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During the first year following Albert's fatal accident, it appeared that the late king's death had tipped the balance in favour of the defenders of the Franco-Belgian military treaty, to the disadvantage of the neutralists. On the day of King Albert's funeral, the Belgian Minister of Defence, Albert Devèze, a Francophone Liberal, began to negotiate an extension of the treaty with the French.

Devèze forced Leopold to dismiss General Prudent Nuyten, an adherent of General Galet, who had succeeded Galet as Chief of Staff of the Belgian army in January 1933. In his memoirs, written half a century later, Leopold wryly recalled: 'Devèze came to see me shortly after my accession to the throne. Bluntly he declared: 'I am sorry to disturb the King whilst he is still grieving for his father, but he shall have to choose between his defence minister and the chief of the general staff.'' Devèze threatened to bring the government down if Leopold did not dismiss Nuyten at once. The inexperienced king did not dare to risk the resignation of the cabinet. 'I was trapped. The highest military authority in the country was fired without being given a chance to defend himself.'[i]

But Leopold sought revenge. When in 1936 he felt at ease in his new role as king, he dismissed Devèze. In a speech on 14 October he publicly revoked the Franco-Belgian military treaty and announced Belgium's return to international neutrality. Unlike the neutral status that had been imposed on Belgium by the international powers until the First World War, this was a voluntary neutrality. For the first time in its history, Belgium had willingly and publicly disengaged itself from France; this was seen by many Francophones as treason. To these Belgicists, the King had become a… Flamingant!! 'This will have serious negative consequences for the institution of the monarchy,' the Walloon Socialist newspaper *Le Peuple* warned prophetically.

In Flanders, too, the King's policy was interpreted as an overture from the monarchy towards the Flemings. This impression was reinforced in 1938 when the Belgian army was divided into separate Dutch- and French-language regiments. For the first time since 1830, soldiers in Flanders received their orders in their own tongue. George Van Severen, a former MP of the *Frontists*, literally embraced the Belgian flag. He renounced his erstwhile separatist and democratic convictions and began a campaign for a new 'Burgundian Empire' – a greater Belgium, a bilingual state encompassing both the Netherlands and Northern France, with a Mussolini-style Fascist constitution and Leopold III at its helm. Van Severen's movement, however, never commanded a mass following. The Flemings were not keen on Fascism, or any ideology that made the individual subordinate to the state. 'There is no place in the Flemish-Nationalist Party for people who defend dictatorship and absolutism,' Staf De Clercq, the party leader said in his speech at the annual party conference in 1934. De Clercq's deputy,

Hendrik Elias, declared that the party rejected 'the racial policies, the *Kulturkampf* and the authoritarianism of the Hitler-regime.'[ii] The Flemish-Nationalist *De Schelde* remained one of Europe's most outspoken anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi newspapers in the early 1930s. On more than one occasion it devoted its entire front page editorial to 'Hitler's despicable anti-Semitism' and the racial theories of the Nazis whose 'scientific value is nil, nothing but philosophical balderdash.'[iii]

Nevertheless, the increase of Leopold's popularity in Flanders and its simultaneous decline in Wallonia, was obvious. It turned the pattern of royalism around completely. King Albert had been the hero of the Francophones, his son became the hero of the Flemings. Ironically, Leopold came to be seen as someone who had fundamentally rejected his father's policy, although he was actually continuing it.

Unfortunately, Leopold was vain. Unlike his father, who always *suggested* to politicians what they should do, Leopold *ordered* them to do what he wanted. King Albert would have been careful not to announce the renunciation of the Franco-Belgian military treaty himself, leaving that task to a politician or to a general who could be dropped later if things went wrong. Leopold desperately wanted to show that the new policy was *his* policy. He even became angry when the Socialist leader Hendrik De Man tried to cover him. When De Man claimed that he had forced Belgium's international neutrality upon the King, Leopold sent the politician a photograph of himself out fishing, with the handwritten message: 'The King trying to catch a big fish called neutrality, not knowing that it had been already caught by you.'

Though De Man was reprimanded for stating that neutralism had been his idea, rather than Leopold's, Leopold might not have been able to renounce the Franco-Belgian treaty without the support of the BWP leadership. It was fortunate for the King that the first year of his reign coincided with a change of leadership in the Belgian Workers' Party.

The change was caused by the illness of the old BWP *patron*, Emile Vandervelde. His deputy, who gradually became the party's new strongman, was a brilliant intellectual in his late forties. Hendrik De Man was born and raised in Antwerp as the grandson of the Flamingant poet Jan Van Beers. As a teenager he had experienced the anti-Belgian and anti-militarist climate in the town. In 1905, the 20-year old De Man left to study in Leipzig. There he joined the SPD, the powerful German Socialist Party. After the First World War, De Man emigrated to the United States, but he soon returned to Europe, dissatisfied with America's 'xenophobia and anti-Socialist witch hunts.'[iv] He settled in Germany, where he became Professor of Social Psychology at Frankfurt University. Soon he was one of the most prominent and influential ideologues of the European Social-Democrats. In May 1933, after the Nazis dismissed him from his Chair, De Man returned to Belgium where Vandervelde engaged him as head of the BWP think tank.

Barely six months later, in December 1933, De Man became the focal point of Belgian politics. He launched a constructivist scheme – the so-called *De Man Plan* – necessary, he claimed, to fight the high level of unemployment in Belgium. The Plan proposed the nationalisation of basic industries and

a centrally planned economy. The idea of fighting capitalism by strengthening executive power in an authoritarian system, was consistent with the *Zeitgeist*. 'Planism' attracted many ambitious young anti-parliamentarian intellectuals to the BWP. Soon De Man teamed up with one of these, Paul-Henri Spaak, a Brussels Francophone barrister, of whom the French author Alfred Fabre-Luce would later write: 'By looking at this weathercock, one can always tell which way the wind of Europe is blowing.'

Spaak came from a well-to-do artistic family of actors and politicians. His father was the director of the Brussels Opera, his mother a Liberal Senator and the sister of the Liberal Party leader Paul-Emile Janson. Spaak entered politics as a Communist revolutionary, 'delighted to lead rioting mobs.' He was still smashing windows as late as 1934, when he was already 35 years of age. The following year, however, Spaak, a chubby fellow with, as Count Capelle, remarked, 'the hands of a woman,' became De Man's partner. They formed a brilliant team. Spaak ably translated De Man's theories into appealing political slogans.

In 1936, De Man and Spaak proclaimed that 'national socialism' was the central concept of the BWP's programme. This *socialisme national*, said De Man, was 'a socialism that recognises *l'importance primordial du fait national*. The primordial importance of the fact that one constitutes a single nation.'[v] Of course, De Man, who had been expelled from Germany, had not become a Nazi. In fact, his 'national socialism' was merely a pun. Belgium, as an artificial nation, did not really exist as a Nation, and De Man knew this. The Belgian State was no more than the corporatist social welfare system run by the labour unions and other 'Social Partners.' Being a Belgian nationalist meant only that one was attached to the Belgian welfare state. 'What Spaak and I mean by national socialism is a socialism that attempts to achieve all that can be achieved within the national framework,' De Man explained in an interview in February 1937. He went on to state that the Belgian welfare system could – and should – eventually be replaced by a pan-European or even a global welfare system. 'I insist on being a good European, a good world citizen, as much as on being a good Belgian,' he said.[vi] He reckoned that if one had to live in an artificial welfare state, it would be better to live in one on as large a scale as possible. The Belgian model had to be applied at a European level.

Apart from being 'planists,' 'national socialists,' and 'Europeanists,' De Man and Spaak were also neutralists. De Man believed that Germany had been badly treated at Versailles. This made a new war almost inevitable, as became clear when Hitler's troops marched into the demilitarised Rhineland in March 1936. Like Leopold, De Man felt that Belgium – urgently – had to detach itself from its military alliance with France.

De Man's ideas also attracted the queen-mother. Elisabeth frequently invited the politician over. They became close friends. She confided to him that she always voted Socialist herself and encouraged her chamber maid to do so too. Elisabeth introduced De Man to her son, who appointed him as one of his personal councillors, not only in political matters but also in private, and even intimate, ones as well. De Man soon discovered that the thing mostly on the King's mind was sex. In his private memoirs Leopold's secretary, Count Robert Capelle wrote that his master was 'a weakling

concerning sex, with various passionate adventures.' According to De Man, he had '*une sexualité très développée*.' Other characteristics included his stubbornness and 'his capricious mood swings.'

In March 1935, Leopold installed a three-party Cabinet of Catholics, Socialists and Liberals, led by the technocrat Paul Van Zeeland, with De Man as Minister of Employment and Public Works, and Spaak as Minister of Transport. One year later, in a cabinet led by Spaak's uncle, Paul-Emile Janson, De Man became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Spaak Minister of Foreign Affairs. Leopold told Spaak that he was obliged to submit all important questions to him. Spaak was obedient. In May 1938, the grateful King made him Belgium's first Socialist Prime Minister ever.

De Man, who after Vandervelde's death became BWP President, did not return to the cabinet. His 'planism' had left the state with a deficit of 2 billion francs. Leopold suggested that his friend become his '*maître des plaisirs*,' helping him to find prostitutes while 'gallivanting in Paris.' Once it had dawned on the Socialist leader that the King wanted to involve him in these affairs, he carefully avoided 'encouraging conversations of this type.'[vii]

Apart from Brussels and Paris, Leopold's sexual escapades often brought him to Knokke, the new fashionable resort on the Flemish coast. In the early 1930s, Ostend was 'out,' and Knokke was 'in.' Knokke was a creation of Count Maurice Lippens, a former Governor-General of the Congo, who owned a huge tract of land in the dunes along the sea to the east of the old fishing village of Knokke. Lippens divided it into plots on which he built luxurious villas for fellow millionaires. In 1930, the shrewd Count donated one of his plots to Leopold. Once it was known that the King had a villa in Knokke, every member of the establishment wanted one as well. Leopold often went to his villa. It bordered on the golf course, where the handsome, sex-addicted King had ample occasion to meet willing women from the Belgian 'high society.' Knokke is, of course, a perfect name for a place to meet willing women.

In April 1930, nearly half a year before Baudouin, his first legitimate son, was born, Leopold became father of an illegitimate son, but there were also rumours of a daughter by a Swedish lady-in-waiting of the queen. Women, however, were not Leopold's only obsession; fast cars were another. Unfortunately, he was a bad driver. On 29 August 1935, the 29-year old Queen Astrid was killed in a car crash caused by her husband. While on a private vacation, Leopold's car crashed into an orchard near his Swiss home, the Villa Haslihorn on Lake Lucerne. The queen died instantly, her head smashed against a tree; the King suffered a broken rib.

The Belgian State and Church propaganda portrayed Leopold as a deeply religious, mourning widower with three young children. Cardinal Van Roey wrote a hagiography about the royal marriage. In one Catholic publication, King Leopold, who in a period of 18 months had lost both his father and his wife in tragic circumstances, was compared to Christ. He was, the publication said, 'a broken man, who by his immortal love was crowned for the second time, and with thorns, as King of his People.'[viii] To promote the message, the Church distributed post cards bearing a photograph of Leopold walking

behind Astrid's hearse and shouldering a large cross that had been added by trick-photography: this was Jesus carrying his cross on the way to Golgotha!

Meanwhile, the conflict between Leopold and his brother Charles deepened. The Count of Flanders, still unmarried, spent most of his time in Raversijde near Ostend. His friends called him 'the Prince of Darkness' because he lived mostly at night. According to his biographer, 'Charles drank enormous quantities of milk mixed with even more whiskey, which he consumed not by the glass but by the bottle.'[ix] In 1936, the Prince fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy Brussels pastry baker. When she became pregnant in 1938, he intended to marry her. As a member of the royal family, however, he needed the King's permission, but Leopold vetoed the marriage, arguing that he could not allow a baker's daughter to marry a prince. Charles never forgave his brother. He wanted nothing to do with the hypocrite again and struck up a friendship with another Saxe-Coburg outcast, Leopold II's son, Lucien, the Duke of Tervuren, who made a living as a travelling salesman of dental prostheses in the South of France.

25 A Work of Necessary Destruction

The second half of the 1930s saw a rapid succession of escalating conflicts between Leopold and his ministers. King Albert I had transformed Belgium into a corporatist regime where the powers running the state were politically unaccountable 'Social Partners,' like the trade unions. The agreement between the three major parties on this basic issue made Belgium, notwithstanding its ethnic division, a rather stable country, as Albert had intended it to be. Paradoxically, however, Belgium's governing cabinets were politically instable, because Albert had, again deliberately, imposed an electoral system that resulted in weak coalitions. The ministers, who had nothing to say about the fundamental social and economic issues that the Social Partners dealt with, quarrelled about everything else. In the six years between Leopold's accession in 1934 and Hitler's occupation of Belgium, there were no less than nine different Belgian governments and 22 cabinet crises. These crises all arose from obscure party manoeuvres and intrigues, often over the assignment of government contracts or the appointment of leading civil servants.

None of the inter-war governments was brought down in Parliament. In fact, even today, Belgian governments hardly ever fall as a result of a direct vote in Parliament. The electoral system introduced after the *Loppem coup* makes the individual deputies totally subservient to their party's ruling caucus. This *Politburo*, where official representatives of the Social Partners of the party's ideological colour have their say, decides where a candidate is placed on the electoral list. It is his place on the list rather than the number of votes he receives that determines a candidate's chances of election. Consequently a Representative or a Senator who dares to disobey party directives, commits political suicide. He can also forget the career opportunities of his sons and daughters in the civil service or in the many companies owned or controlled by the state or the 'Partners.' The Belgian system has a built-in tendency towards corruption: the more a politician submits to the system, the better off he and his family will be.

Unsurprisingly, Belgian politicians are more despised than their counterparts in neighbouring countries. In the late 1930s, Leopold tried to exploit these anti-political feelings. He blamed 'ministers who do not govern, but only obey the directives of their parties and cater to the trade unions.'[x] The King often acted the populist demagogue. It gained him the approval of many ordinary people and it helped prepare the ground for the more authoritarian regime he envisaged.

