

BRUNO DE WEVER, FRANS-JOS VERDOODT & ANTOON VRINTS

FLEMISH PATRIOTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NATION:
HOW THE FLEMISH NATION CEASED TO BE 'SMALL'

NISE ESSAYS 4

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INTRODUCTION

This essay applies the influential theory of Czech historian Miroslav Hroch related to the development of ‘small’ nations on the territory of dominant nation-states to the case of Flanders. How did the ‘small’ Flemish nation develop within the dominant Belgian nation-state? How did their roles switch, the Flemish nation gaining the upper hand over the Belgian nation? To understand this, it is useful to look at the social context in which the founders of the Flemish nation, or ‘patriots’ (*patriotten*) operated, and the social programme that they laid out for the Flemish nation.

This essay defends the hypothesis that the Flemish Movement was for a long time unsuccessful in integrating the working-class movement and the ownership class into the Flemish nation, which at the time remained subordinate to the Belgian nation. For decades, the Flemish patriots failed to reach the masses. Essentially, their social base was limited to the middle classes. In addition, their programme did not have, or only had to a lesser extent, the aim of integrating the other social classes. It was not until the 1960s that the situation evolved, on the one hand because of socioeconomic changes which led to an expansion of the middle classes and on the other hand because of sociocultural upheavals which enlarged the social base of the Flemish project. The Flemish patriots were then able to get a process of state reform and devolution underway which brought the Flemish nation to the fore in everyday life. It was in this context that the ‘massification’ of the Flemish nation took shape and that it ceased to be ‘small’ in relation to the Belgian nation.¹



The Czech historian Miroslav Hroch during the presentation of his intellectual autobiography, Prague, 30 August 2018, outlining his influential theory on the formation of nations. Hroch's writings have proved to be of importance to the N-VA's (National Flemish Alliance) chairman Bart De Wever in drawing out the blueprints of the nationalist party. [ADV N, Antwerp]

I. MIROSLAV HROCH'S THEORY

Miroslav Hroch, the well-known Czech theorist of nationalism, laid out the theory that the success of a national movement is tightly linked to the social conditions in which it develops.² His comparative analysis of national movements enjoys wide recognition today.³ Hroch formulated the founding principles of his doctrine in the 1960s⁴ and since then, he has refined and expanded his theory and model through dozens of publications. His most recent synthesis appeared in 2015.⁵

In this essay, we will apply Hroch's ideas specifically to the Flemish Movement, given that they are particularly well adapted to the historical-social analysis of processes of nation construction. This kind of analysis is not new. However, until now, Hroch's theory has been used essentially for explaining the developments of the nineteenth century and the interwar years.⁶ In this article, we continue the exercise all the way to the present. The study of a century and a half of history is necessarily limited to the identification of key elements over the long term. This approach has two major weaknesses. On the one hand, if it aims to formulate general conclusions, it does not always allow us to highlight all of the nuances. On the other hand, the absence of a satisfactory empirical analysis for numerous periods prevents the effective confirmation of the general hypotheses. Therefore, the present essay has a clearly exploratory character.

Hroch was interested in the 'small' European nations in the nineteenth century. 'Small nations', or subaltern ethnic groups, develop on the territory of a dominant 'large nation'. Flanders is an example of one of the former. The notions of 'small' and 'large' nation are not defined by population level but by a relation of subordination to a dominant position, as was the case, in this instance, of the Dutch-speaking Flemish nation with regard to the French-dominated Belgian nation. At no point was the number of Dutch-speakers lower than the number of French-speakers. According to official data, 2.4 million Belgians spoke Dutch in 1846, as opposed to 1.8 million for French, giving 57% and 43% respectively. In 1880, the proportion reached approximate parity because of Flemish emigration and Francisation. Subsequently, the higher birth rate in Flanders brought the ratio to about 60% Dutch-speakers to 40% French-speakers. The Dutch-speakers thus never formed a demographic minority. They were however a sociological minority from the time when their native

language placed them in a subordinate position in a society in which speaking French was more advantageous in numerous respects, notably in the socioeconomic sphere. This, according to Hroch, defines a 'small nation'.

Hroch's empirical analysis of subaltern ethnic groups in Europe concentrates on the 'long nineteenth century', that is to say the period between the French Revolution and the First World War, and compares a certain number of national movements in Europe, including the Flemish Movement. It places them in the context of the great social upheavals that marked the whole of the nineteenth century in Europe, that is, socially, the development of a working class, economically, the emergence of industrial capitalism and politically, the arrival of (mass) democracy.

Small national movements found success when their programme dovetailed with the interests of the most important social classes, namely the working class and the capitalist elites, and when these social classes found their place in the small nation, which thereby ceased to be 'small' (as it was no longer subordinate to the large nation in which it had developed). According to Hroch, the small nation is characterised by its incomplete class structure; the construction of the nation is not complete until the social composition of the small nation corresponds to the typical capitalist class structure. In other words, the nation is 'mature' and ceases to be a small nation once it is supported by the social classes that constitute society, from financial elites and landowners through the middle class all the way to the proletariat.

Hroch shows that the construction of the nation takes place in the framework of the social transformations which are at the basis of modern societies. He thus considers the creation of the nation as a link in the transition between a feudal society of orders and a bourgeois capitalist society. The Third Estate identifies itself with the nation and the working class is integrated into the process. Consequently, Hroch concludes that the construction of modern nations is not just the simple consequence of a conjuncture of objective social relations. It also requires a change of mentality among at least part of the population. His vision owes its originality from the fact that it connects social change with the change of mentality, as being two sides of the same coin. Hroch argues that the development of a small nation (like the Flemish nation in Belgium) depends on the success of the programme and the actions of its patriots, in the overall context of social, economic and political development.

Hroch also considers the conditions under which the patriotism of the small nation spreads, or, in other words, to the ways in which national sentiment takes root in individual consciousness and how this interacts with objective social, economic and political relations which connect the individual to his or her environment. According to Hroch in the case of small nations, the construction of the nation is particularly complicated: the national movement sets itself not only against the existing ruling classes of the *Ancien Régime* but also against the new leading elites of the bourgeoisie. This situation triggers the emergence of alternative elites who oppose the domination of the leading elites of the large nation. In this process, the vernacular language is often, but not always, a tool to underpin their role as challengers.

