The elites will not be able to perform their
function in such a system if they are unsure of the support of their followers in the sub-cultural segment of society which they represent and lead. It is in this sense that the consociational democracy model is highly elitist. Stability is preserved because political elites can come to agreements without constant reference back to their supporters. Elections in such a system do not directly decide the issues of politics but rather give signs of the popular trends of opinion which become part of the negotiating positions of the elites in the processes of compromise and coalition-forming after the elections. The model also assumes that potentially acute issues can be taken out of normal politics via a consensus or grand coalition of political leaders.

Consociational democracy refers not only to elite interactions but also to a set of conditions of the social structure or political culture which reinforce and underpin the bargaining process at the top. Lijphart offers six major conditions favourable to this type of democracy: "distinct lines of cleavage between the subcultures, a multiple balance of power among subcultures, popular attitudes favourable to government by grand coalition, external threats, moderate nationalism and relatively low load on the system." The second condition, in particular, concerning the multiple balance of power, assumes that no one particular sub-culture (or its political party) is overwhelmingly strong compared to the others. It follows also that all sub-cultural groups (or parties representing those subcultures) should take part in the system. Lijphart points out that
new groups such as the Socialists have been brought into the system as they became established. The exclusion of important groups from the political process could lead to their disaffection and even alienation. The desirability of distinct lines of cleavage between the sub-cultures may be understood as part of the emphasis upon the leadership role of the elites. It is better if there is minimum inter-reaction or inter-relation between the followers of the respective leaders. This enables the leaders to handle the problems which arise between the interests of the various groups in a more rational and reasonable manner, not subject to pressure from their own followers nor having to concern themselves with local disputes between their own group members and those of other groups. It is assumed that the elites will be able to take a broader and more long-term view of problems than is possible by the less well-informed and politically less sophisticated followers. This means in practice that the followers hand over political issues to their leaders and leave matters in their control.

The reference by Lijphart to external threats, moderate nationalism and low load upon the system relates perhaps to the obvious fact that all the candidates for consociational democratic status, with the possible exception of Canada, are small countries. They are, or have been, vulnerable to invasion or domination and, as small nations, nationalism of the aggressive type has been unlikely. As small countries the load upon their political systems has been
less than upon large ones although of course their resources are also less and therefore the load might be relatively as high as in larger countries.

The term 'load' could also be understood figuratively to mean the seriousness of the problems and issues involved. This interpretation would imply however that consociational democracy works best when resolving less serious problems and less well when faced with serious crises. This would contradict the view that consociational democracy can be a form of crisis management for by definition crises place a heavier 'load' upon the system. Taking this view a stage further would suggest that consociational democracy would not be relevant to problems such as the Belgian Schools Problem which was a very serious crisis. The method adopted then in Belgium in 1958, however, certainly fits very closely the consociational model. Perhaps in the 1960s however the Community Crisis imposed too heavy a burden upon the system.

It is clear from even a brief summary of consociational democratic theory that elitism is central to the working of such systems. Followers are expected to show deference to their leaders and popular control and influence are limited to elections which have only indirect influence upon governments. This brings into question the extent of 'democracy' within such systems. Lijphart's model is ultimately based upon the assumptions of such writers as
Mannheim, Schumpeter and Dahl,⁴ that in a modern democracy popular participation is impossible and the quality of the system as a democracy depends upon competition between parties and elites. This view accepts the role of elites as inevitably dominant but concentrates upon the idea of a plurality of competing elites as the practical expression of democracy in complex societies. This definition of democracy has been criticised as insufficient and it is relevant to explore these criticisms as they might apply to consociational democracy, which relies so much upon the function of elites in maintaining system stability. Bottomore, for example, questions whether elite theory even claims to encourage popular participation: "All elite theory denies that there can be, in any real sense, government 'by' the people."⁵ Elite theory therefore assumes deference and submission to the leadership of those 'in command' or 'better qualified'. Bottomore further suggests that any system of indirect election is undemocratic:

The undemocratic nature of representative government becomes most apparent when the representative principle is applied in a system of indirect election, whereby an elected elite itself elects a second elite which is endowed with equal or superior power.

Elections in a consociational system are not indirect in the sense that they are constitutionally defined as such but their relevance is limited and a form of second election takes place in the elite level negotiations which take place at a later stage. Doubt is
also expressed by Bottomore about the element of competition among elites as an effective safeguard to democracy:

It is one of the political myths of our age that democracy is protected and sustained principally and solely by the competition between elites which balance and limit each other's power.

With reference to consociational democracy it should be noted here that the assumption is made that system stability depends upon reducing the levels of competition between elites and seeking rather consensus and compromise among them. If, in Bottomore's view, democracy is not protected by competition between elites, then a system where competition is deliberately weakened in favour of elite consensus must be even less democratic.

It is not the purpose of this study to evaluate the quality or otherwise of democracy in consociational political systems. It is however necessary to understand the model as characterised by a strong tendency towards indirect democracy. It is also a feature of most of the systems usually placed in the category that although in theory all parties and groups take part in the elite-level negotiation processes, in reality larger parties carry greater weight. Excluded groups are usually rather small and therefore this is of minor significance. It would seem logical also to exclude 'anti-system parties'. In Belgium, however, it is possible to observe a degree of cooperation between the established groups to exclude others,
even those with democratic credentials. This may be understood as a form of mutual support to maintain the status quo from which the existing parties benefit and which they do not wish to share or weaken by the admission of newcomers. In the 1960s and 1970s Belgian voters began to show a willingness to desert old loyalties and even support new parties. The traditional parties were surprised by this development and for some time appeared to behave as if the phenomenon of new parties with over 20% of popular support was an aberration which should and would disappear as it had arrived. Existing parties were not enthusiastic to admit new members into their consociational club until forced by circumstances to do so.

Given the emphasis placed in the theory of consociational democracy upon the role of elites it is worthwhile to discuss the possibility that political leaders in such systems are different in their attitudes to the political processes from those in other democratic systems. It is obviously true that they appear more willing than, for example, British politicians to contemplate coalition government and made the necessary compromises to achieve this. They also appear willing to involve opposition parties where necessary in policy-making in crises. This may seem to be a different attitude to politics in general but can also be understood as a recognition of political realities in their respective societies. In a political system based upon a proportional representational electoral system (which is the case in all consociational democracies
in Europe) with several political parties, none of which can achieve an overall majority, the party leaders must seek coalitions if they are interested in taking part in government. Unwillingness to make the necessary compromises to enter coalitions would mean self-exclusion from political power. Whatever motives might inspire political leaders, whether they be simply ambition for power or a matter of principles, gaining office is their ultimate aim. In a multi-party system this means in reality only a share in power. Therefore a willingness to accept 'power-sharing' might be used as a synonym for consociationalism. The question arises whether political leaders in a consociational system would be willing to share power if their party won an overall majority. In Belgium in 1950 the CVP/PSC leaders did not share power when they held a majority. In 1958 and again in the 1960s and 1970s, however, the governing coalition did seek to involve the opposition parties in the discussions to resolve the crisis of the time. It is well to keep in mind even here, however, that in the Belgian system the requirement for a two-thirds majority for constitutional measures dictated this approach. Political leaders in consociational systems must not therefore be assumed to be totally different from those in adversary systems. To an extent their flexibility and willingness to compromise has always been a matter of enlightened self-interest as much as conviction. A consociational system is one where this enlightened self-interest leading to compromises has become part of the usually accepted political processes.
The theory of consociational democracy refers also to commitment to preserve the political system as a common feature among the political leaders which motivates them to transcend their differences in seeking solutions to difficult problems. Most political leaders in most democracies are presumably committed to the preservation of their systems. In the countries placed in the consociational category it happens to be the case that the balance of forces means that this commitment compels them to accept compromise.

At a deeper level perhaps the difference between consociational democracy and some other democratic systems is a difference between those who see politics as a matter of principle and those who see them as a matter of compromise and reconciliation of interests. There is no place in a consociational system for the political leader with a monist view. The respective Socialist parties in such systems could not remain strongly Marxist parties (if they ever were such) and at the same time make the compromises necessary. The Catholic parties likewise could not insist on imposing their world view on their societies. In Belgium the conflict between the traditional Catholic right and the Socialist and Liberal left was a conflict of principle. The consociational resolution of this conflict in 1958 was for all concerned a departure from strict principle. In Holland in the 1970s, probably the nearest system to the consociational model, the question of abortion was one where the Catholic party found compromise difficult
in spite of the traditional flexibility of the Dutch parties. In general therefore consociational democracy assumes a low priority among the political leaders for the politics of principle and concentrates on the politics of reconciliation of interests.

All the above factors must be taken into consideration when studying Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s. The Belgian leaders did not necessarily at all times think in terms of compromise and reconciliation. They were also motivated by an appraisal of the costs and benefits to their parties, their sections of parties and themselves. Sometimes they might treat certain aspects of the regional problem as matters of principle not amenable to compromise. Circumstances often dictated, however, that their best interests would be served by adopting a consensual approach.

Belgium has been included in most discussions of consociational democracy as a possible example of the type. The list has included the Netherlands, Colombia, Austria, Switzerland, Uruguay, the Lebanon and possibly Canada, as well as Belgium. In recent years some of these political systems have changed and could not any longer be included. Belgium, however, is still regarded as an exemplar of the consociational model. The question must be posed as to the 'fit' of the consociational democracy model in Belgium before 1961 and whether this model provides insights to help an understanding of what happened between 1961 and 1980. The
applicability of the model before 1961 and the nature of consociationalism in Belgium before 1961 will be discussed. The developments from 1961 can then be examined with their impact upon the system.
CONSOCIATIONALISM IN THE NETHERLANDS AND SWITZERLAND

Before discussing the political system of Belgium in the light of the consociational model it is useful to examine those of the Netherlands and Switzerland from the same point of view. Both systems have frequently been included in the category and therefore can give useful insights into the possible diversities within the type. Neither can be said to fit Lijphart's model exactly. In the case of the Netherlands, however, the political system probably approaches very closely to it.

The most noteworthy feature of the Dutch political system is the large number of political parties represented in parliament. Proportional representation was introduced in 1917 when 17 parties won seats. By the 1970s this had been reduced to 14, the 3 religious parties having joined together as the CDA. The Dutch system is therefore one of the most fragmented in terms of the number of political parties in the world. Within this wide range of parties there are three main groups or parties: the Liberals (VVD), the Socialists (PvdA) and the religious parties, two of which are Protestant and one Catholic (all combined in the 1970s to form the CDA). These parties in the past gained 90% of the electoral support although this has recently dropped to 80%. These main parties therefore dominated the system and all have had experience of office at one time or another. The religious parties have been the most dominant. The Catholic Party (KVP) has taken part in all
governments since 1917 and the two Protestant parties have rarely been out of office. Since 1978 the three religious parties, together, known as the Christen Demócratisch Appel (CDA), have gained approximately 30% of popular support, similar to the PvdA and more than the VVD. The CDA forms the pivotal party of the system. The Liberals on the right and the Socialists on the left are unlikely to form a coalition excluding the CDA which occupies the centre ground. Socio-economic issues which divide the former parties are resolved internally within the CDA which can thus join a centre-right, centre-left or grand coalition. The pivotal position of the CDA acts as a brake upon the growth of left-right adversary policies in the Netherlands. In Belgium the CVP/PSC (formerly Catholic Party) has similarly usually been in office, only being out of government for six years since 1945 and rarely before. It performs therefore a similar role to the CDA in the Netherlands. In both systems any serious weakening of the position of the pivotal party could lead to destabilisation in the traditional patterns of coalition-forming.

Dutch society has been traditionally understood as divided into segments - Catholic, Protestant, Liberal and Socialist - each with its own separate social and welfare institutions. These are called the 'verzuilen' or 'pillars' of Dutch society. The political parties and their leaders represent the 'verzuilen' on a pattern very similar to that described in Lijphart's model:
Leaders settle urgent matters among themselves or leave them deliberately in abeyance, without too much pressure from their constituents who are left in the dark; all this is much in the tradition of the patrician Dutch regents of the 17th and 18th centuries.

This coincides very closely with the elitism characteristic of consociational democracy described above.

The pattern of political parties in the Netherlands and the necessity to reconcile the interests of the 'verzuilen' lead inevitably to a tradition of coalition government. The formation of such governments depends upon negotiation and inter-action between the leaderships of the various parties and groups. In the past this process took place in a degree of secrecy but in the 1960s demands for more open government meant that the negotiations began to be carried on in the light of publicity with more consultation with outside pressure groups. In spite of this however, the formation of governing coalitions in the Netherlands is still a matter for elite-level negotiation. Elections do not decide upon governments in such a system. "Dutch voters never know what kind of government they are going to get after the election." Losers in an election can stay in office and winners (those who made the most gains, such as the Socialists in 1977) can find themselves excluded from office in the post-election negotiations.

The consociational or consensus background to Dutch politics is reinforced by two further factors. The first is the
existence of two state institutions, the Social and Economic Council and the Central Planning Bureau, which are given a major role in planning and running the economy outside the parliamentary arena. This ensures a high degree of continuity from one government to another:

It does nevertheless seem that policy outcomes in the socio-economic realm during the 1970s reflected a similarity of response to major issues on the part of governments of differing composition and apparently differing complexions. 10

The pivotal role of the CDA is probably the main factor in this continuity of policy but the state councils also make an important contribution. The second factor reinforcing the consensus in the Netherlands is the fact that the system has not faced seriously destabilizing crises since as far back as 1917.

But touchy questions which have caused great turmoil in France and Belgium - such as the official status of the Church and its clergy or the financing of denominational schools - were solved in the Netherlands at the end of the First World War. 11

The Dutch system has therefore not been required to cope with issues of principle but rather with those which by their nature make them more amenable to compromise. Two issues which in recent years have caused difficulties are however matters of principle: abortion and the placement of Cruise missiles. These have produced a degree of adversary politics in the system.
It seems therefore that the Netherlands can be categorized as very close to the model of consociational democracy. Here this approach to politics is not only a matter of crisis management but also an on-going constant attitude to politics in general. Party competition persists, especially at election times and coalitions are formed which place some groups in opposition. Nevertheless at the core of the system is the process of elite-level bargaining and compromise which produces system stability and continuity of policy irrespective of elections and apparent party competition, and social segmentation. The leaders represent the segments and interpret the election results. In their representation and interpretation they are guided by a willingness to compromise described by Lijphart in his model.

Unlike the Netherlands but similar to Belgium, Swiss society is divided not only by religion (Catholic and Protestant) but also by language (German, French, Italian and the small Romansch language group). Switzerland presents a picture therefore of a system which could become very fragmented and unstable. It has however remained stable since the Civil War in 1848. There are nine or ten parties operating in the system and since 1940 no party has attained more than 28% of the electoral support. Unlike the Netherlands and Belgium it is not possible to identify a pivotal party. The three main parties usually occupy 75% of the seats in the Federal Assembly and the fourth a further 12%. These four
parties therefore dominate the system and as in the Netherlands coalition governments are essential.

The manner in which the four parties govern Switzerland could be taken as an ideal illustration of consensus politics. Although they compete against each other in elections, the results show only minor variations of support - usually gains or losses of 1% or 2%. After elections governments are formed as grand coalitions of the four parties on a basis of two seats each on the Federal Council (Cabinet) for the three largest parties and one seat for the fourth. This system was adopted in the 1920s when one party took four seats, another two and a third, one seat. In 1943 the Socialists were given one seat at the expense of one of the other parties and in 1959 they were given two which produced the 2-2-2-1 formula which has continued ever since. The governing coalition always controls over 80% of the seats in the Assembly. This continuous grand coalition approach was confirmed in 1975 when the Socialists won ten extra seats in the Assembly and could have opted to form a more narrowly based coalition with one other party and some small groups. They preferred however to stay with the coalition on the 2-2-2-1 basis as before. The approach to politics in Switzerland therefore develops even further than in the Netherlands the idea of cooperation among political leaders to maintain system stability.

Sharing power has become a powerful norm in Swiss politics. This norm is disclosed by a public opinion survey after the 1975 parliamentary election: 80% of the voters wanted to continue the existing grand coalition.
Once the Federal Council (of 2-2-2-1) is elected by the Federal Assembly the latter has no power to overthrow it. This represents the type of power-sharing described in Lijphart's model at the top level of politics.

Switzerland does however differ from Lijphart's model - and from the Netherlands also - in its patterns of party and social segmentation below the top level. In the Dutch example, parties represent the segments or 'verzuilen' without overlap between and across the segments. In Switzerland they overlap the major divisions of Swiss society. The three largest parties have roughly equal representation from the different regional or linguistic segments of the population. In 1967 an attempt to found a purely French party (Parti Unitaire Romand) was a complete failure, confirming the lack of reinforcement between linguistic and political cleavage lines. The Catholics tend to support the Christian Democrats more than they do the other parties but generally the main parties do not represent religious cleavages. There exists a slightly more left tendency in all parties in the French areas but not enough to be understood as reinforcing political cleavage patterns. The political parties illustrate therefore the phenomenon of overlapping membership and cross-cutting cleavages. The Swiss parties themselves perform the function of integrating the segmented society rather than representing the segments separately as separate parties. The latter form of representation would be closer to the consociational model of Lijphart. A further variation from that model lies in the fact
that Switzerland, unlike the Netherlands or Belgium, is a federal state. Within the Swiss system the cantons of the federation form an important basis for political life. Some of the federal parties operate under different names in different cantons. Cantonal interests and issues are of special concern to Swiss political leaders and Switzerland could be better understood as a collection of federal or cantonal segments rather than religious or linguistic segments. Inside each canton the various political parties are represented and the powers of the canton relative to central government are clearly defined by the constitution in the tradition of separation of powers similar to the USA.

A further feature of Swiss politics is also very relevant. The elitist character of the consociational model assumes a passive role for the followers in relation to their leaders. The Swiss elections with their minimal impact upon government coalition forming seem to conform to this pattern. There is in the Swiss Constitution however special provision for direct democracy via referenda at national and local level following popular initiatives. This means that in theory interest groups and numbers of ordinary voters can use them to express opinions and intervene in political decision-making which should, according to the consociational model, be left to the leaders. The extent to which in reality this provision can influence leaders is debatable but both in the Netherlands and Belgium the use of referenda is not a matter of
popular initiative as in Switzerland. In Belgium the referendum of 1950 over the Royal Question was government sponsored and motivated.

The above brief survey of the politics of the Netherlands and Switzerland illustrates the divergence between two countries which are usually categorized as consociational democracies. Lijphart's classification may be reduced to the common denominator of an emphasis upon elite attitudes favourable to compromise and unwilling to act in adversarial ways which might lead to system instability. In the case of Switzerland consensus or compromise politics exists at the top levels in the Federal Council and Assembly and thus sets the tone for the country's politics. Below this level however the patterns of segmentation are different from those assumed by Lijphart and the overlapping cleavages are closer to Almond's picture of a stable democratic system. In the Netherlands politics are more competitive than in the Swiss system of permanent grand coalitions. The competitive element in the Netherlands is however modified by a spirit of compromise and continuity in policy. In both systems elections have minor significance. In the Netherlands the pattern of segments with mutually exclusive memberships and firm boundaries between them conforms much more closely to Lijphart's model than is the case in Switzerland.
CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY IN BELGIUM

It has been maintained that in Belgium "a long-standing consociational elite consensus exists" which is in operation continuously, as well as in times of crisis. Dewachter gives ten broad areas of agreement among the leaders of the sub-cultural segments (or the parties representing them):

... the constitutional role of the crown, the operation of the parliamentary system, the dominance of parties, philosophical pluralism, the classic liberal rights, the politics of pacification, the central position of Brussels as a point of concentration and orientation of power, the dominance of the French language and culture, (although far less than in the nineteenth century), the acceptance and defence of Western dominance in the world, European integration and the five alleged objectives of the welfare state - nearly full employment, economic growth, internal and external monetary stability and a relative distribution of income.

Most of these would be common to many political systems which would not be considered examples of consociational democracy and the last offers scope for very wide disagreements about policies to achieve the obviously desirable economic objectives. Nevertheless the sixth area is especially relevant. The politics of pacification means in practice the consensus approach to crises which threaten the system. The pacification implied here is the settlement of crises by a deliberate rejection of confrontation or adversary politics and a quest for a formula for all-party compromise. An
example of this type of pacification in the 20th century is the Social Pact of 1945. This was agreed among all the parties in exile during the Second World War and put into effect after the war. It established a social security system and laid down mechanisms for settling problems of industrial relations. There were also in the 20th century several periods of grand coalition government of all parties in periods of tension. The most notable were 1916-21, 1935-39 and 1939-45. According to Dewachter, in Belgium:

... the elitist consensus implies that no party should pursue a policy that one of the parties participating in the elitist consensus might consider contrary to its vital interest. 16

It should be noted however that the consensus always excluded anti-system parties from participation in the bargaining process.

The general spirit of Belgian politics up to 1961, according to Dewachter, was therefore one of three-party cooperation in the face of crisis and a further tendency for parties to modify their policies or actions in order to maintain system stability even when not in coalition. The experience of the 1950s, however, contradict this assertion. The CVP/PSC policy of the 1950-54 government was strongly in favour of religious education. The government itself was not a coalition for the party held an overall majority in parliament. This policy did offend the vital interests of the opposition. The coalition government of the Left (Socialists and
Liberals from 1954 to 1958 pursued an opposite policy equally offensive to the Catholics. The consequence of this conflict was the crisis of the Schools War which obliged the parties to seek consensus and compromise policies after 1958. The tensions of the period 1950-58 therefore led to the necessity for a consociational approach.

At the national level normal politics in Belgium was characterized more by competition between the parties than compromise. They competed at election times and governments were formed on a basis of a parliamentary majority with a vigorous parliamentary opposition. The exceptions to this rule were the periods of grand coalition in especially difficult times quoted above. Although the leaders of the respective parties might on occasion accept a consensus about the limits of party policy with respect to the vital interest of other groups they also strove to outmanoeuvre rivals and maximize electoral support at the expense of other parties. In any consideration of the nature of the Belgian political system up to 1961 it would be wrong to ignore the competitive nature of normal politics.

The problems of coalition-formation have been a major feature of Belgian politics since 1919. In the 20th century only one government has been formed from one party with a parliamentary majority - 1950-54. All other governments have been two or three party coalitions. This has also contributed to the enhancement of
the role of the political leaders and elites. Elections in Belgium have not necessarily been decisive in deciding the complexion of government coalitions. The party leaders use and interpret election results which register gains and losses for the three parties. In fact, the complexion of governments has been the result of bargaining and discussions by leaders evolving government programmes. The leaders of the parties have not themselves assumed office in the governments which they have helped to form. Normal politics in Belgium were therefore a combination of party competition and inter-elite bargaining to form coalitions. The centrality of the CVP/PSC in Belgian politics is also noteworthy. Since 1884 that party - formerly the Catholic Party - has taken part in every government except for two periods (1946-7 and 1954-8). This has meant that Belgian coalitions have been either left of centre with the CVP/PSC combining with the Socialists or right of centre with the CVP/PSC and Liberal combination. The grand coalitions included all three, which, of course, involved the CVP/PSC.

In the centre of the system the CVP/PSC can be subject to internal tension between its left, or Christian Democrats and its right or conservative tendencies. There has always been a slope towards the left in Wallonia. A similar range of views exists among the Socialists with both moderate and pragmatic contrasting with the more radical and doctrinaire views. Here again there has always been a slope towards more radicalism in Wallonia.
The Liberals alone have held consistent views throughout the country. The two former parties have therefore always been compelled to seek compromises among their own members. This has been particularly true of the CVP/PSC at the centre of the system. There are some similarities between the pivotal position of the CDA (or previously the Catholic Party) in the Netherlands and that of the CVP/PSC. The position of the latter at the centre of the Belgian system has been a factor for stability and continuity rather like the Dutch situation. It follows from this that any serious weakening of the CVP/PSC might have a serious destabilizing effect upon the system as a whole.
The consociational approach in 1958 was adopted only as a last resort after attempts by both sides to impose their own solutions unilaterally. Similarly, after 1958, the parties quickly restored competitive politics and this competition continued even during the 1960s and 1970s when they were confronted by the Community Problem. Expressed simply: Belgian politicians adopted consociationalism only when they were forced by circumstances to do so and not as a result of the convictions assumed by Lijphart in his references to accommodation-minded elites.

The most important factor in Belgian political stability in the 20th century has been the three traditional parties which operated nationally across the dualism of Belgian society. The competition between the parties did not threaten but reinforced the national and unitary nature of the system. The three parties were the political expression of the three segments of Belgian society. These segments - Catholic, Socialist and Liberal - have often been called in Belgium the three 'familles spirituelles' and the cleavage between them is termed 'philosophical'. For the sake of convenience therefore the term 'famille' is used here to designate the philosophical segments into which Belgium is divided. In many ways the familles resemble the 'pillars' or 'verzuilen' in Holland and Lijphart's consociational model. As the familles have been such an important factor in Belgian politics and their existence may perhaps confirm
the consociational nature of the system they must be examined in some detail. All three consist of a number of groups and organisations with a common philosophy, interlocking with each other and creating a framework of institutions for the citizen who is a member of that particular famille.

The Catholic famille is the largest and has the widest range of groups within it. The most extensive organisation in the Catholic famille is the ACW-MOC (Algemeen Christelijk Werkersverbond-Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien) founded in 1921 as an umbrella movement to coordinate the activities of a range of trade union and social groups whose base was in the Catholic working class. The ACW-MOC activities can be divided into two broad areas: socio-economic and cultural. The three main representatives in the first category are:

1. The ACW-CSC (Alegemeen Christelijk Vakverbond - Confédération des Syndicate Chrétiens) which forms the strongest trade union confederation in the country with over 800,000 members, over ¾ of whom are in Flanders.

2. The CM-MC (Landsbond der Christelijke Mutualiteiten - Alliance Nationale des Mutualités Chrétiennes) which is responsible for social insurance needs of over 1 million members of whom over 70% are in Flanders and

3. LVCC-FNCC (Landelijk Verbond der Christelijke Coöperatieven - Fédération Nationale des Coopératives Chrétienes) which include over 100,000 members of cooperative societies, over ¾ of whom are in Flanders.

These three socio-economic organisations in the 1960s maintained a unitary structure across the country in both linguistic zones. They were clearly stronger in Flanders than in Wallonia but nevertheless they formed a bridge between the two communities. The
second category of organisations, of a cultural type, affiliated to
the ACW-MOC operates autonomously in each community. The three
most important pairs in this group are:

1. The KAJ-JOC (Katholieke Arbeidersjeugd - Jeuness Ouvrière
    Chrétienne) and the VKAJ-JOPC (Vrouwelijke Katholieke
    Arbeidends Jeugd - Jeunesse Ouvrière Féminine Chrétienne)
    with a combined total of over 60,000 members in Flanders and 30,000
    in Wallonia.

2. The KAV-LOFC (Kristelijke Arbeiders-Vrouwengilden - Ligues
    Ouvrières Féminines Chrétiennes) with 250,000 members in Flanders
    and 144,000 in Wallonia and

3. The KWB (Katholieke Werkliedenverbond) in Flanders with 132,000
    members and 10,000 members of the 'Equipes Populaires' in
    Wallonia, both devoted to religious missionary work among the
    working class.

The second most important organisation in the Catholic
famille is the Boerenbond (Farmers' Union) with over 270,000
members. This movement was founded in 1890 as a Catholic organisation
based upon rural parishes in Flanders and its objectives have always
been the promotion of the cultural and religious life among farmers
as well as the protection of the farmers' interests. It also offers
professional and insurance services to its members. Much weaker
than the Boerenbond are the two farmers' organisations in Wallonia:
the Alliance Agricole Belge and the Unions Professionelles Agricoles.
The former had in the 1960s 25,000 members and was similar to the
Boerenbond with its close connections with the Church but the latter
(with 23,000 members) was more secular in tone and had links with the
Liberal PLP as well as the PSC and Catholic famille.
In addition to the above there are a range of middle-class organisations in the Catholic famille. The most important of these is the NCMV (Nationaal Christelijk Middenstandverbond) with over 40,000 members in Flanders. In Wallonia the MIC (Mouvement Chrétien des Indépendants et des Cadres) performs the same representative function as the NCMV but with less than half the membership of its Flemish equivalent. The middle-class organisations have tended to assert right wing pressure upon the CVP-PSC as opposed to the more left wing pressure from the workers' ACW-MOC.

The above organisations together with other smaller groups, make up the 'standen' (or sections) of the Catholic famille spirituelle. Most of them have equivalents in both communities in the country. There are some purely Flemish organisations such as the Davidsfonds, founded in the 19th century to promote Flemish culture, with no Walloon links but in general the various organisations existed in the 1960s on both sides of the linguistic border. The political party, the CVP-PSC is the political expression and representative of the Catholic famille. It has always been the task of the party to aggregate the interests of all the sections of the Catholic famille and articulate them in the national Parliament. The Flemish organisations were always stronger than those in Wallonia. This has given the Flemish opinion more weight in the combined party. On the other hand, particularly in the unitary ACW-MOC, but also in the other organisations, where the two equivalent organisations were autonomous, there have always been attempts to integrate the views of the two communities.
The Catholic famille in Belgium, therefore, shows some of the features of the segment or 'pillar' described in the consociational model. All Catholics are gathered together in one 'bloc' with a clear philosophical or ideological boundary between themselves and the other segments or 'pillars'. Within the segment the members have a wide range of cultural, social and economic groups and organisations separate from fellow citizens in the other segments of society. A Catholic citizen could be born, educated, enjoy a social and cultural life, join a trade union, spend time in hospital, draw insurance benefit and even borrow money all within the Catholic segment. There is however one area where Belgian segments differed from the consociational model. The Catholic famille, like the other segments, cuts across the major cleavage line in society, the language frontier. The linguistic cleavage has not reinforced the other cleavage lines. The Catholic segment therefore, in the 1960s, which in so many respects fitted the consociational model, did not do so in this very important area. Similarly the political party which represented the segment did not exactly fit the model. Thus the Catholic segment and Catholic party in Belgium differed from their counterparts in Holland to which in other ways they bore a considerable resemblance.

A further feature of the CVP/PSC was the link between the various organisations described above and the politicians who represented them through the party. In the 1960s for example, over 35% of CVP deputies and 30% of PSC deputies had connections, often present or past office-holding, with the ACW-MOC. Over 20% (CVP) and 10% (PSC) were similarly linked to the agricultural organisations
and a further 25% (CVP) and 40% (PSC) with the middle-class movements. The various social organisations of the Catholic famille formed the background from which the politicians emerged. Before 1945 the former Catholic party was a party of indirect membership, being a federation of the Catholic organisations rather than based on individual membership. After 1945 the CVP-PSC became a party of direct membership but the tradition of close links between it and the various sections of the Catholic famille continued.

The CVP-PSC was therefore a broad coalition of interests gathered around a common Catholic philosophy. There were many areas of potential tension within the coalition such as the possibility of a conflict of interest between working-class and the middle-class aspirations. This was reflected in the existence of the left and right wing tendencies within the party, the former happier in coalition governments with the Socialists and the latter more favourable to cooperation with the Liberals. There was also the imbalance noted between the strength of the Flemish wings compared to the relative weakness of the Walloon wings of the organisations and political party. The CVP had approximately 110,000 members in the 1960s whereas the PSC had only between 30,000 and 40,000. The party and social organisations had to overcome these tensions by seeking accommodations between the various groups in order to be fully effective on the national level.
The other two families in the system — the Socialists and Liberals — have a narrower range of supporting organisations but even so they exhibit many characteristics similar to the Catholic segment. In both cases the balance of membership between Flemings and Wallons is more even than among the Catholics. The Socialist family consists of four sections: the political party, the trade unions, the social insurance 'mutualités' and the cooperative movement.

The Socialist party organisation is based upon individual membership in regional federations which together make up the totality of the party. In the 1960s there were approximately 240,000 members of the party, 106,000 in Flanders, 22,000 in Brussels and 112,000 in Wallonia. The party was therefore slightly more French-speaking than Dutch, especially when the proportion of Dutch to French-speakers in the country (roughly 60:40) is taken into consideration. Even so the Socialist party was more balanced from the linguistic point of view than the CVP-PSC. The party organisation based upon the federations was unitary at the top and so a unifying function was performed by the leadership at that level. The Socialist party was the most unified of the three parties until the 1970s but from 1967 separate congresses drawing together the Flemish and Walloon regional federations began to take place. The Walloon regional party federations had a stronger tradition of dissension from the national party line than those in Flanders who could usually be counted upon to support the national leadership. The supreme authority of the Socialist party in the 1960s was the congress of the party which drew
together both communities in the country. From the congress was elected the general council which in turn elected a bureau for current work. At the top of this was a president of the party. By the end of the period under consideration the presidency had become joint between two co-presidents, one Flemish and one Walloon. Until the 1970s the Socialist party remained united, unlike the other two traditional parties which began to split into community wings in the late 1960s.

The largest organisation in terms of numbers in the Socialist famille is the trade union federation, the FGTB-ABVV (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique - Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond). Until the 1950s a proportion of the membership of the FGTB-ABVV were Communists but by the 1960s this was negligible and the federation was dominated by the Socialists. The membership of the federation in the 1960s was about 800,000, in approximately equal proportions in Flanders and Wallonia. The FGTB-ABVV is a unitary organisation and its activities, unlike the ACW-MOC, are socio-economic only and do not involve it in cultural fields. The other two sections of the Socialist famille are much less important than the trade unions. The first is the social insurance organisation the NVSM-UNMS (Nationaal Verbond van Socialistische Mutualiteiten - Union National des Mutualités Socialistes) together with the SVV-FPS (De Socialistische Vooruitziende Vrouwen - Les Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes). The second section is the cooperative societies throughout the country.
Like the Socialist party which represented them, the various Socialist social organisations brought together within one movement the two communities. All the four parts of the overall Socialist movement - the party, the trade unions, the social insurance 'mutualités' and the cooperative societies were coordinated by a national 'Action Commune' which was founded in 1950 at the time of the Royal Crisis. In this way the Socialist famille forms a segment within the system unified around a common Socialist philosophy. The organisations performed a similar role to those among the Catholics of bridging the community boundary and integrating the two parts of the country. The tensions inherent in the cross-class structure of the Catholic famille are, however, less evident among the Socialists. The organisations described above provided the main background for the Socialists deputies and leaders. In the 1960s over 25% of the Flemish Socialist deputies had a trade union background and a further 25% were linked with the other organisations. In Wallonia the pattern was similar but with considerable variation among the regional federations.

The third famille in Belgium is the Liberals. This was smaller in the 1960s than the other two and less extensively organised. The number of organisations within the Liberal segment of society is less, the main one being the OGSLB-ACLVB (Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique - Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België), a federation of Liberal trade unions with 125,000 members, and a group of Liberal social security and
insurance organisations. In both cases the balance of membership between the communities in the 1960s was approximately even. The political party representing the Liberal famille was previously the Liberal party but in 1961 it was re-formed as the PLP-PVV (Parti de la Liberté et Progrès - Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang). The new party was no longer anti-clerical but offered itself as a right wing party based upon a neo-liberal socio-economic philosophy. The Liberals were therefore the first to see the Schools Pact as a final solution to the old confessional politics which opened the way to a change in Belgian politics away from the former pattern of segmental loyalty based upon religion or anti-religion. They sought to attract right wing Catholic voters into a new Liberal segment based upon a right-wing socio-economic philosophy rather than old fashioned anti-clerical liberalism. The membership of the PLP-PVV in the late 1960s was approximately 64,000 with 31,000 in Flanders, 28,000 in Wallonia and 5,000 in Brussels. The balance between Dutch and French speakers was therefore even. The Liberals were the most de-centralised of the parties in the autonomy they granted to their regional organs. In the 1960s however the party was still united with one unified congress, council, executive bureau and presidency. Similar to the other two families in Belgian society therefore, the Liberals bridged the communities and integrated the respective regions into one party. The deputies and leaders of the PLP-PVV had a background somewhat different from that of the other two parties. The number of PLP-PVV deputies, for example, with connexions with social
organisations was below 10%. Their background tended to be the middle-class liberal professions and management and their connection with politics was directly through the political party.

Comparisons can be made between the backgrounds of the politicians from all three parties. The closest connections between the social organisations of the respective segments can be seen in the Flemish CVP and the Flemish Socialists. A large proportion of the deputies from these two groups had close links with trade unions, 'mutualités' or other groups and they often retained these links through office-holding whilst in Parliament. In the Walloon PSC and the Walloon Socialist party the connection was still notable but much less so than in the Flemish wings. In these cases a background in the political party as an individual member was as important as membership of one of the groups in the segment. Among the leading elements of the PLP-PVV membership of social organisations was of least significance. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the CVP and Flemish Socialist deputies and leaders would be much more likely to be subject to immediate pressure from below than those elsewhere. This factor must not be exaggerated for the pressure from regional Socialist federations in Wallonia was also strong. Nevertheless the broader Flemish Movement which sought to use interest groups to bring pressure to bear upon the politicians would have direct access via the social organisations to which so many Flemish deputies and leaders were linked.
Although the internal details of the respective families or segments of Belgian society and the political parties which represented them may have differed, the parties all performed the same function of creating a political unity across the community divide. The parties thus transcended the potentially dangerous dualism of Belgian society. The crucial factor which enabled them to do this was the common philosophical backgrounds - Catholic, Socialist and Liberal respectively - which formed the three common denominators uniting and defining the three segments. The inter-relationships and compromises achieved between the communities within each segment can be observed operating at two levels. Most of the organisations from all the segments described above were either united in the 1960s as one organisation across the whole country in the manner of the ACW-MOC and FGTB-ABW or worked closely with their equivalents in the other part of the country. At this level therefore within each segment or famille there was a constant process of interactions. At a higher, or political level the same process was in operation in the cross-national parties. The elected representatives and leaders of each segment were part therefore of three sets of relationships. Their first role was to represent the philosophy of their segment, their second was to represent the sub-group with which they were associated and thirdly they represented their linguistic community. This was most clearly the case with the CVP-PSC deputies who might represent, for example, the agricultural interest, the Catholic interest and the region from which they came. This was true also
of the other parties. It necessitated a degree of compromise and accommodation to reconcile these various interests within each party.

The three traditional parties were therefore of crucial importance as the main factor in preserving the unity of the Belgian system and ensuring stability. There is a problem, however, in forming an assessment of whether the three parties fit the consociational model. From the philosophical point of view Belgian society, with its segments and parties and leaders representing those segments, does fit the model. The leaders, with their roots and connections reaching down vertically into their respective segments were eminently suited to the consociational role as spokesmen and negotiators on behalf of their followers. There was however a fundamental anomaly which calls into question the simple application of the consociational model to the parties. This anomaly lay in the fact that the segmentation and the parties overlapped one of the most important cleavages in the system - the community cleavage. The linguistic boundary did not, as it should in a 'pure' consociational system, reinforce segmentation. It ran right across it.

There were in Belgian society at the beginning of the 1960s three main cleavage lines. The first was the philosophical line discussed above between the anti-clerical Liberals and Socialists and the Catholics. The second was the socio-economic division between the working-class, represented by the Socialists,
and the middle-class Liberals. This cleavage ran through the middle of the CVP-PSC where there was considerable class overlap. The third cleavage was that between the linguistic communities. This line ran through the middle of the traditional parties. It would be incorrect therefore to see the cleavage lines in Belgian society reinforcing one another and producing homogeneous segments. Only the first and oldest pattern of segments can be understood in this way. Even here although the Catholic segment did probably embrace all Catholics within one famille, the anti-clericalism of the Socialists and Liberals was hardly distinguishable in the battles over the role of the Church in education in the 1950s. The cleavage patterns in Belgium therefore did not coincide very closely with the consociational model of mutually reinforcing cleavages.

The diagram of Lijphart's consociational model would look like this:

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Elites

bargaining - interactions

Followers

minimal interaction

Segment A  Segment B  Segment C
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The diagram of the Belgian system in the early 1960s would look like this:

The anomaly in the consociational interpretation of Belgian politics - the cross-cutting community cleavage and the overlap of the parties - was essential for system stability. The three parties needed to draw support across the community boundaries in order to remain national parties and thus compete successfully in normal politics. It was also very important for the successful operation of consociational politics in times of
crisis. The consociational model assumes that the political leaders can rely upon the support of their followers in the segment which they represent. In Belgium the three parties based upon the segments had operated very efficiently for many years upon this basis. Both competitive and consociational politics would have been much more difficult to work if the parties became fragmented along community or regional lines which would create blurred edges between them and introduce an element of uncertainty about support for leaders.

In discussing Belgian political stability the first place must therefore be given to the national traditional parties and their integrating function deriving from their cross-community appeal. These parties formed the base of the system. If the three parties were to fragment then the system could become unstable until a new party structure had consolidated itself. Dewachter's emphasis upon the willingness of Belgian politicians to seek compromises is relevant here because, as discussed above, within each segment and party a spirit of compromise was essential in order to achieve some sort of common policies among a range of sub-groups. This was especially true of the CVP-PSC. Its importance was, however, mainly as a factor in holding the three parties together, rather than between the parties.

The problem which arose in the 1960s was partly a consequence of the decline of the importance of the confessional
cleavage in Belgian society following the Schools Pact and the weakening of the force of clerical and anti-clerical feeling in general. This in turn lessened loyalty to the traditional families and the traditional patterns of party support. The socio-economic cleavage might then have become relatively more important and thus placed greater strain upon the unity of the left and right in the CVP-PSC. Parallel with this development, the 1960s saw the growth of community movements and parties which placed a further strain upon the system which, as has been demonstrated, depended upon the cross-community unity within the traditional parties. It was inevitable therefore that it would become difficult to operate both normal competitive politics and consociational crisis management where the basic pre-conditions of clearly defined segments and loyalty of supporters to leaders were breaking down.

In this study of Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s this process of weakening and division in the traditional parties will be traced. By the end of the period the three parties had split into six. The traditional parties attempted to use the consociational approach to crisis management to save the stability of the system and preserve themselves by resolving the issue which was causing their own decline.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1


17. Membership statistics for social organisations and political parties are from:
   (a) Rowies, L., *Les Partis Politiques en Belgique*, CRISP, (Brussels, 1975), and
CHAPTER 2

CRISIS-MANAGEMENT IN BELGIUM - the application of the consociational approach in the 1950s and in face of the Community Crisis of the 1960s and 1970s.
The political history of Belgium from the foundation of the state in 1830 to the 1960s can be divided into three periods; 1830-47, 1847-1919 and 1919 to the 1960s. These three periods can be very broadly designated; the period of 'unionisme' when politics were a matter of an overall consensus between all groups with no strong party conflicts, a long period of adversary politics when two parties, the Catholics and Liberals, were in conflict, with the former ascendant from the 1880s to 1919 and finally the period after the introduction of full male suffrage and proportional representation when the system became one of competition between three main parties.

The earliest period may be regarded as one of consensus politics in face of the threat to the new state from Holland and the problems of establishing national sovereignty. From 1847 to 1919, however, Belgian politics in many ways resembled those of 19th century Britain with a similar two-party system. There was no parallel in Britain to the predominance of the Catholic Party in Belgium for over 30 years but nevertheless the consociational model has no more applicability in Belgium at this time than it does to Britain.

After the growth of the Belgian Workers' Party at the end of the century and the achievement of universal male suffrage, the parallel with Britain weakened and some of the pre-conditions of consociational democracy appeared. The most important of these
was the extreme unlikelihood of one party gaining an overall majority in an election. From 1919 all Belgian political leaders had to be prepared to compromise and cooperate in coalition formation in order to take part in government. This was not a sufficient condition for consociational democracy but it was a necessary one. A further development since 1919 was the increase in the danger of crises which could de-stabilise the system. The world economic problems of the 1930s, the threat to liberal democracy implied in the growth of the semi-fascist Rex party in 1936, the Royal Question of 1945-51 and finally the Schools Question of the 1950s were all such. At the same time, since 1919, unlike in the late 19th century, there was no one party dominating the system. From 1919 onwards therefore crisis management was a matter of seeking a minimum 2-party consensus and preferably a 3-party consensus. In addition therefore to the condition for consociational democracy described above the resolution of difficulties facing the system demanded of Belgian political leaders a willingness on occasion to adopt a consensual approach. Belgian political history from 1847 to the 1960s may be understood as a development from adversary politics to 3-party coalition politics with a consensual approach adopted in times of crisis. At the same time, it is also clear that Belgian consociationalism even in the crisis of 1958 must be understood as a technique for crisis management in times of severe strain on the system and not the normal or desired state of affairs for the parties concerned. This has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter in the discussion of the 'fit' of the consociational model to the Belgian system.
It is useful to review the crises of the post-war period. The adversary politics of the 19th century gave way to coalition politics after 1919 with consociationalism appearing as a form of crisis management. Since 1919, however, the political parties have always continued to compete vigorously in normal or non-crisis periods.
CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN 1950 AND 1958

In Belgium in the period 1945 to 1961 there were two major political crises which seriously threatened the stability of the system: the Royal Crisis in 1950 and the Schools Crisis which dominated the 1950s until its resolution in the Schools Pact of 1958. The Royal Crisis was a problem in which there were serious community undertones. The Schools Crisis was acute but paradoxically a crisis within the traditional system and therefore it reasserted the old patterns rather than weakening them. The difference between them exemplifies on the one hand the dangers where community differences were part of a crisis and on the other the possibility of the old system tolerating acute divisions within one overall unity.

The Royal Question was the problem of whether King Leopold III should return to the throne. The left argued that the King had deserted his people by allowing himself to be captured by the Germans in 1940 and suggested that he had been to cooperative with the occupiers. The right disputed this and sought the return of the King from his exile in Geneva. In 1949-50 the CVP/PSV - Liberal coalition government passed a bill to decide the issue by national referendum. The King agreed with this approach. It appeared to be a legitimate and democratic way to resolve the dilemma. In the referendum of March 12, 1950, nationally 57.43% voted for the King's return and 42.57% were against. Thus the
majority in favour was 15%. Following this the government resigned and a general election took place. The CVP/PSC gained an overall majority in the Chamber (108 CVP/PSC, 77 Socialists and 20 Liberals and 7 Communists). The CVP/PSC government formed after these elections took this result as a mandate to invite the King to return, which he did on June 27th. Strikes and demonstrations immediately followed, especially in the south. In the voting in the Chamber to allow his return the opposition parties abstained. More demonstrations and counter-demonstrations followed and by the end of the month half a million Walloon workers were on strike. Three socialist demonstrators in Liège were killed and on the 31st a march from Wallonia on Brussels of 100,000 was planned. In face of this pressure, on August 1st, Leopold III abdicated in favour of his son Baudouin who would formally assume the throne when he came of age in 1951. Thus the crisis was resolved. It must be noted that this was not a question of the institution of the monarchy itself but rather the person of the King. The solution was a last resort compromise to satisfy the left. The CVP/PSC in 1950 chose to form a one-party government rather than attempt to form a coalition and at first wished to impose their policy without any special concern for the vital interests (as they saw them) of the Socialists.

The dangerous aspect of the affair which was to have particular relevance to the developments of the 1960s was not so much polarisation of the right and left which was a traditional
cleavage, but rather a polarisation between Walloons and Flemings. The Flemish provinces had voted 72% in favour of the King (Limburg recording 83% and even the lowest, Antwerp, was 68%). In Wallonia only 42% were in favour and in Brussels 48%. Therefore the Flemings were strongly in favour compared to the French-speakers' rejection. From the Flemish point of view the abdication was forced upon the King to appease the French speakers in spite of the national majority in his favour and the overwhelming majority in his favour in Flanders. It appeared therefore that the minority was able to exercise a veto over the majority. This gave some substance to the view of many Flemings that the will of the Flemish majority would always be thwarted by the French veto. It became difficult for Flemish moderates to argue that Flemish claims could be satisfied within the unitary system once the Flemish proportion of the population was properly represented in Parliament, where they would be in a majority. Within the traditional system a majority of 15% in a referendum and a clear majority in Parliament for the CVP/PSC were not sufficient to overcome the French veto. Thus the moderate case was weakened, providing arguments to support the 'no compromise' position of much Flemish opinion in the 1960s. The Royal Crisis demonstrated also the difficulty of applying simple majority rule democracy in the Belgian context. In the 1960s these problems can be seen again in the discussions of special majorities necessary for legislation on cultural matters, in Flemish demands for more seats in Parliament combined with Francophone demands for
guarantees of their position and in demands from some sections of the Flemish Movement (the Volksunie in particular) for some form of federalism which they saw as the only means by which Flemish opinion could be sure of seeing its will carried out.

In the 1950s the old confessional cleavage reasserted itself. This was a period of considerable tension between the two sides of Belgian politics yet at the same time it was in the tradition of the unitary system in that the two groups in dispute over the issue of the role of the Church in education were represented in both communities. The CVP/PSC government in 1951 (loi du 13,7,51) had increased the state subsidies to middle schools and established a mixed (i.e. including Catholics) commission to advise on and supervise educational programmes in state and Church schools.*

In 1954 the CVP/PSC lost its majority in the elections and it was succeeded by a left coalition (left in the old Belgian sense of secular, i.e. Socialist and Liberal). The left government began in 1954 to reduce the state subsidies to Church schools and in the Projet Collard planned to expand the state sector of education and reduce the role of the Church. The Catholics strongly opposed this and formed the 'Comité national de défense des libertés démocratiques' (C.D.I.D.). During the period of the debates on the Projet Collard, in April 1955 riots and demonstrations took place.

* * The system of parish and Church schools has always been very extensive in Belgium. In 1951, for example, there were: 274 State middle schools with 50,474 pupils and 463 'private' (i.e. Church) middle schools with 66,633 pupils. Dorchy, Histoire des Belges, p.413.
and the Church in the person of Cardinal van Roey gave its support to the C.D.L.D. The situation in 1955 resembled that of the Schools War of the 1880s. The elections of 1958 were therefore fought around the oldest issue in Belgium politics. The Catholic CVP/PSC polled 34% in Wallonia, its highest ever in the south and the CVP alone polled over 50% in Flanders. This variation reflected the difference in religious practice in the north and south but also demonstrated the national nature of the issue and support for the respective parties at that time.

The 1958 election was a traditional one fought by the three parties along established battlelines. The three parties obtained between them 95% of the national vote. In 1950 they had also achieved 95% and in 1954 93%. In the 1950s the three party share was greater than in the 1930s, and '40s but the high degree of support for the old parties in 1958 was a turning point, for it steadily declined from that point onwards. In 1958 the CVP/PSC took 104 seats in the Chamber, the Socialists 84, the Liberals 21, the Communists 2 and the VU 1 - thus the left had 107 seats and the right 105 (counting the VU as right). In the Senate, however, the CVP/PSC held 90 seats and the left 84. Therefore the left had lost the 1958 elections but the result was inconclusive. A coalition between the CVP/PSC and Liberals was formed which lasted until 1961.

Over the Schools Question only compromise would resolve the impasse and the new Catholic Prime Minister Eyskens initiated
a three-party approach which produced the Schools Pact of 1958. This pact had the effect of taking the issue out of party politics. The final document embodying the compromise was signed by representatives of the three parties and it was agreed that it would operate for 12 years. With slight modification it was incorporated in the Revised Constitution of 1971. The number of participants in the discussions was three - the traditional parties - and the issue straightforward. This will be contrasted with the larger number of participants in similar dialogues in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The manner of the resolution of the Schools Crisis may be taken therefore as a good example of the consociational approach to crisis management. It was, however, as in 1951, a compromise reached after it had become impossible for either side to impose a solution. In 1950-54 and again in 1954-58 the right and left governments respectively set out to enact a set of policies which they were well aware to be unacceptable to their opponents who had the support of nearly 50% of the electorate. Belgian political leaders at the time were clearly not opting initially for consensus politics but acting in ways more reminiscent of adversary politics. Taking the 1950s as a case study, it would appear that the competitive approach was the first choice of Belgian politicians and consensus politics only resorted to when impasse was reached. The Schools Pact was dictated by circumstances rather than the innate preference of Belgian leaders for consociational solutions. It is likely that had the CVP/PSC won the 1958 elections even by a small majority as in 1950 they would have imposed their educational policy as in 1950-54
in spite of the views and feelings of the opposition. This must be kept in mind in any evaluation of the pre-1961 Belgian political system as a possible example of the consociational model in practice.

The resolution of the Schools Question could have had two possible impacts upon Belgian consociationalism. The ending of the traditionally most acute and nearly intractable conflict in the system could have opened the way to a pattern of competitive or even adversary politics concerned with largely socio-economic issues. The Liberals assumed this to be the future of Belgian politics when they dropped their former anti-clericalism and sought to present themselves as a new re-formed party of the neo-liberal right. Such a development would have meant that the Belgian system would move further away from the consociational model. The problems of coalition formation would remain but competition rather than consensus and cooperation would have become the outstanding characteristic of the Belgian system after 1958. The system would have become more like West Germany (not regarded as consociational) than the Netherlands. This possible pattern of developments after 1958 assumes that the internal unity of the parties was maintained across the community boundaries. Had this happened it would have been possible to say that the consociationalism of the 1958 Pact paved the way for a full return or strengthening of socio-economic competitive politics.
The second possible line of development after 1958 was that the ending of the old cleavage pattern, dominated by the confessional issue, would expose the system to community tensions which had been overlaid by the Schools Question. Socio-economic politics might therefore remain as only one of a new set of problem areas. Community issues might come to the fore, weakening the cross-community unity of the parties and at the same time presenting those same parties with the task of resolving the very problems which were causing internal tensions. In this case it would mean that the consociational solution to the Schools Question in 1958 had the consequence of opening the way for formerly underlying tensions to assert themselves and thus it contributed to the Community Crisis of the 1960s. Paradoxically the Pact of 1958, by resolving the traditional conflict, offered a successful example of crisis management whilst at the same time it was one of the factors which contributed to the development of the destabilising Community Crisis after 1961.

In 1965 the Liberal revival appeared to suggest that the Schools Pact had in fact led to the assertion of the primacy of socio-economic politics in Belgium. After 1965, however, the second possibility became reality. Freed from the constraints of confessional loyalties some of the Belgian electorate began to support the community parties. In this way the Community Problem became a crisis which demanded radical solutions and the political parties, not able to return to normal competitive politics, were forced to turn once again to consociational methods.
THE COMMUNITY CRISIS OF THE 1960s

By the middle 1960s the previously stable Belgian political system had entered a very difficult period. The factors which had previously contributed to its stability were all becoming weaker. The three traditional parties were beginning to feel the pressure from the community movements, first in Flanders and later in Brussels and the South. This pressure was taking the form of new political parties which were making inroads into their electoral support. In turn this compelled them to concern themselves with the Community Problem and in so doing the issue invaded them internally. By the end of the decade, therefore, they were themselves often dividing along community lines. As the three parties, with their national cross-community structures and appeal had formed the essential stable element in the old system this was a very serious development. The community cleavage became the central factor in Belgian politics and could no longer be contained in the former manner. The ending, or modification of the traditional confessional division of Belgian society after 1958 meant that the way was open for shifts in patterns of voting behaviour. This was important because Belgian politics, competitive or consociational, depended upon the willingness of supporters to follow their leaders in a consistent manner. Any signs of a willingness of followers to desert their old loyalties was dangerous.
By the end of the 1960s the combined CVP/PSC and Socialist support in the country and seats in Parliament, had fallen below 66%. At the same time 25% of the electorate were supporting the community parties. The Liberals, who had revived in 1965, were seeing their support in Brussels drift away to the community party in the city, the FDF, and the party as a whole began to split into several wings. In 1968 the CVP in Flanders and PSC in the South fought the election as separate parties. The only way forward was by a revision of the system to resolve the Community Question. In order to resolve the problem any reforms would have to take into account the wishes of both the Flemish majority and the French-speaking minority.

The problems of the 1960s presented the system with a major crisis. Adjustments were clearly necessary to achieve a new stability. These adjustments could only be in the direction of regional autonomy and this autonomy would have to be more than simply a recognition of cultural peculiarities. The linguistic rights of each group would have to be guaranteed in an acceptable manner to both and this meant, from the Flemish point of view, unilingualism in each region. Once these adjustments had been made it could be assumed that the old traditional cleavage patterns might re-emerge, or a new emphasis upon socio-economic issues take over. A new level of stability might be possible in such a reformed system which recognised the dualism in Belgian society. The problems of bilingual Brussels made such a simple solution difficult to achieve. Therefore the
solution to the whole might depend upon the solution to the Brussels Problem. Unless this solution could be found, the Belgian political system, previously stable, could find itself constantly vulnerable to immobilism and disintegration.

Given the problems facing them in the 1960s it could be expected that as the crisis deepened the parties would be compelled to adopt a consociational or consensus approach as in 1958. The complications of the Community Problem were however much greater than those of the Schools Crisis of the 1950s. At the same time the capability of the three traditional parties to resolve the dilemma by compromise and bargaining as in 1958 was shaken by their own internal disunity. Lijphart, in his set of desirable conditions for the successful working of a consociational system referred to 'low load upon the system'. Clearly the resolution of the Community Problem was likely to impose a much greater load than in 1958 and also greater than had been the case in recent times in Switzerland and the Netherlands.

A further more long-term aspect of the problem was that any solution involving the granting of regional or federal autonomy would inevitably mean that compromise and accommodation would become more a feature of Belgian political life than hitherto. Central government would be compelled to take into account, and perhaps negotiate with, regional organs with greater powers. In the 1960s,
Belgian political leaders were faced with the necessity of using consociational methods to manage the crisis. The solution which was most likely to emerge could increase the consociational element in the system. Previously the parties had sought to return quickly to normal competitive politics after finding a consensus to resolve a crisis. This was the case in the early 1950s and again after 1958. Such a return to normality after the resolution of the Community Crisis might be much more difficult. There was a possibility therefore that Belgium might become closer to the full consociational model after the crisis had been successfully managed.
BELGIAN CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND THE CRISIS OF THE 1960s

Assuming that the community tensions of the 1960s constituted a crisis, it would be reasonable to expect, on the basis of the earlier characterisation of Belgian politics up to 1961, that the three parties would attempt to adopt and, if necessary, adapt the consensus or consociational approach of 1958. Undoubtedly the Community Problem was a crisis. Undoubtedly also the three parties had considerable tactical gains to make if it were resolved. The community parties which grew up as part of the crisis were a serious threat which could be weakened if the crisis could be solved. The issue was absorbing too much time and energy when the country was faced with growing economic problems. In view of this it is necessary to ask whether the 1958 approach was tried and further to see why, if it was tried, it did not seem to prove to be as effective as previously.

The Reform Process 1962-1980: To What Extent Was It Similar To The Consensual Approach of 1958?

The period 1961-1980 may be divided into five phases. In each of these phases steps were taken to find a solution to the Community and Regional Problems. The phases were:

1962–65: the first attempts to find a consensus among the three parties,
1969-71: the revision of the Constitution,
1970-74: provisional arrangements to establish a system of regional government,
1976-78: the evolution of the Egmont Pact, and
1978-80: further revision of the Constitution creating regional institutions for Flanders and Wallonia.

The attempts to reform the Constitution were preceded in the 1962-1963 period by the passing of Language Laws and the abolition of the linguistic census. Both of these measures were relevant to the problems of the communities and regions and were passed by the CVP/PSC – Socialist government of the time against Liberal opposition. They were normal legislation and formed a prelude to the more far-reaching reforms which began to be discussed in 1962-65. Each of the phases will be briefly summarised in order to see the extent to which the consociational approach of 1958 was attempted and why it did not appear to be so successful as on that previous occasion.

**First Phase 1962-65**

During this period the government in office was a CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition which in 1962 took the initiative of forming the two-party working party to review ideas for constitutional reforms. In October 1963 this group reported to the leaders of all three parties. In November the Round Table was formed which included representatives from all three parties and through them of all regions. Although the VU was not included in the group the Round Table can be understood as a collective statement that the
way forward on the constitutional question was via all-party consensus and the discussions should include both parties in government and those in opposition. The Round Table carried on its discussions throughout 1964. In January 1965, however, the Liberals withdrew, leaving the other two parties to draw up an agreement for reforms in February. This agreement was subsequently referred by the leaders to their respective party conferences and approved by them, becoming part of their election programme. In the elections of 1965, however, the two parties lost ground to the Liberals and failed to win between them a 2/3rd majority necessary for constitutional reforms. The proposals which originated in the Round Table were therefore shelved.

The bare facts of the history of the Round Table do not reveal the underlying tensions during the discussions. These tensions make simple application of the consociational model of 1958 to the process inappropriate. Whilst for most of the time (until January 1965) all three parties were included, the two larger parties were in fact split within themselves. Among the CVP/PSC and Socialists there were federalists and unitarists and variations of views between the regional wings. The Liberals were more united in favour of a unitary policy. In the classic model of consociational democracy the leaders of the segments of society act on behalf of their followers who accept their leadership and the compromises which those leaders evolve between them. At the Round Table the old pattern of segments was beginning
to break down. The two larger parties were splitting into
linguistic and regional wings sometimes with more in common with
the regional representatives of the other party than with their
own party leaders from other regions.

A second problem in seeing the Round Table as
consociational democracy in action was the way in which normal
competitive politics influenced the positions adopted by the
parties. The Socialists were unsure whether they wanted to be
in coalition with the CVP/PSC but such a coalition was essential
for the proposals to succeed. The Liberals were concerned that
they might be used to assist in the passage of a reform which would
only be workable if in future there were no right-wing coalitions
which would alienate the largely Socialist dominated Walloon
region. Right wing CVP/PSC members were unhappy about the
possibility of too close ties with the Socialists. In October 1964
the communal elections showed considerable gains for the Liberals
in Brussels and serious losses for the Socialists and PSC to
regionalist groups in Wallonia. The Liberals saw therefore the
possibility of gains in the capital by adopting a strongly
unitarist policy and the desirability of dissociating themselves
from the Socialists and CVP/PSC. The Socialists, under pressure
in Wallonia, began to adopt more regionalist policies. In short,
the Round Table, far from being a cool appraisal of the problems
by political leaders prepared to seek compromises, was subject to
the influence of normal political manoeuvres and the pressures on participants from groups outside their own parties. Although the Round Table began therefore with the intention of re-creating the same sort of dialogue as in 1958 it was seriously weakened by these internal problems.

The consociational model assumes the participation of all groups which were not anti-system parties. The exclusion of the VU in 1962-65 is not surprising as the party was still fairly small. After the 1965 elections, however, there were three community parties - the VU, RW and FDF. As the whole discussion would have to be about regional and community issues the exclusion of the parties which were especially concerned with the issues would have been a serious omission. In the same way, the exclusion in 1964 of the problem of economic regions was understandable in order to make progress but it meant that any conclusions from the Round Table would have offered only partial solutions to the problems of the time. In the event the elections of 1965 ended this first phase of the reform process.

Second Phase 1969-1971

The second phase of the reform process approaches closer to the consociationalism of 1958. From 1965 to 1968, first the centre-left coalition (1965-66) and then the centre-right coalition (1966-68) both lacked the 2/3rd majority for reform and also the
will to seek a cross-party consensus. It was hoped that the community crisis would ease but in 1968 the Louvain University crisis of that year brought down the government. This made the resolution of the community problem urgent. In its general policy statement in June 1968 the new centre-left coalition government reviewed the ideas of the Round Table and urged moves to 'modernise the state'. Efforts were made to involve the Liberals and by September 1969 the new discussion group had been created - the XXVIII group. This new group was closer to the ideal of a cross-party consensus than anything before in the 1960s. All three traditional parties were represented but it also included the VU, RW, FDF and Communists. All segments, regions, language groups and interests were represented. In February 1970 the Prime Minister was able to present the ideas from the XXVIII group to Parliament and by the end of the summer of 1971 the constitutional reforms were passed. The discussions were not, of course, smooth at all times. The VU at one point threatened to boycott the proceedings and the PLP, FDF and Brussels Socialists expressed strong objections to the treatment of the capital. The inclusion and subsequent support of the Liberals for the reforms was an especially significant development because until that time they had been the most unitarist of the parties. As reform appeared to be inevitable no doubt they were interested in being involved in the discussions rather than remain without any influence outside the group.

From September 1969 to the summer of 1971, therefore it seems that the consociational approach was used to manage and
resolve the community and regional crisis. All groups formed part of the XXVIII group irrespective of their place in government or opposition and including the recent newcomers. There are two reservations which must be made however. The first is the deliberate shelving or postponing in the 1971 measures of a final solution to the problem of defining the regions and their powers. This was done in order to make progress and avoid what was likely to be the most contentious area but it meant that the reforms were in reality the minimum which might reduce the danger to the system. The XXVIII group was not able to resolve all the questions before it in 1969. The second reservation is a hesitation to ascribe unmixed motives to the traditional parties in their invitation to the community parties to join the discussions. On the one hand this can be interpreted as a generous opening of the system to the new parties to achieve a just consensus in the spirit of consociational democracy. An alternative view is to see this as a means of involving the new parties to achieve a result which could see their raison d'être removed if the reforms were successful or see them sharing responsibility for failures.

Third Phase 1971-1974

The results of the elections of 1971 after the constitutional revision showed a further increase in support for the community parties. The problem of establishing some system of regional devolution (putting into effect Article 107D of the Constitution) was taken up by the new
government. The new centre-left government initiated discussions on this question but progress was not made until the formation of the three-party coalition in 1973. This coalition drew up an 'accord politique' to set up a parliamentary commission from all three parties to prepare the ground for legislation concerning Article 107D. This commission presented its report at the end of the year. In April 1974, however, another election took place. This produced few changes in the balance of forces in Parliament but the Socialists expressed themselves unwilling to continue in coalition with the Liberals on economic policy grounds. A centre-right government was therefore formed with the Socialists in opposition. Later in the year, the community parties having stated their willingness to join the government, the RW became part of the coalition in June. The FDF, ally of the RW, was not acceptable as a partner to the Flemish members of the coalition. During the spring the government sponsored a conference of all parties except the Socialists and Communists at Steenokkerzeel to resolve the problem of the implementation of 107D. By July the proposals were ready and referred to a special committee of the Senate. On the 1st August they were passed by Parliament with simple majorities against the opposition of the Socialists. They were entitled 'Preparatory Laws on Regionalisation' because although they could be put into effect they did not have validity as a revision of the constitution.

The third phase of the reform process is therefore difficult to characterise from the point of view of consociationalism.
Initially the proposals and discussions were between two parties only (CVP/PSC and Socialists, 1971-73), then among the three parties (1973-74) and finally measures were passed as a result of initiatives from two parties (CVP/PSC and Liberals) with the wider support of the community parties. Certainly the consensus was not as wide as had been achieved for the reforms of 1971.

Fourth Phase 1974-1978

It could be argued that it was during this period that the management of the crisis approached closest to consociationalism. From 1974 to 1977 there was a centre-right coalition government (CVP/PSC, Liberals and RW). In June 1976 the Socialists, the main opposition party who had voted against the regional measures of 1974, took the initiative of proposing discussions among all parties on the implementation of the Article 107D. It was most important that this proposal came from the opposition. If it were accepted by the governing parties it would mean a wide consensus could be achieved and the discussion would be outside the normal politics of government and opposition. In response to the initiative in November 1976 representatives of all parties met in the Prime Minister's office and established the 'group of 36' from all shades of political and regional opinion. In order to emphasise the consensual approach it was agreed that there would be two chairmen, one from the CVP, the main Flemish party and one from the PSB, the main French-speakers' party. Thus the discussions were representative of all regions and interests and assumed the title 'Dialogue Communautaire'.

After the 1977 elections the Socialists joined the CVP/PSC in coalition with the FDF and VU. The RW had declined into relative insignificance by this time but the Liberals were not part of the new government. In May (9th-25th) there were extensive discussions among the six parties in the coalition to formulate a government programme which would include the final resolution of the problem of Article 107D. These were the Egmont discussions which finally produced a programme of both constitutional and economic measures. After the government under Tindemans formally took office in June, further discussions among the same six parties produced the Accord de Stuyvenberg. Finally the totality of all these agreements and discussions were given the title 'Pacte Communautaire' which became part of the government programme in March 1978. These discussions and even the term 'Pacte' recall the consociational approach to crisis management considered earlier. In their discussions the various parties were represented by their presidents and other leaders. They took place apart from normal politics and with minimum publicity, the Prime Minister attempting to keep press involvement to a minimum. Once a form of compromise was reached it was referred to respective party conferences who approved their leaders' recommendations. The final result was a pact which encompassed a wide range of measures to resolve both the constitutional and economic crises which were threatening the political system. The pact was a total package with no loose ends which had made the 1971 measures unsatisfactory.
There was however the important difference that the 1978 pacts unlike 1971 and 1958 did not include the Liberals. The participants were all members of the governing coalition. They would indeed control a 2/3 majority but the absence of one of the three traditional parties must be contrasted with 1958 and 1971. In spite of this the discussion process leading to the pacts can be regarded as the closest the Belgian system approached the consociational model of crisis management since 1958.

Unfortunately the developments at the end of 1978 when the CVP withdrew from the implications of the pacts, brings the above evaluation into question. The CVP were interested in resolving the regional problem but at the same time the temptation to outmanouvre the VU in Flanders by adopting a tough stand over Brussels must have been very great. As the Egmont Pact included economic as well as regional measures it is possible that Prime Minister Tindemans sought to use the parliamentary support of the whole coalition for the economic legislation whilst at the same time was prepared to see his own CVP reject the constitutional proposals. Whatever the motives of the CVP and Prime Minister in the autumn of 1978 their actions contrast with the consociationalism which seemed to be the spirit of Egmont. As on former occasions the vital factor was the dominance of regional interests within the traditional parties. The action of the CVP in 1978 stemmed from its identity with the Flemish region which must be contrasted with its national role as part of the CVP/PSC alliance. Unlike the negotiators in the Schools Pact the participants in 1978 were placed in a position where there
were other groups willing to exploit any compromise as weakness
defence of the cause. There was no Volksunie or Flemish Bloc
in 1958 to influence the position of the CVP/PSC and take advantage
of any concessions made to the opposite side.

**Fifth Phase 1979-1982**

This was the final phase (to date) of the reform process. Although the new centre-left government formed in April 1979 still included the FDF, by the summer the latter had withdrawn over the Brussels issue. The VU did not enter the new coalition. After the withdrawal of the FDF there were no further attempts to include the community parties either in coalition formation or in seeking to resolve the regional problem. The formation of a three-party coalition of the traditional parties which lasted for 5 months in the summer of 1980 and the constitutional reform measures passed at that time (shelving the Brussels problem) can be understood as a revival of the idea of three-party cooperation to resolve the crisis. This move in the summer of 1980 can be variously interpreted. It was a quest for 3-party consensus similar to 1958 and at the same time it was a deliberate exclusion of the community parties which still commanded the support of 15% of the electorate, a similar proportion to that of the Liberals in 1958. The FDF was still the largest party in the capital and its exclusion meant that the Brussels region was badly represented in the discussions to produce the new arrangements. The three parties were clearly prepared to
disregard the community parties and shelve the Brussels problem
in order to produce a minimal reform programme to defuse regional
tensions in Flanders and Wallonia, and to allow them to get back to
normal politics. The end of the three-party coalition (shortly
after the reforms) as a result of differences over economic policy,
the 1981 election which was fought over economic policy, the success
of the Liberals in that election and the formation of a centre-right
government with a right-wing economic programme all confirm the
view that the three parties were eager to return to normal. The
new government was not committed to the completion of the 1980
reforms, except in vague statements of intent to look at the problems
later. It was not formed with the idea of representing all communities
but rather based upon a right wing socio-economic programme. It did
not seek to find a 2/3 majority for constitutional reforms and its
general policy stance made it difficult for the Socialists to
cooperate anyway. Competitive and even adversary politics seemed
to have asserted themselves again.

The fact that after the reforms of 1980, passed by a
three-party coalition, normal socio-economic politics could return
might suggest that 1980 could be compared to 1958 when in a similar
way normal politics returned after several years of pre-occupation
with confessional politics. The difference was that the 1980
measures were not the result of a total consensus as had been the
Schools Pact nor were they a total resolution of the problems.
It was a form of crisis management, of course, and judging by the
results of the 1981 elections which did not see sweeping gains for the community parties, it was successful crisis management.

The long 20 year reform process reviewed briefly above can be reduced to five specific sets of events: the Round Table of 1962-65, the reforms of 1971, the regionalisation law of 1974, the Egmont Pact of 1977-78 and the reforms of 1980. Of these the most significant and productive were the reforms of 1971 and 1980. Discounting those of 1974 which were 'preparatory' and designed to be only provisional, the successful measures were those which had three-party support from the traditional parties. The reforms of 1971 also had the support of the community parties but their views were disregarded in 1980.

The consociationalism of the Schools Pact period was based upon the three parties of the system at the time. Therefore the Pact could be regarded as an all-party agreement. After the rise of the community parties a similar all-party agreement should have involved not only the three traditional parties but also the newcomers who had the support of over 20% of the nation. All parties were involved in the discussions only in 1969-71 and briefly in 1976-7. At other times one or other of the main parties did not take part, for example, the Liberals in 1965 or the Socialists in 1974. The community parties were involved from 1969 to the beginning of 1980 but not in the reforms of 1980.
Given the desirability of all-party involvement to reproduce the success of 1958 it might appear surprising that this was not the approach throughout the difficult period. The first and most obvious reason why this was not so was that it was more difficult to gather together six parties (counting the traditional parties as one each) than three. Another reason was the effect of normal politics on the attempts to manage the crisis by consensus. There are many examples of this. The withdrawal of the Liberals from the Round Table provides a good illustration. They took this step not only because as a party they were unenthusiastic about constitutional reforms but also because they saw electoral advantage in doing so. In 1958 there was no advantage to be gained by any party from non-participation in the talks to resolve the crisis. In addition, the main parties in the 1960s and 1970s were always aware of the threat in the regions from the community parties. This had to be taken into account in the consideration of the possible costs of joining inter-party discussions. Two examples illustrate this: the PSB in Wallonia was aware that the RW could take advantage of any sign of weakness or concessions to the Flemish parties and similarly the CVP had to take account of the threat from the VU in Flanders. Eagerness to join talks to find compromises could be interpreted as willingness to make concessions. It is also possible to see the load upon the system in the 1960s and 1970s as much greater than that in 1958. The Schools Problem was serious but at the same time much more straightforward than the Community Problem. The resolution of the latter involved many more complications and problems. The application of consociational democratic methods was perhaps more difficult because the demands being
made were too heavy. Lijphart's definition of consociational approach to crisis management worked well in 1958 because the load was lighter than in the 1960s. Seen from this point of view the postponement of the discussion of regionalisation in 1971 and the by-passing of the Brussels Problem in 1980 were both means of reducing the load or demands upon the system in order to allow some sort of consensus approach to work. In 1958 this was not necessary.