Meanwhile international tensions deepened. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria – a move Spaak found 'only logical.' In July 1938, Spaak asked Czechoslovakia, which he considered to be 'an artificial state,' to 'stop its provocations of the Germans.'[xi] Hendrik Borginon, the leader of the Flemish-Nationalist MPs in the Chamber of Representatives, disagreed with the appeasement policy of Spaak's government towards Berlin. In a speech on 26 October, Borginon remarked that it was impossible to deny that Nazi Germany had aggressive intentions. Germany had become a far bigger

threat than France, he said. This 'pro-French' statement breached the official line of party president Staf De Clercq which stated as an axiom that 'for the Low Countries, France cannot be anything but a danger; Germany can become a danger; England will never be a danger.'[xii]

Borginon, one of the founders of the *Front Partij*, was known to be anti-Hitler, as was Elias, the deputy president of the party. Other Flemish-Nationalist MPs, however, such as Reimond Tollenaere, declared that Nazi Germany was no threat to the West and that it was a bulwark against Communism. On 1 November 1938, Staf De Clercq settled the dispute between the two factions in an uneasy compromise. He came out in favour of strict neutrality, but warned against Nazism, which he implicitly compared with Communism. 'We reject Fascism and National-Socialism, we reject all totalitarian ideologies,' De Clercq wrote.[xiii] According to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), the State Security Service of Nazi Germany, the Flemish-Nationalist party was divided into a pro-German group and 'a fervently Anglophile group around Borginon and Elias,' with De Clercq unable to choose sides.[xiv]

Dissatisfied with De Clercq's line, which they considered insufficiently critical of Nazi Germany, the local branch of the Antwerp *Front Partij* broke away from De Clercq's *Vlaams-Nationaal Verbond* (VNV, Flemish Nationalist Alliance), which was actually a federation of various local Flemish-nationalist parties. In the 1938 municipal elections, the Antwerp *Frontists* supported the protest party of Leo Frenssen against the official VNV candidates. Frenssen was a Flamingant eccentric whose long hair and beard gave him a Rasputin-like appearance. He had spent the First World War in London, where he was a frequent visitor to Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park. After the war he tried to introduce this institution in Flanders. The Belgian authorities were not persuaded. Once, while 'speaking' at a Brussels street corner in August 1935, Frenssen was arrested and locked up in a lunatic asylum for nine days. Frenssen was also supported by *De Dag*, a tabloid founded in 1934, which rapidly became Antwerp's largest newspaper. Its journalists were mostly former *Aktivists* who, like its editor, had spent terms in prison after the First World War. *De Dag* was also the Jewish-friendliest of all Antwerp newspapers. Frenssen gained nearly 15 percent of the vote and six seats in the Antwerp municipal council, while the VNV had only one. The following year, in the 1939 parliamentary elections, Frenssen was elected as an Antwerp MP on a platform of pacifism, Flamingantism and hostility to racial prejudice. One of his political slogans was the rhetorical question: 'Who is most dangerous: the Jew or the Jew-hater?'[xv]

When on 15 March 1939, German tanks rolled into Prague, Hendrik Elias stressed that hitherto Germany had only annexed provinces inhabited by ethnic Germans, but that it had now started to violate the rights of other peoples. Even Van Severen, the former Flemish separatist who is generally considered to be the epitome of fascism in Flanders, instructed his followers to join the Belgian army in case of a German invasion.

Leopold III took an entirely different position. The King was a neutralist, not, like the Flemings because he disliked France as much as he disliked Germany, but simply because he could not afford to run the risk of losing any war. Like the Flemish-Nationalists, Leopold's objective was to stay out of

the war; but, unlike them, he had to keep a second objective in mind as well: If Belgium was drawn into the conflict, it was vital that it end the war on the side of the victors or else it would disappear**.** Owing to the artificial nature of Belgium, Leopold had to be more than a neutralist; he had to be an appeaser of any would-be aggressor.

In February 1939, the Spaak cabinet fell. Spaak was succeeded as Prime Minister by Hubert Pierlot, a Catholic Walloon, while Spaak returned as Foreign Minister. Leopold was soon dissatisfied with his new Prime Minister, who refused to give in to Leopold's demands that he censor the Belgian press. 'We must create a neutralist mentality in Belgium,' Leopold said. 'The biggest threat for our country are France and Britain who want to force us to join the war on their side.'[xvi] Hence, the King intervened personally in October 1939 to prevent Belgium from recognizing the exiled Polish government in London.

On 17 October, Karl Gebhardt, the queen-mother's German physician, who had meanwhile been promoted to the rank of SS General, came to Brussels to complain about 'German-unfriendly remarks' in the Belgian media. 'The *Führer* is furious,' Gebhardt said.[xvii] Two days later, Spaak begged his colleagues in the cabinet 'to consider the possible consequences of the press campaigns against Germany.'[xviii] The Foreign Minister was under pressure to impose censorship, not only from the King, but also from Viscount Jacques Davignon, the Belgian Ambassador in Berlin. Davignon, the son of the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1907 to 1915, demanded tight control of the press. 'Censorship would be ideal, but the government does not seem to dare,' he told Count Capelle. The King's secretary agreed and said that the cabinet consisted of '18 cowards.'[xix]

In November 1939, Leopold made plans to replace Pierlot as Prime Minister by Count Lippens, the Knokke real estate investor, who had Fascist sympathies. Pierlot, unwilling to resign, decided to give in to the King's request for censorship. In December, an 'administrative censorship' was introduced: the distribution of a number of (foreign as well as Belgian) 'anti-German and unpatriotic publications' was prohibited, including the Flamingant *Het Vlaamsche Volk*, the British *The Daily Express* and the French *Paris Soir*. On 9 January 1940, the German Ambassador to Brussels, Count Vicco von Bülow-Schwante, presented Spaak with an additional list of periodicals which he wanted to have outlawed as well. The government granted his request. All in all, Belgium prohibited 61 publications, but the wayward Pierlot had added 7 pro-Nazi titles.

After Hitler's invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940, London and Paris, convinced that a German attack on Belgium was imminent, asked Brussels for permission to station British and French troops on Belgium's territory. Leopold replied by sending Belgian troop reinforcements to… the Franco-Belgian border. They were under orders to shoot any French- or Englishman attempting to cross into Belgium. The French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud was scandalised. He felt insulted that Leopold should treat him on a par with Hitler. In Britain, Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was equally infuriated. In 1944, he recalled that the Belgians had been 'the most contemptible of all the neutrals.'[xx] Leopold, said Churchill, was 'a feeble specimen, thoroughly

representative of the Belgian nation which vainly hoped to keep out of this war, no matter what they owed to those who saved them in the last war.'[xxi]

On 13 April, the King instructed the Belgian ministers to 'take swift action against Allied propaganda in Belgium.' The same day, he ordered Paul-Emile Janson, the Minister of Justice, and Robert De Foy, the head of the *Sûreté de l'Etat*, the Belgian secret service, to draw up lists of 'suspect Belgians and foreigners.' Those on the lists were to be arrested, extradited or 'placed in concentration camps' as soon as national security required. 'Be unyielding towards those who serve an anti-national cause over here,' Leopold said, adding that he 'refused to take sentimental considerations into account.'[xxii] The black lists of 'anti-national' Belgians included Flamingants and Communists. The 'foreigners from states which might become involved in war against Belgium'[xxiii] included not only Germans and Italians living in Belgium, but also citizens from Allied countries. Most non-Belgians on the list, however, were Jewish fugitives from Germany and Poland.

Thousands of Jewish families had fled to Belgium in the late 1930s. They had not been welcome. After the German *Anschluss* of Austria on 11 March 1938, Charles du Bus de Warnaffe, the then Belgian Minister of Justice, ordered the Belgian Embassy in Vienna to deny visas to Jews. The Minister, a Walloon member of the Catholic Party, opined in Parliament that the Jews had 'for centuries constituted a problem in Europe' and that 'these criminals take our livelihood from us.'[xxiv] In an article Bus wrote that the Jews are an 'extremely unreliable' people; 'they have no word of honour and do not keep it.'[xxv] In May 1938, the anti-Semite hard-liner lost his ministerial post (to return after the war in 1945!), but King Leopold kept pressuring his government to stop the inflow of Jewish fugitives. 'The number of Israelites that have entered the country illegally since September 1939 is estimated to be 30,000,' he complained to Pierlot on 23 January 1940. 'Action against them cannot be harsh enough.'[xxvi]

German troops crossed the Belgian border at 4 o'clock in the morning on Friday 10 May 1940. That same morning, Janson and De Foy ordered the police to round up the suspects on the *Sûreté's* black lists. Exactly how many people were arrested in this operation is unknown. Most documents relating to the arrests have disappeared. A German report written three months later states that in Antwerp alone 3,000 suspects were arrested. The majority of them were Jews, about 400 were (non-Jewish) German citizens and 50 were Flemish-Nationalists.[xxvii] Many prominent Flamingants were gaoled, including the former Aktivist leader August Borms.

The Belgian authorities rounded up a considerable number of foreigners, often entire families. Most of them were people who had fled dictatorship in their home countries, such as East-European Jews, German political opponents of Hitler, and anti-Fascist Italians. Some Allied citizens were gaoled as well, probably by mistake through a mix-up of lists.

Meanwhile the Belgian army retreated. The Belgian and the Allied armies were no match for the *Wehrmacht*. Hitler's generals had developed a totally modern concept of warfare, the *Blitzkrieg*, which employed panzer spearheads in close collaboration with fighter planes to deadly effect. Instead of an offensive over an extended front, the entire German army aimed its strength at a single target. This target was the French town of Abbeville on the Somme estuary. On 14 May, General Erwin Rommel's panzer divisions broke through the French defences near Sedan to the south of the Belgian province of Luxemburg and rushed towards Abbeville and the English Channel. The German victory at Sedan decided the war. On the morning of 15 May, Paul Reynaud told Winston Churchill, the new British Prime Minister, that France was defeated.

In accordance with Article 68 of the Belgian Constitution, Leopold personally led the Belgian army during the war campaign. On paper it was a formidable army. Almost 900,000 men had been mobilised out of a population of eight million. However, 200,000 of them immediately fled to France, as did nearly 2 million civilians. Leopold, who had left Brussels for the army headquarters at Fort Breendonk to the south of Antwerp on the morning of 10 May, had appointed his friend Hendrik De Man, a Reserve officer with the rank of Captain, as personal aide-de-camp to the queen-mother. The first night Elisabeth stayed at Laken, with De Man camping in front of her bedroom door. But when Belgian army and police units fired at each other under the queen-mother's window – both groups supposing the others were German paratroopers that had landed in Laken Park – De Man decided to leave the Palace. One policeman was killed in the incident.

Elisabeth asked De Man to take her to the Villa Maskens at De Panne, where she installed herself on 14 May, the day of the fall of Sedan. 'Like my husband would have done, I will not leave Belgium,' she said.[xxviii] On that same 14 May, the MPs of the VNV who were still in the country and had escaped arrest by the *Sûreté*, met in Brussels. The Flemish-Nationalists agreed that even if Hitler were to win the war, they would not collaborate with Nazi Germany. There was going to be 'no second Aktivism.' At that moment, however, they were unaware of the fact that Belgium had arrested many of their friends and party comrades and was deporting them to France. The *Sûreté* had decided to 'evacuate' all the 'suspect and unnational elements' it had arrested. The prisoners were stowed in railway wagons bound for France. One victim later recalled: 'It took our train seven days to get from Brussels to Orléans. Under a torrid heat, locked up with 40 people, including women and children, in a hermetically sealed wagon where we had to stay day and night, we suffered from hunger, a lack of air and especially from thirst. We were left for 43 hours without receiving even a drop of water. We were submitted to the brutality of the soldiers accompanying the escort and in many stations we were almost lynched by citizens who had been led to believe that we were parachutists and spies. Many people died *en route*.'[xxix] Most convoys arrived in the South of France before the fall of Abbeville. There, the prisoners were rounded up in Franco-Belgian concentration camps.

Late on the evening of 20 May, the first German panzers rolled into Abbeville. The *Wehrmacht* had split the Allied armies in two and arrived at the Channel after less than two weeks of warfare. At De

Panne, Elisabeth told De Man how glad she was. ‘This war is in reality a Revolution,’ she exclaimed. ‘Hitler is a demon doing a work of necessary destruction. I firmly believe that a more socialist order will result from this.’[xxx]

Unfortunately, one wagon with 79 political prisoners from Belgium happened to be at Abbeville on the evening that the Germans arrived. The group was made up of 21 Belgians (including an agent of the British Intelligence Service) and 58 non-Belgians: 19 Jews, 15 non-Jewish Germans, 9 Italians (including at least four Communist opponents of Mussolini), 6 Dutchmen (including an 18-year old girl with her mother and grandmother), 3 Luxemburgians, 2 citizens of neutral Switzerland, a Spaniard, a Dane, a Frenchman and an English-speaking Canadian. French soldiers gone berserk began to butcher the prisoners. They massacred 21 of them, including the Canadian, the Dutch grandmother, a German Catholic monk, a Hungarian Jew, a Czech Jew, a Communist Brussels town councillor and the Flemish politician George Van Severen and his deputy. Most were shot, but others, including the grandmother, were savagely stabbed to death with bayonets. The killings were interrupted by the rapid approach of the Germans who liberated the prisoners.

Thousands of civilians imprisoned by the Belgian authorities in France, were released by the Germans in the course of the following weeks, including a large number of Jews. They were the only Jews ever liberated by Hitler’s army. The *Wehrmacht* allowed them to return to Belgium. However, 3,537 Jews holding German and Austrian passports, were kept imprisoned. This group later ended up in Auschwitz, where they were murdered. They were the only Auschwitz victims who had been arrested on the order of a Western government.

Upon his return to Antwerp, the old Flamingant Borms went to see the family of a Jew who had been imprisoned with him and who had not been freed, to offer financial assistance. Another Flamingant, the anti-racist MP Leo Frenssen who had also been imprisoned in the South of France, tried in vain to get Jewish co-prisoners released. Following the Abbeville massacre, *Wehrmacht* General Eggert Reeder had Robert De Foy, the chief of the *Sûreté de l’Etat*, arrested. The SS, however, immediately ordered that De Foy be released. Reeder received the order personally by telephone from Reinhard Heydrich, head of the State Security Central Office of the *Reich*, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), in Berlin. It appeared that ‘De Foy had in the months preceding the invasion closely collaborated with the RSHA and with Heydrich himself, to whom he had provided important material.’[xxxi]

After the war, the Belgian authorities refused to investigate the matter of the deportations. Nor did anyone ever investigate how and on whose orders the Belgian secret service had assisted Heydrich before the war. Belgium never apologised for what happened, and never paid damages to the victims. It even refused to repatriate the bodies of the 21 victims in Abbeville.

26 How to Become a European

The Belgian army surrendered on 28 May. The 18-day campaign cost the lives of 8,000 Belgian soldiers and 12,000 civilians. Leopold and Pierlot had continuously quarrelled during the two and a half weeks of the campaign. According to the government, France and Britain were Belgium's *allies*; according to the King they were using Belgium as a battlefield to fight the war *they* had declared on Germany in September 1939.

When the collapse of the Belgian front became imminent, Pierlot tried to persuade the King to follow the example of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands and leave the country for England. Leopold refused. As supreme commander of the army, he could not abandon his troops, he said, because that would amount to desertion. There was a political reason for his refusal, as well, which he only revealed to confidents such as General Van Overstraeten: If he left, he would abandon the country to 'separatist tendencies,' but if he remained in German-occupied Belgium, his presence might 'deter the enemy from taking disastrous decisions.'[xxxii] As Leopold wrote on 25 May, staying in Belgium was 'the only way to maintain Belgium's independence and the continuation of the dynasty.'[xxxiii]

Most Belgian government ministers had fled to the South of France before the fall of Abbeville on 20 May, but Pierlot and Spaak remained, trying to persuade Leopold to leave the country with them. After a week of vain efforts, with the Germans rapidly closing in on the last remnant of Belgian territory, the ministers called upon Leopold for the last time at Wijnendale Castle near Bruges on 25 May, at 5 o'clock in the morning. Leopold was angry to be 'dragged from [his] sleep.'[xxxiv] No argument could persuade the stubborn King. Leopold almost succeeded persuading Spaak to remain with him. When Pierlot saw that the Minister of Foreign Affairs began to waver, he took him by the hand and led him outside. The ministers departed for the coast, where they boarded a British boat. They arrived in London in the afternoon. Spaak had been weeping for hours. The next day, they travelled to France where they joined their colleagues.