Hroch distinguishes three phases in the process of national transformation. In phase A, a small group of impassioned intellectuals, whom Hroch calls 'patriots', manifests its fervour for the culture of the small nation. Throughout phase B, the patriots organise an intense nationalist agitation through associations, in periodicals, in national meetings, etc. During phase C, the national movement acquires the status of a mass movement as it succeeds in integrating the working class. These three phases are part of a process of social transformation, itself made up of three stages: stage 1 entails a struggle against the *Ancien Régime*, the bourgeois and industrial revolutions and rise of industrial capitalism. Stage 2 is marked by the breakthrough of industrial capitalism and the appearance of a working class. Stage 3 defines itself through the growth of the economy and increased importance of mass communication.

Based on the moment during which the three phases and three stages evolve in relation to each other, Hroch distinguishes four types of national movements.

Type 1 or the 'integrated type': the passage from phase A to phase B precedes the industrial revolution. The transition from phase B to phase C takes place within the context of the industrial and bourgeois revolutions. The agitation of the small national movement coincides with the struggle against the *Ancien Régime*. The small national movement is complementary to this struggle and develops its own democratic programme. Phase C can manifest itself before the rise of an organised workers' movement. The working class is therefore rapidly integrated into the process of nation building. As a result all social classes are integrated into the small nation. The small nation is completed and thus ceases to be small.

Type 2 or the ‘belated type’: the evolution is similar, but the transition from phase B to phase C is realized at lower speed as a result of foreign pressure or geographically uneven socioeconomic development. The transition from phase B to phase C happens simultaneously with or after the formation of the workers’ movement. The agitation of the national movement is closely linked to class conflict within a capitalist society. The process of forming the modern nation therefore happens relatively late.

Type 3 or the ‘revolutionary type’: the national movement has already attained a mass dimension under the *Ancien Régime*. The transformation is often rather violent.

Type 4 or the ‘disintegrated type’: the passage from phase A to phase B happens after the industrial and bourgeois revolutions, and the transition from phase B to phase C is absent, or does not happen until after the creation of an organised workers’ movement, which developed in the context of the leading nation. The small nation is thus unable to complete its process of construction.

In Hroch’s perspective, a historical–social analysis is necessary for a good understanding of the history of the Flemish Movement and of the construction of the Flemish nation. The driving forces, that is the social base of the Flemish Movement (*‘flamingantisme’*), need to be highlighted. In the Flemish case, a link has to be established between the social structure and the construction of the nation. In addition, the social analysis of the Flemish Movement allows us to understand its ideology and political strategy. An integrated analysis of the history of the Flemish Movement through the lens of the triangular relationship between class, nation and ideology is necessary. This analysis certainly does not imply a rudimentary materialist approach in which the construction of the nation is purely and simply a reflection of the underlying social structure. Alongside objective social relations, the subjective evaluation of these relations influences the construction of the nation, as Olivier Boehme’s work on economic nationalism clearly demonstrates.⁷ Finally, it is also worth noting that the existence of the nation can create its own effects on the social structure.⁸

Hroch himself has already begun to look to the social history of *flamingantisme*, albeit limited to the long nineteenth century. This is why he identifies the Flemish Movement as disintegrated. The transition from phase A to phase B in the development of the national movement happened after the industrial and bourgeois revolutions, and the transition from phase B to phase C did not happen, or only happened after the

emergence of the organised workers' movement, which found its roots within the territory of the leading nation. This is why, he wrote in 1985, the small Flemish nation was not able to complete its process of construction.⁹ Thirty years later, he still considered the Flemish nation to be disintegrated, but nevertheless successful, even if that success had been deferred.¹⁰ Ultimately, phase C was attained, even though Hroch did not explain its achievement. The current essay intends to fill this gap.

Hroch uses the term 'patriots' for the elites who fashion the small nation and who make it an integrated one through their actions. He avoids using the term nationalists, given that this notion refers to an ideological conception according to which the nation deserves its own state. The integrated nation implies, certainly, a struggle aiming for a certain degree of national autonomy, but one which does not necessarily go as far as political autonomy and separation from the state in which the small nation was born. The historiography of the Flemish Movement has already examined the opposition between loyal Belgian *flaminganten* and anti-Belgian Flemish nationalists. In Hroch's terms, these two tendencies both contributed to the construction of the Flemish nation. In light of the aforementioned social-historical processes of massification of the 'small' nation, it is not surprising that, in principle, the loyal Belgian *flaminganten* would have been more likely to attain their goal of constructing the Flemish nation than anti-Belgian Flemish nationalists. Essentially, the success of the nation is measured by the spread of national consciousness among the population. Separatism might pose obstacles to the spread of national sentiment when the population, for whatever reason, remains attached to a state against which the separatists struggle. The spread of the consciousness of the existence of the 'small' nation does not necessarily imply the destruction of the 'large' nation.

Clear terminology is absolutely necessary here. The historian Harry Van Velthoven rightly considers that while analysing the construction of the Flemish nation, it is important to take note of not only the question of 'shifting identities', but also of 'shifting definitions'.¹¹ In this essay, we will use the term 'patriots', as used by Hroch, to refer to all the *flaminganten* who contributed to the formation of Flemish identity and the Flemish nation, within or against the Belgian nation-state. The political horizon in which they operated is thus subordinated to the shared contribution to the construction of a Flemish nation. In other words, the 'Flemish patriots' include a loyal Belgian and an anti-Belgian wing. In this contribution, we will call the former subgroup 'loyal *flaminganten*' and the latter 'Flemish nationalists'.