Although the ideal solution to the problems of the 1960s and 1970s might have been an agreement supported by all groups and parties in the system it is significant that real progress still depended upon the cooperation of the three traditional parties. This was the case in 1971 and 1980. Therefore even after the rise of the community parties the role of the three parties remained the central factor in the system. They still commanded at the lowest over 75% of the electorate in the country. It is possible that the success of 1958 might have been repeated more quickly or the reforms of 1980 accomplished earlier if the three parties had come together to find a solution and ignored the other parties. The question here is why the parties with the prestige of their traditional roles in the system and the success of 1958 behind them could not achieve the same type of solution earlier than 1980. Why did they not adopt this approach in 1968, 1974 and 1977 but did follow it in 1980?
The most important reason why they did not do so was the breakdown of the former regional consensus within each party. This took place in the 1960s as a result of the growing regional pressures and left the three parties fragmented into regional wings by the early 1970s. The three parties which were attempting to control the community crisis were different from those which had managed the Schools Crisis. In 1958 they were three groups united around three philosophies. By the 1970s they had become six or more groups - nine if the Brussels regional sections of the parties are seen as having their own interests apart from the rest of the country. This fragmentation made it very difficult for the former three parties to act in a positive way. This may be illustrated by the problems of the Walloon and Flemish Socialists whose views on constitutional reform were often at variance. The cause of the fragmentation was the problem they set out to solve whereas in 1958 the problem to be solved (the confessional issue) did not have the effect of splitting the parties internally. The success of 1958 had depended also upon the discipline of followers being prepared to support their leaders in the question for compromise. In the 1960s the leaders became not only split amongst themselves upon regional lines but the followers were no longer necessarily willing to continue their support. This was particularly serious between 1965 and 1974, when voters, dissatisfied with their traditional parties, deserted in large numbers.
The fragmentation of the traditional parties was made worse by the existence of the new community parties. In 1958 there was no danger that supporters would transfer their allegiance elsewhere for there were no other parties to attract them. A Catholic dissatisfied with the CVP/PSC for its willingness to compromise in the Schools Pact had no alternative Catholic party and clearly would not vote Socialist in protest. Similarly a Socialist voter who felt perhaps that the Socialist party was making too many concessions would be unlikely to vote Liberal. In the 1960s the community parties began to offer an alternative to dissatisfied voters. Unlike 1958 therefore the leaders of the traditional parties were constantly aware of the dangers of appearing too willing to make compromises. The essence of the 1958 approach however was the willingness and freedom of leaders to compromise.

The result of the above was that the picture of the political party of the consociational model — unified and disciplined followers, leaders allowed to seek solutions free from excessive pressures from below and the whole system resting upon clearly defined cleavage lines — was not applicable. These difficulties also had the effect of making the leaders avoid contentious areas which might make matters worse. The Round Table shelved discussion of economic regionalisation as early as 1964 and the reforms of 1971 left this area vague. The adoption of this tactic of minimal reforms to make progress was partly based upon the hope that it
would suffice to defuse regional and community tensions. It was also dictated by the fact that the internal tensions in the three parties would be made worse by the discussion of such issues. Thus the parties were unable to move positively to a radical resolution of the totality of the problems facing them. Even in 1980 when the three parties passed the reforms of that year they by-passed the Brussels problems for the same reason. Although the tactic was successful in the long run as it gradually weakened the position of the community parties, it meant that the reform process took far longer than was necessary. Even allowing for the complications, 18 years (1962-80) was too long for the system to be burdened by constitutional argument.

Over the whole period the three parties appeared to be following a dual tactic, partly dictated by the circumstances discussed above. Their aim, not surprising in any political party, was to restore the ascendancy which they had held prior to 1965 elections. In order to do this they had to halt the growth of the community parties and force them back to the margins of Belgian politics. They also had to defuse the community issue itself in order to reduce the damage to their own internal unity. After the failure of the Round Table in 1965 and the Louvain crisis of 1968 they achieved three-party discussions in 1969. At the same time, however, they began the process of involving the community parties in the complicated problems under discussion. The three parties
were forced into a dilemma in 1969. To resolve the crisis which was the basic cause of the rise of the newcomers and their own internal difficulties it was considered useful to expand the inter-party dialogue. This expansion however might also give extra credibility to the new parties. On the other hand their involvement might also expose the new groups to the need to compromise and make them partly responsible for decisions made. As the community parties continued to expand after 1971 they were drawn into further discussions of regionalisation. Later they were brought into the processes of coalition formation. The dual tactic was simply to expand the consensus to include the new parties in order to resolve the problem whilst at the same time to outmanoeuvre and if possible remove the new parties in the process.

After the expansion of the consensus up to 1978-79 in 1980 the three parties (now six) passed the reforms without, it appeared, any attempt to involve the new parties. What had changed? The most important change was the beginning of a decline in the support for the newcomers. By 1980 the RW had lost ground to such an extent that it was ceasing to be a major factor even in Wallonia. This decline began after the RW took part in the 1974-77 coalition.

In the 1978 elections the VU appeared to have been outwitted by the CVP whose withdrawal from the Egmont Pact, which had been supported by the VU, placed the traditional party in a position to claim to be the real defender of Flemish interests. The VU not only lost votes but found itself in the position of the
CVP in the 1960s - threatened by another party (the Vl.B.). Only the FDF continued as a serious challenger in its region but that region comprised only 10% of the electorate. By 1980 therefore it appeared that the tactic of minimal reforms in 1971 and 1974 had begun to erode the support for the newcomers. In addition to this, by the late 1970s the economic problems of the country were beginning to assume crisis proportions and thus the community and regional issues might begin to appear of secondary importance. In this changed climate the traditional parties were able to take the initiative in a way which may have appeared dangerous to them earlier.

Although the reforms of 1971 based upon a consensus of all parties might therefore seem closer to the pattern of 1958, those of 1980 repeated the earlier pattern even more closely. Only the three traditional parties were concerned. They achieved an inter-party consensus and acted quickly to resolve the regional crisis following the failure of the Egmont proposals. Immediately afterwards there was a return to normal politics, largely ignoring the community and regional issue and hoping to turn the focus of Belgian politics onto economic questions. This was very similar to 1958, taken in the context of the years preceding the Pact and the first years afterwards. The 1950s was dominated by the confessional issue, the Schools Pact resolved the problem and by 1961 politics returned to problems of economic management and other normal areas.
After the reforms of 1971 and 1980 the setting in which the three parties operated had changed. The new cultural and economic autonomy which had been granted to the regions made the system different from the former unitary state. The three parties had become three pairs of allied parties: CVP and PSC, Flemish and Walloon Socialists and Liberals. After 1958 it had been possible to return to normal competitive politics without any difficulty because the Schools Pact had not altered the framework of the system itself. The Pact was the result of taking the issue out of the normal political processes and it had little effect upon them. Belgium was a unitary state before 1958 and remained the same afterwards. The three parties also continued unchanged after the Pact, except for the change of the Liberals into the PLP/PVV in 1961. This was not the case after 1980, for the solutions found changed many aspects of the state structure. The unitary state was no longer the same as before 1971 and the unitary parties had been split. The necessity for compromise and accommodation in Belgian politics after 1980 was greater than ever before.

In order to understand how and why the change took place in the 1960s and 1970s it is necessary first to examine the growth of the movements in Flanders and Wallonia which presented the traditional parties with such difficulties. It would seem surprising at first sight that three long established and prestigious parties upon whom the Belgian polity had depended for so long should find themselves in such difficulties within ten years of achieving their
highest electoral support since 1919. It is also surprising that they were not able quickly and successfully to repeat the consociational exercise of 1958 to resolve the Community Crisis. The rise of the Flemish and Walloon Movements must be examined in some detail in order to comprehend how the Community Question could offer such a challenge to the system. In addition the problems of the capital must be included as they form the most acute version of the problems of the country as a whole.
CHAPTER 3

THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT IN THE 1960s - the collective assertion of the demands of the Flemish 'volk' in the Belgium state as a whole and Brussels in particular.
Until the 1960s the most important regional problem in Belgium was the Flemish Question. The position of the French-speakers in the system had been up to the 1960s stronger. Their culture, part of the larger French Culture, was less vulnerable and their language had an assured status as a world language and also as traditionally the lingua franca of Belgian politics. Economically Wallonia was until recent times the more developed part of the country. In the 1960s, however, major changes began to reveal themselves which brought these old assumptions into question. The Flemings were becoming a clear majority in the country, their economic progress and potential were beginning to make Flanders at least as important as Wallonia and possibly more so. Culturally the Flemings, having established the autonomy of their language and their cultural base in a Dutch-language educated middle class in the first half of the 20th century, no longer accepted French cultural ascendancy and began to seek to push back the cultural/linguistic frontier. In the south, on the other hand the Walloons began to feel that the consequences of their minority status might be dangerous (they called this 'minorisation') and to fear the serious economic decline of their region. By the middle 1960s therefore the traditional Belgian system was subject to a Walloon pressure from the south as well as a Flemish pressure from the north.

A further possible explanation for the development of the Flemish Movement relates to the problems inherent in variations in time and speed of modernisation among regions. Until the post-1945 period
Flanders was more backward economically than Wallonia and the more modern part of the country was dominant. After 1945, however, Flanders caught up with Wallonia and overtook it economically. For a number of years, however, the balance of political power in the system seemed to remain in the hands of the French-speakers. The role of largely French-speaking Brussels in the political and economic life of the country reinforced this impression in Flanders. The result was an imbalance between the Flemish perceptions of their new economic and demographic status and their influence in national politics. Underlying the Flemish Movement therefore there may have been a desire among Flemings to see their new status clearly expressed in constitutional and cultural arrangements within the Belgian state system. The outward expression of these discontents and aspirations among Flemings was in support for the Flemish Movement. Whatever the underlying reasons for Flemish grievances, however, the immediate issues over which the battles were fought in the 1960s were largely cultural and linguistic. The Walloon fears of 'minorisation' (finding themselves in a permanent and weak minority) were part of the same underlying tension resulting from the changed balance within the country.

The Flemish Movement will be studied first because it began to offer a challenge in Flanders somewhat earlier than the Walloon Movement in the south and its roots lay in the 1950s or earlier. The Walloon Movement was perhaps a consequence of the success of the Flemish Movement and its growth was a form of interaction with the latter.
At this stage attention will be concentrated upon Flanders and Wallonia and the French Movement in Brussels will be considered in the context of the Brussels Problem. From a simple statistical point of view Flanders and Wallonia comprised nearly 90% of the electorate and hence the main areas of operation of the traditional parties. Therefore the impact of a Flemish party in Flanders and a Walloon party in Wallonia was likely to demand more urgent attention than a similar movement in the capital where only 10% of the electorate lived. A solution to the problems of Flanders and Wallonia was relatively easier to contemplate than the complications of Brussels and its periphery. It would be no exaggeration to say therefore that it was the conjunction of pressures from north and south which caused the government to set out upon the path of constitutional revision. It is unlikely that the discontents of Brussels and its region would have caused such a serious reappraisal of the whole system. Many of the problems of the capital and its periphery were a result of ordinary normal legislation (such as the new language laws) which were not part of the Constitution.\(^1\) Brussels was to become a major obstacle to the full resolution of the Community Problem but initially the question was placed on the Belgian political agenda by the Flemish Movement and underlined as urgent by the Walloon Movement. The initial discussion will therefore centre upon the emergence of these movements from generalised pressures or interests finding expression in the regional wings of the traditional parties to political movements which upset the balance of the old three-party system. Flanders
had always been the main base for support for the CVP/PSC. The party usually collected over 50% of the votes in the region compared with little more than half that average in Wallonia. The centrality of the CVP/PSC has been noted as a stabilising factor in Belgian politics. It was always the pivotal party of the system, usually in office and only in opposition for 6 years since 1945 and largely dominant since the 1880s. The party was also the main spokesman for Flemish aspirations. Any serious challenge to its latter role might therefore have the effect of weakening its dominance at the centre, for it relied upon its strength in Flanders to provide the basis for its national ascendancy. In order to maintain its overall strength it was compelled to sympathise with Flemish demands rather than see its support drift away to the VU. On the other hand, a too strongly pro-Flemish position would weaken its appeal to French-speaking voters which could also threaten its position at the overall national level. The other two traditional parties were in the same dilemma but, from the point of view of system stability, the erosion of the position of the central or pivotal party was the most dangerous. As the central dominant party the CVP/PSC would have to carry the main responsibility for finding a solution to the community problems. If the central pivotal party were weakened the problem of finding such a solution would become inevitably more difficult.
THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT

The Flemish Movement since 1945 may be seen to have expressed itself at three different but interwoven and inter-related levels. The oldest aspect was the cultural dimension, which, had a long history associated at first with the rehabilitation of the Flemish language, then with the expansion of Flemish culture as a whole. In the second half of the 19th century and the first 20 years of the 20th century this entailed the encouragement of higher education in Flanders in Flemish and the consequent growth of a Flemish-speaking intelligentsia. This broad cultural movement was embodied to a large extent in the three 'traditional foundations' for this purpose in Flanders: the Davidsfonds, the Vermeylenfonds and the Willemsfonds. These three cultural foundations were associated with the three traditional 'familles spirituelles'. Unlike the organisations previously described, the three cultural foundations had no real equivalents in Wallonia. They were by their nature purely Flemish in origins and objectives. Their traditions and their primarily cultural motivations precluded them from direct political action and they were reluctant to become identified with the more radical Flemish groups such as the Volksunie and the VVB.*

In addition to the three cultural foundations there has always existed in Flanders a very wide range of specific interest

* "VVB" – Vlaamse Volksbeweging – Flemish People's Movement.
groups with their own organisations operating in Flanders only. Such groups were very numerous and covered all aspects of Flemish life, economics, politics and society. Taken all together, including the three cultural foundations, these groups, associations, movements and societies were to be found all over Flanders. Their role was largely non-political. The most non-political organisation can however become involved in politics where its own interest is threatened. In the Belgian context this could very quickly become part of the overall community politics of the country. This may be illustrated by the example of a motoring organisation. It could be assumed that its interest would be the advocacy of more and better roads and road-building. It could therefore be expected that such an organisation would attempt to influence the government in Brussels, be that government Socialist, Catholic or Liberal. It would not wish to be associated with one party only. In Flanders, however, news of extra road-building in the south when there might be demands for more roads in the north could lead the Flemish motoring organisation to join those who argued that Flanders subsidises Wallonia. * Thus a non-political motoring organisation can become politicised in relation to the community problems and community politics. This was a process common to many of the Flemish non-political interest groups in the 1960s.

* This may be seen in the slogans of the Flemish demonstrators in Brussels in 1963:
"E-3 Weg : 12,000 Voersteugen per dag. Route de Wallonie : 1,500 per dag" (E-3 road : 12,000 vehicles per day. Route de Wallonie : 1,500 per day).
The range of non-political interest groups in Flanders is similar to that found in any sophisticated Western political system. The special feature of Belgium, however, is that they existed completely autonomously in Flanders, with similar, completely autonomous groups in Wallonia. The Flemish and French-speaking groups worked together where they had common interests but the existence of completely separate organisational machinery in each zone of the country was highly significant for this facilitated fully autonomous actions in each zone. All these groups were well-established by the 1950s. The Willemsfonds, for example dated from 1851.

These organisations were what can be designated as the primary level of the Flemish Movement. Flemish Culture and its defence were their common denominator. Issues related to this were very sensitive in view of the Flemish historical experience of the loss of Brussels as a Dutch-speaking city in the 19th century. The defence of Flemish Culture and language involved them in the complications of the politics of the Brussels region, for example, in spite of their non-political inclinations.

At the second level of the Flemish movement was an organisation with specifically political aims - the Vlaamse Volksbeweging (VVB). This was established in 1954 with the long term ambition to change the Belgian political system from unitary
to federal. This group had close links with the Volksunie and could be understood as advocating the same policies as the party. It was well organised and pursued a vigorous propaganda line in favour of Flemish interests. It possessed a secretariat and formed a permanent and lively pressure group organised for a political purpose. Organisations formed to support the traditional political parties were also, of course, political but their original role has been to support the cross community parties and therefore their specifically Flemish commitment was blurred. They were part of the familles which extended across the boundary into other regions.

Defining this second level of the Flemish movement as definitely political organisations, reference must also be made to attempts to bring all the non-political groups together for coordinated action over specific problems. Such coordinating agencies in the 1950s and 1960s had no individual membership, unlike the first level groups and the VVB, but rather formed associations of associations, with coordinating committees consisting of representatives of the various member organisations. The Vlaams Komitee voor Brussel - VKB *, for example, brought together various Flemish groups in the capital in the early 1960s. The most important of such coordinating associations was the Vlaams Aktie Komitee - VAK **. This was formed

* "VKB" - Flemish Committee for Brussels.

** "VAK" - Flemish Action Committee.
in 1959 and was very active in achieving the suppression of the linguistic census in 1959-61, in organising the marches on Brussels in 1961 and 1962 and the demonstrations in Antwerp in 1963. These events were coordinated and organised by the VAK and achieved a high level of participation from various Flemish groups. By 1964, however, the VAK had disintegrated, partly because of the lack of enthusiasm from the three cultural foundations. Such a coordinating organisation depended for its strength upon the enthusiasm of its member groups and therefore the withdrawal of the three foundations meant that it ceased to exist in its original 1959 form. In spite of this the VAK must be regarded as a vital factor in the Flemish movement from 1958 to 1963. In 1965 the Overlegcentrum * took over the function of the VAK in coordinating the activities of varied Flemish groups for specific issues. It must be noted that this pattern of coordinating committees (called action committees - aktie komitee) bringing together interested organisations at a given time and place proved a characteristic of the Flemish approach to the issues of the community problem. The most notable of these, apart from the VAK itself, were the action committees over Brussels and the Catholic University of Louvain. Between the larger organisations and the coordinating committees set up by them there existed the phenomenon of interlocking leadership whereby members of the leadership of one organisation, for example the Davidsfonds, could be found in the executive of the VAK or possibly taking a leading role in the VVB. At all levels this interlocking of leadership and

* "Overlegcentrum" - Central Coordinating Committee
membership performed a coordinating function. The various arrangements to coordinate a wide range of Flemish groups to create one united 'action front' for cultural and linguistic issues had the effect of drawing together members of the different familles spirituelles in Flanders within one movement. This weakened the bonds between the groups and their Walloon equivalents and thus began the process of blurring the boundaries between the segments of society in Flanders.

At the third level of the Flemish movement was the Volksunie (VU) party itself. The various groups and committees would hope to influence Flemish deputies in Parliament from all parties (especially from the CVP with its special strength in Flanders). The VAK and Overlegcentrum saw this as their obvious course of action. The Brussels and Louvain problems fully demonstrated this tactic. The formation of the Volksunie party, however, gave direct parliamentary expression to the more radical sections of the Flemish movement. As a party the Volksunie was deeply committed to the thinking behind the marches and demonstrations organised by the VAK in the early 1960s. The Volksunie and the VVB had close links from their very foundation and it would be possible to see the VVB as a popular propagandist wing of the VU or the VU as the parliamentary expression of the VVB. The VVB, being an autonomous organisation, however, formed a link between the strongly committed VU and the non-political groups in Flanders. The VU policies were, from its inception in 1954, basically federalist but included in the short term demands for a tightening of the language laws and their strict enforcement.
In comparing itself to the CVP - the main party in Flanders - the VU claimed to be more truly Flemish and untainted with compromise. The VU was founded in 1954 and achieved a break-through in 1961, surpassing the performance of the pre-war Flemish VNV.* in 1971.

The Flemish organisations therefore fitted an overall pattern which emerged in the 1960s. The base was the range of non-political interests which expressed themselves through the various societies and groups in Flanders. These were coordinated through action committees for specific demonstrations of Flemish solidarity. Some organisations sought a very limited political role, whereas the most radical, the VVB, was linked in policy with the Flemish political party, the Volksunie. The Volksunie was not the spokesman for the whole Flemish Movement which included supporters and members of other parties. It was the expression of more radical Flemish opinion. It must be noted that the pressure from Flanders upon government in Brussels was a far wider movement than merely the Volksunie and its supporters.

"VNV" - Flemish National Union.
THE FlemISH CULTURAL FOundATIONS

The three senior cultural organisations in Flanders were the three cultural foundations - the Davidsfonds, the Vermeylenfonds and the Willemsfonds. These three illustrate the way in which non-political cultural movements were drawn into the political issues of the Community Problem. They had a highly respected position in Flemish life and therefore any Flemish Movement which had aspirations to protect, or speak on behalf of Flemish Culture would need their support. On the other hand the foundations did not wish to be drawn totally into politics. Therefore they should be seen as part of the broad span of a Flemish Movement but reluctant to become too closely identified with any specifically political proposals, such as, for example, the ideas of federalism which became policy among the more extreme Flemish activists in the middle of the 1960s.

The largest cultural foundation was the Davidsfonds, founded in 1875 with the two aims of promoting the culture and language of Flanders within a Catholic framework. It had links with other organisations in the Catholic famille in Flanders, notably the ACW and Boerearbond. Its membership in the 1960s was between 63,000 and 70,000. The foundation was part of the overall Flemish Movement and saw itself as a pressure group, associated with the movement, as was explained clearly in its Congress Report of 1964:
La lutte flamande du Davidsfonds peut être menée dans l'avenir, comme elle l'a été dans le passé, en adressant des motions au pouvoir législatif et aux autres autorités, en collaborant en l'action commune flamande, en adhérant à des organisations non liées à une politique de parti, en informant directement les représentants du peuple des souhaits de la population, en informant les membres et l'ensemble de la population des engagements pris par les parlementaires ou autres responsables publics.

It is quite clear from the above that the Davidsfonds was interested in influencing policy but at the 1965 Congress the leaders also made clear their dislike of too close links with any political party:

*Il n'appartient pas au Davidsfonds de drainer ses membres vers l'un ou l'autre parti politique.*

Defining a pressure group as an organised set of people interested in influencing policy-making and political parties in a system, without seeking at the same time to take over responsibility for decision-making or become a political party, the Davidsfonds formed in the 1960s a classical pressure group. The peculiarity of the position in Flanders was that (especially in the post-1960 period) the problems which arose involved the whole Flemish community and its future and therefore any such pressure group was in danger of being drawn further into active politics than it might previously have wished to go. The foundation may have wished to be non-political and may indeed have seen itself as such but inevitably
its views on such issues as Brussels, Constitutional Revision and the Catholic University of Louvain provided support which could be used to advantage by more radical groups. The boundary between political and non-political (cultural) proved so flexible and imprecise in Flanders at this time that the Davidsfonds as an influential Flemish organisation was bound to cross it many times. Linguistic issues were clearly cultural and yet at the same time they became intensely political also.

The other two foundations were considerably smaller than the Davidsfonds with approximately 6,000 members each. The August Vermeylenfonds was founded in 1945 and was originally to encompass a wide range of philosophies. Gradually the foundation took on a Socialist orientation and in 1961 the Executive took the decision to recognise this officially. The third foundation was the Willemsfonds. This was the oldest, founded in 1851, and of similar size to the Vermeylenfonds. It claimed to be non-political with no direct links to the Liberal PVV, although sharing the philosophy of that party. In 1961, like the Liberal Party, the Willemsfonds ceased to emphasise its old anti-clerical position of the previous 100 years.

The three cultural foundations had a high reputation in Flanders (the newer Vermeylenfonds enjoying the same prestige as the older foundations). Taken together, they represented a cross-section of the philosophical spectrum of the region, from all three spiritual families.
The VVB* was founded in 1954. Its political motivation stood out clearly at the Congress of the VVB at Machelen on the 9th October, 1960. This congress was attended by delegates with Catholic, Socialist and Liberal backgrounds and it made a wide ranging study of all aspects of the Flemish society, economics and politics. Congress was attended by over 1,000 delegates and it produced a specific programme of action. In order to make clear that this programme was to be more than a vague statement of ideals and aims the congress passed a resolution that the programme should be fulfilled in 5 years - by 1965. It formed therefore a platform or plan for the Flemish movement for the early 1960s and may be taken as a statement of the radical Flemish position for that period. The programme was to consist of three stages:

1. Measures to end inequalities between Flanders and Wallonia.
2. Measures to give equal growth opportunities to each region, and
3. Specific measures to promote Flemish growth and expansion.

In order to achieve equality the programme envisaged the complete suppression of the French language in Flanders, the abolition of the linguistic census, the imposition of Dutch in all public and private undertakings and offices in Flanders, the halting of the growth of

"VVB" - Vlaams Volksbeweging.
the Brussels periphery and the direction of 80% of national
industrial investment funds to Flanders. These aims were to form
the first stage. The second stage, to achieve equality of opportunity,
would involve the final and irrevocable fixing of the language
frontier and the limits of Brussels periphery, the legal obligation
that all senior posts in Flanders in public or private concerns
should be filled only by those educated in Dutch, the de-centralisation
of the economy and government machinery and the division of the main
parties along community lines. The third stage would be the
separation of the government services, the application of a federal
pattern to all government and private undertakings and the move
towards a fully federal constitution. These proposals formed the
full five year programme of the VVB and constitute the clearest
exposition of the radical Flemish position. They go beyond the
generalisations of other groups.

There are no figures for actual membership in the early
1960s but assuming that 1,000 delegates attended the Congress in
October 1960 the membership must have been considerable. The
Congress of the VVB elected an Executive Committee, a Directorate
and appointed a full-time Secretary. 6

The practical activities of the VVB in the early 1960s
were designed to heighten Flemish self-consciousness and ensure
the strict enforcement of the language laws - although the VVB
regarded them as inadequate. The federalist policy of the VVB
was most actively promoted at central national level via press
conferences for journalists from abroad as well as Belgium. 7

At this time the VVB also began to approach the Walloon
Movement federalists to seek a common approach. Exchanges between
the two movements took place in 1961 culminating in a declaration
in principle in favour of Walloon and Flemish federal autonomy at
a joint VVB-MPW conference in Liège on October 15th 1961. The VVB
was very active in the Brussels area, taking part in the marches of
1961 and 1962.

The VVB membership, although from the three 'familles
spirituelles' in Flanders, tended to be largely Catholic. Given the
strength of Catholicism in Flanders this was not surprising. In this
period (1960s) the VVB was able to exert considerable pressure on the
governing CVP party. This influence of the VVB on the CVP lay in
the constant raising of community issues by the movement, thus com­
pelling it to concern itself with the Flemish Problem. The VVB
insisted that the problems could not be overlooked. The VVB had
very close links with the VU, for their policies were almost
identical. Common policies: interlocking membership and common
action (such as the marches on Brussels) meant that the VVB and
Volksunie could be very closely identified. The direct influence
of the VVB on the Socialists and Liberals was less but even here the
constant and vigorous pressure by the VVB meant that these parties
too could never ignore community issues.

The body which performed the function of coordinator of the Flemish Movement as a whole was the Vlaams Aktie Komitee (VAK). The members of the VAK was not individual but collective, with each member organisation sending delegates to it. Another characteristic of the VAK was that it did not have an existence of its own, apart from its member organisations. It could be said to have been purely an instrument to express Flemish solidarity over a particular issue. Its sphere of operation was, the organisation of such actions as marches and demonstrations. The VVB played a leading role in the VAK, for it was the main politically active Flemish organisation but the VAK could only be as strong as its membership allowed and declined when many member organisations withdrew in 1964-65.

In broad terms it may be said that the VAK through its campaigns began the process of turning Flemish voters and political leaders away from their former cross-national loyalties and towards regional loyalties. Earlier the triple role of Belgian politicians was described. This was seen as sectional (interest aggregation), philosophical (Catholic or secular) and regional. By its campaigns and propaganda the VAK made the third role much more important. It ensured that during this period Belgian politicians could never afford to ignore the Flemish dimension. In this way the Flemish
Movement, and the VAK in particular, weakened the pattern of segments and segment loyalties which had formed the basis of Belgian consociational democracy.

The origin of the VAK may be traced back to 1946 when a committee was established from an initiative of the Vermeylenfonds to coordinate the activities of the three cultural foundations. It is significant that this took place some weeks after the general census when the linguistic questions which were part of the census were causing difficulties in Flemish circles. The coordinating committee - Algemeen Vlaams Komitee (AVK)* continued as an ad hoc form of cooperation between the three foundations into the late 1950s. The AVK was not involved in any major Flemish activities in the period from 1947 to 1959, which was dominated by the Royal Question in 1949-50 and the Schools Question in 1954-58.

The initiative for the foundation of the VAK came from the VVB at the end of 1958. As would be expected, the VVB, as an active political pressure group sought to strengthen the unity of the Flemish movement and the issue which stimulated this move by the VVB in 1958 was the census due in 1960-61. The Flemish view was that the census was more of a linguistic referendum than strictly

* "AVK" - General Flemish Committee
a census. It could be part of French cultural imperialism and a means whereby some Dutch speakers might express pro-French preferences and thus weaken the Flemish position on the Brussels periphery and the language frontier. Therefore in November 1958, the VVB suggested that together with the AVK they invite other Flemish groups to form a Delegatie der Vlaamse Verenigingen (Delegation of Flemish Organisation) to achieve the suppression of the linguistic census. The organisations which responded were mostly of the cultural type and the president-elect was the leader of the Vlaamse Toeristenbond (VTB – Flemish Tourist Union) and the Vlaamse Automobilistenbond (VAB – Flemish Motoring Organisation). The Delegatie proposed the foundation of a much broader and more effective organisation to coordinate the Flemish movement and on March 14th, 1959, such an organisation was established as the "Aktie Komitee tot behoud van de integriteit van het Nederlandstalige - grondgebied en tot bescherming van de Vlamingen in de Brusselse agglomeratio".* This long title was soon reduced to the more manageable: Vlaams Aktie Komitee voor Brussel en Taalgrens (Flemish Action Committee for Brussels and the Linguistic Frontier) which later became the even shorter: Vlaams Aktie Komitee (VAK).

The activities of the VAK between 1959 and 1965 were centred around four main demonstrations of Flemish 'solidarity':

* 'Action Committee to preserve the integrity of Dutch-speaking territory and to assist Flemings in the Brussels area.'
talentelling!" *(29.11.59), the first march on Brussels (22.10.61), the second march on Brussels (14.10.62) and the demonstration in Antwerp (10.11.63). In support of the campaign against the census the VAK organised over 70 meetings throughout Flanders and published a campaign brochure: "Waarom talentelling?" **. They also sought the support of individual members of all parties in Parliament and local councils and of Flemish public figures in general. They, in addition, sent a full statement of their views to the government commission which had been set up to study ways to improve or modify the census. Although at this time the Willemsfonds was in favour of the campaign it must be noted that modification of the census was its policy rather than outright suppression. The government responded by agreeing to modify the census and remove the linguistic element.

The VAK objected however to the fact that the 'normal census' forms were bilingual. This implied that Flanders might be bilingual rather than purely Dutch-speaking. Thus a bilingual census would be a linguistic census in disguise according to the VAK and therefore unacceptable. As a result of VAK influence, over 300 communes returned blank census forms to Brussels and the census was effectively suppressed. The mayors and councils of many of these communes were from the CVP and other parties. The VAK had achieved a

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* "No linguistic census!"

** "Why no linguistic census?"
major success as a result of its campaign, which demonstrated the effectiveness of such coordination of a whole range of Flemish organisations.

The problem of the census was merely a part of the overall problems of the linguistic frontier and it was on the periphery of Brussels that this issue was most sensitive. The VAK view was that the rights and opportunities for Dutch-speakers within the capital were limited by the French-speaking dominance within the ostensibly bilingual city. The 'facilities' for education and administration in French in the outer suburbs were also criticised as encouraging French-speaking expansionism to the detriment of the position of Dutch in those areas. The Flemish movement, therefore, led by the VAK and especially the VVB within the VAK, sought the improvement of the position of Dutch within the city and also the abolition of the special arrangements for the use of French on the periphery. These demands were embodied in the memorandum from the VAK to the government on the eve of the 1961 elections. The reply of the Prime Minister in Parliament on May 2nd 1961 was not considered acceptable to the VAK and hence the march on Brussels was organised as a demonstration of Flemish solidarity over the issue.\(^9\)

Events such as this demonstrated the special significance of the VAK. There was also a counter-reaction by the French-speakers. The march embraced a wide range of formerly separate groups all brought
together under the umbrella of the VAK to influence the government over a linguistic-cultural issue. The only sceptical element in Flanders was the Dutch-language socialist press. The French language press adopted a warning tone, pointing out the presence of war-time collaborators (from the old VNV) in the march and criticising the anti-French feelings expressed.*

In 1962 the government began the process of drafting new language laws with reference both to the unilingualism demanded for Flanders (and also for Wallonia) and the problem of the Brussels periphery. Over the winter 1961-62 the VAK gave special attention to the Brussels region, especially the six communes with 'special facilities', and took as its slogan: "Gen faciliteiten" ('No special facilities' which would mean the abolition of French rights in the communes in question). On January 10th the VAK sent a letter to the Minister, Gilson, responsible for the new language legislation, threatening another march on Brussels if the views of the VAK were to be ignored. The VAK considered the government response unsatisfactory and therefore in February 1962 arrangements began for another march with invitations to communal councils to pledge their support. The Flemish paper De Standaard claimed that 500 had agreed to do so (20.11.62). The question of the participation of members

* "Le minorisation de notre peuple reste leur objectif numéro. 1. Dès le début de la manifestation, il apparaît clairement que les buts invoqués jusqu'à là pour expliquer 'la marche' ne constituaient qu'un programme de façade. En fait, il s'agissait bel et bien de prôner la flamandisation inconditionnelle de Bruxelles et de son agglomération. Les cris des manifestants ne laisseraient d'ailleurs subsister aucun doute à ce sujet : Bruxelles flamand... les Wallons chez eux." La Wallonie, 23.10.61. (See Appendix for examples of the slogans used in the march.)
of parliament was discussed extensively in the press - the French language papers strongly against such participation and the Flemish, especially De Standaard, suggesting that as the march was organised by cultural groups the political parties had no need to instruct their members (15.8.62). The CVP 'Komitee van 8' * proposed that as the language laws were under discussion in Parliament, CVP members of parliament should not compromise the negotiation by taking part in the march. In the end three CVP deputies joined the VU members in the march in October. The Liberals adopted varying positions. The LVV ** supported participation by PVV deputies whereas the PVP/PVV directorate condemned the march. The French PLP youth movement opposed the march, as would be expected, whereas the LVSV *** allowed its members free choice, itself as an organisation remaining a loyal member of the VAK. The Willemsfonds took no part in the march. The PSB/BSP was hostile to the idea of the march and the Socialists refused even to discuss the matter with the VAK. Similarly the Vermeylenfonds abstained from active participation. Only the Socialist students from Ghent took an active part from the Socialist side. The second march on Brussels therefore did not have such a wide range of support as the first in terms of groups and parliamentary representatives. Nevertheless it was another outstanding demonstration

* 'The Committee of 8' was composed of 4 deputies and 4 senators.
** "Liberaal Vlaams Verbond" - Flemish Liberal Organisation.
***"LVSV" "Liberaal Vlaams Studentenverbond" - Flemish Liberal Students Organisation.
of Flemish solidarity around a specific issue. The number of participants was greater than the previous year, being estimated as from 200,000 downwards according to the point of view of the observer. The consequent comment and reaction on the French side were similar to 1961. In spite of this success, however, the various abstentions and reservations revealed certain signs unfavourable to the future of the VAK should it adopt an even more radical programme. Although the Davidsfonds remained, the other two cultural foundations were moving away from the VAK and CVP members were becoming more careful about too deep involvement.

On March 2nd 1963 the VAK General Assembly took the decision to organise a third march on Brussels, especially if they were dissatisfied with the new language laws which were evolving at that time. The Executive Committee was instructed to watch events and developments with a view to deciding upon the issue. At a Press Conference on June 7th the VAK Executive stated that another march was likely. On the 6th July the VVB took the decision to organise a demonstration in Antwerp in favour of major structural reform of the state system (i.e. in favour of federalism). In the meantime the VAK followed three courses of action: influencing the decision-makers and political parties by lobbying and conferences, arousing Flemish public opinion by meetings and propaganda and finally seeking the support of communal councils. A major tactical problem arose however which revealed the dilemma faced by the VAK as an organisation which although strongly
influenced by the ideas of one of its leading members - the VVB - derived its strength from the achievement of a consensus amongst a varied and diverse membership. This consensus was not difficult to achieve over linguistic issues but where reform of the Belgian state became the issue there would be much more divergence between federalists and moderates.

On the 8th July the VAK announced a third march on Brussels on October 27th and the theme of the march would be major reforms of the state structures. The VVB was strongly in favour of such a march. On the 7th September the VVB confirmed its decision to support such a federalist demonstration. The Davidsfonds expressed its reservations.

The Davidsfonds had therefore begun to withdraw from the extremism (as it saw it) of the VAK over the federal issue. Several other organisations also began to distance themselves from the VAK. On the 28th August the Vermeylenfonds had withdrawn completely from the VAK and the Willemsfonds, not a fully member anyway, withdrew its observers. At the end of September the LVV withdrew and the VTB, VAB and VKB expressed themselves opposed to the planned marches.*

* "VTB" - Vlaams Toeristenbond - Flemish Tourist Association.
"VAB" - Vlaams Arbeidverbond - Flemish Workers' Association.
"VKB" - Vlaams Komite voor Brussel - Flemish Committee for Brussels.
In spite of these difficulties the plans went ahead with the major change that on September 4th the decision was taken to move the march from Brussels to Antwerp. The demonstration attracted 25,000-50,000 participants and was notable for the fact that many of the slogans were economic as well as federalist.* These new developments opened the way to more dissension within the VAK. Once the movement began to adopt an economic line the divisions between the 'left' and 'right' became relevant, just as the adoption of federalism had given a much more political tone to the movement.

At Antwerp only the VU parliamentarians took part, thus continuing the trend whereby in 1961 many CVP members had participated, in 1962 considerably less and in 1963 no CVP members of Parliament at all. On the other hand there was a small delegation of Walloon regionalists. This was because they too were in favour of federalism and economic reforms and therefore had common ground with the VVB.

After the Antwerp demonstration the VAK was weakened by the division between its cultural elements and the more militant and radical VVB which had taken such a leading role. Movements of a more left orientation, expressed in the economic slogans, were dissatisfied with the VAK and formed their own organisation: "Vlaams Demokratisch Front". The more traditional elements on the other hand moved closer to the CVP. At the same time the VVB itself, 

* See Appendix for slogans in Antwerp.
closely associated with the VU, was becoming more concerned with the actual process and politics of constitutional reform under discussion in Parliament. As it had not formal constitution and no staff, the existence of the VAK had depended upon its individual member's continued interest. As this interest and support fell away the VAK disintegrated and by the middle of 1964 it had ceased to exist.

In January 1966 another coordinating organization was emerging to fulfil the same function as the former VAK. This was the "Overlegcentrum van Vlaamse Verenigingen" - OVV*. The new organisation was open to all Flemish groups except political parties and thus, it was hoped, would represent all shades of opinion. In the first year the president was the president of the Willemsfonds and in the second from another of the three major cultural foundations and in the third from the third foundation. As with the VAK there was to be no institution and no bureaucracy. On the other hand in a press statement of May 13th, 1966, the OVV presented itself thus:

Il y a quelque temps, un 'OVV' a été crée à Bruxelles. Ce centre groupe un grand nombre d'organisations flamandes... qui se réunissent régulièrement pour des réunions de travail. A ces 'recontres' l'actualité du mouvement flamand est commentée, les opinions sont confrontées et des suggestions sont faites, de sorte que les organisations sont libres de

* "CVV" - literally "A meeting place for Flemish organisation", better translated as "Liaison Committee for Flemish Organisations".
The OVV was intended to be completely flexible, forming a centre for the exchange of ideas. The members were to be free to subscribe to its general policies or not to do so. Only when there existed complete unanimity would it be possible to speak of the 'policy or views of the OVV'. In this way the OVV was to combine the best feature of the VAK - its effectiveness when all Flemish groups could be coordinated around a specific issue - whilst at the same time allowing all member groups to maintain their own freedom of action and opinion. On July 7th, 1966 a unanimous OVV statement was made concerning the University of Louvain, in which the transfer of the French section to Wallonia and the enforcement of the linguistic laws were demanded. At the same time the OVV established the 'Coordinatiekomitee Leuven' to coordinate the campaign over this issue.

The broad Flemish Movement described above acted as a pressure group influencing the traditional parties. The movement was most effective when brought together by some sort of coordinating committee around a common Flemish concern such as the use of languages on the periphery of the capital.
The political expression of more radical Flemish views emerged in the Flemish political party of the 1960s — the Volksunie — whose policies were close to those of the VVB. Many of the supporters of the broader Flemish Movement (for example, in the Davidsfonds) did not adopt the radical positions of the Volksunie and continued to hope to see reform through the traditional parties but the new Flemish Party provided parliamentary-political outlet for those dissatisfied with the older parties. The growth of the VU was a measure of this dissatisfaction.

Even before the growth of the VU political party in the late 1960s, therefore, the Flemish Movement had begun to have the effect of weakening established political loyalties in Flanders. In the VAK and later in the Overlegcentrum members of the three familles spirituelles were willing to cooperate to promote Flemish interests. This process in turn began to weaken the intra-party accommodations through which regional interests were reconciled within each of the traditional parties respectively. The experience of working together in the Flemish Movement resulted in a relaxation of the rigidity of former party allegiances and the formation of new regional cross-party alliances. The same will be observed in Wallonia and particularly in Brussels.
THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW FLEMISH REGIONAL PARTY - THE VOLKSUNIE (VU)

In the immediate post-1944 period the pre-war Flemish VNV party was completely discredited. Although at the outbreak of the war in 1939 the party had rejected the idea of collaboration with the Germans, in fact in the period 1940-44, under the German banner of anti-communism, many members of the VNV cooperated with the occupying power. Explanations of this after the war pointed to the claimed lack of understanding of Flemish problems by pre-war Belgian governments as a justification. Nevertheless, especially after the 1945 revelations of German atrocities to Belgian citizens, the linking of collaboration with Flemish nationalism proved a serious obstacle to the post-war revival of a Flemish political party. Given these circumstances it is understandable why the only signs of Flemish nationalism in the 1944-50 period were in the cultural sphere such as the founding of the socialist Vermeylenfonds in 1947 or in a multitude of folk and youth groups.

Undoubtedly the beneficiary of the disappearance of the VNV in the 1940s was the CVP. This party offered itself as the best spokesman for Flemish aspirations and in the 1944-50 period a process called 'veruiming' took place whereby many former Flemish nationalists were brought into an enlarged CVP. This 'veruiming' (enlargement) included a number of leading former VNV personalities untainted by collaboration. Thus the electoral appeal of the CVP
in Flanders was broadened. Unfortunately the price to be paid for this 'veruiming' was the adoption of a more radical Flemish policy by the party. As a national party however, the CVP/PSC could not afford to alienate the PSC of Brussels and Wallonia by too much indulgence of Flemish demands. The great success of the CVP/PSC in 1950, when the party had an overall majority in the Chamber and Senate, could be seen as the beginning of a certain degree of disillusion in Flanders among nationalists. This period was one when the party did not need to compromise with others in coalition-forming and thus possessed supreme power. It could not use the argument of the necessity for caution in Flanders in order not to offend coalition partners. When considering the decline of the CVP support in the 1960s it must be born in mind that the 'veruiming' policy of the party in the 1940s attracted Flemish nationalist votes which were vulnerable to inroads from those who could demonstrate that the CVP, with its ties to the PSC, could never be absolutely single-minded in its advocacy of the Flemish cause. The 'veruiming' policy of the CVP in the 1940s also had the effect of increasing the Flemish tendency within the party. Historically the Catholic Party had always been the main advocate of the Flemish case in Belgium. This followed from its dominance in a traditionally strongly Catholic Flanders. It was also the defender of the Catholic interest nationally. There was always the possibility however that these two functions might come into conflict as they
did in 1968 when French-speaking Catholics felt betrayed by their Flemish CVP colleagues. The same inner tension applied to the Flemish Liberals and Socialists but the traditional strength of the CVP in Flanders together with the 'veruiming' in the 1940s made the dilemma greater for that party.

The Flemish VNV in the 1930s had been very influential in the discussions of the various language laws for education and administration. In the 1940s the issues which concerned the Flemish movement were still predominantly those of language, especially in the Brussels area. They were also concerned with the economic fortunes of the region. In approaching these problems the CVP argued that, given the ever increasing preponderance of Flanders as a proportion of the electorate, there was no need to seek extreme solutions. The Flemish radicals argued, however, that although this might appear to be a sound point of view, the Walloon and Brussels French-speakers seemed able to dictate to the Flemish majority in spite of the demographic facts. The crisis surrounding the Royal Question of 1949-50, in Flemish eyes, proved that this was so. The events of 1949-51, according to radical Flemish opinion, demonstrated that the gradualist CVP approach would fail even with the Flemings clearly in a majority in Parliament and the country. The French-speakers would always be able to have the last word. The only solution therefore would be to separate Flanders in some way from the south and thus some sort of federalism was the only policy
which could offer any real guarantee of satisfaction for the Flemish majority. The record of collaboration from 1940 to 1944 destroyed the VNV and the Flemish nationalist movement in the late 1940s but the Royal Crisis of 1950 and its outcome weakened the moderate Flemish case of the CVP.

The claim of the Volksunie was that only a party with no need to seek the support of French-speaking voters could truly represent Flemish opinion. The CVP was trapped in the contradiction, according to this view from the VU, between its Flemish role in Flanders and its national cross-community role. The consequence of this for the CVP was a necessity to compromise on Flemish issues, a compromise which was not necessary for the Volksunie which could claim that it was therefore the only true guardian of Flemish interest. This challenge from the VU threatened the Catholic famille unity around the CVP party. It emphasised community and language rather than philosophy. It weakened the old system by undermining the loyalty of followers to leaders. This willingness to follow the leadership of the sub-cultural segment was noted as a very important and fundamental part of the success of both normal and consociational politics before 1961.

In 1949 a small group of largely unknown candidates stood for election under the party heading 'Vlaamse Concentratie'. There were no well known Flemish nationalists among them for those who
had collaborated were obviously to be discounted and many others had found their new home in the CVP. This small group without any real funds or party machine, polled 104,000 votes. The 1950 election was totally dominated by the Royal Question and there were no Flemish nationalist candidates. In 1952 there were a handful in the municipal elections and they won a small number of seats on the Antwerp city council. In the election of 1954 the 'Vlaamse Concentratie' joined with various other small groups and formed the 'Christelijke Volksunie'. In the election this group gained 114,000 votes and elected one deputy to the Chamber - Wagemans from Antwerp. This performance was fairly satisfactory in 1954 because the national swing was against the right (CVP/PSC) which lost 6.53% support and in favour of the anti-clericals (BSP/PSB and Liberals). The 'Christelijke Volksunie' was, as the name implies, a party of the right. It thus maintained and even slightly improved its position in spite of the national political climate.

After the election of 1954 the 'Christelijke Volksunie' and the various other groups making up the Flemish electoral alliance decided to move away from party politics and support the Flemish movement as a whole. In December 1954 those members who supported a more active and direct political involvement made the decision to go forward to establish a new Flemish political party and this was the foundation of the Volksunie. At annual congresses from 1954 the VU formulated its initial policies which included an amnesty for former
collaborators, federalism and economic regional planning for Flanders. By the time of the elections of 1958 the party had a rudimentary organisation. A Flemish Party had therefore re-emerged to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of the VNV. The Royal Question and its outcome, disappointments with the performance of the CVP when the party had an absolute majority in 1950-54, weak application of the language laws (to radical Flemish eyes) and the publication of the 1947 census results in 1954 all stimulated this revival of a Flemish Party in the 1950s.

The first election faced by the new party was that of 1958. This was the period of the Schools Crisis. The CVP/PSC set out to mobilise all Catholic support around itself. The Catholic Hierarchy in 1958 (for the last time in Belgian politics) urged all Catholics to support the CVP/PSC and thus by implication urged them not to split the Catholic vote by supporting a party such as the VU.* The VU elected one deputy to the Chamber and obtained 104,823 votes

* Mgr. De Smedt issued the following statement:
"Tous les baptisés doivent en ce moment collaborer d'un commun accord. Toutes les forces sont indispensables. Voter pour la Volksunie signifie en fait qu'on fait perdre sa voix au bloc chrétien et qu'on renforce le front anti-religieux... Vu la grandeur des intérêts menaces et la gravité de cette menace, nous déclarons que voter pour la Volksunie dans les circonstances présentes est pêché grave" Quoted by Van Haegendoren in L'elise et l'etat au XX siecle, p.17. (Published by CRISP, Brussels, 1971).
overall. In the circumstances of the election this was a very satisfactory result and demonstrated the ability of the VU to survive its first test in a very inhospitable atmosphere. After the election the VU began to expand and consolidate its organisation. The issues which arose after 1958 began to provide useful propaganda material for the new party. The demands for bi-lingualism at the Brussels Exhibition in 1958, the strong Flemish concern about the extensions of French in the outer suburbs of Brussels as former residents of the centre began to move to the periphery, the refusal of Flemish mayors to implement the linguistic side of the census—all were issues of great importance to the Flemish movement and the VU could offer positive policies for their resolution. The Schools Pact meant that the 1961 election would not revive old loyalties and cleavage patterns. The Catholic Hierarchy, for example, did not in 1961 give any official support to the CVP/PSC. This, together with the move among the Liberals and Socialists to drop their former anti-clerical policies, was of great importance for it meant that the old boundaries between the parties as representatives of three philosophies would become blurred. The way was therefore open for the VU to advance its claims as a new party transcending old cleavage patterns and fully committed to the welfare of its region.

In the election of 1961 the VU vote rose to 182,407 or 3.46% of the national total. In Flanders the support was 5.95% and in Brussels 2.51%. Whereas in 1954 and 1958 only one deputy had
been elected, in 1961 4 deputies were elected from Flanders and 1 from Brussels and also 2 senators from Flanders. Although the VU was founded in late 1954 and fought the 1958 election, 1961 may be regarded as the point when the party began to make its first serious impact upon Belgian politics. In the interval between the 1961 and 1965 elections the political climate was ideally suited to the VU. This was the time of the marches on Brussels and the demonstration in Antwerp. The CVP/PSC - Socialist Coalition government sought to improve the situation by passing new laws relating to the linguistic frontier, the linguistic status of Brussels and its periphery and the use of language in the educational and administrative system. Inevitably this process highlighted certain relatively small incidents and problems such as the position of some small communes on the linguistic frontier. The consequence of this was that these details of the application of the new laws intensified the problem and provided constant areas of dispute. The coalition government was in the unenviable position of being unable to satisfy all sides and thus being driven into compromises which were always vulnerable to criticism from radicals who rejected these compromises as a matter of principle. The Brussels periphery was an area of constant frictions of this kind. Although the VU had adopted a broad programme including economic and social reforms, its origins and fundamentalist Flemish principles meant that it was well prepared to exploit this situation. In Parliament the VU
abstained from voting over the Language Law of November 1962, arguing that although the aims were correct it was too modest. The party voted against the other linguistic legislation because it maintained an attitude of scepticism about language legislation in a unitary system.

In the 1965 election the VU moved from its 3.46% national support to 6.69% (1961 = 182,407 votes to 1965 = 346,860 votes). In Flanders support rose from 5.95% to 9.94% and in Brussels from 2.51% to 3.60%. In the Chamber the number of VU deputies rose to 12 (1961 = 5) and in the Senate to 7 (1961 = 2). The 'winner' of the 1965 election was the PLP/PVV but the performance of the VU was also very notable. The party had not yet equalled the performance of the VNV in the 1930s but its rate of growth was very satisfactory. The actual voting percentages doubled between 1958 and 1961 and again in 1961-65. The number of deputies rose from 1 in 1958 to 5 in 1961 and 12 in 1965. In the Senate the expansion was the same, from nil to 2 and now to 5. 1965-1968 was marked (after the short Harmel-Spinoy government which fell in February 1966) by the efforts of the CVP/PSC-PLP/PVV Coalition to produce a linguistic truce so that the problems facing the Belgian economy could be faced. This truce was however impossible to achieve. In November 1967 mass demonstrations took place in Antwerp, organised by the VVB and the three cultural foundations combining as the '15-November Komitee'. Further incidents and demonstrations took place throughout 1967 and early 1968 concerned mainly with the issue of the University of Louvain and the fate of the French section of the university. The
fall of the government in February was precipitated by this issue. The CVP and PSC were split and it was the resignation of the CVP ministers which caused the collapse. The compromises demanded of the CVP to maintain unity with the PSC had finally proved unacceptable. The VU however was in a position to argue that the CVP was too compromised by its past links with the PSC for it to serve the Flemish cause vigorously.

The 1968 election was therefore once again fought on ideal ground for the VU. Its national support rose from 6.69% to 9.79% (346,860 votes to 506,724). In Flanders its support rose to 16.86%, placing it above the PVV and thus making it the third party of its region. The VU deputies in the Chamber increased to 20 (+8) and senators to 14 (+7) which meant that its total of parliamentary representation doubled from 17 to 34. In the Chamber and Senate VU members began to assume seats on important committees of each House. A VU representative from each House respectively became one of the 'secretaires d'assemblée', 2 VU members (1 deputy and 1 senator) joined the inter-parliamentary consultative committee of Benelux, another became chairman of the 'Commission sénatoriale de vérification des pouvoirs', a deputy from the VU became deputy chairman of the 'Commission des Affaires économiques de la Chambre', and another became secretary of the 'Commission de l'emploi et du travail de la Chambre'. These appointments were significant in marking the arrival of the VU to respectability and credibility as
a political party. A certain psychological value may be attached to such appointments in that they mark the recognition of the VU in the political system as a fully developed political party rather than a small group. This was an important step.

In 1971, unlike 1965 and 1968, it might have been expected that the political climate would be not quite so auspicious to the VU chances. In that year the PLP/PVV had finally agreed to cooperate with the other two main parties, in passing the constitution reforms which were designed to create cultural autonomy for the linguistic regions and institutionalise such changes as the separation of educational and cultural ministries which were taking place. In addition the Law of the 15th July set up regional economic councils for Flanders. The dissolution of Parliament was recommended by the Eyskens-Cools (CVP/PSC-Soc,) coalition government itself rather than precipitated by a linguistic crisis as in 1968. The reception by Brussels of the new arrangements was most unfavourable and in the 1971 elections the FDF in the capital and the RW in the south made considerable gains from the PLP.* In Flanders the election produced little change. The VU support grew from 506,724 to 586,917 - a national support of 11.11% compared with 9.79% in 1968. In Flanders the figure was 18.76% (1968 = 16.86%) and in Brussels 5.65%. The VU once again held third place in Flanders, above the

* "FDF" - the Brussels French-speaking Front.
"RW" - the Walloon party.
"PLP" - French-speaking Liberals.
PVV, and the gap between itself and the BSP narrowed. This performance by the VU did not repeat the rapid expansion of the 1960s but may be understood as consolidation of gains made at elections which had been dominated by issues ideally suited to its campaigns. Clearly, hopes that the achievement of constitutional reforms, language laws and economic regionalisation would weaken the appeal of the VU in 1971 were unfounded. In parliament the number of VU deputies rose to 21 (+1) and senators 19 (+5) making a total of 40 representatives (+6). Once again several of these VU representatives occupied official positions as chairman and secretaries of various commissions and committees of each House.

The acuteness of the linguistic and community tensions assisted the VU in 1965 and 1968. The achievements of the coalition government in the constitution reform and various linguistic laws in the 1960s may have taken the edge off the sharpness of these problems in Flanders by 1971. Hence the levelling off of the growth of the VU in the elections of that year. There is no doubt, however, that in Brussels and the Brussels region these problems were as serious as ever. In the elections of November 21st (within three weeks of the General Election) for the conseil d'agglomération of the capital the VU did well. In the 19 communes of the city the Dutch-speakers may have totalled 20% of the electorate. The VU obtained 5.98% of the total vote which is roughly 30% of the Dutch-speakers, assuming that no French-speakers would have voted for the VU. This
result meant that the VU was relatively stronger in Brussels as representative of radical Flemish opinion than in Flanders proper where its support was nearly 19%. The extra intensity of the linguistic and community issue in the capital compared to the Flanders proper may account for this.

The VU did well also in the peripheric federations around the city which included 6 communes with 'facilities' which had been incorporated along with a large number of Dutch-speaking communes into 5 federations.* In Asse (NW) the VU was the second party after the CVP with 23% support, in Tervuren (SE) it was also the second party with 21% and also in Zaventem with 22%. In Vilvorde the VU was third party with 15% and in Hal (SW) it was fourth party with 14%. The communal elections therefore gave the VU a very strong presence in three of the federations and a substantial base in the other two.

The growth of the Volksunie from 1958 to 1971 is summarised best in the following table:

* The 6 communes (with large French-speaking minorities) with 'facilités' in French were incorporated into the surrounding Dutch federations of communes in the following manner: Crainhem and Wezembeek into the federation of Zaventem, Wemmel into the federation of Asse and Rhode St. Genèse, Linkebeek and Drogenbos into the federation of Hal.
By 1971 the membership of the VU had grown to 42,000 (47,000 in 1972). This was approximately 8% of its electoral support. This membership was already by the early 1960s organised into an effective political machine.  

By 1971 the VU had established itself as a serious challenge to the traditional parties, especially the CVP, in Flanders. Originally the party was largely a single-issue party whose main and dominant policy was Flemish autonomy. By the end of the 1960s it had broadened its programme to include agricultural policies to attract the farmers' vote, policies to encourage the growth of small businesses in the region and an economic expansion plan for Flanders as well as projects for extensive constitution reforms. All these ideas were brought together in 1966 in the 'Nationale Programmdag van de Volksunie'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of votes for VU (000s)</th>
<th>% of national total</th>
<th>% of Flemish total</th>
<th>% of Brussels total</th>
<th>No. of Deputies (/212)</th>
<th>No. of Senators (/181)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>18.76</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The broadening of the policy programme was designed to widen the appeal of the party among all sections of Flemish opinion. In the study of Belgian electoral behaviour in the 1960s by Delruelle and Evalenko the profile of VU support which emerged was pluralist in terms of class and occupational background with no emphasis upon any particular group but a good cross-section of the Flemish population.

Unlike the Walloon and Brussels community parties the VU was not an entirely new development in the 1960s. Apart from the fact that there had been a Flemish party as far back as the 1930s (the VNV) the VU grew out of Flemish political activities in the 1950s and the remnants of Flemish activists from the pre-war and early post-war period. For this reason, as the party grew in the 1960s, it already had a nucleus of leaders and organisers. From the VU point of view therefore the need in the 1960s was the creation of a broad electoral base for an already existing party. This will be contrasted with the situation in Wallonia and Brussels, where the new parties were created by leaders and activists of the older parties who came together to form the RW and FDF respectively.
The pressure of the Flemish Movement upon the three traditional parties took two forms. The first was the broad pressure organised by the action committees such as the VAK, the action committee for Brussels and the Overlegcentrum. The various interest and pressure groups in Flanders were mobilised to influence the three parties and highlight issues relating to culture and language. The collective efforts of this broad movement weakened the philosophical cleavage lines as new regional alliances were created. Some of the groups were already part of one of the families in Flanders and therefore brought direct pressure to bear upon one of the traditional parties. At the same time they cooperated closely with groups from the other families in the general Flemish Movement.

The second pressure upon the three parties was directly from the new VU party. Not only did the broad Flemish Movement keep cultural and linguistic issues on the political agenda but the VU also offered an alternative to voters dissatisfied with the way the three parties were handling them. The three parties found themselves in a situation where they were forced to take the problems seriously, whilst at the same time they were unable to risk appearing too moderate and reasonable in their quest for solutions for fear of competition from the uncompromising VU party. The solutions were only to be found, however, through a process of discussion and compromise with the Walloons and Bruxellois. Compromise and
accommodation were of the essence of the consociational approach to crisis management but the Flemish Movement and the VU were making this ever more difficult to achieve.

The Flemish Movement was clearly a serious threat to the traditional system in Flanders. The Flemish Problem, part of the Belgian system for many years, was, however, compounded by the emergence of similar movements in Wallonia and Brussels. The problems of one region and community became problems of all regions and communities and the whole political system faced crisis.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. The Language Laws of the early 1960s were normal government legislation and did not form a part of the Constitution. Similarly, after 1971, the laws relating to economic regions were not part of the Constitution of 1971. 'Normal' legislation requires only a simple majority. 'Constitutional' legislation requires a 2/3 majority.

2. An example of this was Amter who will be referred to in the context of the Antwerp demonstration. He was General Secretary of the Davidsfonds and also president of the VAK. Coppetiers was a member of the Davidsfonds executive and also of the VVB leadership and later of the Volksunie also. The Flemish Movement was united therefore at two levels: the organisational via the VAK and CVV and the individual through overlapping memberships and interlocking leadership.

3. The motto of the foundation is: 'For the Faith, Language and the People'. Amongst the members of the foundation 50-60% regard its 'Flemishness' as most important and 40-50% its Catholicism but clearly the two elements are closely interwoven. Given the 'de-confessionalisation' of Belgian politics after 1958 and the more open attitude of the Church to non-Catholics, the Davidsfonds declared itself in 1964 open to sympathetic non-Catholics. Nevertheless, the foundation could still be largely identified as Catholic. (c.f. Report of Constituent Assembly of the Davidsfonds 15.1.1875 and Articles 1 and 2 of the Statutes of the Davidsfonds discussed at the Congress of the Foundation in 1964, and described in the Report of the 1964 Congress, page 28.).

4. 2/3 of the members were between 35 and 60 years old and their general educational level is higher than the regional average. In terms of social class 63% were members of middle groups (clerks, teachers, small businessmen, farmers, etc.) 11% 'workers' and 9% 'upper classes'. These approximate figures show the under-representation of the working class in the comparison with other groups. Het Davidsfonds, sociologische doorlichting published by the Sociology Department, Free University of Brussels 1965.

6. In each Flemish district the VVB formed groups with special 'days' given over to seminars and discussions among activists. The VVB took a considerable interest in enhancing and enlarging the Flemish festival of the 'Golden Spurs' every July 11th and encouraged the flying of the Flemish flag as well as, or in place of, the Belgian tricolor. The members of the movement exposed commercial concerns in Flanders where French was still used in the higher levels of administration.


8. The Commission with representatives from 4 universities and presided over by former minister Basijn, was to study ways of producing a truly 'scientific' linguistic census. The Commission never actually completed its work.

9. De Saeger (president of the CVP) and Van de Kerkhove, who was at the time mayor of Machelin but was later to succeed De Saeger as president of the CVP, took part. In addition to 57 deputies, a large number of communal councillors participated and 650 communes sent messages of solidarity and support. The march was strongly supported by Catholic student groups and also by non-Catholic students, especially the Socialist students from Ghent University. Estimates of the number on the march varied from 100,000 in the Flemish press to 50,000 in La Libre Belgique.

10. La Libre Belgique, 13/14.10.62.

11. Le Soir, 14.5.66.

12. The election of 1950 was fought over the 'Royal Question' and the CVP/PSC obtained 47.68% of the national vote and 108 of 212 seats in the Chamber. This was the first single party government in Belgium since 1919.

13. The 1932 Language Laws were applied to administration and education, extended to justice in 1935 and the army in 1938.

14. For most of Belgian history the Flemings have been a majority. In the 1880s the high Walloon birthrate of the first half of the century together with the famines in the 1840s produced near parity which gave way to Flemish ascendancy by 1900. The frequent assumption abroad (especially in the past) that Belgium was more French-speaking than Dutch probably derives from the former dominant position of French among the educated in Flanders as well as Brussels.
15. This was far below the pre-war performance of the VNV but it did reveal that there still existed in Flanders a potential Flemish nationalist electoral audience.

16. In 1958 there were 20 branches, in 1960, 40 branches and by the end of 1961 had grown to 60 branches. Schultz, Volksunie, identity, history and programme, p.6.

17. The issue of the Voeren-Les Fourons region (a group of communes on the linguistic frontier), transferred from the French-speaking province of Liege to the Dutch-speaking province of Limburg, is the most notable example.

18. The setting up of regional economic councils was not part of the Constitution of 1971 but a separate piece of legislation to permit and encourage regional economic planning in Flanders, Wallonia and Brabant.

19. For more detailed discussion of the proportions of each linguistic group in the capital see Chapter 5 on the Brussels Problem.

20. For the sake of comparison party membership of figures for all parties in 1971 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>% of Members/Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVB/PSC</td>
<td>151,000</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP/PSB</td>
<td>235,000</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP/PPV</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCB/KPB</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>163,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF/RW</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>580,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


21. The 'Nationale Programmdag van de Volksunie' (1966) was the plan of the VU for 1965-75 and its first part was directed towards the farmers, with three specific proposals: help for the sons of farmers whose land had become uneconomic to work as one farm, the protection of farmers from price fluctuations and adequate social security protection for farmers and their families. In order to achieve these three objectives a 'Vlaams Land en Tuinbouwinstituut' (Flemish agricultural and horticultural institute) should be set up. Clearly this was a policy designed to attract the farmers' vote. Similarly the small businessman was to be assisted by the establishment of a 'Vlaams Instituut voor Kleins en Middelgroots Ondernemingen' (Fl. institute for small and medium size enterprises) which would either facilitate
the growth and expansion of small businesses or plan integration and amalgamations. In order to promote the economic growth of the region a 'Vlaams Instituut voor Sociaal-Ekonomische Ordering' (Fl. institute for social and economic planning) was projected. This institute was to direct the 55% of Belgian investment towards Flanders and to improve infrastructures in the region. Thus the VU party was in favour of planning on a large scale. The programme also dealt with details of taxation policies, public expenditure, pension policies (especially for the self-employed) and even such detailed items as the expansion of commercial and technical education in Flanders. The perspective adopted was that of a long-term economic and social expansion of Flanders rather than short-term linguistic problems. Over the community problem the VU had by 1966 worked out its programme for the implementation of its federalist ideas. The federation envisaged would have to be à deux (Flanders and Wallonia) for allowing Brussels as a third partner would create a 2:1 majority for the French-speakers in the federal system. The federation could not be created overnight and therefore the VU proposed early legislation to lay the foundations for such a step. The foundation would have four parts: cultural autonomy, the splitting of certain ministries into two, decentralisation of other ministries and the creation of a department to facilitate cooperation with the Netherlands.

For Brussels the VU suggested the idea of each citizen possessing dual nationality - Belgian and Walloon or Flemish - which would thus place him one side or the other of the federal divisions. The city itself would have its limits fixed finally and all existing linguistic laws firmly enforced. This federal programme of 1966 was a fully developed plan for the future evolution of the Belgian state.


The survey was based upon questions to 4,200 electors - 1,800 in Flanders, 1,200 in Wallonia and 1,200 in Brussels. (pp.34-7, Delruelle, Evalenko and Fraeyes.)

The VU appears to have drawn more support from men than women (58.8% : 41.2%) and also from a somewhat younger group than the other parties (only 14.3% of VU voters were over 60 and nearly 50% under 40). In professional status half its supporters were workers and white-collar workers (28% for each.) The comparison here with the CVP is interesting for 35.6% of CVP voters were workers and 24% white-collar workers giving a total of 59.6% compared to 56% for the VU. The profile of the VU in the status category was therefore similar to the CVP. The proportion
of VU voters in the skilled worker-tradesman category was 19.6%, very similar to the PVV (19.3%) and larger than the CVP (13.8%). Among the 'cadres' the VU had 18% of its voters, close again to the PVV (19.3%) and higher than the CVP (7.6% of its supporters) and the BSP only 4.1% of whose supporters came from the 'cadre' category. The area of weakest support for the VU was the agricultural/peasant workers. Whereas 15.3% of CVP voters and 9.3% of the PVV were from this group only 6.4% of VU supporters were found here. The conclusion therefore would be that whereas the VU was relatively weak in the rural areas (although stronger than the BSP) its supporters in 1968 came from a very wide range of professional backgrounds with some emphasis upon the skilled/tradesmen group and white-collar workers where the VU proportion was higher than that in other parties.

The worker and 'cadre' groups were also well represented. From this point of view therefore the VU voters were certainly pluralist in the sense that it is not possible (as can be done for the BSP with its 58% worker vote) to identify a specific professional group which dominated the support for the party, apart from a general tendency to draw adherents from the middle groups.

The percentage of religious believers among the VU support in 1968 - 74.2% was greater than the PVV (65.5%) and much greater than the BSP (34.5%), 94.7% of CVP voters placed themselves in this group. Overall, however, in this respect too the VU confirmed its own pluralist image.

An alternative classification used in the survey was 'subjective self-identification' on a class basis. Here the categories were four: workers, middle-class, 'bourgeois' and professional. In Flanders the VU voters saw themselves as preponderantly middle-class (50.6%) which compared with 37% for the CVP, 46.9% for the PVV and only 13.4% for the BSP. 42% of VU voters saw themselves as workers compared to 57.6% for the CVP, 84.4% for the BSP and 38.8% of PVV supporters. 3.7% of VU supporters called themselves 'bourgeois' which was more than the CVP (1.9%) and the BSP (0.7%) but less than the PVV figure of 12.9%. Self-identification as professional was highest in the VU group (3.7%) compared to 3.5% (CVP), 1.5% (BSP) and 1.4% (PVV) respectively. This 'self-identification by class' approach reinforces and confirms the middle of society (middle-class, white-collar worker, tradesmen, etc.) strength in the Volksunie support. It also confirms the pluralism of VU support as no group is excluded.
CHAPTER 4

WALLOON GREIVANCES IN THE 1960s

The growth of the Walloon Movement may be linked to Walloon perceptions of the changes in their economic position within the country in the 1960s. During this period they began to feel economically vulnerable as important traditional industries of the region such as coal-mining and steel began to decline in importance. At the same time it appeared to them that Flemish industrial strength and prosperity were growing much more rapidly. The fear of economic decline both in absolute terms and relative to Flanders was combined with the French-speakers' fear of 'minorisation'. This grew out of the demographic fact of steady decline in the proportion of the Walloon population to Flemish in the Belgian population as a whole. The consequence of these two concerns was the growth of demands for Walloon autonomy, particularly economic autonomy, to secure the interests of the Walloon minority in the Belgian state with a Flemish majority. In order to understand the seriousness of these issues to the Walloons it is necessary to examine the economic situation of Wallonia in the 1960s.

In the 19th century Wallonia had provided the industrial base for the Belgian economy and prosperity. The industrial revolution had arrived in Wallonia by the 1830s and by 1900 the south was a fully developed and mature industrial area. By the mid-20th century, however, the region, with its heavy emphasis
upon older industries such as coal and steel, found itself in
danger of serious decline. In the 1950s the national government
cushioned this decline, in particular by subsidies to the coal
industry, but by the end of the decade the problems were becoming
more acute. Foreign capital coming into the country was invested
in the north - GM, BMW, VW, Scandia, Volga and BL all opened
assembly lines in Belgium, of which only one (BL) was in the south,
at Senneffe. Foreign investment was a major element in the Belgian
economy. Between 1958 and 1972 foreign investment was twice that
of Belgian investment in the country. Most of this went to the Brussels-
Antwerp-Ghent region which received 65 of the 103 new plants set up
in the period. Wallonia was not therefore a major beneficiary of
this investment. 1

A wide range of statistics demonstrate the economic
position of the region. The proportion of the working population of
the country found in the south fell from 35% in 1947 to 31.5% in
1961 whilst the Flemish share rose from 48% to 51%. 2 The proportion
in Brussels rose from 16.6% to 17%. Similarly the share of Wallonia
in the total GDP of Belgium between 1957 and 1966 fell from 34% to
30% whilst that of the north rose from 44% to 47% and that of Brussels
rose from 22% to 23%. These statistics may be seen more clearly when
expressed as GDP per inhabitant (expressed in 1,000 BF):
Alternatively a basis for comparison can be made by taking the national average per capita GDP as 100 and comparing the regions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>1966</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brx</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This gave an annual growth rate of 2.55% for Wallonia, 3.53% for Brussels and 3.71% for Flanders. These statistics are capable of various interpretations. From the Flemish point of view, their region in 1957 was backward and thus in need of investment and all that took place up to 1966 was a process of achieving a balance between north and south. From the Walloon point of view, however, the statistics pointed to a decline, relative until 1966 but possibly absolute thereafter. The prosperity of the Brussels region contrasted with the chronic economic problems of the south.

The economic future of a region may also depend upon the type of industry found within it. A developed economy has a stronger development of the tertiary sector of industry and less
dependance upon primary industry. Here the statistics are also relevant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector of Primary</th>
<th>Sector of Secondary</th>
<th>Sector of Tertiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fl.</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wll.</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRx.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here again the Walloon share of the more advanced economy was in relative decline, although a Flemish view would see the same figures as a move towards more balance between the regions. According to Riley the location of growth industries is not influenced by any need to be in traditional areas and therefore areas of low wages are attractive to them, combined with coastal or canalside sites (especially for chemical and oil industries). In the 1950s therefore Flanders was much more attractive to new industries. In 1955 the average wages in the following provinces were:

(in BF per day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.Flanders</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainault</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.Flanders</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brabant</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liège</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Flemish view was of course that this imbalance needed correcting in the 1950s but the lower wages in Flanders did make the north
much more attractive to investment than the south.

Some Walloon writers used more statistics to prove the decline of Wallonia. Patrie in L’étape decisive and Outers in Le divorce belge gave figures for road-building, hospital expansion and similar schemes which show Walloon decline. The opposing Flemish view, however, refers to the Harmel Report which expressed serious concern about the lower standard of living and high unemployment in the north in the 1940s and van Haegendoren in Vlaanderen Eisende Partij argues that Flemings had less places in higher education than Walloons. Undoubtedly unemployment was higher in the north in the 1950s but by the 1960s the situation was reversed. Thus both interpretations of the statistics could be regarded as valid. The following table illustrates this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wallonia</th>
<th>Flanders</th>
<th>Brx.</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The worsening of the position of Wallonia by 1968 was clear, as well as the poor position of Flanders in 1958. Brussels fares much better than the regions in these statistics.
problems of Wallonia were not identical with those of Brussels. Both north and south could view with envy the consistently lower than average unemployment figures for the capital.

In addition to the economic, there was also a demographic problem. The Flemish population always outnumbered the Walloons but, with the increase in the Walloon birthrate in the 1840s to 33-35 per 1,000 at the same time as the famines in Flanders in the 1840s, the proportions became more nearly even by 1900. In 1910 the population of Flanders was only 47% of the national total.\(^9\) This figure for 1910, however, concealed a change which was taking place because the Walloon birthrate had fallen to 20 whilst the Flemish figure was 30 per 1,000. This trend continued and in a survey published in 1962 - the 'Sauvy Report'\(^{10}\) - it was found that for every 100 persons in the south 28 were under 20 years old, compared to 32 in the north and 19 were over 60 compared to 15 in the north. In the 10 years 1960-70 a 7.1% population growth was predicted for Flanders whereas 1.7% was the rate for Wallonia. This, it was estimated, would give Flanders nearly 55% of the population of the Kingdom by the 1970s and only 33% to Wallonia. The Walloon proportion could be as low as 28% by 1980. In fact the proportions between 1950 and 1969 were:
The proportions by language zone were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These proportions must be compared to the proportions of 51.1% Dutch speakers, 37.2% French and 11% Brussels in 1930.11

The Walloons became aware, therefore, in the early 1960s not only of their economic problem but also of potential 'minorisation' whereby they would be facing a decline in voting strength. This could have serious consequences in a unitary system based on universal suffrage and majority rule. A government family policy, for example, to encourage population growth in Wallonia could not be acceptable to Flanders unless the Flemings enjoyed the same benefits. The problems of the declining Walloon economy could also only be helped by government aid for the south but this could only be acceptable to Flanders if it were in proportion to population which would mean that Wallonia, with its declining proportion of the population would still
be receiving less aid than it claimed to need. Between 1959 and 1972 investments by the state in the three regions were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Investment (million BF)</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>254,937</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallonia</td>
<td>165,916</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>7,925</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wallonia, therefore, (and Flanders also) obtained more than its population proportion but at the cost to the capital. The Bruxellois were very dissatisfied with this situation and considered these proportions a serious injustice to their region. On the other hand the capital was consistently more prosperous than the other two regions.