Leopold contacted the *Wehrmacht* on 27 May. At 4 o'clock the next morning (no sleep needed that night), he unconditionally surrendered himself and his army. Four hours later, the French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud gave a radio speech. He denounced the King as a traitor. Reynaud's radio speech was followed later in the day by one by Pierlot, who stressed that the Belgian government did not agree with the capitulation. He relieved all Belgian officers of their oath of allegiance to the King. 'Pierlot,' says Leopold in his memoirs, 'cowardly followed Reynaud and approved of the latter's disgusting radio speech. In doing so he trampled upon my honour, that of the dynasty and of the army.'[xxxv]

The British were as angry as the French. On 29 May the *Daily Mirror* described the Belgian King as a 'regal Judas' who 'disgraced his father's splendid name' by his 'abominable desertion!' The *News*

Chronicle called Leopold 'the unworthy son of a great father.' Former Prime Minister David Lloyd George opined that one would 'rummage in vain through the black annals of the most reprobate Kings of the earth to find a blacker and more squalid sample of perfidy and poltroonery.' The journalist Alexander Werth explained that he had 'heard say long ago' that Leopold had 'a German mistress provided by the Gestapo,' and added, somewhat prophetically as it soon turned out: 'I suppose he'll be back in the Royal palace complete with German girl-friend.'[xxxvi]

On 31 May, Pierlot and Spaak were in Limoges in Central-France, where 143 of the 379 members of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives and the Senate, had gathered. The Limoges Parliament approved the Government's decision to continue the war on the Allied side. In accordance with Article 82 of the Belgian Constitution, which stated that the ministers as a group take over the royal powers when the King 'is unable to reign,' the parliamentarians decided to transfer Leopold's authority to the Council of Ministers. In Belgium itself, however, the King's decision to surrender to the Germans was acclaimed by the majority of the people. The expectation was that France would soon surrender as well and that Britain would sign a peace treaty with Hitler, whose army had conclusively proved its superiority on the battle field.

The Germans escorted Leopold to Laken. Theoretically, he had become a Prisoner-of-War, like the rest of the Belgian army. *Wehrmacht* soldiers were posted in front of Laken Palace and Leopold was assigned a German aide-de-camp, Colonel Werner Kiewitz, an elegant former diplomat, who was under orders to make life agreeable for the King. Hitler intended to pamper the Belgian. According to Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, the *Führer* paid Leopold 50 million francs as a reward for his 'strong sympathies for Germany.'[xxxvii]

It was not long before Leopold engaged Kiewitz as his *maître des plaisirs*. In Laken, Kiewitz discreetly provided call girls. Leopold also often travelled to his love nest in Knokke and, whenever he felt the urge to do so, Kiewitz took him on a 'pleasure trip' to Paris. The King could even rely on the German Secret Police to remove the traces of his erotic adventures. Once, he had been so stupid as to send naughty letters to the wife of the pianist Walter Rummel, an exalted young nymphomaniac who had the habit of opening her front door in the nude. The Gestapo paid Madame Rummel a visit 'in order to retrieve the personal letters that she had received from the King.'[xxxviii]

In Laken, Leopold was free to receive guests. The first visitor after his return home on 29 May, was Cardinal Van Roey. Together they prepared a text which the Primate subsequently had read out as a pastoral letter from all the pulpits during Sunday Mass on 2 June. It explicitly approved the capitulation, stressed that, contrary to Pierlot's assertion, the King had 'in no way violated the Constitution' and called upon 'all Belgians to remain united and firm behind the King, the supreme personification of our Motherland in danger.' The pastoral letter contained not a word of criticism of the Germans. On the contrary, the Cardinal seemed to regard Hitler as an instrument of God: 'Be convinced that we are at this time witnessing an exceptional act of Divine Providence that reveals its power through great events before which we feel very small.'[xxxix] These were Van Roey's words at the

very moment that the Nazi war machine was wiping out the French army and the British were hurrying home from Dunkirk.

Another early visitor was SS doctor Gebhardt. He came to see Leopold on 31 May to propose a meeting with the *Führer*. Hitler was due to arrive in Brussels the next morning on a 'tourist trip.' The German dictator wanted to show his architect the Brussels monuments of Leopold II. Hitler was especially fond of the *Palais de Justice* casting its dark shadow over the town.[xl] Leopold agreed to receive Hitler, but asked for it to be an incognito meeting. The *Führer* was angered by this request and did not show up. The events of that week, especially the condemnation in Reynaud's radio speech and the convention of the Belgian parliamentarians at Limoges, had made Leopold cautious. He realised that De Man had been right in 1936: It was better for a King to have someone to screen off his political decisions. In future, Leopold would conduct his personal policy in secret and through the intermediation of his private secretary, Count Capelle. To start this new policy by making demands on Hitler, however, was an act of sheer stupidity which made Davignon, the King's advisor on foreign issues, despair. Gebhardt returned to Laken on 3 June to warn that though the *Führer* was still positively disposed towards Leopold, it would be wrong to take this attitude for granted. Leopold at once asked to meet Hitler, but received no reply.

The King's main political aim was to dissuade Berlin from splitting Belgium up into a Flemish and a Walloon half. He wanted a significant group of staunch Belgicists to collaborate in order to convince the Nazis that it was in their interest to keep Belgium intact. One of these Belgicists was Robert Poulet, a Catholic Brussels journalist. Poulet was not very keen on working for the Germans but, during a meeting at Count Capelle's house, the King's secretary persuaded him to accept the editorship of *Le Nouveau Journal*, a newly established pro-German daily. Capelle asked Pierre Daye, another Belgicist journalist, to join Poulet. The Count told Daye: 'You would do well to collaborate with that newspaper, because if patriots such as you do not do it, then God knows who will gain control over the press.'[xli] Interestingly, the Pierlot government also encouraged 'patriotic collaboration.' On 25 July, Justice Minister Janson wrote a letter from France to Daye, saying: 'If you could contribute to the Brussels papers' retaining as much of their national character as possible, then you would be doing the country a great service. We encourage such attempts.'[xlii]

The King and his aides also deemed it necessary to resume economic activity in the German-occupied country. In June 1940, Alexandre Galopin, the Governor of the SG, brought a committee together to run the economy. It included people like Jules Ingenbleek and Max-Léo Gérard, two former private secretaries of King Albert I, and Ernest-John Solvay, the owner of a Belgian company that was the fourth largest chemical concern in Europe. Except for weapons and ammunition in the strictest sense, the Galopin Committee agreed to every kind of production for Nazi Germany, including engines and chemicals for the German army. This policy allowed SG subsidiaries to continue making profits during the war. In March 1941, Galopin paid a secret visit to Berlin to discuss Belgian deliveries with various Nazi ministries. Apart from Count Capelle and King Leopold, no-one

in Belgium, not even General Alexander von Falkenhausen, the head of the German administration in Brussels, knew about the visit.

Early in June 1940 Leopold was hoping that Hitler would establish him as a dictator in Belgium. He asked Paul Struye, an attorney at the *Cour de Cassation*, to work on a legal justification that would grant the King a period of twelve months in which he could rewrite the Constitution and all laws as he pleased. Before having himself proclaimed a dictator, however, Leopold wanted somebody else to do the preliminary 'dirty work.' As early as June 1940, he seems to have known, probably through Gebhardt, that the Nazis intended to purge Europe of the Jews. 'You know what I think of the Jews,' he told Capelle in November 1940: 'The damage which they have done is not sufficiently known. It is they who are responsible for all our problems.'[xliii] His anti-Jewish feelings, however, did not go so far that he wanted to become personally involved in the purge: 'I have no personal animosity towards the Jews; I have met many,' he stressed, 'but that does not prevent me from recognizing the danger that they constitute.'[xliv] On 2 July 1940 he asked Capelle whether 'it would not be better that others than myself do the necessary works of purification that are needed in Belgium.'[xlv] Leopold did not wait for the Count's answer because already on 29 June he had told Kiewitz to ask the *Führer* to allow him to 'temporarily leave the country until the stabilisation of the new regime is completed.'[xlvi] The King wished to go for a long holiday to the Bavarian Alps. He suggested that the Germans conceal this as a forced deportation, because that would not compromise him in the eyes of the Belgians.

The King's advisors feared that Leopold was committing another stupidity likely to earn him Hitler's contempt. Louis Wodon warned Leopold against the plan to 'retire for a few days in Bavaria,' a plan, he wrote, 'which Capelle seems to relate to the presumed initiative of the Germans for a purge in Belgium: arrests of Jews, of unwanted Belgians, etcetera.'[xlvii] Kiewitz, who had not submitted the request to Hitler, was very anxious to know from Van Overstraeten whether Leopold had also put his request for a 'deportation to Germany' to Gebhardt.[xlviii] The SS General had, indeed, returned to Laken on 29 June to meet the King. Whether Leopold repeated the request to him is unknown. On leaving the royal office, however, Gebhardt accidently bumped into De Man. The latter committed a stupidity as well: he told the German about Leopold's plan for installing a new government with De Man as Prime Minister. De Man seems not to have realised that the SS distrusted him, which was rather naive in someone whom the Nazis had expelled from Germany in 1933. Gebhardt returned to Berlin where he informed SS boss Heinrich Himmler of Leopold's plans for De Man.

Apart from Leopold's anti-Jewish diatribes, De Man and the King shared the same political opinions. On 28 June, the BWP president formally disbanded the Belgian Workers' Party. In a manifesto, which Leopold had approved beforehand, De Man wrote to the former BWP members: 'Do not resist the occupying force. Accept its victory. The war has led to the debacle of the parliamentary regime and the capitalist plutocracy in the so-called democracies. For the working-classes and for socialism, this collapse of a decrepit world, far from being a disaster, is a deliverance. The Socialist

Order will thereby be established, as the common good, in the name of a national solidarity that will soon be continental, if not world-wide.'[xlix]

Leopold hoped that Nazi Germany would establish De Man's old dream of a 'United Europe.' He accepted that this would entail a certain loss of Belgian sovereignty, possibly even require that he take 'an oath of allegiance to Hitler;'[l] but he seemed prepared to accept this. 'The freedom we had before the war was also a mere sham,' he told Capelle: 'Owing to the influence of internationalism, of the Jewry, of the freemasonry, of big business, we could only act insofar as Paris and London allowed us to.'[li] To Paul Struye, the King said in March 1941: 'There is a serious risk that we will no longer be independent after the war. But were we completely independent before the war, namely in the field of economics? To be frank: it is impossible to hesitate between German supremacy and English supremacy.' He told Struye that England was 'a social danger' and that he greatly admired the social-economic performance of the authoritarian German system.[lii]

Leopold was strongly influenced by De Man's vision of a unified European welfare state under authoritarian leadership with one single economic policy, one foreign policy, and one defence policy. The chief goal on the political agenda in Laken was the integration of Belgium and its dynasty in a Federal Europe dominated by Germany. De Man expected much from Italy in this respect. The war had produced two victors on the Continent, he stressed: Germany *and* Italy. The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was Hitler's partner in the so-called Berlin-Rome Axis. Hence, Hitler would have to take Mussolini's wishes into account when building the new Europe. De Man told Leopold that the need for a symbolic figure unifying the Axis would soon be felt, and that Leopold, a prince from Coburg whose sister was the Italian Crown Princess, held the best cards to be this figure. De Man had already discussed the idea of a dynasty for a Federal Europe with Mussolini's brother-in-law, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Ciano, in 1939. According to what De Man had heard from Ciano, the *Duce* favoured the idea of establishing Leopold as the monarch of such a Europe. In July 1940, De Man took the matter up with Otto Abetz, the German Ambassador in Paris. He, too, according to De Man, thought that someone of Leopold's capacities deserved a far higher position than that of King of Belgium. Perhaps, Abetz suggested, Hitler would even put Leopold on the British throne![liii]

27 A Ministering Angel Shall My Sister Be

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V. i. (263)

Leopold's sister, Marie-José, the wife of the Italian Crown Prince Umberto, enjoyed the respect of Mussolini. For her sake, the *Duce* pleaded with the *Führer* on behalf of her brother. This explains why Hitler remained patient with Leopold and why he installed a relatively mild occupational regime in Belgium. It was a so-called *Militärverwaltung*, led by Conservative *Wehrmacht* generals, instead of a *Zivilverwaltung* of civilian Nazi party officials. The head of the *Militärverwaltung*, General Baron Alexander von Falkenhausen, was a Prussian aristocrat who sympathised with the titled Belgian nobility. Impressed as he was with royalty, he considered himself a partisan of the King and kept the Flamingants at bay.

In the weeks following Leopold's surrender, the Flemish-Nationalists in their political passiveness were being outmanoeuvred by the Belgicist circles around the King. Both Count Lippens and Hendrik De Man were setting up a government, each imagining himself as the future Belgian *Quisling*. When, on 3 June, Staf De Clercq heard that Lippens, De Man and other politicians, including the anti-Flamingant ex-minister Devèze, had already been received by the King, he wrote Leopold a letter to request an audience as well. The King flatly refused to meet the VNV leader. This persuaded De Clercq of the need to make his own political overtures to the Germans, lest the Flemings be overlooked in the Nazi controlled Europe of the future. Indeed, a consequence of the intense political activity of the Belgicists was that many Flemish-Nationalists, who initially had decided against a 'second Aktivism,' soon felt obliged to collaborate with the Germans. De Clercq contacted Falkenhausen's deputy, General Eggert Reeder, a Catholic Rhinelander of far humbler stock than his superior, whom the Flamingants hoped to win over to their side.

By the end of June, it seemed as if *all* the Belgian politicians, including even Pierlot and Spaak, were anxious to resume their political careers in a German-occupied Belgium. After the French government had asked the *Reich* for the terms of capitulation on 19 June, the Belgian ministers and parliamentarians in the South of France had lost heart. Almost unanimously they asked Leopold's permission to return to Brussels. Camille Gutt, the Francophone Minister of Finance, however, decided to flee to Britain. Gutt was Jewish. In London, he met his colleague Albert De Vleeschauwer, the Minister of Colonial Affairs. De Vleeschauwer, who belonged to the Flamingant group within the Catholic Party, was the only minister who after the invasion had gone to England instead of France. He had offered his personal services plus the Belgian colony's resources to Churchill. 'It is a good thing you bring the Congo with you, because you are a bit thin by yourself,' Churchill had jested.[liv]

When Churchill heard that Pierlot and Spaak intended to surrender to the Germans, he was horrified. On 20 June Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, informed the Belgian government that if it followed Leopold's example and capitulated, the British Prime Minister would renounce the

solemn promise he had made in the House of Commons on 6 June to restore Belgium's independence after the war. The Belgian ministers were not impressed. They formally ordered the 200,000 Belgian soldiers who had fled to France, to surrender to the Germans. Seven fighter pilots disobeyed and flew their planes to Britain. The government accused them of theft, had them court-martialled and dismissed from the army.

The vengeful Leopold, however, vetoed the return of Pierlot and Spaak. He had Falkenhausen issue a warrant for their arrest as soon as they crossed the border. This left the ministers no choice but to remain in Vichy, the capital of the unoccupied southern part of France, where Marshal Pétain had installed a Fascist puppet regime. The British Foreign Office tried to get Pierlot and Spaak over from Vichy to England, because it needed some Belgian Francophones. According to Roger Makins (the future Lord Sherfield), the leading civil servant for Belgian Affairs at Whitehall, it was 'totally unacceptable' that the government of Free Belgium in London 'should consist of a Jew and a Flamingot, without a single Walloon.'[lv] De Vleeschauwer was sent to Spain to meet his colleagues on the border of Vichy-France and to persuade them to come to London. But neither Pierlot nor Spaak believed in Britain's capacity to beat Hitler. They kept hoping for a reconciliation with the King, which would allow them to switch their allegiance to what they now clearly perceived to be the winning camp: Germany.