Although patriotism can be associated with any nation, the use of the term 'patriot' in relation to Flanders might initially seem unorthodox because in the Belgian context, patriotism is more usually associated with the Belgian nation-state. In English-language scholarly literature, nationalism is a general notion covering the construction of the nation and can thus, in principle, be either Belgian or Flemish. However even with Hroch's objections to the term 'nationalist' set aside, the use of the term is more likely to create confusion rather than clarity in the Belgian context. The distinction between cultural nationalists and political nationalists offers little clarity, given that cultural nationalists also operated in the political sphere and sometimes also called for Flemish autonomy in areas other than just cultural matters. To add even more to the conceptual confusion, the notion of cultural *flamingantisme* ('*cultuurflamingantisme*') is widespread in Flemish historiography, as is, to a lesser extent, that of social *flamingantisme* ('*sociaal flamingantisme*'). These notions refer to the shift from linguistic demands towards demands for autonomy in other areas, a shift which coincided with an acceleration of the construction of the Flemish nation and the development of new social classes within it.

II. THE PATRIOTS AND THE PEOPLE

Preceded by a phase during which the study of the vernacular language aroused an essentially intellectual interest, the Flemish Movement qua political factor came into being around the year 1840. Hroch explains that language is a banner under which a national movement forms because of the social composition of that movement: 'The importance of linguistic demands in phase B of national movements was inversely proportional to the share of the ruling classes and intellectual elites in the social structure of the non-dominant ethnic group at the outset of this phase'.¹²

The ideology of the Flemish Movement gradually shifted over the course of the nineteenth century. Rather than reinforcing the vernacular Dutch language to consolidate the fragile Belgian fatherland, the defence of the demands of the small Flemish nation within the large Belgian nation became the overall goal. The construction of the modern Belgian nation – which, in Hroch's point of view, was accomplished in 1830 with a new class, namely the bourgeoisie coming to power – allowed for the emergence of a new Belgian-Flemish consciousness. It originates in the inequality of status between French-speakers and Dutch-speakers. The privileged position of French constituted an expression of class difference in the nineteenth century. As in many other socially segmented societies, the Belgian elites cultivated their own elite language to distinguish themselves from 'the people'. The dominant position of the French-speaking elites, who imposed French as the working language in the administration, the justice system, the army and education, was challenged. In Francisation, the Dutch-speaking middle class saw an obstacle to the achievement of its aspirations, and they thus constituted the hard core of the *flamingant* base. The small Flemish nation arose from the opposition of what historian and contemporary observer Leo Picard called the 'Flemish sub-bourgeoisie' to the exclusive power of the French-speaking elites.¹³ It is precisely because it was socially adjacent to the elites that this 'Flemish sub-bourgeoisie' perceived the use of French as a manner of demarcation to be a humiliation.¹⁴

Why did the middle classes, who would become the flag-bearers of *flamingantisme*, not choose the most obvious path, that is, individual social mobility through the use of French, of which they usually had better command than (standard) Dutch? Why did they not abandon Dutch, which manifestly did not offer them any opportunity for personal advancement?

It was not the language in which they had been educated, and it was associated with the animus against the Protestant North and the former Dutch regime. Why did the socially ambitious classes not appropriate the norms and codes of behaviour of the ruling classes? Why did they not view Dutch language for what it was at the time, namely a tongue enjoying little prestige on the international stage and, on the national level, the disdained vernacular of the 'common' people in its regional dialectal varieties? There is no unequivocal answer to these questions. In their work *Languages in contact and conflict*, the historians and specialists in the Belgian language conflict Els Witte and Harry Van Velthoven identify some motives, both rational and emotional, such as moral indignation as a pathway to social mobility. Peer groups, connections of friendship and networks of individuals can play a role.¹⁵ Our explanatory model is based on the rational choice approach as developed in the social sciences. This approach explains the choice of a language in terms of social functionality. This theory is supported by an analysis of the way in which, in the present, different social classes react to the domination of English in the worldwide language system.¹⁶ When called on to choose one or the other language, individuals make a 'cost-benefit' analysis. They opt for the language which possesses the most value as a medium of communication among a given group, or that which offers them the most advantages, such as social prestige.

Again, it is important to stress the importance of perception. Individuals allow themselves to be guided by their subjective evaluation of an objective linguistic configuration in a given context. The option of abandoning one's language and the radical transition from Dutch to French was, socially, not the most functional one for the middle classes of Dutch-speaking Belgium. In the Dutch-speaking provinces in the nineteenth century, the linguistic configuration was such that the knowledge of Dutch and the acquisition of an official status for the vernacular language represented a socially functional instrument for the middle classes. They could not simply turn their back on Dutch, given that they needed the vernacular language to carry out their professions. They held occupations that required permanent contact with the lower social classes. However, this contact could not take place in French – which, for the large majority of the population, either a 'foreign' language, or a poorly spoken one.

The Belgian bourgeois state was totally indifferent to the language usage (and level of education) of the lower classes. The education system could have been used as a tool for the Francisation of the population, but prior to 1914 there was no obligatory schooling, and when the lower classes

Shop window of a delicatessen in Ghent (s.d. – prior to the First World War). French had also been the language of the elites in Flanders, which resulted in shops that were aimed at this social group preferring to showcase their wares in French. De Scheemaecker sold products that were unaffordable for the average person, including ‘complete dinner packages’ [Collection André Verbeke]



did go to school, teaching was more or less always in Dutch. This indifference of the bourgeois state regarding access to education for the lower social classes had the effect of limiting the value of French for communication in the Dutch-speaking provinces and the portions of the middle classes who depended on contacts with lower social classes to make a living thus had to use the vernacular language. Parochial priests, physicians, veterinarians, teachers, lawyers, printers, publishers, small business owners and shopkeepers could not do without Dutch in their daily activities. Given their position as cultural intermediaries and mediators between the French-speaking elites and the Dutch-speaking people, abandoning their language was not a realistic option. The oft-remarked upon difference between the sexes concerning language use in the middle classes in the nineteenth century can be explained by this approach. The women of this class who, because of the bourgeois ideal of respectability, were excluded from economic and political life, did not feel the necessity of using Dutch.¹⁷ The paradox in which the *flaminganten* of the nineteenth

century often spoke French in their home life also demonstrates that it was participation in public life which constrained them to continue to use Dutch.