Two particularly difficult problem areas for the Belgian economy in the late 1950s and early 1960s illustrate the interaction between the economic factors and the community problem. They were not problems unique to Belgium but their treatment and the community dimension were special to the country. These were the problems of the coal industry in the 1950s and the development of the steel industry in the 1960s.

In 1957-58 the coal industry represented 12% of Belgian industrial production and employed 10% of the workforce. There were five major areas of production: Limburg in Flanders and Borinage, Centre, Charleroi and Liège in Wallonia. The four Walloon areas had been
exploited for over 100 years and had become difficult to work, whereas the field in Limburg had been opened in 1921-38 and was much easier to handle. In 1951 production in the south was 2/3rds the national total from 149 small pits but the 1/3rd from Limburg was from seven large pits. Productivity per man was 1,000 kg. compared to 1,290 in Limburg. In 1958-59 the Belgian coal industry was in serious difficulties, its costs being higher than the EEC averages and the number of pits in operation too large to be economical. For this reason the government changed its policy from subsidies to the encouragement of pit closures and 20% of mining jobs were lost. In the region of Borinage and Centre where 62% and 38% of the labour force were miners the impact was severe. The Limburg mines were much less seriously affected by the closures. The result, therefore, as seen by some Walloons, was the deliberate running down of a Walloon industry but better treatment for one in Flanders.

Between 1953 and 1972 the number of pits in Wallonia fell from 136 to 15 (with only 2 pits working in Borinage and Centre compared to 40 earlier) whilst the number in Limburg fell from 7 to 5. In 1972 Limburg produced over 7 million tons of coal compared to 3 million from Wallonia. In 1953 the proportion had been 2:1 in favour of Wallonia. The trade union view of this problem was split between those in Limburg supporting the closures in Borinage and the formation of an all-party 'Comité de défense du Borinage' in the south.
Dans un contexte de recession economique, chaque region eut tendance a croire que son propre salut dependait - au moins partiellement - d'une sacrifice d'une autre, et ceci etait particulierement vrai entre le bassin charbonnier de Campine et celui du Borinage.

In the Belgian regional context of course the Campine (Limburg) was Flemish and the Borinage was Walloon.

Traditionally the steel industry in Belgium was located near the coal industry in Liege, Charleroi and Centre. The bulk of Belgian steel was exported, especially through the port of Antwerp. In the late 1950s a decision was made to extend and modernise the steel industry by building an entirely new plant at Zelzate near Ghent in Flanders. This was to be a huge project to produce 15% of the combined production of Belgium and Luxemburg. The land on the east bank of the Ghent-Terneuzen canal already belonged to one of the firms wishing to be partners in the plan. In October 1954 an alternative project was drawn up to build a new steel mill in Borinage, combined with the modernization of canal links from Wallonia to Terneuzen. This project was rejected in favour of the site near the sea in Flanders. The place chosen, Zelzate, would help in the development of E.Flanders where problems of rising population and a declining textile industry were acute.

In the middle 1950s over 50,000 workers commuted each day from E. Flanders to Brussels, Antwerp or even Hainault to work. There were therefore sound economic reasons to seek to develop the area. A
further psychological factor caused Flemish opinion to support the scheme - a steel industry in the north would demonstrate the new industrial maturity of Flanders whilst at the same time the industry itself, steel, would offer no competition to any already existing interests in Flanders. In Flanders, except with marginal reservations in Antwerp, the plan was greeted with enthusiasm. In Wallonia, however, fears were expressed for the future of the steel industry in the south. The Catholic Forces Nouvelles, (No.2.,1961) joined the Socialist La Gauche in criticising the plan. The MPW (see below) led by André Renard were very antagonistic. Nevertheless the project was put into effect and the new plant built at Zelzate.

The economic dimension to the Walloon Movement is aptly summarised by Riley:

The 1950s and the 1960s have witnessed a reversal of the fortunes of Wallonia and Flanders. The Brussels-Antwerp axial belt has replaced the Haine-Sambre-Meuse coalfields as the economic core of the country, while the Flemish provinces of Oost and West Vlaanderen and Limburg have made remarkable strides, considering their poorly developed industrial tradition and infrastructure. It is as if virtually everything that took place in Wallonia in the era of steam industrialisation now counts for little, or indeed for nothing: for the manufacturing industries stemming from the current technological advances tend not only to shun the old industrial districts in favour of the newly developing ones, but also to have little use for the external economies of established industrial areas ... It is small comfort to the Walloon working population that some of their industries have managed, through adoption of new techniques, to increase output, for these increases are achieved by a decreased labour force.
These are the economic circumstances which must be kept in mind when observing the growth of Walloon consciousness in the 1960s.

In contrast to Flanders therefore the main grievances of Wallonia must be placed firmly in an economic and demographic context. The economic problems of Flanders before the 1960s were serious and therefore the Flemish Movement was vitally concerned with these aspects but cultural and linguistic issues were those which caused the greatest demonstrations of Flemish opinion. Economic fears provided the main stimulus to the development of the Walloon Movement. If Walloon economic and social problems were to be solved, many in the south began to argue that at least economic devolution or possibly federalism were essential. From the cultural or linguistic point of view, however, Wallonia had less need to be defensive. Its language, French, already had worldwide cultural stature, unlike Dutch in Flanders, and most Walloons lived south of the contentious linguistic frontier. They were concerned about the rights of French-speakers in national government and hence would support parity in national government offices. They were also sympathetic to the problems of the Brussels periphery and linguistic boundary areas such as the Fourons/Voeren villages but the linguistic and cultural problem was less urgent to the Walloons than to the Flemings, or to the Bruxellois. The Dutch language was no threat to French in Wallonia.
Relations between Walloon grievances and the Brussels problem were not necessarily simple. The various economic statistics quoted above show that, with reservations about the future expressed by certain Bruxellois circles, the capital was not threatened with the same economic problems as the south. The capital’s share of secondary and tertiary industry remained the same between 1947 and 1961 (13.6% and 32%), the proportion of the working population found in the city rose from 16.6% in 1947 to 17.2% in 1961 and 17.5% in 1969 and in terms of national average GDP the city remained well ahead at 145 to the national average of 100 in 1966. The average rate of economic growth of the city from 1957 to 1966 was 3.53% compared to Flanders 3.71% and Wallonia 2.55%. On the other hand whereas from 1959 to 1972 Wallonia received 38.7% of national investment Brussels only received 1.8%. The economic background to the Brussels problem was not the same as that in Wallonia and therefore, although the movements in the respective French-speaking regions might be close allies, their interests could also be at variance. It is for this reason that the Walloon Movement must be examined separately from the Brussels Movement which developed at the same time. The events which stimulated the Walloon Movement in the early 1960s were economic and those which stimulated the Brussels Movement were linguistic.
The strikes over the December-January period 1960-61 may be regarded as the crucial time when the Walloon Movement of the 1960s began to emerge. The strikes were aimed against the 'Loi unique' which was to apply to the whole country and thus would appear to have been of a national rather than community nature. The development of the strike movement, however, revealed a major difference of approach between the north and south. The economic crisis of 1960 was the result of a combination of circumstances, especially the impact of the Congo troubles in 1958-60 and the relative decline in the Belgian economy in the 1950s. The answer to these problems was to be the 'Loi unique', introduced by the CVP/PSC - Liberal coalition government. The proposals of the 'loi' were accepted with reluctance by the employers, although they imposed extra taxes and levies upon them, but strongly opposed by the left because they also included cut-backs in social security expenditures and increases in indirect taxation.

In November 1960 the FGTB-ABVV (Socialist Trade Unions) passed a special resolution condemning the 'loi unique' but leaving a definition of action against the 'loi' to a later date. On November 17th a 'journée d'étude' took place, comprising the Walloon officials of the FGTB under the chairmanship of André Renard. At this meeting it was resolved that maximum efforts be made to defeat
the new 'loi'. On the 21st November the workers of Liège struck for 2 hours as a protest gesture, again under the leadership of Renard. A pattern was emerging at this time of differences between the national response of the FGTB-ABVV and much more vigorous reaction in Wallonia. Protest meetings took place throughout the country but out of 70 such meetings only 12 took place in Flanders. On November 30th the committee of the trade unions representing workers of the 'Centrale générale de services publics' demanded a meeting of the national committee of the FGTB-ABVV to call a general strike. This motion was opposed by another from the Flemish side (proposed by Smets) which sought only a 'day of struggle'. The Renard motion was defeated by 496,787 votes to 475,823. All the Walloon provinces and districts with the exception of Tournai voted for Renard and all the Flemish districts with the exception of Ghent and Antwerp voted for Smets. A pattern of greater militancy on the part of the Walloons was asserting itself.

In spite of the vote in the central committee of the FGTB-ABVV, the strike developed on a full scale in the Walloon cities of Charleroi, Mons, Liège, Namur and Nivelles before any official strike call, followed by Brussels itself and then Antwerp. By Christmas the strike had become general in those areas and the situation became serious enough for Belgian troops to be recalled from Germany to assist in the maintenance of order. 75 people were injured on January 6th in Liège in riots. The
main effort of the strike was in the Walloon areas where the Socialist unions predominated whereas in Flanders the Catholic trade unions acted more in sympathy than with enthusiasm. Within the FGTB-ABVV the handing over of the direction of the strike from the central organs to the regions on December 22nd was a further step towards the regionalisation of the strike. On December 23rd a Walloon coordinating committee was established and at the same time Walloon members of the PSB began to set up a parallel Walloon coordinating committee.

By January the movement against the 'loi' had become regionalised with only partial strike action in Flanders and total strike action in Wallonia, the central trade union leadership in Brussels seeking a compromise solution whilst the Walloon leaders, through the new regional coordinating committee, seeking ways to intensify the struggle. The Walloon committee began to demand on January 2nd a re-examination of the structure of the country and on the 3rd January a gathering of 400 elected socialist representatives from Wallonia (deputies, communal councillors and similar) claimed "the right for Wallonia to dispose of its own future" and further declared: "the Walloon people cannot seek any other solution but the revision of the institutions of the country in order to be able to choose for itself the road for its own expansion." These resolutions and statements were close to the
policies of federalism and regional autonomy advocated by André Renard. In spite of this atmosphere in Walloon circles the national leadership of the PSB/BSP and FGTB-ABVW continued to seek compromise and rejected Renard's call for all Walloon Socialist deputies to Parliament to resign in protest against the 'loi unique'. In a letter to the King the PSB leader, Collard, sought to express Walloon grievances but in spite of this on January 13th 1961 the 'loi' was passed. The strike continued in Wallonia until January 21st when there were still 150,000 workers on strike in the south. The small strike movement in Flanders had long since disintegrated.

The reaction against the 'loi unique' revealed a serious difference between the north and south. The Flemish and Walloon working class, their trade unions and Socialist Party were by no means united along class lines but rather divided along community lines. Later in 1968 the Flemish demands for the splitting of the Catholic University of Louvain and the moving of the French Faculty to the south demonstrated that religion too did not necessary unite Flemings and Walloons, but rather that the community cleavage existed among Catholics also. Both in 1961 and again in 1968 mutual support among members of the same 'famille spirituelle' across community boundaries collapsed and was replaced by regional loyalties which cut across the old political divisions. The old pattern of three sub-cultural segments was becoming fragmented through regional and linguistic or cultural pressures. This weakened the unity and
authority of the older parties and made it more difficult to achieve the traditional accommodations by which regional interests were reconciled within each party. This was being replaced by a centrifugal tendency within each of the three older parties. The impact of community politics was creating clusters of regionally-minded groups across old party allegiances.

The development of the Walloon Movement, and in particular the Mouvement Populaire Wallon (MPW) may be related directly to the events of 1960-61. The movement was in origin socialist and radical, inspired by economic factors and led by André Renard, widely regarded as a syndicalist. Its campaign in favour of fundamental reform of the Belgian state structure revived and stimulated the already existing Walloon organisations of a variety of different political philosophies such as 'Renovation Wallonne', a Catholic group, the 'Congrès National Wallon' and 'Wallonie Libre'. These movements, led by the MPW, began to assert considerable influence and open the discussions of new federalist solutions to the problems of Wallonia.

In the tense Royal Crisis of 1950-51 Renard had already made clear his belief in federalism linked with his socialism:

Fédéralisme! Oui, mais avec la place qui revient à la classe ouvrière. Nous voulons la libération de la Wallonie, mais nous voulons aussi notre libération comme classe sociale.
In 1959 at a Congress of Walloon Socialists a resolution had also been passed demanding economic and social reforms for Wallonia with the setting up of some sort of coordinated activity to achieve these ends. A 'Comité de coordination des régionales Wallonnes de la FGTB' was established following this. During the December period 1960 in Charleroi, Namur and even Brussels posters with the slogan 'La Wallonie en a assez!' began to appear. By January 1961, Wallonia was the scene of a serious upsurge of discontent against the 'loi unique' whereas Flanders was comparatively peaceful. In January a new journal began to appear in Liège and this *Combat* became the mouthpiece of Renard's ideas. Finally on April 6th the paper announced the formation of the MPW. The movement derived its support from socialist circles and through them began to exert pressure upon the PSB, the Walloon PSB organising in September a congress to discuss the idea of federalism. In July 1962 Renard died and the MPW lost much of its vigour. Nevertheless its role in 1961-62 in stimulating the Walloon Movement as a whole was most important. The 'Declaration of Principles' of the MPW on its foundation fully demonstrates the ideas behind the radical Walloon Movement at this time:

> Pour les Wallons il est moins cinq ...
> Ils vont agir parce que
> - l'accumulation de leur griefs a largement dépassé les limites raisonnables qu'un peuple tout entier peut supporter,
> - la longue suite des déceptions collectives et individuelles d'un régime unitaire et centralisateur a mis à vif les sentiments des Wallons les plus temporeuseurs,
> ... de la dégradation la Wallonie va à la catastrophe.
Les Wallons vont agir en disant pourquoi et comment.

Griefs politiques et culturels wallons:
- Impuissance wallonne définitive : dans le régime unitaire actuel, le peuple wallon, d'humanité moins forte, est condamné à perpétuité à être commandé malgré lui. Le suffrage universel, qui s'exerce avec le régime actuel de peuple en peuple et non d'homme à homme, n'est plus dès lors qu'un instrument pseudo-démocratique.
- Isolement wallon grandissant dans une Belgique unitaire
- Anémie culturelle ...

A ces griefs un seul remède : le fédéralisme qui seul peut assurer le respect et la mise en valeur de la personnalité des peuples dans l'harmonie générale.

The Manifesto of the MPW which followed the Declaration continued the same theme:

Pour la libération de la Wallonie par l'expansion économique dans le progrès social dans la justice politique.
Le Mouvement populaire wallon sonne le rassemblement de tous ceux qui, fédéralistes parce que démocrates, sont devenus fédéralistes parce que wallons.

The stages in the evolution of the Walloon Movement in the 1960s were: the impact of the strikes and the consequent awareness of the differences between the reactions of the north and south to the 'loi unique' together with the psychological effect of the economic statistics revealing Walloon economic relative decline, 1961-62 the formation of the MPW, 1963-65 the coordination of activities of a number of other Walloon organisations with the MPW in a broad common front and finally 1965-68 the appearance of a Walloon political party which in 1968 became the Rassemblement Wallon.
In March 1963 more than 1,000 delegates gathered at Namur at a 'Congrès d'action Wallone'. They came from the following Walloon organisations:

- Wallonie Libre (founded in 1940 as a Belgian Liberation Movement),
- Rénovation Wallonne (RC) and Mouvement Libéral Wallon (both groups deriving from Wallonie Libre),
- Association Wallonne du personnel des services publics,
- Avant-garde Wallon (a left socialist and communist group),
- Bloc Francophone de Bruxelles,
- Le Parti Unité Wallon (a small left socialist group), and
- Representatives of the PSB, PC and FGTB in Wallonia.

This was a far wider cross-section of Walloon opinion than the MPW and included Communists, Liberals and Catholics as well as Socialists. A resolution was passed which included the following declaration in favour of autonomy for the south:

... cette autonomie doit s'insérer dans le cadre d'un état belge du type fédéral, où la parité, de droit des deux communautés serait institutionalisée.

Thus the main theme of the MPW 'Declaration of Principles' was continued. The Congress passed two further main resolutions - to set up a 'Collège exécutif de Wallonie' and to organise a mass
demonstration of support in Charleroi in May.

The new executive consisted of over 20 members from all parties and organisations. The membership of the executive was on an individual basis rather than mandated by the organisation to which the executive member belonged. The first task of this group was to organise a petition against the adaptation of the number of seats in Parliament to allow for the Flemish majority before the revised constitutional safeguards for the Walloon minority had been introduced. This petition (open for signatures from October 15th to November 15th 1963) gathered 645,499 names (27% of the total Walloon electorate) and was therefore quite successful. At this time, however, the movement began to be weakened by dissension especially among PSB party members who were under pressure from the party leadership to withdraw. The PSB had officially opposed the petition, which makes the number of signatures more impressive. In the summer of 1964, therefore, the 'collège' was reorganised as a 'délégation permanente'. The new 'délégation' was drawn from four of the above organisations: the MPW, RW, WL and MLW.* Thus again Socialists, Catholics and Liberals were represented. The 'délégation permanente' was officially brought into being by a resolution of the 'Conseil général commun' of all the organisations.

* MPW - Mouvement Populaire Wallon.
RW - Rénovation Wallonne.
WL - Wallonie Libre
MLW - Mouvement Libéral Wallon.
of 'Action Wallonne' on 21st March 1965. The new coordinating body deliberately excluded leading figures in the main parties. They wished to remain free to influence all parties in Wallonia in the communal elections of October 1964 and the General Election of May 1965, rather than appear to be linked with any one party.

The 'délégation permanente' consisted of six representatives of the four organisations above. The 'délégation' resembled the 'aktie komite' of the Flemish Movement, coordinating pressure upon the political parties. The 'délégation' was responsible to the executives of the member organisations or to the full 'Conseil général' of the Action Wallonne Movement, which was the name given to the Walloon Movement as a whole. By the end of 1965 there were regional 'délégations permanentes', along the same lines as the overall one, in Liège, Hainault, Namur and Luxembourg provinces. Of the four main members of the movement the MPW was the strongest and best organised. Its journal Combat had a circulation of over 70,000. The oldest of the four was Wallonie Libre. Renovation Wallonne (RW) was derived from Wallonie Libre and its members were mainly Catholic intellectuals. The Mouvement Libéral Wallon (NLW), also deriving from the WL, drew the same type of membership support. The traditional political parties had no links with Action Wallonne and later the emerging FDF and Rassemblement Wallon parties were linked with the movement by overlapping membership rather than directly.
The first meeting of the 'Conseil général commun' took place in Liège on 21st March 1965. This congress considered many issues but the fundamental programme of the movement was clear from the report 'Wallonie '65' given by Lucien Outers of Renovation Wallonne:

... Le Parlement élu en mai 1965 comportera une majorité absolue élue par les seuls arrondissements flamands ... Depuis 1961, chacun des trois partis traditionnels a reçu plus de voix flamandes que de voix wallones ainsi les mandataires wallons sont en minorité dans leur propre formation politique ... Les nouvelles formations ... Le Mouvement Wallon est le seul carrefour où l'unité dans les objectifs peut se faire facilement entre groupes idéologiques différents...

But du Mouvement Wallon : Rassemblement du peuple wallon pour qu'il obtient l'égalité dans l'état avec le peuple flamand et l'autonomie indispensable à son sauvetage ... Seule l'égalité des deux communautés dotées d'une large autonomie pourra maintenir leur union au sein d'un même état: 28

At the second meeting on June 13th 1965 emphasis was placed upon the economic problems of the region and, in the resolution passed by the congress, the movement suggested again that only federalism or autonomy could lead to a solution of these problems:

... seule l'instauration de réformes institutionnelles de type fédéral permettra d'apporter une solution aux problèmes de la reconversion de l'économie wallonne en donnant à la Wallonie les moyens de prendre elle-même les décisions qui s'imposent. 29
At the same time (June 1965) the movement addressed a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Harmel, which again summarised the federalist case:

Personne ne met plus en doute, à l'heure actuelle, l'existence dans notre pays, des communautés flamande et wallonne. Notre Constitution et nos institutions ne tiennent cependant pas compte de cette réalité ... Pour porter valablement remède à cette situation, les Mouvements Wallons revendiquent une réforme profonde de nos institutions qui tienne compte des principes suivants : - Sur le plan du pouvoir central, reconnaissance de l'autonomie de chaque communauté et mise sur le pied d'égalité de la communauté wallonne et de la communauté flamande. - Décentralisation en matière économique, sociale et culturelle au profit d'un pouvoir wallon et d'un pouvoir flamand, de telle manière que ceux qui puissent mener eux-mêmes la politique qui s'imposent.
- Pour la communauté bruxelloise, possibilité de gérer elle-même ses intérêts propres et représentation, au niveau du pouvoir central, en fonction de sa véritable importance.

Action Wallonne took several initiatives over other matters during this period. It was associated with the Brussels Francophone movement through the links of its individual members with the Brussels FDF party and the Brussels branches of the various Walloon organisations. Lucien Outers, for example, was a member of the FDF executive, the Renovation Wallonne and Action Wallonne. The Action Wallonne also took part in the 'journées de solidarité entre Wallonie et Bruxelles' on the 9th and 10th November, 1965. Over the problem of the Fourons/Voeren region the Movement was especially active. It took part officially at
demonstrations in Liège (21.3.65) and Brussels (10.11.65) and a whole range of meetings and public events around this theme. In late 1965 to 1966 the 'délegation régionale de l'action Wallonne' collected funds for French language schools in the Fourons. The most important action, however, was the organisation of a referendum on 21-31st March 1965 in the district to give support to the Retour à Liège Movement.
THE EMERGENCE OF A WALLOON REGIONAL PARTY

Wallonia in the middle 1960s saw the emergence of specifically Walloon political parties, culminating in 1968 in the Rassemblement Wallon. There had existed prior to the 1960s a number of very small Walloon political groups, the most notable of which was the 'Parti d'Unité Wallon' (PUW) which obtained 1,774 votes in 1946, 5,852 in 1949 and 3,466 in 1961 (.07%). This small party also published a small journal Le Bloc Wallon. The PUW was the most successful of the small Walloon groups but it was of very marginal importance in the region. The dominant political force in Wallonia, the PSB, had moved in a regional direction at its special Walloon Congresses in 1947, 1959 and 1961 but the need to maintain its national unity, clearly expressed at its National Congress in November 1963 where the 'Compromis des Socialistes' was agreed, precluded the Walloon wing of the PSB from taking the leading role in the Walloon Movement. As a national party competing for national office the Socialists could not afford to weaken their unity. This necessity for compromise created discontent among many Socialists, in particular members of the MPW. At the conseil général meeting of the MPW in June 1964 the movement declared itself ready to become involved in political activity, if necessary in party political competition. On January 19th 1964 a new political formation - Front Wallon pour l'unité et la liberté de la Wallonie (FW) was established in Charleroi. This new party
absorbed the PUW and the journal Bloc Wallon became the organ of the FW. In April the new party held its first congress and in October candidates from the FW stood in the commune elections, obtaining 28% of the vote in some districts and only 1% in others. Only a few seats were actually contested but even so the party had begun the process of offering a challenge to existing political groups. In the May 1965 the FW contested some of the Hainault electoral districts in the General Election.

Simultaneously with this development of the FW another small Walloon party was emerging - Parti Wallon des Travailleurs (PWT). This too was a group whose members came largely from the Socialist supporters. In December 1964 the Socialists held a congress to consider the compatibility between party membership and membership of the executive of the journals Links and Gauche and also of the MPW.* Partly this was an internal dispute with the Socialist Party the 'leftism' of the journals. The congress resolved that membership of the executives of the journals and the MPW and the party was incompatible. The result of this was the departure from the PSB in Wallonia of some of the members of the MPW and some associated with Gauche. On January 25th 1965 this group met in Liège and founded the PWT party. The leaders of the group,

* The two journals La Gauche and Links were the journals of the radical 'left' of the Socialist Party and they had expressed reservations between 1961 and 1964 about coalition with the CVP/PSC.
especially François Perin, sought to cooperate with the new FW in the forthcoming General Election. 31 Elements of the left of the new PWT were not prepared to support this link with the FW and therefore on 7th February 1965 they in turn founded their own group - Union de la Gauche Socialiste (UGS). In addition to these parties a number of other small groups appeared at this time - the two main examples being the Front Démocratique Wallon (FW) in the Nivelles area of Brabant and the Rassemblement Démocratique Wallon (RDW) in Namur. Therefore by the spring of 1965 the Walloon Movement was beginning to express itself in independent Walloon political parties, although they were individually very small and still largely associated with the province of their birth.

The weakness at this time of Walloon challenges to the established parties was their fragmentation and their largely left origin. By 1965 the Volksunie was already established in Flanders as the only purely Flemish party and in the 1965 elections it received nearly 10% of the Flemish vote compared to its 6% in 1961. To this extent the development of a Walloon political party comparable to the Volksunie was delayed.

The problem of fragmentation was resolved by the creation of an 'Action commune wallonne' in April 1965, in preparation for the May elections. The four groups - FW, PWT, FDW and RDW came
to an agreement with each party remaining autonomous. In the
election the parties combined obtained 4.25% of the Walloon vote and
elected two deputies: Moreau (FW) and Perin (PWT). Following this
relative success, when the election of two deputies by fragmented
groups which had only recently been formed was encouraging, it was
decided to move ahead to the formation of one Walloon party. This
took place in June 1965 when the members of the Action commune
founded the Parti Wallon (PW). The executive of the new party
consisted of 13 FW members, 13 PWT members, and 5 FDW members.
Thus by the summer of 1965 the problem of fragmentation of the
Walloon political movement was being resolved.

The problem of the left orientation of the new party was
also confronted at this time with the founding conference of June
26th rejecting the terms socialist and anti-capitalist from its
terms of reference and reports. This was an essential step in the
direction of a pluralistic appeal which could transcend the old
cleavage patterns and place its main emphasis upon an appeal to
Walloon consciousness and thus attract former Liberal and Catholic
supporters. Between 20th February and the middle of March 1968 the
PW was enlarged by the addition of further numbers and groups from
a wide range of backgrounds. This expansion led to the adoption of
the new title Rassemblement Wallon (RW). This became the Walloon
counterpart of the Flemish Volksunie.
The impact of the Rassemblement Wallon (RW) in the 1968 elections was considerable. Its support overall in Wallonia amounted to 175,186 votes which formed 10.47% of the total. This must be compared to 4.25% for the Walloon parties in 1965. The party drew most of its support from the industrial provinces of Liège and Hainault and least from the rural province of Luxembourg. The PSB obtained 35.6% of Walloon votes, the PSC 20.26%, the PLP 26.51% and the PC 7.02%. The RW in 1968 was therefore still well behind the three main parties but its gain of 6.22% over the support for the Walloon party in 1965 was satisfactory.

The major electoral breakthrough of the RW was achieved in the election of 1971. In that election its support grew from 10.47% to 21.17% a gain of over 10% or a doubling of the 1968 figure. In 1971 the RW became the second party in Wallonia after the PSB, on the scale: PSB : 35%, RW : 21%, PSC : 20%, PLP : 17%, and PC : 6%. By 1971 the electoral threat of the Flemish VU which had been a feature of the Flemish region in the 1960s was mirrored in Wallonia by the electoral impact of the RW. In 1971 the RW with 21% support in its region was stronger than the VU with 19%.

The structure of the electoral base of the RW resembled that of the VU. The profile of RW support showed a tendency to be
more male than female, somewhat younger than average and largely from the worker-employee group. The appeal of the RW in rural areas was weaker than in the towns, which was similar to the pattern for the VU. Catholic voters for the RW were less numerous than for the PSC but more than for the PSB. The general profile was broad and no groups were overwhelmingly strong or very weakly represented. \(^3\)

It was estimated \(^3\) that the 1968 support for the Walloon RW came 44% from former PSB voters, 10% from the PLP voters, 8% from the PSC former voters and 5% from former Communists, compared to the 1961 patterns. The remaining 30% of support came from new voters. This general picture may be compared to that of the VU which with a similar pattern of support threatened the CVP in Flanders. In Wallonia, therefore, the same challenge existed to the old patterns of loyalty as that in Flanders from the VU. No longer could the Walloon voter be assumed to support one of the three traditional parties. The old boundaries between the sub-cultural segments of Walloon society were beginning to become blurred.

In March 1968 the leaders of the RW and the FDF in Brussels drew up an electoral pact. There was already a considerable overlap between the leadership of the two parties. The case of Lucien Outers, for example, has been quoted above as a leading figure in the FDF, Action Wallonne and Renovation Wallonne. All the various Walloon organisations discussed had branches among the Walloons of Brussels and French-speaking Brabant. Similarly the
former political activists from the traditional parties who had taken part in the formation of the RW had links with their equivalents in the capital. In this way the pact and later the union of the RW and FDF were a logical step based not only upon a large area of common concern but also upon considerable overlap among the leadership. After the election the twenty parliamentary representatives of the FDF and RW took the initiative in forming a single group in the Chamber. In May discussions took place among the leaders of the two parties with a view to bringing them together to form a single political force. On May 21st a union of the FDF and RW was announced. The union provided for a common FDF/RW Directorate (Conseil Général) consisting of fifteen delegates from each party under the presidency of Jean Duvieusart (formerly a PSC Prime Minister). This union of the two parties was of a federal nature, leaving each with its own organisation and complete autonomy concerning policies relating to its own region. Thus from this point the RW was on the one hand the Walloon regional party and on the other the Walloon section of the overall French community political movement. By the end of the 1960s the RW had developed an organisation embracing the whole of Wallonia consisting of local branches, regional organisations, provincial conferences and a national Bureau fédéral of 69 members. Among the 69 members were 13 who had formerly been identified with the Catholic movement (Rénovation Wallonne or PSC) in the south, 11 former Socialists and 2 former Liberals. Many others had links
with non-political Walloon groups such as Wallonie Libre. The five executive posts in the RW were the President, Perin (formerly Socialist), the Vice President, Dr. Wruj (former Socialist), Michel (from Louvain University, Catholic) and Wancquez (Mouvement Libéral Wallon).

The leaders of the Walloon Movement and later the Walloon political party came from a range of backgrounds. In the early stages the bulk of the leadership was from the traditional left in Belgian politics, some from the PSB and others from the FGTB. An example of the former was François Perin, who was originally on the left wing of the PSB, later a supporter of the Front Wallon and finally a leader of the RW and of the second, an example was André Renard himself. The MPW, so important in 1961-63, was led largely by former activists of the PSB. With the expansion of the Walloon Movement culminating in the establishment of the RW, leading elements of a variety of Walloon organisations came together to create a pluralist movement, incorporating a broad spectrum of political opinion. Unlike the VU but similar to the FDF in Brussels, the Walloon Movement and the RW were led by politicians formerly identified with one of the three traditional parties. The RW was a coming together of already well-known local and regional political figures around a new political focus. The leaders took with them some of their former supporters. The pluralism of the VU was the result of the choice of the party to develop a range of policies to
attract votes. The pluralism of the RW (and FDF) arose from the diversity of the origins of the leaders who formed the movement and party in 1961-68. In this sense the RW (and FDF) was created by the leaders who formed their coalition or 'rassemblement'.

The RW, although part of the FDF/RW, held a number of its own congresses in the late 1960s and it was at these that its programme was clarified. The constant theme of the congresses was the economic problem in Wallonia and the necessity for some sort of Walloon control of the region's economic destiny. The party defined itself as: "une association volontaire de hommes libres, en rupture avec les formations politiques traditionnelles dont la carence a été si nuisibles à la Wallonie" and its demands were for a "une assemblée wallonne disposant d'un véritable pouvoir".34 This theme of self-government or autonomy as the basic requirement for a resolution of the economic problem of the region was repeated at the first full Congress of the 9th June 1968 and again at the second Congress of the 22nd March 1969 and yet again at the third in March 1970. The RW consistently advocated economic and political devolution for the region. Like the VU, however, the party also concerned itself with a whole range of issues and problems. It supported parity between the two communities at national level, the expansion of education and the social services, agricultural reforms, and women's rights. (Second Congress). The third Congress discussed education at length and also expressed
views on foreign policy, advocating European federalism rather than what they called a Gaullist 'Europe des Patries'. The RW had therefore by 1970 expanded its programme beyond purely Walloon issues. The control core of its programme however was always a Walloon renewal through Walloon autonomy.
The coincidence of two movements, one in the north and one in the south at the same time, led the traditional parties, the CVP/PSC and Socialists in particular, to seek to accomplish the necessary adjustments in the system to accommodate these pressures. Such a course of action could have been considered as offering some possibility of success. The demands of the Flemish and Walloon Movements for autonomy and even federalism were not necessarily mutually contradictory and had much in common. The Brussels Problem however was highly relevant to both. The focus of the Flemish Movement was upon the Brussels region, its surroundings in particular, as the area of the most acute linguistic and cultural problems. In focusing on these areas the Flemish Movement drew its widest support among the Flemish population as a whole. Links existed between the FDF in Brussels and the RW and their common concern was for French-speakers' rights in the political system as a whole. At the same time the capital did not share the Walloon experience of economic decline. Brussels was part of the Antwerp-Ghent-Brussels triangle which was the region of maximum growth and prosperity. The city was not culturally part of Flanders nor geographically part of Wallonia. In a sense the whole Brussels area was a boundary zone with its own problems. Therefore the city and its problems must be studied apart from the other regions, but always with the awareness of its position as capital of the whole Belgian system and geographically its heart.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Most of the foreign capital went to the Brussels-Antwerp-Ghent triangle which received 65 of the 103 plants thereby established. Riley, Belgium, pp.43-7.


3. Ibid., p.246.

4. Riley, op.cit.,p.45.

5. Patris, André, L'étape décisive, pp.45-6.


12. Ibid., p.11.


14. The Belgian mining industry had been in a precarious position for many years. Even in 1903-6 the cost of production in Belgium was greater than elsewhere in Europe. For example, the cost of production per tonne in B.Francs was:

- 12.91 in the Borinage (Belgium) in 1906.
- 11.00 in Pas de Calais (France) in 1903.
- 9.50 in the Ruhr (Germany) in 1906.
- 8.50 in Cologne (Germany) in 1906.

Riley, p.31.


17. Communiqué du MPW, 19.5.1961 strongly opposed the whole project.


19. The Voeren/Fourons problem.
The small district was transferred in 1962 from the French-speaking province of Liège to the Dutch-speaking province of Limburg. For everyday purposes the inhabitants spoke a form of Dutch but for business and cultural purposes they used French. Many in the district therefore opposed the transfer. In October 1962 the provincial council of Liège organised a referendum on the issue in which 68% of the electorate voted and 93% of those sought to stay in Liège province. The central government declared the referendum illegal. In the 1964 communal elections in the region the 'Retour a Liège' party obtained 63% support and in the General Election in 1965 60% voted for the 'Droit et Liberté' party, reducing the formerly dominant PSC to a minority position. In 1964 some of the inhabitants of the region took their case to the European Commission on Human Rights (Application 2209/64) with limited success.


24. From a speech by André Renard at the Congrès National Wallon 27th March 1950 (reported in *Le Soir*, 28.3.50).

25. Quoted in 'Courrier Hebdomadaire' of CRISP No.275, p.18. See Appendix for further examples of Walloon 'griefs'.


27. 'Courrier Hebdomadaire' of CRISP No.319, p.2.

28. Ibid., pp.9-10.

29. Ibid., p.21.

30. Ibid., pp.23-4.

31. c.f. article by François Perin in *Le Soir*, 6.2.65.
32. The patterns of support among social classes may be compared to the opinions held by various social groups in each region when asked a series of questions relating to the popular perceptions of the structure of power in Belgium. When Flemings were asked in 1963-4 'Who controls Belgian Institutions?' the replies divided in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>French-speakers control still</th>
<th>French-speakers control is over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political elites</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labouring</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly Walloons were asked 'Has the Belgian state machinery been captured by the 'flamingants'?'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political elites</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labouring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delruelle, Evalenko and Fraeys, p.121, give the following analysis of the social background of RW supporters.

The male:female proportions of support for the RW was 59.41:40.6 (VU 58.8:41.2) and in age 47.8% of RW voters were under 40, 36.2% between 40 and 60 and 16% over 60 compared with a proportion of 49.5%, 36.2% and 14.3% for the age groups among the VU voters. Allowing for the slightly older age structure in Wallonia, the proportions are very similar in terms of sex and age. In terms of objective class 30% of RW voters were 'workers' (compared to 28% for the VU) and 31.5% 'employes' (VU - 28%). The RW drew few peasant/farmer voters (1.4% of its support) compared to 6.4% for the VU. (In terms of subjective class the proportion of 'workers' in both was identical, 42% and middle class fairly close (RW 44.9%, VU 46.9%). A major difference was in religious background where 74.2% of VU supporters were Catholics, but only 43.9% of RW. The profile of RW supporters was therefore more male than female, predominantly young and strongly oriented towards worker and employes groups. The proportion of Catholics whilst lower than the PSC, was similar to the PLP, and more than twice as high as the PSB's 17.9%

33. Delruelle, Evalenko and Fraeys, op.cit.,p.120.

34. 'Front Wallon', 16.3.68,p.6.
CHAPTER 5

THE BRUSSELS PROBLEM — the problem of a largely French-speaking capital of a largely Dutch-speaking state.
DUTCH LANGUAGE ZONE

1. Wemmel
2. Crainem
3. Wezembeek-Oppem
4. Rhode St.G.
5. Linkebeek
6. Drogenbos

FRENCH LANGUAGE ZONE

Ten communes and parts of communes with 'droit d'élection de domicile' in the capital. (Egmont proposals of 1977)

a) Alsemberg
b) Beersel
c) Negenmanneke
d) Dilbeek
e) Grand Bigard
f) Strombeek-Bever
g) Beauval & Mutsaart
h) Woluwe St.Etienne
i) Sterrebeek
k) N.Dame-au-Bois

Six communes with 'facilities'

1. Wemmel
2. Crainem
3. Wezembeek-Oppem
4. Rhode St.G.
5. Linkebeek
6. Drogenbos
Although the consociational model discussed earlier was offered as a useful reference point to aid an understanding of Belgian national politics as a whole it is useful to apply it also to Brussels and its regional political system. Until the 1960s the three parties were represented in the region on a fairly consistent average basis of 43:18:33. No one party was dominant. These parties represented the three sub-cultural segments of Belgian society at the regional level. By 1971 however this had changed radically. Loyalty to sub-cultural segments had weakened to become a secondary factor in Brussels politics after the deepening of the community cleavage. The three parties were split and fragmented and a new party, the FDF with its philosophical pluralism was in a position to be regarded as a pivotal party, much stronger than its nearest rivals. The issues which dominated the politics of the region were of a kind which made compromise and accommodation extremely difficult to achieve. Brussels politics had become polarised, with community and language defining party boundaries for the FDF and VU (55% of the city's voters in 1971) and producing confusions and divisions within the other parties. Finally, the majority in the region in the late 1960s was beginning to feel excluded from the processes which were taking place at national level to resolve the problems concerning their region. In the 1971 conseil d'agglomération election the FDF showed that together with its close allies it could obtain an absolute majority in the region. This was an achievement.
which had eluded the traditional parties. Given this strength there would be less urgency about compromise in the city on the part of the new party. Thus by 1971 the characteristics of politics in the city and its region were departing seriously not only from the broad national pattern of previous years but also from the consociational characteristics of Belgian and Brussels politics before 1961.

If the Community Problem forms a chronic dilemma for the Belgian political system, existing as it did for many years under the title of the Flemish Problem and emerging in the 1960s as an issue involving the south as well as the north, then the Brussels Problem may be called an acute version of the same dilemma. The pressures, taking the form in the middle 1960s of community parties in north and south, led to the constitutional reforms completed in 1971 and the Language Laws and administrative adjustments in the early 1960s. These measures, however necessary for the country as a whole, were of doubtful validity when applied to Brussels and its region. This central region appeared to find itself in a position where resolution of the problems of north and south might even create more tensions in the area of the capital.

The capital formed the extreme version of the process of decline of the three-party system. By 1974 in Brussels the older parties jointly obtained less than 50% of the electoral support, compared to 79% and 74% in Flanders and Wallonia respectively.
In addition the three parties were split and divided in the capital to such an extent that they appeared as collections of much reduced groups, rather than as mature and dominant political forces.

Brussels therefore posed special problems for constitutional reform and special problems for the traditional parties. In spite of this, however, the city was, of course, the national capital and its influence dominated the whole of the centre of the country. It contained only just over one tenth of the population yet stood at the intersection of the two communities. It was the only bilingual zone within a system of unilingualism in all other areas. There was always a danger that the special arrangements necessary for the city and its region would spoil the symmetry of the new cultural federalism which was at the heart of the new Constitution. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the problems of Brussels in some depth in order to see why they were so special. In particular it can be observed how often there appear to be completely opposed positions on issues, both having a perfectly rational basis and yet almost impossible to reconcile. This may lead to the conclusion that the final resolution of the Belgian community problem is impossible without the resolution of the Brussels Problem which in turn is so complicated that it brings into question the possibility of an overall satisfactory solution at all.
The problem here for the system as a whole recalls the assumptions behind the consociational approach to crisis management and problem solving. The assumption in question is that political problems are capable of resolution in a rational manner to produce satisfying consensual results. In short, consociational democracy assumes that rational solutions are always possible, given goodwill on all sides and given that the problems do not load the system too heavily. In the case of Brussels, both in the problems of the region itself and its place in the national system, such rational solutions are much more difficult to find. This will become clear in the detailed study of the region below. Often the positions adopted by the different communities and groups are perfectly rational from their respective points of view but at the same time diametrically opposed to each other. Compromise becomes therefore almost impossible and politics can acquire the characteristics of a zero-sum game which is the antithesis of consociational democracy. It is in this way that the Brussels component of the Community Problem became by the 1960s far more complex than the Schools Problem, which was resolved in the compromise of the Schools Pact in 1958.
THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM IN BRUSSELS

The difficulties associated with the community and linguistic issues of the city and its region are unique. By the 1960s it would be correct to categorise the city proper as French-speaking. Officially the capital is 'bilingual' but in fact 80% of the inhabitants of the 19 communes of Brussels-Capital speak French. In origin however, the city is undoubtedly Flemish and its traditional language until the mid-nineteenth century was Flemish. The aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie spoke French in former times but there is no doubt that when considering the linguistic picture of the city it can be seen as having changed its language from Flemish to French only in the last 100 years. This makes Brussels quite different from the Flemish city of Antwerp of the French city of Liège. Until the beginning of the 20th century this process was confined to the city proper (the present 19 communes) with the surrounding communes remaining largely Flemish. This made Brussels an island of ever-expanding French usage detached from the French-speaking southern provinces. The strict enforcement of the language laws in Flanders and the fixing of the linguistic boundaries in the 1960s emphasised this island situation.

In common with most large cities in the last 100 years Brussels expanded beyond its former limits into the periphery. This type of process has produced problems for town planners.
In all great cities but in Belgium this is even more acute because it has meant that largely French Brussels was exporting French into surrounding Flemish communes beyond the city limits, which coincide with a linguistic boundary. This led to an increase in the percentage of French-speakers in the Flemish periphery - in particular in 6 communes immediately adjacent to the city. Given the past experience of the transformation of Brussels from Flemish to French in the 19th century, this process was seen by Flemings as a threat to the linguistic and cultural integrity of the Flemish zone around the city. The Dutch-speakers of these areas (led by the Flemish Movement) therefore resisted the expansion of French schools and administrative services in the communes of the periphery of the city. One particular commune (Rode St. Genèse) is bounded in the north by Brussels-Capital and in the south by the linguistic frontier. Should this commune be classified as French it would form a bridge or corridor linking Wallonia and Brussels, the latter ceasing to be an island and becoming a French-speaking peninsula. In the Flemish view such a development would inevitably lead to further expansion in the use of French in the whole central region of the country. Many cities in the process of expansion face problems from those who seek to create green belts and direct expansion in a planned manner. The surroundings of Brussels, however, are in a different linguistic zone and therefore under a different linguistic regime - yet they are the natural zone for planned expansion.
The political complications of this situation are as acute as the problems are unique. On the broad scale Brussels, which is largely French, is the capital of a largely Dutch-speaking country. Some Flemings maintain that they do not feel at home in their own capital city and this has led to Flemish demands for parity for both languages in Brussels in order to stimulate the revival there of Flemish culture. The logic of this demand is that the 20% of Dutch-speakers would have parity (in administrative appointments, education and cultural facilities) with the 80% French-speakers. This would appear to be fair compensation for the granting of parity at national level where the French-speakers total of 45% of the population but occupy by law 50% of senior government posts. To the Bruxellois however such parity in the city would appear as undemocratic, given the linguistic statistics of the 19 communes. This argument is further expanded by the French-speakers' Movement when they point out that in many of the surrounding communes (apart from 6 exceptions where there are special arrangements) there are more than 20% French-speakers but the local administration is entirely Dutch. The Brussels French-speakers demanded democratic majority rights in the city but supported limitations of Flemish majority rights in the country as a whole. Similarly Brussels Dutch-speakers demanded parity arrangements for 20% Dutch-speakers in the city but denied those rights to the large French-speaking minorities in the surrounding Flemish communes. This was typical of the contradiction between the two positions.
These problems are further aggravated by the attitude of many of the members of both communities. Among Flemings the Brussels region has been described as the 'olievlek' (oil stain) which spreads across the heart of Flanders. Among the Bruxellois the language laws form a 'carcan' imprisoning them and preventing the city's natural expansion. Bilingualism is somewhat one-sided with French-speakers largely unwilling to learn Dutch whereas the Dutch-speakers have traditionally been willing to learn French.

In the context of the Community Problem as a whole, the linguistic factor dominates the Brussels area, whereas in Wallonia the emphasis is upon economic factors and in Flanders on cultural factors. The city was, as stated above, once Flemish and has become French over a period of 100 years. This development may be seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of declared French-speakers:</th>
<th>1847</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1947</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brussels city (original commune)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs Right Bank 1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Bank 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Bank 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Bank 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer communes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The right bank areas included the middle class districts and the left bank the more working class areas. The overall pattern is quite clear: the French expansion took place from the centre and middle class districts, where French was dominant by 1900, outwards to the suburbs where French dominated by 1940. The pattern could also be seen to be repeating itself in the outer communes where the expansion of French was taking place in a similar way to that on the left bank. Roger Nols estimated that in the 1940s the number of bilingual citizens was approximately 50% but of these 2/3rds would be described as primarily French-speaking, although formerly of Flemish background. In the well-established French communes of the centre he estimated that 75% of the population was uniquely French-speaking. By the 1960s therefore, the process was nearly complete whereby Brussels had changed its character from a Flemish city to a French one. In the post-war period, the process of expansion of French into the surroundings accelerated and by 1969 the number of communes on the periphery where French was widely used had grown to 18. In some French had become the majority language. They were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>French-speakers</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>French-speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linkebeek</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>Vilvorde</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kraainem</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>St.Pieters L</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drogenbos</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>Alsemberg</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beersel</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Tervuren</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rode St.G.</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Zellik</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wezembeek</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Groot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilbeek</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Bijgaarden</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St.Stevens W</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Storrebeek</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wemmel</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Itterbeek</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strombeek</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* denotes communes with 'special facilities' for French.
The 18 communes all belonged to the Flemish linguistic zone and therefore were subject to the language laws applicable to Flanders as a whole. These percentages may be compared to those of Dutch-speakers in the 19 communes of the city proper (approximately 20%) where the political demand for parity was part of the policy of the Flemish Movement.

In the capital as a whole in 1947 (the last linguistic census) the proportion of French-speakers to Dutch was given as 70.61 : 24.24. There were variations among the communes with St. Gilles (11.23%) and Ixelles (9.55%) giving the lowest number of Dutch-speakers and Evere (48.24%) and Ganshoren (42.61%) as the highest. In a study of the population by Leo Lindemans in 1951 these figures for Dutch-speakers were disputed. His figures were nearer to 40% for Ixelles and 66% for Ganshoren for example. 4 Nevertheless the figure of 70% French-speakers in Brussels in 1947 (according to the official census) is generally accepted. Since 1947 there has been no official census but in February 1970 Le Soir published an estimate compiled by Fernand Rigot (of the 'Bloc de la liberté linguistique'). This gave a figure of 90% for French-speakers in the city and also generally high percentages for the surrounding communes - a majority in Wemmel (55%), Beauval (80%), Kraainem (70%), Wezembeek (65%), Rode St.G. (60%), Linkebeek (73%), Beersel (55%), and Drogenbos (65%) with another 20 communes with over 20% French-speakers. These figures may be compared with those quoted above.
for the same communes and suggest perhaps an overestimate. In 1969 the Institut de Sociologie de ULB * made a survey of the 19 communes and gave a figure of 82.3% French-speakers and 17.7% Dutch. Taking all these estimates together it can be assumed that whereas the 1947 census gave just over 70% for French-speakers, in the late 1960s this must have been in the region of 80%. Similarly, in spite of possible variations, the French speakers formed by the 1960s a substantial proportion of the population of the surrounding communes, in or near a majority in the 6 communes with 'special facilities' and with above 20% in many of the others.

Whatever the arguments over the exact figures for each community the historical pattern is clear. In the 19th century the Dutch-speaking proportion of the population of the city fell from a 2/3rds majority to a minority position which was probably only 1/5th by the end of the 1960s. Similarly the outer suburbs were also steadily becoming more French-speaking with Dutch-speakers becoming a minority there in some areas by the 1970s. Those suburbs were, however, placed in the Dutch linguistic zone of the country. The statistics therefore supported both the French-speakers' argument in favour of more liberal treatment of French in the suburbs and

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* U.L.B. – Université Libre de Bruxelles.
the ascendancy of French in the city and also the Flemish argument that the Brabant province of Flanders was vulnerable to French expansionism which would change its traditional cultural character. Population statistics are therefore of much more than academic interest in any consideration of the problems of Brussels in the 1960s. They are also excellent illustrations of the problem of two points of view in the region, both of which are rational and based upon not unreasonable assumptions and yet nearly irreconcilable.

These population and language statistics have produced in many Flemings strong opposition to a repetition of the expansion of French in the outer suburbs similar to the historical experience of the decline of Flemish in the city centre in the 19th century. The French-speakers, however, based their arguments on individual linguistic rights of citizens living on the periphery. These rights in their view transcended the demands of the Dutch-speaking collective.

In addition to the considerable language problems, until the reforms of the late 1960s, Brussels presented a very complicated administrative picture. Geographically the city had grown out from a centre with relatively little interaction and contact between the growing outer areas which looked towards the centre rather than horizontally towards each other. This in itself was not unusual for a large city in the 20th century but it must be seen in conjunction with the fragmentation of the administrative structure.
of the city. Brussels-Capital (Brussels as known to the outsider) consists of the 19 communes, of which Brussels is only one, each with its own council and executive.* This situation led in the past to differences within the capital in street widths, public services, police forces and other local government services.

The Brussels problem was not simply one of tackling the linguistic/community issue but also creating a new and more efficient system of government for the city. This problem of the reorganisation of local government was not unique to the capital. In the reforms of the 1960s Antwerp, Ghent, Liège and Charleroi faced similar problems of fragmentation and the necessity for creating new structures. With these cities, however, there were two vital differences: the language problem was of no importance because in the four cases the city and its region were of the same language and

* In the Brussels context reference is made to the following:
  Brussels-Capital = the 19 communes of the capital itself,
  Brussels commune = the original Brussels, now one of the 19 communes with approximately 1/8th of the population,
  Brussels electoral arrondissement = the 19 communes plus the district of Hal-Vilvorde around them,
  Brussels economic region = a term used by geographers for most of the province of Brabant, but later in government regional discussions it refers to the 19 communes only and Brabant province = one of the 9 provinces of Belgium. Unlike the other 8, Brabant is not unilingual, the north of Brabant is Dutch and the south, French.
secondly the communes already existing within the new city region were consulted before final decisions were made. In the case of Brussels however, the Ministry of the Interior did not consult the existing communes before drawing up the new plans for restructuring the region. Thus many in the region argued that for them, unlike the other major cities, the reorganisation was imposed. Many of the communes surrounding the city, where French-speakers were strong in numbers, were particularly discontented with this imposition, which they saw as a Flemish move to prevent their attaining bilingual status and closer links with the city. Reorganisation of local government in the Brussels region formed, therefore, another aspect of the same linguistic/community problem.

The experience of Brussels conflicts with the consociational tradition of problem solving. The latter approach assumes compromise between all interested parties (except anti-system groups) with consultation and discussion among the respective leaders. In the case of Brussels, decisions about the fate of the city appeared to be handed down from above, irrespective of the wishes not only of ordinary citizens but also of many, perhaps the majority, of the local political leaders and representatives. In short, Brussels was excluded from decision-making about its own problems. The reasons for this are clearly related to the fact that the complications and mutual hostility among the groups in the city would have made consultation difficult and probably fruitless. Nevertheless an
interested party was thus excluded. It was always clear therefore, from past experience, that in their quest for a solution to the overall national problem the major parties might be prepared to impose solutions on Brussels irrespective of the views of the majority of the citizens. The electoral weight of the city was only 12% of the whole and therefore could perhaps be ignored.
THE ROLE OF BRUSSELS IN BELGIAN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE

In a consideration of the problems of Brussels account must also be taken of the special economic and cultural status of the city within the country as a whole. The city formed more than a political capital. The economic importance of the Brussels region in the Belgian economy is more than its 1/9th of the population would suggest. It forms the most important nexus for the economic and commercial life of the country and is the centre of a micro-region of nearly 4 million people, compared to 1.75 million around Antwerp and Ghent, 1.25 million around Liege and 0.75 million around Charleroi. This means that it is by far the most important commercial focus in Belgium.

The region has a larger share of industrial development than its population (12%) suggests. This is very clear from the following figures: Brussels region has -

42% of the printing industry
35% of the chemical and rubber industries.
31% of metal industries.
26% of construction industry.
25% of clothing industry.
22% of the machine tool industry.
22% of the wood and paper industry
18% of the food processing industry.
These figures include those employed in central administrative offices and this factor may have inflated them. Nevertheless the commercial and industrial importance of Brussels is clear. The city also attracts a large number of commuters from outside its immediate region. In 1961 it was calculated that over 188,000 persons came into the city each day (half from Brabant, 1/4 from E.Flanders and 1/4 from Hainault).\(^6\) Allowing for the fact that the Brussels region comprises 12% of the population of Belgium (including the periphery in this population estimate for the city) its industrial importance is clear. Similarly the numbers of people working in the city in such central concerns as banking (58% of national total), insurance (66% of total) and the administration of private firms (70% of the total) reinforces this conclusion. One final detail completes the picture - with 12% of the population of Belgium, Brussels pays 20% of the income tax.

In culture and religion, Brussels forms the least religious region in Belgium. In a study in 1958\(^7\) it was estimated that 35% of the inhabitants of the region could be classified as practising Catholics. In the 19 communes of the capital this fell to 27% and in the central Brussels commun to 24%. The proportion was correspondingly higher in the outer suburbs. These percentages must be compared with a national average of 50% and a Flemish average of 60%. The south of the country as a whole gave an average of 41%, although the figure for the industrial areas would be much
lower than this. These figures for religion are of special interest when the appeal of the CVP/PSC to religious support is recalled. The prospects for the CVP/PSC in the capital could be much more vulnerable than in Flanders or the rural areas of Wallonia where the religious factor was still important. This may account for the traditionally better support for the Liberals in Brussels than the other regions.

In the field of higher education - important as a factor in the formation of the future elites of the country - Brussels does not have the importance which it has in commerce and administration. Approximately 20% of the students in higher education attended institutions in Brussels in 1968. This compares to a similar percentage for Liège and Ghent and is half the number attending the University of Louvain at that time. The bulk of those studying in Brussels came from Brabant with a small number from Antwerp and Hainault. The higher education establishments in Brussels were therefore local or regional in their appeal. The linguistic pattern among the students in Brussels was 9,000 French and 1,100 Flemings, thus reflecting the French dominance in the city. Brussels attracted 30% of French-speaking students in Belgium, but only 5% of Dutch-speaking students in higher education.
THE COMMUNITY PROBLEM IN BRUSSELS

Any proposals for reform for Brussels (including parity for Dutch-speakers in the city) would have to be part of the overall attempt to resolve the national community problem. If the French-speakers demanded special rights and parity at the national level, then the Dutch-speakers of Brussels would demand similar provisions for the city administration. Thus from the French-speakers' point of view an imposed solution for their region would in reality be part of a nationwide deal with which they might not agree and about which they expected to be directly consulted.

The fact that the problems of the capital were part of the overall community problems in the country might be understood as leading to the creation of a common Francophone Front covering both Brussels and Wallonia. On many issues this proved to be the case but, as the Brussels problems were so special and specific to the region, the French-speakers of the city founded their own party, the FDF, which, although allied to the RW in Wallonia, remained an autonomous party even after the union with the RW after 1968. There was to be no one Francophone party equivalent to the VU which sought to represent all Dutch speakers in Belgium. In some ways the policies of the RW resembled those of the VU, in relation to federalism, for example. A federal Belgium was attractive to the VU (it was part of its policy) and equally so to the RW. To Brussels, however,
federalism was not an easy solution. The VU would accept federalism 'à deux' but not 'à trois' which would put Flanders in a minority. The RW considered federalism as the best way to save Wallonia. Where would Brussels fit in a federation of two regions? The Bruxellois claimed that the capital formed a region of its own. In the 1960s the Bruxellois tended to defend the unitary state as the only solution, with Brussels as capital of course. The PLP adopted this policy in the mid-1960s and was especially successful with this line in the capital in the 1965 election. It cannot therefore always be assumed that there would be total identity between the FDF and RW. In addition, account must be taken of the fact that although the Dutch-speakers might have resentments about the capital arising out of the linguistic issue, the Walloons also viewed the capital as too powerful, absorbing too large a part of French cultural and commercial life.

By the 1960s, with the intensification of the community and linguistic problems, Brussels was inevitably destined to be an area of acute difficulties. Underlying all the problems of language, community and local government reform was the awareness in many Flemish minds that Brussels had once been a Flemish city and had become French by a process of cultural expansionism which could, if not checked, engulf the whole of central Brabant by the end of the century. In the French mind was the awareness that the city was surrounded by the Dutch linguistic zone and the new language
laws would stop any further expansion of French in the periphery, thus imposing intolerable limits to the natural expansion of the city.

At a deeper level, Brussels illustrates some of the problems of democracy in Belgium. According to simple majority rule democratic theory the Dutch-speakers of Brussels would have to accept the will of the French majority and the French minority position in the country as a whole would also have to be accepted. Quite clearly such a simple approach was not easily applied in Brussels. The attempts at a solution included veto clauses in the constitutional arrangements, parity in administration, proportionality of seats for the various political groups on the executive council and other sophisticated attempts to overcome this problem. However, such solutions often introduced further complications. Brussels was a region where a permanent on-going consociational approach might be the only viable option but at the same time one which would be most difficult to achieve. The micro-political system of the capital was far more fragmented than the country as a whole. There were the three traditional 'familles spirituelles' but they were in turn, by the end of the 1960s, split into linguistic groups. Therefore by 1971 there were seven or eight political groups. The overlap in terms on the one hand of philosophy and on the other hand in terms of language and culture made the situation even more complex. The result was a
system where compromise and consensus was essential, as in Lijphart's picture of the Netherlands, but almost unattainable if all the groups were to be accommodated. Compromise was necessary but the issues did not lend themselves to compromise.

The electoral patterns up to 1961 demonstrate a fair degree of consistency from election to election with the various fluctuations in party support or swing to be expected, whilst at the same time consistently reaffirming a balance between the three main parties. The CVP/PSC had an average of 32.2% support, the left (i.e. Socialist plus PC) an average of 46.4% and the Liberals an average of 18.6%. The electoral patterns up to 1961 demonstrate a fair degree of consistency from election to election with the various fluctuations in party support or swing to be expected, whilst at the same time consistently reaffirming a balance between the three main parties. The CVP/PSC had an average of 32.2% support, the left (i.e. Socialist plus PC) an average of 46.4% and the Liberals an average of 18.6%. 10

By 1971 the left had fallen to approximately 50% of its previous support, and the CVP/PSC to 66% of its previous figure. The Liberals, after making great strides in 1965 and 1968, had fallen to a low level of support by the early 1970s. Many Liberals turned at the end of the 1960s to the FDF, a group of them later joining with the FDF in a cartel for the 1974 election. The new group, which emerged in 1965, and grew rapidly thereafter, was the FDF which became the dominant force in Brussels politics by 1971. The two main national parties of Belgian politics (the Socialists and CVP/PSC) whose share of the Brussels vote in 1961 had been over 75% (1946-61 average - 75%) fell to a combined support of 41%, only 5% above the FDF and its allies. To complete this picture, the almost 6% support
for the VU in Brussels in 1971 must be added (compared to a negligible 1.6% in 1961). Adding the FDF and VU together produced in 1971 40% of Brussels voters giving their support to the new community parties which hardly existed in the early 1960s. The main parties suffered from their ambivalent position as national parties unable to identify too closely with Brussels alone, afraid as they were of the consequences in other regions. The PLP/PVV too was torn apart by the various community issues. The growth of the VU in the capital and especially in the outer periphery of the region was a similar development on the Dutch-speaking side to the growth of the FDF among French-speakers.

The immediate cause of this upheaval in Brussels politics was the impact of the new language laws of 1963-64. In Brussels, the language issue, especially with its complicated implications for the city's future, formed the centre of political controversy. The laws fixing the Linguistic Frontier in 1962 and the Linguistic Laws of July 1963 and August 1963 were the government's most important attempt to solve the language problem. These laws were passed by the CVP/PSC and Socialist coalition and therefore those parties carried the main burden of responsibility for them. As they formed perhaps the most burning issue in the Brussels Problem, some detail must be given of the development of language policy in Belgium since the 1930s in order fully to understand their impact upon the Brussels region, and especially on the periphery.
THE LANGUAGE LAWS OF 1963-64

In the immediate post-war period, until the 1960s, the laws governing the use of languages in Belgium were those of the early 1930s, in particular those of 1932. These laws defined the linguistic frontier between French and Dutch. In the north the language of education and administration was to be Dutch and in the south, French. Thus both areas were by law unilingual. Brussels-Capital was the exception to this rule because it was designated bilingual. As, even in the 1930s, there were problems of minorities in each zone, especially French in Flanders, the law provided for the creation of 'facilities' in education and administration in the minority language where the minority exceeded 30% of the population. It also allowed for a change from unilingual to bilingual status where the majority language changed from one to the other. The application of these changes was to be the result of a linguistic census which would take place alongside the normal national census. The laws of the 1930s were therefore strict in the sense that they clearly defined the dominance of the majority language but flexible in their provisions for change in the linguistic status of a district. History had demonstrated, however, that change invariably meant from Dutch to French rather than in both directions equally.

Following the results of the 1930 census the bilingual Brussels regions comprised 16 communes. In 1947, following the
first post-war census, the communes of Berchem Ste. Agathe, Evere and Ganshoren were added, as Dutch had ceased to be the majority language following the expansion of the use of French in these areas. By the 1960s Brussels-Capital consisted of 19 bilingual communes. In 1932, 4 communes on the edge of the city were granted 'facilities' for French (in addition to the 3 which later became bilingual, named above) - Kraainem, Drogenbos, Linkebeek and Wemmel. At that time Wezembeek-Oppem (with 29.97% French-speakers) was not placed in this category. Outside the capital and the communes with 'facilities', the other areas around Brussels were designated unilingual. It is clear why the linguistic census was so important, for it was the means by which the language laws could be related to local usage and thus modified. In 1961, however (24.7.61) the linguistic census was abolished as a result of pressure from Flanders by the Flemish Movement, where 300 mayors refused to take part in the organisation of the census at that time. In the light of this development it was therefore necessary to re-examine the language laws of 1932. The abolition of the linguistic census and the 'Law of 8th November 1962' (modifying boundaries of provinces, arrondissements and communes and reforming the laws relating to the languages of education and administration) was opposed by the PLP/PVV and some Brussels French-speaking PSC and PSB deputies and senators.
The three specific measures which implemented the new approach were the 'Law of 30th July', concerning the language to be used in primary and secondary education (not necessarily applicable to higher education but extended to higher education in 1968 in the Louvain University crisis of that year), the 'Law of the 2nd August' concerning the language used in administration and the 'Law of 8th August' concerning certain district boundary changes. All these laws were passed in 1963. As a result of these changes certain alterations were made along the linguistic frontier. The most significant was the arrangement for the Brussels region. The region was divided into three zones. The inner zone of the 19 communes of Brussels-Capital which would remain bilingual, the communes on the periphery, called arrondissement spécial de Bruxelles which would enjoy special 'facilities' in French (the '6 communes à facilités') and finally beyond them and surrounding the capital the arrondissement of Hal-Vilvorde which was designated as Dutch. The whole area would be considered as one electoral and judicial region. Within Brussels-Capital the law further insisted that 25% of the local government posts should be occupied by Dutch-speakers and by 1st September 1973 50% of all senior posts should be so occupied. To act as overseer for the whole region a new post of Vice-Governor of Brabant was created who was to be responsible for the full application of the new laws. The first Vice-Governor was M.Cappuyns, a Flemish socialist with a law practice in Liège.
The arrondissement spécial was a subject of serious dispute in 1963. The minister in charge of the new laws (Arthur Gilson) proposed 8 communes in Flemish Brabant and 3 in Walloon Brabant (with a minority of Dutch-speakers) for this special status. This would have made a total of 11 compared to the 6 which finally emerged. Many Flemish CVP members and the Flemish Movement as a whole were opposed to any 'facilities' outside the capital until Dutch was better accommodated in the capital itself. The 3 communes in Walloon Brabant were also opposed to the provision of facilities for Dutch. After a severe government crisis over the matter it was agreed to designate 6 communes in this category - Kraainem, Drogenbos, Linkebeek and Wemmel (already with facilities) plus Rhode-St. Genèse and Wezembeek-Oppem added in 1963. All the other communes in the whole of Brabant were either in the Dutch zone (Hal-Vilvorde and Leuven-Louvain) or the French zone (Nivelles). This left many anomalies. In the district of Brussels Airport at Zaventem, 85% of manual workers were Dutch-speakers but 60% of the clerical workers and 94% of technicians were French-speakers. Zaventem, however, was officially 'Dutch'. Similarly the Catholic University of Louvain was bilingual, with facilities allowed to French staff in 1966. This contrasted with the totally Dutch status of the Leuven district.

The new laws referred very specifically to the use of language in education. In Brussels-Capital the study of the second
national language was made obligatory and the teaching of Dutch in the city was to be expanded. This envisaged the opening of 10 new Dutch schools in the city per year for a decade. Many French-speakers saw this as a plan to open schools which would immediately become redundant. In the arrondissement spécial a French primary school could be established at the request of a minimum of 16 heads of family. The definition of the term native language related to the normal language of the head of the family. In order to deal with any complications arising from this, a special linguistic inspectorate was established. This process of defining language for education became very complicated and although it won the case the Belgian government had to submit to the embarrassment of a court hearing at the Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg after the inhabitants of many villages in the outer suburbs had lodged a complaint. The new laws referred to the languages to be used in the courts and administration but education became the most difficult aspect. In the past many Dutch-speakers had preferred their children to have a French language education but this became difficult under the new laws. The French-speakers on the other hand were not enthusiastic about their children being compelled to learn Dutch. The enforcement of the laws was very strict. If a parent chose to have his children educated in a language other than his own in the area surrounding Brussels, or in a language different from the official language of a unilingual area, the schooling was deemed unacceptable and homologation was denied to the leaving diplomas.
This had the serious consequence that such a young person's qualification would not be recognised for any post under state auspices. There were special boards to achieve homologation outside the education system but the process was complicated.

The reaction to these new laws among politicians in the mid-1960s may be grouped under two broad headings. On the one hand there were those who wished to see the new laws relaxed and made more flexible to allow for developments and changes in the use of language in each district. The second group were those who wished to see the law used as a means of containing or even changing the language patterns of the country. These advocated a harder and even more rigid set of language laws. The advocates of a more flexible approach concentrated on the broad principles of liberty of the individual choice, local option and adaptation to needs rather than fixed proportions. The supporters of this view were some PSC spokesmen from Brussels, the PCB, some Brussels PSB deputies, the new FDF after 1964 and the whole of the PLP/PVV which adopted this as its electoral policy in its programme 'Compromis des Belges' in January 1966. Even by 1965, therefore, members of the PSC and PSB in Brussels differed from their national parties over the new language laws.

Opposed to this French approach was the Flemish Movement view, that the laws should be extended to give parity on executive
bodies of the Brussels region and on each conseil of the communes in the city. Some wished to go further than this and limit the city to the 19 communes and abolish all other 'facilities'. The first Vice-Governor proposed that Brussels capital should be separated from the rest of Brabant and the province divided into two: Flemish Brabant, including the 6 communes of the arrondissement special and French Brabant. The range of views on the future of the language laws and the Brussels region was therefore very wide and the cleavage line between the liberal view and the strict view was largely along community lines. The two extremes were the VU policy of using the laws to push back French cultural 'imperialism' and the FDF emphasis upon the absolute freedom of individuals and groups. In between were the moderates seeking greater flexibility in various ways but acknowledging the validity of the other side's claims. Unfortunately even mild modifications were unacceptable to the extremes and the issue became one of reaction and counter-reaction.

The language laws of 1963 were therefore already a factor in weakening former party loyalties in the Brussels region. From the point of view of many French-speakers, the laws were imposed without any reference to their opinions or respect for their interests. The new regulations exposed the irreconcilable gap between the positions of those in favour of collective rights (the Dutch view) and those in favour of individual rights (the French view). By passing the new laws the traditional CVP/PSC and Socialist
parties alienated themselves from many French-speakers in the
capital. At the same time polarisation of opinion on these matters
was increasing in the region. As the consociational approach
depends upon a spirit of accommodation and compromise its success
was becoming less likely in the capital. The problems of the region
were beginning to appear insoluble locally as the politics of
reconciliation became less and less workable. Given the complications
and diversity of opinion in the city the only solution might be an
imposed one from outside. From the Bruxellois point of view, however,
this could not be regarded as a solution based upon compromise. It
would be totally alien to the spirit of consociational democracy,
especially if the solution was opposed by the main political group in
the city.
THE REACTION OF THE BRUXELLOIS TO THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS

Many PSC and PSB representatives from Brussels were acutely embarrassed by the laws passed by their own government. The PLP/PVV, in opposing the legislation, put forward their own plan: 'Programme linguistique' which advocated an enlarged Brussels-Capital district, including the 19 communes plus the 6 of the arrondissement spécial and a further zone de rencontre of 13 communes where bilingualism would be the rule if the commune so wished. Traditionally the Liberals formed a stronger force in Brussels than elsewhere and, as the only party which completely opposed the new laws, they were likely to emerge as the main outlet for Brussels French-speakers' discontent. The new PLP, appearing as the champion of the cause of linguistic freedom and opening up new territory with its non-confessional politics, threatened the PSC in the capital. Similarly the Socialists had to accept part of the responsibility for the new laws but were unable to make clear statements about the problems for fear of splitting into two camps. At this stage from the French side there began to emerge voices in favour of the organisation of a separate political movement on the lines of the VU to defend their cause. This attitude is illustrated in the following from *L'Alliance Walloons*:
Qu'on ne se fasse aucune illusion, aucun parti dit 'traditionnel' n'osera défendre les droits des francophones à Bruxelles. Tous les hommes politiques bruxellois sont à la remorque de la direction 'unitaire' de leur parti. Francophones bruxellois vous êtes 800,000. Ne plus voter comme papa est la seule consigne à suivre et elle sera rentable.

By late 1963 therefore the political picture in Brussels was becoming fluid. This situation may be illustrated by the following extracts from Brussels French-language journals at the time. The first is from Flambeau, the journal of the academic staff of the ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles). It has a clearly combative tone:

La violence appelle la violence. Rappelez-vous la menace prophétique de Van Cauwelaert : 'Bruxelles sera la théâtre du dernier combat de la cause flamande.' Pour les Wallons et les francophones, l'heure de la résistance a sonné. L'heure est venue de vous donner la main. 'Quand deux civilisations se heurtent', a dit Eisenhower, 'il n'y a plus de place pour de neutralité' : Trahies et bafouées dans une mesure largement atteinte, les francophones doivent employer ces moyens qui ont si bien servi la cause de ceux qui nous ne craignons pas appeler nos ennemis. Contre les flamantants oppresseurs nous prenons la position radicale, avec les plus fermes opposants, jusqu'aux dernières conséquences. La modération reviendra avec la victoire.

Flemish journals in Brussels took an equally serious view of developments but if it can be assumed that the press has a role in developing or even increasing reactions to a political issue, then
in Brussels the French language press is much more significant than the Dutch. On the Dutch side in Brussels are two important dailies: 
Laatste Nieuws (PVV) and De Standaard (CVP) but there also exist considerable Dutch language papers in Antwerp and Ghent. The bulk of the Flemish press in Belgium is not therefore primarily Brussels oriented. On the French side however all the main papers: Le Soir, La Libre Belgique, La Cité, Le Peuple, Le Drapeau Rouge and La Lanterne were based in the capital. In this sense therefore in Brussels the French press is more significant. In his Christmas message of 1963 King Baudouin himself seemed to see the dangers ahead and the special responsibilities of the press:

Qui que soyons, simples citoyens, mandataires publics, responsables de ces puissants moyens d'action que sont la presse, la radio et la télévision, nous devons veiller à ne rien dire, à ne rien faire qui puisse provoquer une tension ou rendre une dialogue difficile.

The specifically Brussels section of the Flemish Movement was the 'Vlaams Aktie Komite voor Brussel en de taalgrens' founded in February 1959. This Flemish group was responsible for great pressure upon the government in the early 1960s. The new laws were, from their point of view, a step forward but could be extended. Hence the continuation of the campaigns of marches and demonstrations in the city. Brussels and its periphery were to be the main battleground of the Language Laws.
On the French side, the 1st July 1963 was the beginning of an organised response to the Flemish Movement. This was the date of the foundation of the Front des Francophones de Bruxelles. This marked a stage in the evolution of a separate Brussels political party. The organisation comprised all the French cultural movements and groups in the city and especially important among these were the Bloc de la liberté linguistique and the Rassemblement bruxellois contre la tyrannie linguistique. The Front bore a resemblance to the Flemish Movement which brought together various cultural groups under one umbrella organisation of organisations. The basic programme of the Front was the establishment of what was called linguistic and cultural freedom. This meant in practice the modification of the linguistic laws. This policy in turn was linked to the proposals to modify the constitution which could include enlarging the number of Flemish seats in Parliament to account for the changing population balance. The Front suggested that French-speakers should only agree to the latter after their linguistic grievances had been satisfied.