'M. Pierlot and M. Spaak are not deserving of much consideration,' Makins acknowledged. Nevertheless, 'however poor the material, one can only hope that they will improve. I therefore recommend that we bend all our efforts to extricate these miserable Ministers.'[lvi] Only after three months of waiting in vain for Leopold's permission to enter Belgium, did Pierlot and Spaak finally depart for England. The two men arrived in London on 24 October 1940. There, together with Gutt and De Vleeschauwer, they formed a Belgian government-in-exile consisting of three Francophone Belgicists who did not understand a single word of Dutch, and one Fleming. To many Flamingants in occupied Belgium, this overwhelmingly Francophone government was an indication of what the Flemish position would be in post-war Belgium in case of a British victory. It convinced them that Flanders had not much to expect from the Allies.

While Pierlot and Spaak had been awaiting word from Leopold, the latter had been waiting for a reply from the *Führer* to his request for a meeting. The reply did not come. Leopold understood that Hitler was dissatisfied with him. When Gebhardt returned to Laken with the message that the Nazi regime distrusted De Man, Leopold decided to distance himself from his former friend. De Man's downfall presented an opportunity for his rival, Count Maurice Lippens. The latter suggested that the King appoint him as Prime Minister and Viscount Davignon as Foreign Minister. But the *Führer* had enough of the political scheming in Laken. On 20 July, he forbade Leopold and his entourage to continue any political activities.

Following Hitler's veto on the installation of a Belgian collaborationist government, Leopold began to fear that Berlin was about to dissolve his kingdom. There were rumours that the Nazis were secretly negotiating with Vichy to offer Wallonia to France as recompense for the Alsace and Lorraine provinces that had been returned to Germany. Pétain's Prime Minister, Pierre Laval, was keen to have the Francophone Belgian provinces and established a special *Bureau des Affaires Belges* in Vichy. Its liaison was Georges Thone, a publisher from Liège, who led the *Ligue d'Action Wallonne*, an organisation of Francophiles prepared to collaborate with the Nazis if the latter allowed their country to join France.

Laken was greatly disturbed by the rumours that Belgium might be reduced to what Davignon called '*une terre flamande*.'[lvii] When a summit meeting was announced between Hitler and Pétain, the King lapsed into a deep depression. Marie-José decided to help. As Crown Princess of Hitler's Axis partner Italy, she had easy access to Hitler. She travelled to Laken late in September 1940. Apart from her brother and mother, she also met Lippens. He was, she noted in her diary, '*molto pro l'Axe*.'[lviii] With Falkenhausen and Kiewitz, she visited Dunkirk and its graveyard of battered British ships. From Belgium she travelled to Munich where she met Gebhardt on 16 October. The following day she was received by Hitler in his Alpine residence, the *Eagle's Nest* on the Obersalzberg above the Bavarian town of Berchtesgaden. The *Führer* succumbed to her charm. 'He took my hand,' she recalled later, 'and began to sing the praises of the northern races: 'Do you know that you are the perfect incarnation of the Aryan princess? A living example of Aryan superiority.' And a whole litany about my figure, my fair hair, my eyes that have the colour of a Germanic sky.' Marie-José obtained from Hitler what she wanted: an invitation for her brother.

On 19 November, the King was received on the Obersalzberg. Hitler pampered his guest. The Gestapo even provided call-girls. According to Leopold, the very first thing the *Führer* said when he welcomed him, was: 'I have a very great respect for you and for your dynasty, because your father has always treated Germany justly.'[lix] Leopold asked Hitler to guarantee Belgium's integrity and independence. The *Führer* was not prepared to do this. He did, however, guarantee Leopold 'the continued existence of his dynasty.' This was a reassurance, not to Belgium, but to its royal family. Leopold did not know what to make of it. Could it be true, as De Man had told him, that Hitler had a greater Crown in store for him than that of Belgium? On his return to Brussels, Leopold could not resist the temptation to contact De Man and tell him the great news. According to De Man, the King enthusiastically told him 'that though no concrete results had been achieved during the meeting, he was deeply impressed with Hitler's personality. 'Only once in a thousand years a man of his stature is born,' he said.'[lx]

This was one of the last conversations between De Man and Leopold. Early in 1941, De Man approved the marriage of his son to Marlene Flechtheim, a Berlin Jewess. The queen-mother advised De Man to go into political hibernation: 'Play the dormouse,' Elisabeth said.[lxi] He subsequently left Belgium and retired to the Alps, at first in Vichy-France, later in Switzerland, where he wrote a book

about his European vision: *Au delà du Nationalisme* (Beyond Nationalism). Leopold never again replied to any of his letters. Though his political career was over, De Man's political legacy lasted, thanks to his one-time pupil Spaak, who, after the war, became one of the Founding Fathers of the European Union. Today this Union embodies De Man's great ideal of a 'Federal Europe with one single economic policy, one foreign policy, and one defence policy' which he hoped would 'establish the Socialist Order as the common good, in the name of a continental solidarity.' According to Spaak's 1969 memoirs, Hendrik De Man was 'one of those rare men who on some occasions have given me the sensation of genius.'[lxii]

Soon after Leopold's return from Berchtesgaden, things went wrong again. The *Luftwaffe* proved unable to win the *Battle of Britain*. There was also the establishment of the Belgian government in London, which began to broadcast daily to Belgium through the BBC. Though only 20,000 Belgians remained outside the Belgian national territory after the repatriation of the Belgian fugitives from France, Pierlot claimed to be speaking for the entire Belgian population, as well as for the King. Leopold found this hard to take. To Paul Struye, he said: 'I have more freedom here than I would have in London.' Davignon told the American Ambassador in Berlin that it was 'ridiculous' to suppose that the King was a victim of Nazi propaganda and said that he was 'as free as anybody in Belgium.'[lxiii]

Too many things, however, were slipping out of Leopold's control. The easiest problem to deal with were the Walloon Francophiles. They were silenced when Falkenhausen had Raymond Colleye, one of the most outspoken Walloon separatists, arrested. This allowed Colleye to pose as an anti-Nazi freedom fighter and a true Belgian patriot after the war. When the Francophiles realised that the Nazis were not going to allow Wallonia to join France, they switched their allegiance to the Allied camp and joined the armed resistance.

The Flemish separatists posed a far more serious problem. On 10 November 1940, two weeks after the announcement of Leopold's meeting with Hitler, Staf De Clercq had publicly and formally renounced the decision of his Flemish-Nationalist Party not to collaborate. The VNV had hesitated for a full six months about the question whether or not to side with the Germans. However, with the Belgicists wooing Hitler and with the British backing a government-in-exile that was overwhelmingly Francophone, De Clercq announced in a radio speech that henceforward he would consider Germany as Flanders' ally. Anti-Belgian and pro-German sentiments ran very deep in Flanders since the deportations by the *Sûreté* and the Abbeville massacre. Indeed, according to the later Belgian Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens, the 'embitterment' caused by the arrests and deportations of the Flamingants by the Belgian authorities immediately after the German invasion on 10 May, motivated 'many sorely tried Flemings to turn against Belgium and join the Collaboration.'[lxiv]

There was, of course, the Jewish problem. Flemish Jews had always been very active within the Flamingant Movement. The Aktivist Martin Rudelsheim, who had died in a Belgian gaol in 1920, was revered by the Flemish-Nationalists as one of their greatest martyrs. Peter Tack, the President of the short-lived independent Flemish State that had existed from late December 1917 to early November

1918, had honoured his fellow-Aktivist in 1933 as both a great Fleming and a great Jew, 'sacrificing his life for Flanders,' but also 'always remaining faithful to his Jewish race, the many talents of which were harmoniously embodied in his person.'[lxv] Another former Aktivist, the dentist Jan Laureys, a member of the Antwerp provincial council for the *Front Partij* had personally helped Jewish fugitives from Nazi Germany before the war because, as he wrote in October 1936, anti-Semitism is 'inhuman, hateful, degrading.'[lxvi] Elias, too, had always explicitly rejected 'the ideology of Fascist Nationalism; its ridiculous idolisation of everything that is supposed to be national, with xenophobia and a one-sided intellectual and military imperialism as its logical consequence.'[lxvii]

Most Flemings in 1940 were unaware of the genocide Hitler had in store for the Jews. The Belgian government had censored anti-German articles in the press before the war, and the only Jews so far seen maltreated in the country, were those that were arrested by the Belgian authorities following the German invasion. In addition, during the first five months of the occupation the *Militärverwaltung* had not disturbed the Jews. Unlike the Netherlands and France, Belgium had experienced no discriminatory measures. Until January 1941 the Jews at the German prison camp of Fort Breendonk, near Antwerp, were treated no differently from 'Aryan' prisoners.[lxviii]

An ironic consequence of De Clercq's public announcement of the VNV's willingness to collaborate with the Germans (while that of the King and his entourage had remained a secret) was that the vilest of all Belgian anti-Semites, the Belgicist Charles Somville, decided *not* to collaborate. Somville was the pre-war editor of a magazine preaching 'hatred against the Jewish race until this global enemy is eradicated,'[lxix] but his anti-Flamingant sentiments clearly outweighed his anti-Jewish feelings. After De Clercq decided to side with the Germans, Somville began to finance the partisans of the Belgian *Résistance*. Other right-wing Belgicists acted similarly. Hence, the artificial state of Belgium gave rise to a double paradox: While many Flemish democrats, who before the war had attacked Germany's racial laws, were led to collaborate with the Germans because they hated their own State so much that they automatically came to consider this State's invader as their friend, similarly, many anti-democrat Belgicists, who before the war had been sympathetic towards Nazism and anti-Semitism, joined the *Résistance*.

One important reason why the Flemish-Nationalist leadership ultimately decided to collaborate with the Germans was that they had teamed up with General Eggert Reeder, the second man in the *Militärverwaltung*. Reeder ran the German administration in Brussels while his boss drank champagne at the parties of the Belgian nobility. Reeder used the VNV to thwart the political ambitions of the SS in Belgium. The SS wanted the *Militärverwaltung* replaced by a *Zivilverwaltung* of Nazi party hardliners. Reeder needed the collaboration of a significant group of Belgians to be able to argue in Berlin that the *Wehrmacht* was perfectly capable of running affairs in Belgium and did not need the 'assistance' of the SS.

In the absence of a Belgian government, the ministerial cabinets in Brussels were led by senior civil servants, the so-called Secretary-Generals. Reeder had two VNV politicians appointed amongst

them. Victor Leemans became Secretary-General of Economic Affairs and Gerard Romsée received the highly influential post of Secretary-General of the Interior. Reeder had wanted Romsée at the head of the equally important Justice Department, but he was forced to accept a Francophone royalist there. Indeed, through Falkenhausen, the entourage of the King had its say in all the appointments. Romsée had to appear before an ad-hoc commission of Capelle, Davignon and Van Overstraeten, and got the job only because he was able to convince them that he was a royalist, too, whose ambition was restricted to achieving a form of Flemish autonomy *within* Belgium. Romsée and Leemans were frequently called to the royal palace during the war to receive 'instructions' from Capelle.

With Reeder on the side of the Flamingants, half the municipalities in Flanders soon had a VNV mayor – Antwerp being a notable exception – and, apart from Brabant, all the Flemish provinces had a VNV politician as Governor. The SS, however, tried to thwart the *Militärverwaltung*. It attempted to have the VNV outlawed directly by Hitler. SS publications described Staf De Clercq's policies as 'half-democratic-clerical, half-fascist party-hocus-pocus.'[lxx] Heydrich told Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, that the leader of the VNV was a 'stupid Catholic anti-German marionette without any use for the German army.'[lxxi] Himmler complained to Martin Bormann, Hitler's private secretary, that it was 'absolutely not in the Germanic and German interests to support this organisation.' He was appalled, he said, to discover that there were Germans who assisted the VNV 'in its resistance against pan-Germanic ideas.'[lxxii] Ernst Ehlers, the head of the Gestapo *Judenabteilung*, wrote in January 1942: 'The VNV has so far shown not the least bit of understanding of the Jewish and racial question.'[lxxiii]

Though Hitler undoubtedly agreed with the SS, he felt obliged to keep the *Militärverwaltung* in charge in Brussels, because Mussolini insisted on it. All this, the *Führer* said, was the fault of Leopold with his close Italian connections: 'If only that accursed king had left the country, like the Queen of Holland, who fled and does not constitute a factor which one has to take into consideration.' 'If ever there was anyone I disliked, then it was that Belgian, that cunning scoundrel, that sly fox! However, his sister is the Crown Princess of Italy!'[lxxiv]

Leopold did his best to be in the SS's good books. He kept in close touch with Dr. Gebhardt. At the end of May 1941, he had Van Overstraeten complain to Otto Meissner, Hitler's *chef de cabinet*, about the 'anti-royalist attitude of the SS.' Meissner passed the message on to Himmler. A few weeks later the SS replied via Kiewitz that it was not at all hostile to the King. On the contrary, Kiewitz told Van Overstraeten, the SS, valuing 'race' above anything else, looked favourably on Leopold whom they admired for his 'physical type and moral character.'[lxxv]

In the political strategy of the SS, however, there was no place for Belgium. Himmler aimed for the downright annexation of both Flanders and Wallonia by Germany. Each part of Belgium was to form a separate province of the *Reich*. To this end, Himmler established two SS chapters in the country. In Wallonia the pre-war Fascist party of Léon Degrelle, *Rex*, was integrated within the SS structures. In

Flanders, the SS created a new political party, *DeVlag*, to fight the VNV. Flanders was the only country in occupied Europe where the Nazis could not rely on an existing political party. Having lost his political significance, Leopold again lapsed into a deep depression. This worried the queen-mother, who remembered her late husband's morose moods, which she knew to be a Saxe-Coburg family trait.

28 Happy He With Such A Mother!

Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Princess*, VII, 308

Lilian Baels was the prettiest girl in Belgium. Authors and journalists variously described the dark-haired girl in superlatives such as ‘exotically beautiful,’ ‘as beautiful as a Greek night,’ ‘with eyes of fire’ and ‘as elegant as a beautiful cigar-girl from Andalusia.’ It is hardly surprising that as a regular visitor to the Knokke golf course in the late 1930s, she had attracted the attention of Leopold and there were rumours that they had slept together. Her father, Hendrik Baels, was a wealthy Flemish fish trader from Ostend. He was an ambitious and pompous man who had managed to become Governor of the province of West Flanders. Keen on mingling with the Belgian elite, he had raised his children in French and had bought a villa from Count Lippens’ real estate company in Knokke. At the outbreak of the war, Baels and his family fled to Biarritz, the fashionable holiday resort in the South-West of France. In January 1941, the queen-mother sent her chauffeur to Biarritz to fetch Lilian. Elisabeth judged that the 24-year old constituted the perfect medicine for her son’s despondence. It was her task, as Capelle says in his diary, to ‘distract’ the King. Soon, the queen-mother discovered ‘that the remedy was very mild and that the patient was not disposed to finish the treatment.’