The necessity of knowing the vernacular language was less marked among professional categories which had little direct contact with the lower social classes in their professional life (for example industrialists, bankers, wholesale traders, scholars and scientists, lecturers in higher education and the members of the clergy who occupied the highest posts in the ecclesiastical hierarchy). Only these elites could completely forego the vernacular Dutch language and express themselves exclusively in French. Francisation was thus probably limited by the fact that the economic stagnation which hit most Dutch-speaking regions limited the expansion of these social classes until late in the nineteenth century. Thus, the city of Ghent, which experienced a more rapid industrialisation than Antwerp, also experienced a stronger Francisation. The gulf between the middle-classes, who used Dutch heavily, and the French-speaking elites seems to have taken shape along these lines.

For the local authorities, which constituted the most important level of administration in nineteenth-century Belgium, the Dutch language was also indispensable in everyday practice. Except for the regions located along the language border and in the capital city of Brussels, most municipal administrations had recourse to the constitutionally guaranteed liberty of language to use Dutch as their working language.¹⁸ The use of Dutch in a social context was more important in the countryside than in the cities. In urban contexts a much larger social milieu which expressed itself solely in French, undoubtedly derived from the concentration of (upper-level) positions in cities which required no usage of the vernacular language. The number of individuals who knew French was thus higher in the cities, as was also the case along the language border. The centrality of Dutch was thus more restrained there, thereby limiting the hardship of those who abandoned the language.

This was notably the case in Brussels. In the capital, the adoption of the linguistic code of the elite offered the middle classes real opportunities for upward mobility.¹⁹ The presence of the French-speaking central administration, of the royal court, of diplomats and of high finance were so many specific factors which tipped the scales of the 'cost-benefit' analysis against Dutch among the middle classes, contrarily to what happened in the other Dutch-speaking cities (and especially the countryside). The French-speaking public to whom they sold their goods and services

in their professional capacity was economically more attractive to the middle classes than the Dutch-speaking public. The influx of wealthy and/or well-educated Walloons and French people provided even more reinforcement to the moneyed French-speaking public. Consequently, in Brussels, the typical social segregation of the nineteenth century was not only visible in the streets, but also audible. The orientation towards the French-speaking elites began a process of language abandonment among the ambitious middle classes.

In contrast, the working-class population of Brussels remained largely Dutch-speaking in the nineteenth-century society of classes. Due to the limited social mobility workers gained few advantages from learning French. Moreover, the limited education offered little opportunity to do so. Because of this, in Brussels the relationship between the social and linguistic hierarchies was closer intertwined than elsewhere in Belgium. French was associated with the well-to-do while Dutch was connected with the proletariat. While, elsewhere in Flanders, Dutch was perceived as the vernacular language and the language of the great majority of the population, even of the population as a whole, it kept a plebeian connotation in Brussels. The fact that Flemish migrants who came to live in Brussels were mostly workers and domestic servants also helped to cement this connotation. The integration of this combined social and linguistic inferiority was at the root of the shame which many Dutch-speakers of Brussels typically felt towards their mother tongue. It is therefore not at all surprising that the process of Francisation began to work on certain fractions of the lower social classes as well from the moment when, during the *Belle Époque*, the prospects of social mobility substantially increased. The transition from a bilingual, albeit segregated city towards a majority French-speaking city would last until the 1960s.

In Flanders, it was impossible to do without Dutch. Nevertheless, in the case of the middle classes, the functional necessity of mastering Dutch does not explain why they argued in favour of giving the vernacular language a more important official role. They could have adopted the same strategy as the aristocracy installed in Flanders who, in their contacts with the farmers and diverse subalterns, had recourse to the local dialect with condescending goodwill, but used French in their other social interactions. The decision not to fall back on this strategy but to engage in a difficult struggle for the equality of languages in Belgium shows that, in their eyes, this struggle fulfilled a social function. The social function of the Flemish Movement is thus explained by the specific class position of the *flaminganten*. In the framework of the systematically changing social

relations which followed industrialisation and democratisation, they felt threatened in their middle-class status. They therefore sought a guarantee and a consolidation of their social position. In the reinforcement of the position of Dutch, they saw an adequate instrument to achieve their objective.

The struggle in favour of Dutch had as its objective to reinforce the social, cultural and political capital of the threatened middle classes. In this framework, the thirst for respectability constituted a powerful driving force. Because of their language use, the middle classes were constantly under pressure from the French-speaking elites who disdained Dutch for reasons of social distinction. They perceived this situation as a humiliation, a deliberate questioning of their social status due to their usage of the vernacular language, which was considered socially inferior. The sentiments demonstrate yet again the importance of the factor of resentment. Even if they adopted the behavioural norms of the bourgeoisie, the Dutch-speaking middle classes were never taken seriously by that same bourgeoisie, because they did not satisfy the elite linguistic codes. However, respectability is indivisible; any person who fails to conform to just one bourgeois behavioural norm irrevocably endangers his or her respectable social position. Given that, unlike the upper bourgeoisie and the Brussels middle classes, the Flemish middle classes could not get away from Dutch in their daily operations, they had but one solution for increasing their respectability: contesting the linguistic hierarchy in place in Belgium by striving to raise the status of the vernacular language. For reasons of respectability, the Dutch of the Netherlands as a standard language was a rational choice: in the struggle for an equality of status with French, the chances of success of an 'isolated' Flemish, not utilised in higher functions, would be even smaller than that of a politically and culturally established language. In addition, the economies of scale were significant. The creation of a 'standard' version of Dutch allowed the middle classes to have a more respectable weapon when faced with the French of the elites than if they had opted for a host of dialects. This choice also offered them the possibility of setting themselves apart from the 'common' language usage of the lower social classes.