The approach of the Front was made clear at a large public meeting on the 23rd October 1963 where three well-known French-speaking academics - Professors Génicot, Ruelle and Perin - added their names to a letter to be sent to all leading citizens of Brussels. The letter expressed the sense of the meeting:
Le premier et le plus menacé de ces intérêts est certainement la liberté de s'exprimer dans la langue de son choix. Déjà les lois qui méprisent cette liberté ont été votées. Des arrêtés d'exécution qui les interpréteront sont en cours d'élaboration.

Si nous nous laissons faire, si nous n'avons plus de réaction qu'au moment du vote des lois linguistiques, il est évident que notre droit de nous exprimer dans notre langue sera définitivement compromis. Vous devez dès lors vous joindre à ceux qui luttent : 

pour que leurs enfante puissent, avant d'aborder l'étude d'une seconde langue, avoir acquis une parfaite connaissance de leur langue maternelle; pour que Bruxelles, grâce au libre usage du langue française, puisse devenir une capitale européenne; 

pour que disparaissent les conséquences ridicules des lois linguistiques qui font de la Belgique un objet de risée pour l'étranger.

Other French organisations were also committed to some revision of the laws. The MPW was naturally interested in the fate of the Walloons of Brussels. The Brussels Walloon Movement Comité d'action wallonne de Bruxelles issued a statement on July 23rd 1963 (Ordre du jour) strongly critical of the new laws in the capital and the MPW issued a Tract entitled : 'Le MPW dit "non" aux projets linguistiques du gouvernement' which contained the slogan "Oui au bilinguisme des services, oui à l'unilinguisme des individus."  

As with the Flemish Movement, non-political cultural organisations became part of the general process of asserting a French view. In an editorial in the Bulletin of the Foundation, Charles Plisnier (branch of the Association Européenne de l'ethnie Française), M.V.Willam wrote:
Il n'est pas dans les habitudes de la Fondation - et moins encore dans les miennes - de se hasarder dans la jungle politique ou de lancer des avertissements solennels "aux princes" qui nous gouvernent.

Mais il est des circonstances où se taire devient non seulement une lâcheté, mais une véritable trahison vis-à-vis de soi-même, des autres hommes, un manquement à son devoir de citoyen et de démocrate.

Ainsi nous apparaissent aujourd'hui certains actes du législatif et de l'exécutif de l'état belge.

Croyez-vous juste d'imposer un régime bilingue à Ixelles et St. Gilles - pour prendre un autre exemple - qui ne compte que 10% de néerlandophones et de n'accorder, avec combien de réticence, que quelques facilités linguistiques à Crainham et Wezembeek où vivent plus de 50% de francophone?

Similar French business circles in the city began to express concern about the impact of limitations upon the capital's economic future:

Il est certain que les voix s'élèvent pour un isolement économique de Bruxelles en ce qui concerne des mesures qui sont prises dans le cadre de développement économique régional. Ouvertement, on veut freiner son essor alors que nous nous sommes jamais opposés à celui des autres régions du pays, que ce soit en Flandre ou en Wallonie.

Car, permettez-moi de croire que, malgré toutes les manifestations, tous les cortèges, tous les marches, politiques, Bruxelles restera Bruxelles.
Finally an even more significant development at this time, in that it led to a clearly defined politically autonomous Brussels movement, was the publication of the 'Manifeste Bruxellois' in 1963, signed by 300 academic staff from the Free University of Brussels (ULB). From these same academics derived the Rassemblement pour le droit et liberté, founded in December 1963. The RDL and the 'Manifeste' preceding it made five main points:

1. The right for each individual to use the language of his choice and have access to and facilities in any cultural tradition he wishes,
2. The rejection of any policies based on such concepts as 'sol' or 'sang',
3. The duty to combat all manifestations of intolerance and fanaticism,
4. Free access to all relevant information, and
5. Open and free consultation and reference to all views in approaching the possibility of revising the Belgian Constitution.

As part of their quest for free and thorough information the RDL conducted a full survey on the use of language in the Brussels region in 1967, published under the title: 'Que veulent les Bruxellois? - une sondage d'opinion sur le régime linguistique dans la région de Bruxelles'. This provided a range of information previously mainly a matter of estimation and opinion.
Although the FDF was founded in time to do so, the decision was made not to contest the communal elections of October 1964. The party criticised the policies of all three traditional parties, including the PLP/PVV, and urged Bruxellois to vote where possible for small French groups such as the Unité francophone in Brussels commune and Uccle or the Union démocratique et francophone in Etterbeck and, where this was not possible, to vote for the candidate from the three traditional parties who was most sympathetic to the policies close to those of the FDF. In addition the FDF extended its interest to the periphery and offered moral and propagandist support to French groups there.

The May 1965 General Election was the first appearance of the FDF on the electoral scene. For the party the campaign began with a mass rally on November 12th 1964 and from that date to the election the party set out to achieve two objectives. The first was the basic one of extending the party organisation as widely as possible and the second was the achievement of a balance between the various points of view from different political philosophies on the older political spectrum - pluralism in the left-right sense. The latter was accomplished by balancing the list of candidates offered. The first name on the list for the Chamber was Léon Defosset from the left (President in Brussels of the MPW) and the
first name on the Senate list was André Lagasse from the right (Professor at UCL and president of the Brussels section of the Catholic Renovation Wallonne). In the end the lists included former Catholics, Socialists, Liberals, RDL leaders and members of small French groups. Many of these had been elected to their commune conseil in October 1963. The pluralism of the FDF was therefore confirmed by the choice of candidates. The FDF also made an agreement with the Front Démocratique Wallon (FDW) in the Nivelles area of Brabant. The FDW was in its turn linked to the emerging Rassemblement Wallon (RW) in the south. Through common membership of the MPW, Renovation Wallon and similar French organisations which supported the RW in the south, many members of the FDF were in contact with the latter. In 1968 these links were formalised as the union between the FDF and RW. No formal links were established with the Association des francophones de Flandre (AFF) but in Louvain and the periphery of the capital there were such links on a personal basis. Some small French groups in the city refused to cooperate with the new party. In January 1965, for example, the small Rassemblement démocratique de Bruxelles (RDB) declined to associate itself because of its reservations about FDF policies and fears for national unity. Similarly two communal councillors, formerly linked to the FDF, organised a separate list, Unité francophone, following arguments about the compilation of the FDF lists. These French lists not associated with the FDF were
very small and they were isolated cases.* Much more significant was
the decision of the RDL to give its support exclusively to the FDF
from 30th March 1965 after it received no clear replies from the three
traditional parties to its request for guarantees of reform of the
language laws. The older parties were in no position to make such
commitments. At the time of its first appearance on the national
political scene the FDF was therefore challenging the traditional
patterns of party allegiance in the capital. Expressed simply, the
FDF was inviting the followers of the traditional party leaderships
to desert their old loyalties. Many of the leaders of the new
FDF were formerly active in leading roles in the older parties.
The new set of allegiances which was developing was likely to
introduce a new element of fluidity and uncertainty into the politics
of the capital. Community loyalty was replacing traditional sub-
cultural philosophical loyalties and thus undermining the old
structure of elite-follower relationships.

In the election of May 1965 the FDF did well, given its
short existence — only eight months. It obtained 68,966 votes
for the Chamber (8.29%) and 68,397 (8.37%) for the Senate. The
percentages are of the Brussels results where the FDF put forward
candidates. This gave the party three deputies and one senator.
Three deputies in a Chamber of 212 is small but it constitutes a

* The small Unité Francophone group, for example, received about
4,000 votes only in the election.
"parliamentary group" in the Belgian system, giving access to commissions and committees as of right. The VU had achieved this breakthrough in 1961. It is important as a factor which enhances the credibility of a party within a system. The themes of the FDF election campaign were outlined in its 'Programme d'urgence' published in April 1965. This programme was specifically concerned with Brussels and its problems. It included repeal of the language laws, a special status for Brussels, individual and local rights. There were no social or economic views expressed for they were not the party's immediate concern. The linguistic issue was the core of the FDF campaign. The party included in its pluralism representatives of various economic and social philosophies and also it included federalists and unitarists. Nevertheless the defence of the interests of Brussels was the totally dominant theme of its 1965 programme.

Normally a one-issue party is vulnerable and in a precarious position. It can rise quickly over the one issue and decline just as quickly as circumstances change. The FDF had arisen over one issue at a time when that issue was becoming particularly acute. The directness and clarity of its advocacy of the Bruxellois position was an initial source of strength. This gave it an advantage over the traditional parties in the city. This one issue was however so much interlinked with the overall Belgian community problem and that problem was proving so intractable that
a speedy and easy solution would be extremely difficult to find. Therefore the FDF had even at this stage an assured intermediate future beyond the 1965 election.

At the time of the foundation of the FDF in September 1964 a central executive organ was instituted, the Comité de direction, which included representatives of the main French and Walloon movements and groups in the capital. This directorate was broadly based and included Outers (General Secretary of the Catholic Rénovation Wallonne), Laloux (from the PSC), Notte (formerly PSB) and Bourgeois (formerly PLP). In October 1964 it was replaced by an expanded Comité executif. After the elections of May 1965 a further Comité directeur was set up. This committee had 32 members and was to meet monthly. A number of sub-committees were also created to handle specific areas of party work such as finance and grassroots organisation. Especially important was the sub-committee to handle relations with the press and radio and television. In July 1965 membership was defined as being on an individual basis by subscription. The FDF had grown out of the cooperation of various organisations such as the RDL, MPW, Rénovation Wallonne and others. By emphasising individual membership the party established itself as an organisation in its own right and not as a coalition of groups. The members were associated with branches which each elected a local executive committee.
During June, July and September, 1965, branches appeared in Anderlecht, Leeuw, St. Pierre, Wezembeek, Woluwe St. Lambert, Woluwe St. Pierre, Auderghem, Ixelles and Watermael-Boitsfort. Many of these branches asked members of the Comité directeur to act as their honorary presidents (Outers at Auderghem and Lagasse at Ixelles, for example). This formed a link between the party executive and the new branches. In October 1965 the party newspaper FDF-Contact was first published as a monthly journal and sent free to members, keeping them informed of developments, actions and policies. Between 1965 and 1971 the party expanded whilst following broadly the same organisational pattern as that set up in 1965.

By 1971 the President, Vice-President and General Secretary of the party were elected for 3-year terms by the Congress of the FDF. A Bureau permanent had also been created to run the party organisation. This included representatives of the FDF, members of communal conseils, the RDL, branch organisations, the Young FDF and the CTP (Comité technique de propagande). The Bureau had two lines of contact with the party as a whole. The first was via the Conseil général des sections. This conseil had one representative from each branch. It was given the responsibility of coordinating activities between branches and exploring the possibility of opening up new ones. The second link between the Bureau and the branches was through the Association des mandataires communaux FDF, which had an executive of 32, elected from FDF councillors in the communes.
In discussing of the RW the differences between the Walloon party and the VU in respect of the origins of the leaders and pluralism in the parties was pointed out. The FDF was similar from this point of view to the RW. The leaders of the new party were all former activists, deputies, senators or leading elements in already existing parties or social organisations. The new party was therefore pluralist as a result of the varied backgrounds of its original leadership. There was also a considerable overlap of membership among the various Brussels and Walloon organisations and groups. As was the case with the RW, the FDF was largely created by its first leadership who formed a new coalition around a common regional focus and sought to take their followers with them.
THE EXPANSION OF THE BASE OF THE FDF

Beneath the level of central organisation the FDF continued to expand its branches. By October 1968 there were 29 branches and by 1971 the party had some sort of organisation in 36 communes of the Brussels region - 20 branches in Brussels-Capital (2 for Brussels commune), 6 in the communes of the arrondissement special, 11 in the Flemish arrondissement of Hal-Vilvorde (with its French minorities) and 1 in Flemish Tervuren. In the communes in the Nivelles arrondissement, which is also considered in part of the Brussels region but is in the French linguistic zone in the south, the FDF did not operate in competition with the RW. In 1966 the FDF also set up its own youth organisation - Jeunesse FDF for members under 30. The total party organisation therefore had expanded considerably since the small beginnings in 1964.

On 27th October 1968, the first full party Congress was held with delegations from each branch. The second was held in May 1970. Theoretically all members were able to participate in the Congress via their branches. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the party only existed within a relatively confined geographical area of one city - albeit a large one - and therefore communication within the FDF was much easier than in a party covering a whole country. By 1974-75 the membership of the party had grown to 11,000. This figure only has meaning when compared to
the membership of other parties in the Brussels region. The CVP had 17,000 (most of them in the outer Flemish zone and relatively few in the city), the PSC (Francophone) - 5,000, the BSP/PSB 25,000, the Liberals - 7,500 and the PC - 2,300. Thus by 1974 the FDF was stronger in membership than the PSC, the Liberals and the Communists. The Socialist membership included both communities. The FDF by the 1970s, therefore, was very firmly implanted in the region. In 1968 the FDF entered an agreement to join with the Rassemblement Wallon and form a common front. The agreement made no difference to the organisational or membership structure of the party, which remained completely autonomous and independent in its own Brussels area. For this reason it is possible to consider the FDF from 1964 into the 1970s as an autonomous party.

Between 1965 and the 1970s, the party demonstrated a preference for press conferences, television and radio propaganda and especially mass meetings as a means of influencing public opinion. Usually these meetings took place in the large Salle de la Madeleine in Brussels and were attended by thousands of people. The emphasis upon huge public meetings was appropriate to a party operating in a large city but not seeking to campaign outside that city.

In April 1967 the journal 'FDF-Contact' was replaced by 'Bruxelles Verité', a bi-monthly, initially of 12 pages, later much
expanded. The average circulation of 'Bruxelles Verité' was 100,000 and at election times this was enlarged to 400,000. The journal formed therefore an excellent means of propaganda, with a high circulation within an area of 1½ million. The extensive propaganda and agitation initiated by the FDF recalls similar actions initiated by the VU in Flanders. In both cases the object was similar: to keep linguistic and cultural problems on the political agenda and draw into the movement a wide range of support beyond the membership of the regional party.

The traditional political parties in Belgium formed the political wing of a total 'famille spirituelle'. The FDF (like the VU) also became associated with various social organisations apart from politics. On 9th November, 1968, a permanence d'aide was established and on 1st February 1970, a Mutuelle neutre francophone offered facilities to FDF members who had left the mutuelles linked to the older 'familles spirituelles'. In 1968 a Communauté de langue française began to provide recreational, cultural and sporting facilities for FDF supporters. The social functions of the party were extended to the establishment of an annual ball, Nuit des Francophones, in November, numerous cultural events and excursions, especially for young people, to Wallonia and the Côte d'Opale in France. In January 1971 a Société de musique FDF was formed, including drum majorettes to entertain at FDF rallies and meetings. In this way the FDF began to create around itself an 'FDF-famille'
which would provide a broader base for the future. The Volksunie had moved in the same direction and it is interesting to observe a new party in Belgian politics following the similar patterns to those of the traditional parties.

The efforts to ensure that the FDF would be open to all philosophies continued after the initial foundation period. The party drew strong support both from ULB (the secular free university) and UCL (the Catholic university) through the medium of the RDL. In a survey of the 22 members of the Bureau permanent in March 1971, 16 could be identified by their former political allegiance. 9 had formerly been Socialists, 4 had been Liberals and 3 had been PSC. On the Comité directeur, which included the above, plus 28 others and a former Communist senator who was the Honorary President, the former allegiances were: 14 Socialists, 7 Liberals and 6 PSC. The other members were formerly not attached to any political party. The representatives of the FDF in Parliament illustrated this also: 1965-68 out of 4 members, 2 were former Socialists and 2 former PSC and 1968-71, out of 9 representatives, 3 were former Socialists, 3 former Liberals and 3 former PSC. The pluralism of the initial foundation of the party was therefore continued into the 1970s. It would be appropriate to say therefore that by the late 1960s, the FDF was creating a new 'segment' in Brussels politics in a similar mould to the three traditional parties in the past. Within the capital any attempt to find a solution to the community crisis by consociational means would therefore need the inclusion of the FDF
leadership in the discussions as they would represent an important section of the population. As noted previously, the Belgian tradition of consociational democracy had always excluded small or anti-system groups from the consultations involved. Although the FDF might be small on the national scale it was much more important in the capital. Its exclusion from discussions about the fate of the capital would not only be dangerous but also contradict the whole spirit of consociational democracy. On the other hand its inclusion might enhance its stature and credibility in the eyes of an electorate which was showing its willingness to desert its old allegiances. This was the dilemma which faced the traditional parties as the FDF growth seemed to be unstoppable.

The initial policy statements of the FDF had been largely confined to the linguistic issue. The first Programme d'urgence had referred almost exclusively to these issues. It was necessary, however, for the party to study also social, economic and constitutional questions. By the party congress of 1968 the FDF had evolved a range of policies relating to other problems besides those associated with the language. They covered socio-economic questions, family policy, foreign policy, planning and many other areas. In this way the pluralism of background of the original leadership was reinforced in a range of policies which could attract wide support.
The year 1968 saw several developments which intensified the political atmosphere in Brussels and indirectly benefitted the FDF in its position as an unequivocal Brussels party. The year began with the acute crisis surrounding the future of the Catholic University of Louvain-Leuven (UCL). This was a straightforward linguistic-community issue. This crisis led to the fall of the government coalition and the elections in March. The election led to the splitting of the CVP/PSC along linguistic lines, the divisions among Brussels Socialists and a considerable expansion in support for the Volksunie, Rassemblement Wallon and the FDF. The PLP/PVV held together a form of unity but still lost considerable support in the capital. Following the elections and the discontents in Brussels the 'Manifeste des 29' was published in May. This manifesto was, as can be seen in retrospect, a further step in the realignment of political forces in Brussels.

The crisis around Louvain made an impact upon Brussels for a number of reasons. The crisis was one of language and community and Brussels was clearly very sensitive to these problems. The traditional leading parties had not acted in such a way as to inspire confidence in their handling of future similar crises. The Louvain crisis also revealed the unreliability of a common Catholic philosophy as a basis for agreement between the communities. Flemish
Catholics and Walloon Catholics, both members of the traditionally Catholic CVP/PSC and part of the same famille spirituelle were opposed to each other over the future of the Catholic University of Louvain. It should also be noted that in some ways the University of Louvain was a local university to the Brussels Catholics. UCL and the ULB (Free Secular University of Brussels) formed the two leading higher education establishments in Brabant and many Louvain students were Bruxellois. This closeness of the Louvain issue to the problems of the capital is well illustrated in the point of the VU deputy Van der Elst:

As far as the problem of Louvain is concerned the Flemings are not opposed to Walloons studying there, because after their studies they would return to Wallonia. The problem of Louvain was aggravated by the French students from Brussels who were studying in Louvain. The crisis was further provoked by the intention of certain Brussels Francophone professors and students to achieve the enlargement of the bilingual zone of Brussels to include Louvain.

The Louvain crisis was therefore bound to have repercussions in the capital and this increased the urgency of the language and community question there and therefore benefitted the FDF.

The appearance of the 'Manifeste des 29' was a direct result of the election of March 1968 and the government formation which followed that election. In 1965 the elections had returned in the Brussels region 11 PLP/PVV deputies to the Chamber, 8 CVP/PSC,
9 PSB/BSP. 3 FDF, 1 VU and 1 Communist. The number of Dutch-speaking deputies was 8 out of 33. The outgoing government in 1968 had the support of 19 of the 33 deputies from Brussels (CVP/PSC-PLP/PVV coalition). In the tense atmosphere surrounding the 1968 elections the three traditional parties in the capital were in great difficulties. There was a separate PSC list, led by Persoons, opposed to the CVP list headed by the former Premier Van den Boeynants (VDB) and the PSB led by Simonet was separate from the Flemish Rode Leeuven. The PLP/PVV held together a fragile unity which was under much pressure after the elections. The results in 1968 gave the following seats in the Chamber for the Brussels area (out of 33): CVP/VDB - 9, PLP/PVV - 8, PSB - 5, Rode Leeuven - 3, PSC - 1, FDF - 5, VU - 1 and 1 Communist. In April when the Eyskens-Merlot coalition (CVP/PSC-PSB/BSP) was formed only 11 out of the 33 gave it their support (8 CVP-VDB of whom 5 were Flemish and 3 French-speakers and 3 Rode Leeuven all Flemish), 1 PSC deputy, Persoons, abstained and the other 21 Brussels deputies voted against the new government.* In the Senate only 8 out of 22 Brussels Senators supported the government. Thus out of a grand total of 59 Brussels representatives in Parliament only 19 supported the government, 1 abstained and 39 were opposed. Of the 19 Brussels representatives who were Dutch-speakers, 12 supported the government.

* Persoons: a PSC deputy who opposed the VDB/CVP cartel in Brussels in 1968 and moved in 1968-71 towards a 'Brussels first' position. By 1971 he had joined the FDF and left the PSC.
and 7 (PVV) opposed. Of the 40 who were French-speakers, 7 supported the government and 32 opposed, with the 1 abstention. The implications of this were serious. The government was very much a minority one in Brussels (39:19) and even more so among Francophone representatives (32:7). This led to a lower representation for Brussels in the new Ministry. In 1965-68, 7 out of 24 ministerial posts had been held by Brussels representatives whilst after 1968 this fell to 5, out of an enlarged list of 29. This situation was not one to inspire loyalty or confidence in the government on the part of the Brussels French-speakers.

The CVP/PSC and the Socialists were the governing parties which had passed the 1963 laws. Therefore it was very necessary for the members of those parties in the capital to ensure that they were not the victims of some sort of Brussels-backlash over them. Hence the split in the CVP/PSC and the PSB/BSP. The Brussels PSB deputies and senators, and also Persoons (PSC), were emphasising, by their non-support of the government made up of their own parties, that the problems of Brussels were above their older loyalties. The problems of the two main parties were less immediate for the PLP/PVV because during the 1961-65 period it had been in opposition and therefore was not implicated in the passing of the new language laws. The Liberal campaign of 1968 emphasised liberty for individuals and groups and also national unity, policies around which its various sections could coalesce. After the election, however, linguistic
disagreements began to appear among the Liberals also. In contrast to this disunity among the older parties, the FDF and VU stood out with their clearly defined policies. The dissident members of the PSC and PSB in Brussels were isolated from the majority of their colleagues in the national party. They formed small minority groups but in combination with others, such as the FDF, they were a major force in the capital. Therefore the possibility or even desirability of cooperation between French-speaking members of the traditional parties in Brussels and the FDF became an important factor after March 1968. The example of disloyalty to the national party set by some members of the PSB and PSC was also likely to make it easier for the voters to show similar flexibility and consider the possibility of new alliances and loyalties.

After 1968, therefore, two trends emerged. The first was the evolution of the FDF as the leading political force in the capital and the second was the coming together of some of the representatives of other parties in the city to form a common front to defend the French interest against a government to which their loyalty was in doubt even if of their own political party. This produced strains in the traditional parties in Brussels as the French - and Dutch-speakers drew apart and also as old loyalties and new pressures pulled in different directions.

In April 1968 the comité directeur of the FDF invited the parliamentary representatives of the other parties in Brussels to
"prendre en commun des initiatives nécessaires pour parer au danger." 28 This appeal was formally received by the PSB and Simont, the leader of the Brussels PSB, agreed to "un appel à la création d'un rassemblement des parlementaires bruxellois pour défendre la capitale et ce sans aucune exclusive." 29 The PLP/PVV, however, unlike Simont's PSB still included Dutch-speaking deputies and members and therefore their reaction was lukewarm. On the other hand, within the party the French-speakers were rather more enthusiastic than the official line would suggest. There were emerging three tendencies within the PLP/PVV - the Dutch-speakers, the French moderates and the more extreme French-speakers. On the 13th June, 1968, Professor Van Rijn, President of the RDL, invited a group of Brussels French parliamentarians to meet for discussions about the situation. A meeting with representatives from the PSC, PSB, PCB and FDF took place on the 16th June. From this point a number of further meetings took place, later including the French PLP. Finally, on July 11th 1968, a committee of 10 (3 FDF, 3 PLP, 3 PSB and Persoons, PSC) produced a manifesto which was later called the 'Manifeste des 29'.

The manifesto was signed by 29 parliamentarians. Of these, 9 were FDF, 10 PSB, 8 PLP, 1 PCB and Persoons (PSC). Of the 12 Francophones who refused to sign, 7 were from the CVP/VDB group and 5 were moderate PLP. 18 of the 19 Dutch-speakers refused to sign, including 3 PVV, as well as the CVP, Flemish Socialists and VU. Following the publications of the manifesto the 8 PLP signatories
found themselves in some difficulties with the national party. They
were called to a meeting of the Bureau of the party on the 17th July.
Some members (Sen. Vanderpoorte from Machelen and deputy Hannotte from
Mons) demanded that the eight renounce their support for the manifesto.
This extreme view was rejected but the final statement of the
chairman referred to the necessity for more discipline within the
party. He also added: "Je regrette que certains de nos amis
ont signé ce document sans avoir consulté ou prévenue le bureau." 30
The national PSB accepted the situation of the party in Brussels but
with reservations about the necessity for such actions as the
manifesto. The Vice-President of the BSP (Flemish wing of the party)
praised the refusal of the Flemish Socialists in the capital to
sign the document.31 The CVP and PSC were already separate by this
time and therefore the sympathy of the PSC in Brussels for the manifesto
merely increased the tensions between the two wings. The 'Manifesto
des 29' demonstrated the growing gap between the national parties
and their Brussels regional French-speaking sections. The CVP and
PSC were already split nationally, with the tension between them most
serious in the capital, the Socialists were dividing into two
clearly separate groups in the city and, following the 'Manifesto',
tension began to develop between the Brussels Liberals and the
national PLP/PVV.

From the point of view of the FDF these developments
had advantages. The successes of the VU in Flanders in bringing
pressure to bear upon the CVP was being repeated in Brussels by the FDF. The extra dimension in the capital was the weakening of the traditional parties through their divisions and compromises. On the one hand it would appear as if the FDF were merely part of a coalition of interests in Brussels which would have no long term impact upon the political patterns there:

...initiative prise ne signifie nullement la création d'une nouvelle formation politique ou d'un groupe interparlementaire, mais qu'à l'instar de ce qui est réalisé en Flandre et en Wallonie, c'est l'expression d'opinions convergentes, lesquelles du reste ont été formulées lors du débat sur le programme gouvernemental.

On the other hand the formal attachment of the members of the manifesto group to their old party loyalty was perhaps no more than "une danse de style car la solidarité régionale l'emporterait finalement sur l'attachement aux partis traditionnels." The FDF would form the centre of any new alignments in Brussels because it already occupied a strongly regional position.

Having achieved the creation of the '29' an effort was made in the autumn of 1968 to draw in the support of the maximum number of communal and provincial councillors not only from the capital but also from the periphery and outer areas. The FDF played a major role in this. For example, in September the party published a pamphlet for distribution throughout the region giving
full details of the manifesto. These efforts produced varied but generally satisfactory results. Thirty four of the 65 members of the Brabant Provincial Council signed a motion in support of the manifesto. Brabant included largely Dutch-speaking areas as well as the capital and its periphery. 18 of the 19 Brussels-Capital communal council passed resolutions in support also. The only one which did not was Woluwe-St.Lambert where the controlling CVP/VDB group, supported by 4 out of 6 PLF/PVV members opposed the manifesto. The FDF uttered a warning about this:

... nous comptons avertir la population de Woluwe - St.Lambert de votre réponse afin de lui permettre d'apporter des suffrages, en 1970 aux candidats mandataires communaux décidés à défendre ses intérêts.

Among the 6 communes the 'arrondissement spécial' (à facilités) there were no resolutions of the full council but 5 'bourgmestres' signed demands for their communes to be joined to the bilingual region of the capital. The Flemish Gazet van Antwerpen suggested that this growth of support was achieved under 'FDF pressure'. If this were true then it would suggest that the FDF had become a very serious force by 1968 able to put such pressure upon the communal councils. Beyond this there was no further official reaction to the 'Manifeste des 29' but in November 1968 the Association des conseillers communaux de la périphérie bruxelloise (which consisted of individual councillors in favour of more linguistic freedom)
resolved to support the '29' and take part in the planned 'Manifestation de St.Gilles' on December 2nd. This extension of the campaign around the 'Manifeste des 29' led by the FDF was effective to the following extent:

Among the 19 communes of the capital were 467 councillors of whom 432 were present when votes were taken on the resolutions supporting the manifesto and of these 432, 277 voted in favour (64%), 139 abstained (32%) and only 16 opposed (4%).

141 PSB councillors supported the motions, 4 abstained.

111 PLP councillors supported the motions and 55 abstained and 18 CVP/PSC supported the motions, 78 abstained and 14 voted against.

At the 'Manifestation de St.Gilles' in December 1968, 230 of the 467 Brussels councillors attended or sent good wishes (nearly 50%) as did 14 of the 70 in the arrondissement spécial. In addition 17 of the 255 members of the executive committees of the communal councils in the Flemish arrondissements of Hal-Vilvorde and Leuven attended. These figures were satisfactory (especially the 50% attendance from Brussels) from the FDF point of view. The momentum of the community problem had steadily increased in the area since the early 1960s and the FDF was in a position to capitalise upon this in the communal elections due in 1970 and the general election due in 1972. In considering these statistics it
is necessary to recall that the FDF did not exist prior to 1964 and did not take part in the communal elections of October of that year. Hence all the councillors who supported the manifesto and the 'Manifestation' were from the traditional parties.

Another major development in 1968 of significance to the growth of the FDF was the formalisation of links between the party and the RW in the south. The FDF evolved in 1964-5 around specifically Brussels regional policies. By extension, however, these issues led to a concern for the future constitutional arrangements for the country as a whole. The FDF faced the danger that Brussels, with less than 15% of the electorate, might find itself isolated in some new constitutional arrangements which would satisfy Flemish and Walloon demands for autonomy but leave the capital in a highly vulnerable position. Therefore some sort of agreement between the FDF and RW had the advantages of an insurance policy, apart from the emotional and cultural ties of the French language in the face of the Flemish threat. The two parties, as a result of their geographical position, placed different emphases in their policies, the FDF being interest in language and cultural questions and the RW, operating in a unilingual French area, more concerned with economic and demographic problems.

Some cooperation between the two parties began during the election of March 1968 when each agreed to allow the other exclusive campaigning rights in its own territory in Brabant (the RW in the arrondissement of Nivelles and the FDF in the Brussels, Hal-Vilvorde and Leuven arrondissements). At an eve of poll press conference on
March 30th, Havelange, soon to be an FDF deputy suggested three common areas between the FDF and RW - they were both pluralist, they were in favour of French solidarity and they were opposed to Flemish hegemony.  

After the election the deputies and senators from the two parties formed one group in Parliament and began weekly meetings to coordinate action. On May 11th discussions began between delegations from each party with a view to forming a united front. On May 21st a union between the two was officially announced at a press conference in Brussels. This was followed by a joint meeting in Brussels addressed by the leaders of both parties. From October 25th the two parties offered common spokesmen at TV and radio discussions, press conferences and similar public meetings. Large public meetings emphasised this unity - on 16th March 1970 an FDF-RW rally entitled 'Mobilisation de Bruxelles', on April 24th at Charleroi 'Mobilisation Wallonie-Bruxelles' and in June at Waterloo 'Solidarité Wallonie-Bruxelles.'
THE FDF BECOMES THE MAIN PARTY IN THE CAPITAL

The election of 1968 was the breakthrough for the FDF. The setting of the election following the Louvain crisis was ideal for the party and agonising for the CVP/PSC and PSB/BSP which were split and offered separate lists for each community. The CVP/VDB cartel was an attempt to hold together a bilingual list. The results for Brussels capital were:

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</tbody>
</table>

The PSB/BSP for the capital was split between the French official PSB and the Flemish Rode Leeuven with 17.73% and 2.32% respectively. Similarly the CVP/PSC vote was split between the CVP/VDB cartel with 24.86% and the PSC with 2.74%. Thus 39% of the voters voted for the French groups - FDF, PSB and PSC and 7% voted for the purely Flemish VU and Rode Leeuven.

The Liberals lost ground but still remained the largest group in the capital as the CVP/PSC was split. To a certain extent in 1968 they had lost the momentum they possessed in 1965. They had hoped to improve on their 1965 performance and the results in 1968 suggested that the Liberals had not achieved the
total breakthrough to a realignment of Belgian politics around
themselves which they had been seeking. The FDF share of 18.63% 
was a considerable success and gave the party 5 deputies and 4
senators, a total parliamentary representation of 9 compared to 4 
in 1965. In 1968 there were four unilingual parties - FDF, VU, 
Rode Leeuven and PSC (Persoons group) and they gained nearly 30% 
of the votes. The FDF and VU between them took 23%. This was an
ominous sign for the future danger of the polarisation of Brussels 
politics along community lines.

The 1971 election was partially a judgement upon the
parties of government and their handling of the constitutional
revision which was to solve the community problem. This was passed
in 1971 after long delays. In Brussels in 1971 the CVP and PSC 
succeeded in presenting one list of candidates instead of the two
of 1968. The Socialists were again split between the PSB and Rode
Leeuven. The Liberals, who had held together in the election of
1968, split in 1971 into three groups - the PLP/PVU (an attempt
at unity) the PLP of Brussels (French) and a dissident Mundeleer
Liberal group. The events of the period after 1968, especially
the 'Manifeste des 29' in Brussels and the new constitutional
arrangements which confirmed the limits of the city to 19 communes
and left the Bruxellois dissatisfied, meant that 1971 would again
be an election fought in the capital over issues highly relevant
to the FDF. The results expressed further disenchantment with the
older parties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCB</th>
<th>PSB/BSP</th>
<th>LIBS</th>
<th>CVP/PSC</th>
<th>VU</th>
<th>FDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>20.67</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>20.11</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>34.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-10.25</td>
<td>-6.49</td>
<td>+1.39</td>
<td>+15.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again comparison of the performances of the main parties is difficult because of the splits but in 1971 the combined Socialist (PSB and Rode Leeuven) and CVP/PSC support had fallen to 40.78% (1961 = 69.64%, 1965 = 45.87%, 1968 = 47.65%). In 1971 support for community-based lists (FDF, VU, Rode Leeuven, Fr. Libs. etc.) approached 70% and the FDF and VU between them took 40.14% which was approximately the same as the combined vote of the Socialists and CVP/PSC. The result of the election gave the FDF 10 deputies (1968 = 5) and 7 senators (1968 = 4), a total of 17 in place of 9. The party was 14% ahead of its nearest rivals (the combined PSB/BSP) in first place in the capital. The 1971 election was therefore the point at which the FDF ceased to be a minor party or even an intruder in Brussels but became rather the leading political force in the city. The decline of the Liberal vote in the city since the high point of 1965 was also significant. In 1965 the PLP/PVU percentage was 33.46%, in 1968, 26.26% and in 1971 16.01%. The explanation of this lies in the disillusionment of the voters with the main parties. In the middle 1960s this took support away from the governing parties - the Socialists and CVP/PSC. In 1968 this began to have its effect upon the Liberals also.
In 1971 there also took place the election to the new conseil d'agglomération in Brussels. The new councils were part of the attempt in the late 1960s to reform local government. The reforms had created the new councils to coordinate the government of the whole area. The old 19 communes continued to deal with purely local matters but the new conseil d'agglomération was to solve the problems of lack of coordination between communes described above. In 1965 the FDF had not taken part in the communal elections as a separate party. In 1970, however, the party had offered candidates in all 19 communes. The communal elections which took place a year before the d'agglomération election of 1971 gave the following total results for the whole capital:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCB</th>
<th>PBS/BSP</th>
<th>LIBS</th>
<th>CVP/PSC</th>
<th>VU</th>
<th>FDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Already by 1970 therefore the FDF had moved into first place in the capital. The 28% of the communal elections of 1970 had grown to over 34% by the general election a year later. Even more impressive was the result of the election for the conseil d'agglomération which took place one week after the 1971 General Election. In this election the FDF (together with their Liberal allies) took control of the city's new overall controlling authority.

In the election the FDF entered a local coalition with
the French wing of the Brussels PLP and they took the joint name of Rassemblement Bruxellois (RB). The RB cartel rejected the government policy on the capital. In addition to French support the RB managed to attract some Dutch-speakers. This was most important in view of the parity on the executive of the new conseil where Dutch-speakers would have equal numbers of seats with the French-speakers. The result of the elections for the conseil were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCB</th>
<th>PSB/BSP</th>
<th>PLP/PVV</th>
<th>CVP/PSC</th>
<th>VU</th>
<th>RB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 49.2% for the RB, which was 2/3rd FDF, was a signal success for the party. It gave the RB control of the city and therefore made the FDF the dominant force. The conseil seats were allotted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB/BSP</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVV/PLP/Lib.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ind.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the Law of 26th July 1971 the collège or executive of the conseil was to consist of 6 French-, 6 Dutch-speakers plus a chairman. The RB with its total majority on the French-speaking side took 5 of the 6 seats and it also took 3 of the 6 Dutch seats. Thus it took 8 of the 12 seats and also the chairmanship went to the RB. The RB also controlled the alarm bell machinery by which a language group could refer back measures harmful to their cultural group. In 1971, therefore, the RB emerged with a majority in the conseil, a majority on the collège, the chairmanship of the latter, control of the French cultural council and even a decisive voice on the Dutch cultural council.

The expansion of support for the FDF in 1968 and subsequent years was obviously at the expense of other parties. The VU support also expanded at this time but it can safely be assumed that these two parties did not attract votes from each other. According to Delruelle, Evalenke and Fraeys, the FDF gains in 1968 were largely at the expense of the PSB, with the addition of a higher than average support from new voters:

Le FDF dans la région Bruxelles-Capitale est composé sur base du vote de 1961, de

11% de PSC
30% de PSB
23% de PLP
1% de PCB
3% d'électeurs ayant voté blanc.
32% de nouveaux électeurs.
Les électeurs PSB ont rejoint le FDF assez également durant les deux périodes de 1961/5 et 1965/68.
In 1971 the PSB gained very slightly in the capital (+.62%) as did the PCB (.42%) whereas the CVP/PSC lost 6.49% and the PLP/PVV lost 10.25%. As in 1971 the FDF gained 15.87%, it can be assumed that the main transfers in the 1968-71 period were from PSC and PLP. On this assumption it may be estimated that by 1971 the above estimate of the composition of the FDF vote should be modified approximately thus:

17% from PSC, 30% from PSB, 33% from PLP with new voters the remainder.

The significance of this is that by 1971 the pattern of former support among voters for the FDF had become fully pluralist (i.e. from all three familles spirituelles), reflecting the background of the founders in 1964 and their efforts at pluralism in candidate selection in 1965, 1968 and 1971.

By 1971 therefore the FDF had achieved considerable success. In the elections of 1965 and 1968 it had established its position as a credible minor party nationally and a potentially serious force in its own region. After 1968 it ensured that it would not remain as an isolated group by taking a major part in the inter-party Brussels movement following the 'Manifeste des 29'. This gave the FDF a new authority in the capital as one of the leading forces in a new grand coalition of forces in defence of
the interests of the citizens. In alliance with the RW the party formed part of a parliamentary group which could not be ignored. The success in the elections to the conseil d'agglomération when the Reassemblént Bruxellois achieved an overall majority marks the logical culmination of this process. The FDF occupied 27 of the 42 seats won by the RB or 33% of the total of 83.

In comparison with the VU in Flanders the FDF was more successful within its own region. The former exerted considerable pressure upon the traditional parties, especially the CVP, but its share of the Flemish vote was 19%. This was very successful but must be compared with the 34.5% of the FDF for the same 1971 election in its region. The difference here may be related to the position of the traditional parties in the capital which was much more ambivalent than that of the same parties in Flanders. In the north the parties were subject to pressure from the Flemish movement, including the VU, and the issue for them was whether to take a strongly Flemish line or not. This presented problems, of course, but they were straightforward in their implications. In the capital however the traditional parties were split between Dutch and French-speakers, moderates on both sides, extremists and sympathisers with federalism and centralists. Thus they were in a state of greater confusion than their fellows in Flanders. The growth of the Brussels Movement (similar to the Flemish Movement earlier) brought pressure to bear upon the traditional parties but their response was bound
to be confused and compromised. The blurring of old loyalties drew a great proportion of the old party loyalists to the new formation having the advantage of a pluralism which would make them welcome from a philosophical point of view. It also had a clear policy over the Brussels issues. It would seem therefore that the secret of the extra success of the appeal of the FDF lay in the division and confusions in the older parties in the capital contrasted in the elector's mind with a clear-cut pro-Brussels FDF position.

Assuming that in the electorate of the capital 80% of the voters were French-speakers and further assuming that the number of Dutch-speaking supporters of the FDF were relatively few, then the figure of 34.5% support for the FDF meant approximately 44% of Francophones voted FDF in 1971. By the 1970s, therefore, the centrality of the FDF in the Brussels electoral scene was established and confirmed. Neither the VU in Flanders nor the RW in Wallonia achieved this level of success.
In the 1960s the political system in Brussels, although faced with a local version of the national community crisis, moved further away from the conditions necessary for consociational democracy. Before 1961 the politics of the city were largely a local version of the national three-party system. The issues at stake in the 1960s related mainly to the language laws. The arguments about these became almost matters of principle. Rational compromise became almost impossible as the two sides in the arguments adopted irreconcilable positions. Consociational democracy assumes that the issues can be resolved by rational compromise but such compromises were less likely in the Brussels region by the end of the decade. The boundaries between the three traditional segments into which Brussels society, like the rest of Belgian society, can be divided became blurred as the language question cut across old loyalties and voters in the capital changed their traditional habits to a much greater degree than anywhere else in the country. Consociational democracy assumes clear boundaries to the segments and consistent loyalty of followers to leaders. By 1971 the FDF and its allies had formed a new strong grouping within the Brussels system with the older parties attracting only 50% of the voters between them. The traditional parties were also in serious disarray as a result of their own splits along community lines. The new pattern of party strengths in the city differed considerably from that assumed in the consociational model. In the model a
balance of parties is assumed whereas the FDF was strong enough with its RB allies to bid for and gain absolute control in 1971.

The consociational model cannot therefore be applied to Brussels politics at this time. There was no balance of parties, the positions of the opposing main blocs were not reconcilable and compromise difficult if not impossible to achieve. The proper solution to Brussels' problems could have been simple majority rule. The RB majority in the 1971 conseil d'agglomération elections could be regarded as a mandate for policies advocated by the FDF and its allies in the same way as nationally the CVP/PSC took its outright victory in 1950 as a mandate to form a one-party government.

The reason why Brussels politics could not be allowed to function in this simple way was that such an approach could not be fitted into the overall plans for the resolution of the national problems of community relations. For this reason the national government intervened and imposed its ideas of justice for each community irrespective of majority opinion in the capital.

Brussels also formed an obstacle to a smooth consociational solution to the national problems. Two consociational approaches were possible in the 1960s and 1970s: consensus of all parties including the VU, RW and FDF or consensus of the three
traditional parties excluding the regional ones. The first would be difficult to achieve because the views of the FDF and the Flemish radicals (VU and many CVP) were irreconcilable and therefore the ideal consensus could not be reached. The second would include the main party in Flanders (CVP), the main party in Wallonia (PSB) but would exclude the strongest party in Brussels. Either approach would therefore be incomplete in terms of the consociational model.

The only way forward from the dilemma posed by Brussels might be to separate the Brussels Problem from the rest of the community and regional issues under discussion. This was done in 1971 and for some time in the discussions in the early and middle 1970s. The capital always remained an obstacle to the achievement of an overarching consensus to solve the whole national and regional problem.

By the end of the decade the city had not only become an obstacle to a grand consensual solution to Belgium's crisis but its politics had also become an extreme version of the weakening of the three parties which had taken place in the 1960s. Most of the French-speaking political leaders in the city were closer to each other in their common defence of the interests of the city than they were to the Flemish members and leaders of their own national parties. They had links with the Walloons to the south but the
most outstanding development in Brussels politics in the period, apart from the rapid growth of the FDF and the weakening of the older parties, was the growth of inter-action between the leaders of the French-speaking groups and parties. The 'Manifeste des 29' was an excellent example of this. Brussels had become by 1971 something of an anomaly in the system – an obstacle to progress in regional reform, an area of acute language problems, the area of weakest support for the three traditional parties and the only region under the full control of a community party. At the same time the city only accounted for 12% of the national electorate and therefore could be regarded by the traditional parties as of only of marginal importance. By the early 1970s, however, the older parties had lost their total control of the national system and were therefore unable to move forward resolutely to solve the crisis which faced the system both nationally and locally in Brussels.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

2. Ibid., p.146.
6. 'La Revue Nouvelle', 1968, pp.263-4. 'La Revue Nouvelle', published in 1968 as a series of articles on Brussels and its problems. It is from these articles and from *L'agglo.mération Bruxelloise*, that the statistics concerning the capital are drawn.
7. 'Courrier Hebdomadaire de CRISP', 1958, No.224, p.16.
9. By 1968 the PDP had moved in the direction of federalism when they entered an alliance or union with the RW.
10. The table below shows the performance of the parties in the Brussels electoral region in the national elections from 1946 to 1961.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>PSB/BSP</th>
<th>LIB</th>
<th>CVP/PSC</th>
<th>F1,Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>17% (13%)</td>
<td>35% (32%)</td>
<td>13% (9%)</td>
<td>33% (45%)*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>9 (7)</td>
<td>29 (30)</td>
<td>25 (15)</td>
<td>30 (44)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
<td>41 (35)</td>
<td>18 (11)</td>
<td>35 (48)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>45 (37)</td>
<td>19 (12)</td>
<td>30 (41)*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>43 (36)</td>
<td>18 (11)</td>
<td>33 (46)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>42 (37)</td>
<td>17 (12)</td>
<td>32 (42)*</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes various dissident RC groups.

12. The strict application of the language laws meant that private schooling, which might be a means by which some residents in Flanders (traditionally middle-class) could avoid the law must also be Dutch.
14. The 'zone de recontre' was to include the following:

- Diegen
- Woluwe-St.Etienne
- Overijee
- Hoeillart
- Vlezenbeek
- Herbeek
- Grand Bigard.
- Strombeek
- Vilvorde
- Mechelen
- Zellick
- Dilbeek
- Leeuw St.Peters

This total of 13 communes would greatly have exceeded the existing 6 with 'facilities' and thus enlarged very considerably the French 'peninsula' in Brabant.

15. 'L'alliance Wallone' quoted in 'Courrier Hebdomadaire de CRISP', No.226, p.15.


18. Le Soir, 30.10.63.

19. 'Tract du MPW', 23.7.83.


22. The Manifeste Bruxellois, was published by the journal 'Flambeau' together with a review of the views of the 300, December 1963.

23. Que veulent les Bruxellois? gave results related to questions about language spoken, language of newspapers read, TV programmes watched etc. The research was organised by European Marketing Research in Brussels and covered the 19 communes, the periphery and also outer areas. This was a total of 67 communes in and around the capital. The total number of persons questioned was approximately 2,000.


28. 'La Libre Belgique', 6/7-4.68.

29. 'Pourquoi Pas?', 16.5.68, p.49.

30. 'Pourquoi Pas?', 25.7.68, p.35.

31. 'Pourquoi Pas?', 18.7.68, p.35.

32. Le Soir, 12.7.68.

33. 'Pourquoi Pas?', 25.7.68, p.22.

34. 'La Libre Belgique', 23.10.68.

35. Gazet van Antwerpen, 26/27-10.68.

36. There were contacts between the FDF and RW before the formal agreement in 1968. There was a meeting of FDF/RW 'solidarité' in Charleroi on 17th November 1966, and another in Brussels on 3rd February 1967, 'FDF-Contact', Feb.1967, p.3.

37. 'FDF-Contact', April 1968, p.3.

38. 'Forces Wallonnes', 18.5.68, p.1.


41. The CVP-VDB (Vanden Boyenants) cartel was an attempt by the outgoing Prime Minister (VDB) to present a common French and Dutch-speaking list in the elections in the capital. This must be contrasted with the separate French PSC list headed by Persoons which made common cause with the Walloon PSC over the Louvain issue and the language laws in general. The CVP/VDB cartel did well in the elections because of the prestige of VDB but its support came more from Dutch-speakers than French, who could opt to vote for the PSC. The cartel elected 5 Dutch-speaking and 4 French-speaking deputies.

42. During the negotiations to write the Revised Constitution the CVP/PSC and the Socialists had sought to achieve a tripartite approach. The PLP/PPV for long refused to cooperate. Only in 1970/71 did the PLP/PPV agree to support the Revision. Without the Liberals the other two main parties in the late 1960s were unable to muster the required 2/3rd majorities in Parliament.
Following the 'Manfeste 29' in 1968-69, moderate Liberals in Brussels signed a 'Charte d'union' to hold the party together. In the autumn of 1968, however, a number of radical PVV Flemish members formed their own organisation 'Blaauwe Leeuven' (c.f. 'Rode Leeuven' among Flemish socialists). The French-speakers, together with some moderate PVV supporters in the capital, formed in turn the 'PLP de la région bruxelloise'. After the 1970 communal elections the 'PLP de la région bruxelloise' itself began to split between radical pro-Brussels factions and moderates. Georges Mundeleer, for example, broke away and formed the entirely independent 'Parti LIBERAL Indépendant Belge' (LIB) which was largely French-speaking but very hostile to FDF federalist ideas, and therefore opposed to any alliance with that party. The cartel FDF-PLP (the RB) in the 1971 'conseil d'agglomération' elections was in fact between the FDF and the 'PLP de la région bruxelloise'. As well as Mundeleer, some members of this Liberal group also disliked close cooperation with the FDF and therefore they too broke away to form (or re-form) the old 'Fédération PLP de l'arrondissement bruxelloise'.

In 1971 there were therefore no fewer than four liberal lists in Brussels:

1. 'PLP de la région bruxelloise' allied to the FDF.
2. 'Blaauwe Leeuven' or Flemish Liberals.
3. 'Fédération PLP' who were moderates on the Brussels issue and willing to work with 'Blaauwe Leeuven' and finally,
4. 'LIB' the independent group of Mundeleer, the weakest of the four.

During 1972 the 'PLP de la région' absorbed the 'LIB' group but in 1973 they broke all contacts with other Liberal groups in the capital and formed a new party, 'Parti LIBERAL, Démocrate et Pluraliste' (PLDP). This new party adopted a federalist policy combined with a strongly Liberal (right wing) economic policy. During 1973 the PLP in Wallonia, which had become federalist also, established links with the PLDP.

44. c.f. p. 193 about the lack of coordination between communes in Brussels.

45. According to the 'Law of 26th July 1971' a citizen's identity card showed his linguistic group. Therefore the RB was able to include on its list persons who were legally Dutch-speakers even though for cultural reasons they might be very sympathetic to the French position, or even use the language for preference. These would be regarded by many Dutch-speakers as traitors. In spite of this, once elected they would form part of the Dutch group on the council. In this way the RB was able to extend its influence to the Dutch-speakers cultural council from which the French-speakers were of course excluded.
46. The 'sonnette d'alarme' was part of Articles 3, 4, and 6 of the Revised Constitution. At the national level (Art. 38b) each linguistic group of deputies constituted a Cultural Council and if 2/3rds of the council considered a new law harmful to the cultural interests of its community the law would have to be referred back to the Cabinet for arbitration. Similarly in Brussels the two groups constituted 'cultural councils' for the city with a similar 'alarm' system based on 2/3rd votes. The fact that the RB occupied 11 of the 30 Dutch seats on the Dutch council meant that the group could veto a Dutch 'alarm'.

47. Delrueille, Evalenke and Fraeys, Le comportement politique des électeurs belges, p.121.

48. Ibid., p.169.
BELGIUM: MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY CRISIS
1961-1981

by

J.G. WARDEN

Thesis for the Degree of Ph.D.

1985.
CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION 1961-71 - the end

of the total dominance of the three traditional parties.
In the following discussion of the electoral decade 1961-71 some clarification of the titles of the political parties is necessary. Sometimes reference will be made to the whole cross-national political parties; in this case the terms CVP/PSC, Socialists (or PSB/BSP) and Liberals (or PVV/PLP) will be used.* It will also be necessary to refer to the specifically regional wings of these parties separately. In this case the terms used will be: CVP, BSP and PVV for the Flemish sections and PSC, PSB and PLP for the French-speaking sections. There is no similar problem for the VU, FDF and RW.

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* The full titles are:
CVP - Christelijke Volkspartij.
PSC - Parti Social-chrétien.
BSP - Belgische Socialistische Partij.
PSB - Parti Socialiste Belge
PVV - Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang.
PLP - Parti de la Liberté et Progrès.
THE MAIN DEVELOPMENTS OF 1961-71

During the 1960s there were three major lines of development which proved to be serious shifts in the patterns of Belgian politics and a fourth which appeared at the time (1965-68) to be highly significant but later could be seen as a transient phenomenon. The latter was the Liberal Revival of the mid-1960s which, had it been successful, would have fundamentally changed the party system but by the late 1960s was shown to be a temporary move of the electorate towards the Liberals in 1965 and 1968 which was not fully sustained in the period.

The clearest development of the decade was the decline of support for the three traditional parties. This may be briefly but clearly illustrated from the figures for the percentage of support for these parties from 1958 to 1971.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternatively this may be expressed as the serious decline in the total support for the two largest parties, the CVP/PSC and Socialists. These two parties were the most important in the system and upon them fell the main task of providing leadership in seeking solutions to the problems threatening the stability of the government. Their
share in the same period was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Belgian Constitution major reforms required a 2/3rd majority in Parliament. After 1965 the two parties could not command this majority and even the three traditional parties were only marginally above that level. Apart from their decline in support in the country in the 1960s compared to their position in the 1950s, traditional parties also experienced in this period the impact of the community issue on their internal balance of support between the regions.

In 1958 66% of CVP/PSC support came from Flanders, in 1971 70%

- 24% of " " " Wallonia " 21%
- 9% of " " " Brussels " 8%
- 43% of Socialists " " Flanders " 50%
- 43% of " " " Wallonia " 40%
- 14% of " " " Brussels " 9%
- 49% of Liberal " " " Flanders " 56%
- 32% of " " " Wallonia " 33%
- 19% of " " " Brussels " 10%
In all three parties by 1971 the Dutch-speaking support was the majority element and Flanders was the most important region. This did not mean that they could afford to ignore the Walloons for, as before, all three parties needed the widest possible electorate. On the other hand the realities of practical politics meant that the order of priorities for each party would be Flanders, Wallonia and lastly Brussels as the least important catchment area. These figures demonstrate the possible electoral weight of Flanders which each party had to accommodate.

A more serious development in the late 1960s was the splitting of the three parties into linguistic wings so that they operated as alliances of like-minded sections rather than united political movements. The CVP/PSC fought in 1968 was two separate parties* and the Liberals, although they maintained their unity until 1971, fragmented at that election into several groups. The Socialists operated as two wings of one party with two presidents and in Brussels after 1968 there were two Socialist parties, one Flemish and one French. By 1970 all three parties were splitting along language lines. By the 1970s the traditional parties were in danger of becoming alliances of regional groups rather than national parties. The impact of the Community Problem upon the cross-community unity of the three

* The term used by Belgian commentators for this development in the CVP/PSC in 1968 and after was 'distancement' of the PSC from the OVP.
traditional parties, combined with the decline in their overall support made it difficult for them to adopt a consociational approach to the crisis facing the country. Consociational democracy requires a degree of unity and discipline in the segments and parties so that the leaders can enter negotiations with others with full confidence in the support and reliability of their followers. At a time when such unity and discipline was essential in order to make a consociational approach workable the three parties were splitting and the traditional loyalties of followers to leaders was breaking down.

The overall consequences of the decline in the total ascendancy of the three traditional parties and the splits and difficulties within the parties themselves were twofold. The critical questions of constitutional reform could not be dealt with in a positive and radical manner because the parties were constantly afraid of their vulnerability to inroads from the VU, RW and PDF in the regions. They were in danger of losing credibility either as national parties - because of their internal divisions and hesitations - or as adequate representatives of regional aspirations because of the necessary compromises to hold the parties together nationally. The second consequence of this development applied more specifically to Brussels. The weight of Brussels opinion in the parties became less important and the parties themselves were much more split in the capital than elsewhere. Therefore the voters in the city were less
likely to have confidence in the willingness of traditional parties to protect their interests than was the case in other regions. It was not surprising, therefore, to see these voters turning, in the late 1960s, to their own regional party - the FDF. By the end of the decade the Belgian political system comprised three main parties and three established regional parties whereas at the beginning it was a straightforward three-party system. As has been demonstrated, the changes in the capital were a more extreme version of the national pattern. This may be described as a further dimension of change in the Belgian system, after the decline and weakening of the internal unity in the three-parties and the rapid growth of regional parties. The problems of Flanders and Wallonia were difficult and the position of the older parties in those regions complicated but in the capital the problems were especially severe.
THE LIBERAL REVIVAL OF 1965-71

Earlier reference has been made to a development in the 1960s which appeared about to change the Belgian party system but which did not in fact unfold as might have been expected at the time. It is unusual to speculate on possibilities which did not actually happen but in this case it is useful to comment upon the mid-1960s Liberal Revival. Had this revival continued and strengthened, Belgium would most likely have become almost an adversary system much closer to the German pattern than the consociational model. The Belgian system would perhaps have been characterised by a clearer left-right polarisation along socio-economic lines with the CVP/PSC weakened as the new main cleavage line cut the Catholic segment of society vertically.

In 1965 the support for the Party of Liberty and Progress (PLP/PVU) increased from the Liberal total of 12.33% in 1961 to 21.6% and this became 20.9% in 1968. The 1961 figure was approximately the average Liberal performance from 1919 to 1961. It therefore appeared in 1965 that the pattern of party politics in Belgium was about to change. In 1958 the Schools Pact had greatly modified the confessional cleavage and in 1961 the Liberals had recognised that anti-clericalism was no longer of fundamental importance to their party programme. Therefore they re-formed themselves into the new
party (PLP/PVV) to attract right-wing former Catholic supporters of the CVP/PSC. The Socialists too modified their anti-clerical stance in order to attract left-wing former Catholic voters. The consequence of this change could have been serious for the CVP/PSC with a drift of its supporters to left and right, in particular to the new PLP/PVV. A first sign of such a change in Belgian politics would be a rise in support for the Liberals and in 1965, the first election after the change of policy in the new Liberal party, the results seemed to demonstrate that such a new pattern was about to emerge. In 1968 the Liberal vote dropped very slightly. This did not totally invalidate the above interpretation of 1965 but the Liberals were disappointed that the momentum of their expansion was halted and they had not overtaken one of the other two parties. In 1971 their support fell to 16.8%. Clearly the anticipated change had not taken place and the Liberals had returned to a level higher than their pre-1961 figure but well below the other two main parties.

The interest of this unfulfilled Liberal Revival lies in its comment upon the relative importance of the various possible cleavage patterns in Belgian politics. In the past it might have been reasonable to assume that the confessional cleavage, deriving as it did from the 19th century, would perhaps be modified as the old right (CVP/PSC) and left (Socialists and Liberals) reached compromise solutions. Following this it could further be assumed that the new pattern would be based on socio-economic conflicts, which had been concealed beneath the old clerical versus anti-clerical conflicts.\(^4\)
Instead of this developing in the 1960s, the community cleavage was added. The continued existence of the CVP/PSC as a main party in the system was an echo of confessional politics, the existence of the Liberals and Socialists referred us to the politics of capital and labour and the new community parties were the manifestation of the politics of the community problem.

The Liberal Revival also had a special significance in the capital. In 1965 the support for the PLP/PVV in Brussels rose from 16.4% to 33.5% and the party became the first party in the city. In Wallonia the PLP rose from 11.8% to 25.8% and in Flanders the PVV rose from 11.6% to 16.6%. Thus the PLP/PVV success was greatest in Brussels. In 1968 when the PLP/PVV suffered a slight setback nationally and thus failed to sustain the rapid growth of 1965 the decline in the capital was steeper than elsewhere. In Flanders they fell from 16.6% to 16.1%, in Wallonia they rose from 25.8% to 26.7% but in the capital they fell from 33.5% to 24.4%. In 1971 the PLP/PVV share in the capital (totalling the various Liberal groups into which they had fragmented) fell to 16% which was lower than their 1961 figure of 17%. In Flanders in that year the PVV won 16.5%, very little change from 1968 and in Wallonia they fell from 26.7% to 17.7%, which was a similar decline to that in Brussels. In short, the Liberal Revival had been very marked in the capital (33.5%) in 1965 and the decline to 16% by 1971 was equally marked. In Wallonia the revival had been considerable (26.7% but well below the high figure for
Brussels) and the decline equally considerable (to 17.7% but not so steep as in the city), whereas in Flanders the progress was steady and sustained but never comparable with the other two regions and well below the capital. The reason for this imbalance may be found in the campaign of the PLP/PVV in 1965 and 1968 to oppose serious changes in the Belgian Constitution. In the first election this policy appealed to the citizens of the capital of the unitary state and even in 1968 it was significant. After 1968, however, irrespective of objections, reform was inevitable and it appears that many of the Bruxellois turned to what was unequivocally their own party, the FDF. Many former PLP voters must have moved over to the FDF between 1965 and 1971. The fate of the PLP in Wallonia was similar with a swing to the RW after 1968 from the Liberals. Undoubtedly, however, in the case of the Liberal Revival of the 1960s, Brussels was once again an extreme version of what was happening elsewhere. The capital saw the biggest revival and the steepest fall of the PLP/PVV. The Liberals would clearly have to await a weakening of the community conflict before they could hope for a further revival similar to that of 1965. A shift of emphasis to socio-economic issues would provide them with an opportunity to advance.
The following analysis of electoral developments and party fortunes will be in three sections. In the first section the three main parties will be taken together through the period of 1961-71, showing how their relative positions in the system weakened and how they became subject to internal stresses and divisions. The framework will be the elections of 1961, 1965, 1968 and 1971. Following this, the growth of the three regional parties within the system as a whole will be described, considering them as a group rather than individually. In both cases, taking the parties in groups of three may lose some detail of developments in each one individually but it will avoid the danger of becoming too immersed in the history of each one alone and thus missing the overall picture. The third section will consider the electoral history of the period within each separate region. The impact of the changes was not only significant on the national level but at the regional level and the relative position of the parties was not identical. Only by isolating each region for individual study can this be seen clearly.

In analysing the Belgian General Elections of 1961, 1965, 1968 and 1971, a certain number of limitations have been imposed in order to keep the exercise within manageable proportions. The most important limitation is the concentration upon voting percentages
for the lower house of the Belgian Parliament - the 'Chambre'.

This sometimes ignores the actual allocation of seats, which although approximating to the voting figures because of the PR system in operation, is not absolutely accurate. For the sake of more precision, therefore, electoral comparisons are confined to actual voting percentages. The second limitation of this type is the exclusion of consideration of voting figures for the Upper House - the Senate.

The parties considered are confined to the three traditional parties, the Volksunie (VU) the Rassemblement Wallon (RW) and the Front Démocratique des Francophones (FDF). The minor parties, the Communists (PCB) and other smaller groups are referred to where really significant. In this context significance is defined as completion of the picture of overall voting patterns. At no time in the 1961-71 period are the minor parties a vital factor in the changes which were taking place.

Occasionally reference is made to the mobility factor between elections. This is a simplified way of comparing mobility of voting from election to election. It is arrived at by totalling all the gains and losses of the various parties and then halving the total, because one's loss is another's gain.* This approach does not

* For example, in a 3-party system if A loses 10%, B gains 6% and C gains 4% the three changes are added together, giving a total of 20. This is halved to give a 'mobility factor' of 10. If A lost 6%, B gained 8% and C lost 2% the mobility factor would be 8 (half of 16).
go into any great depth in telling us about movements from party to party but it is useful in allowing comparisons of changes in voting patterns from election to election.

In the elections the preferential voting for individual party candidates is ignored. Only the global results for each party list as a whole are considered. On one occasion, however, where the name at the head of a list was vitally important - Vanden Boeynants (VDB) in Brussels in 1968 - this is used. Otherwise the details of the lists and preference voting would often obscure the argument. Similarly during this period (1961-71) local elections took place which could be used to study trends in voting patterns. Here again however, this would provide so much detail that the overall argument would be obscured. The three regions constantly referred to are: Flanders (which includes Dutch-speaking Brabant), Wallonia (which includes French Brabant) and Brussels.
THE ELECTION OF 1961 - 'THE LAST ELECTION DOMINATED BY THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES

The CVP/PSC faced the election of 1961 defending its record as the senior partner in its 1958-61 coalition government with the Liberals. There were two major issues in the election: a judgement on the government's handling of the Congo Crisis of 1960 and the impact of the austerity programme (the 'loi unique') which was designed to deal with the economic problems of the time. This programme had led to the strikes of the winter of 1960-61 described earlier as one of the factors in the emergence of the Walloon Movement. Unlike the previous election of 1958 there was no confessional issue, the problem of state aid to Church schools and the relations between Church and State having been modified by the Schools Pact of 1958. Thus the older religious factor was no longer as important as it had previously been in the electoral programme of the CVP/PSC. The party was therefore not only in a defensive position in relation to its handling of problems when in government but also defensive against a possible drift of former CVP/PSC Catholic voters to the Liberals and Socialists without the religious issue to preserve their loyalty. After the successful pacification of the Schools Problem in the Schools Pact of 1958, which was, as has been explained, a good example of the consociational approach, the 1961 election was a return to normal politics. The
elections of 1950, 1954 and 1958 had been dominated by the Royal Question and the Schools Question whereas that of 1961 was largely concerned with the normal problems of social and economic policies. Although these were serious issues they were not of crisis proportions like those before in the 1950s nor were they such as to raise questions about the structure of the system itself which was the case in the late 1960s.

The results of the elections of 1961 showed the CVP/PSC as the losers. Their electoral support fell from 46.49% to 41.46%. In the 1954 election the CVP/PSC had obtained 41.14%. The coalition partners of the CVP/PSC in 1961 were the Liberals and they did not suffer a similar setback but increased from 11.83% to 12.33%. The Liberals may have benefitted from a slight drift of some Catholic voters to the right. The Socialists, the opposition in the election, made no gains at all but fell slightly from 37.11% to 36.73%. Adding the Communist vote to the Socialists gives a total of 39.81% in 1961 compared to 39% in 1958. The position of the two left parties in 1961 was comparable to that in 1958. The position of the three main parties in 1961 was therefore relatively stable. The mobility factor, 1958-61 was 4.61% which was similar to 1954-8, (4.55%) and less than 1950-54 (6.82%). In his study of the 1961 election at the time Fraeys concluded:

* In 1954 the CVP/PSC had been in office for 4 years as a majority party with no coalition partners. The election of that year brought to power a coalition of Socialists and Liberals. 1954 was the post-war low point for the CVP/PSC following its 1950 success.
Le corps électoral belge est traditionnellement stable. Les variations des résultats électoraux d'un scrutin à l'autre sont presque toujours de faible amplitude (p.398). Malgré les événements que la Belgique vient de vivre, l'immense majorité du corps électoral belge est restée fidèle à ses partis traditionnels (p.399)... Le vote de l'électeur belge apparaît ainsi comme un acte d'appartenance politique plutôt que comme un acte de gestion. (p.399).

This was a good summary of the Belgian political scene at the time.

Following the elections the losers, the CVP/PSC remained in office, joined by the Socialists whose performance as the challengers in opposition was also poor. The Liberals, who had gained most in the elections went into opposition. The Lefèvre coalition lasted from 1961 to 1965. This was an example of the way in which the CVP/PSC acted as the pivot of the system - it was the constant factor around which the others changed places. Similarly it was an example of the way the election results were not reflected in the complexion of the government formed afterwards.
THE 1965 ELECTION - THE LIBERAL REVIVAL

The 1965 election was the turning point when the community issue became of central importance. The Flemish Movement became active in the 1961-65 period and a Walloon Movement was emerging in the south. The new linguistic laws of 1963-64 were under heavy criticism, especially in Flanders and Brussels. The governing coalition of CVP/PSC and the Socialists under Lefèvre-Spaak set up a working party in 1962 and 1963 to study the community issue and possible reforms and was proposing a Round Table Conference of all three parties to achieve a consensus on constitutional questions. In January 1965, however, the Liberals withdrew from this tripartite Round Table. The CVP/PSC and Socialists therefore drew up what they called 'communiqués parallèles' which were ratified by the respective party congresses in February. Thus the two parties entered the election with the problem of how to handle an election campaign where they could not oppose each other too vigorously. The sharpness of any disagreements had to be blunted by their common interest in constitutional revision to which they had lent their names. The withdrawal of the Liberals from the Round Table left that party much more free to criticize and attack the others and also emphasised its position as an opposition to a tired coalition. The Round Table formed the first initiative of the traditional parties to seek a resolution of the Community Problem via a consensus similar to the consociational model exemplified in the pact of 1958. The withdrawal of the
Liberals left the two other parties exposed to criticism from those who were reluctant to see major changes in the Belgian constitutional arrangements. The success of the consociational model depends to a considerable extent upon the participation and cooperation of all major groups involved in the problem to be resolved. The Liberals saw the possibility of making major electoral gains by dissociating themselves from the Round Table and thus made consensus more difficult to achieve. In 1958, after the experiences of 1950-58 with both sides reaching an impasse over the Schools Problem, no one of the three parties had anything to gain by withdrawing from the pact negotiations and using the move to electoral advantage.

The CVP/PSC were in a most vulnerable position in 1965 because having been in office since 1958 they would be the main target for any protest voting. In addition the CVP/PSC faced the constant problem of reconciling its conservative and Christian Democratic wings.

The PSB was threatened with defections in Wallonia and Brussels over the community issue, with a range of groups - FW, PWT, UGS - seeking former PSB votes in the south. Neither governing party could campaign freely. The PSB/BSP concentrated its criticisms of the CVP/PSC on that party's right wing and even referred to the activities of the old pre-war Catholic Party. The CVP/PSC attacked the PCB and the PLP/PVV, but refrained from too much criticism of the
Socialists. The result of this was a rather feeble campaign by the two main parties: "Le monde politique semble être court d'imagination. Aucun parti n'apporte une idée originale."9

The initiative therefore lay with the PLP/PWV and other groups. The PLP/PVW had several advantages. In 1961 after the elections the old Liberal party changed its name to Party of Liberty and Progress and transformed itself into a party of the right whose philosophy emphasized individualism, free enterprise and non-interference by the state. The party therefore entered the election with a new image and was making a definite bid to attract dissident right-wing CVP/PSC voters. It was not encumbered with the problem of defending its past because it had been in opposition since 1961 and it was also not encumbered with the problem of defending a constitutional revision proposal to which it was not a party. Its emphasis upon individualism would appeal to those threatened, as they saw it, by language laws which took away individual rights to choose the language of education for their children - of particular importance in the Brussels region. The PLP/PVW was therefore in a very flexible position for the election of 1965. It directed its attack upon the government record and thus became the party of protest and opposition. It varied its appeal by concentrating upon individualism and right-wing policies in Flanders, linguistic policies in Brussels and dissatisfaction with 'collectivisme, travaillisme et étatisme' in Wallonia.
The elections of 1965 showed a mobility factor between 1961 and 1965 of 16.97% which was higher than any other election since 1919 except for 1939-45. The support for the CVP/PSC fell from 41.46% to 34.45%, the lowest since 1945 and 13.23% lower than the party's maximum in 1950. The Socialists suffered even more, falling from 36.73% to 28.28%, their worst performance since 1919. The two government coalition parties fell therefore from a joint 78.19% to 62.73% which was less than 2/3rds of the electorate. The PLP/PVV showed considerable gains, rising from 12.33% to 21.61%. This was by far the Liberals' best result since 1919, their previous maximum (in 1921) being 17.86%. It seems likely that they were beginning to attract former right-wing CVP/PSC voters. They may have gained from their refusal to take part in talks to change the Constitution. This may have been particularly attractive to the Bruxellois where the PLP/PVV became the first party.

The election results made the position of the CVP/PSC very dangerous. The success of the PLP/PVV had demonstrated its vulnerability on the right and therefore the party would have to beware of losing even more votes rightwards. On the other hand, adoption of rightist policies might offend the Christian Democrats in the party and lead them to support the PSB/BSP now that the latter was no longer 'anti-religious'. The CVP could also lose more votes to the VU who, like the PVV, had shown themselves a threat in Flanders. To avoid this the CVP must not be seen to show weakness in
defending Flemish interests. Too pro-Flemish a policy, however, would offend the French PSC and the bad results for the PSC in Brussels had shown what could happen if the French-speakers lost faith in the party.* The only course open to the CVP/PSC was to attempt to remove the community issue from the scene and this meant continuing with the constitutional revision. To accomplish this, however, meant a firm alliance with the PSB/BSP as the PLP/PVV had withdrawn from the consultations. A close alliance with the Socialists might leave the way open for further PLP/PVV advances on the right, however. The vicious circle would therefore be complete. The election of 1965 posed these tactical problems for the CVP/PSC and their solution was extremely difficult to find.

The PSB/BSP was in a similar position to the CVP/PSC after 1965. It too felt, and experienced in the elections, the threat from the community parties (especially, for example, the FDF in Brussels) which could seriously weaken its support in the south. A further threat was the improvement in the position of the PCB on its left. This threat was relatively small but in Wallonia, in conjunction with the demands of the Walloon movement, it could become serious. The only policy for the Socialists was also to go

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* In Brussels the CVP/PSC fell from a relatively low (in comparison with their national average) position of 28% to 19% which left them as the third party in the capital, after the Liberals with 33% and the Socialists with 26%.
ahead with constitutional reform to defuse the community issue. This meant that for them the CVP/PSC were the only allies possible. The danger in this was aggravated for the PSB by the fact that the CVP was so strong in Flemish votes and thus it might appear to be compromising with a pro-Flemish party. On the other hand the Socialist support in Flanders was as important as that in the Walloon areas.

The position of the PLP/PVV was obviously very strong after 1965. They were not committed to constitutional reform and therefore could operate much more freely in this contentious area. They had no problems of possibly losing votes to the right, as was the case of the CVP/PSC, and therefore could concentrate on a clearer line of conservative policy. They also were able to appear as new, as opposed to the tired coalition. The two main parties had clearly lost the election. They had not won the 2/3rd mandate for their constitutional policies and this had been the major part of their election programme. The PLP/PVV however had made such advances that it had to be regarded as the winner in 1965. In spite of this the PLP/PVV had its own dilemma relating to the community issue. It had not advanced so much in Flanders where the VU was firmly established. This had the effect of giving the French--speakers a majority in the party as a whole.* The PLP was far stronger than the PVV in 1965 - especially in Brussels. Consequently the party would have to make sure that it did not disappoint French expectations. Its policy of personal

* The PVV in Flanders obtained 17% compared to 26% for the PLP in Wallonia and 33% for the PLP/PVV in the capital.
liberty in linguistic questions was of clear appeal to French speakers in areas in or near Brussels where the linguistic laws appeared to infringe personal liberties. The PLP/PVV policies concerning constitutional or state structural reforms were more questionable however. The FDF in Brussels and the Walloon movement were beginning to demand something more than guarantees over language issues - the latter even speaking of federalism. After their success in 1965 the PLP/PVV would also have to face the community pressures which were causing so many problems for the other main parties.