The strong-headed Lilian demanded Leopold’s exclusive attention. Her rival, Minime du Roy de Blicquy, *née* Baroness Marie-Louise de Furstenberg, a former lady-in-waiting of the late Queen Astrid, who had remained at Court after the queen’s death, was told to pack her bags and leave. But Lilian was not content with the position of Laken’s resident mistress; she wanted to be the King’s wife. When Lilian got pregnant, Leopold gave in. He justified his decision to Capelle with the argument: ‘When a woman gets under our skin, then nothing is able to curb this passion.’ The marriage took place at Laken Palace on 6 December 1941. The following day, a Sunday, the Belgians learned of the royal marriage via a pastoral letter which Cardinal Van Roey had read out from the pulpit in all Catholic churches. The effect was devastating. It shattered the myth that Leopold was a Prisoner-of-War. The news could not have come at a worse moment, smack in the middle of the coldest winter in decades. The Germans were confiscating coal and potatoes to be shipped to Germany; the Belgians were suffering from cold and hunger and Allied bombings. The ordinary citizens had come to see Leopold as a martyr. They expected Leopold to live up to this image, because it mitigated their hardships: the King was to remain the poor widower of Astrid as well as the prisoner of Laken. Being neither widower nor prisoner, he had failed them twice. ‘A double myth has been cruelly shattered,’ General Reeder noted.[lxxvi]

‘Send our prisoners a chick too,’ someone painted on the wall of Laken Park. ‘You have killed Astrid,’ an anonymous letter to Laken said. The people nicknamed Leopold ‘the son-in-law of Mr. Baels’ and told saucy jokes about his affair with the daughter of a Flemish ‘fish-monger.’ Leopold’s brother Charles was seething, too. Barely three years ago, Leopold had forbidden him to marry his

pregnant girlfriend because she was only a baker's daughter. 'Is the smell of shrimps so much more enticing than the smell of pastry?' Charles asked in a fit of rage.

Lilian had obtained her marriage with Leopold, but had she become queen? In his pastoral letter of 7 December, the Cardinal wrote that the King had signed a deed which gave his second wife the title of 'Princess of Réthy,' expressly denying her the title of Queen, and depriving their children of any rights to the Belgian throne. The pastoral letter went so far as to say that Lilian herself had asked for such a deed as a condition to her marrying Leopold. The pastoral letter was a lie. 'The deed does not exist. I never drew one up,' the King told Capelle in March 1942.[lxxvii]

Sunday 7 December 1941, however, was to go down in history for a reason different from a shattered myth in Brussels. It was the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the American entry into the war. The balance of power gradually began to shift in the direction of the Allies. That same winter, Hitler, like Napoleon before him, was defeated in Russia by the forces of nature: freezing temperatures stopped the *Wehrmacht* within sight of Leningrad and Moscow. The following spring, the Germans launched an offensive towards Stalingrad and the oil fields of the Caspian Sea.

Nazi propaganda portrayed the struggle against the Soviet-Union as a struggle between European civilisation and ungodly Communism, and called upon young men in the German-occupied countries to volunteer in this battle. Everywhere, national divisions of the so-called *Waffen*-SS were established. They had nothing to do with the 'regular' SS, the *Allgemeine*-SS, but fought alongside the *Wehrmacht* on the Eastern Front. Belgium was given two *Waffen*-SS divisions, one for the Flemings and one for the Walloons.

Leopold regarded the battle on the Eastern Front as a fight, not between Christianity and Communism, but between Europe and Asia. He predicted that the Russians and the Japanese were about to ally themselves in a battle against the White race. 'This is only natural,' he explained to Capelle on 17 February 1942, 'because both the Russians and the Japanese are Asians. The greatest threat to the White race is the Yellow menace.' Sometimes, the King could not sleep at night. 'I wake up in the middle of the night,' he confided to his secretary, 'and ask myself whether anything can still be done to avoid a catastrophe. Our civilisation will collapse, our race will be destroyed.'[lxxviii]

Meanwhile, another race was being destroyed. The Nazis had lit the fires of the Shoah. Neither Cappelle nor any of the other royal advisors mention in their diaries or memoirs that the plight of the Jews kept Leopold from sleeping. Nevertheless, he was one of the first Belgians to receive detailed accounts of Nazi atrocities. Indeed, shortly after the royal marriage, SS doctor Karl Gebhardt paid a visit to Laken. In Lilian's presence, Gebhardt, who was hanged after the war for conducting medical experiments on Jewish prisoners, gave a 'boastful account of the experiments he had carried out on human guinea-pigs.' The account left Lilian and Leopold 'frozen with horror,' as the King later recalled to his biographer Lord Keyes. After 'having sent Gebhardt packing,' he expressed his 'horror and disgust' to Kiewitz. The latter replied 'that there was no need for the King to receive Gebhardt in

future and that he would keep him away.'[lxxix] Unless Lord Keyes made this story up, it proves that Leopold discovered already during the war what the Nazis were doing to the Jews.

The history of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Belgium has been well researched. When the Germans invaded Belgium, the country had about 64,000 Jewish inhabitants. More than 30,500 of them were deported to Nazi extermination camps. Of the latter group, only 1,821 survived. All in all, 45 percent of the Jews living in Belgium were murdered, a far lower figure than the 80 percent that died under the *Zivilverwaltung* in the Netherlands.

Only 3,000 of the Jews in Belgium had the Belgian nationality. The others were predominantly '*Ostjuden*' – fugitives from Central and East European countries. The Belgian authorities held that their responsibility was strictly limited to the Belgian Jews, most of whom, indeed, managed to survive the war. An example of this attitude is found in Cardinal Van Roey. Unlike Cardinal Verdier of Paris, Van Roey never protested against the persecution of the Jews in Germany in the 1930s. Worse, he disbanded the *Katholiek Bureau voor Israël*, an Antwerp Catholic organisation that tried to help the fugitives. During the war, too, Van Roey remained silent, unlike Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons and Archbishop De Jong of Utrecht, the Primate of the Netherlands, who had pastoral letters read from the pulpits of their dioceses, condemning anti-Semitism and encouraging the faithful to help the Jews. Van Roey wrote such letters only to defend the King and warn against anti-Belgian agitators. When the Bishop of Liège asked Van Roey for instructions about the Jewish problem, the Cardinal had his secretary reply that 'because the Germans have declared that they were only interested in the Jews of Greater-Germany, Poland, the Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Austria,' the Belgian Primate had decided 'to do nothing.'[lxxx]

To Van Roey's credit, his secretariat did intervene with the German authorities during the war on behalf of 70 individual Jews. These were all either Belgian Jews or Jews who had converted to Catholicism. King Leopold's cabinet intervened in 80 cases involving only Belgian Jews, and the queen-mother in almost 420 cases involving only Belgians or children. In 60% of these nearly 570 cases, their efforts were in vain: the Jews were deported to an extermination camp. This means that about 230 people can actually claim that their lives were saved by cardinal, king or queen-mother. Especially the latter was hailed after the war as a heroine of the Jews.

Some leading Belgian collaborationists, whose names, unlike those of Van Roey and Elisabeth, do not figure on post-war lists of 'Friends of Israel,' were no less 'heroic.' In June 1943, the SS arrested 303 Belgian Jews. Elisabeth asked General Reeder to release them, which he did. In September 1943, the SS rounded up 794 Belgian Jews for transport to extermination camps in Germany. This time the Flamingant Secretary-Generals Romsée and Leemans intervened, and Reeder again set the prisoners free. During the final days of the German occupation, in August and September 1944, Romsée and Leemans were also able to halt a convoy of Jews (Belgian and non-Belgians) bound for Auschwitz. The two VNV politicians did at least as much for the Jews as the Cardinal, the King and the queen-mother.

On 22 October 1942, Staf De Clercq died of heart failure. He was succeeded as leader of the VNV by the Anglophile Hendrik Elias. Elias wanted to reverse the party's previous policy of collaboration with the Germans. Gottlob Berger, the SS General supervising Belgian Affairs at SS headquarters in Berlin, reported to Himmler that Elias was the 'bitterest adversary' of the SS.[lxxxi] Berger at once phoned Reeder to annul Elias's appointment, but Reeder replied he did not have the means to do so. Berger came to Brussels for a meeting with Reeder and Elias. He scolded Reeder and warned Elias that if the VNV mayors, governors and secretary-generals dared to resign their posts in protest of Nazi atrocities, 'five percent of them will end up in concentration camps; and, lo and behold, the others will be only too pleased to be allowed to retain their posts!'[lxxxii] Elias was intimidated and for six months he did not dare to speak out against the SS. This was not to the liking of Father Jules Callewaert, a Dominican monk and one of the moral leaders of Flamingantism. He wrote to Elias on 3 April 1943, urging him to break with the collaboration policy. Callewaert called Nazism 'the return to complete paganism – something we as Catholics never can or will accept.' The Nazis, he continued, 'debase moral attitudes, principles and all values. It is no use saying: and what about Bolshevism? We must stand firm against everything that is evil.'[lxxxiii] On 7 May, Elias sent an 'ultimatum' to Reeder, with a list of complaints about the SS. The VNV also stopped recruiting for the *Waffen*-SS. This open defiance of the SS was unique in the history of collaborationist movements in occupied Europe. Berger reported to Himmler that 'the VNV is an instrument of English propaganda' and suggested that Elias had received money from British agents and a promise from London for the political autonomy of Flanders after the war.[lxxxiv] Elias expected that he would be arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Later, after the war, he confessed that if he had known at the time what a Nazi concentration camp really was, he would never have dared to challenge the SS.[lxxxv]

Father Callewaert, meanwhile, circulated copies of his letter to Elias. Soon Berger in Berlin had one on his desk. He had the text translated in German and passed on to Himmler with the suggestion 'to put this problem before the Führer.'[lxxxvi] The SS was furious, but the *Militärverwaltung* in Brussels troubled neither Elias nor Callewaert. In August 1943, the monk wrote a report about the policies Flanders should follow after the war. This document, written early in August 1943, was widely copied as well. It proposed a political system based on Papal encyclicals. A copy ended up in London. The British Foreign Office thought that Callewaert, a Flamingant, had to be *by definition* pro-German, hence a 'Goth,' hence a collaborationist. A British report, referring to the monk as 'the Flemish Quisling,' consequently interpreted his text as a blueprint for the future Fascist regime in Belgium![lxxxvii] Better informed Belgian politicians in London called it a 'Holy Water dictatorship.'[lxxxviii]

On 3 January 1944, Hitler promised Himmler that the SS was to have its way in Belgium: the *Militärverwaltung* would be abolished and the country annexed to the *Reich*. The SS immediately began to prepare the ground for its take-over. Political adversaries of the annexation, including collaborators of the *Militärverwaltung* who were Belgian- or Flemish-Nationalists, were murdered.

One of them, Alexandre Galopin, the Governor of the SG, was eliminated by an SS death squad on 24 February. The VNV was under fire from two sides. Many Flamingants were also killed by Belgicist or Communist partisans. 'We could expect to be assassinated any moment, either by the SS, or by the resistance,' Victor Leemans, the VNV Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, later recalled.[lxxxix] On 1 March, Constantin Canaris, the head of the Brussels SD, received a warrant signed by Himmler for Elias's arrest. All he needed was a phone call from Berlin to send the VNV leader to a concentration camp. Strangely enough, the phone call did not come. Perhaps the Nazis feared unrest in Flanders, a country strategically situated between England and Germany. Elias was not arrested until 3 January 1945. He was imprisoned in Austria until the end of the war.

King Leopold had spent the years following his marriage in domestic bliss. Prince Alexandre, his first child by Lilian, was born in July 1942. Life at Laken Palace was easy during the war. It was an island immune from the deprivations outside its walls. Though the fortunes of war had gradually shifted to the advantage of the Allies, and though the King had lost the protection of his Italian connection after the fall of Mussolini on 25 July 1943, Lilian kept Leopold too busy to care about his political future. On 30 July 1943, Hitler ordered the SS to closely monitor the King's movements. The *Führer* was afraid that Leopold would flee to Britain or lead a popular rising. He need not have worried. Leopold kept rejecting all attempts of the Pierlot cabinet in London to get in touch with him.

Pierlot was prepared to turn a blind eye to the 'patriotic collaboration' of the King. Already in July 1941, he had sent Robert Jourdain, a Jesuit priest, to Belgium with a reconciliatory message for the King. Father Jourdain was dropped by parachute in the Ardennes and succeeded in contacting Count Capelle. Leopold, however, refused to accept any message from Pierlot. On his return journey to England, Jourdain was arrested in Spain and imprisoned.

In March 1943, two months after the German defeat at Stalingrad, Capelle advised Leopold to distance himself publicly from the Nazis. The King refused, saying that he did not want 'to turn against a system of ideas of which I am inclined to approve.'[xc] To General Van Overstraeten, Leopold said that a public protest against the Germans would amount to a statement of support to the Allied cause which he did not want to make. He was not prepared 'to support those from whom we need not expect gratitude.'[xci]

In December 1943, Pierlot again sent an envoy to the King. This time François De Kinder, an Antwerp attorney whose sister was Pierlot's wife, was parachuted into Belgium. De Kinder succeeded in handing over Pierlot's letter to Cardinal Van Roey, but again Leopold would not accept it. Sadly, on his return journey, Pierlot's brother-in-law was arrested by the Germans and executed.

Early in 1944, Leopold began to take into account the possibility that Hitler might lose the war. He told Van Overstraeten on 24 January that there would be 'advantages' if the retreating Germans took him along as a prisoner. He toyed with the idea of having himself deported to Germany to boost his

tarnished popularity in Belgium. He mentioned this so often that Van Overstraeten felt compelled to warn that if he was, indeed, ever deported, he would have to ensure 'this measure could not be attributed to his own request.'[xcii] A disadvantage of deportation, however, was that the King would not be in the country at the moment of the liberation. This worried Leopold because he wanted the Belgian people to know his instructions for post-war Belgium. Hence, he wrote the Belgians an Open Letter. He gave a copy of his 'Political Will,' as he called it, to Chief Justice Joseph Jamar to make it public after the liberation.

The 'Political Will' stated that pre-war politicians, such as Pierlot and Spaak, who had 'deserted and insulted' the King in May 1940, must not be allowed to hold any political office after the war 'so long as they have not regretted their error and granted the Crown complete and solemn redress.' Leopold told Van Overstraeten that he 'would not hesitate to join forces with the Communists.' He even discussed the possible inclusion of the Communists in a post-war Belgian government.[xciii] From the summer of 1944 onwards, the SG began to finance the Belgian Communist *Résistance*, for a total sum of 10.3 million francs (£3.4 million or $5.6 million in today's value).

Leopold made it very clear that he did not want to have anything to do with the Allies whom he deliberately failed to thank for liberating Belgium. As he told Capelle in May 1944, he regarded the entry of the Allied forces as nothing more than 'the replacement of one military occupation by another.'[xciv] The 'Political Will' contained an explicit refusal to recognise the treaties with the Western Allies that the Pierlot cabinet had signed in London. According to the Belgian Constitution, all international treaties need a royal signature. Leopold indicated that he would not put his signature to any document tying Belgium to the Western alliance.

On 7 June 1944, Leopold got what he wanted. One day after D-day, the landing of the Allies on the beaches of Normandy, Hitler ordered that the King be deported to Germany with his wife and children. The Germans brought the royal family to Hirschstein, a medieval castle in Saxony. Though Hirschstein Castle was a 'comfortable and well furnished' dwelling, Leopold asked Hitler to be lodged somewhere else, 'preferably in the Alps.' Lilian confided to Kiewitz that she feared that Hirschstein, 'a sombre building set in monotonous scenery,' would make the King 'depressed, a condition to which he is already disposed as it is, owing to his continuing ill fate in life.' She, too, asked to 'urgently assign them to a more pleasant residence.' Stressing that Leopold was 'loyal to the Führer,' she added that he could be 'of political service in the future, given that he knows the statesmen of the other side personally.'[xcv] Kiewitz put the request down in writing and passed it on to Berlin, but everything remained as it was, even after a friendly visit by Gebhardt.