In raising the status of Dutch, the *flamingant* middle classes also improved their own social status. Indeed, if they depended on the usage of the vernacular language, they also created opportunities thanks to this language; Dutch served the strident social aspirations of the middle classes. The development of a literary system in the Dutch language was part of a feasible strategy which aimed to build cultural capital, of which

the creation of the Royal Flemish Academy of Language and Literature (*Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*) in 1886 was the symbol. The choice of the Dutch of the Netherlands as standard facilitated the accession of the language to a position of equality in relation to French in Belgium, an ambition realised on paper with the law of 18 April 1898 'relative to the use of the Flemish language in official publications', called the Law of Equality. The rise of the Dutch language to the rank of state language offered numerous opportunities to the *flamingant* middle classes. In fact, they were all particularly suitable for occupying the posts which were about to open up in the future bilingual state. In this new situation, the Flemish sub-bourgeoisie saw the possibility of undermining the preponderant position of the French-speaking bourgeoisie within the expanding apparatus of the state. According to the Flemish demographic majority of Belgium, the vehicle of language offered the possibility of eventually gaining the upper hand in these structures. The start of the process of 'Dutchification' of public secondary education in 1883 (and later, of higher education) was essential in this framework.

The struggle for Dutch also opened certain horizons in the world of industry. The number of individuals likely to gain from a reinforcement of the status of Dutch became much higher near the end of the century. The second industrial revolution brought about an extension of industrial activity in Flanders and growth in the service and transport sector. A class of Flemish white-collar workers arose but it experienced language discrimination in sectors in which language played an important role. It was also at the mercy of competition from middle-class Walloon migrants. It is therefore not surprising that the employees and bureaucrats of sectors in which language played an important role, such as the telegraphs, the postal service, railways and customs, demanded the imposition of Dutch as the only administrative language in Flanders. They were well aware that the struggle for Dutchification could be favourable to their career trajectory.²⁰ For the emerging group of Flemish entrepreneurs, language was also an adequate instrument for demanding a large piece of the economic pie, to the detriment of the French-speaking bourgeoisie.

Dutch was also a tool for reinforcing the social role of the middle classes who felt threatened. Moved by the necessity of class reconciliation, the *flaminganten* gave themselves the mission of guiding the processes of democratisation and industrialisation.²¹ In their role as an elite speaking the vernacular language, they presented themselves as representatives of the Flemish people. They wanted to lead this people in a language that they understood. The intervention of a Dutch-speaking elite as a driv-

ing force for the social integration of the Flemish people was intended to prevent the combination of proletarianisation and mass democratisation leading to a social polarisation and the breakthrough of socialism in Flanders, as had happened in the south of the country. The emergence of '*cultuurflamingantisme*' was important here. The option of a generalised bilingualism in Belgium, supported by the Flemish Movement until the turn of the century, gave way to an ever more strident demand for monolingualism in Flanders.²² The French-speaking elites of Flanders reacted by promoting French as an essential means of social promotion for the 'ordinary people' and created the 'Flemish Association for the Popularisation of the French Language' ('*Association flamande pour la vulgarisation de la langue française*') to that end. It was established in several Flemish cities at the dawn of the new century. This point of view also shows that because of democratisation, the struggle to gain the favours of the masses intensified.

The struggle was no longer limited to just language. The Flemish Movement additionally gained an economic and social dimension, going far beyond the mere recognition of Dutch as an official language. The economist and civil servant Lodewijk De Raet intellectually sustained this reorientation. In the context of the second industrial revolution and the discovery of coal in the subsoil of Limburg, he called for 'Flemish people's power' ('*Vlaamse volkskracht*'), an economy for and by the Flemish people. He linked the economic and cultural underdevelopment of the Flemish people, and argued that the economic survival of the people necessarily happened through intellectual growth. The Dutchification of the University of Ghent thus became the ultimate goal of *flaminganten* of all political orientations. De Raet aimed for the creation of a Flemish dominant economic class, in a model of society characterised by class reconciliation and anti-socialism.²³ As a result, from a language movement, the Flemish Movement transformed into a vast national movement, supported by the 'Flemish patriots'.

The class position of these patriots stood in the way of integrating the ambitions of the lower social classes into the programme of the Flemish Movement as exemplified by the situation in Brussels. In the capital, the *flaminganten* did not manage to oppose the obvious social segregation between the better-off French-speaking minority and the Dutch-speaking working-class population. Even if they had a profile that was essentially radical and democratic, they did not understand the world and the priorities of the Brussels working-class population, on account of their origins in the petty bourgeoisie. The inability of the *flaminganten* to overcome

their class position was also due to their attitude on the question of the democratisation of the right to vote. While the *flaminganten* took the initiative in the struggle for the integration of the middle classes in the bourgeois political order around the middle of the nineteenth century, there was no question of holding a similar stance once the issue of equality of political rights for the working class was brought to the fore in the *Belle Époque*.

The *flaminganten* did not make any important contribution to the fight for the democratisation of the right to vote. The plural vote was introduced despite them in 1893. As one million new voters were added to the system of obligatory voting, the censitary elites had to develop new strategies to maintain their power and as demonstrated by Harry Van Velthoven, conservative Catholics succeeded in consolidating their power despite the insurrection of the Christian Democrats and the Catholic *flaminganten*.²⁴ He contests the existence of a symbiotic relationship between the Christian Democrats and the *flaminganten* which constituted the breeding ground for a massification of the Flemish nation, contrary to the argument advanced by Lode Wils, the *éminence grise* of the historiography of the Flemish Movement.²⁵

Whatever the case may be, the *flaminganten* kept their distance from the fight for pure and simple universal suffrage, which would end the political overrepresentation of the elites and the middle classes. Meanwhile, the advance of socialism alarmed the greater part of the *flaminganten* and made them fear a further democratisation and as members of the middle classes, they saw in the class struggle a threat to their social status and fought for a model of social harmony that preserved their central position. They were wary of the principle of an autonomous workers' movement; their elitist and petty-bourgeois paternalist point of view led them to believe that the emancipation of the lower social classes had to happen under their supervision. This supervision would allow them to 'civilise' and 'embourgeoise' the lower social classes, an indispensable condition in their eyes for the introduction of full democracy.

The liberal *flaminganten* were guided by the bourgeois ideals of the Enlightenment, while the Catholic *flaminganten* were inspired by the social doctrine of the Church, with the majority of them belonging to the ultramontane wing of the Catholic Party.²⁶ This point of view was related to their class position; just like the middle classes of other European countries during the *Belle Époque*, they adopted a very orthodox and 'strict' point of view in religious matters, to set themselves apart from

the 'immoral' lower social classes and the 'decadent' elites.²⁷ The language question was likewise defined in moral and religious terms. The French spoken by the elites was associated with depravity and the French Revolution which they condemned. However, the pious language of the forefathers was perceived as a guarantor of the maintenance of ancestral values.