The PLP/PVV, although the most successful of the three traditional parties in 1965, remained in opposition to a re-formed CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition. By 1966, however, the coalition foundered upon disagreements over economic policies between the two parties and a new centre-right (CVP/PSC-Liberal) government was formed, which lasted until 1968. The whole period between 1965 and 1968 saw no progress towards a resolution of the Community Problem. The CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition had failed to achieve a 2/3rd majority in the 1965 elections and the 1966-68 coalition not only lacked the necessary majority for constitutional measures, but also placed its emphasis upon economic rather than community issues. In 1965 the Liberals had gained electoral advantage by detaching themselves from the Round Table and attempts to find a consensus for constitutional reforms. They placed themselves in a position to fight a vigorous campaign independent of any necessity to
maintain any sort of truce or agreement with another party to preserve a two-party common front. Once the Socialists left the coalition in 1966 they too moved into an independent position. The period 1965-68 may be characterised therefore as a brief return to normal inter-party competitive politics and a withdrawal from the consensus politics of the Round Table.

The elections of 1965 marked the beginning of major changes in the political balance in Belgium. Important shifts had taken place since 1961 and the scene after May 1965 was very different from the pattern up to and including 1961.

On nous a tant parlé, depuis si longtemps, d'une crise du régime, que le terme finissait par nous lasser. Mais on ne voit pas très bien comment définir autrement la situation. Manifestement, le décor est planté....
THE ELECTION OF 1968 - THE FULL IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITY PROBLEM

The 1968 election was crucial for several reasons. For the CVP/PSC and PSB/BSP it would show whether the decline in their fortunes in 1965 was only a temporary setback or a much more long lasting phenomenon. For the PLP/PVV the election could mean a further step forward to a re-alignment of Belgian politics in their favour. Therefore for all three traditional parties 1968 was a crucial year. The elections took place in an atmosphere of acute inter-community tension surrounding the problem of the place of the French section of the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL). The results of the election were very bad for all three parties and left the Belgian political system in an even more dangerously fragmented situation than before.

The elections took place one year earlier than was constitutionally necessary and it was precipitated by the specifically linguistic issue of Louvain, against the wishes of the Prime Minister Vanden Boeynants (CVP) - referred to usually as 'VDB'. In his New Year Message of January 1968 VDB insisted that a sort of linguistic truce was necessary and that the efforts and energies of the government should be devoted to the problem of the economy rather than being distracted by linguistic problems which he regarded as 'accessoires'. At this date the government was not anticipating an election by March 1st.
The issue which caused the sudden change was the problem of the University of Louvain (UCL). This question had been smouldering for many years, given the peculiarity, in the Belgian context, of a bilingual university with a strong French language element existing within the Flemish language zone. The Flemish extremists (and moderates, influenced by them) demanded that the French section be moved across the linguistic border into Wallonia. This was simply in their view the logical application of the language laws already operating in schools and administration. The French-speakers on the other hand, wished to maintain the unity of the UCL and thus expand in Louvain as hitherto. The VDB government had been hoping to resolve the problem in the context of a general examination of university expansion in April-May 1968. The issue exploded however in December 1967. In 1966 the Catholic hierarchy responsible for UCL had decided in May to maintain the unity of the university. On 20th December 1967 the Flemish members of the administrative council of UCL had opposed the purchase of a building in Louvain for the expansion of the French section. On the 29th, Parisis, president of the PSC, wrote to the press in favour of the French section remaining in Louvain. 13 In this he was supported by the PSC deputies in Parliament. In January 1968 Flemish students and school children demonstrated in the streets against any expansion of the French section and on February 2nd, Bishop Desmedt of Bruges described the decision of the hierarchy in 1966 as an error. 14
This view was supported by the Flemish bishops. Finally on
February 6th a Flemish CVP deputy, Verroken, demanded in the
Chamber an unequivocal statement from the government on the UCL
issue:

*Voor de Vlaamse CVP is er geen dubbelzinnigheid: zij is voorstander van de doortrekking van de taalreiking tot het universitair onderwijs. Deze stellig houdt in dat de VUB verdeelt wordt in 2 autonome secties en dat Leuven Frans geleidelijk en mits voorzorgen overgeplant wordt naar Wallonie...*

The next day the Flemish CVP members of the government resigned
over the question and thus the CVP could be seen as responsible
for the fall of the VDB government and an election earlier than
was expected.

The election therefore was brought about by the linguistic
and community issue which the problem of UCL had high-lighted.
The consequences of this were serious for all three traditional
parties, especially the CVP/PSC. The party was split not only in
the Chamber over the UCL issue but also in the elections. The

* "For the Flemish CVP there is no ambiguity: it supports the application of the linguistic laws to university education. This position is that the Free University of Brussels should be divided into two autonomous sections and that the French section of Louvain University should be gradually transferred to Wallonia."
CVP and PSC fought separately, to all intents and purposes as distinct political parties. Even before the crisis of February the PSC had begun to show dissatisfaction with the CVP. Over various issues, such as the allotment of credits for public works between the regions in the 1967 budget, the PSC had not been in agreement with the CVP. The PSC, already weakened in 1965, had to distance itself from the CVP in order to survive as a credible party in the French language areas. It would face disaster if it were simply seen as dominated by the CVP. The decline of confessional politics left the PSC especially exposed to the PLP in Wallonia and Brussels. It can be assumed therefore that the PSC was mentally prepared to the 'distancement' from the CVP which took place in 1968. The UCL issue made this inevitable.

The position of the PSC as a separate entity was made clear in a statement on the 22nd February:

_Il va de soi que nous allons aux élections en prenant nos distances vis-à-vis du PSC flamand. Nous le regrettons, mais nous n'en portons pas la responsabilité. Nous restons PSC. La crise politique a révélé une totale divergence de vue entre les deux ailes sur des problèmes fondamentaux. Nous avons décidé de dire au corps électoral notre position de francophone sur Louvain, sur Bruxelles, sur les rapports entre les communautés, sur les garanties contre la minorisation et sur l'avenir de la Wallonie ... Nous voulons arrêter l'escalade sans cesse reprise par le Mouvement Populaire Flamand, dont les intentions ne coincent pas avec le bien commun de la population dans le sud._
Both the PSC and the CVP entered the 1968 elections with their own programmes.

There were four major issues in the election: UCL, Brussels, regional economic policies and the new constitutional structures. Over these issues the PSC and CVP had varying differences. They were sometimes completely apart as if they were totally separate parties and at other times still operated as wings of one movement. The first two issues were the points of sharpest disagreement. In Brussels the position was further complicated by the fact that the former Prime Minister (VDB) proposed a common French-Flemish list of candidates (i.e. maintaining some sort of CVP/PSC unity under his leadership). At first this proposal was neither accepted nor rejected when the voting at a French conference of the party was 45:45 but later it was rejected by 11:7 by the French committee of the Brussels region. In spite of this VDB went ahead and drew up a list of both French and Flemish CVP/PSC candidates, headed by his own name. Thus in Brussels there was 'la liste VDB' as one section of the CVP/PSC. The PSC of Brussels drew up its own French list led by Persoons. Hence the CVP/PSC voter in Brussels had two lists to choose from in 1968.

In contrast to the CVP/PSC, the PSB/BSP, based on programmes drawn up at Klemskerke and Verviers in 1967, appeared to maintain its national unity. The principles of these programmes
were: national and regional economic planning and some form of recognition of the existence of communities in Belgium, meaning Flemish, Walloon and possibly Brussels. At a conference of the whole party on March 16th, these programmes were confirmed unanimously. Unfortunately the pre-election polls by the PSB/BSP * had given the Flemish candidates relatively low positions on the lists and thus a low likelihood of election. The Flemish Socialists in Brussels found this unacceptable and called upon the national party to intervene, which it refused to do. The Flemish Socialists therefore decided to put up their own candidates, supported by the BSP in Flanders. Therefore in Brussels the PSB/BSP voters also had a choice between two lists - the PSB and a separate Flemish list called 'Rode Leuven'.**

In contrast to the other two traditional parties the PLP/PVV was optimistic about maintaining its unity and building upon the great advances of 1965. Potential PLP/PVV voters were not confused by two lists in Brussels and the party avoided the bitter differences which damaged the CVP/PSC.

* The party decided the order of the candidates on their lists by means of pre-election polls among members of the party. A high place on the list means a greater likelihood of that individual being elected.

** Rode Leeuwen - Red Lions ('Lions' of Flanders)
The campaigns of the parties reveal very clearly that 1968 may be designated as the year when the linguistic and community issue had become dominant in Belgian politics. The images presented by the parties demonstrate this as well as the fact that the CVP and PSC were split and the PSB/BSP embarrassed by the issue in Brussels. The CVP - without the PSC - portrayed itself as the ruling party which could 'get things done'. Not only would this appeal to the voter in the broad sense (hoping to command his respect for a mature party) but also it was designed to counter the pressure from the VU in Flanders, contrasting the 'mature' CVP as a better hope for Flanders than the new VU. The CVP slogans: "De CVP doet het. Uw stem regeert", "Laat Uw stem regeren" and "De CVP is een regeringspartij. Eenen partij met een realistisch programma".* These summarise the CVP view of itself. These may be contrasted with the VU, presenting itself as the party of the future which never compromised over Flemish rights and was thus 'untained', unlike the CVP: "De Volksunie zal uit de komende verkiezingen komen als een heel grote partij. Een partij die de macht zal hebben mee de gang van zaken te bepalen", "De Volksunie is een vlaams-nationale partij. Dit betekent dat zij radikaal en kompromisloos politiek zelfbestuur voor Vlaanderen opeist." **

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* Dewachter, p.36. "The CVP gets things done. Your vote really counts." "Let your voice really count." "The CVP is a party of government. A party with a realistic programme."

** Dewachter, p.27. "The Volksunie will emerge from the coming elections as a truly major party. A party which will also have the force to get things done." The Volksunie is a Flemish national party. That means that it will insist on its radical and uncompromising policies of self-determination for Flanders."
The CVP and PSC must be regarded in 1968 as two separate parties. Their common loyalty to the Catholic philosophy continued but their loyalty to each other had been drastically damaged over UCL in Louvain.

The PSC adopted an independent position over Louvain and Brussels and therefore its appeal to the electorate was based upon these issues:

Pourquoi le PSC tient tête? Il avait fait beaucoup de concessions aux Flamands dans les années recentes. Il avait cru pouvoir y consentir pour réaliser un accord durable entre nos communautés. Mais il a constaté que certains considèrent toute concession comme un recul et y trouvent un motif de revendications nouvelles. Aussi, le PSC a dit non à l'escalade.

The CVP therefore was projecting a picture of itself as a governing party whereas the PSC had adopted a more community-oriented position.

Over the issue of Louvain the PSC declared its position:

Oui! Le CVP veut réduire notre Université chrétienne universelle au rôle de médiocre petite faculté régionale! Louvain déchiré = 30 milliards, Quit payera? Vous. Le PSC francophone de Bruxelles dit non! (PSC)
The CVP view was the opposite:

... de Franse afdeling van de universiteit van Leuven moet ingeplant worden in het gelijknamig kultuurgebied en ingeschakeld in de culturele infrastructuur van de Waalse volksgemeenschap: de universiteit in dienst van het volk (CVP) *

Similarly over the problem of Brussels the PSC was opposed to the outgoing government's (and CVP) plans to limit the expansion of the bi-lingual city:

Bruxelles veut grandir. Bruxelles veut respirer. Bruxelles veut penser. Après Louvain, c'est Bruxelles, que vise l'extrémisme flamand assoiffé de puissance! Le moment est décisif : l'électeur doit choisir entre la liberté et l'intolérance raciste. **

In the city the VDB group tried to adopt a more moderate line than the Flemish CVP outside.

De Brusselaars weten vooral heel goed wat zij niet willen : dat de Vlamingen en de Walen, in hun plats, zonder hen, zouden beslissen over hun lot. Wij wensen zelf onze zaken, to beredden, maar — en ik zeg het met klem — om van Brussel een oord van toenadering en niet van verdeeldheid te maken. **

* "The French section of the University of Louvain must be transplanted to the French cultural zone and become part of the cultural infrastructure of the Walloon people: the university at the service of its people..."

** "The people of Brussels know very well what they do not want: that the Flemings and Walloons should make their own decisions about their future. We want to organise our own affairs and more than this — and I say it with emphasis — to make Brussels a place of rapprochement rather than one of division."
In 1968 the Socialists had the advantage of entering the election as the opposition. It must be recalled that in 1965 the PLP/PW had had this advantage. Therefore the Socialists were able to adopt a fairly aggressive line:

De CVP/FVV regering was een mislukking. Oodeel zelf: ekonomische crisis - Steeds verder fabriekssluitingen - 200,000 wekelos - Duizenden jongerer zonder werk - Enorme stijging van prijzen - Verhoging van de belastingen: 10 milliard nieuwe belastingen en taksen - Do socials voruntgang werd gestppt - De taalproblemen kregen. Dat was nieuwe stijf -

The PSB/BSP also wished to present itself as the party of ideals for the future:

Wij willen levensvreugde en broederlijkheid. Wij stellen aan de jeugd een wereld voor, waar men in vrede kan leven.*

The Socialists suggested that even the community problems were part of the overall economic problems of the country for which the outgoing coalition was responsible:

Certains se saisissent des problèmes linguistiques pour masquer la triste réalité. Dans toutes les régions du pays, des usines ferment, le chômage s'étend et ceux qui ne sont pas touchés craignent de l'être demain.

* "The CLP/PW rule was a failure. Judge for yourself: economic crisis - ever more factory closures - 200,000 without work - dozens of young peopleour of work - enormous price increases - increases in taxes: 10 milliards in new taxes. Social progress has stopped. The language problem finds no solution. That was the new style of government. "We desire the joy of life and the brotherhood of mankind. We offer young people a world where man can live in peace."
Over the problem of Brussels, however, where the community problem was worst, the Socialists also split along linguistic lines into the PSB Bruxellois and the Flemish Rode Leeuven. The PSB view of the capital's problems was similar to that of the PSC:

Le Bruxellois a le libre choix de la langue pour lui-même et ses enfants ... L'expansion de l'agglomération bruxelloise se poursuivra en dehors des limites des 19 communes.

The Flemish Socialists however were closer to a Volksunie position:

Opdat Brussel de Hoofstad blijve van allen ons land, is hed nodig de Vlaamse rechtsgelijkheid to Brussel to verzekeren. (Rode Leeuven)

The PLP/PVV was one of the coalition government parties (since 1966) but presented itself as the defender of political stability. The CVP/PSC had split and the resignation of the CVP ministers had caused the downfall of the government. They had done this, in the view of the PLP/PVV, as a result of extremist pressures and so the PLP/PVV was the party which could legitimately claim, in their view, to hold the national interest above extremism.

* "As Brussels is the capital of the whole of our country it is essential that the rights of Flemings should be guaranteed in Brussels."
"Ils démolissent. Nous contruisons!" "Mon parti? C'est mon pays." "Seul le PLP peut sauver le pays."

"Voor de P VV stemmen is voor Belgie stemmen. Voor eendracht, stemt Belgie onder nr. 8." *

"Un seule certitude de sauver la Belgique : une victoire écrasante du PLP."

Over the problem of Louvain the PLP/PVV was also united and here again used the threat to national unity implied by the arguments over the university as part of their propaganda:

De P VV verklaart plichtig : Leuven zal nooit het Dien Bien Phu van de nationale eenheid worden; maar wel van het federalisme. (PVV) **

Louvain est un problème de financement en premier lieu. Puis ce sont les évêques de Belgique et non pas M. Verroken qui doivent décider. Et s'ils ne peuvent pas se mettre d'accord : alors c'est la décision de 1968 qui reste.

As the party of national unity the PLP/PVV accepted the necessity for some reforms of state structure but they rejected any changes which could harm the Belgian state as a political entity.

* "To vote for the P VV is to vote for Belgium. Belgium votes for union under list 8." (list 8 = PVV)

** "The PVV must make it clear : Louvain shall not be the Dien Bien Phu of national unity, more likely of ideas of federalism."
Par deux fois nous avons étonné le monde et l’Europe par le miracle de notre réconstruction. Aujourd'hui, le danger qui menace le pays vient de l'intérieur. Quelqu'uns, fédéralistes ou extrémistes, ne veulent plus d'une Belgique unie ... le fédéralisme, en Belgique, serait un processus de morcellement d'un seul état que est uni ... Le PLP n'a pas hésité à proposer des solutions osées pour réaliser un état moderne... La Belgique Nouvelle du PLP est un état moderne tourné vers l'avenir, persistant dans une structuration unifiée dans une Europe toujours plus unie.

The three parties entered the election therefore in various states of unity with the PLP/PVV maintaining a common front, the Socialists split in Brussels and the CVP/PSC not only split in the capital but also badly divided between north and south over the central issues of the politics of 1968. The results of the election were a further setback to the CVP/PSC and gave no consolation to the Socialists and Liberals. The support for the CVP/PSC fell from 34.47% to 31.73%, well below any results since 1919. The Socialists, too, dropped to a new low level of 27.99% from 28.28%. This was not severe but disappointing to the main opposition party hoping to recover some of its support lost in 1965. The PLP/PVV fell slightly, also, from 21.61% to 20.87%. The PLP/PVV loss was small but very disappointing as they had not sustained the growth of the 1961-65 period. They had portrayed themselves as the one group interested in 'sauver la Belgique' and sceptical about
constitutional reforms but this too did not appear to have made any gains for them. The traditional three party share fell again to 80% and the two-party share to 57%. The trend of 1965 away from the traditional parties was confirmed by the 1968 results which showed the CVP/PSC and Socialists as unable to recover lost ground and even the Liberals beginning perhaps to lose the momentum of the 1961-65 period. The comment of Le Revue Générale after the elections summarises the seriousness of the situation after 1968:

*Il faut craindre que sur les franges des trois partis traditionnels on trouve un certain nombre de parlementaires qui n'oseront prendre leurs distances vis-à-vis les extrémistes, ce qui rend difficile toute bipartite ... A cet égard, notre crainte le plus vive est que l'on résolve le contentieux communautaire en paralyant le pouvoir exécutif. La seule solution correcte réside dans la modération flamande ... ce régime ne pourrait davantage faire preuve d'efficacité si on créait un sénat paritaire, par exemple, comme le réclame le PSC wallon. Une telle formule conduirait tout droit à la paralysie de l'exécutif, c'est à dire à un gouvernement d'une assemblée au carré. Tous les problèmes deviendraient communautaires et les affrontements se multiplieraient à propos de tout et de rien, chacune des communautés restant surses positions et paraly sant tout.*

The elections had shown no winners among the traditional parties. They were all losers to varying degrees. A centre-right CVP/PSC-Liberal coalition was formed by the VDB to carry on government business (a continuation of the 1966 coalition) but three months later it was replaced by a centre-left coalition of
the CVP/PSC and Socialists, led by Eyskens. Again the CVP/PSC was
the core of coalition-forming in the system. It should be noted
that in spite of the 'distancement' between the CVP and PSC they
were still to be considered as one party at this level. Coalitions
were formed along traditional lines based on the old cleavage
patterns with socio-economic and philosophical policies in mind
whilst the community cleavage asserted itself within the parties and
the coalition when structural reforms of the state were under
discussion.
THE ELECTION OF 1971 AND THE NEW PATTERNEmerging

The results of the 1971 election, even more than 1968, would confirm or otherwise the permanence of the changes which had taken place in the 1960s. They were again disappointing for the two major parties and a serious setback for the Liberals. The CVP/PSC obtained 30.05% compared to 31.73% in 1968 and the Socialists 27.23% compared to 27.99%. There was therefore still no sign of a return of confidence in these parties, although they could console themselves with the fact that the rate of decline had slowed down to a marginal level compared to 1965. The PLP/PVV fell from 20.87% in 1968 to 16.81% in 1971. This was still above 1961 (12.33%) but showed that the Liberal Revival was over. In 1971 also, the Liberals began to show serious divergence among the regions. In Flanders the PVV showed a small (31%) increase compared to a loss of 9.3% in Wallonia and 10% in Brussels. In the analysis below of the regional electoral patterns over the decade it is clear that the 1971 election and the local Brussels regional elections of that year saw the capital as an area of great weakness for the three traditional parties, the Liberals in 1971 experiencing the steep decline in the city which the other two had suffered in 1968.

The government formed in January 1972, following the elections, was another CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition on the same
pattern as the one it replaced. The CVP/PSC had been in office continuously since 1958, the Liberals for five years (1958–61 and 1966–68) and the Socialists for eight years (1961–66 and 1968–71). The elections of 1971 had once again shown no clear winners, all three parties failing to make any gains, but the Liberals lost more than the others. Although this suggests that their exclusion from the new coalition was therefore appropriate, this was not the major factor. The two other parties remained in office as a result of inter-party negotiations in the traditional way, influenced by their joint interest in defusing the community issue through the reforms they had managed to accomplish.

The overall decline of support for the three traditional parties from 1961 to 1971 may be summarised by simply comparing their results in the elections and observing the steady trend downwards until 1971:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td>46.49</td>
<td>41.46</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>31.73</td>
<td>30.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB/BSP</td>
<td>37.11</td>
<td>37.73</td>
<td>28.28</td>
<td>27.99</td>
<td>27.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP/PVV</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>21.60</td>
<td>20.87</td>
<td>16.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>95.43</td>
<td>90.52</td>
<td>84.33</td>
<td>80.59</td>
<td>74.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures suggest that the period of steepest decline was the middle 1960s (when the serious setbacks for the two larger parties were somewhat balanced by the temporary Liberal Revival) and by the 1970s a new pattern had emerged. The previous totally dominant three parties (with over 90%) had fallen to a relative dominance with 74% of the electorate. The two party totals for the same period were:

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83.60</td>
<td>78.19</td>
<td>62.73</td>
<td>59.72</td>
<td>57.28</td>
</tr>
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</table>
These totals show that already by 1965-68 the two parties were only drawing approximately 60% of the electoral support compared with their previous 80%. The mobility factor for the various elections gave the same picture of considerable changes in voting patterns in the middle 1960s.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>16.97</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the above statistics refer to the national voting patterns and do not take into account the regional variations.

In 1958 the Walloon and Brussels regional parties did not yet exist. Only the Volksunie represented a community interest directly and it achieved only 1.98% of the national total. In 1961 the VU, still alone, achieved 3.46%. In 1965 Walloon lists appeared for the first time and between them the Walloon lists and the VU obtained 9.36%. By 1968 the RW and FDF had established themselves. The regional parties obtained 15.80% (VU - 9.79%, RW - 3.50% and FDF - 2.51%). By 1971 this had grown to 22.24% (VU - 11.11%, FDF/RW - 11.23%). In that election the combined regional party support exceeded that for the PLP/PVV (16.81%) and was approaching the Socialists' 27.23%.
Behind the above national totals, however, the regional variations are very significant. The regional parties are best studied in their own territory or catchment area for by definition these areas were those where their impact would be greatest. The oldest of the three, the Volksunie, showed a very steady improvement in Flanders in the 1960s.

1958 - 3.40%  1968 - 16.86%
1961 - 5.98%  1971 - 18.77%
1965 - 11.82%

In Wallonia the RW grew from 1965 at a more rapid pace than the VU:

1965 - 3.35%  1971 - 20.86%
1968 - 10.47%

The FDF in Brussels also appeared in 1965 but its growth in its region was extremely rapid and successful:

1965 - 10.66%  1971 - 34.49%
1968 - 18.62%
It will be clear that to take the overall national election statistics in the Belgian context will give no clear picture of the variations which developed in the three regions in the 1960s. It is desirable therefore to examine the electoral decade as it appeared in each of the three regions separately and by doing this to see how much more radical were the changes in the capital than elsewhere. Before doing so it is essential, however, to have in mind the relative importance of each region in the national total. In 1971 the percentages of the electorate in each region were: Flemish cantons: 55.4%, Walloon cantons: 31.4% and Brussels: 12.5%. The proportion of Dutch to French-speakers in the electorate was 59.1%: 40% (the remainder were German speakers in the east). From these figures it follows that although the capital was an extreme case of fragmentation, its proportion of the electorate was little above 10%. This proportion must be borne in mind in an analysis of each region. Similarly it is important to be aware in considering Brussels that approximately 75% of the population were said to be French-speakers and 25% Dutch. The exact proportion was in dispute but this is a workable approximation. In view of this, it is best to regard the support for the purely community parties as a proportion of their potential electorate in their own region alone. For example, if the VU obtained 12.5% of the Brussels vote, then in fact they probably gained 50% of their potential support.
for only 25% of the voters would consider supporting a purely
Dutch-speaking party. Similarly, if the FDF obtained 37% of the
total it would mean 50% of French-speakers. With these statistics
in mind each region will be summarised separately.

In Flanders the CVP was traditionally the dominant party,
with, in the 1950s, over 50% of the popular vote. In the following
tables it is clear that, although it remained the main party, its
absolute dominance was lost. Similarly, the Socialists (BSP), the
main alternative to the CVP, declined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVV</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two-party share dropped from 81% in 1961 to 63% in 1971, and
the three-party share from 93% in 1961 to 79% in 1971.

In Wallonia the PSB had been the traditionally dominant
party with approximately 50% support. In this region the Communists
also had some significance and gave the left a majority position.
The PSC as the main opposition party in Wallonia was comparable in its relative weakness with the BSP in Flanders. The changes in the 1960s were parallel to those in Flanders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PCB</th>
<th>PSB</th>
<th>PSC</th>
<th>PLP</th>
<th>RW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two-party share fell in the period from 77% to 55% and the three-party share from 89% to 72%. In 1971 the RW overtook the VU, in its share of its regional electorate.

In the Brussels region it is not possible to speak of a traditionally dominant party but the Socialists were always strong in the region with approximately 40% of the total and the Liberals were relatively stronger than elsewhere with between 15% and 20%. The changes between 1961 and 1971 were complicated by the fragmentation which took place in the main parties. In order to simplify this, the wings of the same party are grouped under one total. For example, the 1968 CVP/PSC total of 30.3% includes the PSC and CVP cartel led by VDB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1968</th>
<th>1971</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCB</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc.</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP/PVV</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the capital the two-party support declined from 69.6% in 1961 to 41% in 1971 and the three-party figure from 86% to 57% in the same period. In 1961 the Socialists had been the leading group, in 1965 the Liberals, in 1968 the CVP/PSC and in 1971 the FDF had taken over that position. In 1971 over 40% of the voters supported avowedly community parties (FDF and allies and VU), leaving the older parties, themselves split along linguistic lines, to share the remaining 60%. In 1961 the only community party, the VU, obtained a mere 1.6%.
The overall conclusions which can be drawn from this survey of the electoral decade are threefold. The three-party system which had dominated Belgian politics before 1961 was seriously threatened in 1965-68 but survived in a moderated or weakened form on the national level and in Flanders and Wallonia at the regional level. The second conclusion is that whereas in the north and south the traditional parties could maintain their position with some decline from their old strength and remain united within the region, in Brussels the community and linguistic issues divided and thus weakened them. All three began to split along language lines in 1968 in the capital and, even where they managed to present a united front, this was fragile when community issues were under discussion. The left in Wallonia were disillusioned by the failure of the Flemish trade unionists to give their full support to the strike of 1961 against the Loi Unique and the Catholics of Wallonia were surprised and disappointed by the Flemish Catholic attitude to the problem of the Catholic University of Louvain in 1968. In spite of this each party was able to survive with its own regional wings and cooperate at national level in the process of coalition and government formation. In the capital, however, these divisions were apparent within one small area and were therefore much more destructive to the prestige and fortunes of the traditional parties.
The third conclusion which could be drawn from the above elections was that the efforts of the main parties to resolve the Community Problem by the reforms of 1965-71 were not recognised by the electorate in a renewal of support for them in 1971. The election was the first one after the passing of the reform measures. The results showed the community parties still increasing their support, particularly in Wallonia and Brussels. In Flanders the VU only increased by 2% but the RW gained 11% and the FDF and VU between them in the capital gained 21%. The verdict of the electorate in 1971 was therefore not one of enthusiasm for the three traditional parties and their efforts over the Constitution.

There are two possible interpretations of the variations between the regions in their reaction to the reforms. Perhaps the FDF and RW were catching up with the VU which had begun its growth much earlier. Alternatively, or perhaps parallel with this, the arrangements of 1971 were more satisfactory from a Flemish point of view but very unsatisfactory from the point of view of Wallonia and the capital. Although the VU, for example, only grew from 17% to 19% in 1971 in Flanders, it grew from 4.2% to 5.6% in the capital. From a relative point of view the performance of the party in the capital was better than in the region. It has been noted that the main grievance in Flanders was cultural, that of Wallonia, economic and that of Brussels, linguistic. In the later examination of the reforms of 1971 this question of differing electoral reactions to the measures must be kept in mind.
The electoral developments in the 1961-71 period also thrown light upon the question of the consociational democratic nature of the Belgian system at this time. The shifts in voting behaviour and the splits in the traditional parties undermined the former patterns of leaders and faithful followers. A degree of uncertainty and inconsistency became characteristic of the system as the old sub-cultural segmentation began to weaken. This made it difficult for the political leaders to manage the growing community crisis in the system by the method adopted in 1958. Intra-party accommodation was shattered in Brussels and weakened nationally. The Community Problem reached crisis proportions in 1968 with the fall of the government over the problem of Louvain University. The leaders found it difficult to resolve the issue even after those events. The constitutional revision process, begun in 1963, took eight years. It was sometimes under intense discussion and sometimes left in abeyance. The result in 1971 was intended to go some way, if not completely, to a resolution of the Community Problem, in the same way as the Schools Pact had resolved the Schools Problem. The whole process took place with the background of elections described above and normal competitive politics continuing at the same time. During the period there were several attempts to achieve a consensus for reform on the lines of 1958, at first among the three traditional parties and later among all parties. The reforms passed in 1971 were incomplete in that they postponed the precise definition of regions in the system in order to avoid the most contentious issue
of all — that of giving a clear and viable definition of the limits and status of the Brussels region. The aim of the whole exercise was to achieve such reforms as were necessary to enable the system to get back to normal — which meant back to three-party competitive politics. The three parties might hope that even incomplete reforms might weaken the appeal of the new community parties and thus restore the complete ascendancy which they formerly enjoyed before the changes in the 1960s.
1. Article 131 of the Constitution.

2. Source of these figures and elections statistics used throughout:

   1965 Elections - " No.288 - 26.6.65
   1968 Elections - " No.402 - 5.4.68
   1971 Elections - " No.544 - 10.12.71
   1971 Elections to the 'Conseil d'agglomération' in Brussels C.H. de CRISP No.553-554 - 25.2.72.

3. The Socialists did not split into two wings until 1977 when the division in the party came to be expressed in a separate BSP and PSB. In Brussels however as early as 1968 the Flemish Socialists were beginning to distance themselves from the French Socialists.

4. A Marxist position would clearly assume that this development might take place once the 'false consciousness' loyalty of the Flemish working class to a Catholic party (CVP) no longer appeared important or necessary. A non-Marxist might also have concluded that the economic and social problems of Belgian society might assume a central position in the political life of the country once religion was no longer a vital part of party politics.

5. There have always been small parties or groups taking part in Belgian elections but compared to the three traditional parties and the three community parties in the 1960s their impact has always been minimal. In 1961, for example, a small right-wing party (Rassemblement National) appeared. It obtained less than 2% of the votes and disappeared before 1965.

6. In the 1968 elections 'VDB', a well known ex-Prime Minister, tried to hold together the CVP and PSC in Brussels as one party with one list headed by his name.'VDB' is an abbreviation regularly used for Vanden Boeynants.

7. The last time the Catholic Hierarchy took an active part in Belgian elections was in 1958 when they urged all Catholics to support the CVP/PSC over the Schools Question. After that date the Church remained neutral.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6 cont.


10. The PLP/PVV was, as has been suggested, sceptical about constitutional revision—unfortunately the election of 1965 had demonstrated not only the scope for a Liberal revival but also the willingness of the Brussels electorate in particular to change its allegiances in a much more flexible manner than previously.


14. *c.f. La Libre Belgique*, 10.2.68.


17. Dewachter, p.15.


20. Dewachter, p.29.


27. *Ibid.*, p.34

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6 cont.

29. Ibid., p.27.

30. Ibid., p.33.

31. Ibid., p.36.


33. The elections of 1971 were not 'constituants' as were those of 1965 and 1968. This meant that the constitutional revision period was officially terminated.
CHAPTER 7

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION OF 1962-71
FEDERALIST AND REGIONALIST IDEAS BEFORE 1961

The process of reforming the Constitution lasted from the early 1960s to 1971. This should not be understood as nearly ten years of actual discussion and deliberations over the reforms but rather many years of attempts with varying degrees of enthusiasm, by the two major parties to achieve a consensus on the type of changes required, followed by one year of activity in actually framing the new laws. The process of attempting to establish the consensus between 1964 and 1970 was made ever more difficult by the fragmentation and internal divisions among and within the traditional parties. The electoral consequences of this are shown in the survey of the electoral decade 1961-71. In discussing the reform of the Constitution therefore, it is necessary to review the history of the process before going on to look in detail at the changes made in 1971.

When studying the period 1961-71 it must be kept in mind that the idea of some sort of adjustment or reform of the Belgian political system was not entirely new in 1960 when M.P.Herremans surveyed the Community Problem in his article 'Quelques aspects de l'actuel contentieux'. He pointed out specific problem areas—linguistic, cultural and political and also referred to the problem of amnesties for former collaborators in the war. Under the heading 'linguistic' he wrote of the language census which was
due and should have been the means by which the linguistic boundaries would be defined. He also drew attention to the problem of Brussels and its periphery. Referring to cultural problems, he saw the proposals of 10th November, 1959, above the signature of the Prime Minister Eyskens, for the creation of separate cultural councils for Flanders and Wallonia, as of great significance. A political problem which he foresaw was the necessity to adjust the numbers of parliamentary seats to population balance - which meant more seats for Dutch-speakers at the expense of French-speakers. This would lead to the French-speakers' fear of 'minorisation' and hence to their demands for constitutional safeguards for their position. Finally, in the difference between the Flemish sympathetic attitude to former collaborators and the French-speakers' antagonism to them, he saw a symptom of a general difference of approach between the north and the south.

All these problem areas (except for the amnesty issue which was relatively minor) were those to which the political parties had to address themselves in the later 1960s. Herremans' work provided a good survey of the ground to be covered.

After 1960 a further dimension was added to the 'contentieux' of his article. The Walloons in particular began to express grave concern about the economic future of their region and hence to seek more regional aid and support. They began to
discuss whether regional autonomy alone would satisfy their wishes
to develop their own region and some began to adopt a federalist
point of view. Similarly the capital became concerned about what
appeared to be limits placed upon its expansion.

The agenda of the Herremans article in 1960 was therefore
expanded beyond the cultural, linguistic and political to include
economic devolution and the specific problem of the capital and its
region.

In the same article he wrote:

Traité à chaud ce problème - ou cet ensemble de
problèmes - qu'on les qualifie de faux problèmes
ou non - peut à tout moment dégénérer en une très
grave opposition, l'élément sentimental risquant
de supplanter momentanément l'ensemble des autres
éléments constituant la trame de la vie politique
belge.

Traité à froid ce problème est susceptible de
recevoir un certain nombre de solutions plus ou
moins acceptables. Dont aucune cependant n'est
susceptible d'atteindre à la perfection d'un
théorème cartésien.

La solution définitive semble être un leurre.
Il se posera toujours des problèmes dans ce domaine
et les groupes de pression sont toujours prêts à
intervenir si on leur fournit l'occasion. L'essential
est d'éviter de laisser pourrir la situation à un
moment donné.
The problem of the census was resolved by the abolition of the linguistic component, which measure provoked Francophone anger. The language laws were re-defined in 1963 to the dissatisfaction of many in both communities, although for conflicting reasons. The new laws were passed by the CVP/PSC and Socialists against Liberal opposition. There was no attempt to achieve a consensus on the 1958 pattern at this stage.

The language frontier was drawn at the same time, leaving serious arguments about marginal areas such as the region of the Fourons-Voeren and the surroundings of Brussels. Proposals were made to relate the number of parliamentary seats to population but this led to French demands for guarantees before the implementation of the proposals and Flemish counter-demands for their claimed democratic rights. Certainly the wish of Herremans in 1960 that the issues could be treated à froid seemed to be vain.

The proposals to revise the Constitution were an attempt by the major parties - the CVP/PSC and Socialists in particular - to achieve an overall and rational compromise and in this way treat the whole problem, as they hoped, à froid. The pacification of the Schools Crisis in 1958 provided an excellent example of a rational approach à froid. The two main parties, joined for a while by the Liberals, in 1964 began the process of trying once again to adopt the consociational methods to achieve the desired three-party
consultation and cooperation outside normal politics.

The process became steadily more difficult, however, as the problem became ever more complex. The original cultural and linguistic problem of 1960 had become by 1970 a problem of regionalism. In the meantime, the two major parties had lost their dominant position and therefore to a certain extent were not in a position to control the process of revision which they had themselves initiated.

There was a history of ideas and proposals for reform of the Belgian Constitution dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. The reformers of the 1960s were therefore not working without the benefit of previous discussions of possible changes. Before the 1960s such proposals had not found any support from the traditional party leadership and therefore they remained as part of the background thinking concerning the Belgian political system until the subject was re-opened in 1961-70. One of the options which had been considered was that of federalism. The idea of federalism as a form of government suitable to the Belgian situation was not new. In the 19th century, from 1850 onwards, articles appeared in various journals suggesting such a reform, the most notable by August Vermeylen in his work *Kritiek der Vlaams Beweging*. This early tentative reference to federalism was his
answer to the growing demands of the Flemish Movement. In the 20th century, federalist views began to be heard from the Walloon side also, the most important of these being from the Socialist Jules Destrée in his *Lettre au Roi* of 1912. This may be regarded as the original starting point of the Walloon federalist movement. During the war in 1914-18 the country was split into two regions under German auspices and many ideas of the Flemish federalists began to materialise. After the war, therefore, Flemish federalism came under suspicion of collaborationism. This left the leadership of the federalist tendency to the Walloons. During the 1920s and 30s the Assemblée Wallonne and Concentration Wallonne adopted generally federalist policies. By 1929 Flemish federalism had revived also, initially among academic circles at Louvain who founded the Vlaams studiekomite voor politieke, sociale en cultureel aangelegenheden. In 1931 the VOS Flemish Party * proposed a motion in favour of federalism in Parliament, which was rejected. The new Flemish party, the VNV which achieved relative success at the elections in 1936 and 1939, was a federalist party. In 1935 the VNV signed an agreement with the KVV (Katholieke Volkspartij - the Flemish wing of the Catholic Bloc) and also another agreement with Rex. This agreement envisaged ultimately a federalist form of government in Belgium. One of the signatories on the Catholic side

* VOS - Vlaamse Oud Strijders - founded in 1919. The group was commonly called the 'Frontists' and derived from a movement among the Flemish troops on the Ijzer Front in 1914-18.
was Professor Eyskens who later became CVP/PSC Prime Minister in
the 1960s. In 1938 three Socialist leaders, Van Belle, Truffaut
and Martel, tabled a federalist motion in Parliament, which was
rejected.

Throughout the 1930s, therefore, federalism was
seriously discussed, although it never became official policy
of any of the major parties. In the middle of this period the
Centre d'étude pour la réforme de l'état (C.E.R.E.) was organised
to study the community and constitutional question. This
commitée reported in favour of de-centralisation of administration,
parity among Dutch and French-speakers at the top levels of the
administrative hierarchy, the splitting of the Ministry of
Education into two linguistic sections and finally separate
cultural councils for each community. It rejected federalism.
These findings are interesting because they form an earlier
version of the proposals of the late 1960s.

After the Second World War the Flemish movement continued
to advocate some form of federalism. In Parliament in 1947 this
theme was taken up by a Walloon PSB deputy Gregoire, together with
the Communist leader Lahaut and the Liberal leader Rey. Another
federalist motion was proposed but again rejected. In the same
year, 1948, the Congress of the Walloon PSB at Charleroi expressed
full support for federalism. In 1961 the same Walloon PSB Congress passed a similar motion which became part of the overall reform movement of the 1960s. Federalism, or at least economic devolution, had Walloon Socialist support for many years prior to the 1960s.

In the 1940s and 1950s, therefore, federalism was not an unknown concept to Belgian politicians. In 1948 the government set up the Harmel Centre to study relations between the communities. In the course of its work the centre studied a number of federalist projects from previous years and therefore federalism was to be considered as a possible solution to Belgium's problems. As with the C.E.R.E. in the 1930s the final report of the Harmel Centre rejected federalism in favour of the preservation of the unitary system with modifications to allow for economic and cultural decentralisation. Its specific suggestions were:

1. Decentralisation of public services.
2. Parity at the top levels in the administration.
3. A definitive fixing of the language boundary.
4. Adjustment of administrative regions to the language boundary.
5. The creation of Flemish and Walloon cultural councils.
6. The creation of consultative committees in Wallonia and Flanders to examine economic and social matters.

These suggestions were all designed to ease relations between the communities but did not mention the specific problems of the Brussels area which was assumed to be simply part of the overall national
community problem and not to have any special features worthy of study at this stage.

In 1961 the newly formed MPW on the Walloon side and the Volksunie on the Flemish side were advocating federalism and the Walloon PSB was moving in the same direction. In October 1961 Walloon and Flemish federalists met together in Liège and published a common manifesto. Parallel, however, was the moderate Harmel Centre approach and the problem of the 1960s was the achievement of the latter under pressure from the former. On the Flemish side the Volksunie was the federalist party, with some sympathy from elements in the CVP and on the Walloon side, the MPW with many of the PSB. Flemish Socialists and Walloon PSC were much less enthusiastic for they would find themselves permanent minorities in their respective regions. The Liberals in the early 1960s completely rejected any reference to a federalist solution and the bulk of the CVP saw Flemish aspirations achieving satisfaction through a unitary system giving them cultural autonomy and a majority in the national Parliament.
The CVP/PSC coalition government of 1961-65 embarked upon the revision process to achieve reform within the unitary system. The process began in 1962 when a working party was established to prepare a programme for the changes it deemed necessary. The framework of the revision had to be the article 131 of the existing Constitution which stipulated that the proposed changes had to be presented to parliament. Once it had been agreed that certain articles in the Constitution were to be revised the proposals had to be published in the Moniteur*. This then would form a 'declaration to revise' and parliament would have to be dissolved and a new one elected. The new parliament would then be 'constituant'. From that point any revisions required 2/3rds of the members to be present and 2/3rd of their votes to be in favour. The parliament of 1961-65 was therefore not 'constitutant' but the government working party of 1962 was to prepare the proposals for revision which could be published as a declaration of intent to revise. The government was compelled to seek reform and compromise but the complications of the 2/3rd quorum and 2/3rd majority requirements meant that negotiations would be needed in at least two parliaments - the 'pre-constituant' and the 'constituant'.

*Le Moniteur Belge is the official government journal.
In October 1963 the working party reported that it had not come to any conclusions but passed a summary of its discussions to the presidents of the three traditional parties. Following this, in November 1963, the three parties began to form a three-party commission on the Constitution - the Round Table of 1963. Unlike the working party which had been formed from the two parties in the government, the Round Table was to include the Liberals. In November 1963 the president of the Liberals (the PLP/PVV) expressed his optimism about the outcome of the Round Table and looked forward to a successful result by April 1964. On the CVP/PSC side, however, opinion was divided. The right of the party was concerned about party unity and also about becoming too closely involved with the Socialists. The left of the CVP (the Christian Democrats in Flanders) expressed sympathy for a considerable degree of economic and social decentralisation, a view which found an echo among Walloon Socialists but was criticised by the CVP right wing. It was also significant that at this time Pope Paul VI in a broadcast on Belgian radio called upon the Belgian people to end 'sterile quarrels' and to seek to remain united. This was badly received by many Flemings sympathetic to devolution and even federalism. The division of opinion in the CVP between unitarists and federalists revealed itself at the party congress at this time. The CVP/PSC had therefore to achieve a compromise within a compromise in its approach to constitutional revision. This became the pattern for all three parties by the late 1960s.
At this stage therefore the government was seeking to adopt, via the three-party Round Table, an approach to the problem which recalls that of 1958. All three parties were to be included, although at the time the Liberals were in opposition just as the Socialists had been in opposition in 1958. This was what has been described above as a consociational approach to the crisis. At this time, before the 1965 and 1968 elections, the three parties still commanded the support of the vast bulk of the electorate and therefore a consensus between them would cover the full spectrum of Belgian political opinion just as it did in 1958. At the same time the problem of the divergence of opinion within the two main parties over the community question was beginning to weaken the internal consensus within each one. It will be recalled that this inner consensus between communities within the parties was a vital part of the Belgian tradition both of normal and consensus politics. This was the special element in the Belgian system where it differed from the Netherlands and resembled Switzerland. The internal problems which were already showing themselves in the CVP/PSC were therefore a sign that the 1958 approach might be much more difficult in the new situation. The VU was excluded from the Round Table. As in the early 1960s the VU was still comparatively small, this omission might have seemed relatively insignificant. Its exclusion (and until 1969 the exclusion of the FDF and RW) was however a sign that the three parties saw the problems of the Belgian state as
their exclusive concern and they were not prepared to admit new parties to the negotiating table until forced by circumstances to do so. Until that time their exclusion meant that the community parties were able to offer criticism and comment upon any proposed reforms without having to accept any responsibilities.

The Volksunie reacted unfavourably to the Round Table. It accused the three traditional parties of planning to present a unitary solution to Belgium’s problems as a *fait accompli* and it saw the arrangements for the Round Table as a means to that end. After 1965 the French language regional parties, the RW and FDF, criticised the main parties in the same way. The Socialists also expressed suspicion of the CVP/PSC, suggesting that they were seeking a formula to keep open the possibility of a future coalition with the Liberals.*

Within the governing CVP/PSC - Socialist coalition there were three areas of tension. The Flemish Socialists and the CVP had different views of the cultural devolution plans under discussion, the former being afraid of becoming a permanent minority in a culturally Catholic Flanders. The two parties also differed nationally over their interpretations of decentralisation, the

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* The Socialist reservation was valid in that the right of the CVP/PSC did want to keep open the option of coalition with the Liberals. They feared that if the revision were only workable with the cooperation of the Socialists the possibility of a right coalition with the Liberals would disappear for a long period.
CVP/PSC thinking in terms of provinces whilst the Socialists thought in terms of whole regions. Thirdly, they differed over the guarantees appropriate to safeguard Walloon interests, the Socialists seeking a double majority provision and the CVP proposing a 2/3rds majority only.* The Liberals, not part of the governing coalition, in the person of their president Vanaudenhove, firmly condemned any moves to divide the country into two parts and emphasised the traditionally unitary nature of the Belgian political system. When the Round Table met therefore for the first time on January 14th 1964, the approaches of the three parties ranged from the unitarism of the PLP/PW, to a sympathy for federalism among some members of the PSB. Some members of the CVP feared that they might find themselves in a position where only perpetual coalition with the Socialists could make the new Constitution workable. The PLP/PVU suspected that they might find themselves permanently excluded from power. These fears, together with the Socialists' desire to choose whether or not to continue in coalition with the CVP/PSC, all formed a background to the thinking of the party leadership at this time in addition to the community problem itself. Normal party political tactics could not disappear to allow for the community problem and each party had to consider its long-term strategy in relation to the others. Unlike 1958 it was difficult to isolate the issue under discussion from normal competitive politics.

* 'Double majority' - a separate majority among the Flemish and French deputies respectively in Parliament.
2/3rd majority - a 2/3rd majority of all deputies voting together.
The constitution of the Round Table illustrated the principle of consensus which was desired. It consisted of 12 French-speakers and 12 Dutch-speakers. There were 9 Dutch-speakers from Flanders and 3 from Brussels. There were 8 Wallons and 4 French-speakers from Brussels. In the party background the 8 Wallons were 3 PSB, 3 PSC and 2 PLP, the Brussels French-speakers were 2 PLP, 1 PSC and 1 PSB. The 3 Dutch speakers from Brussels were 1 CVP, 1 BSP and 1 PVV and from Flanders there were 3 CVP, 3 BSP and 3 PVV. Thus it was hoped that every possible shade of opinion would be included within the total of 8 representatives from each party. The listing of the backgrounds of the participants illustrates the difficulty of achieving the over-arching consensus necessary. The attempt to ensure that all shades of opinion were represented was in the spirit of the consensus-seeking tradition of 1958. The Schools Problem had been resolved in this way and in 1964 the same approach was to be sought by the three traditional parties.

From the very beginning the Round Table became absorbed in the differences between the approaches of the different groups. The arguments ranged over the guarantees for Wallonia, cultural devolution, interpretation of the concept of decentralisation and impasse was reached. The PLP was particularly strong in its defence of Brussels interests. In order to make some progress, on March 5th 1964 the Round Table was re-formed into three sub-
committees. These were: a committee to deal with cultural problems, one to study decentralisation and a third to study relations between the executive and the legislature. The link between the three was to be the regular meetings of the three party presidents. The committees met regularly during the Spring and Summer of 1964. The issue of cultural devolution was one of the main themes with the CVP/PSC accepting cultural federalism but totally rejecting economic federalism. The Liberals were totally opposed to federalism and saw the choice as a clear one between federalism, which they rejected, and unitarism.* The same arguments which had taken place at the Round Table were rehearsed again in the committees and therefore in June the whole question was passed into the hands of the three party presidents in the hope that they could evolve a solution. A step forward was made by a decision to exclude economic decentralisation from the constitutional revision on the assumption that this could be dealt with by a normal parliament as it would not involve the Constitution. This removed one area of contention but the problem of economic decentralisation remained in the background, to return in the 1970s. It is possible to see the exclusion of this important issue as tactically wise, designed as it was to concentrate minds upon cultural matters and constitutional reforms. In the long term, however, it meant that

* "Ou bien nous irons vers un renforcement de l'unité nationale ou bien vers un fédéralisme qui n'ose pas dire son nom." Vanaudenhove, President of the PLP/PVV, La Dernière Heur, 12.3.64.
any solutions which might emerge at this stage would leave a large vague area of problems unsolved. This must be contrasted with 1958 when, after similar negotiations, the whole Schools Problem was resolved, with no areas postponed as too difficult to handle. In short, the 1964 Round Table accepted that at best it would only find a partial solution to Belgium's Community Problem.

The discussions were suspended in the summer but during the month of August the three party leaderships met unofficially at Menton in France to try and formulate a common policy to present to their colleagues in the autumn. In the autumn, however, the parties continued to differ about any proposals put forward. At this meeting the CVP claimed to be the only effective vehicle for Flemish aspirations. The party set as its main immediate aims the establishment of cultural autonomy for Flanders, the adaptation of the number of parliamentary seats to population with some guarantees to Wallonia which would not limit majority rights and finally a solution to the Brussels problem. The CVP saw as its main opponents the Flemish Socialists and the PLP/PVV.*

* "Si nous voulons arriver à nos fins, nous devons donc désarmer leur méfiance et mettre un terme au tirailement entre l'anti-cléricalisme et le cléricalisme."
La Libre Belgique, 29.9.64.
The local government elections (communal elections) of October 11th, 1964 influenced the parties further. In Wallonia the Socialists suffered setbacks, as to a lesser extent did the PSC. Walloon federalist or regionalist groups gained at their expense. These election results brought more pressure to bear upon the Walloon PSB who felt obliged to seek revision of the language laws in the border areas.* The Flemish Socialists, however, firmly rejected any suggestions of such revisions and threatened to withdraw their support for guarantees to protect Wallonia. The PLP/PVV on the other hand were encouraged by successes in Brussels to see the defence of the capital and the unitary system as a potentially popular policy and therefore the party continued its emphasis upon this approach.

A month after the local elections the PSC met for a Journée d'étude. This could be compared to the CVP Congress above. At the PSC meeting the emphasis was different from that of the CVP. The first contribution was from Professor Urbain of Louvain who discussed economic and social questions. His emphasis was strongly pro-Brussels. Having discussed the Walloon problem in general terms he argued that the dynamism of the capital would bring benefit to the south as well as the centre of the country. This was not the same approach as that of the delegates from Liège and

* The border area meant primarily the Fourons/Voeren district and the Brussels periphery. The rest of the linguistic border was less contentious.
many other Walloon areas who were sympathetic to regionalism. The second major speech was by Pierre Wigny, PSC deputy for Tournai, who concentrated upon the question of constitutional guarantees for French-speakers' interests in the reform proposals.* He left the precise nature of these guarantees to the judgement of the negotiators. The discussions which followed showed a wide diversity of views about the constitutional revision and revealed the PSC as much more divided and sceptical than the CVP which had demonstrated so clearly its support of the Flemish interest. The difference of emphasis among Flemish and French-speaking Catholics and Socialists revealed the dangers to internal unity in the main parties. As early as 1964 the internal splits of 1968 and the 1970s were beginning to develop.

In December 1964 the three party leaders, together with some colleagues, again took up the negotiations.** The problem of guarantees for Wallonia again seemed insoluble. On January 18th, 1965 the full Round Table met again to attempt to find a solution.

* "Nous ne pouvons simplement compter sur la sagesse de la majorité flamande, Une telle attitude serait politiquement imprudente et psychologiquement dangereuse."
La Libre Belge, 23.11.64.

** As well as the three presidents there were: from the CVP/PSC Harmel, De Schrijver and Van de Kerkhove, From the BSP/PSB Van Eynde, Pierson and Merlot. From the PLP/PVV, Lefèbre, De Clercq and De Winter.
In the meantime, however, a serious crisis was presented by the Liberals. This centred on Article 3b which concerned Brussels. A Brussels PLP leader Van Offelen, accused the CVP of 'courir après la Volksunie' and the PSB of 'courir après sa dissidence en Wallonie.' The Round Table had hardly begun its work again when the PLP expressed its hostility to Article 3b. The CVP reaction to this ranged from a strong line on the part of De Saeger * to a moderate conciliatory approach from Segers, Minister of Defence. The PLP in Brussels and the party nationally, with the exception of some Flemish elements, saw this as an election issue for them; retreat from the Round Table would also enable the party to appear more united than those still involved in the complicated and seemingly endless negotiations. The Socialists continued to support the Round Table and were content to see the PLP/PVV departure. The CVP/PSC were however faced with a dilemma. They could continue to work with the Socialists to revise the Constitution, which would make the continuation of the centre-left coalition essential or they could admit that they had failed in their aim to reach an agreement for the reforms, which admission would provide excellent propaganda material for the Volksunie in Flanders. They would then be able to argue that the CVP was not able in the final analysis to push the

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* De Saeger, President of the CVP took the view that the process should be pushed through without the Liberals, whereas the CVP Minister of Defence, Segers, took a more conciliatory position. *La Libre Belgique*, 16.1.65.
Flemish cause because of the need for compromise within the party. On January 21st the Liberals left the Round Table. The issue which led to this was Article 3b which defined the linguistic regions and thus limited Brussels for the indefinite future. On January 26th the two main parties signed an agreement which was to form the basis of constitutional revision in the next Parliamentary session, after the forthcoming elections. The Round Table ended therefore as a two-party consensus. Even among these two parties there were wide reservations which were likely to develop and deepen as further discussions followed. Unlike 1958, when the issue was taken out of normal politics, the parties in 1964-65 were allowing normal politics and the politics of pacification to become intermingled.

Once the agreement between the two had been signed it was to be presented to the two parties on the same day - February 13th. The CVP/PSC approved by 362 to 22 votes with 5 abstentions. The Socialists approved by 889 votes against 86 with 21 abstentions. On all sides there were reservations, many Dutch-speakers expressing doubts about the guarantees for Wallonia and many Walloons were disappointed about the failure to move in a more regionalist direction. One Walloon speaker at the PSC meeting went so far as to say, "il craint que tes Yattons ne soient victimes d'un jeu de dupe!" Nevertheless in both parties the agreement was accepted. Outside the two main parties reactions were mixed. The Volksunie
and the Vlaams Aktie Komitee and also the MPW in Wallonia and other Walloon groups condemned the agreement as a betrayal of the Flemish and Walloon causes respectively.\(^{14}\) These were criticisms from a federalist point of view. Middle-class organisations rejected the discrimination among citizens which they claimed that the agreements implied and criticised the plans for the capital.\(^{15}\) Many Liberals saw the rigidity of the proposals as offensive to the Belgian liberal democratic tradition.\(^{16}\)

The Round Table had lasted 12 months from January 1964 to January 1965. It was to be the means by which an over-arching agreement and consensus was to be achieved. Unfortunately the process of negotiation to achieve this showed the acute difficulty of its accomplishment. The Socialists maintained their unity, but with difficulty and with many differences behind outward appearances. The CVP/PSC was very nearly split with the CVP taking a leading role and the PSC following behind reluctantly. The original three-party ideal collapsed when the Liberals left in January 1965. Within the PLP/PVV unity was preserved by the unitary policy of the party but the emphasis upon Brussels revealed differences between the PLP in the capital and the PVV in Flanders.\(^{17}\) The proposals, far from achieving a consensus, were under attack from both federalists and regionalists on the one hand and believers
in the unitary system on the other. The year of the Round Table made it clear that a smoothly working consensus between the parties was going to prove an almost impossible ideal. It also revealed that the problem of Brussels was going to be one of the crucial issues in the whole revision process. The three-party approach collapsed over this issue in January 1965.

In spite of its collapse, the attempts of 1964 to achieve consensus have several characteristics of the consociational model. The initial invitation to the three parties, which included the Liberals who were in opposition at the time, recalls the similar three-party consultations in 1958 which included the Socialists who were then in opposition. The emphasis on both occasions upon the role of the party leaders is also characteristic of the model. The discussions were between party presidents and a few colleagues, not between whole parties or even a large representation of each party. The leaders met separately from normal politics, even out of the country in the south of France in the summer, far away from the Brussels political scene. After the withdrawal of the Liberals, the CVP/PSC and Socialists continued in the same way. Once the leaders had worked out the basis of a compromise between them, the terms were taken to the full parties for their endorsement which was forthcoming.
The period of the Round Table may be regarded as the first phase of the attempt to revise the Constitution. The resulting proposals were placed before Parliament by the CVP/PSC and Socialists jointly and the ensuing election of 1965 was therefore 'constituant'. For the proposals to become law a 2/3rds majority would be required. From 1961 to 1965 the two main parties held 180 of the 212 seats in the Chamber, well above the 2/3rds needed. After the 1965 election, when the two parties lost considerable ground, they held only 141, not enough for constitutional revision without the aid of another party. The PLP/PVV, which dissociated itself from the proposals, rose from 20 to 48 seats. The variation between the regional support for the PLP/PVV reveals however the Brussels and Francophone appeal of the party in 1965.*

The new Brussels regional party, the FDF, gained 10% of the Brussels electorate. In 1965, therefore, the electors of the capital demonstrated their preparedness to desert old allegiances and turn to parties which would identify themselves as interested in the problems of their region. The performance of the PLP in Wallonia was good, in Flanders it was satisfactory but in Brussels, combined with the FDF it meant that 43% of the voters were opposed to the two parties which had sponsored the revision proposals. After the

* The PLP with 33% support in Brussels was more successful in the capital than in Wallonia (26%) and Flanders (17%).
May 1965 elections, the credibility of the two parties of the coalition was very low in the capital. Their hopes for the 2/3rd majority depended upon other parties, of which the PLP/PVV was the strongest. The second phase of the revision process was therefore limited by the new situation in parliament. Virtually no progress was made between 1965 and 1968.

After 1965 the CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition continued to 1966, when it was replaced by a centre-right CVP/PSC-Liberal government. The failure of the two parties (CVP/PSC-Socialists) to gain a 2/3rd majority in the 1965 elections placed the Liberals in an important bargaining position. This was the period of the Liberal revival when they appeared to be expanding. As the one party of the traditional three parties not part of the Round Table agreement, they were not prepared to support the reform package proposed by the other two. In 1966 the change of government showed a new emphasis upon socio-economic politics and the Prime Minister, Vanden Boeynants, hoped to concentrate attention upon the problems of the Belgian economy. If he could have achieved this shift then normal politics would have reasserted themselves and the Community Question would have been reduced in importance. This would in turn have benefitted the traditional parties. The period 1966–68 was, however, to prove to be only an interval between the intense arguments around the Language Laws in 1962–64 and the crisis of
1968 concerning the University of Louvain. The problems grew worse but the government was less able to handle them than hitherto.

Before the March 1968 elections, caused by the Louvain crisis, a declaration of intent to revise the Constitution was again made to enable the next parliament to be 'constituant'. The elections saw a continuation of the trends of 1965. The position of the two main parties was weakened still further, their total number of deputies dropping to 128 out of 212, well below 2/3rds. The PLP/PVV obtained 47 seats, the Communists 5, and the remaining 32 were taken by the community parties (VU, FDF and RW). In the capital the PLP obtained 25% (a decline from 1965), the FDF 16% and the VU 7%.

After the elections the problems of defining a 2/3rd majority occupied the minds of the main parties. There could be a vital difference between a 2/3rd rule applying to those who actually voted and a 2/3rd rule which included abstentions in the calculations.* By July 1969 this was resolved by agreement to exclude any abstentions from the calculations. It is a demonstration of the complications of the party political situation after 1968.

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* For example: if 210 deputies attended and of these 180 actually voted, then 2/3rd would be either 140 (2/3rds of those attending) or 120 (2/3rds of those who actually voted.)
that time needed to be spent on debates about voting procedures in 1968-69 in order to attempt to move forward on a reform which had first been tabled in the 1962-65 period. The Community Problem had caused a crisis in 1968 which brought down the government and yet even after this event had demonstrated the urgency of the problem, the parties were in dispute about voting procedures.

In June 1968 the new CVP/PSC - Socialist coalition published a long agreement outlining their programme for the session. The first chapter listed the changes necessary to achieve the "modernisation de l'état et relations communautaires." This contained the full range of reforms planned in the discussions in 1964-65. After further inter-party negotiations, especially with the PLP/PVU whose support was lukewarm, in September 1969 a working party for community relations was set up, from members of both houses of parliament. This group had 28 members and was thus called the 'XXVIII group'. The Liberals had previously found it difficult to cooperate and therefore the problem had been left to a weakened CVP/PSC and the Socialists. The entry of the Liberals to the discussions at this time was a change in policy for them. It had become obvious that reforms were necessary and inevitable. The party was also beginning to feel the internal community pressures which it had resisted before 1968, when party unity had been maintained. They had presumably concluded, therefore, that they
could better influence the changes from within the discussions. It was, however, a token of the seriousness of the situation that the Liberals, who had previously been the most unitarist and sceptical of the traditional parties, could be induced to join discussions of constitutional reforms. If they had remained outside whilst the VU, RW and FDF took part in the bargaining process, the Liberals would have found themselves isolated. The 'XXVIII group' recognised the new realities of Belgian politics and sought to include all parties. There were representatives from the three older parties the VU, FDF/RW and Communists. This approach was consistent with the attempt to achieve consensus overall. The new quest for compromise among the representatives of the parties recognised the new importance of the community parties. In this way, by the late 1960s, consensus among Belgian political leaders was to be extended beyond the three traditional parties.

It can be maintained that it is only at this point that the full consociational approach to crisis pacification began to be adopted in Belgium in the 1960s. Up to this point the negotiations had been between the three traditional parties, or more often between only two of them, the CV/psc and Socialists. The 'XXVIII group' included all interested parties in an attempt to find a full consensus along the 1958 lines. This was a major concession by the traditional parties for it admitted the community parties as part
of the system. Equally this could be interpreted as an invitation to the three community parties to share responsibility for any failures of the reforms which might emerge. The community parties might thus be outmanoeuvred and forced onto the defensive. Just as the three traditional parties were compelled by the circumstances of the growth of the Community Problem to include the new parties, the new parties could not refuse to take part in discussions. A feature of 1969 which recalls characteristics of the consociational model was the role of the leaders, which was similar to 1958, and also to the first attempt at consensus in 1964-65. The 'XXVIII group' was made up again of party leaders and immediate colleagues, who were to negotiate apart from normal politics and produce among them a compromise solution, which would then be handed down for endorsement to their followers.

The 'XXVIII group' produced its first report on November 11th 1969 after twenty-seven meetings. The four main features of the report were:

1. The rejection of federalism,
2. Support for the idea of decentralisation and a certain degree of regionalism,
3. An assertion that the Constitution should only state broad principles rather than attempt to be too specific, and
4. Support for the idea of parity for each community at the Cabinet level, combined with guarantees for Wallonia and for Dutch-speakers in Brussels.
It was clear that at these meetings the problems of Brussels and its region were not to be solved easily and the form of guarantees for Wallonia was still vague. The PLP/PVV had moved its position from that of 1968 and was now prepared to accept some degree of regionalisation as a defence against federalism. Similarly the FDF/RW had moved from federalism to regionalism.

The final phase of the Revision began on February 18th 1970 when Prime Minister Eyskens presented new proposals, based on the report of the 'XXVIII group'. A most important feature of these was the emphasis upon the new Constitution laying down general principles to be implemented by a later legislature, by simple majority. There were four new areas in the proposals which differed in their emphasis from the previous approach:

1. Brussels was to be limited to 19 communes by the Constitution,

2. The idea of regions was accepted, there being three regions with a certain degree of decentralisation,

3. At the national level, when the 'alarm bell' was sounded* by one of the communities, the issue would be referred to the Council of Ministers rather than parliament as a whole, and

4. There was to be local government reform.

* The 'alarm bell' refers to Article 38b of the constitution.
During the summer of 1970 progress was slow because of objections from the PLP/PVV concerning special majorities and guarantees. In June Brussels PLP representatives, together with the FDF walked out of discussions of the problems of the capital. On another occasion the VU threatened to boycott all proceedings. On yet another occasion the Brussels Socialists left the Chamber to demonstrate their feelings about the treatment of the capital. Finally, by the end of the summer of 1971, all the revision bills had been passed after further negotiations and compromise. Parliament was dissolved on September 29th and a General Election took place on November 7th 1971. The parliament of 1971-74 was not 'constituant'.

The attempt to revise the Constitution had therefore taken 9 years from the setting up of the working party in 1962. The long and involved inter-party negotiations and the immobilism caused by the decline in the authority of the two main parties had weakened confidence in the system. The new community parties grew stronger with each election. The Liberals had finally split over the Brussels issue. When the revision was finally achieved it had many weaknesses but it could possibly have satisfied Flemish and Walloon aspirations within the overall national compromise. It was clear however that the Brussels region was more discontented in 1971 than 1961.
The psycho-political aspect of the process of revision must also be taken into account. Collard observed that, whilst he did not agree that Flemish economic development had been favouritism, the fact that Walloons thought this to be true was important. In the same way many years of discussion and argument about constitutional revision might also have a psycho-political effect. The original Constitution of 1830 had only been modified in the 1890s and 1919 with extensions of the franchise. In the 1960s the Constitution was examined and discussed in more profound ways. The whole concept of the Belgian State was questioned. This could have two consequences: some could regard the operation as insufficient and half-hearted and feel that opportunities had been wasted and others might feel that the Constitution had lost its sacred character and could therefore be subject to frequent modification like any other laws. The old version lasted 130 years without any profound revision of principle. It may be that the psycho-political effect of one revision could whet the appetite for more, rather than lay a foundation for future stability. The approach of the last year of the discussions which suggested general principles rather than specifics meant that many issues would return as later legislatures attempted to put them into practice. 1971 would not therefore be the end of the problems, but the beginning of the process of putting the revision into effect. A further psycho-political consequence of 1962-71 was the break-up amongst voters and even party representatives of old traditional loyalties. In
Flanders CVP members worked sometimes with the Socialists, sometimes with the PVV and even the VU. In Brussels, regional loyalties drew all parties together, old allegiances were weakened by the new alliances formed during this period. The constitutional revision therefore had two faces. It was an attempt to solve the Community Problem whilst at the same time it exposed the depth of that very same problem and its many ramifications.
THE MAIN CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION 1971

The Revised Constitution which emerged from these years of negotiations was designed to achieve cooperation between the communities in the spirit of the Harmel proposals rather than that of the federalists. The aim was to preserve the system intact whilst allowing for cultural autonomy and a certain amount of economic decentralisation. The new Constitution is best appreciated by concentrating on the new or amended articles viewed in the light of the above aims. 19

Article 3b was the first change. It was the Article which most concerned the Brussels PLP in 1965. It defined the language areas of Belgium:

Belgium comprises 4 linguistic regions: The French language region, the Dutch ... the bilingual region of Brussels - capital and the German...

Every commune in the Kingdom belongs to one of these regions. The boundaries of the four regions may only be altered or amended by Act of Parliament passed on a majority vote of each linguistic group ... on condition that the majority of the members of each group are present and the total votes in favour in each group be 2/3rds of the votes cast. (Art.3b)

This Article defined the linguistic boundary. In reality neither the Dutch-speakers nor the French-speakers would be likely to concede territory in the future and vote as a 2/3rd majority to do so. This was relatively unimportant to the bulk of the population
of Wallonia and Flanders but much more important to those near the boundary. Above all this was vital to Brussels, which was defined as the area of the 19 communes. The bilingual region would therefore never, according to the logic of Article 3b, extend beyond this. The Article formed the corridor which the Brussels French-speakers saw as surrounding their city.

In Article 3c the nation was defined as belonging to three communities:
"Belgium comprises three communities: French, Dutch and German" (3c). This introduced into Belgian law a new previously unknown concept - that of cultural community. Previously the Belgian State recognised only Belgian citizens irrespective of community. Article 3c meant that a Belgian would be henceforth 'citizen and Flemish', 'citizen and Walloon' and so on. In the case of Brussels a citizen would therefore be either a 'citizen and Flemish' or 'citizen and Walloon' even though his family might be several generations removed from Flanders or Wallonia. Further, Article 3c recognised the communities as entities in themselves: "Each community enjoys the powers invested in it by the Constitution or by such legislation as shall be enacted by virtue thereof." (Art.3c).

Having defined community in this way, the Constitution gave political expression to the concept of Article 32b where the political leadership of each community is described as the function
of groups within the parliamentary system:

"For those cases prescribed by the Constitution, the elected members of each House are divided into a French-language group and a Dutch-language group in such a manner as is laid down by law" (Art.32b). Following this, Article 38b gave protection to each group against infringements of its rights:

"Except in the case of budgets and laws requiring a special majority, a reasoned motion signed by at least 3/4 of the members of one linguistic group ... may declare that the provisions of a draft or proposed bill ... are of such a nature as to have a serious effect on relations between the communities."

"In such cases, parliamentary procedure is suspended and the motion is referred back to the Cabinet..." (Art.38b). This procedure whereby each community could question legislation which it considered a threat to its cultural integrity was called the 'alarm bell'. The Cabinet, according to Article 86b, was to be half Dutch and half French and therefore objectivity was to be preserved. This procedure was the guarantee of Francophone minority interests against the Flemish parliamentary majority. Article 49 gave the Dutch-speakers satisfaction over this matter for it fixed the number of seats in the Chamber as 212 with one member for each 1/212th of the population. Therefore Articles 38b and 49 must be seen as complementary. They are an attempt to combine Flemish majority rights with French-speaking minority protection.
A further entirely new element in the Constitution was implied by Article 59b which set up two Cultural Councils. These formed the foundation of the cultural devolution policy. Each cultural council was to consist of all the deputies and senators from each linguistic group respectively who would then meet together as a council previously unknown in the system. In section two of this Article 59b the spheres of interest of these councils were defined as cultural matters, education and cooperation between the communities. The councils were empowered to determine linguistic laws in their areas, educational policy and even to take initiatives in industrial relations. Decisions of the councils would have the full force of law in their respective linguistic areas:

"Such decrees as are promulgated in pursuance of Section 2 shall have the force of law respectively in the French language region and also in the Dutch language region and also in respect of institutions established in the bilingual region of Brussels-capital which by virtue of their activities, must be considered as belonging exclusively to one or other of the cultural communities."

(Art.59b Section 4). The councils were to receive funds for their activities from central government (Art 59b, Section 6). The spirit of Article 59b was that of cultural autonomy. As with Article 3b above, this arrangement admirably suited Flanders and Wallonia but Brussels was clearly an anomaly, for there the communities were closely interwoven.
The concept of economic region was introduced in Article 107d.

"Belgium comprises three regions: the Walloon region, the Flemish region and the Brussels region."

"The law confers on the regional bodies, which it sets up and which are composed of elected representatives, the power to rule on such matters as it shall determine ..." (Art. 107d). The regions did not correspond to the cultural zones defined in Article 3b and unlike the Cultural Councils there was no mention of the promulgations of the economic regional bodies having the force of law. They would also have no taxation powers. The Constitution was here laying down general principles for it left the definition of the powers, scope and boundaries of the regional economic councils to later legislation. Neither the Cultural Councils nor the economic councils were to have rights of tax collection for their own purposes. This would have been a federalist approach which the new Constitution rejected. In this context of economic regional arrangements also, Brussels formed an anomaly, for whereas Wallonia and Flanders formed easily defined geographical entities, the capital region extended across the centre of the country into both other regions.

The revision allowed for cultural autonomy, made economic regionalisation possible, gave guarantees for majority rights and
minority protection and finally in Articles 108b and 108c dealt with local government reforms. The first of these was designed to create large councils to cover the major urban areas and federations of rural communes. Each of these new authorities was to have an elected council and executive. This was easily applied to Antwerp, Ghent, Liège and Charleroi, where the various urban communes of the agglomeration were brought together under the one umbrella organisation. Before the reforms there were many small communes which in reality formed districts of the large city-regions. In the Brussels area, however, the problem was complicated by the existence of the six communes on the periphery where French-speakers formed a large minority or even claimed to form a majority. They were not to be considered as part of the bilingual 'Brussels-Capital' region (Article 3b) but although they had 'facilities' for use of French, they were considered as part of the Dutch-speaking zone. Around the capital, five federations of communes were created - Asse, Hal, Vilvorde, Tervuren and Saventem, in accordance with the new Article 108b. These new federations were overwhelmingly Dutch and therefore the six peripheral communes were permanently fixed in their anomalous position. This section 108b was therefore another case of a reasonable and workable solution to Flemish or Walloon problems presenting extra problems in the area of the capital.

Article 108c extended local government reform to the capital. The city emerged with a system of government which
resembled that of the state itself. The council created to cover the 19 communes would divide itself along linguistic lines and "except in the case of budgets, a reasoned motion signed by at least 2/3rds of the members of the linguistic group in the urban area council ... may declare that such provisions as it specifies... are likely to do grave harm to relations between the communities." (Art.108c/3). This was very similar to Article 38b - the 'alarm bell' in Parliament. There were to be two cultural councils for Brussels and guarantees for the Dutch-speaking minority. The powers of the cultural councils were related to education and cultural matters similar to those at national level. The council as a whole was to elect an executive committee "composed of an uneven number of members. With the exception of the Chairman, there are the same number of members in the French language group as in the Dutch language group." (108c/2). The parity in the Brussels executive committee parallels parity in the Council of Ministers at national level (Art.86b). The compromise was to be seen by many Bruxellois as achieved at their expense, for, whereas the national linguistic balance was approximately 55:45, that in Brussels was nearer 75:25, The arrangements for the capital appeared therefore to be especially favourable to the Dutch-speakers.