The King remained in Saxony for almost nine months, until 7 March 1945 when his party was transferred to a villa on Lake Sankt-Wolfgang in the Austrian Alps east of Salzburg. The war was drawing to its end. On 8 May, the *Reich* unconditionally surrendered. Meanwhile, however, Belgium had already been liberated for over half a year. British and Canadian troops had entered Brussels and Antwerp on 3 and 4 September 1944. On 9 September, one day after Pierlot's return to Brussels, Chief

Justice Jamar handed the Prime Minister a copy of the King's 'Political Will.' Pierlot was stunned. He informed Spaak, who agreed to keep the document top secret and to act as if it did not exist. The British Prime Minister also received a copy. 'It stinks,' Churchill said. Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, called Leopold 'obstinate, even pig-headed.'[xcvi] But the Belgian politicians could not do without their King. Belgium, as Achilles Van Acker, the Socialist who succeeded Pierlot as Prime Minister on 12 February 1945, stressed, 'needs the monarchy like one needs bread.'[xcvii] Hence, when the news reached the government that Leopold and his family had been liberated in Austria, the Belgian politicians decided to forget the past and welcome him back. On 9 May, Prince Charles, Prime Minister Van Acker, Minister of Foreign Affairs Paul-Henri Spaak, and other leading politicians, left for Salzburg on a British plane to accompany the King home.

29 Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Genesis, 4:9

The end of the war was the end of Hubert Pierlot's political career. When he returned to Belgium in September 1944, he was so unpopular that the American ambassador remarked that it was the Allied troops that kept him in place: 'The government is safe only so long as the military authorities are in the background. It will fall the minute that potential support is withdrawn.'[xcviii] Hence, a more forceful government was installed with Allied backing in February 1945. It was a coalition of Belgium's three 'traditional parties,' the Catholics, the Socialists, and the Liberals, plus the Communists.

Apart from Spaak, the politician with nine lives, who remained on Foreign Affairs, the new ministers had all spent the war years in Belgium. Prime Minister Achilles Van Acker was a 46-year old trade union leader from Bruges. When he assumed the leadership of the cabinet, he boasted to the press that his political motto was '*J'agis et puis je réfléchis*' (I act, then I think). He regretted some of his acts, though. In July 1940, Van Acker, hoping to become the leader of the collaborationist trade union in his home town, had asked Hendrik De Man to speak to the Germans on his behalf. He pursued De Man for months, until he noticed that the *Militärverwaltung* was favouring his local enemies of the Bruges VNV. After the war, Van Acker posed as a man of the *Résistance*. Only De Man could compromise him, but the pre-war Socialist leader had not yet returned from his exile in Switzerland.

The new Minister of Finance, Gaston Eyskens, a member of the Catholic Party, was a Flemish professor of Economics from Leuven University. In lectures given during the war, Eyskens had praised the performance of the Nazi economy, 'made possible by the spirit of discipline and the application of the *Führerprinzip*.'[xcix] The new Minister of Justice, Charles du Bus de Warnaffe, had already been a cabinet member before the war, when he authored anti-Semite texts and systematically denied Jewish fugitives permission to enter Belgium. The new Minister of Education, Auguste Buisseret, a Liberal from Liège, had been a member of the *Ligue d'Action Wallonne*, the group that had been so eager to collaborate with the French Fascists in Vichy.

Each of these men had something to hide. Hence, they wished to distance themselves as far as possible from those who were accused of having collaborated with the enemy during the war. They dared not condemn the wave of terror that was being unleashed by the Communists against the so-called '*inciviques*,' the French term for 'unpatriotic citizens.' Some even called for a more severe punishment of these 'traitors.'

The war had left deep scars: 90,000 Belgians had lost their lives, property had been destroyed, people had suffered deprivation, 3.5% of the population had been deported to Germany as forced labourers or concentration camp prisoners. In September and October 1944, following the German retreat, the anger and frustration which had accumulated during four years erupted. The mob

descended on collaborationist families. Men were lynched, women raped, children abused, houses plundered. Self-declared 'patriots' rounded up suspects and imprisoned about 70,000 of them, often in appalling conditions. Hundreds were locked up in the cages of the Antwerp Zoo. Overnight the Nazi concentration camp of Fort Breendonk became a concentration camp for 'collaborationists.' Father Alfons Van Assche, the Abbot of the Benedictine monks of Steenbrugge, and a well-known Flamingant, was violently raped by his guards in gaol and died as a consequence.

In the immediate aftermath of the liberation, probably no government could have avoided excesses. Similar events happened in neighbouring countries during the first post-war days. Ten months after the liberation, however, on 17 June 1945, an inmate from Merksplas prison still complained to Cardinal Van Roey: 'Yesterday four women were brought in here. They had been tortured in an inhumane way: feet burned, a piece of the ear cut off, disfigured beyond recognition by beatings and kicks.'[c] The Cardinal received over 3,000 letters from prisoners and their families begging him for help. He turned down all requests, including one from his Flamingant first cousin.

Following the terror, the Belgian authorities organised a systematic purge of the *inciviques* with the intent of eliminating once and for all the anti-Belgicist enemies of the State. Flemish-Nationalist MPs who tried to reclaim their seat in Parliament, were denied entry to the building. Belgicist collaborators, however, were left alone, with the exception of those who, like De Man, might compromise the new rulers. The Belgicists had collaborated, as Count Capelle explained, only 'to oppose German policies favouring the Flemish-Nationalists.'[ci] Capelle, Lippens, Davignon, the business tycoons of the Galopin Committee, were not disturbed. Even Robert De Foy was allowed to resume his post as head of the *Sûreté de l'Etat*.

The Flamingants were not so fortunate. The authorities charged 405,067 citizens, almost five percent of the entire Belgian population. Former Minister Albert De Vleeschauwer, the only Fleming of the initial war cabinet, was scandalised by the fact that Belgium 'was punishing about one million people directly or indirectly with a pointless repression.'[cii] He took into consideration the suffering of the families of those charged. Others have calculated that the purge directly and indirectly hit 1.5 million of the 8 million Belgians. One *incivique*, Luc Desramault, had spent the entire five years of the war in Britain. Upon his return from London in May 1945, he was beaten up, arrested and imprisoned for 'collaboration with the enemy.' He had to remain in gaol until September. The reason, his attorney told him, was that he had been a leader of a Flamingant scouts group and a member of the VNV before the war.[ciii]

One quarter of those charged were formally punished by the authorities, although many more suffered repercussions in their daily lives, with jobs lost, careers broken or homes plundered by hooligans. Of those officially punished by the authorities, 57,254 Belgians received a sentence by a judicial court, while 43,093 others fell victim to the so-called 'civil purge.' The latter was a *government* decision that deprived people of their civil and political rights. Though the 'civil purge' was not a *court* decision, the *inciviques* were no longer entitled to vote or to stand for elections, nor

were they allowed to work as civil servants. They were not entitled to reimbursements for war damages or pensions. They could not enroll at universities, nor participate in state examinations or start a business. A victim of the 'civil purge' was Prof. Cornelius Heymans of Ghent University, the 1938 Nobel Prize winner for Medicine. He had not been politically active during the war but was a Flamingant who during the 1920s and early 1930s had promoted the transformation of Ghent from a French-speaking university to a Dutch one. His lectureship was taken from him.

The Government deliberately aimed to disenfranchise as many 'enemies of the State' as possible. This became very clear in the weeks preceding the parliamentary elections of 17 February 1946, when thousands were listed on the register of the 'civil purged.' The 'civil purge' was also retro-active. Article 11 of the bill of 19 September 1945 stated that everyone who had 'not yet' been inscribed on the list, but had been a member of 'unpatriotic' political organisations (such as the VNV), was not allowed to vote. Posters at the entrances of the polling stations warned of severe penalties for anyone seeking to evade the new law: a prison sentence of 6 months and a fine of up to 5,000 francs (equalling £1,650 or $2,750 today).

The *inciviques* sentenced by judicial courts were also predominantly Flemish. Though the Flemings constituted 56% of the Belgian population, they made up 67% of those convicted for political collaboration with the enemy, 62% of those convicted for military collaboration (mainly volunteers on the Eastern Front) and 81% of those convicted for both political and military collaboration. Only for informing and for political collaboration combined with criminal offences, the Flemings scored low, respectively 32% and 52%. Political collaboration, however, or behaviour that was defined as such (it included 'mingling with Germanophiles, membership of the VNV, the acceptance of a German literary award' etc.), accounted for over 50% of all collaboration sentences.[civ] One form of assistance to the enemy was not punished: economic collaboration. This was explicitly exempted by a bill of 25 May 1945. Most of the economic collaborators had been Francophone Belgicists, such as steel baron Paul de Launoit. The most important economic collaborationist was the SG. It had done business with both sides during the war. 'The men connected with Société Générale are playing both sides so that no matter which side wins, the power and wealth of Société Générale will survive,' a report of the Office of Economic Warfare in Washington D.C. had stated in September 1943.[cv]

The Belgian courts sentenced 2,940 individuals to death, and executed 242 of these. In the Netherlands, where the Nazi occupational regime had been far worse than in Belgium, only 123 collaborationists were condemned to death and only 38 were executed. The Belgian authorities wanted to set examples. The aged August Borms was executed in April 1946 because he had occasionally given farewell speeches to Flemish volunteers setting out to fight on the Eastern Front. Leo Vindevogel, the war-time Mayor of Ronse and an MP of the Catholic Party, was executed in September 1945, one month after Van Acker had formed his second cabinet: a left-wing coalition *without* the Catholic Party. It is unclear why this father of eight had to die. He had been neither a Nazi, nor a Flemish separatist.

The authorities also shot Stefan Laureys. He was the son of Jan Laureys, the *Frontist* who before the war had been one of Antwerp's most outspoken anti-racists and a helper of Jews. Stefan was an anti-communist. In 1939 he had volunteered to fight in Finland against the Soviet invasion. Later he joined the *Waffen*-SS on the Eastern front. In August 1944, when his regiment was transferred to the Western front, Laureys deserted. He was in Antwerp at the moment of the liberation, was arrested, sentenced to death and executed at the end of February 1945. Another sad tale is that of 21-year old Lucrèce Vanbillemont, executed in February 1946 because she was the *fiancée* of a Flemish member of the Gestapo. The latter was arrested in Brussels two weeks after the liberation and found dead the following morning in a Brussels pond with 21 bullets in his body. Vanbillemont was accused of having given her boyfriend information, an allegation she denied. Her parents tried in vain to find out where their daughter had been buried after the execution, but it has remained a secret to this very day.

Most death sentences, including that of VNV leader Hendrik Elias, but also those of real criminals, like Richard De Bodt, the hangman of the Breendonk Nazi concentration camp, were reduced to life imprisonment. Added to the 2,340 other sentences of life imprisonment, the total of those serving life sentences amounted to 5,038. This was as many as the annual average of *all* prisoners in Belgium before the war. In addition there were 3,366 *inciviques* who were sentenced to between 15 and 20 years in prison; 3,253 received a sentence to between 10 and 15 years (Father Callewaert, the author of the anti-Nazi letter that had enraged the SS, was condemned to 12 years of imprisonment 'for aid to the enemy, before [!] and during the occupation'); another 9,844 were sentenced to between 5 and 10 years of imprisonment; and 30,750 people received prison sentences of under 5 years.

One of the most famous *inciviques* was Hendrik De Man. He wrote to King Leopold and the queen-mother to ask if he could reveal information relating to the Crown in his defence, but the royals never replied. De Man consequently decided to remain in Switzerland and not to show up for his trial. He was sentenced in his absence to 20 years, a fine of 10 million francs (£3.3 million or $5.5 million in today's value), the confiscation of his properties, the loss of his Belgian nationality and a prohibition to publish. In 1948, he received an additional sentence of two years and was fined one million francs for publishing his political memoirs. Copies of the book were confiscated in Belgium. De Man died under a train in an accident in Switzerland in 1953.

The purge removed all Flemish-Nationalists from the Belgian civil service. In 1991, Luc Huyse, a sociologist at Leuven University, described the post-war purge in Belgium as the settlement of the pre-war conflict between two political elites. The purge allowed the old Belgicist elite of the 'three traditional political clusters' around the Catholic, Socialist and Liberal parties, to eliminate the anti-establishment VNV that in the 1930s had been gaining electoral momentum. 'The sentence actually concerned not so much the political collaboration with a foreign occupier, but the internal assault on the regime,' says Huyse.[cvi]

The purge of the Flamingants explains why extremist Francophones who in the 1930s and during the war, had conspired to establish an independent Wallonia or to join France, were ultimately

reconciled to Belgium after the war. In September 1940, in a memorandum addressed to the Fascist French Vichy-government, their leader, Georges Thone, had pleaded for the annexation of Wallonia by France, arguing that because 'Flemish domination in Belgium is growing, the entire structure of the Belgian State will gradually be transferred into Flemish hands.'[cvii] These Walloons were prepared to accept Belgium only if they could be sure that the Flemish majority would continue to be treated as if it were a minority. The purge meant that their nightmare of a Flemish-dominated Belgium would not come true in the foreseeable future. The Francophile separatists were even allowed to pose as loyal Belgians. Anti-Belgian Walloon separatism was not considered to be 'unpatriotic.' The Francophiles of Thone's *Ligue d'Action Wallonne* who had offered their services to Vichy, were not prosecuted. On the contrary, Auguste Buisseret, Jean Rey and Fernand Dehousse became Belgian cabinet ministers after the war. Rey even presided over the European Commission from 1967 to 1970.

The political emancipation of the Flemings that had been achieved during the 1920s and 1930s, was reversed after the war. In the first post-war government, less than one third of the cabinet ministers (6 out of 19) were Flemings. The result of the shift in the balance between the competing elites was reflected in the 1947 census in Brussels. Only 24% of the capital's population still considered it wise to declare itself predominantly Dutch-speaking, although 33% of the Brussels conscripts before the war had been Flemings.

The disenfranchisement of 3% of the Belgian electorate was a political handicap, not just for the Flemish-Nationalists, who did not regain a seat in Parliament until 1954, but also for the *Christelijke Volkspartij* (CVP, Christian People's Party), as the former Catholic Party was renamed after the war. At first the Christian-Democrats had welcomed the elimination of the Flemish-nationalist political elite. Soon, however, the CVP realised that the elimination of a large section of the conservative Flemish electorate strengthened the position of the extreme Left within the remainder of the political spectrum. In August 1945, Van Acker was able to form an extreme-left government of Socialists, Liberals and Communists. When the Christian-Democrats returned to power two years later, the list of the 'civil purged' was no longer extended.

The period of the purge coincided with the most serious political crisis in Belgium's history: the so-called 'Royal Issue.' Because Leopold III was a captive in Germany when the country was liberated, Parliament declared on 20 September 1944 that the King was 'unable to reign' (Article 82 of the Constitution) and appointed his brother, Prince Charles, the Count of Flanders, as Regent. This was not to the liking of the queen-mother, who wished to become the regent herself. But Spaak had warned the Allies that Elisabeth was 'a schemer with one half of her backside on the throne and trying to wriggle the rest on.'[cviii]

The Prince Regent was not much interested in politics. Charles lived mostly at night, when he indulged in whiskey and women. He duly put his signature to all the papers that his secretary, André De Staercke, laid before him. When he was later asked why he had agreed to the execution of the

Catholic MP Vindevogel, though the latter could hardly be accused of collaborating, he replied that he did not recall having signed the execution order. Soon, De Staercke, who was only 32 years old, became the real man in power at the royal palace. Charles placed all his trust in him. Like many of Charles's friends and servants, De Staercke was a homosexual. Rumours had it that the Prince was extremely jealous and wanted to make sure that members of his entourage did not sleep with his girlfriends.