The dominant ultramontanism forbade any cooperation of the Catholic *flaminganten* with the socialists or progressive liberals. The latter played an important role in the development of the Flemish Movement. The Willemsfonds, a liberal cultural organisation, played an authoritative role in practically all areas of culture. Nevertheless, from 1884 on when the Catholic Party came to power for more than thirty years, it wound up ossifying and falling into political inaction. Liberal *flaminganten* still made their voices heard in Parliament, but they were much less successful in recruiting among the population. Rome's condemnation of liberalism, seen as the ideological heir of the French Revolution, was far from negligible in Catholic Flanders.²⁸ The Catholics considered their fight for the vernacular language as part of the Catholic project intended to save the people from liberalism and socialism. The Catholic Flemish Movement defined itself as the catalyst for a Christian social movement and as a bulwark against socialism and liberalism.

Therefore, it would be difficult to realise a significant cooperation between the Belgian Workers' Party (*Belgische Werkliedenpartij* – BWP in Dutch, *Parti ouvrier belge* – POB in French) and the petty bourgeois Flemish Movement. The BWP/POB, founded in 1885, counted on its strong French-speaking parliamentary wing to make its demands known. The BWP/POB was openly hostile to the *flaminganten* who came from the petty bourgeoisie, whom they reproached for remaining aloof from the social and political struggle for democratic rights.²⁹ Nevertheless, this hostility did not prevent the party from supporting a certain number of bills in Parliament that were favourable to Dutchification, even if this support remained subordinate to the struggle for universal suffrage and social equality. In 1898, the BWP/POB voted unanimously in favour of the Law of Equality. In 1909 however, as the party had not adopted a position on the language question, it became an issue which led to growing internal disagreements.³⁰ Hroch's affirmation that the socialists did not contribute to the construction of the Flemish nation, which thus remained disintegrated, should be nuanced. A study by Maarten Van Ginderachter has shown that in Ghent, the city which was home to the most powerful socialist federation in Flanders, socialist party leaders and activists identified with the Flemish

nation and supported the principle of Dutchification.³¹ The integration of the Ghent socialist movement into the Belgian nation only happened during and after the First World War. One can thus question whether or not Hroch's A-B-C model is too linear as an external factor such as war can put an end to nascent massification.

The relationship between the Flemish socialists and the Flemish nation before the First World War deserves a more thorough analysis³² as there are cases such as in Ghent where socialist party members identified with Flanders. Seen in this light, cooperation between the Flemish Movement and the socialist movement was not unthinkable. The visceral repugnance of the *flaminganten* towards socialism was nonetheless a major obstacle to the realisation of such cooperation.

The possibility of the Flemish Movement and other social movements joining forces was also demonstrated by the dissident Christian Democrat movement, which found its roots in miserable living conditions experienced by a large part of the population. The movement, of which the Aalst priest Adolf Daens would become the figurehead, came on the scene in 1895 as an autonomous movement struggling for social progress, universal suffrage, and the changeover to Dutch all at once. A symbiosis between flamingantisme and Christian Democracy did happen in this case.³³ It nevertheless came up against conservative Catholicism, which led to a condemnation by the Church and because of internal disagreements as well, Daensism remained an isolated phenomenon which did not attain national success.

In the years that preceded the First World War, the *flaminganten* radicalised. It prefigured the transition from Flemish-Belgian thought to Flemish national thought. This process originated in the growing frustration about the discrepancy between the increasing dynamism of the Flemish Movement and its relative powerlessness, which was, as mentioned above, due to the inability of the *flaminganten* to translate the aspirations of the population as a whole into national terms. The Catholic *flaminganten* managed to encourage their party and the Church to adopt measures in favour of Dutch, but they were not powerful enough to put an end to the supremacy of French. Nor did the anticlerical *flaminganten* have enough political influence. They were not only minorities within the socialist and liberal parties, but also part of the opposition with the Catholic Party in power since 1884. As in the campaign for the Dutchification of the University of Ghent, the growing will for a pluralist collaboration found among the *flaminganten* was an obvious sign of

this radicalization, which highlights the major importance of the national factor. The frustration around the slowness of parliamentary progress on the question of language reforms caused numerous *flaminganten* to feel snug in their petty-bourgeois elitism, and led a minority to become apolitical. As such, the revolutionary slogan calling for 'administrative separation' ('*bestuurlijke scheiding*'), which had no practical effect, gained traction following the disillusionment provoked by the laws on the usage of languages in the army and in primary education. The repeated embryonic call for the creation of a Flemish national party is also significant in this sense.

Drawing of the Antwerp artist Eugène Van Mieghem (1918). It depicts a manifestation against the Flemish collaborators who were on their way to a plebiscite in Antwerp that had to elect a 'Council of Flanders', an incipient parliament that would be able to formulate a pro-German stance on behalf of all Flemish citizens during the prospective peace negotiations. In reality, the Council of Flanders only represented a miniscule and nonrepresentative faction of pro-German Flemings. Van Mieghem illustrated how this minority was heckled by a group of angry anti-German citizens. [ADV N, Antwerp]