There were several other amendments to the 1830 Constitution but they do not have any relevance to the community issue of the 1960s. Reservations concerning the Constitution as a whole may be regarded as serious but nevertheless the ideal of cultural autonomy combined
with economic regionalisation would go some way to satisfy the aspirations of Wallonia and Flanders. Similarly the guarantees at the national level for the rights of the French-speaking minority, although cumbersome in that they could lead to immobilism in acute situations were a reasonable attempt to produce a formula to satisfy the requirements of democracy in such a divided society.

Unfortunately the line between the two communities could not be drawn in a clearcut way. The situation of largely French-speaking Brussels north of the linguistic boundary presented an anomaly. In addition to this the use of French extended to minorities outside the city boundary into the surrounding Dutch zone. The capital could not therefore fit neatly into the pattern of cultural and economic zones and regions. This was a weakness in the Constitution. The application of Article 3b (concerning linguistic regions) 3c (definition of communities), 59b (guarantees for the Dutch-speaking minority in the capital) and 108b (local government reform) was inevitably destined to be extremely complicated in the case of the capital and its region. Therefore, the 9 year process of revising the Constitution to achieve a new consensus for the country as a whole had produced a possibly workable solution for Flanders and Wallonia, whilst at the same time leaving a range of unsolved problems in and around the capital. The achievement of nearly 50% of the total vote in the 1971 Brussels agglomeration elections and majority control of the council and its executive by the Rassemblement Bruxellois must be understood in this light.
In comparing 1971 with the 1958 Schools Pact it is immediately clear that there are major differences. The unsatisfactory nature of the arrangements for the capital and the postponement of a resolution of the problem of regions meant that 1971 was only a partial solution of pacification whereas 1958 was a complete set of arrangements with no loose ends left to form the basis of further problems. There was also a major contrast between the position of the main actors in 1958 and 1971. In 1958, the three traditional parties, after 8 years of adversarial politics about the issues involved (preceded by 100 years of confessional politics), hammered out an agreement within a year. The Schools Pact was seen by all parties as a turning point in Belgian politics. The change of the Liberal Party to the new PLP/PVV after 1961 shows very clearly that they took the view that confessional politics were no longer important within the system. The arguments about religion and education had reached new levels of intensity in 1950-58. This was the Schools Crisis which the Pact resolved or pacified. From that point onwards the problem is no longer important. The process of seeking a consensus to find the solution in 1958 did not have the effect of introducing new disagreements and divisions within the parties themselves.

In contrast to 1958 the quest for the 1971 agreement lasted for 6 years and during this time the process of seeking consensus often had the effect of weakening the unity within the
parties participating. Instead of resolving the problems, the discussions frequently aggravated the internal differences within the three main parties. The 1958 process had also included all the interested parties from the beginning, whereas for a large part of the years from 1964 to 1971 only two parties were involved. The Liberals and the community parties only became full participants in 1969 and even then with constant reservations and difficulties. In short, the consensus of 1971 was based on much more fragile foundations than in that of 1958. A further difference between the two periods lay in the fact that the discussions to revise the Constitution in the 1960s were not entirely detached from normal competitive politics. At various times the Liberals, the right and left wings of the CVP/PSC and the Socialists were very concerned about the impact of their policies on the Constitution in relation to their long-term competitive strategies in normal politics. Thus the three traditional parties in the 1960s were involved in a consensus seeking accommodation process on the one hand and normal political manoeuvres on the other - all in a setting where the community issue was weakening the loyalties of traditional followers to traditional leaders.

In spite of reservations, the process of seeking a wide consensus in 1969-71 does resemble the consociational model. The most important aspect of this was the inclusion of all parties whether part of the governing coalition or not. The consensus of 1958 had been expanded from the three traditional parties to include
the new ones. Their inclusion was essential, however, as the
issues under discussion were not only the reason for their existence
but also the issues concerning which they would have major
contributions to make. They could certainly not be classified as
anti-democratic, nor after 1965 could they be considered as
irrelevant. It seems clear, however, that although the leaders of
the two main parties (CVP/PSC and Socialists) were prepared to admit
the Liberals, they only admitted the others when they were compelled
to do so by the failure of their efforts until 1969 and the problem
of a 2/3rds majority in parliament. After 1969 it was tactically
wise to bring the community parties into the discussions. If the
Community Problem could be resolved in this way then the reason for
the new parties' existence would disappear. On the other hand if the
solution proved unsatisfactory then the new parties would have to
share some of the blame. After 1968, therefore, when the traditional
parties became fully aware of the electoral threat to themselves
from the community parties, it was in their own interest that they
broadened the discussions to include all parties in the 'XXVIII
group'. By bringing into the system the new parties the CVP/PSC
and Socialists also made themselves less totally dependant upon
the Liberals for their required 2/3rds majority. The motives
of the traditional parties were therefore mixed. Certainly they
were concerned with preservation of the system and in order to
achieve this they were willing, as in 1958, to seek a consensus.
When the Liberals agreed to join the discussions in 1969, all three
older party leaderships became involved as they had ten years
previously. Their motives, however, in inviting the participation of the new parties were not entirely related to system preservation. The inclusion of the new parties can also be understood as a move by the older parties to undermine them. The motivation of the older party leaderships was therefore a mixture of a desire to preserve the system and a desire to preserve their own ascendancy within that system by outmanoeuvring the new community parties.

A further characteristic of the consociational model is the willingness of political leaders to compromise to achieve a full resolution of the problems before them. As will be clear from an examination of the 1971 arrangements, complications were often avoided because compromises were not possible. An example of this was the willingness in the New Constitution to state that Belgium consisted of three economic regions but a reluctance to define economic regionalisation much further than this. It may be assumed that the issue was left unresolved because it was known that the various groups would be unwilling to reach compromise solutions. The 1971 agreements were minimal compromises, with difficult problems postponed, because the parties were not prepared to concede on matters which they regarded as non-negotiable. There are several possible reasons for this reluctance to compromise on all the issues of 1971, compared to the general accommodations achieved in 1958. Unlike the earlier crisis, the Community Problem had a wide variety of ramifications and overlaps which made compromise on them all much more difficult. Similarly the negotiators of 1969-71 from
the main parties were constantly aware of the threat from the regional parties. The VU, for example, had for many years accused the CVP of compromise to preserve its links with the PSC. The CVP was not therefore a free agent to make adjustments without fear of electoral consequences in Flanders. Whatever the reasons, the spirit or commitment to compromise among the negotiators of 1969-71 was not as unmixed as the consociational model assumes. Although never expressed, it might be suspected that the attitude of the traditional parties to the Community Problem in the 1960s was more one of minimal measures to make the problem go away and out-maneuvre and remove the threat from the new regional parties. The Revised Constitution of 1971 should be regarded in this light.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7


2. Ibid., p.19.

3. Vermeylen, August (1872-1945), Kritik der Vlaams Beweging 1895. Vermeylen became the first Rector of Ghent University when it became entirely Dutch. The Dutch-speaking Socialist Vermeylenfonds was named after him.


5. The Harmel Centre considered the following autonomist and federalist proposals:
   (i) An RC group of deputies' proposal to increase decentralisation by enhancing the powers of the provincial councils (1940-45).
   (ii) A project from the Walloon provinces (1953) to decentralise administration and create a federal senate.
   (iii) A project from the RC deputy Philiport for a federal senate and decentralisation of administration.
   (iv) A project from CVP deputy and later Minister of Education van Elelande (CVP) for cultural federalism (1940).
   (v) Federal proposals from a Flemish-Walloon Commission of Enquiry set up by the government in 1953.

6. La Dernière Heure, 22.11.63.

7. These fears were expressed in an article in La Libre Belgique, 13.12.63.

8. La Libre Belgique, 12.12.63.


10. La Dernière Heure, 21.12.63.

11. La Libre Belgique, 23.11.64.

12. Le Soir, 9.1.65.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7 cont.

13. La Libre Belgique, 15.2.65.

14. La Cité, 12.2.65.

15. The M.I.C. (Mouvement Chretien des Independants et des Cadres), a middle-class organisation, held a press conference on 11th February 1965 where the organisation’s secretary-general criticised the three parties for their conduct of the constitutional revision process. La Dernière Heure, 12.2.65.

16. For example, on February 10th, Professor Barzin, former Rector of the Free University of Brussels, criticised the three parties for their disputes which were 'violant les consciences' by the new laws relating to community and language, Le Soir, 11.2.65.

17. "Et sans doute, est-ce d'alors, que date la réelle distanciation entre francophones et néerlandophones du PLP. Elle n'était pas encore sensible au niveau de l'opinion mais les hommes responsables sentaient déjà à ce moment, les prémices de l'éclatement. Pourtant le 20 janvier 1964 le PLP se retira de La Table Ronde. Vu de l'extérieur, le phénomène pouvait être pris pour une démonstration de l'unité libérale réalisée autour de la défense des droits de l'individu par préférence aux droits des communautés ... Les Flamands acceptèrent de subir, dans leur fief, les attaques des autres ... La situation du libéralisme flamand était d'ailleurs difficile", Francis, Jean, Mes années belges, p.195.

18. Léo Collard was the leader of the Socialists in the 1950s. The left education laws of 1954-58 which formed part of the Schools Problem in 1958 were called the 'Loi Collard'. He was referring in this case to the Walloon view that Flanders had received favoured treatment and he rejected this view. The fact that some people in Wallonia still thought this was so was however very important. He wrote: "I have studied the effects of these ideas, however, and I find them terrible from a political-psychological point of view ... it has made its impact upon many hearts and minds." Quoted in Dayez, p.87.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7 cont.

20. For example:

Article 1 referred to colonies and became irrelevant after Belgian rule of the Congo ended in 1960.

Article 11 defining discrimination between citizens was clarified.

Article 25b accepted the devolution of some state powers to international authorities (EEC for example) and similar details which were not major issues of contention between the parties.
CHAPTER 8

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DIALOGUE AMONG THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO RESOLVE THE REGIONAL PROBLEM

The New Constitution of 1971 concerned itself largely with linguistic and cultural autonomy for the communities and various new provisions at national level, involving special majorities and similar arrangements. The regional and economic aspect of the Community Problem was not directly part of the new system of 1971. In 1970, before the finalisation of the constitutional revision, the 'Law of 15th July' established a certain degree of economic decentralisation. This law set up regional development councils, regional committees for planning and regional economic councils.

The economic regionalisation of 1970 was not part of the Constitution and was therefore not subject to any special rule relating to majorities in Parliament. It was an interim measure of decentralisation of economic administration rather than regional autonomy. The members of the regional councils were appointed and thus in reality the system was still part of the system of overall central control. The 'Law of 15th July' was therefore merely a first step towards a serious reorganisation of the country along regional economic lines. The new Constitution which came after the above law, included Article 107d, which pointed the way to a more permanent and clearly defined regional devolution of power. The Article defined Belgium as consisting of three regions but it
did not define the precise boundaries of these three regions. This omission avoided the contentious problem of defining the Brussels Region in order to make some progress in laying the basis for future legislation.

The Article established three principles for future regionalisation policy:

1. Regional organs of government should be composed of elected representatives and not appointees.

2. The law should clearly define the competence of the regional organs, and

3. The law relating to regions would have to be passed by a special majority (2/3rds) in Parliament.

There was no reference to granting the regional organs power to levy any taxes but rather they were to receive their funds from central allocations. Article 107d was therefore very important in that it placed the problem of economic regionalisation firmly on the agenda of Belgian politics in the 1970s but at the same time left the questions of implementation to further discussion. The necessity for special majorities meant that progress would be slow and complicated by the need to seek many compromises to create the majorities required. The ideal approach to these problems would be via an overall consensus similar to that achieved for the constitutional revision in 1969-71. To accomplish this, consociationalism again offered a model. Unfortunately,
given the complications of defining regional boundaries and powers, especially in relation to the capital, such a broad national consensus would be even more difficult to establish than in the 1960s. In 1969-71, the really contentious and divisive problems of the capital and its region were postponed and avoided in the general reference to regions in Article 107d of the Constitution. Further progress would inevitably demand that these difficult problem areas be confronted and therefore the smooth working of the consociational approach could be more difficult than before.

The election of November 1971, previously discussed, could be understood as a judgement upon the constitution revision just completed and also of the regional measures of 1970. The three traditional parties treated the Community Problem as of relatively minor importance in their electoral campaigns as if they assumed that the problems were on their way to a solution. They were clearly hoping that the measures of 1971 would have reduced the intensity of the issues and led to a restoration of normal politics. Having, as they hoped, satisfied Flemish demands for cultural autonomy and instituted proper representation for the Flemish majority in the political system, whilst at the same time introducing guarantees to protect the Walloons from their feared 'minorisation', they appeared to assume they could handle the Brussels Problem as a separate issue. Provision had also been made for regional economic development in the plans of 1970 which was meant to de-fuse Walloon economic grievances. Therefore
the traditional parties looked forward to the 1971 elections with confidence. The community parties campaigned strongly around the issue of Brussels and its regional status, the VU wishing to deny the capital full regional powers and the RW and FDF supporting such powers.

The 1971 measures did not however have the desired effect from the point of view of the traditional parties. The overall support for the CVP/PSC fell again. The community parties, instead of seeing their positions weakened after the 1971 reforms, increased their total support. It was clear therefore that confidence in the traditional parties had not yet been restored.

In general, the 1971 elections were, after the upheavals of the 1960s, a stalemate. The three traditional parties continued to decline but less dramatically than in the 1960s. The community parties continued to grow but here again one of them, the VU, seemed to have reached near its maximum. The message of the election was that more must be done to make regional economic autonomy and development a reality and that a solution must be found to the problems of the capital and its region. After the election a new government coalition of CVP/PSC and Socialists was formed, led by Eyskens, the Prime Minister since 1968.

On the basis of the limited regional decentralisation
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of the Law of the 15th July 1970 and the guidelines of Article 107d of the Constitution of 1971, the new government initiated discussions of proposals for further regional economic devolution. This was the first phase of a process which continued throughout the 1970s, similar to the long drawn-out constitutional revision of the 1960s. The government proposed, in January 1972, that each region should have a council composed of the members of the Chamber of Deputies from that region, that a commission should be established to coordinate the activities of the regions and that the funds would be allocated from the centre to each region on the basis of 50% for Flanders, 40% for Wallonia and 10% for the capital. The competence of the councils and the regional boundaries were to be defined in the process of the setting up of the new system. As with the Article 107d of the Constitution, the problem of boundaries was again to be avoided in order to make some progress. During all the attempts to devise a solution to the problem of regional economic devolution in the 1970s, the boundary problem, or more particularly the Brussels boundary problem, was to prove a stumbling block as in the 1960s. Similarly the 1970s were to see the same complicated inter-party negotiations and manoeuvres to find a consensus or at least substantial majorities. All these attempts were again to take place within a context of various government coalitions which were at the same time dealing with the difficult problems of the national economy as a whole in the 1970s.
In January 1973 the Eyskens-Cools two-party coalition government was replaced by a broad coalition of the three traditional parties, called the Leburton-Tindemans-de Clerq Government. The new government immediately declared its wish to revive the regional initiative described above and in the 'Accord Politique' of January 21st 1973 it was proposed to establish a parliamentary commission to consider possible legislation to put into effect Article 107d. The 'accord' recalls the initiative of the CVP/PSC-Socialist government in 1962-63 when moves were made to establish the three-party Round Table, which was the first attempt to apply the 1958 consociational approach to the Community Problem of the 1960s. In 1973, unlike 1962-63, the government was already a three-party coalition and therefore there were grounds for hope that progress towards consensus might be quicker than on the earlier occasion. This would not necessarily depend upon the continuation of the governing coalition but upon the continuation of the participation of the three main parties in the discussions of the regional problems. The existence of the three-party coalition government made this more possible, however.

The commission began its work on March 14th and published its report on the 13th September, 1973. The report made specific proposals relating to the composition and powers of regional councils but there were again differences of opinion on a definition of the Brussels region. It was also clear that the
the question of the competence of the councils depended for its solution upon the view taken of the desired future shape of Belgium as a whole. This meant in fact a difference between a federal approach with greater powers for the regions and a unitary approach with relatively less powers in the regions.

In April 1974, the three-party coalition which had been formed in 1973 ended and elections followed. As in 1971 the elections would give the political leaders some idea of public reaction not only to the 1971 reforms but also to the progress made over further regionalisation. The Belgian electors were faced with a range of main parties - CVP and PSC, PSB and BSP, various Liberal groups, Communists and their local regional party. In Brussels there were two CVP/PSC groups (Dutch and French), two Socialist groups, the VU, FDF and three Liberal groups. The Brussels Liberals were divided into Dutch Liberals, (Blauwe Leeuven), PLP (French-speakers) and the PLDP (Parti Libéral Démocrate et Pluralist) which formed a cartel with the FDF.

The election results did not show any major shift since 1971, which suggested that the 1970s were going to be a period of new electoral stability compared to the very volatile period of the 1960s. There were signs that the growth in support for the new community parties was coming to a halt and perhaps the traditional parties, in particular the CVP/PSC and Socialists
might hope to revive their fortunes or at least see an end to their decline. The CVP/PSC saw an increase in its support from 30.05% to 32.34%. This was the first increase since 1958. The Socialists dropped marginally by 0.6% to 26.65% but the Liberals fell from 16.81% to 15.19%. The CVP/PSC gains increased the three-party share from 74.09% to 74.18%. These were not spectacular results for the two main parties but they did see the end of the previously steady downward trend in their support. The community party share fell for the first time since their foundation, from 22.24% to 21.14%. The VU dropped in Flanders to below its 1968 total with 16.78% (1971 = 18.77%) which confirmed the impression in 1971 that the steady growth of the Flemish nationalist party was over. In Wallonia, again for the first time, the RW showed a decline, from 20.86% to 18.78%. In Brussels the FDF/PLDP cartel increased the FDF 1971 figure of 34.49% to 39.55%.  

From 1974 the community parties were faced with a dilemma. Previously the traditional parties had to contend with the choice of tactics between concessions to regionalism which might weaken internal unity or a unitary emphasis which might weaken their appeal in the regions. They were compelled to compromise in order to balance the two tactics. In 1974 the community parties were able to concentrate upon opposition to central government and promote regionalist policies with no concessions to compromise. This had been the recipe for their
rapid growth in the 1960s. It was always a major criticism, for example, of the CVP by the VU that the former had to compromise in coalition-forming and thus could not truly represent Flemish opinion and interest. From 1974 onwards, however, it became clear that the expansion of the new parties was no longer assured and there was even a possibility of decline were they to adopt the wrong tactics. They could either offer to cooperate in discussions to resolve the Community Problem and thus find themselves making necessary compromises but perhaps influencing the final outcome or they could see themselves in permanent opposition. Were they to adopt the latter course but at the same time begin to decline, they would lose all credibility and find themselves becoming irrelevant. Once it became clear that their growth was unlikely to go further they also had to consider tactics to enhance their influence or preserve their support. The three traditional parties still controlled 75% of electoral support and, once they began to feel more sure that the community party threat was weakening, they could still hope to dominate the system and perhaps counter-attack to restore their old total ascendancy. The problem for the three traditional parties, however, remained their own internal divisions concerning community issues. They were also divided amongst themselves over economic policies following the oil crisis of 1973-74. In view of the new situation the RW and VU both were prepared to join a coalition government. This was a new development and shows their appraisal of the general situation in
1974 and their own prospects. They were aware that the reforms of 1971 and any regional reforms in the future might undermine their regional appeal and therefore participation in government could enhance their prospects of survival.

Attempts were made at first to form a three-party coalition of the traditional parties but these foundered on the unwillingness of the Socialists to cooperate with the Liberals over economic policy. A centre-right coalition of CVP/PSC and Liberals was formed therefore, in April. It was joined in June by the RW. The RW originally joined on the assumption that the FDF would follow. The two parties were close allies and this was a reasonable assumption to make. The Dutch members of the other parties in the coalition were unwilling, however, to make the necessary concessions over Brussels policy and so the RW found itself alone in the coalition. It was the first of the community parties to take part in government. From 1977 to 1978 the VU took part in a coalition and from 1979 to 1980 the FDF. During the period of coalition formation in April 1974 a conference was held at Steenokkerzeel (19th-21st) at which all parties except the Socialists and Communists agreed upon a common programme to include a resolution to move forward to an implementation of Article 107d of the Constitution. It was at this stage that the VU and RW offered to join the coalition and FDF participation was still possible. The new Prime Minister, Tindemans, saw the
programme as a three-stage process: a plan for régionalisation, the adoption of the plan by a 2/3rds majority and finally a 'tidying up' stage. The discussions reached deadlock however over the definition of the Brussels region when the Dutch CVP, PVV, and VU opposed French proposals. It was after the failure of these discussions that the centre-right coalition was formed, later to be joined by the RW.

In June 1974 the new proposals from Steenokkerzeel were ready and by the beginning of July they had been studied by a special committee of the Senate formed for that purpose. From the proposals and the subsequent discussions it was clear that the majority were in favour of full powers remaining at the centre of the Belgian political system with certain defined powers devolved to the regions. This was a unitary position. Their spirit was more of a modification of the unitary system than a major change of form. The Socialist opposition maintained that the proposals could not become law because the Constitution required special majorities for such changes. The government, however, proposed to go ahead and create regional assemblies and a certain degree of regional self-government as a first stage of the reorganisation of the Belgian system. The second constitutional stage would follow later. At that stage the regional councils would be given greater powers.

On 12th July, the proposals were passed by the Senate by 99 votes to 57, with 10 abstentions. On the 17th July the Chamber set up a similar committee to the special committee of the Senate.
The Socialists were again critical but nevertheless, on 20th July, the measure passed the Chamber by 110 votes to 78, with 9 abstentions. In both Houses the majority was less than 2/3rds, with the Socialists in opposition. The new law was therefore not the result of a broad consensus. The official title of the law was: 'Loi du ler août 1974 - créant des institutions régionales, à titre préparatoire à l'application de l'article 107d de la Constitution'. It is important to note the absence of the Socialist support for these measures. At this stage the developments of 1974 recall the negotiations of 1963. At that time the Liberals were not party to the Round Table agreements of the CVP/PSC and Socialists. The inclusion of the RW and occasionally the VU and FDF in 1974 broadened the scope of the consultations but without the Socialists, the second party in the system, any agreement or measures would be flawed. The new law was therefore only the next stage in the regional devolution of the Belgian political system, and still, as shown in its title, only preparatory and not yet part of the Constitution.

According to the new law the regional councils were to have only advisory powers, the central government being committed to refer to the regional council when proposing legislation which would affect that region. As in all previous discussions of the problem, it was relatively simple to define the boundaries of Flanders in the north and Wallonia in the south. Brussels was
however limited to the 19 communes of Brussels-capital, excluding the communes on the periphery. Clearly this was most unsatisfactory from the point of view of the Brussels French-speakers. The Brussels regional problem was not resolved by this arrangement and would remain as an almost insurmountable difficulty for the next stage of the reforms. The regional councils were to consist of senators qualified by reason of representation and residence in their respective regions. In the case of Brussels, because the number of senators would be too small, 42 members of the conseil d'agglomération were also to be included. The councils for each region were to be concerned with a range of matters such as local planning, public health, family policy, energy policy and especially regional economic expansion, employment and economic policies in general. Each council should elect a chairman by simple majority (which meant not necessarily an absolute majority) and an executive committee on which all parties would be represented in proportion to their seats on the council as a whole. The regional councils were to advise three ministerial committees responsible for regional policies. These three ministerial committees would form the channels through which funds would be provided for regional purposes. They formed the essential link between the region on the one hand and central government on the other. Funds were to be allocated by central government, through these committees, on a principle of proportionality of a global sum.*

* On the basis of 50% for Flanders, 40% for Wallonia and 10% for Brussels.
The new regional law of 1974 was a compromise. The necessity for special majorities for full constitutional revision meant that it could be only an interim measure, as was indeed intended. The arrangement was still largely unitary with the ministerial committees as the main regional authorities and the regional councils purely advisory. The fact that the members of the councils (except in Brussels, for special reasons) were members of the national Senate first meant that the councils could not claim to be regional assemblies in the full sense. Finally the finances of the regions were still very much under the control of central government. The allocations to each region were on a proportional basis but the global sum was fixed by central government. These characteristics showed the incomplete, or partial nature of the regional arrangements of 1974 and the designation of the Brussels region as only the 19 communes of 'Brussels-Capital' was highly contentious. The above law of 1974 was therefore only a transition stage to something more complete and permanent which would have full constitutional authority. In 1976, therefore, further efforts began, to resolve the community and regional problem once and for all. This attempt was called the 'Dialogue Communautaire'. It was to be similar to the successful dialogue of 1958.

In 1976, however, the second largest group in Belgian politics, the Socialists, were not part of the coalition. They
had opposed the 1974 laws on regionalisation. It was essential for the achievement of a successful resolution of the regional problem that the Socialists be included. Without their participation no solution could be found which could be regarded as satisfactory as they were the strongest party in Wallonia as well as the second party in the country. If the dialogue was to have any hope of success it was necessary to include the Socialists. They were an essential part of the 'XXVIII group' which laid the foundations in 1969 for the constitutional legislation of 1971.

The initiative for the Dialogue came from the opposition Socialists in June 1976. This was highly significant as it meant that normal politics of government and opposition were to be suspended where regional issues were concerned and any results would be the result of consensus rather than competition. If the government response were favourable to the initiative there would be greater chance of achieving a consensus. The Socialists invited discussion specifically of plans to implement Article 107d of the Constitution through some clearly defined form of regionalisation of the system. Between June and November 1976 the various parties discussed the initiative and finally on 18th November representatives of all the parties met in the Prime Minister's office to begin discussions of the best way to approach the problem. The Flemish parties (CVP, VU and PVV) insisted that the dialogue go beyond the implementation of
Article 107d and they anticipated the full resolution of the whole community problem. This view was accepted at the meeting of the 18th November. The problem of who should be chairman of the discussions illustrated the overall problem they were facing. The CVP proposed the Prime Minister, himself but this was unacceptable to the Socialists who suggested that his appointment would give the discussions the appearance of government sponsorship. The French parties also objected to a Flemish Chairman of such discussions. The result was a compromise of two joint chairmen - one from the Flemish CVP and one from the Walloon Socialists. The problem of the chairmanship was very important if the discussions were intended, as they were, to recreate the same atmosphere as that of 1958 and possibly 1969-71. By avoiding the appearance of government sponsorship the dialogue was to be seen as outside the normal run of competitive politics. The issues were to be taken separately by a group of senior representatives and leaders from all the political groups under a cross-party chairmanship. This coincides with the spirit of the consociational model where crisis issues are taken out of normal party competition to be handled in a cross-party manner. It was necessary to ensure that all groups felt that their views were represented. In order to achieve this, parity of representation was given to each linguistic group and within each group all political shades of opinion were to be represented. The final composition was
therefore an example of the diversity of the voices which would take part in the discussions. They were: 4 CVP, 4 PSC, 4 BSP, 4 PSB, 4 PVV, 4 French Liberals (3 PLP and 1 PL), 4 VU, 2 RW, 2 FDF, 2 PCB. Additionally the two government ministers (1 CVP and 1 RW) responsible for reforms of institutions were members, the only direct representatives of the government. The total membership was therefore 36 and the group was fully representative of all shades of opinion. Of the 17 Flemish members, 5 were representatives from Brussels (1 from each of the CVP, BSP, PVV, KPB, and VU). Of the 17 French-speakers 5 were also from Brussels (1 PSC, 1 PSB, 1 PL and 2 FDF). From this point of view the capital was well represented with 10 out of 36 members, 5 of whom were French-speakers. This must be contrasted with the discontent in Brussels in 1968 when the Bruxellois suspected that their views were inadequately represented at the government decision-making level.

The dialogue also recalls the 'XXVIII group' in 1969 which also included all shades of opinion. As with 1969, it is possible to regard this as an approach which fits the consociational model of crisis management. The fact already noted that the initiative came from the opposition party and all groups, irrespective of whether they formed part of the governing coalition, took part is an excellent example of the consensus formula. At this stage the Dialogue Communautaire began to
provide a close parallel with 1958. There were more participating
groups than in the past but the issue was being taken out of
normal politics to be settled by overarching agreement among
representatives of the segments of society in the consociational
manner.
At the beginning of the dialogue of the '36' the two ministers who were ex-officio members (Vandekerckhove and Perin, CVP and PSB respectively) produced a confidential digest of the declared positions of all the parties prior to the opening of the discussions. This review of positions remained confidential but on November 30th La Libre Belgique published its own comparative tables of the various positions held and it is useful to examine this as a survey of the various opinions in Belgian politics at the time and as a pointer to the main problem areas.

An immediate difference was in the interpretations of the term 'region'. According to the Socialists and French-speaking Communists and all the French parties (PSC, FDF, RW and Liberals), the country should be divided into three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) all of equal standing and status, whereas the three Flemish parties (CVP, VU and PWV) referred to only two regions (Flanders and Wallonia) with Brussels as an area of special status but not a region with the same rights as the other two. All parties supported the idea of directly elected regional assemblies rather than indirect representation through members who were in reality elected for the central parliament, local or provincial councils. It was also agreed that the regional assemblies should elect their executives on a majority basis rather than in
proportion to the representation of the parties. A difference of view emerged however with reference to the appropriate executive for Brussels. The PSB, CVP, VU and PVV advocated parity of seats for Dutch and French-speakers, whereas the FDF, RW, French-speaking Liberals and PCB were in favour of representation in proportion to the number of each linguistic group on the overall council.

The views on the powers to be devolved to the regions showed a varying emphasis. The VU maintained that the decrees of the regional assemblies should have the force of law whereas the PSC referred to 'quasi-laws'. These rather vague positions can be understood with reference to the view of the VU that central government should be allocated specific powers and responsibilities, with all residual powers left to the regions, in contrast to the views of all the other parties that, although the powers of the regions should be expanded beyond those of the 1974 Act, the central government would retain all residual powers after there had been specific definitions relating to the regional assemblies. Once elected, all parties agreed, the regional assemblies should have a four year term (the PVV preferred five) and they were not necessarily to be dissolved at the time of a dissolution of a national parliament.
At the national level major changes were proposed for the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies would remain with 212 members. The Socialists, PVV and PCB advocated the total abolition of the second chamber. The other parties supported the idea of a reformed 'Senate of the Regions' (or 'Federal Council' according to the VU). This new Senate would serve as a constitutional check, in that any major reform would require double majorities in the new assembly. This was the view of the CVP, FDF and RW. The PSC and French Liberals were in favour of complete parity of seats between the communities as a constitutional guarantee in the Senate. Whichever plan was adopted it would change the nature of the Senate into a form of supreme arbiter over Constitutional issues.

Several parties (CVP, PVV, FDF, RW and French Liberals) sought a fixed term for national parliaments of four years (five from the PVV) with moves to insist upon 'positive censure' motions as the only means of overturning governments - meaning that such motions must contain proposals for an alternative government. These proposals would, it was hoped ensure greater stability of government. It was clear that unstable central government with frequent elections would contrast unfavourably with the stable four year regional governments and thus possibly weaken central government authority.
The question of the financial resources of any regional assembly was seen by all parties as crucial. All agreed that funds should come from both national global budgeting and also from specific regional allocations and possibly regional taxes. The VU was in favour of specific regional allocations as the main source of revenue with any extra from the national budget as merely supplementary assistance. The CVP, PVV, FDF and RW supported the idea of tax raising powers being granted to the regions. The Socialists, French Liberals, PSC and PCB suggested that certain tax revenues from each region be held back by each region for its own purposes, the actual taxation levels being fixed nationally in order to avoid inequity in tax levels within the one country.

The proposed new system for Belgium which would emerge from the ideas already being discussed by the parties before the dialogue would consist of three levels of government: national, regional and local communal. Only the CVP and PSC considered the possibility of some level between the last two. Most parties considered the possibility of disputes over competence between the levels. The VU, FDF, RW and French Liberals proposed therefore the setting up of a new federal body which would be a Constitutional Court or special Council of State to ensure the legality of the acts at each level.
From the above it is clear that there was both considerable common ground and also considerable differences between the parties. The variations between their positions can be understood in both an optimistic and pessimistic way. There is no doubt that all parties were aware of the need to go beyond the transitional arrangements of 1971 and 1974. On the other hand it was clear that there was a wide gap between the views of those who saw the reforms as a form of devolution of some powers to the regions whilst preserving the essentially unitary system intact and those who sought some form of federal solution with much reduced powers for the national centre. The problem of Brussels too was once again a major and ominous area of disagreement. The Flemish parties maintained their position that Brussels-Capital should remain firmly and irrevocably fixed as the 19 communes whereas the French parties wished to see the boundary drawn beyond the 19 communes and related to local opinion.² As a compromise the PSB proposed that the 6 communes with facilities in French should be attached to Brussels-Capital which would then consist of 25 communes. The PL demanded facilities in French in all communes with more than 15% French-speakers whilst the PSB and PSC supported special concessions to French on an individual basis in the Dutch-speaking periphery. All parties advocated the splitting of the Brussels electoral district into Brussels-Capital and Hal-Vilvorde. The CVP suggested the complete abolition of the province of Brabant as it cut across the linguistic boundary. Within the city proper
the CVP, VU and PVV sought to transfer responsibility for 'matières personnalisables' to the Dutch language community as a whole beyond the city. Clearly in 1976 Brussels was again to be a problem over which the parties would disagree. It was however essential that some solution be found or any new reforms could again be temporary.

The various attitudes of the parties to the dialogue begun in November 1976 made the rethinking of aspects of the 1971 Constitution also essential. The Cultural Councils for each linguistic region could not continue on parallel lines with the economic councils for the same region without the system becoming overburdened with assemblies and councils of various kinds. The regional councils could take over the responsibilities of the Cultural Councils (PSB, CVP, PSC, PVV, FDF, RW and VU) or perhaps the new Senate would have a role here (French Liberals). Once the question of the Cultural Councils was included in the dialogue of 1976 the discussions had assumed a Constitutional character. The Dialogue Communautaire would be therefore of

* The definition of 'matières personnalisables' was a subject of considerable contention. Basically the term refers to cultural and educational matters and personal services. By placing these under the oversight of the larger Dutch-speaking community of Flanders, the Dutch-speakers in the capital would have greater protection for their minority status.
The dialogue continued without a major break from November 1976 to the government crisis of March 1977. After the General Elections of March 1977 it was resumed in a similar form at the Palais d’Egmont. The dialogue of November 1976 to March 3rd 1977 may be called the first phase of the process of discussion of the regional problem. It was complicated and subject to many disagreements but was suspended in March only because of the general elections. It did not at any point approach total disagreement or breakdown.

The dialogue undoubtedly approaches closely to the consociational model in which political leaders seek to manage crises by finding amongst themselves overarching compromises apart from the normal run of competitive politics. The wide range of diversity of views and the many ramifications of the issues involved contrast with the relatively simple, although equally acute, crisis of 1958. This made it inevitable that it would be much more difficult to work out the ideal set of compromises in the 1970s than in the earlier crisis.

The results of the 1977 elections were a relative success for the parties of the governing coalition. The CVP/PSC increased its national share from 32% to 36% and the Liberals showed a small increase from 15.1% to 15.5%. The Socialists
showed a further slight decline from 27% to 26.4%. The VU remained constant with 10% as did the FDF with 4.8%. The RW however, saw its support fall drastically from 6.2% to 2.4%. The community party share of the total fell to 17.2% compared to 21% in 1974 whereas the three-party share increased from 74% to 79%. In regional terms, the FDF and VU preserved their position of 1974 but without making the spectacular gains of the past. The RW support in Wallonia dropped from 19% to little more than 7%.

The results were the best for the CVP/PSC since 1961. The Liberals, whilst faring considerably worse than in 1965-68, were well above their figure of 12.33% in 1961. Of the three traditional parties the Socialists found the least comfort, for although their rate of decline had slowed, their result was again lower than previous years. There were probably three reasons for the steep drop in RW support. The party had split in 1976, one section moving to the right to merge with the Walloon Liberals in a new formation, the Parti des Réformes et de la Liberté en Wallonie (PRLW) and the remnant remaining as the RW. This had the obvious consequence of weakening the party before the elections. Secondly, the party tactic of joining the centre-right coalition meant that it had lost its former image as a no-compromise party representing Walloon aspirations. Confusion within the party about its left or centre-right orientation contributed towards
the split in 1976. Finally the most serious reason for the decline was possibly the fact that some of the main grievances which had given rise to its existence were on their way to a solution. Walloon fears of minorisation and demands for regional economic autonomy were being at least partially satisfied by the reforms of 1971 and the subsequent regionalisation measures and plans.

The outgoing Prime Minister, Tindemans was invited by the King to form a new government. He could have opted to re-form the outgoing CVP/PSC-Liberal coalition which would have had a 111:101 majority. In view of the seriousness of the economic problems of the 1970s and the necessity to grasp the nettle of the Community Problem, he sought to try and form a grand coalition of CVP/PSC, Liberals and Socialists. It was important to assemble a 2/3rds majority in order to pass any measures of a constitutional nature, which might emerge from the 'Dialogue Communautaire' to put into effect Article 107d. Although the CVP/PSC and Socialists could muster 142 of the 212 seats (2/3-142), the margin was far too narrow for this to form a base for such important measures. Tindemans therefore announced his intention of approaching other groups. The Socialists, however, confronted the Liberals with a demand that they give a firm commitment to support the passage of a bill laying down the outlines of regional reforms (a 'loi cadre'), leaving the details for further legislation by simple majority.
The Liberals refused to answer this demand which would have meant, from their point of view, their being used first for the 'loi cadre' but then becoming unnecessary for further legislation. In response the Socialists made it clear that they would not enter a coalition with the Liberals. In his quest for a clear 2/3rds majority Tindemans turned therefore to the VU and FDF to seek to associate them with his reconstituted coalition. Such a coalition would include the largest group in Flanders (CVP), the largest in Wallonia (PSB) and the largest group in Brussels (FDF). The participation of the Flemish VU would make the FDF more acceptable to more extreme Flemish opinion. The RW was not invited. The CVP/PSC-Socialist-VU-FDF coalition would command 172 of the 212 seats in the Chamber (a grand coalition of the three traditional parties would have been 175). The participation of the FDF and VU in the new government was especially significant in view of the experiences of the RW in 1974-77. The CVP/PSC-Liberal invitation to the RW to join the coalition in 1974 had actually paid a dividend in undermining the regional party in Wallonia. The FDF and VU joined the government in 1977 on the assumption that they would be able to influence policy-making. They would have to be prepared, however, to risk weakening their claims to be the untainted and uncompromising representatives of their regions.

As a result of the initiatives by Tindemans on 4th May 1977, the VU and FDF were asked to commit themselves to seeking, with the two larger parties, an agreement on regional reforms under five heads:
1. the limits of the regions to be defined,
2. clarification of the competence of the regional councils,
3. clarification of the composition of the regional assemblies and their executives,
4. arrangements for the financing of the regional system and
5. study of the consequences of the other four for the Constitution.

The VU and FDF accepted this request and therefore, on 6th May, Tindemans and the six party presidents (CVP, PSC, PSB, BSP, FDF and VU) met at the Palais d'Egmont to finalise the procedure to reach an agreement on a government programme for the coalition. The first part of the agenda for this was: regional political organs, competence of the regional organs, financial arrangements for the regions and lastly constitution revision. If agreement could be reached on these four areas, discussion could move on to a social and economic programme for the coalition. Once all these aspects of future policies had been clarified and a consensus achieved, the members of the group would turn to the most contentious issue of all - the definition of the boundaries of the regions. The view was clearly held that, were the last issue taken at the beginning of the discussions, it would lead to such disagreements that no further progress would be made and an impasse reached within a very short time. There would be a greater likelihood of success if the most contentious issue was left until there had already been large areas of agreement. Tindemans made a complete
global agreement over all aspects of the government programme an essential starting point for his new coalition.

The Prime Minister wished to create a sense of urgency about the discussions at the Palais d'Egmont and therefore it was agreed that they would commence on 9th May and that there would be both morning and afternoon sessions with the aim of reaching agreement in a relatively short time. The issue of regional devolution of power of some kind had been on the Belgian political agenda since the constitutional revision of 1971 and there was therefore an urgent need to achieve some movement towards a solution. Over the weekend before the 9th May the two co-chairmen of the 'Dialogue Communautaire' of November-March prepared a resumé of the uncompleted discussions on the Community Problem over the winter so that the new group would have the benefit of the ideas considered there. The membership of the group at the Palais d'Egmont was very important and relevant, for it included, apart from the Prime Minister Tindemans and his chef de cabinet, all six presidents of the six parties of the coalition. In addition to the presidents there were six 'Second Members' again one from each party. These full members were advised by six experts from the parties (who were not full members of the group). Thus the total membership of the group was 14 plus 6 experts. Of the 12 full members, 5 represented Flanders, 1 Brussels Dutch-speakers, 2 Brussels French-speakers and 4 Walloons. Eleven of the 14 had been also members of the group of 36 of the 'Dialogue
In this way once again all communities were represented and there was continuity with the previous discussions which had been interrupted by the elections. Not represented at this stage were the Liberals who were not part of the governing coalition. The presence of party presidents was important for if consensus were to be found among the leadership it would be easier to go forward to the application of any policies agreed. A consensus among the leaders would commit those leaders to the policy and thus go a long way to seeing it supported in the parties as a whole.

Although the Liberals did not take part in the Egmont discussions at this time, they approached very closely the consociational model discussed earlier. The negotiations and compromises were to take place among party leaders who would then present the results achieved to their followers for their endorsement. The whole arrangement was an attempt to achieve a very wide-ranging consensus over both regional and economic issues amongst an equally wide-range of political leaders. The isolation of the discussions in the Palais d'Egmont was a visible sign of the elite level bargaining process going on behind closed doors until a final result could be presented to the followers of the parties represented inside. If the Liberals had been party to the discussions the Egmont process would have conformed even more closely to the consociational model.
The negotiations between the 14 lasted from the 9th to 26th May 1977. The discussions covered the whole of the proposed coalition government programme, including economic and social policies as well as regional and Community policy. On the 9th, the group was given a 27 page economic working paper from Tindemans' office to provide a basis for the economic discussion similar to the resumé from the co-chairman of the 'Dialogue Communauté', which provided a basis for the regional policy discussion. Although the group was not meeting in secret, efforts were made to keep contact with the press on an official level by means of communiqués and press-conferences. This meant, it was hoped, that the group would be less subject to external pressure. This conforms to the pattern of the Schools Pact in 1958 to which the Egmont discussions in 1977 may be compared. The issues were to be taken out of the usual political environment and were to be resolved away from the glare of publicity.

By the 22nd and 23rd May the negotiators were able to adopt a partial agreement on the community issue, excluding the final problem of the delimitation of the Brussels region. Their meeting broke up at 2.30 a.m., 23rd May at that point, rather than attempt to resolve all problems at the same session. The following day they turned to the problem of the capital. Tindemans made a special point of seeking press discretion on this matter which he regarded, correctly, as extremely delicate. The discussion lasted
from lunch on the 23rd to 4.00 a.m. on the 24th. This phase of the negotiations was extremely difficult. They were dealing with the problem of the Brussels region which had up to that point always been left for further study. Nothomb (PSC) made the proposal to extend the Brussels region to include not only the 19 communes and the 6 communes with facilities but also some officially Dutch communes beyond this. According to the reports this was rejected by the Flemish representatives 'avec fracas'. The Flemish response suggested attaching parts of 5 communes on the periphery to the capital and including the rest in Dutch-speaking Flanders region. This was equally strongly rejected by the French. The final solution was suggested by Lucien Outers (FDF) who suggested that Brussels and Hal-Vilvorde electoral districts should be completely separated (which was satisfactory to Flemish views) with Brussels remaining as the 19 communes only. He added, however, a new approach altogether, whereby the French-speakers living on the periphery could opt to register for voting in a commune of their choice within the 19. The facilities for French language would remain in the 6 communes and both the French and Flemish rights for those living in them would be protected by their respective community councils (which would replace the cultural councils established in 1971 for each group). Part of this compromise involved the abandonment of the principle of parity between each linguistic group on the future executive committee of the Brussels regional council.
After a certain amount of rewriting, on the 25th May at 2.00 a.m. the final version in French and Dutch was signed by the 12 delegates. Later the same day they also put the final touches to the economic and social programme of the future coalition government. This was signed at 4.00 a.m. on the 26th. From this date the agreement is referred to as the 'Egmont Pact' which was the name given to the agreement in Belgium at the time. In the Introduction to the Pact three points were emphasised. In the first place it was described as between the six parties taking part, thus recognising the exclusion of the Liberals. Secondly, all the six accepted that they were 'morally obliged' to seek its full implementation, including both the normal legislation and the constitutional legislation. Finally all agreed that this should be seen as a firm beginning to 'Community Peace' in Belgium. The Egmont Pact was meant therefore to form the foundation for a period of stability in Belgian politics. It was intended to be much more than a simple agreement between parties to form a coalition. The pact was to be a pacification programme designed to deal with the Community Problem, combined with a programme of economic and social measures. This type of total government programme was previously unknown in Belgium and it was implicit that the participants would ensure the passage of all parts, both constitutional reforms and economic measures.
Having signed the Pact, it was necessary for Belgian politicians to consider how to implement its programme. Article 107d of the Constitution had deliberately left the implementation of regional policy to a later legislature by simple majority in Parliament. On the other hand, many of the reforms proposed in the Pact were far-reaching and would have required constitutional amendment, only possible after a further general election to choose a Constituent Assembly. On the 27th May therefore an agreement was published to proceed to implement the Pact by means of a 'régime transitoire' created through the existing legislature to fulfil the requirements of Article 107d. This legislation would create the new regional structures 'sous la condition suspensive'. This new 'régime transitoire' would terminate within one year of the next elections which would of course be 'constitutional'.

The Pact was signed by the leaders of each party who took part in the discussions. It was necessary to ensure that the parties as a whole would support the agreement. During the period 27th to 31st May, therefore, special meetings of the respective party executives took place. The following table illustrates the support from the respective executive councils:
The Socialists were the most in favour with over 96% support, followed by the PSC with 79%, the CVP with 75%, the FDF with 70% and the VU with 66%. This was not surprising for the FDF and VU were both parties of strong regional identity and therefore more of their members would be likely to see the Pact as containing too much compromise. Nevertheless even the 66% in the VU partijraad was a 2/3rds majority. The leaders had negotiated a compromise plan behind the closed doors of Egmont Palace and the followers had broadly given the package their
endorsement. Except for the absence of the Liberals, referred to earlier as a flaw from the point of view of full consensus, this final stage of the Egmont process conformed closely to the consociational model of democratic crisis management.

Upon the basis of the Egmont Pact as a programme, ratified by the party executives, on June 9th 1977 the Tindemans coalition government of CVP, PSC, Socialists, VU and FDF obtained a vote of confidence in the Chamber with 165 votes against 33 (various Liberals and Communists and one dissident VU deputy). During the debate on the motion the president of the RW, Gendebien, (the RW was not a member of the discussion group) declared his support for the government and its community policy. The Liberals were split, the Walloon and Flemish Liberals opposed the government but the Brussels Liberals were in favour. In the Senate the PRLW Liberal senator, Perin, formerly of the RW, gave his support. The VU senator, Bob Maes, in opposing, described the Pact as "a sort of cocktail composed of 50% of powers remaining at the national level, 40% at the regional level and 10% at the commune." This view of Bob Maes was clearly that the Egmont Pact, whilst envisaging some devolution of powers to the regions, could not be considered a step to federalism in Belgium. In fact the Maes view was probably correct. The Pact was a compromise between the concept of federalism and the traditional view of the Belgian political system as a unitary one. Nevertheless, in June 1977,
the six parties which had taken part in the discussions at the Palais d'Egmont and also a minority of the opposition representatives in Parliament gave their support to the plans to implement this new regional pattern of government. In Parliament over 83% of the deputies and senators gave their approval. This must therefore be regarded as a major development. In the 1960s the regional parties - VU, FDF and RW - had grown at a rapid rate because the Community Problem was so acute in Belgium. In the Egmont Pact of 1977 the two largest traditional parties were able to evolve an agreement with the FDF and VU which was later supported by the RW. Thus, even without the Liberals, the developments in 1977 were an important step in involving the community parties in the attempt to produce a consensus solution to the problem. The dissatisfaction of the Brussels French-speakers in 1968, following their feeling of exclusion from decision-making, led to the collapse of the three party ascendancy in the capital in the 1970s and made the arrangements for the capital in 1971 unsatisfactory. The incorporation of the FDF, VU and later RW into the Egmont Pact in 1977 could offer better prospects for the new ideas. In addition, involvement of the community parties in the new arrangements meant that they would have to bear some of the responsibility for making them work or alternatively some of the blame if they did not work.
THE EGMONT PROPOSALS

The proposals of 1978 must be examined from the point of view of the four major problem areas or demands upon the Belgian political system with their origins in the Community Problem. These areas were: the economic autonomy for the regions (and the definition of regions), cultural autonomy for the cultural communities, the achievement of some system of guarantees for minority communities (French-speaking in the country as a whole and Dutch-speaking in Brussels) and finally, the resolution of the problems associated with Brussels, the capital. The discussion of the proposals will fall under these four headings.

In the 1971 Constitution, cultural autonomy was accommodated by the provision for the Cultural Councils which consisted of all the members of Parliament from both Houses who came together as two separate committees. In Brussels the respective members from each community on the conseil d'agglomération constituted similar Brussels cultural councils. The Egmont plans proposed to abolish these cultural councils and substitute three councils: The Council of the French Community, the Council of the Dutch Community, and the Council of the German Community, the membership of each to be 91, 121 and 25 respectively. All members were also to be members of the new Regional Councils.
Regional Councils

The most important proposal of 1978 was the plan for Regional Councils. These could be interpreted as the first steps towards a federal system for, unlike the various interim arrangements, these councils would have had a separate electoral base distinct from that of the Chamber of Deputies. There were to be three regional councils - Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels (the 19 communes only) - with a membership equal to the number of deputies in the Chamber from each of the two large regions and twice the number of Brussels deputies in the case of the capital. The members were to be elected every four years and their election need not in any way coincide with national elections to the Chamber of Deputies. No member of a regional council could at the same time be a deputy or minister at the national level. The new regional councils therefore were to be entirely independent with their own electorates and mandates. As the regional councils would be quite large, each one was to elect an executive of seven members for day-to-day business. The executives were to occupy an important position in the proposed system. The election to the executive was to be by an absolute majority in the first instance followed by relative majorities. Thus the new system would have created both regional parliaments and also regional cabinets. The executive as a whole was to take collegiate decisions. Besides their proper areas of competence the executives were intended to
have advisory and coordinating powers on matters in which other executives and national government might also be involved. Each member of the cabinet was to have his own area of responsibility. Although not ministers in the strict sense they could be seen as such for they would have had their own cabinets of advisers.

As part of the new system the administrative structures were also to be made regional. All fields of administration which fall in the regional category were to be grouped into French and Dutch separate entities. In this way two separate administrative structures could come into existence. A national civil service was proposed for those matters still the responsibility of central government, such as defence and national economic affairs, and separate regional organs for regional and community matters. These regional administrative arrangements were to be the responsibility of the regional and community council executives, the members of the executives thus becoming elected heads of separate departments. In this way a full administrative infrastructure was envisaged to support the regional and community executives.

The electoral base and powers of the executive would have provided one necessary aspect of a genuine regional autonomy. The financial autonomy of the regional councils could be seen as the other. Their sources of revenue were to be:
(a) non-fiscal revenues from licences of various kinds,

(b) allocations from the national budget on a basis of population, area and revenue income from the region,

(c) the localisation of some taxes such as traffic tax, radio and TV licences, taxes on gambling, transfers of property, etc.,

(d) loans from the national exchequer,

(e) the possibility of independent levying of taxes after the system had been in operation for four years.

The executives of the regions were to be able to raise loans to increase their financial resources but these loans, whether internal or foreign were to be contracted within the overall policies of the national cabinet. The regions were, however, to be free to invite foreign investment in their respective areas. It was possible to envisage, for example, a Walloon trade delegation seeking foreign investment in Walloon industry. These arrangements could be understood as a compromise between full financial autonomy which would imply the right to levy taxes at a rate decided by the region and financial subordination to central government which would imply budget allocation at levels dependent upon the generosity of central government at the time. The monies available to the regions were clearly defined in the proposed system, giving the regional executives the right to certain sums. The areas of competence of the regional councils were defined as similar to those of previous regional measures: urban and rural planning, environment, energy, housing, provincial and local administration, water management, employment policies and the regional economy.
and economic development plans. The regional councils were also to have administrative control of the budgets of the cities and communes in the region.

The proposals were identical in terms of financial powers and general principles for the Flemish region, the Walloon region and the Brussels region. The latter however required special arrangements as a result of its smaller size and its bilingual nature. Unlike the others, the membership of its council was to be twice the number of Brussels deputies in order to make the size reasonable.* The executive of the Brussels region was also to consist of seven members but these had to include two Dutch-speakers.

Community Councils

The community problem in Belgium has been however more than a matter of economic regions. The cultural aspects of the problem preceded the economic, especially in the Flemish Movement. In the 1971 Constitution the problem was covered by the creation of cultural councils consisting of the members of Parliament from each community respectively. In the 1978 proposals this system

* The membership of the Flemish Regional Council was to be 118 and the Walloon, 70. The Brussels Council was to be 48 members. There would be no German Regional Council.
was to change to one with two major Community Councils - Dutch and French.* The membership of these councils was to consist of the regional councils described above. Thus the Dutch Community Council would have comprised all the members of the Flemish regional council with the addition of half the Dutch-speaking members of the Brussels regional council. The French Community Council likewise would have included the Walloon regional council together with half the French-speakers of the Brussels regional council. As the regional councils were to be elected every four years, the Community Councils, whose membership was to be essentially the same, would also have four year terms. Each council was to elect an executive on a similar pattern to that of the regional councils but as in both cases the council would have covered the capital as well as the region, one of the four members of the executive was obliged to be a member from Brussels. The power of the Community Councils was defined as similar to that of the Cultural Councils of 1971 but the term cultural was extended to cover citizen's relations with the administration, medical services and similar where language is a factor. Finances to support the activities of the Community Councils were to be fixed as a central government allocation based on proportionality relative to population and territory.

* There was to be a small German Cultural Council of 25 members.
The Community Council system, combined with the Regional Councils, meant that cultural and economic autonomy could be achieved by the Flemings in the North and the Walloons in the South. The special overlapping arrangements for Brussels were designed to recognise the existence of the city as an economic entity apart from Wallonia, whilst at the same time recognising the cultural peculiarity of a bilingual region.

The Senate

A further role for the Regional Council - Community Council was the new arrangement for the Senate. The traditional system defined the Senate as a second nationally elected Chamber parallel to the Chamber of Deputies. The members of the new Senate in the Egmont Plan were to be the members of the Regional Councils (and Cultural Community Councils, with the same membership) meeting as one Senatorial assembly. As the councils were to be elected for four year terms which would not necessarily be the same as those of the Chamber, the Senate would thus have a four year fixed term as opposed to the lower house which could be dissolved at any time in its four year life. The responsibility of the Senate, apart from the review of legislation, was to cover constitutional law, the protection of minorities through special majorities and oversight (in conjunction with the Community Councils) of cultural arrangements in Brussels. The Senate would have no power on budgetary matters.
The Senate therefore, was intended to perform a double function in the new system. On the one hand it was to be the point at which the two Community Councils (or three Regional Councils) came together as part of the overall national political system. The second function of the Senate was to form part of the system of guarantees for the interests of the minority community, for it would have a role to play in the 2/3rds special majority system which derived from the principles laid down in the 1971 Revision.\textsuperscript{10}

The new Senate illustrated very well the compromise between a federal principle and a unitary principle. In most federal systems designed to guarantee equal rights to parts of a federation, the second chamber of the legislature has equal number of seats for all groups irrespective of their relative population sizes. The proposed Belgian Senate was not designed in this way - the Flemish seats would have formed a clear majority in proportion to population balance. On the other hand the necessity for a 2/3rd majority for constitutional revision meant that on matters considered vital to the minority the existence of a Flemish majority in the Senate could be overridden. This was not to apply, of course, to normal legislation - economic, social and foreign policy questions for example - where the system was to operate like a unitary system of government with simple majorities necessary for policy decisions. Given the fact that the Senate was specifically excluded from budgetary powers it would have been, by definition, more concerned with community issues and in this sense would have
performed the function of a federal second chamber in contrast to the Chamber of Deputies. It is typical of the new Egmont proposals that the Senate cannot be placed into a straightforward category. Most of the time it would have performed the function of a review body for legislation within its competence. At certain times it would, however, have found itself functioning as a check on the majority community in favour of the minority and this function would have been possible because of the special arrangements to allow for population imbalance. The special arrangements in the Belgian Senate would only come into effect on constitutional and community matters whereas in a federal second chamber they are in a sense in operation all the time because of its composition.

Arbitration in the new Arrangements

There are three areas where disputes could have arisen within the proposed system: problems of overlapping competences between the regions (or communities) or between one of the regions and central government and problems of conflict of interest between regions. The problems which may be defined as those of competence of the various spheres of government were to be referred in the first instance to a special National Committee, representative of the interests which might be relevant. This committee was to include the Prime Minister, the three ministers for the regions, the chairman and one executive member of the Flemish regional and community council (Flemish
158.

region and community being considered as one for this purpose) and the chairmen of the executives of the French Community Council and the Walloon Regional Council. The National Committee was to seek to resolve the dispute on a consensus basis. Failing this the matter would be referred to the Council of State.

The Council of State was set up in 1946 and its composition and powers were reviewed and confirmed in 1973. It is therefore not an organ created specifically in conjunction with the constitutional revision proposals. The Council of State is not a judicial body or a Constitutional Court but operates under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior. It is best understood as an administrative tribunal. It comprises three sections: a legislation section, an administration section and a section dealing with conflicts of authority. The task of the Council of State is to give an opinion on the legality or competence of legislation from the national Parliament or the regional or community councils. In this way the Council of State could comment upon any disputes in the proposed system. Having made a recommendation to Parliament, the role of the Council of State in a dispute was to be transferred to that body. In the final analysis disputes relating to competence were to be resolved in the National Cabinet. The Cabinet, as defined in the Constitution, is always half French and half Dutch-speaking (Art.86b). This would be the final stage of arbitration in such disputes in the proposed system. During the debates on the
revision of the Constitution in the 1960s and 1970s the question whether to set up a Constitution Court (Supreme Court) was discussed. The proposal was rejected as contrary to the traditions of Belgian public law according to which the ultimate right to interpret the Constitution is vested in Parliament alone. This continuation of the tradition of primacy of Parliament at the centre of the system could be regarded as a further unitary feature of the proposed system. A truly federal system might imply the necessity for some sort of Constitutional Court, above the National Parliament and regions as final arbiter. In the Egmont arrangements this role was still reserved for Parliament, or even, more specifically, for the Cabinet.

Disputes about interests (where, for example, one region's actions or policies might harm or offend another) were, it was hoped, to be resolved at the local level. If one regional executive were to feel that the actions of another fell into this category it was to be empowered to demand a review of the matter by the chairman of the two regions jointly. The problem could be taken a stage further at this local level. The two chairmen could appoint a commission of enquiry made up of representatives of both sides to study the issue. Should this process fail the matter was to be referred to the National Committee described above for a resolution by consensus. The Committee would have had power to delay any action for 60 days in order to give time to find a solution. Finally, in case of continued failure to find a consensus at this level, the problem was to be referred to the National Parliament as in the case of disputes concerning competence.
The Senate in its new regional form was to fulfil the position of supreme referee in other areas of possible dispute. Constitutional matters were to remain part of its responsibilities (with 2/3s majority provisions). It was also to have a special role as protector of ideological and philosophical minorities in each region and in the country as a whole. This had particular relevance to Catholics in Wallonia and Socialists in Flanders. With a written Constitution Belgium has a clear exposition of the various rights, powers and duties of different parts of the political system. The different types of arbitration described were to operate within the constitutional framework. The Constitution in 1971 included, for example, specific arrangements for settling disputes between the linguistic communities through the so-called 'alarm-bell' procedure (Art. 38b). In these cases protests from 3/4 of the deputies from one community were to be referred to the Cabinet for resolution.

In cases of dispute the ultimate arbiter was to be the Cabinet itself, responsible as it is to Parliament. Should serious difficulties arise solutions would have depended upon the achievement of consensus at the supreme level. The consensus sought would have been among political leaders, not judges or Constitutional Courts. This reflects the continuance in this area of Belgian politics of traditional attitudes whereby the Cabinet of the central National Parliament was to remain the supreme arbiter.
The proposals for Brussels in the new system were also an attempt to reach a compromise over a very complicated problem. The city was defined as a region and thus was to have its own special Regional Council and Regional Executive. The acceptance of the concept of Brussels as a region meant that Belgium was to consist of three regions - Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels - two largely French dominated. Clearly this was correct from the point of view of economic geography, but it must be recalled that the Flemish view was that any kind of 'Fédéralisme à trois' would be unacceptable. The granting of regional status to the capital was balanced by the incorporation of Brussels into the Community Council and Executive arrangements. In this way Brussels Dutch-speakers, for example, would have been members of the capital region but the Flemish community. The second balance in this context was limitation of the Brussels region to the 19 communes of Brussels-Capital. Many Brussels French-speakers wished to see the Brussels region defined as a much wider area than this. Although the Brussels region was confined to the 19 communes, the new system confirmed the facilities in the six peripheral communes guaranteed in the 1971 Constitution. In addition, however, it introduced a new concept of 'droit d'élection de domicile' in ten further peripheral communes. These communes were to remain (like the
six above) in the Dutch zone, but French-speaking citizens were to be able to enrol on the electoral register in one of the communes of the capital and thus become by this means part of the French community.* In order to protect each community in each of the 19 communes of the capital and the six on the periphery there were to be created cultural commissions for each linguistic group, elected by the communal councillors of that group. There were also to be two cultural commissioners within the Brussels Regional Council, also elected separately by each linguistic group. These commissions were to be ultimately responsible to the two overall Community Councils for the two national communities.

As Brussels, unlike the other two regions, is one city, the existence of a regional council together with a council for the conurbation (the present conseil d'agglomération) occupying the same 19 communes would have meant over-government. Therefore, the conseil d'agglomération was to cease to exist, being replaced by the new regional council of 48 and the new executive of seven.

* The six communes with 'facilities' were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wemmel</th>
<th>Krainem</th>
<th>Linkebeek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drogenbos</td>
<td>Rhode St.G.</td>
<td>Wezembeek-Oppem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ten communes where special voting rights in Brussels-Capital were to be permitted to French-speakers were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alsemberg</th>
<th>Beersel</th>
<th>Dilbeek</th>
<th>Grand Bigard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strombeek-Bever</td>
<td>Beauval</td>
<td>Woluwe St.E.</td>
<td>Sterrebeek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre-Dame au bois</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negenmanneke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The electoral arrangements were to be similar to the previous system - separate lists for each linguistic group, seats allocated on the council in proportion 42:6 and on the executive 5:2 in favour of the French-speakers. The new system for Brussels briefly described above was an attempt to compromise in the midst of demands which seemed irreconcilable. The Dutch-speakers were to have cultural guarantees in the city and the bilingual region was to be firmly fixed at the boundaries of the 19 communes. The interests of the Brussels Dutch-speakers were to be integrated through the Community Council with the Flemish cultural interest in the country as a whole. The French majority position in the capital was clearly expressed in the proportions of seats on the Regional Council and the Executive. The rights of French-speakers on the periphery in the six communes were to be protected by their integration within the larger system of guarantees and the French-speakers beyond this (in ten further communes) were to be given the right to opt for French 'sub-citizenship' although resident in the Flemish zone.

Sub-regions

A further reorganisation proposed was the creation of sub-regions to replace the old nine provinces which were to cease to exist as administrative units. In their place it was planned that there should be 13 sub-regions in Wallonia, 11 in Flanders and 1 in Brussels. The old province of Brabant would finally
have been split into Dutch and French sub-regions. Each of these sub-regions was to be governed by the bureau or executive of assemblies elected every 6 years at the same time as the communal elections. The sub-regions were to form therefore a third tier of government. Beneath them would be the communes - 262 in Wallonia, 388 in Flanders and 19 in Brussels-capital. In this way the new Belgian system was to comprise four levels of government and local government. At the top would have been the unitary National Parliament and Cabinet, below, the three economic regions and parallel with them the communities. Beneath the region, the sub-region and the commune were to provide local government.

The Belgian elector would therefore have voted for the Chamber of Deputies, the regional/community assembly members who would also have comprised the Senate, the sub-regional assemblies and the communes. This would have given a total of four levels of representation. The last two levels can be largely ignored in a discussion of the proposed system as they are only of local significance. In Brussels, however, the three levels of community, region and sub-region would have overlapped and added to the complications of the capital. At the broad national level also the question must arise whether the Belgian system might have become overloaded in the new plan. Previously there were three sets of elections, for example - parliamentary, provincial and communal - and the new system proposed four.
A UNITARY TO A NEAR FEDERAL SYSTEM

The 1978 proposals may be regarded as part of a process
of change of the Belgian political system from a unitary system
to a compromise between the unitary concept, embodied in the
primacy of the Chamber of Deputies and a central government with
supreme authority, and a federal-type concept embodied in the
creation of elected regional assemblies with their own cabinets
(executives) and administration directly under their control.
There is no doubt that the 1978 proposals would have meant a
considerable change from the Belgian system of 1961. This is
best illustrated by placing the 1961 and 1971 systems and the
1978 proposals together and comparing them.

In 1961 the Belgian political system was unitary. In
response to pressure from the Flemish Movement in the inter-war
years the existence of two distinct cultural communities had been
recognised in the laws relating to the use of languages, passed
in the 1930s. A linguistic boundary had been defined but
flexibility of the line was allowed for by the linguistic census
provisions of the same language laws. These changes, combined
with the growth of higher education in Dutch in the 1920s and
1930s were laying the foundations for a further extension of
Flemish community consciousness. Nevertheless, up to 1961,
Belgium was a state with a recognised cultural diversity but a unitary political system. The legislature was elected on a proportional representational system, with no special representation for minorities or special majorities, except the necessary for 2/3rd majorities for constitutional reform which had been part of the Constitution since 1830. As part of the recognition of cultural diversity, provision had been made for separate Ministries of Education for French and Dutch communities but this was a recognition of practical consequence of cultural boundaries established by the laws of the 1930s. Within this system the political issues themselves transcended the community boundary. The older confessional and more recent economic questions united Catholics, Socialists and Liberals in the north and south. Upon this base grew the political parties which contributed to the overall unity of the system. The parties exhibited special characteristics - although they each had a region of special strength and support they needed the other regions in order to compete for power at the centre. They therefore had a vested interest in preserving their own unity and minimising the community differences within them. This applied to the stronger wings of each (Catholic or CVP in Flanders, Socialists in Wallonia, and to a lesser degree Liberals in Brussels). The weaker wings (PSC in Wallonia, and Socialists in Flanders in particular) saw the strength of their allies in the other regions as a security for their minority status in their own regions.
In sum, therefore, in 1961 Belgian politics were unitary in constitutional terms, unitary in terms of issues or cleavage patterns and unitary in terms of dominant political parties. The community cleavage was secondary to the above characteristics of a unitary system and confined to culture and language. In 1958-61 the old confessional issue of Belgian politics was ceasing to have the same relevance as previously. Given the above unitary emphasis of the system up to this time it was assumed that economic cleavages, also of a unitary nature, could begin to characterise Belgian politics on similar lines to the pattern in the UK. The economic demands of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels were varied and often mutually antagonistic. This meant that the cultural or community cleavage might be reinforced by economic regionalism as the demands upon the national resources from each community began to conflict. The traditional socio-economic cleavage between capital and labour and perhaps between rural and urban interests was, however, paradoxically a uniting factor. The surviving strength of the unitary tradition in Belgium in 1960 must not be underestimated. The traditional Belgian political system had survived for over 100 years and accommodated itself to major issues such as universal suffrage, the rise of a working class party, two world wars and major economic upheavals. As recently as 1951 and 1958 it had coped successfully with the Royal Crisis and the Schools Crisis.
The 1971 Settlement (the constitutional revision) was characterised by the recognition not only of the existence of two cultural communities in Belgium but also a clearly defined and even rigid definition of the boundaries and rights of those communities. In the first part of the decade of the 1960s, the linguistic frontiers had been fixed once and for all and the total legal and cultural dominance of Dutch in the north and French in the south and the limitation of the boundary of bilingualism to the 19 communes of Brussels-Capital had completed this process. In the new Constitution (1971) the communities appeared for the first time as political entities in the creation of the Cultural Councils (Dutch and French) with full powers to legislate on cultural matters for each community respectively. At the executive level the new Constitution provided for parity between the communities in cabinet places and, at legislative level, special majority provision on cultural and linguistic matters was introduced. Brussels had become a miniature version of the national Constitution with a range of special provisions to recognise community interests and rights there also. The arrangements of 1971 did not lay down any specific lines for regional economic devolution but proposed that this should be accomplished in the near future in terms of three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels). The initial arrangements for the regions in the early 1970s were moves in this direction but the regional economic councils were still agencies of central government with largely advisory powers.
The Constitution of 1971 was therefore still unitary with government coalition-forming of the traditional type with all powers reserved to the central parliament as in 1961. It confirmed and even consolidated the division within the country between the communities, thus modifying the traditional unitary emphasis of Belgian political culture. The new arrangements for devolution of administration as well as decision-making on community and regional matters could be seen as laying the foundations for a separate governmental infrastructure. The 1971 provisions did not specify any particular form of regional economic devolution but they did state a clear imperative for this to be discussed. Thus after 1971 regional government became a major issue in Belgian politics. If the period up to 1961 was one of preservation of a unitary or centripetal tendency in Belgium, 1971 may be understood as the beginning of the recognition and even perhaps encouragement of centrifugal tendencies in the system.

The centrifugal tendency, evident in 1971, had weakened the factors which had supported the unitary system in 1961. The confessional problem was replaced by the community problem rather than the economic cleavage which had been anticipated in 1961. The traditional political parties had split along community lines, the various wings cooperating over some issues, but allying themselves along community lines over others. In addition, the increasing pressure of the community cleavage had lead to the growth of well-rooted community parties. This change in the balance of
Belgian party strengths was not only a symptom of the increasing seriousness of the centrifugal tendency within the system by 1971 but also a reinforcement of that tendency. The existence of so many groups in Parliament after 1971 made coalition-forming much more difficult. In the 1950s for example there were three elections, 1950, 1954 and 1958 and three distinct governments, 1950-54, 1954-58, and 1958-61. In the ten years 1968-1978 there were five elections, 1968, 1971, 1974 and 1978 and four coalition governments. The difficulties of forming governments were also increasing with long periods of negotiations, such as the three months of difficulties in 1978. Thus in 1971 the unitary factors in Belgian politics which had been relatively strong in 1961 had been weakened. The 1971 constitutional revision was a compromise between a unitary political structure largely unchanged and the recognition of community as a major element in the new Belgian political climate which had emerged in the 1960s. Its reference to community and regions and its provisions or proposals for recognising these as political entities within the system meant that 1971 would be an incomplete settlement. Many of the critics of the 1971 Constitution pointed to this conclusion.

The 1978 proposals may be seen as the next and, it was hoped, the final and complete stage in this process. If 1971 was a compromise which preserved the unitary system whilst recognising
community and region, the later proposals place much greater emphasis upon the community and regional element. The most important factor was the bringing together of the cultural, economic and administrative divisions of the country under one system of regions. Although, as previously, Brussels still posed special problems, it can be seen in the 1978 plans that Flanders meant a region with the possibility of linguistic, cultural, economic and administrative autonomy all under the control of one elected body - the directly elected regional assembly with its own executive cabinet. The same would be true of Wallonia. Unlike 1971 when the cultural councils to deal with cultural matters were separate entities from the economic regions, in 1978 all activities were to come under one authority. In 1978 the regional assemblies which would have this authority were to be elected quite separately from the national parliament. This new definition of the regions and their assemblies would have considerably strengthened the regional aspect of Belgian politics against the formerly centralist or unitary aspect.

To balance this strengthening of the regional governments (for potentially they could be regarded as governments) the 1978 proposals included provisions for linkages between the national parliament - or more specifically national government - through the regional ministries in Brussels. In
this way the proposals envisaged a form of oversight of regional
government through the ministries responsible. There were to
remain also large areas of responsibility reserved for central
government alone.* The ministers responsible for the regions
would have formed the pivot of the balance or the link between the
two aspects of the system. This responsibility would have required
the ability to see the national relative to the regional interest
and vice versa. Thus, much would have depended upon the calibre
of the ministers in situations where the two interests might not
coincide exactly. A minister would see his role as more regional
than national and thus weaken the unitary aspect. Similarly,
division of powers and competence between centre and regions could
have become blurred. In economic policy, for example, the centre
was to have oversight of national economic planning and the
regional assembly oversight of regional economic planning. This
latter, however, could involve the region in negotiations with
external economic powers in the regional interest without
reference to the overarching national economic interest. A
Flemish regional council might negotiate, for example, for invest-
ment from the USA in its region directly rather than through
Brussels. Wallonia might do the same with France. In time the

* Such as oversight of the national economy, the overall
national budget, foreign policy, defence and similar national
matters.
regional interest might predominate over the centre, thus weakening the authority of central government in those fields.

A further problem in the 1978 proposals might have emerged in the political balances within the respective regions of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. In each area one party was much stronger than the others. In Flanders the CVP was always dominant, in Wallonia the same could be said of the Socialists and in Brussels since the late 1960s the FDF had become the main force. Thus when the national political scene might have presented a picture of vigorous party competition and coalition-forming, with a certain degree of balance between CVP/PSC and Socialists and Liberals, all at one time or another experiencing governmental responsibility, in the regions this might not be the case. The Flemish Socialists and PSC might have found themselves permanently in an opposition role with no reasonable hope of controlling the regional political system. This could have had two dangers. The situation of one-party permanent dominance in a political system can lead at the minimum to frustration in any opposition groups or even to fears of corruption arising from permanent security for the dominant party. Similarly, a dominant party in a region could be frustrated in its plans by central government policies formulated by a political coalition of the opposing complexion. For example, Walloon Socialists might have felt a lack of sympathy from a CVP/PSC dominated conservative coalition
with the Liberals. This could have led either to greater demands for ever more autonomy to 'free Wallonia from central limitations' or alternatively (or more likely in addition) to the temptation to blame the national government for local failures, using central government as a sort of scapegoat. These problems would not necessarily have been insurmountable, but, as with the role of the national ministers with regional responsibilities, much would have depended upon the positions adopted by the political parties (or more particularly the political elites) in the regions, \textit{vis-à-vis} the central government.
FEDERALISM AND THE EGMONT PROPOSALS

A range of critical comments could be made about the Egmont proposals. To establish the new system would probably have been expensive in terms of the inevitable expansion of the bureaucracy and administrative machinery, the number of tiers of government would have been possibly too large and disputes on the linguistic boundaries would have continued as before. There are, however, three major critical areas which must command special attention beyond the above details. These are the extent to which the Egmont proposals were in fact a move towards a federal Belgium, the relationship between the proposed post-Egmont system and the tradition of consociational democracy in Belgium and finally the probability, or otherwise, that the proposed arrangements for Brussels would have resolved the problems of the capital region.