De Staercke organised the Prince Regent's daily schedule so that it left plenty of time for relaxation and pleasure. The Prince usually did not go to sleep before the early hours. Around noon, the servants propped Charles up and helped him recover from his hang-over. So long as Charles had not touched whiskey, he was amiable and charming, but when drunk, he became aggressive. He destroyed furniture, hit his girlfriends and once even tried to strangle one of them. The Prince flitted from one woman to another and had a legendary sexual appetite. He also loved to visit ordinary brothels. Many whores in Belgium claimed to be 'the *fiancée* of Prince Charles.' One prostitute waxed poetic when recollecting her experience for Charles's biographer: 'He was one of those rare men who made you forget that our profession is all pretence,' she said. 'He was not a handsome man, but he had eyes that pierced you. I had the impression that he was trying to see inside my knickers and my heart at the same time.'[cix]

Power being an aphrodisiac, Charles soon began to fancy his position as Regent. But could it last? When Leopold was set free in Austria on 7 May 1945, the Prince and De Staercke accompanied the ministerial delegation that went to Sankt-Wolfgang to greet the King. Van Acker was prepared to bring the monarch home, provided Leopold promised to dismiss his wartime advisors and accept the international treaties that had been signed between the Pierlot government and the Western Allies. Afterwards Van Acker told Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British Ambassador to Brussels, that the King 'appeared to make no difficulty' regarding these conditions.[cx] Why, then, did the Sankt-Wolfgang meeting end in disaster?

Van Acker was not the first member of the Belgian delegation to meet Leopold. On the evening of the delegation's arrival, 9 May, the King and his wife received Charles in private. Within minutes they were quarrelling. Charles ostentatiously refused to greet Lilian and behaved as if she were not present. This made Leopold lose his temper. The brothers began to quarrel. Charles left in anger. He paid his brother a second visit the following morning. After barely a few minutes, he walked out, slamming the door. Meanwhile, Spaak and De Staercke had persuaded the other members of the Belgian delegation to demand of the King that he return to Brussels without his wife. Leopold's subsequent talks with the delegation lasted three days, while Lilian eavesdropped from an adjacent room. Spaak told a British Colonel, who had accompanied the Belgians to Sankt-Wolfgang, 'that although the King had changed in appearance, he had not changed his outlook – he was still a Fascist!!' Spaak was bent on revenge. He conspired with De Staercke against the King. The Colonel noted in his report that the events were truly 'Shakespearean' and 'shrouded in an air of the worst story book intrigue.'[cxi] Soon, it all became

too much for Leopold. He displayed the symptoms of a nervous breakdown on 10 May and again on 11 May. The next morning, the King refused to resume the talks with the politicians. He said that he was too ill to travel and that he would not be able to come to Belgium for at least a month.

His refusal to leave Lilian temporarily behind in Austria and accompany the ministers to Brussels cost him his throne. Upon their return from Sankt-Wolfgang, Spaak and De Staercke handed the Socialist newspaper *Le Peuple* damaging documents relating to Leopold's actions during the war, including his telegram congratulating the *Führer* on his birthday in 1941. The paper published these, along with vicious personal attacks on Lilian. On 28 May, politicians from the Socialist, Communist and Liberal parties held a joint meeting in Brussels, where the Francophone Liberal MP Charles Janssens called Leopold 'the greatest *incivique* of them all.' The three parties of the Left said that Charles had to remain Regent until Leopold's eldest son Baudouin, the Duke of Brabant, was old enough to succeed his father. The three parties were overwhelmingly Francophone, while the Christian-Democrat Party was predominantly Flemish. The CVP spoke out in favour of the King, who, once he had been branded as an *incivique*, came to be regarded by many Flemings as yet another victim of an unjust purge.

On 15 June, Leopold announced from Sankt-Wolfgang that he was prepared to return to Brussels without Lilian. But it was too late. The Socialist Party called for a general strike and a march on Brussels to depose the King by force. The Liberal Ministers of the Interior and of Defence announced that they would refuse to order the police and the army to restore law and order in case of unrest. Knatchbull-Hugessen informed Churchill that Van Acker had warned him that there was a real danger of 'civil war.' Even if the Belgian authorities tried to restore order, the British Ambassador did not expect them to be able to do so, as they 'had few police and only one battalion of troops of doubtful reliability' at their disposition.[cxii]

Knatchbull-Hugessen feared that the situation could escalate into Belgium's falling apart. He argued that, given the 'long-term importance of Belgium as a factor in the European system,' the policy of non-intervention of British and American troops had to be reconsidered.[cxiii] At the Foreign Office in London, Frederick-Robert Hoyer-Millar (later Lord Inchyra) disagreed and advised on 26 June 'to keep out of this business as much as we possibly can.'[cxiv] Two days later, Knatchbull-Hugessen wrote a letter to Eden's deputy, Oliver Harvey, in which he referred to 'French intrigue in Wallonia.' He said he was unable to measure the extent of it, but pointed out that Paris would not be 'deterred from pursuing the French separatist and annexationist ambitions by a desire not to displease us.' Indeed, it was 1830 all over again. The Ambassador pointed out that 'the whole existence of Belgium, not to mention the dynasty, rests largely on the fact that it is essential to our strategic and political interests on the continent.' He wanted to know whether, if Belgium broke up, London 'intended to pursue the policy of abstention beyond the point where those interests, which have been permanent at all events since 1830 (without going back to Marlborough), would be sacrificed without any action on our part to defend them.'[cxv]

Harvey replied that the British reaction to a possible break-up of Belgium would 'depend on a large variety of factors, and in particular on whether the break-up came as the result of a bare-faced aggression on the part of the French, or as the culmination of a genuine separatist movement in Wallonia or through some combination of the two. Whichever way it came it would be rash to assume that our interests would oblige us to intervene with British troops either to keep the Walloons from seceding or to engage in conflict with the French.'[cxvi] For the very first time since 1831, London refused to guarantee the existence of the artificial Belgian state. Harvey explicitly contradicted Knatchbull-Hugessen's assertion that the existence of Belgium was essential to Britain's strategic and political interests. He insisted that 'it would be more correct to say that the territorial integrity of Belgium has always been and will remain a paramount British interest so long as the alternative is the occupation of Belgium or of a substantial part of it by a country which there is good reason to fear might at some stage represent a military threat to this country.'[cxvii] Splitting Belgium into two independent states would thus not necessarily be considered to be against British interests.

Moreover, the Americans did not mind if Belgium disappeared. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had told Oliver Lyttelton (later Lord Chandos), a member of the British War Cabinet: 'In Belgium there are two communities. One are called Walloons and they speak French, the others are called Flemings and they speak a kind of low Dutch. They can't live together. After the war, we should make two states, one known as Walloonia and one as Flamingia, and we should amalgamate Luxembourg with Flamingia. What do you say to that?'[cxviii]

The talk of violence, impending civil war and of his country's falling apart made Leopold postpone his return. On 14 July, he announced that he would not return until the Belgian people decided whether or not they wanted him back. The Christian-Democrats demanded that a referendum be held on the issue. In Belgium, two blocks now opposed each other: the Carlists and the Leopoldists. The former, predominantly Socialist and Walloon, the latter, predominantly Conservative and Flemish. The first round had been won by the Carlists.

30 The Grapes of Wrath

On 30 September 1945, Leopold left Austria, where he felt he was being watched by the Allied authorities. He hired a huge lakeside mansion, *Château Le Reposoir*, in Prégny near Geneva. From Switzerland, the King started a propaganda campaign to improve his record with the Belgians. His secretary, Jacques Pirenne, had friendly authors depict Leopold as a staunch anti-Nazi. Instead of being 'the greatest *incivique* of them all,' in Pirenne's version of the facts, the King was the greatest hero of the *Résistance*. Pirenne, a professor of History at the University of Brussels, created the 'Leopoldist' myth, in the same way that his father Henri Pirenne had created Belgicism: by *rewriting* history. If the facts did not fit, Pirenne simply denied them. 'He is a man of prejudice,' Leopold told Capelle, 'he has nothing of the historian in him; he wants to present history as he interprets it and refuses to take elements into account which contradict his version of the facts.'[cxix] Apart from Pirenne, Leopold could also count on the unwavering support of Cardinal Van Roey, who depicted the King's difficulty in regaining his throne as yet another *thorn in the crown of his martyrdom*. Children at Catholic schools were taught the prayer: 'Lord, bless our King Leopold. May His suffering and His sacrifice rise up to You, like the scent of incense.' Some Catholics even held speeches entitled 'My King, my Christ! My Leopold, my Jesus!'[cxx]

Not all Leopoldists were pleased with the lies and the exaggerations. Gaston Eyskens, the parliamentary leader of the Christian-Democrat CVP, thought the King's secretary was overdoing it. Pirenne was catering exclusively for the Francophone Right-wing Belgicists, thereby undermining royal support in Flanders. At his press conferences, Pirenne spoke only French. Eyskens was perplexed that, notwithstanding the obvious contempt of the royal entourage for the Flemings, the latter remained so staunchly Leopoldist. In his memoirs he writes that Flemish public opinion did not have much 'political awareness.'[cxxi]

The proposal of the CVP to hold a referendum about the King's return was not accepted by the other parties. The 'Royal Issue' became the main issue of the 1946 elections. In Flanders the CVP improved 15 percent compared with its 1939 result, in Wallonia only 2 percent. In the country as a whole, the Christian-Democrats obtained 42.5%, the Socialists 31.6%, the Communists 12.7% and the Liberals 8.9%. In Flanders, the corresponding figures were 56.2%, 28.3%, 5.5% and 8.4%. Though the three parties of the Left did not have a majority in Flanders, they had a majority in Belgium as a whole. They formed a coalition cabinet led by Camille Huysmans, a Flemish Socialist and a convinced republican. Huysmans soon became a close friend of the queen-mother, who had meanwhile converted from Nazism to Stalinism, and was sending personal messages to 'my dear Marshal Stalin.'[cxxii] Only her anti-Americanism remained as fierce as ever. '*J'ai un culte pour Lenin*,' she told Huysmans. He confessed to her that he was an 'orthodox Marxist.'[cxxiii]

Elisabeth was not able to change Huysmans's opinion of Leopold, but she succeeded in making him less of a republican. 'If Leopold abdicates, then the path is clear for Prince Charles to take the throne – provided he is willing,' Huysmans told the press in October 1946. Charles was more than willing. De Staercke asked Winston Churchill to help get Charles on the throne. Churchill suggested that the Prince Regent marry his daughter Mary in exchange for British support. Preparations were made for a meeting between Mary Churchill and the Prince. Mary and her parents, however, got only as far as the British Embassy in Paris. There, to the annoyance of all, she fell in love with Christopher Soames, a young attaché, whom she married instead.

In March 1947, the Huysmans cabinet fell. Foreign Minister Spaak, irritated with his Communist colleagues, contacted Eyskens. Spaak and Eyskens agreed on most topics and formed a centrist coalition of Socialists and Christian-Democrats with 8 Flemish and 11 Francophone ministers. The CVP was still demanding a referendum about the King's return, while the Socialists wanted Leopold to abdicate, but Eyskens thought there were more important issues to deal with than arranging the return of a stupid stubborn king. Leopold complained to Capelle: 'Despite the presence of the CVP in the government, I do not receive a franc from the Civil List, and then they dare to pretend that I have their support!'[cxxiv] Since Charles had become Regent, the annual royal stipend of 12 million francs went to the latter instead of to the King. Leopold was in financial trouble, caused by his luxurious way of life and his 'expensive' wife, whose wardrobe was widely commented upon in the Belgian papers. One of Lilian's cleavages even aroused emotions in Parliament, where MPs criticised her for showing 'her naked bosom' in public.

On 26 June 1949 new general elections were held in Belgium; the first ever in which women were allowed to vote. Again, the CVP made the King's return the central issue of the campaign. The Christian-Democrats progressed in Wallonia and lost in Flanders. On a national basis, the CVP gained 43.6% of the votes (+1.1); in Flanders, it obtained 54.4% (-1.8). The CVP were two seats short of an absolute majority in the Chamber of Representatives. Eyskens formed a coalition with the Liberals, who agreed to hold a referendum about the King's return. The new government counted eight Flemings on a total of 17 cabinet ministers, an improvement on the previous post-war governments.

The long-awaited referendum was held on 12 March 1950. In Belgium as a whole, 57.7% voted for Leopold's return. While in Flanders, however, 72.0% of the electorate declared itself in favour of Leopold's return, in Wallonia only 42.1% and in Brussels 48.1% did so. The Francophones took to the streets and started rioting. André Renard, the young and charismatic leader of the Socialist Trade Union in Liège and the publisher of the newspaper *La Wallonie*, said that the Walloons wanted 'to rid themselves of the servile northern bigots' in Flanders. 'The very existence of our people is threatened by the demographic advantage of the Flemings,' he wrote. 'Incited by their religious and economic leaders, the Flemings use Belgian centralism to oppress the numerically weaker Walloons.'[cxxv]

Renard made it clear that the Flemings had to back down, or he would proclaim an independent Walloon Socialist Republic. 'We deliberately stirred up passions,' Joseph Coppé, the editor of

Renard's newspaper, admitted forty years later: 'At the office, floor plans of army and police barracks were distributed and the *Marseillaise* was sung.'[cxxvi] During a meeting on 24 March, Renard's mentor, Joseph Merlot, a Socialist MP and the Belgian Minister of the Budget in the Huysmans and the Spaak-Eyskens cabinets, reminded the Liegeois of the decisive role which volunteers from the Walloon capital had played in 1830. The Belgian Revolution, intended to merge Belgium and France, had not been carried through to the end, Merlot said, and had to be completed. He suggested organising a Walloon national convention to install a provisional revolutionary government, with himself as Prime Minister and Renard as Minister of Defence. The French Consul in Liège participated in preparatory meetings.

Following the referendum, Leopold and Lilian seem to have been confident that they would soon return to Brussels. They decided to have a second child. By May, Lilian was pregnant. Leopold's optimism shows that he did not know the history of his country. Just as in 1912, when the Walloons refused to accept the decision to introduce school vouchers, although it had obtained a majority *in Belgium as a whole*, they now threatened to tear the state apart if the majority did not give in to them. As in 1912, the government backed down for the sake of national unity. The Christian Trade Union with its huge vested interests in both Flanders and Wallonia, did not want Belgium to fall apart. Because the trade union guaranteed Eyskens and his colleagues their eligible places on the electoral list of the CVP, the ministers were forced to save the Belgian Union, even at the cost of sacrificing a fundamental democratic principle. 'The president of the United States can be elected with a majority of one vote,' Eyskens said, 'but not a king.'[cxxvii]

The Eyskens cabinet resigned. New general elections were called for 4 June 1950. In public, the CVP campaigned under the promise that, no matter what the consequences might be, the King had to come back. The party knew it would derive electoral benefit from this stance. Eyskens later explained: 'There is always a difference between what politicians say and what they mean. To the electorate the CVP leaders said 'We will put the King on the throne again,' but to me they added, 'so that he can abdicate honourably.' The first part of the sentence was meant for the masses, the second part only for certain people.'[cxxviii]

Flanders and Wallonia again voted differently. The CVP's pledge to bring Leopold back, brought it additional votes in Flanders, but lost it some in Wallonia. In the country as a whole, the Christian-Democrats obtained 47.7% of the vote; in Flanders, they received 60.4% of the vote. For the first time since the 1912 general elections, the Christian-Democrats gained an absolute majority in Parliament, winning 108 seats on a total of 212. The CVP could now govern alone. The new Prime Minister was the Walloon Christian-Democrat Jean Duvieusart. 'Given the situation in Wallonia, it had to be a Walloon,' Eyskens later explained.[cxxix]

Six weeks after the elections, on 20 July 1950, Parliament lifted the King's 'inability to reign' and ended the Regency. Defiant Walloon MPs sang the *Marseillaise* in protest against what they perceived to be a Flemish victory. Two days later, early in the morning, like thieves in the night, Leopold and his

sons, Baudouin and Albert, left Geneva. The King arrived at the military airport of Evere near Brussels at 7:18 a.m. He was driven the short distance to Laken Palace along streets guarded by 5,500 soldiers and policemen but otherwise eerily empty.