Sam Mayhem



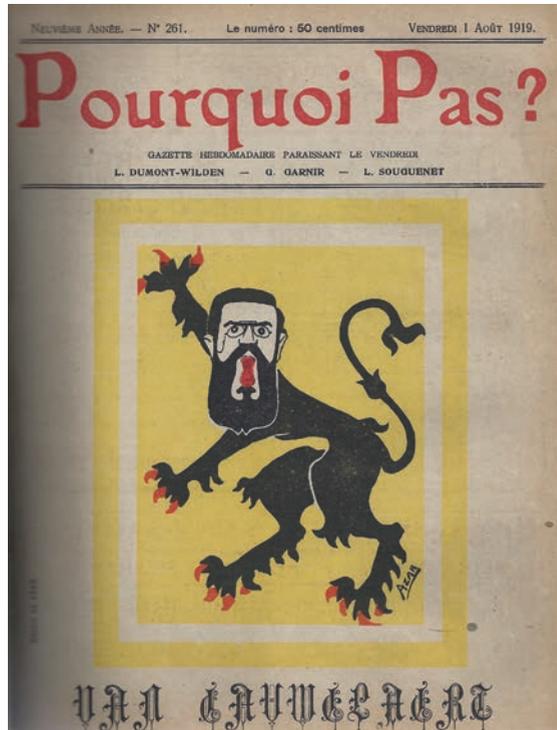
III. THE PATRIOTS, BETWEEN AVANT-GARDE AND DEMOCRACY

The paradoxical situation of the Flemish Movement in 1914 became downright explosive during the First World War. Germany's *Flamenpolitik*, which aimed to destroy Belgium, to weaken it or to place in a situation of independence in relation to Germany by pitting the Flemish sub-nation against Belgium, had the effect of dividing the Flemish Movement into a loyal Belgian wing and an anti-Belgian wing. The frustration caused by the slowness of parliamentary approaches was such that a minority of *flaminganten* ('Activists', 'Activisten'³⁴) seemed ready to collaborate with the occupier, who imposed the Dutchification of public life and administrative separation. Some Flemish civil servants saw therein the opportunity to make their linguistic demands a reality by putting their French-speaking competitors out of the running.³⁵ The reaction of a number of physicians, who also practiced a profession in which language was important, was the same.³⁶ The great majority of *flaminganten* however were hostile to such collaboration.

It was not so much the level of national identification which was decisive in the choice of loyal *flamingantisme* or Activism as much as it was the question of the strategy to follow to bring the *flamingant* programme to fruition. The answer to that question would have ideological implications with serious consequences. The Activists put themselves forward as a revolutionary avant-garde who assumed the right to impose large-scale reforms on the population with the support of an element of external authority, namely, the dictatorial power of the occupier.³⁷ Those categories of *flaminganten* who, before the war, had been the most distant from power were logically those who succumbed the easiest to this totalitarian temptation. They consisted mostly of activists from extraparliamentary pressure groups, liberals who had spent thirty years under a Catholic government and Brussels residents who had experienced the ever-present supremacy of French.

Through their support of the hated German occupier, the Activists irrevocably isolated themselves from the population. The great majority of Belgians saw in the occupation a direct threat to their prosperity and well-being and hoped to take back their country.³⁸ The growth of anti-German hatred went hand-in-hand with the intensification of pro-Belgian sentiment and this resentment was particularly marked among the lowest social classes and the urban population, who suffered the most

The Flemish Catholic politician Frans Van Cauwelaert was one of the pioneers in the implementation of the linguistic policies during the interwar period that would ultimately establish monolingual Dutch and French regions in Belgium. Consequently, many French-speaking Belgians considered him as the undertaker of a predominantly French Belgium. The francophone Brussels weekly magazine *Pourquoi Pas?* [Why not?] portrayed him as a roaring and clawing Flemish lion. [Liberas/Liberaal Archief, Ghent]



from lack of food. They associated Belgium with the relative prosperity of the pre-war period and the Flemish nationalist collaborators with the scarcity and impoverishment brought on by the Germans. In the areas where material privation was less harsh, this mechanism played a less prominent role. The divergent effect of the war on the models of identification might explain why the Activists' message met less opposition in the countryside than in the cities during the war. Because of this, Flemish nationalism would have a distinctly more rural profile after the war than did the pre-war Flemish Movement.

The Activist choice, consisting of undertaking a policy in flagrant contradiction with the hopes and identification of the very large majority of the population, led its partisans to use totalitarian means of constraint to render political opponents powerless. The decision to undertake an

authoritarian policy of collaboration, against the will of the population, cannot be explained except by the elitist perception that the pre-war *flamingant* Catholic and liberal middle classes, from whom the majority of the Activists were drawn, had of themselves. The obvious right of a 'conscious' elite to guide the 'unconscious' population, who did not have a say in the matter during the occupation stemmed from the same class mentality which, before 1914, had prevented most *flaminganten*, to support the demands for equality of democratic rights of the lower social classes.

Loyal *flaminganten* refused such an authoritarian policy. In particular, they considered that the alliance with the occupier risked discrediting the Flemish cause in the eyes of the population, who were undergoing hardships on account of the occupation. They were quite aware of the anti-German and pro-Belgian climate that prevailed among the population. They thus deliberately opted for the path of democratic reforms: the *flaminganten* needed to obtain sufficient support within the population to carry out the Dutchification of Flanders. It was in line with this point of view that the pro-Flemish Catholic leader Frans Van Cauwelaert aimed for an alliance with the radicalised Christian social organisations (namely, the Christian workers' movement) in order to overtake the (essentially French-speaking) bourgeoisie in his party and in the country. Even though the loyal *flaminganten* were drawn from the same middle class as the Activists, they broke away from the pre-war elitism which had been characteristic of them.

During the First World War, Germany implemented a *Flamenpolitik* [Flemish policy] that was aimed at appeasing Flemish grievances. Flemish soldiers at the warfront at the river Yser – where the Belgian army was garrisoned – were encouraged to surrender to the opposing German army. A sign that had been confiscated by the Belgians conveyed a message in poorly written Dutch: 'Flemings, defect to the German side, they won't shoot.' In 1918, the command of the Front movement, a group of radicalised Flemish soldiers, had dispatched a number of militants behind the frontline with the directive to establish communication with the collaborators of the Council of Flanders. After the German defeat, the 'sublime deserters' could present proof that the Front movement's command had committed high treason. Consequently, during a post-war trial, the leaders of the Front movement repudiated the 'sublime deserters' in order to save their own skin. [ADVN, Antwerp]

A black and white photograph of a military trench. In the center, a large, rectangular sign is mounted on two wooden posts. The sign has the Dutch text "VLAAMEN KOMT MAAR OVER DE DUITSCHE SCHIETEN NIET" written in bold, capital letters. To the left of the sign, two soldiers in dark uniforms and helmets stand in the trench. The trench walls are reinforced with sandbags and wooden planks. In the background, there are stacks of supplies and a wooden structure. The overall scene depicts a World War I trench environment.