In order to evaluate the Egmont proposals in the context of federalism it is necessary to give a brief definition of that form of government as a point of reference for further comments. Basically federalism implies a division of powers in government according to the principle that there is a single authority for the whole area of the federal state in respect of matters concerning the whole and independent regional authorities for regional matters. Within their respective spheres the central and regional authorities have full powers and each is coordinate or parallel with the others rather than subordinate. In other
words, the single authority for the whole is not merely the servant of the parts for their convenience as would be the case, for example, in a confederacy or a committee of an alliance between states. On the other hand the regions are not merely agents of the central authority. This may be defined as each part of a federation, overall and regional, possessing a degree of sovereignty or independent power which cannot be infringed by the other parts. There is a problem in defining the extent to which the parts of a federation can really be considered sovereign in relation to the central power. In the U.S. system, for example, it would be an exaggeration to see Texas as possessing any degree of sovereignty comparable to that of an independent state or Washington. It could well be argued that the parts are left with the appearance of sovereignty which is in fact a share of the sovereignty of the whole which is allowed to them by the centre. There is, however, a difference between the powers of a U.S. state and an English county council. This general definition of federalism must be expanded in order to see how this ideal can be applied practically.

The most important implication of the above basic principles of federalism is that the rules of politics in such a system must be very clearly defined in a constitution, especially the limits to the powers of the parts. Having defined the powers of the parts in a written constitution it is equally important that the rules and definitions (and even geographical boundaries)
cannot be changed unilaterally by one of the authorities without the consent of the others. As problems of definition are likely to arise in such a system it is also essential to ensure that arbitration is independent. This implies that a federal system needs some form of constitutional supreme court set apart from any of the authorities which might be party to the disputes which arise. In most federal systems there is an imbalance in size between the various regions and therefore in order to defend the principle of equality of political powers between the regions, part of the central authority will consist of a senate with equal representation for each region irrespective of size. This can protect smaller regions who would be poorly represented in an assembly based upon representation by population. Finally, for the power or sovereignty of the parts to have any real meaning there must be a degree of financial autonomy for each relative to the powers defined in the constitution. Financial subordination to a central treasury would invalidate regional political autonomy and inadequate financial provision for a central authority would reduce its status.

The nature of a federal system (or claimed federal system) may also be judged by the type of relationship which exists between the executive and the houses of the legislature. In a unitary system the national assembly or parliament represents the community as a whole and the executive likewise.
In a federal system one of the national assemblies (the senate) represents the parts rather than the whole community. The other assembly, elected directly on a basis of representation by population (the representative house) represents the whole community. In a federal system both houses should have equal importance. The executive must stand therefore over and above both houses. An executive deriving from or responsible primarily to one of the houses will give extra power and authority to that house. A federal system with the executive in or responsible to the lower (or representative) house would have a strong unitary tendency. In the U.S. system the executive stands over and above the two houses which have equal powers. If the executive were placed in the House of Representatives this would devalue the Senate and weaken the federal character of the system.

A further feature to be expected in a federal system is that the parts or regions should have their own directly elected regional assemblies or legislatures with their own executives responsible to the regional legislatures. A regional system with indirectly elected assemblies (local councillors or members of the national legislature acting in a regional capacity) or an assembly appointed by the central power would be very weak in terms of real autonomy. The regional assembly members must have their own constituency separate from that of the system as a whole.
The above brief definition of the main features of federalism is somewhat static. In the twentieth century there have been certain trends which have the consequence of weakening federalism from the regional point of view in spite of constitutional guarantees of autonomy. There are two in particular which merit consideration. In modern times industries and businesses have grown beyond original local regions and become national and even international. This development must have an influence upon the economic autonomy of any regional authority. On the national scale the existence of multinational companies presents problems for national sovereignty and this effect will be even greater in the regions of a federation. In addition to this the role of the central authority even in a federal system has increased as a result of the development of welfare services and government involvement in economic planning. The growth in the provision of welfare services and the desirability of the equalisation of disparities between regions, both often demanded by the electorate in democratic systems, have the consequence of enhancing the central authority's role. Even in the U.S.A., perhaps the model federal system, these factors (in addition to the enormous growth of central government influence through the placing of military and similar contracts) weaken the economic autonomy of the states.
If their existence means that the 1978 proposals would have produced a 'pseudo-federation' hiding the economic domination of the centre, then a similar criticism could be made of the U.S.A. or any other system which is usually accepted as genuinely federal. In spite of these reservations, it is reasonable to demand of a federal system that the regions, with their constitutionally guaranteed areas of competence and sovereignty (which are not subordinate to but coordinate with the central authority) should possess some degree of real financial autonomy. This may take the form of an entirely independent right to levy their own taxes or alternatively a clearly defined right to a share of the total national tax income, that share being negotiated by the regions together with the central authority. The former source of income would probably provide the greatest degree of autonomy. Dependence upon variable donations from a central exchequer under the control of the central authority or inadequate allocations of funds must be regarded as a flaw in any system which might be placed in the federal category.

The Egmont proposals were not designed with the specific stated intention to replace the unitary system in Belgium with a new federal system. It would be wrong therefore to examine the proposals as if they had appeared under a federal heading. On the other hand they did seem to have many federal characteristics. The question arises therefore whether a post-Egmont Belgium would have been a federal system in all but name or whether in reality
the proposals were a refinement of the old unitary system which allowed for regional aspirations but preserved the complete dominance of the central authority.

The proposed system did envisage a form of regional government or authority. This was reinforced by the plans to change to separately elected regional assemblies. These were to replace the existing regional assemblies whose members were national politicians acting as regional councillors but elected in the first place to the national parliament. The regional assemblies, or more particularly their executive committees, were also to acquire the administrative infrastructures to enable them to carry out their regional roles. These were features which certainly would have increased the independence of the regional assemblies compared to the pre-Egmont position. The proposal that the regional assembly members would constitute, at other times, the national Senate would have created a difficulty. The members would have been at the same time national and regional politicians. This would have created the problem of overlap between their two areas of responsibility in contrast with the federalist assumption that the central and regional authorities are separate and distinct. The new Senate would also have mirrored the population proportions for each region rather than granting equality of representation for each region. The latter would have been completely unacceptable and impossible in a Belgium with
three regions (taking Brussels as a region), two of which would be French-speaking. The guarantees for the regions were to remain as before, embodied in the 2/3rd majority and alarm-bell provisions of the 1971 constitution. These guarantees were mechanisms designed for a unitary constitution. The proposed new Senate would have had no greater role here than the old one.

The Egmont proposals defined the powers and competence of the regional assemblies and the national parliament clearly and assumed any residual powers beyond those defined would revert to the centre. This was an area of dispute during the evolution of the Egmont plans, as the federalists (in the VU for example) argued that any residual powers should revert to the regions with the central authority strictly defined and limited. The assumption that the regions would be limited rather than the centre placed the emphasis upon the unitary principle. A further notable feature of the proposals was the absence of any real provision for independent arbitration by the creation of a constitutional court. This was discussed and vaguely proposed for the future but in the final analysis, arbitration in the Egmont system would have resided in the national central parliament or more specifically in the national cabinet. The Egmont proposals therefore limited the powers of the regions and placed emphasis upon the continuing major role of the centre and allowed the centre to be the final arbiter in any disputes which might arise concerning competence.
The most important powers which may be considered are those relating to budgeting, for economic autonomy and regional economic planning would be meaningless without proper budgetary provisions. The Egmont proposals subordinated regional economic arrangements to the overall national planning. The list of powers and competence of the regions appeared quite long but most of them were of limited and very local importance. The central authority was also to remain largely responsible for financing the regions. The allocations for the regions were clearly defined as proportions of the whole total for regional purposes. The tax rates and the global sums from which the allocations were to be made were however fully under the control of the centre. In reality therefore the regions would have been in a subordinate budgetary position. Although no figures can be estimated with certainty to give some idea of the extent of the financial commitment to regional government, in the proposed systems, in an analysis of the regions' source of finance in 1981 the Société Générale de Banque (one of Belgium's leading banks) gave such an estimate. In that year direct allocations plus taxation likely to be repaid to the regions probably amounted to only about 15% of the national budget compared with 40%-50% granted to regions in the majority of federal states in the western world at the time.\(^1\) Allowing for the fact that the system in 1981 was not strictly that proposed by Egmont, the low figure of 15% showed that the central authority (with 85% of the
budget expenditure) was certainly still in a very dominant position. Finally the Egmont proposals made no reference to the possibility of the executive being placed in some way apart from the lower legislative house. The weakness of the senate as a chamber representative of the regions has been discussed. The executive would have remained firmly responsible to the lower house. This would have maintained the dominance of the overall national unitary side of the system compared to the regional or possibly federal aspect. This would have been a further reinforcement of the preservation of central authority.

The Egmont proposals therefore were not a formula for a federal Belgium. Within the proposals for greater regional autonomy the authority of the centre would still have remained supreme. The Belgian unitary tradition was not to be totally changed but rather modified. The modifications were not, however, trivial. In many areas of Belgian life, especially culture, education and personal services, there would be two sub-nations within one nation and the Egmont proposals would have given this separation a clear institutional framework. The framework would have remained still largely unitary. In the process of implementing them, however, the centrifugal forces within the system would have been reinforced, leading possibly ultimately to a federal system. It is possible to speculate that
although the Egmont plans were not in themselves the blueprints for a federal Belgium, they may have prepared the pre-conditions for a later drift in that direction. In 1978 the Belgian system was at a point of balance but still largely unitary in spite of the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s.

Any consideration of the possibility of Belgium moving from a unitary state to a federal system is a venture into unknown territory. Most federations arose as "a type of government founded upon a foedus or treaty between states." They came together after a previous separate existence as states. This can be said of the U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland, Australia and many others. Sometimes foreign conquest or colonialisation may have provided the framework or stimulus to form the federation as in India, Nigeria or perhaps post-1945 Germany and Austria. Belgium would be an unusual case of a unitary state changing freely in the reverse direction. The 'foedus or treaty between states' which would constitute a Belgian federation arrangement would be between states which did not previously exist, except in the distant past in the case of Flanders. The states would be created by the formation of the federation rather than having their own existence and coming together by treaty.

The Egmont plans, therefore, had they been put into effect, would possibly have initiated an unusual process whereby a unitary system would begin to develop in the direction of
federalism. Further developments would have depended upon the commitment and attitudes of those who would have had the task of making it work. These would be the elected members of the regional assemblies, especially the executives, the local and national political leaderships and the political activists generally. The post-Egmont system would therefore have depended for its stability and success upon the political elites in the system. It is useful to examine this aspect of the Egmont proposals. How would it have worked and to what extent would it have depended upon elite consensus and compromise similar or identical to the patterns of consociational democracy described earlier?
Elite cooperation in Belgium had two aspects in the past. The first was between the leading elements of the three familles spirituelles at national levels and the second was the cooperation within each famille between the Dutch and French-speaking sections of the country. These two aspects have been referred to earlier as two levels of compromise politics in Belgium. The former operated as a form of crisis-management (as in 1958). It was an 'extra' process in addition to normal competitive politics which were the normal state of Belgian political life. The second was continuous and essential in order to enable the traditional parties to maintain their national position. To take part effectively in competitive politics the parties had to operate a continuous process of accommodation politics to reconcile the varying regional and community interests within themselves. This was another paradox of Belgian politics. To operate inter-party competitive politics (and on occasions consensus politics) necessitated intra-party consensus politics. Without the latter the former could not work. In the 1960s, cooperation between the linguistic or community wings of the major parties broke down. The new proposals of 1978 demanded a third dimension of political elite interaction.
The Egmont plans would have meant that at the national level, as before, politics would be a matter of interaction between the major parties in coalition-forming around national issues. At this level the three major traditional parties would have had to maintain cross-community links in order to strengthen their national bargaining positions as previously. Parallel with this, however, the leadership of the assemblies and parties at regional level would have had to be prepared to seek accommodation with national leadership (perhaps of parties opposed to their own) and also with the leadership of the other regions. It is possible also to see that the necessity might have arisen for compromise and accommodation within the regional political subsystems as a regional version of crisis management. The Brussels regional assembly would have divided in the 1978 plan for community purposes, some members becoming members of the Council of the French-speaking community and some members of the Council of the Dutch-speaking community. At this level too, therefore, the Walloon and Flemish members would have had to accept the necessity to respect the interests of their Brussels colleagues who would have formed a minority of the overall linguistic group.

The proposals for 1978 therefore, even if enshrined in the written constitution, would have depended to a very large degree upon the attitudes adopted by the political elites in Belgian politics at national and regional levels. These could have been danger points which could lead to a further aggravation
of the centrifugal tendencies already recognised in the proposals as a whole. It would be possible therefore to understand the Egmont proposals as something approaching an institutionalization of a form of consociational democracy in Belgium. Clearly this would not have been written into the new constitutional arrangements but the reality of the proposed system would have been that only by regular and probably continuous adoption of accommodation or consensus politics would the planned institutions have worked at all. It is useful to compare the diagram of the working of Belgian politics before 1961 with the much more complicated picture which represents the probable (and essential for stability) picture after the Egmont plans had been put into effect:

The 1961 System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competition &amp; Coalition Formation</th>
<th>National Politics in Chamber &amp; Senate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSB/BSP</td>
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<tr>
<td>French PSB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch BSP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>French CVP</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dutch PSC</td>
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<td>PLF/PVV</td>
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<td>Dutch PVV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socialist famille</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic famille</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal famille</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The Proposed Egmont System:

The second diagram must be imagined as superimposed upon the first to give the full picture of the complications implied by Egmont. National politics would go on as before in addition to the new regional element. Belgian politics would have consisted of the interaction and competition between the three political segments or familles (plus others such as the FDF and VU) in each region, the interaction between the regions in the Senate and
between each other directly on a day-to-day basis, interaction between the regions and language groups within the political families and parties (as before), crisis-management by attempted accommodation politics between the three traditional parties at national level (mainly in the Chamber but also in the Senate) and finally normal competitive politics at both the national and regional levels. Such a complicated system could only possibly work if the leaders of the parties, groups and regional assemblies were prepared to accept the necessity of compromise and not make demands which would be unacceptable to other groups.

If this understanding of the reality of politics as they would have developed after Egmont is correct, it refers back directly to the original definitions of consociational democracy given earlier. Unlike the former position in Belgium, however, consociational democracy democracy would have become a permanent necessity as well as a technique of crisis-management. The 1978 proposals would have increased the potentiality for crisis at a wide range of levels. In the 1960s and 1970s relatively small linguistic disputes in boundary districts such as the Fourons/Voeren or parts of Brussels acquired exaggerated significance. In the same way the 1978 proposals would have meant that the possibilities for small political disputes had been expanded, with the consequent dangers to overall stability.
The control or dominance of the three traditional parties would have been more difficult to maintain in the new setting with regionalism so much reinforced.

In the 1970s the parties were seriously weakened by regional feeling and splits. The proposed system in 1978 would certainly have aggravated this problem for them. In the discussion above of the possible federal nature of the proposals it was suggested that in reality the system would have preserved a strong role for the centre. This would, however, have inevitably led at some point to tension between elected regional assembly and the central authority. All these areas of potential instability could only be contained by constant 'management'. Thus the Egmont Pact was unworkable without the permanent operation of the techniques of consociational democracy.

The 1977 Egmont proposals offered a system of compromises which were designed finally to resolve the complicated problems of the capital and its region. The two most important aspects of these plans concerning the city were the creation of a Brussels economic region and the provisions for French-speakers living outside the bilingual zone and not within one of the communes with special facilities in French. The proposed recognition of Brussels as a region with similar status to Wallonia was however a step in the direction of the idea of Belgium
as a 'fédération à trois'. This would have been completely unacceptable to much Flemish opinion. Similarly the extension of linguistic rights beyond the existing limits would also have been seen by many Flemings as a tacit acceptance of French cultural expansionism. In short, the Egmont proposals for Brussels, although a result of a negotiated compromise, would have proved too radical for the Flemish public. It was undoubtedly this issue which caused the CVP to retreat from the Egmont Plan in 1977. In the case of the capital there is no point in speculating whether it would have worked. The fact, demonstrated by the actions of the CVP in the autumn of 1977, that many Flemings would have found the plans unacceptable suggests that if they had been put into effect there would still have been a large number of problems of interpretation. Brussels continued to be, as it had been throughout the period, an area of irreconcilable opposites, where the achievement of compromises and accommodation was much more difficult than elsewhere.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 8


2. Any proposal to allow modification of the boundary of Brussels and its periphery relative to local wishes would imply a return to some form of linguistic census which would be firmly rejected by the Flemish Movement.

3. Election results in 1977:

(i) Votes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1974</th>
<th>1977</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>35.9</td>
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<td>27.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>27.</td>
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<td>Libs</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF/RW</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Seats in the Chamber (1974 in brackets)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVP/PSC</td>
<td>80 (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc.</td>
<td>62 (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libs</td>
<td>33 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF/RW</td>
<td>15 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>20 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source of election statistics:

4. La Libre Belgique, 7/8.5.77.

5. La Libre Belgique, 25.5.77.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8 cont.

7. La Libre Belgique, 14.6.77.


9. Article 59c of the 1971 Constitution defines the powers of the Cultural Councils.

10. Articles 59-60 and 131-131b of the 1971 Constitution define the position of the Senate in the system.


CHAPTER 9

The 'Pacte Communauteaire' of 1978

The way forward towards the implementation of the Egmont Pact of June 1977 was not simple. The Tindemans government took office on 14th June 1977. In September a committee was formed composed of respective Ministers for the Reform of State Institutions, responsible for Flanders and Wallonia, together with the presidents of all the political parties of the Pact. This was called the 'Committee of 22'. This committee produced the 'Accord du Stuyvenberg' published on February 28th 1978. The Stuyvenberg Accord formed, together with the Egmont Pact, the basis of what was called the 'Pacte Communauteaire' of 1978, which formed part of the government programme of March 1978. This set of agreements was to be the final definitive constitutional reform and arrangement for the Belgian political system.

In June 1978 Tindemans' government ran into difficulties over the economic aspects of the coalition programme. In return for his agreement to move quickly to implement the regional reforms of the Egmont Pact, the Prime Minister was able to pass a programme of economic measures - the other aspect of the Pact agreements - in July and thus resolve his difficulties over economic policy. Having survived the crisis in July the government introduced a bill (projet du loi 461) to initiate the processes of economic devolution or regionalisation. During
the summer recess a Special Committee of both Houses of Parliament studied the bill. When Parliament reconvened in September 1978 the Special Committee adopted the bill 'projet 461'.

At the same time, however, CVP members of both Houses began to question the wisdom of proceeding too hastily towards the implementation of the Stuyvenberg agreement. In response, the French parties in the governing coalition (FDF, PSB and PSC) demanded that the CVP publicly support the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agreements. On 9th October the CVP demanded a new summit meeting of the leaders of the coalition parties to discuss the constitutionality of the proposed bill No.461. The Council of State had ruled that certain parts of the bill might be unconstitutional. No doubt with the right approach these difficulties could have been overcome, since the Constitution could be overridden by a 2/3rds vote in parliament. On the 11th a government statement was demanded by the leaders of the parties in Parliament. The Prime Minister, Tindemans, who earlier in the year had supported the bill, resigned. Thus on the 13th October 1978 the government which had adopted the Egmont Pact as part of its programme fell as a result of CVP reluctance to move to what many of the party considered too hasty an implementation of the agreements. On 25th October VDB formed another government from the same coalition of parties which had composed the government which had just fallen. This new government of VDB had a very short and specific programme. Its programme
was the preparation of a 'Declaration to Revise the Constitution' and move on quickly to a general election on this basis. The election was called for December 1978.

The elections of 1978 were again fought by the main parties divided within themselves along language lines. The French-speaking wings of all three were at odds with the Dutch-speakers. The CVP/PSC had been split in this way since 1968 but the events around the Egmont Pact in 1977 led the Socialists to split into the separate parties, the Parti Socialist and the Vlaamse Socialisten (PS and VS respectively), in November. The PS, PSC and FDF formed a common front to demand implementation of the Pact. These were opposed by the CVP, VS and VU. The VU found itself outmanoeuvred by the CVP when it appeared that the former had been willing to compromise over the Egmont provisions whilst the CVP stood as the principled defender of Flemish interests. Thus the VU appeared to have lost its claim to be the truly 'pure' Flemish party untainted by compromise. Some VU members felt this so acutely that they left the party to form a new Vlaamsche Blok (VB). The Liberals, who had been lukewarm about the Egmont Pact and not part of the negotiations which preceded it, adopted a more centralist or unitary position about the constitution, assuming perhaps that the interest of the electorate in regionalism was weakening as economic issues became more serious.
The results of the elections were indecisive. The CVP remained at approximately the same level as 1977: 26%. The PSC showed a small gain from 9.8% to 10.1%, giving a combined total of 36.2%, a small increase from 1977. The Flemish Socialists (VS) fell from 13% to 12.4% and the French Socialists fell from 13.4% to 13%, giving a combined total of 25.4%, a slight decline and a new record low. The Liberals rose in total from 15.5% to 16.4%, showing a 2% gain in Flanders and a 1% loss in Wallonia. As the CVP remained at a constant figure in Flanders it seems likely that the PVV gained from VU defections. These may have been attracted by the Liberals' economic policies. The FDF increased slightly from 4.8% to 5.2% but the RW decline continued from 2.4% to 1.9%. The VU, which had maintained its support at approximately 10% in 1974 and 1977, fell to 7%, probably as a consequence of its involvement in the coalition and the Egmont negotiations and the split with the VB (which won 1.4%).

The three party share was in the region of 79%, as in 1977, but the community party share fell from 17.2% in 1977 to 15.2%, (including the new VB). The various other small groups such as the Communists, Ecologists and the anti-taxation party, UDRT, made small gains. The overall result of the 1978 election was therefore only marginally different from that of 1977. It was a confirmation that the expansion of the community parties was over and perhaps a signal that they were on the decline in Wallonia and Flanders. It must be recalled that in 1971 they
had taken over 22% of the voters in the elections. The three party share seemed to have stabilised at around 80%, with the CVP/PSC gradually climbing back to its 1961 position and the Liberals, after the short revival of the late 1960s, settling at a level above 1961. The Socialists still continued to lose support but only marginally since 1971. The RW could no longer be counted a major threat in Wallonia and the VU seemed to have lost its impetus in Flanders. Only in Brussels did the FDF community party maintain its position. From the point of view of the three traditional parties this was a sign that the two larger community parties, the VU and RW, had been outmanoeuvred in their respective regions and need no longer be feared. The FDF was still a danger to them but Brussels was only a relatively small part of the national electorate. The three parties were therefore in a position again to seek to take full control of the system.

Unfortunately, however, all three traditional parties were still, in 1978, torn internally by community and regional interest which had so seriously weakened the intra-party cross community consensus which had been a characteristic of Belgian politics before the 1960s. The CVP reaction to the Egmont proposals, supported by the other Flemish groups, had produced a strong counter-reaction from the PSC and PS rather similar to the splits which took place after the Louvain crisis of 1968. In addition, the economic situation of the country, worsened as
a result of the oil crisis of the 1970s, demanded attention. It was difficult to separate national economic policy from regional economic interests, however, and the differences between the Liberals and the Socialists on these matters were often very wide. The Liberals in their election campaign had concentrated upon economic issues, offering a set of anti-inflationary policies which must have had some appeal in Flanders where they made electoral gains. The three traditional parties would therefore find it difficult to make a common front against the declining community parties, given their internal condition and the differences between them on economic policy. This area of policy differences was the traditional socio-economic cleavage which remained important throughout the period of community tension. The election of 1978 made no contribution to a resolution of the Community Problem, but rather left the situation worse than before, because of the sense of betrayal felt by the French-speaking parties after the CVP reluctance to implement the Egmont Pact and the consequent recriminations during the campaign. The single most important message was probably that the VU and RW were no longer the threat they had appeared to be in the 1960s. Only the FDF remained dangerous to the traditional parties. The Brussels Problem was as difficult as ever.
Given the tensions surrounding the elections and the further problems afterwards of finding first a simple majority coalition and then a 2/3rds majority, it was not surprising that it took a long time to form a new government - 99 days in all. Finally in April 1979 a new coalition was formed under Martens (CVP). This was a coalition of the CVP, PSC, both Socialist parties and the FDF.

Les changements de partenaires impliquent évidemment des changements de programmes. Au départ, la négociation se construit sur base d'un projet très complet s'inspirant des travaux institutionnels du premier formateur, M.Martens. Par la suite, elle se complète encore par quelques documents relatifs aux institutions de la région bruxelloise. Mais elle se ramène bientôt à la recherche d'un programme de transition pour un gouvernement de crise. Devant l'échec de cette formule, elle se limitera à la recherche d'un 'minimum minimorum' communautaire. Elle s'achèvera par la discussion d'un programme complet en matière institutionnelle mais aussi en matière économique, sociale et budgétaire.

The FDF joined on the assumption that the new government would set about the implementation of the Egmont Pact. Brussels, as the most difficult problem faced by constitutional reformers, was the issue where the FDF would hope to have the most influence. The crux of this question was the regional status of the capital.

In the summer of 1979 (July) it appeared that some progress was being made to implement the Pact when a Royal
Proclamation was made outlining stages to put this into effect. Preparations were to be made for regional assembly elections to take place in January 1980 when the regional parliaments or assemblies would be firmly established. Powers would be transferred to these assemblies by 1982. At this stage therefore it seemed that, in spite of the setbacks of the winter 1978-79, the Egmont Pact was still providing a blueprint for a new set of institutions for the country.

During the autumn of 1979 the coalition ran into difficulties. The economic problems of the country became more serious and demanded priority over constitutional measures. At the same time, however, the language problems in education in the border regions of the Fourons/Voeren and Commines flared up again. Finally, the CVP, supported by the Flemish Socialists, expressed opposition to the granting of full and equal regional status to Brussels. They demanded that the city be governed by a joint committee of the national parliament with both linguistic groups equally represented, rather than an elected regional assembly on the pattern of those proposed for Flanders and Wallonia. Under this pressure the government decided to postpone the regional elections to December 1982. At the same time reservations began to be expressed about the proposed powers or competence of the regional assemblies in relation to the central government. In view of these developments, on January 18th, 1980 the FDF members of the government resigned.
The departure of the PDC from the Martens government left the coalition with a majority in parliament but not the 2/3rd majority necessary for constitutional reforms. It also left the government in a minority position in the capital, similar to the situation in 1969. In spite of these difficulties, in April constitutional proposals were presented to parliament. These were a modified version of the Egmont plans and preserved a greater degree of central control of the envisaged system. The problem of the Brussels region was again to be the stumbling block and the measures failed in the Senate by one vote short of the 2/3rd majority (117:61). The Prime Minister treated this as a vote of no confidence although he was in the anomalous position of still commanding a normal majority in parliament.

The failure of the proposed reforms in April 1980 marked the final end of the Egmont process. The Egmont Plan as a grand design to resolve all the problems of regions and community, including those of Brussels, in one wide-ranging constitutional reform collapsed. The conferences in the Egmont Palace and the agreements which emerged from them had all the characteristics of the consociational model: participation of the leaders of a wide range of political groups representing the main sections of Belgian society, private negotiations among those leaders to achieve a consensus or overarching agreement, an emphasis upon compromise and accommodation as the only approach possible in
the circumstances and finally reference back to followers for their endorsement, which was forthcoming. Only the absence of the Liberal leaders spoiled what could have been an ideal picture of consociational democracy in action. The Pact, however, was never fully put into effect as a result of reluctance and reservations on the part of some of the participants, the CVP, in particular. In the Egmont discussions, full consociationalism, involving a very wide range of opinion, had been tried and very nearly produced the desired result. By May 1980, however, it was clear that the only way forward would be for new initiatives to be taken to salvage some elements of the solutions proposed in the late 1970s. Only the traditional parties were in a position to take such initiatives.
THE REFORMS OF 1980

After the failure of the Egmont Pact, the community and regional problems, topics of so much discussion in the 1970s, were absorbing too much of Belgium's political energy and some sort of resolution was essential. Until this was done it would be difficult to make efforts to solve the country's economic problems which were becoming ever more serious after the increase in oil prices in the 1978-79 period. In May 1980 another government was formed by Martens. This was a coalition of the three traditional parties, excluding any community parties. In August 1980 the three traditional parties (or six parties as they had become, as a result of the splits between their community wings) combined to pass a series of constitutional reforms to allow for more regional autonomy. The reforms were in some ways a modified Egmont Plan but with the important difference that they deliberately by-passed the problem of Brussels. By doing this, progress could be made. Throughout the 1960s and particularly in the discussions in the 1970s concerning regional devolution, Brussels had proved the most difficult problem area. In 1980 it was put aside for further consideration later. In an editorial article *Le Soir* commented:

"le dossier le plus névralgique du dossier communautaire est tout simplement mis entre parenthèse en attendant des jours meilleurs."  

The reforms were passed by the three traditional groups, excluding the community parties which had been drawn into the discussions around the Egmont proposals. Unlike the passing of the Schools
in 1958 and the Dialogue Communautaire of 1976-77, the reforms of 1980 were not the result of a process of taking the issue out of normal politics for a consensus solution involving all interested groups. They were the result of action by the three traditional parties who chose to ignore the new parties and produce a minimal consensus among themselves. By excluding Brussels they were able to do this quickly. The measures of August 1980 were a reassertion of their traditional role in the system. The legislators of August 1980 had the benefit of the months of discussion around the Egmont Pact but chose to act quickly and resolve those parts of the community and regional problems which would cause the least dissension among themselves. After so many years of argument, the three groups took the decision in the summer of 1980 to push ahead without attempting to satisfy the community parties, the FDF in particular.

As had been proposed in the Egmont Pact, the Cultural Councils of the 1971 Constitution and the regional councils of the reforms of 1970 and 1974 were reorganised. In 1980 three separate councils were set up: a Walloon regional council, a council of the French-speaking community and one unified council of the Dutch-speaking community and Flemish region. Immediately the absence of Brussels from the scheme reveals the difference between the 1980 reforms and the Egmont proposals. In principle the Bruxellois could become part of one united French community and regional council on the Flemish pattern. As no final
arrangements were made for the capital, this was not possible at this stage. The temporary arrangement for Brussels in 1980 was the continuation of the conseil d'agglomération, with its executive, under the oversight or tutelage of the national government. In this way Brussels was not treated as a region like the other two and the possibility of 'fédéralisme à trois', so abhorrent to Flemish opinion, was thus avoided.4

The membership of the councils was defined initially as all the deputies and senators from the community or region. This is planned to change at a later stage to all the deputies but only the directly elected senators from the region or community. In the final phase the councils will consist of the elected senators only. This was a departure from the Egmont ideas. In the earlier scheme the members of the regional councils were to be directly elected as regional councillors, elected for a fixed term which might not coincide with the elections for the Chamber. The regional councillors were also, according to Egmont, to assume the role of senators, thus creating a regional second chamber, distinct from the lower house. The 1980 system means that the members of the regional councils are to be national politicians who assume a regional role rather than vice-versa.

The powers of the councils were increased relative to those of the already existing regional councils, created in 1970 and 1974. In 1971 the Cultural Councils were given the
right to issue decrees (laws) and in 1980 this right was extended to the regional councils. The competence of the councils was also changed to give the Community Councils powers over 'matières personnalisables' (health, welfare policy including family planning and public health provision) as well as cultural matters. The regional councils were confined more to economic affairs. Similarly the financial autonomy of the councils was increased compared to the 1970 and 1974 system. Rights were conceded to levy taxes and raise loans. Another development beyond the old regional councils was the provision for the election (at first on a proportional basis among the parties) of a regional executive for each council. All these were also features of the Egmont proposals.

Given the similarity of the 1980 measures to the Egmont proposals in many areas it is necessary to pose the same questions about them as those raised about the earlier plans. Do they really constitute a relaxation of central control and are they a stage towards a new federal Belgium? The most important area where the central government will maintain its dominance is in the financial and budget arrangements. In the 1980 system funds for regional purposes are to come from rebates on taxes collected by the region for central government and also from specifically regional allocations from central government. The central government will still decide, however, the tax levels and the
amount to be rebated. It will also have the right to oversee how the allocations are spent. Regional funds are to be spent upon current expenditure leaving the central government responsible for capital expenditure in many areas. Regional financial autonomy will therefore be very limited. This central influence is further enhanced by the new arrangements for the provinces. The Egmont plans proposed to abolish the provinces and create new sub-regions but in 1980 the provinces were preserved and placed under the control of the regional councils which are to provide funds for current provincial expenditures. Funds for capital expenditures will, however, come from central government and thus be under its control. Thus, although the provinces become the responsibility of the regional council, they will also be largely under the influence of the centre.

The areas of competence allotted to the regional and community councils are very similar to those of Egmont: urban and rural planning, environmental matters, energy, housing, local and provincial administration, water management and regional economic policy for the regional councils and cultural matters and 'matières personnalisables' for the community councils. The power to make decrees applies to all of these areas. All are important but the central government preserves its control over foreign policy, defence, education, internal security and most significantly over the national economy and budget. Given the fact that less than 15% of the national budget was allocated to
regional purposes in 1981 the regions can be understood as very much of minor significance in overall Belgian public expenditure.

As with the Egmont proposals, the 1980 arrangements ensured that the regions would possess only the powers and competence defined in the legislation with all residual powers devolving to the central government. Again, similar to Egmont, arbitration arrangements were weighted in favour of the centre with the Council of State or Supreme Court of Appeals as only the first stage in such arbitration. The decisions of these bodies can be overridden by the national parliament, which ultimately means the national cabinet. As before, a Council of Arbitration was mentioned but not instituted as part of the new system.

It was suggested in the discussion of the Egmont proposals that the real power in the system would still have resided in the national parliament or more specifically in the Chamber. The Egmont Senate was to have no powers over the national budget and would therefore have been weaker than the lower house. It would however have been somewhat more independent of the national government because it was to have been an assembly made up of the members of the regional councils deriving their mandate from the direct elections to those councils. They would therefore have been regional council members first.
and national senators second. The fixed terms for the regional councils and thus for the new Senate would have made the second chamber more distinct from the first. The emphasis upon regional representation in the second chamber would have thus perhaps have counterbalanced the national power of the lower house. The 1980 arrangements, however, envisage the members of the regional councils, even in phase three when they are the elected senators only, as elected firstly to the national parliament. They will, therefore, be national senators with a regional function or interest. This is a centralist element in the 1980 system which distinguishes it from the Egmont proposals.

In 1980, as in 1977, there was no serious examination of the question of the division of powers in the new system. There was no attempt to set up an independent Constitutional Supreme Court. The executive remains firmly based on the lower or 'national' chamber. Even if the Senate were to develop a regional or group representative function, the fact that the cabinet and government are based in the unitary national chamber would mean that the dominance of the centre was preserved. The Senate, the chamber which might represent the groups or parts of the nation, is weaker than the Chamber which represents the whole nation.

The conclusion was suggested above that the Egmont proposals were not the blueprint for a federal system but rather
for a more developed form of devolution of limited and specified powers to the regions. The 1980 arrangements are less federal than Egmont and more a development of the regional system set up in 1970 and 1974. All the same reservations about the federal nature of Egmont can be applied to 1980 with greater force, in view of the composition of the regional councils from the Senate rather than elected directly. The avoidance of the Brussels problem in 1980 also meant that the reforms could not be as complete as those envisaged in 1977. The new system could be regarded therefore as a further step in the policy of 'minimalism' in relation to the community problem. In 1971 the Reforms were seen as satisfactory from the point of view of Flemish cultural aspirations and Walloon and French-speakers' guarantees against minorisation. They were however inadequate as a solution to regional problems, especially to the problem of the Brussels region. The regional measures of 1970 and 1974 were defined as temporary, pending a full solution. Brussels always remained the most difficult dilemma. The Egmont proposals were an attempt to resolve all the questions but from the Flemish point of view they went too far. The 1980 arrangements were a step beyond 1970, 1971 and 1974 but a step back from Egmont.

Although after the reforms of 1970 and 1971 the community parties continued to expand, the regional measures of 1974 seemed to have begun a trend towards a new stability with the three
traditional parties generally holding their position in the system. In addition to this, the incorporation of the RW and later the VU and FDF into government coalitions appeared to have adverse electoral consequences for the RW and VU. In August 1980, when the three traditional groups took the matter into their hands and passed the reforms, they hoped that the trend would continue and further weaken the position of the RW and VU, leaving Brussels and the FDF as the remaining and isolated electoral problem area. It must be recalled that Brussels comprises less than 15% of the national electorate and therefore, were this strategy to be successful, the traditional parties would have achieved the objective of first halting the growth of the community parties after 1974 and then, after 1980, reducing them to the political fringe. In 1977 and 1978 the RW, for example, had begun a serious decline and in 1978 the VU had also shown a drop in support and had to suffer the embarrassment of seeing itself outmanoeuvred by the CVP and threatened by a new Flemish party, the Vlaamsche Blok. In 1970, 1971 and again in 1974 the traditional parties sought minimal measures to outmanoeuvre the traditional parties and pass limited reforms which would preserve the system as intact as possible. In 1980 they did the same. They passed reforms which would satisfy, they hoped, Flemish and Walloon aspirations for regional autonomy, whilst at the same time preserving central power intact. Brussels was ignored in this minimal package of reforms. Apart from resolving the problems of Flanders and Wallonia a further benefit could then flow from the
August 1980 measures. Having at last pacified the regional problem with the minimum weakening of the central authority of the state, the major parties could turn to the business of handling the national economy, the aspect of politics which by tradition was their normal territory. The resolution of economic problems would of course involve considerable inter-party competition and argument but this would make the return of normality to the system, restoring the dominance of the old cleavage patterns which cut across community. The measures of 1980 must be understood, therefore, as the minimum necessary to outmanoeuvre and, if possible, seriously weaken the appeal of the community parties, to satisfy the regional aspirations of 90% of the country and to re-establish the centrality of issues which should revive the old political allegiances.

Although minimal and not really federal, the reforms of 1980 did contain within them potential dangers of a similar nature to those implicit in the Egmont proposals. The most important was the possibility that the regional or community councils, particularly the former with their economic role, might provide a channel or arena for the expression of regional discontents to a much greater extent than previously. This could mean that, even in the national economic policy discussions, regional views would have a greater impact and thus make it more difficult to adopt clearcut policies. Given the fact that the councils will reflect the
political party balance in each respective region, there is a built-in danger of disagreement and conflict between a regional council of one complexion and a national government of another. In reality this means a conflict between a Socialist dominated Walloon council and a national centre-right (CVP/PSC and Liberal) government. Such a national government would derive its main support from Flanders. In this way regional versus national interests could also develop into conflict between the interests of Flanders and Wallonia. Thus national economic policy could become part of regional politics. A Socialist-CVP/PSC centre-left coalition would have less problems because the PS and CVP dominate the two regions respectively. The possibility of a Liberal-Socialist coalition such as the one in 1954-58 is now remote since the end of the relevance of the anti-clericalism which those two parties formerly shared. Their economic philosophies are too far apart. The new system might result therefore in centre-left coalitions being always more stable than those of the centre-right. Three-party coalitions would have a broad support and avoid the problem of regional representation but economic policy in such coalitions would be subject to considerable disagreement within the government. This means in effect that the new system may have an impact upon the possibilities of future coalition formation. The problem of reconciling the interests and representation of the various regions has always been part of Belgian politics but after the 1980 reforms, the reformed
system may increase this. In sum, therefore, as with the Egmont proposals, although the 1980 system is not federalist, it may contain within itself elements which will cause a drift in the Belgian system towards federalism. It is impossible to make a prediction about this. The new system could work in either of two ways: it could either reduce the intensity of the regional and community problem to such an extent as to see the reassertion of the dominance of the three traditional groups and normal and therefore unitary politics or it could be the stimulus for further fragmentation.

It was suggested in consideration of the Egmont proposals that the system would depend to a large extent upon the attitudes of the political leadership. A positive, cooperative attitude, prepared for accommodation and compromise, would have made it work whereas a negative or adversary approach would have exposed it to a wide range of crises and dangers difficult to resolve. It was suggested that the Egmont plan would have depended upon a permanent and constant willingness to compromise, almost an institutionalised consociationalism. Can the same comment be made about the 1980 system? To a broad extent the same conclusion suggests itself. The regional council leaders, in particular the executives, must be prepared to take into account not only their own interests but also those of the nation as a whole and the other regions. National leaders must also make themselves
aware (and will be made aware by the regional councils and executives) of regional interests. In the regional councils the promotion of regional interests may depend upon the presentation of united fronts to national governments which will mean accommodation and compromise on the part of the various groups represented. The members themselves will have to be prepared to adjust themselves to two roles, national in the Senate and regional in the councils. National politicians will have to take account not only of regional councils as a whole but also of the position of their own parties on the respective councils. This will be in addition to the problems of reconciling the views of the community wings of their own parties in the Chamber, now separate parties rather than wings of one party. All these challenges to political leadership point to the necessity of a consociational approach to make the system work. Acceptance by leaders of the necessity for compromise is, however, only part of the overall model of a consociational democracy. Whether the final post-1980 picture of the Belgian political system bears any resemblance to Lijphart's model will be discussed at a later stage.
Once the August 1980 reforms had been passed and community and regional problems removed from the centre of Belgian politics, at least for a while, it was urgently necessary to turn attention to the country's deteriorating economic position. In the period August 1980 to November 1981 (the elections) arguments about economic policy were at two levels. At the one level were the differences between the economic right, represented by the Liberals, and the left, represented by the Socialists, with the CVP and PSC occupying a middle position. On another level the economic arguments acquired a regional tone. During this period the largest group in the Chamber was the CVP, with 57 seats, followed by the PS with 32, the SP with 26, the PSC with 25, the PVV with 22, the PRL with 15 and the various other smaller groups including the community parties with 35 seats. The coalition of the six traditional groups (formerly the '3-parties') broke up in October with the resignation of the Liberals over disagreements about defence and economic policy. This was followed by a coalition of the CVP/PSC and Socialists under the same Prime Minister, Martens, which lasted until April 1981 when a new government was formed from the same groups under Eyskens. The first of these coalitions ran into serious difficulties over the winter of 1980-81. The PS members were unhappy about the government's attempts to change economic
policy in the direction of reducing the budget deficit by reductions in welfare expenditures. The proposed measures led to serious strikes in January 1981. As a result of these differences some PS members resigned from the government in the New Year, leading to the collapse of the coalition in March. The second (Eyskens) two-party coalition had to face the same issues with the same internal disagreements between the CVP/PSC and Socialists. The former wished to impose economic austerity measures (such as the end to the indexation of salaries) which were strongly opposed by the Socialists and Trade Unions. The crisis which caused the downfall of the government in the Autumn 1981 was the dissatisfaction of the PS with the lack of government support for the Walloon steel industry. This disagreement led to the resignation of Prime Minister Eyskens in September 1981 and the elections in November. The coalitions since October 1980 had been an unsatisfactory arrangement between parties with a range of almost incompatible views about the economy.

En fait, dès sa constitution, l'équipe ministérielle s'était trouvée paralysée par ses propres contradictions : de franches divisions opposaient les partenaires de la coalition : les dissensions surgies à l'occasion de l'examen du dossier de la sidérurgie wallonne lui donnant l'occasion - réelle ou feinte, peu importe - de se retirer.
The CVP was in favour of an austerity policy, supported by the PSC but opposed by the PS and SP. On the other hand the PSC and SP were in an ambivalent position over issues such as subsidies to the Walloon steel industry. The SP was not so enthusiastic as the PS in its support of subsidies to Wallonia which might adversely effect resources available for Flanders. The PSC on the other hand had to avoid appearing in Wallonia as the obedient client of the CVP in Flanders. The government was therefore beset by disagreements about broad economic strategy between the CVP/PSC and both groups of Socialists and disagreements and differences of emphasis based upon regional interests between the CVP and SP on one side and the PS and PSC on the other. The community problem of the 1960s and 1970s had perhaps been modified by the 1980 reforms from the cultural linguistic and institutional point of view but it was re-asserting itself in the problems of economic policies. Therefore, after 1980, politics might be returning to what had previously been 'normal' arguments about economics between right and left but normal policy arguments were themselves acquiring strong regional overtones. Whereas in the past the socio-economic cleavage, like the old confessional cleavage, had reinforced unity by uniting the nation around the three political philosophies, in the 1980s there was a growing danger that the community cleavage would prevent a real return to pre-1960s normal politics for all.
La crise politique qui prend souche dans l'État peut désormais porter des rameaux communautaires et régionaux ... Dans une société politique composée comme la Belgique, toute crise nouée au niveau national produit des effets secondaires qui affectent l'organisation ou l'action des collectivités particulières qui s'intègrent dans l'État.

It would be no exaggeration to see the 1981 period as another one of crisis, similar to 1968 and 1977-78. In this case, however, the cause was economic rather than community or regional. The national economy had been in difficulties over a number of years, especially since the international oil crisis of 1973-74. By 1981 the situation was reaching crisis proportions. In many ways the country had been living on borrowed time. The size of the public debt, for example, had risen from BF 833 billion in 1970 to BF 3,129 billion in late 1981. In comparative terms this amounted to 56.3% of Belgian GNP compared with a figure of 15.5% for West Germany, 22.8% for the U.K. and 28.1% for the U.S.A. Attempts to review the wage indexation system had run up against opposition from the Socialists and the Trade Unions but changes in this policy were beginning to appear urgent. The national budget deficit in 1981 was 11% which was twice the anticipated figure. In spite of these problems, wage rates in Belgium were the highest in the industrialised world. The unemployment rate, however, had risen steeply from 124,000 in 1974 to over 500,000 in 1981 (approximately 13%). 1980 also saw the country with a
record trade deficit of BF 210 billion which grew to BF 217 billion in 1981. An important contributory factor to this development was the cost of energy imports which rose over 50% in 1979-81. As a result of these problems Belgium was becoming less attractive to foreign investors. Foreign investment was an important part of the Belgian economy. In the 1960s 80% of new factories were built by overseas capital. By 1981 foreign firms accounted for one manufacturing job in three, 33% of the country's exports and 45% of the total industrial assets. In the early 1970s foreign investment created annually 6,000 jobs. By 1981 this latter figure had fallen to 500 with a particular decline in U.S. interest. Finally, in 1981, growth in the economy not only ceased but reached a figure of 0.5% negative growth in GNP. This was the economic setting for the 1981 election in November.

The economic problems outlined above also had regional implications. Unemployment, for example, was more severe in Wallonia but the area was particularly vulnerable to any further decline in the steel and engineering industries. In order to deal with this specifically Walloon problem special investment was required but this would have meant denial of investment elsewhere, which included, of course, Flanders. Each region guarded its share of public investment and support and the existence of regional councils offered a means of defending their interests. As a result national governments in Brussels were finding
it difficult to reduce or stabilise public expenditure in spite of the growing crisis.

The 1981 election was therefore primarily about the economy and how to resolve the economic crisis. The regional element was also present. In the past Flemish aspirations were largely cultural and linguistic, whilst those of Wallonia were largely economic. Flanders in the 1960s began to prosper economically and there were national resources available to assist Wallonia to resolve its problems. There were of course disagreements about allocations and competition between the regions but this was not the central feature of the community problem from the Flemish point of view. In the 1960s the Flemish Movement was strongest when it concentrated upon linguistic and cultural issues. The argument about the establishment of the steel plant at Zelzate in Flanders in 1961 was economic but not necessarily typical of the traditional cultural interest of the Flemish Movement. In a growing and prosperous economy it is possible to go some way to satisfying the aspirations of all major groups to a greater or lesser degree. In a period of stagnating (or slightly declining) economic performance, arguments about the allocation of resources are bound to become more acute. In the Belgian case, the weakening state of the economy created a new and perhaps more dangerous development of the regional or community problem.
The parties entered the election with a variety of policies relating to the economic crisis but they can be broadly divided into three. The Liberals adopted a strongly monetarist position which included reviews of welfare expenditure, of wage indexation and of taxation. This policy was opposed by the Socialists. They opposed all cuts in public expenditure, advocated more public borrowing, higher contributions from employers and strong measures against tax evasion. The CVP and PSC adopted a middle or moderate position of making savings in public expenditure to allow for tax concessions to business to stimulate growth, balanced by measures to encourage a greater degree of worker participation. The VU position on the economy was close to that of the Liberals, whilst the FDF and RW tended towards the middle position of the CVP and PSC. In the election of 1981, therefore, the Belgian electorate was presented with a clear range of choice on the economy and these issues were the dominant theme of the campaign.

The issue of constitutional reforms or regional autonomy was regarded by the CVP, PSC, Liberals and also, significantly, by the Flemish Socialists as largely solved by the 1980 measures. The PS however made some sort of federalism part of its programme, even contemplating 'fédéralisme à trois'. The VU, RW and FDF also regarded the 1980 arrangements as inadequate. In this election, however, the community issue was not the dominant theme as it had been in the previous elections. In
Brussels, of course, the FDF strongly opposed the 1980 postpone-
ment of the resolution of the problems of the capital.

The elections were the first after the lowering of the
age of qualification for voting to 18 years. It was also the
first which would indirectly elect the regional councils.
Previous elections had elected the members of the Cultural
Councils of the 1971 Constitution but the 1981 elections were to
be the first which would provide deputies and senators who would
make up the membership of the regional councils. There was the
added interest, therefore, of which parties would dominate these
councils and how power would be shared within them. In the
first phase the executives were to be elected on a proportional
basis but later the majoritarian principle would apply.

The results of the election were a major success for
the Liberals. Their strongly economic line appealed to a wide
range of voters. They increased their support nationally to
21.5% (from 16.4%) giving an increase in seats in the Chamber
from 37 to 52. The increase was equal in north and south -
the PVV growing from 10.4% to 12.9% and the PRL from 6% to
8.6%. The Liberal performance in 1981 is comparable to their
success in 1965 (21.6%) and better than any other result since
1919. The VU was also successful. It regained its pre-1978
position with an increase from 7% to 9.8% (14 seats to 20).
Some of these gains were probably a return of discontented
supporters who had voted for the Vlaamsche Blok in 1978. The
latter dropped from 1.4% to 1.1%. The PS and SP remained nearly
constant with 12.7% and 12.4% respectively, giving 61 seats in
the Chamber. The CVP was the main loser in 1981, falling from
26.1% to 19.3%, with its Walloon sister party, PSC, also dropping
from 10.1% to 7%. The CVP and PSC held therefore 61 seats in the
Chamber, the same number as the combined Socialists. The RW
continued its decline since 1974 and for the first time the FDF
showed a loss of support, in spite of the Brussels issue after
1980. The two parties fell between them from 7.1% to 4.2%,
giving them 2 and 6 seats in the Chamber where previously the
RW held 4 and the FDF 11. Small groups such as the Ecologists
with 4.8% and the anti-taxation UDRT with 2.7% were also
beginning to make an impact upon the system, taking 4 and 3 seats
respectively.\textsuperscript{9}

The three-party total (now 6 parties - CVP, PSC, SP,
PS, PVV and PRL) in 1981 was 73% compared to 79% in 1978 and the
community party share was 15.5% compared to 15.2%. The
representation of the three traditional groups was much closer
than previously: 26.4% for the CVP/PSC, 25.1% for the Socialists
and 21.5% for the Liberals. The seats in the new Chamber were
distributed in this way:
The figures in brackets are for 1978.

The 1981 election followed the pattern of the campaign - economic factors appeared to have greater importance than previously. The party with the most economic policy emphasis, the Liberals, showed the greatest gains. The parties which accepted the 1980 regional settlement (CVP, PSC, Liberals and SP) were supported by over 60% of the electorate and those which had expressed criticism of the settlement as part of their policies, except for the VU, had no success, the PS remaining constant and the FDF and RW dropping support. Of the three groups which passed the reforms, the CVP and PSC lost votes, the Socialists showed no change and the Liberals made gains. The electorate appeared to regard the economic policies of the parties as of more interest than pronouncing a judgement upon the reforms. The hope on the part of the traditional parties that the reforms
would initiate a return to normal politics was therefore partly fulfilled. Economic issues had replaced the community issue as the main focus of politics but the community parties had not disappeared. The three-party share had declined slightly. On the other hand the revival of support for the VU must be contrasted with the serious setback for the FDF and RW. The latter party had certainly by 1981 been reduced to the margins even of Walloon politics and, given the treatment of Brussels in 1980, the FDF appeared to be losing some, even if only a little, of its appeal. It could have been expected to capitalise on the Brussels issue.

After the elections there were attempts to form a three-party government. With the great differences between the Socialists and Liberals on economic policy, however, a coalition including both would have been difficult. For a time it seemed that a long delay in forming a new government might have serious consequences for the prestige of national politics. The 1981 election had not only served to elect a new parliament but also from its members would form the regional councils established by the 1980 reforms. If there were to be another long delay of three months without a central government (as in January 1978), the new regional councils would possibly acquire more prestige and authority by contrast:
L'on souligne qu'un gouvernement démissionnaire depuis plus de 2 mois ne jouira pas d'un grand prestige face à des autorités communautaires et régionales qui peuvent se prévaloir d'une légitimité démocratique nouvelle et qui sont à même de mettre en œuvre des prérogatives de plein exercice. L'on relève aussi que les majorités distinctes peuvent se dégager, à l'issue de la crise, dans l'État, dans la communauté et dans la région, au risque de les voir s'affronter sur un ensemble de questions où, dans l'idéal, elles devraient plutôt collaborer.

A three-party coalition was desirable if the reforms of 1980 were to be completed. There were several outstanding problem areas left unresolved, especially those of Brussels and arbitration procedures. The formation of a two-party coalition would mean that it would be very difficult to obtain the required 2/3rds majority and therefore the formation of such a government would suggest that constitutional reform was not a major priority. In addition a three-party government, or a CVP/PSC-Socialist coalition would be more easily able to work with the new regional councils.

The membership of the councils was:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Flanders</th>
<th>French Community</th>
<th>Walloon Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>PS</td>
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<tr>
<td>PVV</td>
<td>PRL</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>PSC</td>
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<td>VU</td>
<td>FDP/RW</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td>184</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>106</td>
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The Flemish executive was made up of 4 CVP, 2 PVV, 2 SP and 1 VU. The French community executive was 2 PS and 1 PRL and the Walloon regional executive had 3 PS, 2 PRL and 1 PSC. On the Flemish council therefore the CVP did not have a majority on the executive (only 4 seats out of 9) whereas in Wallonia the PS held 3 of 6 executive seats and on the French community council executive they had a majority of 2 of 3 seats.

In spite of these possible problems, in December, a new coalition was formed of the CVP, PSC and the Liberals. This was a centre-right coalition. The programme of the new coalition was one of austerity, with welfare cuts to bring the budget more into balance, tax reductions for industry and a modification of salary indexation to hold down wage increases. The formation of the government and its programme could be justified in terms of the elections which showed the Belgian electorate trend to the right. On the other hand, although it could be argued that such a strong government was needed nationally, it could find itself faced anew with regional problems. It was a majority coalition in Flanders and among Dutch speakers but a minority government among French-speakers. The position with the PS in opposition but dominating both the French community council and the Walloon regional council was dangerous. These factors could become extremely important as the government pursued its austerity programme, which would have its greatest impact in Wallonia which was so much more dependent upon central assistance than Flanders. Thus the government's programme might have the
consequence of alienating Wallonia, weakening the position of the PSC and PRL (the French-speaking parties in the coalition) and provoking confrontation with the Walloon council dominated by the PS. On the other hand the national economic situation demanded strong measures of some kind. In a period of retrenchment and economies, a Flemish dominated right-wing coalition would not look favourably on Walloon demands for more subsidies. The regional and community problems, not a major issue in the elections of 1981, were set to re-assert themselves in a new economic form.

At the time of the formation of the new government the Prime Minister Martens maintained that the problems of the country were so urgent that he would be seeking special emergency powers to introduce economic reforms. Powers were granted by the Chamber on January 18th and the Senate on February 2nd 1982. Using the powers granted in this way the government introduced a series of changes on February 3rd. They were: a reduction of VAT on housing and construction work, the suspension of the transfer tax on housing and building land, tax concessions to employers who took on new labour, tax preferences for under 35s who started new businesses, a 15% discount on taxation for the self-employed who settled their tax accounts early and a reduction of VAT on the sale of gold and works of art. In addition to these immediate measures, an agreement was reached to support the Walloon steel
industry. Public expenditure cuts were promised and the question of the reform of the wage indexation system was placed on the agenda. All these measures were of an economic nature, although the agreement to support the Walloon steel industry had regional significance. The constitutional reforms of 1980 were not complete and therefore in theory the new government might have been expected to mention them in its programme. At this time two references occurred. Urgent consideration was to be given to the regionalisation of the administration parallel to the regional system of 1980, with the appropriate financial support. On the question of Brussels, the government declared its willingness to deal with the problem when called upon to do so by a parliamentary commission, to which the problem was referred.11 In short, the government showed no signs of the same sense of urgency about Brussels and other constitutional matters as it was doing about the economy. The election of November 1981 was primarily fought around economic issues and the new government saw its economic programme as central. Regional problems were present and possibly dangerous but they were no longer occupying the centre of the political argument.
At the beginning of this study, three questions were posed concerning the 20 year period in Belgian politics from 1961 to 1981. They were:

1. Did Belgian leaders attempt to follow the approach of the consociational model used in 1958 when they sought to manage and pacify the Community Crisis in the 1960s and 1970s?

2. If they did do so, how well did it work?

3. What is the nature of the Belgian system which has emerged after the 20 years of crisis?

In spite of the difficulties involved, it would be broadly correct to say that from 1964 (the Round Table) to 1977 (the Egmont Pact) Belgian political leaders did attempt to use an approach which resembles the consociational model in dealing with the community and regional problems which confronted them. The Round Table and the XXVII group (1969) included all political parties and the dialogue leading to the Egmont Pact included all parties except the Liberals. This was irrespective of whether those parties were part of the governing coalition. In 1980 the reforms passed by the three-party government of the traditional parties can also be included in this category for, although the community parties were excluded, the measures were the result of a grand coalition which lasted for only a few months to enable the reforms to be passed.
Throughout the period, the approach adopted was also characterised by many other features associated with the consociational model apart from the emphasis upon consensus. The leaders attempted to set the discussions apart as far as possible from competitive politics. Competitive politics invaded the discussions too often but certainly in 1964, 1969 and again in 1977 the conferences and meetings to achieve accommodations and compromise were designed to be separate from the normal competition of party politics. The participants were the leaders (often the presidents) of the respective parties who worked out proposals between them which were later handed down for approval by their followers. These characteristics are very close to the approach of the consociational model.

In spite of difficulties, Belgian political leaders attempted to use the consociational approach to resolve the crisis. It is interesting to contrast their tactics with those in the United Kingdom at the same time. In the 1970s the issue of regionalism became a problem with the rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism. The devolution proposals of the time would have been categorised in Belgium as constitutional measures. In the British case the political parties were forced by circumstances to adopt regional policies. At no time, however, was the issue taken outside normal politics to find a consensus between the main parties. The government of the day produced its own measures and did not consider an all-party conference to find a
common policy on the Constitution. The whole matter remained part of the tradition of adversary politics. The government experienced the same problem of defection of some of its supporters, as that experienced in Belgium. The British approach may be compared to that in Belgium where, in spite of difficulties, it was always assumed that a satisfactory solution to the constitutional reform problem could only be based upon a broad consensus. The 2/3rds majority provisions made this more necessary, of course, but nevertheless the difference between the two countries at this time suggests that the consociational model does have relevance to the attempts to manage the regional problem in Belgium.\(^\text{12}\)

If it is accepted that, during this period, Belgian political leaders did attempt to use the consociational approach to resolve the Community Crisis, then it could be seen that it did not prove very successful. The crisis began early in the 1960s, caused the downfall of a government in 1968 and yet even in 1980 the solution was only partial, leaving serious unresolved difficulties. By contrast, in 1958, the resolution of the Schools Crisis, which had become very acute by 1954-58, was swift and complete. Why was there so much difficulty in applying the consociational method in the 1960s and 1970s?
There are several reasons why it was difficult for the politicians to apply the approach during this period. The crisis was much more complicated than that of 1958. It had many diverse elements and it was also a crisis of the whole system. The problem of secular versus religious interests in education was dangerous but it was a difficulty within the existing constitutional system whereas the problems of community and region involved constitutional and institutional reforms with possibly far reaching consequences for the Belgian state system. It was a mixture of problems of language, culture, economics and also of the impact of varying rates of development and decline within one country. Compromise was elusive over such a wide range of issues. Many positions adopted by the participants were inflexible and not always subject to rational resolution. Some of the problems, those of Brussels and its region, for example, included the dilemma of completely irreconcilable viewpoints. The breakdown of the supporter-leader relationship, the invasion of normal politics, the splitting of the segments along regional lines, the variation of the number of parties taking part in the discussions and finally the variations in the commitment of the leaders to the reform process – all are reasons for the difficulties in the period.

Although there were so many obstacles when attempts were made to use a consociational approach, it would be wrong,
however, to see the whole effort as a failure. Given the complications of the problems they faced, the reformers of 1971 and 1980 managed to go some way towards the pacification of the crisis. As a result, in the 1970s, the growth of the community parties was halted and, in the case of Wallonia, the RW ceased to offer a serious threat to the system. The VU were still strong but no longer growing as in the 1960s. Even in Brussels, where the FDF remained the strongest group, its further progress has been checked in spite of the unsatisfactory nature of the arrangements for the city in 1980. In spite of the difficulties, therefore, the Belgian state system has been reformed to allow for regional aspirations whilst at the same time its basic unity has been preserved. With the major reservation about the problems of Brussels, it could be said that the 20 year attempt to achieve reforms by some form of consensus has many achievements to its credit.

The aspect of the arrangements in 1980, and earlier, which can certainly be regarded as unsatisfactory is the question of Brussels. In the 1960s this was the area of discontent. The Egmont Plan did offer a solution which might have proved satisfactory to the Bruxellois but this collapsed. The 1980 arrangements left the city under the direct control of the national government.
The Brussels Problem was, however, nearly insoluble by any other means than the imposition of a regime by the national government. Compromise and accommodation could not work in the city, given irreconcilable positions adopted by the various groups. At the same time the problems of the capital were constantly an obstacle to the resolution of the problems of Flanders and Wallonia. The consociational method worked in relation to the problems of the country as a whole but could not work in relation to the capital. In this area it was a failure. In the Egmont Pact the interests of the Bruxellois (represented by the FDF in particular) were reconciled with those of the Flemings for a short time. In this case however the negotiators failed to carry the rest of their parties with them. The CVP deputies clearly refused to accept the proposals of the Pact. Their leaders were prepared to listen to them and so the compromise was lost.

The reforms introduced during the period and also the changes in the main parties as a result of the impact of the Community Crisis have had consequences on the nature of the Belgian system. The Belgian state has survived and it remains, in spite of the changes more unitary than devolved in terms of
the location of real political power. The continuing emphasis upon central as opposed to regional powers has been discussed in the context of the reforms of 1980 and the Egmont proposals above. Before 1961, Belgium was also characterised as a competitive system in which consociationalism was only applicable at times of crisis. The vigour of normal party rivalry, illustrated by the willingness of the CVP/PSC to form their own government in 1950 and push through much disputed educational policies, was an outstanding feature of the system. The nature of the pattern of the segments in Belgium also did not conform to the consociational model. The segments were strongly defined from a philosophical point of view. This enabled the consociational approach to work in 1958 when the crisis was one of philosophical differences on education. They were overlapping, however, from the point of view of community, language and region. This was an anomaly in any assertion of the possible fit of the consociational model to pre-1961 Belgium. The pivotal role of the CVP/PSC at the centre of socio-economic differences in the system was also a very important feature of traditional Belgian politics. This was a major factor for system stability. Belgium before 1961 was not a good example of the consociational model in times of normal politics. Consociationalism was abnormal in the system rather than normal. In normal times such an approach was unnecessary. Undoubtedly until 1961 the three traditional parties were the major factor in preserving system stability.
Whilst on the one hand Belgian politics can be characterised as competitive, it was also true before 1961 that the political leaders were accustomed to making a range of adjustments and accommodations in order to conduct competitive politics effectively. In order to maintain party unity across the communities and regions, they had to seek compromises among leading elements of the same party from other parts of the country. In the CVP/PSC, with its wide range of social groups which were part of the Catholic famille the leaders had to accommodate the aspirations and interests of different social strata. In order to take part in national competitive politics the leaders of each of the three traditional parties were accustomed to a good deal of intra-party negotiation between the different sub-groups in each famille respectively. The system also emphasised the role of the political leaders in forming coalition governments. They came to political arrangements through processes of bargaining among themselves to agree a common programme and shares of office. Government coalitions were formed as a result of a process of bargaining among leaders after elections rather than as a direct result of the elections themselves or pressure from below. These were features which do resemble the spirit of the consociational model where it is assumed that political leaders seek accommodations and compromise rather than confrontation. In the Belgian case, before 1961, and particularly in the 1950s, the leaders were willing to
compromise and accommodate but it was in order to go on to compete rather than to seek further good compromises. In 1954-58 the leaders of the Liberal and Socialist parties, very much opposed to socio-economic policies, were willing to cooperate to introduce measures which were vigourously opposed by the CVP/PSC. The willingness of Belgian leaders to seek compromises must not therefore be regarded as a sufficient condition for placing the system of normal politics before 1961 in the consociational category.

To what extent can the brief comments about the Belgian system before 1961 be applied in the 1980s? The most important change over the 20 year period has been an increase in the need for accommodation and compromise on the part of the political leaders. This has become even more important after 1980 than it was before 1961. It could be understood as an increase in the necessity for the adoption of approaches closer to the consociational model on a permanent basis rather than in times of crisis only. The system also has a much greater potential for instability and fragmentation than before.

The traditional parties, the most important factor for stability in the past, have changed. The effect of the Community Crisis was to split the traditional three parties into segments, creating six instead of three. The former intra-party compromises
over regional matters are now inter-party compromises between independent parties with the same economic and social philosophies. There is no great likelihood that one of the six would enter a coalition government without, or in opposition to, its sister party from the other region of the country. However, on economic policy, over which in the past, unlike community issues, their common philosophy dominated, new differences of emphasis may appear. The French-speaking Socialists, for example, whilst broadly agreeing with their Flemish brothers about economic policy, will seek to promote the economic interest of their own region. Unless the Belgian economy recovers in the 1980s this could develop into an area of major disagreement between the regions, each one seeking a share of declining or static resources. Should this happen the community and regional problem might reappear in a new economic form. The six parties with their regional bases may find their common loyalties to one socio-economic philosophy under greater strain than hitherto.

Each of the six parties which have evolved from the former three fits the consociational model better than was the case before 1961. Each has a unified philosophy and a unified linguistic and regional membership and pattern of support. The new six segments are more clearly defined than the old three, with their cross-cutting regional membership. That feature, which was an anomaly in the former attempts to fit Belgium to the consociational model, is now removed.
In addition to the change in the traditional parties, the new regional system set up in 1980 has created regional organs which will have to be accommodated. The 1980 measures have largely preserved the powers of central government but even so there is now a new factor in Belgian politics which was not present in 1961. The net result of the 20 years 1961-1980 has been therefore to increase the need for a willingness to seek accommodation. This increase has been minimised by the resistance of the traditional parties to too radical change, such as the installation of a fully federal system, but community and regional reforms have introduced new areas where accommodation is necessary. Even were the community parties to disappear completely, the new system of six parties based upon regions, operating in the context of a new set of regional institutions, demands a large measure of willingness to compromise.

The conclusion must be therefore that in Belgium in the 1980s the objective circumstances exist for a greater need for a consociational approach to politics than previously. It is worth recalling Lijphart's suggested conditions in a social system most likely to support such approaches. The first two were that the cleavage lines between the segments should be clearly defined and there should be a multiple balance of power between them. In both cases the Belgium of the 1980s offers a better fit than before 1961. The system now consists of six
more tightly defined segments instead of the former three.

None of the political parties representing the segments can aspire to win power independently as did the CVP/PSC in 1950. The third condition related to popular attitudes favourable to coalition government. Given the new balance of forces within the system, it is inconceivable that there should be anything other than a popular attitude favourable to coalition. To hold any other view would contradict the reality of the system as a whole, especially as it is based upon a proportional representation process, designed to reproduce the full spectrum of Belgian opinion. Two further conditions were the pressure from external threats and moderate nationalism. The first of these seems hardly relevant since the end of the dangers from Holland in the 1830s and the threat from Germany in 1914 and 1939. The possibility of Belgian nationalism is not a serious danger but virulent Flemish or Walloon nationalism could present problems. The reforms of 1971 and 1980 were designed to defuse this danger. The final condition was that the system should not have to carry too heavy a 'load'. Reservations were expressed earlier about the definition of 'low load' in a small country. It does have some relevance in the 1980s, however, for the burdens of a stagnating or perhaps declining economy could impose problems (or 'load') upon the system which could cause internal strains between the regions and between the regions and central government. Even allied parties, such as for example, the two
Socialist parties, would find economic issues more divisive than previously and thus compromise could prove more difficult than hitherto. Belgium in the 1980s therefore fulfils Lijphart's conditions to a greater extent than in the 1950s, especially with reference to the segmentation pattern and the extreme necessity for accommodation politics.

To the above set of conditions which operate at the national level must be added the new dimension of accommodation necessary between centre and region and perhaps region and region. Finally each region mirrors a similar three-party segmentation pattern to that which has always characterised the whole. In the regions the balance of power will be more distorted in favour of one party - the CVP in Flanders and the PS in Wallonia - but coalition and compromise will be necessary there too.

Compared to the period up to 1961, therefore, the Belgian political system of the 1980s has the potential to demand a greater degree of compromise than previously. Whether this can work will depend upon the subjective factor of elite attitudes which underlies the consociational model. Will the leaders of the political parties and the regional organs be prepared to take the objective factors described above into consideration? Again it is useful to recall Lijphart's
characterisation of the role and attitude of the elites in a consociational democracy. He offers four necessary conditions for the system to work: the elites must have the ability to recognize the dangers of adversary politics in their fragmented society, be committed to the maintenance of the system, be able to transcend cleavages at elite level and have the ability to forge solutions among themselves by consensus.

The inclination of Belgian politicians in the 1980s will be to pursue normal competitive politics as before. Their behaviour during the difficult 1961-81 period gives some insights into their approach to politics. As a broad generalisation it appears that the leaders of the traditional parties were motivated in four ways. Firstly they wished to preserve the position of their parties and the three-party ascendancy by outmanoeuvring and if possible removing any newcomers. They were prepared, reluctantly, to introduce constitutional reforms and even to admit the newcomers into the system of elite-level bargaining to achieve this end. Secondly, they were concerned with defending the interests of their regions even if this meant alienating some of their own partners in the other regions. Thirdly they were motivated by a desire to promote their own political philosophy and implement politics based upon those philosophies. Finally, and following from the above, they were interested in political power which implied a willingness to cooperate with others in coalition-
formation. Assuming that after 1980 the community parties become less of a danger to the traditional parties, the last three motivations are the most important. Although they will still wish to promote their regional interest, the fear of the impact of a regional newcomer should no longer prevent them from taking a broader view. Similarly a return to normal competitive politics without the need to divert attention to constitutional reforms should mean that Belgian politicians will be able to concentrate more upon building coalitions around socio-economic policies. In order to do this they will have the same problem as before 1961; they cannot build a successful coalition from the parties of one region only. The elections of 1981 and the subsequent government formation suggest that Belgian political leaders are still largely motivated by the quest for political power based upon a coalition built around a socio-economic policy programme. The facts of political life for any Belgian political leaders who seek power dictate, as before, that in competitive politics they must be prepared to cooperate with political leaders from other regions and to cooperate with political leaders from other political parties. A political leader unwilling to do this would exclude himself permanently from office.

The new regional structures after 1980 may reinforce centrifugal tendencies in Belgian politics. At the same time
there are two forces which may counter-balance this tendency. The first is the nature of the new system which, as suggested above, in reality still places great emphasis upon the powers of the centre. The second is the vested interest of the political leaders in preserving central powers. Given the fact that politicians who wish to carry out policies must seek maximum power to do so, it follows that they will still see national government as their main arena of operations. It seems likely that leaders will seek to resist centrifugal tendencies which will weaken their own authority. It will be a matter of enlightened self-interest to them, therefore, to seek to make any accommodations necessary in the new arrangements rather than adopt tactics which might wreck a system from which they benefit. This should mean that Belgian political leaders will be committed to making the new system work rather than allowing the existing centrifugal tendencies to destroy it. They will have to be prepared to make a range of necessary compromises to maintain some unity between the regional sections of each famille and party and also to prevent the system fragmenting along regional lines.

A drift towards any kind of federalism would probably be unattractive to national politicians who share national power. The unifying tendency may be reinforced by a new stability which may have returned to the Belgian electorate. There were signs of this development in the 1970s. The community parties have
levelled at approximately 15%-20% support and the six traditional parties (inheritors of the three-party tradition) at approximately 75%. The temptation for voters to desert the traditional parties because of a feeling that they might not fully represent the regional interest will be less as the traditional parties have become regional themselves. The CVP, SP and P W , for example, are now 'Flemish' parties and thus less vulnerable to claims of the VU to be the only really Flemish party in Flanders. Such a development may consolidate the new pattern of six segments and therefore enable leaders to make the necessary adjustments among themselves over regional issues, with less concern about the willingness of their supporters to follow them than was the case in the 1960s. This too, would give greater weight to the argument that the pre-conditions for consociational democracy may be stronger in the 1980s than before.

In spite of the many conditions in Belgium after 1980 which make the politics of accommodation or consociationalism more likely and more necessary, the 1981 election demonstrated the continuing vigour of the competitive element in the system. Socio-economic issues came to the fore and are likely to continue in the 1980s. Competition between the socio-economic left and right should have a unifying effect upon the system in the same paradoxical way as the old confessional conflicts united Catholics and the traditional left respectively across the community
boundaries. As previously, the pivotal role of the CVP and PSC in the centre of the left-right conflicts, will act as a force for stability and continuity.

There are, however, further dimensions to the economic problems in Belgium in the 1980s which may spoil the relative simplicity of straightforward left-right politics across the whole country. In a period of economic growth, economic conflicts need not necessarily become zero-sum games. Everyone can come away from the discussions with some benefits. Left or right policies can be adopted without the opposite side losing outright. All major interests can be satisfied to a certain degree even if never fully satisfied. Compromise is always possible. In a period of economic stagnation, however, arguments can become more bitter as the allocation of resources and the need for economies becomes a difficult and divisive issue. There is no danger to national unity in Belgium if this forms part of national politics. Problems can arise for national unity if the economic issues become zero-sum games with regional implications. Economies in public expenditure are likely, for example, to be felt more seriously in Wallonia than Brussels or Flanders. As the 1980s is likely to be a period of economic difficulty for Belgium it will be necessary for the political leaders to cope with this danger of a new form of inter-regional tension. This will demand a spirit of compromise and accommodation to prevent it getting out of hand. The growth of socio-economic politics in
the 1980s may therefore also mean a greater need for approaches characteristic of the consociational model.