As soon as the news spread that the King had returned, a general strike erupted in Wallonia. Heavy riots followed, pro- and anti-Leopoldists fought in the streets of Brussels – the latter under the personal command of the middle-aged Spaak, who had rediscovered the revolutionary fervour of his youth. The Brussels riots left two people dead. In Wallonia local mayors prevented the municipal police from restoring order. In Liège a parallel police force of Socialist trade unionists was formed. Flanders, however, refused to go on strike and remained peaceful, apart from Ghent where Socialists beat a tram driver to death for refusing to go on strike. The murderers were never punished.

On 30 July, rioters attacked a group of policemen in Grâce-Berleur, a suburb of Liège. When hooligans tried to grab a policeman's gun, the police fired. Three men were killed on the spot, a fourth one died a few days later. Wallonia now had its martyrs; Renard could trigger his Revolution. He mobilised for a huge protest demonstration in Brussels on 1 August.

Leopold was prepared to fight for his throne. The Government, however, did not want to take the responsibility for a civil war. With the exception of one single minister, Albert De Vleeschauwer, the 'Flamingoth' of the London wartime cabinet, all the ministers privately asked the King to step down. If he did not abdicate, they would resign. In his memoirs, the King writes that the Christian-Democrats begged him not to reveal to the public that it was the CVP that was taking his crown from him: 'One of them, Theo Lefevre, even asked me, on his knees, not to blame the CVP. These gentlemen had decided my fate, but were afraid to take up their responsibility before the public.'[cxxx] Late in the evening of 31 July, the Government told the King that it would not call in the army to maintain law and order in Brussels when the anti-Leopoldists entered town the next morning. It was the last thorn in his crown.

At six o'clock in the morning of 1 August, the King signed a letter of abdication in favour of his son, the Duke of Brabant. The Socialists cancelled their march on Brussels. Less than a fortnight after his return to Laken, Leopold's reign had come to an end. He had truly reigned only from February 1934 to May 1940 and during the last ten days of July 1950. His brother Charles, who was Regent from September 1944 to July 1950, had ruled nearly as long as he.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the text:

ABIR	Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company
ACEC	*Ateliers de Constructions Electrique de Charleroi*
AIA	*Association Internationale Africaine*
AIC	*Association Internationale du Congo*
BWP	*Belgische Werklieden Partij*: Belgian Workers' Party
CBF	*Commissie voor Bank- en Financiewezen*: Commission for Banking and Financial Business
CEOFR	Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism
CFS	Congo Free State
CVP	*Christelijke Volkspartij*: Christian People's Party
DeVlag	*Deutsch-Vlaemische Arbeitsgemeinschaft*: Flemish Nazi Party
EC	European Communities
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
ESH	*Eurosystem Hospitalier*
EU	European Union
FDF	*Front des Francophones*
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Gestapo	*Geheime Staatspolizei*: Nazi German secret police
GIA	*Groupe Islamique Armé*: Algerian terrorist group
MNC	*Mouvement National Congolais*
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
RSHA	*Reichssicherheitsdienst Hauptamt*: Headquarters of the Nazi State Security and Secret Police
Sabena	*Société Anonyme Belge d'Exploitation de la Navigation Aérienne*: Belgian national airlines
SD	*Sicherheitsdienst*: State Security Service of Nazi Germany
SG	*Société Générale*
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*: German Socialist Party
UN	United Nations
UM	*Union Minière (du Haut-Katanga)*
VB	*Vlaams Blok*
VNV	*Vlaams-Nationaal Verbond*: Flemish-Nationalist Alliance

Abbreviations used in the notes:

AQO	Archives of the Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry), Paris
BAK NS	*Bundesarchiv Koblenz Nationalsozialismus*: German National Archives of the Nazi period, Koblenz
DS	Archives of the US Department of State, Washington DC
FO	Archives of the British Foreign Office, Kew (London)

GRA	German Records of Alexandria, the German World War II documents in the US National Archives, Alexandria, VA
GSA	General State Archives, Brussels
HHS	*Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv*: State Archives, Vienna
MFA	Archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels
NAW	US National Archives, Washington DC
PAB	*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes Bonn*: Archives of the (West-)German Foreign Ministry 1945-1990, Bonn
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew (London)
RAB	Royal Archives Brussels, Brussels
RAB FC	*Fonds Congo*: Congo Archives of Leopold II
RAB FG	*Fonds Goffinet*: Private Archives of Leopold I and Leopold II
RAB FG AQL	Archives of Queen Louise
RAB FG PSDB	Archives of the Private Secretariat of the Duke of Brabant (later Leopold II)
RAB FH	*Fonds Havre*: Correspondence between Albert I's cabinet and the Belgian government 1914-1918
RAB FLI	*Fonds Leopold I*: Archives of the secretariat and cabinet of Leopold I
RAB K	Congo Archives, 1960-1961
RAB KAD	King Albert I's Diary
RAB SAE	Archives of the Secretariat of Albert I and Queen Elisabeth
RAB SLIII	Archives of the Secretariat of Leopold III
RAM	Royal Army Museum, Brussels
RAM WC	Wilmet Collection
RAW	Royal Archives Windsor, Windsor
RAW QVJ	Queen Victoria's Journal
RMCA	Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren
SAC	*Staatsarchiv Coburg:* State Archives Coburg, Coburg
SAP MP	State Archives Pilsen, Pilsen (Czech Republic), Mensdorff-Pouilly Papers
SOMA	*Studie- en Documentatiecentrum Oorlog en Hedendaagse Maatschappij*: Study and Documentation Centre of World War II and Contemporary Society, Brussels
SOMA PC24	Capelle Papers
SOMA TB	*Tätigkeitsberichte*: Daily reports of the German Military Administration in Brussels, 1940-44

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Footnotes

[i] Leopold III 2, p. 27.
[ii] *Strijd*, 3 May 1936.
[iii] *De Schelde*, 14 Aug. 1932 and 26 Jan. 1933.
[iv] Quoted in Claeys-Van Haegendoren, p. 127.
[v] *L'Indépendance Belge*, 17 Feb. 1937.
[vi] Quoted in De Schryver and De Wever, vol. II, p. 1995.
[vii] De Man 3, p. 38.
[viii] Denis and Ysabie, p. 9.
[ix] De Lentdecker 2, p. 22.
[x] Leopold III 2, p. 18.
[xi] Quotes in Coolsaet, pp. 297-298.
[xii] Quoted in De Wever 3, pp. 195-196.
[xiii] Quoted in Elias 2, vol. IV, p. 126.
[xiv] SD report, in De Wever 3, pp. 332 and 334.
[xv] Saerens, p. 420.
[xvi] RAB SLIII nr. XV A13/60, Minutes Capelle, 16 and 27 Sept. 1939.
[xvii] RAB SLIII nr. XV A13/95, Minutes Aspremont-Lynden, 17 Oct. 1939.
[xviii] GSA microfilm 2030, Minutes cabinet meeting, 19 Oct. 1939.
[xix] SOMA PC24 nr. 1, pp. 43 and 63.
[xx] Churchill to Eden, 27 May 1944, in Keyes, p. 400.
[xxi] Personal Minute Churchill, 8 Apr. 1945, in Keyes, p. 400.
[xxii] SOMA PC24 nr. 1, pp. 147-150.
[xxiii] GSA microfilm 2081/1, Minutes cabinet meeting, 8 May 1940.
[xxiv] Belgian Chamber of Representatives, Parliamentary Records, 22 Nov. 1938, pp. 52-53.
[xxv] Quoted in Saerens, p. 212.
[xxvi] RAB SLIII, Leopold III to Pierlot, 23 Jan. 1940.
[xxvii] GRA 501/102, Wehrmacht Administration Activity Report nr. 7, 4 Aug. 1940, p. 49.
[xxviii] Quoted in Lambrechts, p. 106.
[xxix] Quoted in Gérard-Libois and Gotovitch 1, p. 114.
[xxx] Quoted in De Man 3, pp. 76-77.
[xxxi] GRA 175/120, Reeder to Himmler, 20 Dec. 1943.
[xxxii] Van Overstraeten 1, p. 690.
[xxxiii] *Verslag van de Commissie van Voorlichting*, Appendix 38, p. 269.
[xxxiv] Leopold III 2, p. 56.
[xxxv] Leopold III 2, pp. 79 and 84.
[xxxvi] Quotes in Keyes, pp. 365-366 and 388-389.
[xxxvii] Goebbels' diary, 30 May 1940, in Goebbels, vol. IV, p. 183.
[xxxviii] Raskin, p. 104.
[xxxix] Pastoral letter, 31 May 1940, in Bishops, pp. 138-139.
[xl] Speer, p. 54.
[xli] Quoted in Van Goethem and Velaers, p. 452.
[xlii] Janson to Daye, 25 July 1940, in Van Goethem and Velaers, p. 449.
[xliii] SOMA PC24 nr 2, p. 137.
[xliv] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, pp. 216-217.
[xlv] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, p. 68.
[xlvi] Id.
[xlvii] Wodon to Leopold III, 4 July 1940, quoted in Van Goethem and Velaers, p. 385.
[xlviii] Van Overstraeten 2, p. 46.
[xlix] Quoted in Claeys-Van Haegendoren, pp. 395-396.
[l] De Man 3, p. 33.
[li] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, p. 205.
[lii] SOMA PS4 nr. 1, p. 83.
[liii] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, pp. 93-94.

[liv] Quoted in Stengers 6, p. 117. Also Keyes, p. 432.
[lv] Quoted in Keyes, p. 440.
[lvi] Makins to Halifax, 29 Sept. 1940, in Keyes, p. 441.
[lvii] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, pp. 76-77.
[lviii] Quoted in Petacco, p. 154.
[lix] Leopold III to Willequet, 22 Nov. 1976, in Willequet 4, p. 172.
[lx] De Man 3, p. 33.
[lxi] De Man 3, p. 37.
[lxii] Spaak, vol. I, p. 26.
[lxiii] Quotes in Van Goethem and Velaers, pp. 611 and 614.
[lxiv] Eyskens 3, p. 108.
[lxv] Quoted in Saerens, p. 160.
[lxvi] Quoted in Saerens, p. 308.
[lxvii] Quoted in De Wever 3, p. 75.
[lxviii] Waysblatt, pp. 457-458.
[lxix] Quoted in Saerens, pp. 264 and 267.
[lxx] *De SS-Man*, 1 Mar. 1941.
[lxxi] PAB Inland II g. Belgien 1940-1943, Heydrich to Ribbentrop, 29 Jan. 1941.
[lxxii] BAK NS 19 (Neu) 1544, Himmler to Bormann, 13 July 1942.
[lxxiii] Ehlers, 31 Jan. 1942, in Steinberg 1, p. 139.
[lxxiv] Hitler 1, p. 221; Hitler 2, pp. 302 and 341-342.
[lxxv] Van Overstraeten 2, p. 140.
[lxxvi] SOMA TB nr. 18, 1 Sept.-Dec. 1941.
[lxxvii] SOMA PC24 nr. 3, p. 448/38.
[lxxviii] SOMA PC24 nr. 2, pp. 216-217 and 219.
[lxxix] Keyes, p. 359.
[lxxx] Max Vanden Berg to Mgr. Kerkhofs, 21 Sept. 1942, in Steinberg 3, vol. II, p. 201.
[lxxxi] BAK NS 19 (Neu) 1983, Berger to Himmler, 21 Oct. 1942.
[lxxxii] BAK NS 19 (Neu) 1557, Berger to Himmler, 4 Nov. 1942.
[lxxxiii] For an English translation of Father Callewaert's letter, see Hermans, pp. 305-310.
[lxxxiv] BAK NS 19 (Neu) 1530, Berger to Brand, private secretary of Himmler, 30 Aug. 1943.
[lxxxv] De Wever 3, p. 541.
[lxxxvi] BAK NS 19 (Neu) 842, Berger to Himmler, 28 May 1943.
[lxxxvii] SOMA microfilm FO 371/38872, p. 43, 18 Apr. 1944.
[lxxxviii] Huysmans, p. XXIV.
[lxxxix] Quoted in Florquin, vol. VII, p. 128.
[xc] Quoted in Van Overstraeten 2, p. 221.
[xci] Quoted in Van Overstraeten 2, p. 230.
[xcii] Van Overstraeten 2, p. 229.
[xciii] Van Overstraeten 2, pp. 292-294.
[xciv] SOMA PC24 nr. 6, p. 35.
[xcv] All quotes in De Jonghe 3, pp. 299-300.
[xcvi] SOMA microfilms FO 123/593, p. 19, Eden to Churchill, 4 Oct. 1944.
[xcvii] Quoted in Stengers 8, p. 301.
[xcviii] DS 855.00/12-1244, Sawyer to State Department, 12 Dec. 1944.
[xcix] Eyskens 1, p. 57.
[c] Quoted in Van Roy 2, p. 25.
[ci] Quoted in De Bens, p. 337.
[cii] Quoted in De Lentdecker 1, p. 57.
[ciii] Vlaemynck 2, pp. 56-57.
[civ] Huyse and Dhondt, p. 192.
[cv] Quoted in Coolsaet, p. 349.
[cvi] Huyse and Dhondt, p. 267.
[cvii] Quoted in Van Goethem and Velaers, p. 1091, n. 121.
[cviii] SOMA microfilm FO 123/599 p. 104, Lt. Col. Williams-Thomas to FO.
[cix] De Lentdecker 2, p. 94.

[cx] SOMA microfilm FO 49012 p. 33, Knatchbull-Hugessen to FO, 3 Nov. 1945.
[cxi] SOMA microfilm FO 123/595 pp. 47-48, Lt. Col. Williams-Thomas to FO.
[cxii] SOMA microfilm FO 371/49009 p. 71, Knatchbull-Hugessen to Churchill, 20 June 1945.
[cxiii] SOMA microfilm FO 371/49009 pp. 107-108, Knatchbull-Hugessen to Foreign Office, 23 June 1945.
[cxiv] SOMA microfilm FO 371/49009 pp. 104-106, Hoyer-Millar, 24-26 June 1945.
[cxv] SOMA microfilm FO 371/49010 pp. 27-28, Knatchbull-Hugessen to Harvey, 28 June 1945.
[cxvi] SOMA microfilm FO 371/49010 p. 31, Harvey to Knatchbull-Hugessen, 14 July 1945.
[cxvii] Id.
[cxviii] Lyttelton, p. 309.
[cxix] SOMA PC24 nr. 3, Meeting with Leopold III, 26-28 Aug. 1948, p. 949/3.
[cxx] Eyskens 3, p. 287.
[cxxi] Eyskens 3, p. 275.
[cxxii] RAB SAE nr. 617, Elisabeth to Stalin, 8 May 1945.
[cxxiii] Quotes in Erauw, pp. 156 and 276, n. 238.
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[cxxv] *La Wallonie*, 24 Mar. 1950.
[cxxvi] Anthierens, p. 54.
[cxxvii] Eyskens 2, pp. 65-66.
[cxxviii] Eyskens 2, 67-68.
[cxxix] Eyskens 2, p. 75.
[cxxx] Leopold III 2, pp. 184-185.