In the 1981 elections, Belgium appeared to return completely to competitive politics. The campaigns were largely about socio-economic questions and the government formed afterwards based its programme on right-wing economic policies. This suggests that after many years of using consociationalism as a method of crisis management politics were about to return to normal. This would be similar to the return to normal after the Schools Pact of 1958. The 1961 election was fought over economic issues following the Loi Unique. The three main changes over the 20 year period described above make such a simple interpretation unsatisfactory. The splitting of the main parties and the consequent need for more inter-party negotiations, the institutional and constitutional changes which have created a range of regional powers to be accommodated and finally the dangers of a regional dimension to national economic problems - all these factors will demand a wider range of compromises than hitherto. The need for accommodation politics will be greater in the 1980s than before 1961. The role of the political leaders in achieving the compromises will be crucial. More pre-conditions for consociational democracy exist in the 1980s than in the 1950s. This does not mean that the system will inevitably conform ever more closely to the model. The competitive element in Belgian
politics is still very strong. Previously the system was a competitive one with consociational democracy used as a means of crisis management. In the 1980s it will still be a competitive system but the potential for permanent crisis is greater. The need for accommodation among political leaders committed to maintaining the system may be therefore much greater than before. In a letter addressed to the two chairmen of the regional executives set up after the 1981 elections, King Baudouin wrote:

Il importe que s’établisse, dès le début du fonctionnement autonome des exécutifs, une bonne concertation entre eux ainsi qu’avec le gouvernement national. Une coexistence harmonieuse et même une collaboration sincère sont dès à présent indispensables entre nos diverses institutions.

Later in a speech to the councils he also said:

Aucun État à structure de type fédéral ne peut fonctionner sans une conscience aigue des enjeux nationaux communs.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. The Statistics for the 1978 elections are from:
   Les élections législatives de 1978, C.H. de CRISP,
   Brussels No. 826/7 July 1979.


7. Ibid., p.143.


9. Statistics for 1981 elections from:
   Les élections législatives de 8 Nov.1981, C.H. de CRISP


11. Keesings Contemporary Archives, pp.31342 and 31343 (1982, and
    Delpérée, F., op.cit., pp.143-188.

12. In the U.K., the Royal Commission on the Constitution (Kilbrandon) in the early 1970s and the Referendum on devolution in Scotland and Wales in 1979 were both outside normal party politics but not examples of a quest for an all-party consensus of the type attempted in Belgium at this time.


APPENDICES

2. FDF election programme 1974.
LA CLARIFICATION NÉCESSAIRE

Après les tentatives de quelques-uns de faire dévier le R.W. dans des voies qui n’étaient pas les siennes, d’en faire un autre P.S.C. ou un autre P.L.P. une clarification doctrinale s’imposait.

En pleine légitimité, la direction du R.W., approuvée par l’écrasante majorité des membres du Bureau fédéral (le 10 novembre 1976) a pris la responsabilité de s’adresser à la base et de lui demander de procéder à un large débat interne dans les assemblées de sections, de cantons et d’arrondissements. Il fallait clarifier notre ligne politique.

Le 4 décembre 1976, 1200 délégués, réunis en congrès extraordinaire ont approuvé dans l’enthousiasme le coup de barre nécessaire.

Le R.W. doit :
— remobiliser;
— retourner aux sources;
— tracé de nouvelles perspectives.

Nous voulons ainsi rendre de nouvelles raisons d’espérer aux Wallons. En démontrant que nous sommes fédéralistes, pluralistes, progressistes).

L’AUTONOMIE WALLONNE ET LE FÉDÉRALISME SONT INDISPENSABLES AU SALUT DE LA WALLONIE

Pour la Wallonie, la revendication régionaliste et fédéraliste est plus actuelle que jamais.

L’établissement d’institutions politiques de type fédéral est nécessaire pour notre redressement économique, utile pour l’épanouissement de notre personnalité culturelle française, et indispensable pour notre sauvegarde en tant que peuple.

Donc, oui à un fédéralisme qui reconnaît et organise l’autonomie des deux communautés et des trois régions.

Pourquoi rougir du mot, ou de la chose? Surtout à l’heure où le mouvement flamand réaffirme avec force tous ses objectifs.

Notre exigence prioritaire reste donc l’application de l’article 107 quater, c’est-à-dire l’exécution d’une régionalisation définitive, durant cette législature. Et à cet égard, nous ne pourrions que dénoncer très durement toutes tentatives de temporisation.)

LA PAIX COMMUNAUTAIRE PASSE PAR UNE SOLIDARITÉ ACTIVE DE LA WALLONIE AVEC BRUXELLES, ET DU R.W. AVEC LE F.D.F.

Notre foi fédéraliste, nous la proclamons solidairement avec la région bruxelloise. Et avec son seul, son véritable défenseur, le F.D.F.

Depuis deux ans, dans bien des combats, et malgré les difficultés que cela représentait, la solidarité réciproque F.D.F.-R.W. a été maintenue.

Elle n’est pas un vain mot. D’ailleurs, elle effraie nos adversaires politiques. Pour les Wallons comme pour les Bruxellois, elle est vitale. C’est pourquoi les liens doivent encore se rassurer sur le plan des relations entre nos deux formations-sœurs.
Il est évident que dans le dialogue communautaire qui s’ouvre, le R.W. et le F.D.F. ne se distancieront pas.

Le R.W. doit refuser de s’associer, doit combattre tout éventuel accord boiteux que l’on tenterait de conclure entre le Wallonie et la Flandre contre la région bruxelloise.

IL EST TEMPS DE PRÉVOIR LA POLITIQUE ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE DU GOUVERNEMENT WALLON DE DEMAIN

Ainsi voulons-nous, l’autonomie régionale, voulons-nous faire la Wallonie.

Mais quelle Wallonie ?

Pas n’importe quelle Wallonie.

Poupons-nous accepter la poursuite du déclin wallon, poupons-nous accepter n’importe quelle organisation économique et sociale dans la région ? Poupons-nous attendre passivement, sans nous y préparer, le futur Gouvernement wallon, dont nous ne cessions de dire par ailleurs qu’il devrait se mettre en place très rapidement ?

Non. Ayons le courage de sortir d’un certain (flou) plus ou moins artistique. Proclamons à nouveau notre doctrine. Proposons un vaste plan de redressement pour la Wallonie.


L’initiative industrielle publique ne démarre guère. Les holdings privés n’indiquent pas leurs intentions ou leur volonté d’investir massivement chez nous. Notre épargne est sous-utilisée. Tout cela doit inciter à réfléchir et à réagir.

2) En toile de fond, il y a la crise économique générale en Europe. Elle s’ajoute aux vieilles difficultés wallonnes.

Depuis 1974, cette crise internationale a engendré une véritable rupture par rapport à une phase de progression économique quasiment ininterrompue et qui avait duré 25 ans.

— Il faudra consommer mieux et moins, en tout cas autrement.
— Il faudra produire autrement, avec une nouvelle stratégie industrielle, en partant davantage de notre matière grise que des matières premières importées du Tiers-Monde.
— Il faudra revoir les conditions du travail, de l’habitat, du transport de la vie en ville, de la promotion culturelle.
— Il faudra aussi qu’une Europe indépendante des blocs contribue à l’établissement d’un nouvel ordre économique mondial démocratique, fondé sur la volonté d’égalité et de progrès des peuples.

LE FÉDÉRALISME SOCIAL EST UNE DOCTRINE BIEN ADAPTÉE AUX ASPIRATIONS DES GENS ET DE NOTRE ÉPOQUE

Concentration des pouvoirs politiques, économiques, culturels.
Centralisation bureaucratique.

Voilà les maux profonds des sociétés modernes, tant à l’Est qu’à l’Ouest.

Pour réagir contre cela, nous disposons d’une riche base doctrinale : le fédéralisme intégral, ou mieux peut-être, le fédéralisme social. C’est la meilleure alternative à la concentration du pouvoir, à la déshumanisation croissante, à l’uniformisation.

Nous l’avons toujours dit. Il faut partager les pouvoirs ; il faut rendre les responsabilités aux gens, à la base, dans un maximum de domaines. Il faut lutter contre la facilité, contre la pente naturelle qui entraîne beaucoup de gens à abdiquer leurs responsabilités, à se laisser conduire comme des moutons.

Les prolongements économiques et sociaux du fédéralisme nous sont déjà bien connus. Dès notre Congrès de 1971, nous en avons décrit certains mécanismes lorsque nous réclamions l’autonomie de gestion pour des cellules de base (dans la Commune, dans l’enseignement, dans les hôpitaux) chaque fois que c’est possible et compatible avec l’efficacité de l’ensemble.

Cela visait la grande entreprise, et non les P.M.E. Cela reste vrai.

Faut-il avoir peur des mots ? Pour nous, gestion décentralisée, contrôle et redistribution du pouvoir, autogestion ne sont pas le (grand soir) que certains nous annoncent. Mais ils reviennent à rendre aux hommes le pouvoir qu’ils n’ont pas, à faire appel au sens des responsabilités plutôt qu’à tenir les gars pour des machines ou des exécutants aveugles.

C’est le contraire du collectivisme aveugle, de la bureaucratisation étatique. Ce n’est pas la suppression de la notion d’autorité.

Ce n’est pas non plus la négation de la notion de capital.

Dans tout système économique, celui-ci est nécessaire ; mais il faut le tenir pour ce qu’il est, à savoir pour un simple facteur de production, comme les matières premières. Comme tout facteur de production, il doit recevoir non un profit, mais une rémunération.

Le pouvoir absolu qu’il exerce sur l’entreprise, c’est-à-dire sur des hommes, ne se justifie pas. Il n’est qu’un élément et ne donne pas de droit divin à commander les hommes.

Il faut tendre progressivement à ce que l’essentiel du pouvoir soit exercé par ceux qui concourent à la production, par la communauté humaine qui par son travail fait tourner l’entreprise.

Quelle différence de nature il y a-t-il entre un cadre des A.C.E.C. licencié sur une décision prise par Westinghouse aux États-Unis et un travailleur de Siemens-Borinage licencié sur une décision prise par un conseil d’administration siégeant à Munich, alors que dans les deux cas le profit est jugé insuffisant ? Cadres et travailleurs constituent donc une même catégorie, même si certaines aspirations particulières des cadres ne peuvent être
méconnues. En un mot il y a une solidarité objective entre les uns et les autres.

Nous souhaitons que les travailleurs eux-mêmes puissent dire quelles étapes ils veulent franchir, et selon quelles modalités.

Quant à nous, comme parti politique, nous affirmons clairement le principe et l'objectif d'une redistribution du pouvoir dans l'entreprise, en vue d'une démocratie réelle et d'une efficacité humaine meilleure, non en vue d'une quelconque apocalypse.

Est-ce du gauchisme, est-ce de l'illusion lyrique que de croire qu'il est possible de créer une société plus généreuse en Wallonie ?

**LE R.W. EST ET RESTERA UN PARTI PLURALISTE**

Etant fédéralistes, nous sommes nécessairement pluralistes.

Le fédéralisme est une forme avancée de démocratie, car il permet l'association et la collaboration dans le respect des différences.

Le fédéralisme (qui organise la diversité) découle logiquement du pluralisme (qui reconnaît la diversité).

Nous sommes donc une formation pluraliste.

Notre pluralisme consiste essentiellement à associer croyants et non-croyants.

**PARTI PROGRESSISTE,**

**LE R.W. VEUT**

**LE PLEIN-EMPLOI EN WALLONIE,**

**GRÂCE À UN PLAN DE SALUT PUBLIC**

Nous sommes progressistes :

- parce que nous refusons aussi bien la fatalité du déclin wallon que la facilité de la croissance sauvage ;

- parce que nous voulons très concrètement un plan de salut public et de mobilisation en Wallonie.

- L'objectif de ce programme opérationnel de redressement de la Wallonie, c'est le plein-emploi dans un contexte nouveau de qualité de vie et de démocratisation des rapports sociaux.

- Les moyens ?

Essentiellement une nouvelle stratégie industrielle de modernisation et de diversification. Et aussi une mobilisation de toutes les ressources wallonnes, tant humaines que matérielles ou financières.

**UN PARTI D'ACTION WALLONNE RESTE ABSOLUMENT INDISPENSABLE !**

C'EST LE R.W.

Sans le R.W. et sa pression, où en serait la prise de conscience wallonne ? Sans le R.W., le mouvement flamand ne serait-il pas encore plus ambitieux et envahissant ?

Pour aller vers l'autonomie wallonne et pour mobiliser les wallons, le R.W., parti wallon, et le seul à être un parti exclusivement wallon, est indispensable.

L'essentiel aujourd'hui est que nous ayons la volonté de sauvegarder un parti d'action wallonne. Un parti wallon.

Il reste un long chemin à parcourir, et nous n'avons pas le droit de nous saborder comme voulaient le faire quelques uns chez nous.

Le R.W. n'est pas un parti circonstanciel. Qu'on se rassure, nous sommes bien vivants.

- Nous faisons appel à tous les démocrates wallons. Nous en appelons aussi à tous les jeunes de Wallonie qui cherchent
leur voie, et qui veulent réaliser en Wallonie une société plus ouverte, plus libre, plus généreuse.

- Nous sommes un rassemblement populaire de progrès.
- Nous rejetons tout autant le collectivisme bureaucratique et centralisateur que le centrisme conservateur. Ce centrisme qu'un auteur français a décrit comme «le point zéro de la politique», comme «le paradis mystérieux où croient s’accorder les contraires».

Le magma centriste des banquiers et des poujadistes du P.R.L. n’est qu’un brouillard artificiel. Il ne trompera pas les vrais Wallons. Libérateur, le mouvement wallon ne peut être ni conservateur, ni opportuniste.

UNE MAJORITÉ DE PROGRÈS DOIT SE CONSTITUER EN WALLONIE!

Que cette majorité soit l’expression des aspirations wallonnes.

Que s’y retrouvent tous ceux qui, dans la société, sont en état de solidarité objective, même s’ils l’ignorent encore.

C’est le cas des cadres et des travailleurs; c’est vrai également des travailleurs et des petits indépendants qui eux aussi sont victimes de décisions qui les écrasent, par exemple dans le cas des grandes surfaces.

- Nous tournant vers l’avenir, nous disons qu’il faut préparer l’action du futur Gouvernement wallon. A cet effet, nous disons que les forces de progrès de la Wallonie doivent se concerter, coordonner leurs efforts et élaborer un programme de réformes et de redressement de la Wallonie.

Que ceux qui parlent d’un rapprochement des progressistes se découvrent!

Qu’ils préparent ensemble cette majorité de progrès dont la Wallonie a besoin, majorité qui respecterait l’indépendance et l’originalité des parties contractantes.

C’est vrai aussi des travailleurs et des agriculteurs : ceux-ci ne sont-ils pas également des victimes des grandes firmes productrices d’engrais ou d’aliments pour bétail, qui ont été jusqu’à augmenter de 30 à 50% certains prix sans aucune réaction des Gouvernements?

Il est temps que les Wallons se remobilisent.

Il faut qu’ils se libèrent du statut mental et psychologique de peuple minoritaire, qui conduit à la servitude ou à la décadence.

La Wallonie a besoin d’autonomie comme de pain. Car il faut d’abord s’aider soi-même avant de prier le ciel.

Marcher sur ses propres jambes et compter au maximum sur ses propres forces, plutôt que de tendre systématiquement la main.

Nous y sommes condamnés si nous voulons retrouver la prospérité. Nous ne prêchons pas la facilité. Nous ne promettons aucun lendemain qui chante. Nous proposons seulement l’effort, la discipline, la confiance en soi-même.

En conclusion, ainsi que l’écrit Maurice OUVÉRGER, c’est que nous vivons dans un monde difficile et dur où la Terre Promise n’est jamais définitivement atteinte, où la liberté enfin conquise, l’égalité enfin obtenue, la fraternité enfin vécue, ne seront ni totales ni assurées, mais toujours partielles et toujours menacées. Voilà pourquoi il faudra toujours des combattants pour la liberté et pour la démocratie. Nous sommes de ceux-là.

Vive le R.W.! Vive la Wallonie!
Extract from 'Programme FDF pour les élections du 10 mars 1974'.

**LES RAISONS D'ÊTRE DU F.D.F.**

A Bruxelles chaque élection ramène le même enjeu : la nature du pouvoir appelé à s'exercer sur notre région et la fixation démocratique des limites de celle-ci. C'est dire qu'une fois de plus le F.O.P. est au centre de ce nouveau combat. Le gouvernement qui vient de s'effondrer rassemblait toutes les forces encore disponibles que le régime unitaire pouvait aligner pour assurer sa survie précaire.

Ce gouvernement s'est désagrégé sous l'effet de ses contradictions intimes et de son incapacité à étouffer l'expression des communautés de plus en plus conscientes de leur identité et de leur force, qui composent la Belgique d'aujourd'hui et entendent en façonner le destin.

Le gouvernement qui s'en va n'a rien réalisé, rien entrepris, rien projeté. Formé pour mener à bien la régionalisation, il n'a pu, en un an en établir le schéma législatif ; son action sociale est dérisoire, consistant tout au plus en quelques ajustements de revenus, vite mangés par l'inflation, au détriment des plus déshérités. Son action dans le domaine économique a été nulle.

Aujourd'hui, le parti socialiste moteur de cette coalition présidé par l'un de ses chefs, tente de masquer cette démonstration d'impuissance par un déploiement de démagogie sans précédent. Le parti qui depuis la libération, pratique la collaboration des classes à travers tous les organes d'une économie de collusions qu'il a lui-même contribuée à mettre en place, se lance aujourd'hui dans un gauchisme de circonstance invoquant les impératifs d'une politique de l'énergie qu'il s'est avéré bien incapable de formuler et de concrétiser durant ses nombreux passages au pouvoir. Le P.S.B. a trébuché sur un mauvais dossier, celui d'Iframco, mal étudié, négocié dans le secret avec un partenaire réticent, bouleversé dans ses données par la crise d'octobre. Son économie ruinée par l'abolition de la
distinction entre les prix affichés et les prix du marché, sur laquelle il reposait, le projet Ibramco ne donnait aucune garantie quant à la quantité des approvisionnements ni quant à la sécurité des prix et des livraisons. À l'autopsie il apparaît comme une machine de guerre du profitariat socialiste acquisé aux intérêts béluxiens refusant de diversifier nos sources d'approvisionnement à partir notamment de la France.

Cette faillite conduit Bruxelles et la Wallonie à exiger pour eux le pouvoir de négocier en leur nom propre une politique pétrolière adaptée à leurs besoins.

La participation du secteur public à une telle entreprise nous paraît souhaitable mais à la condition que l'interlocuteur public soit désormais la région et non l'État central.

Le Gouvernement s'en est allé sur un lourd malaise lié à la découverte par l'opinion publique de pratiques malsaines dans l'administration et de louches collusions entre celle-ci et une fraction du monde politique.

De telles mœurs, illustrées par le scandale de la R.T.T., accompagnent généralement, autant qu'elles l'expliquent et la provoquent, la décadence d'un système politique.

Une Administration qui n'obéit plus à un pouvoir fort, cohérent dans ses directives et ferme dans leur application, se démoralise et incline à prêter la main aux combines de gens pour qui la politique n'est plus que l'instrument de la réussite personnelle.

S'il est urgent d'assainir des pratiques telles que la conclusion des marchés publics par l'État et les parastataux, il est non moins urgent de redonner au pouvoir politique la clarté de ses desseins et la fermeté nécessaire pour les traduire.

Ce renouveau ne peut venir que d'une transformation profonde de nos institutions.

Le fédéralisme ne consiste pas seulement à mieux refléter dans l'organisation du pouvoir la prise de conscience des communautés ; il a aussi pour mérite de rapprocher le pouvoir du citoyen, de permettre un contrôle accru des gouvernants associé à une impulsion plus forte donnée par les gouvernés.

Cette tâche est urgente. L'effritement de notre système politique conduit à la dépolitisation qui est un facteur d'anémie sociale et qui laisse le champ libre aux entreprises oudies dans le secret par quelques uns.
Le discrédit qui entoure les mœurs politiques risque de rejaillir sur toutes les tentatives faites pour y porter remède. Aucune force, aucun parti n’a intérêt à exploiter les faiblesses de notre système et tous ont le devoir pressant d’agir pour enrayer son déclin.

Quelles sont aujourd’hui les forces capables d’entreprendre le renouveau attendu ?

Le parti socialiste, vaste syndicat d’intérêts établis est trop lié aux abus qu’il dénonce occasionnellement pour en être le grand pourfendeur qu’il se prétend aujourd’hui.

Tout au plus préconise-t-il, ça et là, de substituer un capitalisme d’Etat alourdi d’une bureaucratie pesante, aux abus de puissance que peut commettre l’économie privée.

Le souci obsessionnel qu’il a de maintenir l’intégralité de ses forces fait de ce parti le défenseur sournois mais obstiné des structures unitaires.

Son projet de régionalisation conçu à la hâte en pleine bataille électorale est muet sur Bruxelles comme sur l’étendue des pouvoirs qui doivent être confiés aux régions. Rien dans ce parti ne nous garantit contre l’instauration d’une parité injuste pour la gestion de Bruxelles. On notera à cet égard que le P.S.B. prétendument "uni et fort" éclate une fois de plus dans la capitale en deux listes distinctes et antagonistes.

Mais cette fois c’est au tour du P.S.C. et du C.V.P. bruxellois de connaître les affres de la scission. Autrefois machine à faire élire des flamingants rabiques, le P.S.C. est à présent devenu le Parti Satellète Croupion de Messieurs Cools et Van Eynde. Hélas il faut bien constater que ce changement de vocation n’en fait pas plus qu’hier un défenseur des libertés bruxelloises.

La présence maintenue à la tête du P.S.C. dit francophone de Monsieur Vanden Boeynants suffit à en témoigner.

Le P.S.C. n’est plus qu’un conservatisme à la dérive, enclin chez certains de ses membres à se raccrocher aux vestiges d’un cléricalisme intolérant cependant que l’organisme politique qu’il constitue se fait le défenseur de l’unitarisme pour des motifs très semblables à ceux qui animent les hiérarques socialistes.

L’unitarisme est ainsi devenu dénominateur commun des hobereaux de province, des traficants d’influence et des barons syndicaux. Quant au
P.L.P., unitaire de Monsieur Van Audenhove, la demi retraite politique de son chef a la valeur d’un faire part de décès.

À Bruxelles il n’en reste plus que des débris que même un Delforge ou un Corbeau ne sont plus certains de ramasser.

Tant en Flandre qu’en Wallonie, le P.L.P. et le P.V.V. ont opté pour des formules politiques qui reconnaissent davantage qu’hier ta personnalité des régions sans cependant aller jusqu’à faire un choix fédéraliste clair ni oser se débarrasser d’un programme social suranné.

Pour ce qui le concerne, le F.D.F. a fait cartel à Bruxelles avec des hommes d’accord avec lui sur l’essentiel mais qui demeurent attachés à leur identité politique fondée sur une vision de la société qui leur est particulière. Ces hommes, dans les conditions difficiles parfois, ont donné la preuve de leur attachement aux libertés bruxelloises.

Dans une élection où ces dernières demeurent l’enjeu réel par delà le camouflage des ruses socialistes et des faux fuyants sociaux-chrétiens de cette alliance, loin de signifier l’érosion de notre idéal, est au contraire la condition de sa réalisation. Quelles que soient leurs conceptions philosophiques ou sociales, il n’y aura jamais assez de Bruxellois pour défendre ce qui aujourd’hui prime tout : les chances de survie de notre liberté et les fondements de notre prospérité future. Seul le sectarisme pourrait nous inciter à refuser le concours de ceux qui partagent nos vues sur ces aspects essentiels.

Une telle attitude aboutirait à renier toute notre action antérieure ; elle serait la négation de notre engagement fondamental.

Toutes les batailles livrées jusqu’ici ont étoffé nos rangs, élargi notre champ d’action, affiné notre doctrine.

La tâche cependant n’était guère aisée au départ pour un parti tel que le F.D.F. sorti tout armé d’un grand sursaut de colère. Comment faire déboucher une passion sur une politique, comment synthétiser les inspirations d’hommes et de femmes venus d’horizons si divers et qui ne semblent être unis que par un refus ? Dans la pratique, la nature très semblable de nos ennemis, tous conservateurs à leur manière, eut tôt fait de nous éclairer.

Nos adversaires étaient tous à la droite des formations politiques où ils faisaient mine de nous combattre en ordre dispersé pour mieux se liguer lorsque notre action frappait de plein fouet un intérêt qui leur était commun. Tous se sont fait les alliés objectifs du flamingantisme pour maintenir le
cadre unitaire d'une Belgique devenue la marâtre des francophones. Lut­tant contre un ennemi uniformément réactionnaire, le F.D.F. eut tôt fait, contre l'attente sarcastique de certains, de se forger les éléments d'une pensée politique consignant les aspirations de gens que leurs origines di­verses laissaient croire antagonistes à perpétuité.

Se dressant contre la mise en coupe réglée de l'État par la camarilla tripartite, se portant en avant de toutes les libertés menacées, soucieux de promouvoir le projet d'un État reconciliant la liberté de ses communautés avec l'efficacité de ses propres réductions, le F.D.F. était mûr pour exercer un pouvoir qu'il avait d'abord occupé au titre d'une action de sauvegarde.

Aujourd'hui, notre champ de bataille s'est considérablement élargi. Il ne s'agit plus seulement de défendre les intérêts linguistiques et culturels de notre communauté mais de lui rendre sa place dans une Belgique rénovée, d'en faire l'arbitre de son propre destin dans une démocratie transformée.

Pour cela nous avons choisi de livrer bataille à une particration corrom­pue pour restaurer une vie politique transparente, intègre, efficace.

Nous décrétions la fin du règne des idéologies et nous nous opposons à la prétention dogmatique qu'entretiennent les vestales défranchisées des partis traditionnels à tout expliquer par des concepts généraux et absolus qui ne servent plus qu'à masquer leur impérilie dans la gestion concrète et quotidienne de la cité.

Nous prenons pour postulat que la société où nous vivons est celle où les individus réclament le respect de leur autonomie personnelle, entendent s'associer sur des obj'ectifs précis et croient en des partis politiques assez sensibles et pragmatiques tout à la fois pour répondre aux problèmes con­crets posés par le temps présent.

De tels partis se veulent pluralistes car ils ne croient plus que les divergences sur les fins dernières de l'homme et de la société justifient nécessairement des oppositions sur les remèdes à apporter aux difficultés réelles de la vie d'aujourd'hui. Trop souvent les oripeaux philosophiques ou doctrinaires qui ne servent plus qu'à perdurer des coalitions que ne justifient plus les réalités contemporaines.

A cet égard, le F.D.F. se présente comme un refus de l'embrigadement systématiquement organisé par des bureaucraties drapées dans le manteau d'idéologies périmées. Il se veut lui-même l'instrument d'une libération du citoyen à partir d'une conception nouvelle de la pratique politique.
Les modalités concrètes de cette démarche sont expliquées dans les chapitres qui suivent et qui traitent du renouvellement de la démocratie et de l'organisation du fédéralisme.

Comme on le voit, notre projet politique dépasse désormais la défense des intérêts d'une ville, voire d'une région. Cela ne veut pas dire cependant que le F.D.F. entende renoncer à ce qui fut sa raison d'être originelle : la défense de la région bruxelloise, victime des sévices politiques d'un régime qui a choisi d'en faire son souffre-douleur.

Dans ce domaine aussi, les objectifs politiques du F.D.F. se sont étendus à mesure de l'augmentation de ses forces et de son expérience de la pratique du pouvoir.

Qu'il s'agisse de la gestion des communes ou de l'agglomération les intérêts de notre ville étaient trop évidents dans les domaines de l'urbanisme, de la politique sociale, foncière, de la défense de l'environnement pour ne point nous dicter les réponses inspirées par le bon sens et l'équité dont notre parti entend bien qu'elle s'exercent au bénéfice de tous les bruxellois quelles que soient leur langue et leur conviction.

La tâche n'était guère aisée car nous n'occupions jusqu'ici que des pouvoirs subordonnés, sinon subalternes, où l'adversaire pouvait sans peine nous faire subir tout le poids de tutelles administratives, abusives et discriminatoires.

Aujourd'hui ce même adversaire, encore maître des décisions constitutionnelles et législatives, hésite sur le mode d'organisation du pouvoir bruxellois. Va-t-il le confier à l'agglomération ? Le composera-t-il des élus parlementaires des 19 communes ou des conseillers provinciaux qui y sont domiciliés ? Le régime unitaire balance encore dans ses choix. Dès lors, seule notre victoire totale sur tous les plans où l'on projette de nous nuire permettra de retourner contre leurs auteurs les complots qu'ils fomentent.

La force qu'il convient d'accumuler pour ce dernier combat doit être à la mesure de son enjeu. Nos progrès n'ont été rendus possibles que par l'étoffement tantôt lent et régulier, tantôt massif et soudain de nos rangs. A chaque fois ce gonflement de nos effectifs résultait de nouvelles prises de conscience. A chaque fois nos adversaires prédisaient l'éclatement de notre formation rendue de plus en plus hétéroclite, disaient-ils, par ces ralliements successifs. Mais à chaque fois, l'événement démentait ces prophéties intéressées.
Le programme, que ces quelques lignes servent à introduire, montrera que notre parti peut désormais assumer toutes les responsabilités de la politique, y compris, si les circonstances l'exigent, celles du Gouvernement.
CONCLUSIONS

Le programme du F.D.F. tient en 10 critiques fondamentales et 10 propositions prioritaires

CRITIQUES FONDAMENTALES

1) L'incapacité de l'État à mener une politique économique valable.

Imprévision devant la crise de l'énergie croissante, du déficit budgétaire, inorganisation de l'emploi des jeunes, étouffement économique de Bruxelles.

2) Le carcan

Limitation de la liberté linguistique et des possibilités d'emplois pour les Francophones aux seules 19 communes.

3) Le décret de Septembre

Celui-ci envoie en prison tous ceux qui parlent le français dans les entreprises de la périphérie bruxelloise.
Tous les Ministres du Gouvernement Leburton y compris Messieurs Vanden Boeynants et Cudell en sont responsables.

4) Sabotage de l'Agglomération et des communes bruxelloises.

5) Croissance déraisonnable des impôts directs qui augmentent de 20 % chaque année.

6) Inflation sans contrôle et hausse des prix particulièrement pénible pour les revenus modestes.

7) Injustice et gaspillage scolaire.
Absurdité du maintien des réseaux antagonistes dans les objectifs et complices dans l'art d'exploiter la Caisse de l'État.
8) La paralysie de l'Etat central:

Un gouvernement de 36 Ministres, cinq ou six fractions de partis en pleine décomposition, aucune perspective d'avenir, de multiples administrations inutiles se détruisant mutuellement.

9) Les victimes de cette incapacité sont principalement les salariés et appointés:
   - les ménagères ne suivent plus la hausse des prix;
   - les meilleurs investissements publics, comme le métro, sont sacrifiés.
   - on arrête les logements sociaux; les petits revenus, comme ceux des pensionnés supportent les conséquences désastreuses de l'impuissance de l'Etat.

10) L'impuissance des sections bruxelloises des partis dits nationaux

Tous les partis dits "nationaux" ont éclaté en deux ou trois morceaux.

Monsieur Vanden Boeynants prétendait en 1968 qu'il était indispensable de présenter une liste bilingue. En 1974, il renie tous ses propos et se présente à la tête d'une liste unilingue francophone. Sa seule présence disqualifie cette liste.

Monsieur Cudeli a d'excellentes relations publiques. Mais qu'a-t-il fait pour Bruxelles ?
Il n'y a plus de liste P.L.P. unitaire. Les Libéraux Bruxellois sont associés à la seule liste bruxelloise importante. Celle-ci fera 17 à 18 sièges, aucune liste à Bruxelles n'en fera plus de quatre.

DIX POINTS PRIORITAIRES DU PROGRAMME

1 Mettre fin à la particratie et à la corruption
   - Commission permanente d'enquête sur les marchés de l'Etat
   - Renforcement des pouvoirs de la Cour des Comptes sur les ministres et les administrations
   - Objectivité de l'information : nouveau statut de la R.T.B. ; impartialité dans l'aide à la presse.
- Participation des jeunes (18 ans) à la vie politique à tous les niveaux

Dépolitisation de l'Administration, de la Magistrature et du Corps enseignants.

2 Autonomie des trois régions et des deux communautés

- Egalité de pouvoirs et de responsabilité
- Fixation des limites des régions conformément à la volonté populaire
- Ressources financières propres
- Suppression du pouvoir de tutelle de l'Etat, et création d'une Cour constitutionnelle. Cette réforme des institutions est le préalable indispensable à une nouvelle politique économique et sociale, et culturelle
- Vote des jeunes à 18 ans
- Engager une vigoureuse politique de l'emploi pour réagir contre la généralisation du chômage notamment des jeunes.

3 Politique de redressement économique de la Région de Bruxelles.

- attirer des entreprises du secondaire et des entreprises de technologie avancée pour développer l'emploi et rendre effectif le droit au travail
- repenser les transports en commun
- par une régie foncière, relancer la construction de logements
- développer la qualification professionnelle
- adapter les charges fiscales, sociales et administratives des petites entreprises en fonction de leurs caractéristiques propres.

4 Suppression des discriminations à l'égard des femmes et nouvelle politique familiale
- Egalité effective quant à l'accès aux professions et aux fonctions et quant aux salaires
- renforcement des équipements en crèches et prégardiennes
- logements sociaux pour les familles
- information sur la contraception ; mettre fin aux avortements clandestins par la dépénalisation de l'avortement sous conditions médicales
- relèvement des allocations familiales et égalité des barèmes pour les indépendants et les salariés ; relèvement des réductions fiscales pour charge de famille

5 Une politique de l'énergie doit
- s'appuyer à la fois sur l'entreprise privée et sur l'entreprise publique, et coordonner en vue d'une diversification des sources d'énergie et des ports d'approvisionnement.
- dénoncer d'hypocrisie d'accords mal préparés qui subordonnent l'approvisionnement du pays aux fantaisies des dictateurs et mettre au pas les prétentions souvent excessives des sociétés pétrolières multinationales.

6 Suppression de toute discrimination linguistique
- Dans les administrations centrales, régionales, communales, les fonctionnaires francophones doivent être en nombre proportionnel à l'importance relative des groupes linguistiques à desservir.
- Décentralisation sur base régionale des grands parastataux (notamment de la Caisse d'Epargne)
- Dans les communes périphériques, non rattachées à Bruxelles, à la suite d'une consultation population et où existe une minorité francophone importante, régime des facilités.

7 Réforme des structures de la Sécurité sociale et des régimes fiscaux
1) Sécurité sociale
- participation des citoyens, des entreprises et du pouvoir régional
- réorganisation de l'organisation des soins de santé pension nationale de base
- maison de repos
- relèvement du minimum vital garanti et refonte de l'assistance publique en un service d'aide sociale
- tourisme social.

2) Régime fiscal

- en ce qui concerne la T.V.A. respect des engagement en ce qui concerne la détaxation des stocks et aménagement des taux
- en ce qui concerne les impôts sur le revenu, péréquation des exemptions en fonction de l'indice du coût de la vie.

3 Pour une Europe Unie

- Elaboration progressive d'une politique étrangère, militaire et monétaire propre à l'Europe entre les blocs et en faveur du Tiers Monde.
- Développement des institutions européennes à Bruxelles

9 Régler définitivement le problème scolaire

- en développant l'école pluraliste
- en supprimant toutes discriminations entre réseaux scolaires
- en décentrisme des réseaux scolaires pour que le pouvoir d'organisation appartienne aux groupes représentatifs des diverses familles intellectuelles et aux enseignants.

10 Faire triompher une liste bruxelloise unie, capable de grouper les 2/3 des votes de la région bruxelloise et d'envoyer au Parlement une représentation équivalente à peu près à celle du Rassemblement Wallon et capable en amitié avec le parti frère de constituer le Groupe Parlementaire de loin le plus important de la Communauté française de Belgique.

Ce groupe parlementaire, sera l'interlocuteur efficace de la communauté flamande. Grâce à lui, l'époque des capitulations sera terminée.
CRITIQUES ET OBJECTIFS

On a dit du F.D.F. qu'il était un petit parti sans avenir. Il devient au contraire une des deux colonnes indispensables de la communauté française du pays.

On a dit du F.D.F. qu'il n'était qu'un conglomérat hétéroclite. Il présente un programme moderne sur tous les points essentiels de la politique économique, sociale et culturelle. Ses idées sont plus précises et plus concrètes que celles des partis traditionnels dont le bavardage idéologique cache mal l'absence d'accords sur les problèmes concrets.

On a dit du F.D.F. que ses Membres, provenant de familles intellectuelles trop diverses, se disputeraient à la première occasion. La démonstration a été faite que les hommes loyaux sont capables de surmonter les préjugés liés à leur éducation respective et de trouver un commun dénominateur dont l'expression offre au moins le mérite de couronner un effort sincère de chacun vers une plus grande vérité. Les hommes se rejoignent toujours par ce qu'il y a de plus haut en eux. Ils ne se corrompent et ne tolèrent la corruption que dans la mesure où ils s'entendent seulement sur leurs pensées les plus basses. Le pays a besoin de forces nouvelles. Les listes du F.D.F. offrent la caractéristique d'être les plus largement ouvertes à la présence des femmes et à l'ascension immédiate des jeunes aux responsabilités politiques.

Son programme: renouvellement des idées et annonce du courage.

Idées nouvelles. Hommes intègres.
APPENDIX 3

Volkswagie publicity material for the 1977 election.

( translations of main topic headings)

VERKIEZINGS-
PROGRAMMA

1977

Election Programme for 1977
Self-government: a Flemish State.

**ZELFBESTUUR: EEN VLAAMSE STAAT**

Iedereen is het er nu wel over eens, dat de staatshervorming Eyskens-Tindemans in 1970 een mislukking was. Maar telkens wanneer het er op aan komt het slechte werk beter te herdoen, weigeren de traditionele partijen hun verantwoordelijkheid te nemen. Ze zwichten voor hun Franstalige vleugels (PSC en PRLW) of ondergaan gelaten het Waals-Brussels Diktat (PSB). Zo heeft nu ook weer de regering Tindemans belet, dat aan het volgend parlement grondwetgevende bevoegdheid wordt verleend.

Een volk kan zijn krachten enkel dan ten volle aanwenden, als het zich bevrijdt van iedere voogdij en afhankelijkheid. Het moet zijn eigen lot in handen nemen, ook en vooral op het politieke vlak. Zonder werkelijke hervordering van de politieke macht is de staatshervorming niet méér dan een soort administratieve decentralisatie.

Daarom stelt de Volksunie volgende klare en duidelijke oplossing voor:

1. **Federalisme met twee**, Two-part federalism.

*The Flemish State in a Belgian Federal State.*

De Vlaamse Staat in een Belgische Bondsstaat

De Vlaamse en de Franse natie werken samen in een federaal opgevatte bondsstaat. In het tweeledig federalisme heeft Brussel een afzonderlijk statuut. De duitstalige Belgen krijgen de beschikking over hun eigen lot. Binnen de Belgische bondsstaat krijgen de beide deelstaten een eigen wetgevende, rechterlijke en uitvoerende macht op zoveel mogelijk gebieden.

**EEN VLAAMSE STAAT**

A Flemish State would control:

- tewerkstelling en streekonomie; **employment & economy**;
- ontwikkelingshulp, buitenlandse handel; **development & trade**;
- ruimtelijke ordening, huisvesting; **housing**;
- sociale aangelegenheden, gezin; **social & health services**;
- landbouw en middenstand; **agriculture & self-employed**;
- openbare werken; **public works**;
- binnenlandse zaken en beheer van justitie; **internal affairs & justice**.

**EEN VLAAMSE STAAT**

A Flemish State would control its own finances

beheert zijn eigen centen, die hij verkrijgt uit de gesplitste belastingen. (Vlaanderen betaalt met zijn 6 miljoen mensen thans veel meer dan het terugkrijgt).

**EEN VLAAMSE STAAT** A Flemish State would completely & fully protect the Flemings in Brussels.

bescherm voor goed en volledig de Vlaamse Brusselaars: zij vallen onder de bevoegdheid van de Vlaamse deelstaat.
EEN VLAAMSE STAAT

A Flemish State would make faster and better decisions.

de Volksunie wil een eenvoudige moderne structuur met drie beslissingsvlakken: de gemeenten, de deelstaten en de bondsstaat. Er moet een einde gesteld worden aan de wirwar van instellingen, die o.m. ontstonden ten gevolge van de slechte grondwetherziening Eyskens-Tindemans in 1970.

2. Vlamingen volwaardige burgers in het Brussels stadsgewest

Flemings must be citizens with full rights in the Brussels region.

Brussel moet een stadsgewest worden, waar de Vlamingen als volwaardige burgers over alle rechten beschikken. De grenzen van het stadsgewest blijven wat ze zijn: de negentien gemeenten. De Vlaamse deelstaat moet bevorderd zijn voor alle persoonsgebonden aangelegenheden die de Brusselse Vlamingen aanbelangen: volksgezondheid, welzijnsbeleid, OCMW, jeugdzorg, ziekenhuizen, bejaardenzorg, onderwijs, cultuur, sport enz...

Voor de overige aangelegenheden worden de Brusselse Vlamingen op dezelfde voet gesteld met de Franssprekenden door parti-tiet in de uitvoerende macht en op alle vlakken van de stadsgewestelijke diensten.

Gesplitste lijsten voor de verkiezingen van de stadsraad maken, dat de Vlamingen behoorlijk vertegenwoordigd zijn. De Vlaamse Brusselaars zijn burgers van de deelstaat Vlaanderen, met de rechten en plichten van dien.

3. Vlaanderen in Europa en in de wereld

The position of Flanders in Europe and the World.

Vlaanderen kan een laeefbare en waardevolle deelstaat zijn in een Europa der volkeren. De verkiezingen voor het Europees parlement moeten gebeuren op grond van twee kiesdistrikten, een Vlaams en een Frans. De zetels moeten toegewezen worden volgens het aantal kiezers.

Op het cultureel vlak wil de Volksunie dat de samenwerking met Nederland verdiept en uitgebreid wordt. Vlaanderen moet in staat zijn internationale akkoorden af te sluiten, o.m. op het vlak van de kultuur en van de buitenlandseandel. Het moet bij de hulp aan landen van de derde wereld eigen inzichten kunnen ontwikkelen en verwezenlijken.

4. In afwachting: dringende Vlaamse eisen vandaag

The urgent problems of Flanders are awaiting decisions — today.

In afwachting van de uiteindelijke bevredigende staatshervorming wil de Volksunie dringend werk maken van de volgende eisen:

- oprichten van een provincie Vlaams-Brabant en splitsing van het kiesarrondissement Brussel;
- eigen verzorgingsinstellingen in Brussel en Vlaams-Brabant;
- volledige toepassing van de taalwetten, met onmiddellijke sancties bij overtreding;
- zo veel mogelijk splitsing van diensten en instellingen ta Brussel, o.m. de OCMW's;
- eentalige kandidatenlijsten bij de Brusselse agglomeratieverkiezingen;
- verdere voltooiing van de vervlaamsing van het bedrijfsleven;
- minstens 50 % van alle benoemingen, in alle graden van hoog tot laag, in alle openbare en parastatale instellingen;
- ontvetting van Brussel door splitsing en spreiding van overhiedsdiensten.

Het verlenen van zelfbestuur aan de gemeenschappen is de enige oplossing voor de voortdurende krisis die het politiek en maatschappelijk leven in ons land verlamt en verstart. De Volksunie wil dat de energie, die tientallen jaren is opgegaan in de eindeloze strijd om voor de hand liggend Vlaams recht, eindelijk kan worden aangewend voor de volledige ontlooping van alle Vlaamse arbeid, inzet en talent in een zelfstandig Vlaanderen en voor het veroveren van onze rechtmatige plaats in de rij van de Europese volkeren.
2. EEN MOEDIGE EKONOMISCHE POLITIEK

A courageous economic policy

Een stevige aanpak van de economische krisis en het bevorderen van de werkgelegenheid dienen de volgende jaren voorop te staan.

De neergaande economische bedrijvigheid is slechts één aspect van de krisis, die veel dieper grijpt en die de hele samenleving omvat.

Op langere termijn wil de Volksunie een herstel van het vertrouwen: vertrouwen in de opvatting dat het nog de moeite is om te werken, te ondernemen, te sparen. Dat zal uiteindelijk de doortastende aanpak vragen, waarvan de Volksunie reeds in september 1974 in haar moedig anti-inflatiepact heeft blijk gegeven. Onze beleidskeuzen, die zopas nog op ruime schaal werden bekend gemaakt, vatten we samen in volgende kernpunten.

1. Een streng anti-inflatiebeleid

A strong anti-inflation policy.

Een streng anti-inflatiebeleid is een wezenlijke voorwaarde voor het herstel van de economie en het tewerkstellingspeil.

Konkreet stelt de Volksunie voor:

a. Daar één van de belangrijkste oorzaken van de inflatie de groei van de overheidsuitgaven is, moet de stijging van deze uitgaven afgeremd worden.

b. Het is een dwingende noodzaak, de prijzen in de hand te houden. De beste prijzenbeheersing is deze, die voortspruit uit een waarachtige concurrentie. De overheid moet hier krachtig optreden door o.m. - het doorbreken van de monopolieposities - het ontmantelen van kartels - het verbieden van prijsetalpeproken of prijszettingen Een streng, maar realistische prijzenkontrole moet doorgevoerd worden. In overleg met de betrokken sektoren moeten maximum-winstmarges bij de verdeling opgelegd worden; economisch niet verantwoorde tussenschakels moeten ontmoedigd worden.

c. Kiezen voor loonbeheersing is in de huidige economische omstandigheden nog steeds te verantwoorden. Deze loonbeheersing moet echter uitgebreid worden tot een algemene inkomensbeheersing samen met de prijzenbeheersing, zodat geen eenzijdige offers gevraagd worden aan de loontrekenden.

Als tweede instrument voor een betere tewerkstelling wil de Volksunie:

2. Gezondmaking van de rijksfinanciën

A policy for restoring health to the nation's economy.

De rijksschuld heeft het plafond van 1.000 miljard doorboord en het tekort op de begroting van 1977 bedraagt thans 2.60 miljard.
Het is voor de Volksunie duidelijk, dat een eind moet gemaakt worden aan alle verspillende overheidsuitgaven en dat er orde moet gebracht in de wildgroei van de overheidsbestedingen. Bij verschillende departementen moeten besparingen worden doorgevoerd, met name bij:

- openbare werken (o.m. autowegen)
- ziekteverzekering
- landsverdediging

In het openbaar ambt moeten rationalisaties doorgevoerd worden, terwijl de kanker van de politieke benoemingen weggesneden moet worden.

Als derde instrument voor een tewerkstellingsbeleid wil de Volksunie:

3. Herstel van de concurrentiekracht van de ondernemingen

*For the restoration of competition among enterprises.*

Om de tewerkstelling te beveiligen en vooral om de tewerkstelling in de andere sectoren mogelijk te maken, moeten de ondernemingen opnieuw winstgevender worden. Door het herstel van het concurrentievermogen kunnen onze bedrijven terugmededen, waardoor een deel van de werkloosheid kan worden opgevangen.

Het herstel van het ondernemingsklimaat en van het vertrouwen in de economische heropleving zijn nodig om de investeringen-bereidheid aan te wakkeren. De overheid moet in haar economisch beleid een aantal zekerheidsfactoren inbouwen.

Daarom wil de Volksunie:

- belastingsverlaging voor venootschappen en kleine bedrijven (zoals dat gebeurt in West-Duitsland, de V.S. en Japan).
- vereenvoudiging van de steunmaatregelen en een oordeelkundige schifting bij het verlenen van overheids hulp, onder scherp toezicht van de gemeenschap.
- herziening van de economische expansiewetten en uitwerken van expansiewetten-op-maat voor de K.M.O.'s.
- herziening van de BTW-voeten in de zin van een verlaging.
- herstel van een gezond sociaal klimaat in de onderneming door een echte maar realistische demokratisering. In alle ondernemingen herstel van het vertrouwen door gewaarborgde open en volledige voorlichting. In de grotere ondernemingen het op gang brengen van het medebeheer van kapitaal en arbeid en het herwaarderen van de ondernemersfunktie en van de eigen plaats van de kaders.

Tenslotte wil de Volksunie

4. Een toekomstgericht industrieel beleid

*A wise industrial strategy for the future.*

Daar de bedrijfstakken met zware loonlast zich verplaatsen naar de landen waar de grondstof aanwezig is en de lonen laag, moeten wij ons richten op de spitssectoren. Dit zijn de sectoren met een hoge technische specialisatie, zoals computers, scheikunde, machinebouw, electronica, geneesmiddelen e.a. Dit veronderstelt gerichte overheidshulp en de nodige middelen voor wetenschappelijk speurwerk.
De omschakeling naar deze takken alsmede de andere voorgestelde maatregelen moeten - samen met een grondige wijziging van de mentaliteit bij de overheid en bij allen die aan het bedrijfsleven deelnemen - gezien worden op halflange termijn.

Op korte termijn wil de Volksunie inmiddels

5. Een dringend arbeidsprogramma voor de tewerkstelling op
50.000 nieuwe arbeidsplaatsen per jaar (tot 1980).

An urgent programme to create 50,000 new jobs per year. (to 1980)

Dit betekent konkret:

- voorrang voor steun aan de KMO's;
- het aanmoedigen van de vestiging van nieuwe zelfstandigen in alle bedrijfstakken;
- meer steun voor land- en tuinbouw en voor de visserij;
- het oprichten van leefbare overheidsbedrijven in nog niet eerder uitgebuilde bedrijfstakken, zoals de terugwinning van grondstoffen of scheikundige produkten;
- verhoogde inspanning voor de uitrusting van het sociaal vervoer en van de sociale onderbouw (kinderdagverblijven, kinderpeelpleinen, wijkcentra voor bejaarden enz.);
- een inspuiting in de sector van de gehandicaptenzorg, het sociaal werk, het socio-cultureel werk;
- doorgevoerde krachtinspanning bij de zorg voor het leefmilieu, het natuurbehoud, de stadsvernieuwing, het energiebeleid (bvb. steenkoolvergassing, de monumentenzorg e.a.

De financiële middelen hiervoor moeten galaavd worden door de resultaten van het economisch beleid, de sanering van de overheidsfinanciën en het herzien van sommige prioriteiten in de sociale sektor.

GEDAAN MET GEVEN EN TOEGEVEN
HAVE DONE WITH YIELDING AND MAKING CONCESSIONS

Een moedige economische politiek veronderstelt eveneens, dat wij ons voortaan afschermen tegen Waalse avonturen.

- Vlaanderen geeft veel meer uit dan wat het terugkrijgt.
  Op de pensioenmassa van 59 miljard (1972) geeft Vlaanderen 55% en krijgt het slechts 49,5% terug, wat op dat één jaar een verlies van ± 3,2 miljard betekent. In de sociale sector wordt er jaarlijks 8 miljard naar Wallonië overgeheveld. Wallonië betaalt 30,8% van de belastingen, maar krijgt 39% van de expansiekredieten.
- Voor elke twee miljard die te Zeebrugge besteed worden ontving Wallonië 1 miljard als compensatie. Voor de tot nog toe uitgekeerde 3 miljard compensatiekredieten vond Wallonië in veel gevallen zelfs geen bestemming. Desondanks werden nog zopas zonder compensatie voor Vlaanderen 9 miljard aan de Waalse staalnijverheid toegekend.
- Wallonië krijgt voor openbare werken praktisch evenveel als Vlaanderen (1975).

Jaarlijks worden miljarden naar Wallonië overgeheveld, terwijl de voor Vlaanderen levensnoodzakelijke havenverdragen door de Walen worden gesaboteerd.

IN EEN VLAAMSE STAAT

In a Flemish State Flemish money serves Flemish people
gaan Vlaamse centen naar Vlaamse mensen

Een moedige economische politiek veronderstelt een halt aan de Waals-Brusselse afpersing en een afscherming tegen de Waalse wispelturigheid.

De Volksunie wil dus

- stop aan de miljardenroof.
- Vlaamse centen in Vlaamse handen.
- eigen beslissingsorganen door splitsing van planbureau, NIM, NMKN enz..
- vestigingsplaats van de bedrijven op de voornaamste uitbatingszetel.
3. EEN GEDEURFD SOCIAAL BELEID

A BOLD SOCIAL POLICY.

Een gedurfd sociaal beleid moet steunen op de solidariteit van de sterken met de zwakken, waarbij de gemeenschap de verantwoordelijkheid draagt.

WIE KAN BETAALT, WIE HET NODIG HEEFT ONTVANGT

The Volksunie was the first party to propose a minimum wage. De Volksunie was dan ook de eerste partij die het gewaarborgd levensminimum voor iedereen voorstelde (in 1971, volgens de toenmalige raming begroot op 85.000 fr.).

De Volksunie wil in het bijzonder

- het optrekken van het minimum-inkomen en van het gewaarborgd minimum-inkomen; = minimum wage policy
- een gelijk basispensioen voor iedereen; het wegvallen van de grove ongelijkheid door omlaagtrekking van uitzinnige top-pensioenen; = pension policy
- de hervorming van de ziekteverzekering, met onder meer:
  a. federalisering van de Z.I.V., waardoor de in Vlaanderen geïnimeerde inkomsten in Vlaanderen zouden blijven;
  b. fiscaaliseren van de RMZ; = public health policy
  c. bijkomende voorzieningen voor de zware zieken;
  d. depoliticisering van de verzekeringsinstellingen;
  e. opstellen en uitvoeren van een meerjarig beleidsplan op het gebied van de gezondheidszorg in al haar aspecten.
- uitbouw van de sociale voorzieningen voor gehandicapten en bejaarden; = aid for handicapped.
- onmiddellijke gelijkschakeling van de sociale stelsels voor land- en tuinbouwers en voor zelfstandigen met die van de werknemers op het vlak van
  a. kinderbijslagen;
  b. ziekteverzekering;
  c. menswaardig pensioen; = social service provisions
  d. afschaffing van het onderzoek naar de bestaansmiddelen.
- arbeidsduurverkorting als sociale maatregel (o.m. vervroegde pensioenmogelijkheid) en als middel tot evenwichtige spreiding van de werkgelegenheid; = reduction of the working day to spread available work.
- aanvulling van de lijst der beroepsziekten;
- bij bedrijfsafsluiting: strenge voorwaarden op het sociaal vlak aan multinationalen; maatregelen om de gevolgen van bedrijfsafsluiting en de afvaloef te vangen. = control of multi-nationals.
- bescherming van de verbruiker o.m. door voorlichting, door verscherpte controle en door een sluitende waren- en etiketteringswet; = consumer protection policy
- herstel van de sindikale vrijheid; = restoration of full freedom of association.
- hulp aan de gezinnen door tussenkomst bij sparen en lenen en door belastingvrijdom voor pasgehuwden; = family assistance policy.
- kiesrecht op 18 jaar. = increase in voting rights to 18+

De Volksunie ziet een brede sociale planning als een nieuw instrument om te komen tot een werkelijke sociale rechtvaardigheid. Een der meest wezenlijke elementen daarin is dat de "gelijkheid van allen voor de wet" zich uitdrukt in gelijke levens- en ontlokkingskansen voor iedereen.
POLICIES FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND MUTUAL TOLERANCE.

De Volksunie wil dat de Vlaamse gemeenschap aan iedereen voldoende ontmoetingskansen biedt. Dit veronderstelt in de eerste plaats verdraagzaamheid en eerbied voor mekaar godsdiendige, levensbeschouwelijke of maatschappelijke opvattingen.

Daarom stelt de Volksunie voor:

1. **Gelijke kansen voor iedereen**
   
   *Equal opportunities for all.*
   
   Iedereen moet vrij zijn opvattingen kunnen uiten en beleven. Benadeling of diskriminatie omwille van die opvattingen moet uitgesloten worden.
   
   De eerbied voor de levensbeschouwelijke en wijsgerige verscheidenheid moet gewaarborgd vooral in het kultuurbel, het onderwijs en het welzijnsbeleid. De verzuiling en de verpolitiserings dient bestreden te worden.

2. **Een evenwichtig welzijnsbeleid**
   
   *A policy of equal welfare*
   
   In de snel groeiende takken van welzijnszorg en van sociale dienstverlening moet de samenwerking in pluralistische geest tussen de verschillende diensten en instellingen bevorderd worden.
   
   De Volksunie kiest voor een gezond evenwicht tussen de parti- kuliere en de openbare sektor. De kansen van de openbare sektor moeten veilig gesteld worden, zodat iedereen op gelijke wijze gebruik kan maken van de sociale voorzieningen. De voortschrijdende verzuiling in het welzijnswerk moet bestreden worden.

3. **De school van iedereen**
   
   *Schools for all.*
   
   De bizondere aandacht van de Volksunie gaat, zoals in het verleden, naar het onderwijs. Ze bepleit de volstrekte gelijkheid tussen scholen, onderwijzend personeel en inrichtende machten.
   
   Het bestaan zelf van de Nationale Schoolpaktkommissie biedt geen waarborg meer voor de eerbiediging van de beginselen en de geest van het schoolpakt. Staatszin en echte demokratie vereisen daarom een herwaardering van het parlementair beslissingsrecht terzake. De Volksunie wil een minder strikt partijgebonden overlegorgaan, dat de grote onderwijsvraagstukken slechts zou behandelen na een alarmprocedure in het Vlaamse parlement.

Bizondere aandacht moet gaan naar

a. het doelmatig maken van het scholenbestand, dat jarenlang ongebruikt werd uitgebreid. Deze doelmatigheid, die o.m. noodzakelijk is omwille van de te verwachten daling van het aantal leerlingen moet in overleg tot stand komen. De vrijgekomen schoolgebouwen moeten ter beschikking gesteld worden van de kulturele en sociale werking.
b. het vraagstuk van de toegang tot het hoger onderwijs en van de mogelijkheden die het biedt.

c. een ernstig tewerkstellingsbeleid in het onderwijs, o.m. door verlaging van de normen voor schoolbevolking en door inschakeling van part-time opvoeders in het lager onderwijs.

d. de onmiddellijke aanwendbaarheid van alle schoolgebouwenfondsen, om de materiële noodsituatie van talrijke scholen alsvast ten spoedigste te verhelpen.

De Volksunie wil de oprichting van een Opvoedkundig Instituut, verbonden aan het departement en werkend voor alle schoolnetten, om een bestendige beleidslijn te krijgen over de onbestendigheid van de steeds wisselende ministers heen. Er mag niet geraakt worden aan de normen voor de schoolbevolking, die tot stand kwamen voor het nederlandsstalig onderwijs te Brussel als compensatie voor de beruchte "liberté du père de famille".

4. Spreiding van de kultuur Expansion of cultural provision.

Meer dan in het jongste verleden moet het kultuurbeleid in Vlaanderen gericht zijn op kwaliteit. Daarbij moet echter uitgegaan worden van het recht van iedereen op voortdurende scholing.

- Een verfijning van de bepalingen van het kultuurpakt is noodzakelijk. Het kultuurpakt moet beantwoorden aan zijn wezenlijk opzet, nl. de bescherming van de levensbeschouwelijke en wijsgerige minderheden; de uitbouwing ervan tot een hefboom voor partijpolitieke macht en tot middel voor partijpolitieke benoemingen moet ongedaan gemaakt worden.

In ruim overleg moeten nieuwe regels opgesteld worden, die het recht van allen - en in de eerste plaats van kansarme enkelingen en groepen - op voorlichting, op meningsuiting, op vorming en op schappend werk in eigen kring of buurt bevliegen.

- Het nieuw omroepbestel moet een ongehinderde objectieve en volledige informatie waaronder en moet steunen op de eerlijke wil om alle strekkingen tot hun recht te laten komen.

5. Een gezonde omgeving A healthy environment.


Een globale groenstrategie voor Vlaanderen is hiervoor nodig. Daarin moet rekening gehouden worden met een betere ruimtelijke ordening, met een strikte grondbeleid dat de geordende sociale woningbouw in de hand werkt. De wetgeving op de lawaaihinder, op het gebruik van giftige stoffen moet verstrengd worden. De grootste omzichtigheid inzake kernenergie is geboden. Bescherming van grond- en oppervlaktegrondwater moet ons ook voor de toekomst zuiver drinkwater waaronder.
De reeds wetenschappelijk gestaafde mogelijkheid om Vlaanderen inzake drinkwater ongevoelig te maken voor Waalse afpersing moet in de praktijk worden gebracht. De Volksunie wil daarenboven, dat voor dit alles zo snel mogelijk Europese normen worden uitgewerkt.

5. **Verbondenheid met de wereld** *Co-operation with the rest of the world*

Vanuit de verdraagzaamheid wil de Volksunie een actieve verbondenheid met de levende krachten in de samenleving laten groeien, een passende vormgeving van de medemenselijkheid. Deze verbondenheid overschrijdt de grenzen van Vlaanderen.

De Volksunie wil een buitenlands beleid, gericht op
- varende kulturele integratie met Nederland, door het op elkaar afstemmen van het onderwijsbeleid en het kultuurbereid in beide landen;
- overal in de wereld eerbied voor de rechten van de mens; naleving van de akkoorden van Helsinki;
- geleidelijke afbouw van de grote militaire blokken door wederzijdse wapenvorm mindering;
- strak toezicht op de wapenhandel en de wapenproductie door nationalisatie;
- daadwerkelijke ontwikkelingssamenwerking, met erkenning van de eigenheid en het recht op sociale vooruitgang van de partners beiderzijds; een Vlaams aandeel, naar Vlaams inzichten, in de ontwikkelingssamenwerking door splitsing van ABGS.

6. **Rechtvaardigheid en verdraagzaamheid beginnen in eigen land:**

*amnestie* Justice and tolerance begins at home; amnesty should be granted after 35yrs.

Verdraagzaamheid betekent ook het omdraaien van een pijnlijke bledzijde uit ons verleden. Vrede en verstandhouding kunnen or slachts komen, wanneer na 35 jaar eindelijk de sponso gevaagd worden.
APPENDIX 4.

Slogans used in the 'March on Brussels' by the Flemish Movement in 1961

"Tegan verfransing en broodroof" -
'Against 'francisation' and the theft of bread'.

"Neen voor het centralisme" -
'No centralisation'.

"In Oost-Vlaanderen op 100 bazen, 84 fransprekendens" -
'In E. Flanders 84 Francophone bosses out of 100'.

"Geen Franse bazen in Vlaamse fabrieken" -
'No Francophone bosses in Flemish factories'.

"Soldaten : 67%, Vlamingen 33% Walen" -
'Soldiers : 67% Flemings, 33% Walloons'.

"Officieren : 35% Vlamingen, 65% Walen" -
'Officers : 35% Flemings, 65% Walloons'.

"Generaals : Vlamingen : nul" -
'Generals : Flemings : none'.

"Vlaamse officieren voor vlaamse soldaten" -
'Flemish officers for Flemish soldiers'.

"Tegen werklozen en lage lonen in Vlaanderen" -
'Against unemployment and low wages in Flanders'.

"Op 100 werklozen, 70 Vlamingen" -
'In every 100 unemployed - 70 are Flemings'.

"Weg met mobilitieit" -
'No more having to move to find work'.

"In 1960, 7,2 miljard voor Brussel en Wallonis : 62% 4.3. miljard voor Vlaanderen : 38%" -
'In 1960 7.2 milliard (62%) investment in Brussels and Wallonia and 4.3 milliard (38%) in Flanders'.

"Staal to Selzate";
'Steel industry to Zelzate' (from Wallonia to Ghent).

"E.3 weg : de bulldozers moeten rollen" -
'E.3 road : the bulldozers must start work'.
"Eerst de Kampen, dan de Borinage" -
'Develop the Kampen first then the Borinage'.

"Nevenbedrijven in Limburg" -
'Take secondary industries to Limburg'.

"Werk en welvaart in eigon streek" -
'Give us work and welfare in our own region'.

"Vastleggen van de taalgrensen van Brussel" -
'Fix the linguistic frontier and the Brussels region for good'.

"Gelijke kansen voor de Vlamingen in Brussel" -
'Equal chances for Flemings in Brussels'.

"Randgemeenten blijven Vlaams" -
'The Brussels periphery shall remain Flemish'.

"Tweeteligheid te Brussel" -
'Brussels must be bi-lingual'.

"1 Vlaming = 1 Waal" -
'1 Fleming = 1 Walloon'.

"Vlaamse school = school van de toekomst" -
'The Flemish school is the school for the future'.

"Eerbied voor de Vlaamse cultuur" -
'Respect Flemish culture'.

"Eerbied voor het Vlaamse grondgebied" -
'Respect Flemish territory'.

"Eerbied voorde Vlaamse mens" -
'Respect for Flemish Man'.

"Vlaamse school « school van de toekomst" -
'The Flemish school is the school for the future'.

"Eerbied voor de Vlaamse cultuur" -
'Respect Flemish culture'.

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'Respect Flemish culture'.

"Eerbied voor het Vlaamse grondgebied" -
'Respect Flemish territory'.

"Eerbied voorde Vlaamse mens" -
'Respect for Flemish Man'.
APPENDIX 5

Slogans used in the second 'March on Brussels' by the Flemish Movement in 1962

"Vlaamse macht" -  
'Flemish Power'.

"Vlaamse gemeenten : waakt en verenigt U!" -  
'Flemish communes awake and unite!'.

"De Regering moet woord houden : kulturele zelfstandigheid" -  
'The government must keep its word and create cultural autonomy'.

"Meesterschap in eigen huis" -  
'We must be master in our own house'.

"Vlaming zijn om Europeer to worden" -  
'We must be Flemings to be Europeans'.

"Waalse arbeiders wij marcheren niet tegen U" -  
'Walloon workers we are not marching against you'.

"Voor nieuw demokratische, sociaal en ekonomische structuren" -  
'We are for new democratic, social and economic structures'.

"Vlaamse arbeiderskinderen naar de universiteit" -  
'Flemish workers' children to the university'.

"Geen kastevoorrechten te Leuven tervelde van de universiteit" -  
'No special caste privileges at Louvain because of the university'.

"Volledige en snelle ontdubbling van de V.U.B." -  
'Change the Free University of Brussels quickly into two sections'.

APPENDIX 6

Some of the slogans used at the Antwerp demonstration in 1962

"Voor Grondige Politieke en Ekonomische Struktuurhervormingen" - 'For major fundamental political and economic reforms'.

"Decentralizatie van de rijksadministratie" - 'Decentralisation of the machinery of government'.

"Eigen Vlaamse beslissingsmacht op sociaal-ekonomisch gebied" - 'Autonomy of decision-making on social and economic matters'.

"Splitsing van de centrale administratie" - 'Divide the central administration'.

"Voor een Federaal Belgie in een Federaal Europa" - 'A Federal Belgium in a Federal Europe'.

"Voor ekonomsche demokratie" - 'For economic democracy'.

"De Vlaamse arbeider eist medezeggenschap in zijn onderneming" - 'The Flemish worker demands participation in his firm'.

"Vervlaamsing van het bedrijfsleven door medezeggenschap in de onderneming" - 'Make industry Flemish through participation in firms' decision-making'.

The evolution of the position of Flemish/Dutch from 1830 to 1930

1830-1898: French the only official language of the kingdom,  
1865: Flemish deputy from Flanders (Delaerts) took oath in Flemish on joining the Chamber of Deputies,  
1873: facilities in Flemish began to be available on demand in law courts in Flanders and the language began to be used for administrative purposes,  
1883: Flemish began to be used in primary education in Flanders,  
1888: extra 'merits' awarded to army officers with a knowledge of Flemish,  
1898: Flemish/Dutch became second and co-equal official language of the kingdom,  
1923: University of Ghent became bilingual and therefore higher education became available through the medium of Dutch and  
1930: University of Ghent became totally Dutch and unilingual.

The Language Laws of the 1930s.

The laws of 1932, 1935 and 1938 established the unilingual principle in Flanders and Wallonia and bilingualism in Brussels. The laws were:

Law of 26.6.1932 on the use of language in administration,  
Law of 14.7.1932 on the use of language in education,  
Law of 15.6.1935 on the use of language in legal matters and  
Law of 30.7.1938 on the use of language in the army.

The new laws clearly defined the linguistic frontier between Dutch and French. In the north (Flanders) the language of education and administration was to be Dutch only and in the south (Wallonia), French only. Only Brussels, the capital, was to be bilingual for these purposes. As there were problems of minorities in each zone, especially of groups of French-speakers in Flanders, around the capital in particular, the laws provided for the creation of facilities ('facilités') in education and administration in the minority language. The minority had to exceed 30% of the local population in order to qualify for this arrangement. The laws also allowed for a change from unilingual to bilingual status in a district where the majority language changed from one to the other. The application of these special arrangements was to be related to the results of a linguistic census which was taken alongside the normal national census.

Following the results of the national census of 1930 the
bilingual Brussels region comprised 16 communes. In 1947, following the first post-war census, the communes of Berchem-Ste-Agathe, Evere and Ganshoren were added as Dutch ceased to be the majority language. By the 1960s bilingual Brussels-Capital consisted, therefore, of 19 communes. In 1932, 4 communes on the edge of the city were granted facilités in French. They were: Kraainem, Drogenbos, Linkebeek and Wemmel. At that time Wezembeek-Oppem (with 29.97% French speakers or 0.03% short of the 30% required by law) was not placed in the category. Beyond the 19 communes of the capital and the 4 communes with facilités on the periphery all other areas surrounding the city were designated unilingual. The linguistic census was an important part of the system set up in the 1930s as it was the key to modifications in the linguistic status of border communes. In 1961 (24.7.61) the linguistic census was abolished as a result of pressure from the Flemish Movement in Flanders. It became necessary, therefore, to re-examine the language laws of the 1930s in the light of this development.

The Language Laws of 1963.

The measures which established the new system were:
Law of 13.7.1963 on the use of language in education,
Law of 2.8.1963 on the use of language in administration and
Law of 8.8.1963 on certain district boundary changes.

As a result of the laws some changes were made along the linguistic boundaries. The most important was the consolidation of the arrangements for the region of Brussels and its periphery. The inner zone of Brussels-Capital, consisting of the 19 communes quoted above, was to remain bilingual. The communes on the periphery which had special facilités in French were called the 'arrondissement spécial de Bruxelles'. They included the 4 already quoted above. Beyond the boundaries of these two zones all others were placed in the new arrondissement of Hal-Vilvorde which was designated as unilingual and Dutch. The arrangements of the 1930s with modifications after 1947 were thus consolidated and confirmed. Within Brussels-Capital the new laws further insisted that 25% of local government posts should be occupied by Dutch speakers and by the 1st. September 1973 50% of all senior posts so occupied also. A new post of Vice-Governor of Brabant was created with responsibility for the full application of the laws concerning language in the capital. In addition to this new post
observance of the new laws was to be checked by three other authorities: a permanent commission for linguistic matters with 5 Dutch-speakers, 5 French-speakers and 1 German-speaker under the chairmanship of a Dutch-speaker responsible for the laws throughout the country, the permanent under-secretary for civil service recruitment and an under-secretary from the Ministry of the Interior with special responsibility for language matters.

The 6 communes on the periphery of the capital (the 'arrondissement spécial') were named as: Kraainem, Drogenbos, Linkebeek and Wemmel, all designated in 1932 and Rhode St Genèse and Wezembeek-Oppem which were added in 1963. All the other communes in the whole of Brabant were either placed in the Dutch arrondissements of Hal-Vilvorde and Leuven or the French arrondissement of Nivelles. There were also minor adjustments of a similar type in areas along the language frontier. The most important of these (and highly controversial) was the transfer of the communes of Fourons/voeren from the French province of Liège to the Dutch province of Limburg against the wishes of the local inhabitants.

The new laws referred very specifically to the use of language in education. In Brussels-Capital (the only bilingual zone) the study of the second national language was made compulsory and teaching in the Dutch language in the city was to be expanded. This envisaged the opening of 10 new Dutch schools in the city per year for a decade. In the peripheral communes with facilités a French language primary school could be established at the request of a minimum of 16 heads of family. A child's native language was defined as that of his or her father. This was noted on the identity card and became his legal language for educational and administrative purposes. In order to deal with complications and disputes which might arise a special linguistic inspectorate was established. If a parent chose to have his children educated in a private school in a language other than his own legally recognized language the schooling was to be deemed unacceptable and homologation or recognition was to be denied to school-leaving diplomas gained.

The Language Laws of 1963 completed the 1930s picture of strict unilingualism in Flanders and Wallonia and bilingualism in Brussels only. The boundaries were strictly defined and fixed permanently. There was no provision as in 1932 for any further modification of the boundaries. Each citizen's linguistic status was firmly defined without any individual rights to change it.
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La Dernière Heure
La Wallonie
Demain
Wij
Pourquoi Pas?

Pays de Bruxelles
Interviews and direct contacts with representatives of political parties in Brussels

The following officials of their respective parties were consulted:

1977
- P. Bertrand (RW)
- C-E. Lagasse (FDF)
- F. Van der Elst (VU)
- F. Toonder (PVV)

1982
- C-M Hochet (PSG)
- J. Van der Brink (CVP)
- L. Schoofs (VU)

The headquarters made available a wide selection of party publicity material. The most important and useful were:

i) election programmes and propaganda for all the elections from 1974 to 1981,

ii) documents relating to party policy in general and comments upon issues of the day and,

iii) particularly useful in relation to the Brussels Problem, the propaganda journals of the VU and FDF - Wij and Les Dossiers FDF - for the 1977-81 period.

In addition to the above from the political parties the following research institutions also made available a selection of papers and documents on the Community Problem:

Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques (CRISP), Brussels and Institut belge d'information et de documentation (INBEL), Brussels.
The Belgian political system before 1961 depended for its stability primarily upon the three traditional parties which dominated it and transcended the cleavage between the Dutch and French speaking communities. In times of tension, such as the Schools Crisis of 1958, inter-party co-operation (or consociational democracy) was used as a means of crisis-management. The system was, therefore, one of competitive party politics in normal times and consociational techniques used to resolve exceptionally acute issues.

The Community Problem of the 1960s, arising out of the growth of strong community or regional movements and new political parties in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, assumed crisis proportions in 1968 when it caused the downfall of a government. The consociational approach was attempted as in 1958. It proved difficult because by 1968 the main parties were losing control of the political situation. Their traditional total dominance of the system was weakened and they were themselves splitting internally along community lines under pressure from the regional movements.

The efforts to reform the Constitution in the 1960s and again in the 1970s were an attempt to achieve a consensus to de-fuse the issues and manage the crisis. This was more difficult to achieve than in 1958 because of the complexity of the issues, many of which allowed no compromise where compromise was essential, the mixed motives of the various parties and their varying levels of enthusiasm for the reforms and finally the serious strains upon the unity of the traditional parties.

Reforms were passed in 1971 by all parties and in 1980 by the three traditional parties alone. The new system, in spite of its allowance for regional cultural and economic autonomy, remains still largely centralist. Post-1980 Belgium presents, however, many more areas where compromise and accommodation are more necessary than before 1961. The necessary pre-conditions for consociationalism as part of normal politics have increased. It is questionable, however, whether these pre-conditions will prove sufficient to transform the system into a consociational democracy on a more permanent basis.