VLAAMEN
KOMT MAAR
OVER
DE DUITSCHE
SCHIETEN NIET



The war thus was a turning point in the way the *flaminganten* considered the use of political power. While the Activists radicalised the elitist thought of the pre-war era, the loyal *flaminganten* democratised, especially because of their confrontation with the authoritarian collaboration.³⁹ Even Van Cauwelaert himself, who, like the majority of the *flamingant* Catholic middle classes, had had little consideration for democracy, counted himself among the democrats after the end of the worldwide conflagration. This conversion was quite probably also the consequence of the growing strategic perception that only democracy could ensure the triumph of the Flemish Movement. Or, to put it in terms of Hroch's theory: the Activists cut themselves off from the interests and aspirations of the population, while the loyal *flaminganten*, on their part, wanted to integrate those very interests into their political struggle. Even more fundamental than the division of the Flemish Movement into a loyal Belgian wing and an anti-Belgian wing, *flamingantisme* seemed to be divided between democratic and authoritarian camps.

Behind the Yser Front, numerous developments with important consequences were taking shape.⁴⁰ The perception of linguistic inequality during the war ('*Hier ons bloed, wanneer ons recht?*': 'Here's our blood, when's our rights?') was certainly a social reality, but also a powerful myth created by a new generation of *flaminganten*. This myth took root essentially among the Catholic Flemish population ('*Alles voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen voor Christus*': 'Everything for Flanders, Flanders for Christ') and, particularly, among cultivated Flemings: students, professors, priests, bureaucrats, artists and intellectuals in the broad sense of the term. The Flemish Front Movement, from the Yser Front, had essentially the same profile: Catholic, intellectual and middle class. In two respects, the programme of this movement was also a radicalised version of the

Poster of the last pre-war Yser-pilgrimage, a yearly mass manifestation of pro-Flemish citizens at the 'Ijzertoren' [Yser Tower], a monument that commemorates the Flemish soldiers that died at the warfront at the river Yser during the First World War. This 'blood sacrifice' was used as a political tool by the anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism to reproach the Belgian state for its refusal to concede to the Flemish demands and to the Flemings's yearning for home rule. The poster depicts the 'Stone of Merkem', one of the so-called 'Yser symbols'. On the stone, which was found in the village of Merkem, near the warfront, is written, allegedly with blood: 'Here is our blood, when will we get our rights'. It succinctly illustrates the political usage of the fallen pro-Flemish soldiers. [ADV N, Antwerp]

class ideology of the Catholic middle classes. On the one hand, it was marked by the pronounced elitism of the middle class, which had been reinforced by the disappointing interaction with the lower social classes in the army. On the other hand, it was characterised by the idea that the Flemish people could only be regenerated by a blood sacrifice⁴⁴, which notably derived from the idealist ultramontanism of the Catholic middle classes. In parallel to the anti-Belgian radicalisation, some voices were also raised under the leadership of the Front Movement in favour of taking power as an armed avant-garde, and, if necessary, reforming post-war society through violence. The combination of elitism and the post-ultramontane desire for regeneration would pose an obstacle to nationalism's adoption of the path of democratic reform after the war.

Overall, the Flemish Movement came out of the First World War radicalised. The construction of the Flemish (sub-)nation experienced a surge of energy because of this radicalisation and the growth of the number of adherents of the Flemish Movement. Based on Hroch's model, Wils considers that the massification of the Flemish Movement happened essentially after the First World War, even if it was largely limited to the Catholic population.

There was no question of any such massification in Brussels. Just the opposite, even. Given that a relatively important proportion of *flaminganten* in the city supported collaboration, that Activism was more visible there especially because of the city's status as capital and the greater necessity of Dutchification and that the impact of French-speaking opponents was more pronounced, the First World War constituted a sizeable reversal for *flamingantisme* and for Dutch in Brussels. The idea that (calling for) the use of Dutch was supposedly 'antipatriotic' could only produce its effects where French and Dutch coexisted, namely at the language border and in Brussels. Elsewhere, the centrality of Dutch was too important to allow for any change regarding language for patriotic reasons. In Brussels, while Dutch had already had the social connotation of the language of the lower social classes, and not of the vernacular language as in Flanders, it also came to carry an antipatriotic stigma. This combination of social shame and disloyal reputation pushed Dutch even further out of the public sphere. In 1920, in the first linguistic census after the war, the number of Brussels residents who considered themselves to speak only Dutch was half the number recorded ten years previously. The 'tall tale' that the vernacular language of the inhabitants of Brussels was not a Dutch dialect but rather a unique blend of French and Dutch also contributed to people keeping their distance from Dutch. The authoritar-

ian tendency of the Activists who wanted to reimpose Dutch in Brussels produced an effect opposite to the one for which they had hoped.

The rupture that had appeared within the Flemish Movement during the First World War continued to divide *flamingantisme* during the interwar period. The major fault line between the Flemish nationalists and the followers of Van Cauwelaert lay in the strategic question of whether the Flemish nation should take the form of a distinct state (self-administration, the choice of the Flemish nationalists) or of a Flemish takeover within the Belgian state. From the viewpoint of the construction of the Flemish nation, the rupture was of a strategic and non-fundamental nature, as it was evident that, for Van Cauwelaert too, the construction of the Flemish nation was the priority (his biography leaves no doubt on this subject).⁴² It is nonetheless impossible to know if, and if so, to what extent this was the case for his followers, given the absence of studies on this topic.

If the rupture between Flemish nationalists and the followers of Frans Van Cauwelaert was about strategy, it is clear that it rested on very diverse political choices with strong ideological implications. The durability of the rupture demonstrates fundamentally divergent visions and will heavily influence the history of the construction of the Flemish (sub-)nation.

Van Cauwelaert's vision made a clean break with the elitism of the pre-war period. It was carried by a wave of democratisation unleashed by the First World War, to create a base for his programme, namely the radical Dutchification of Flanders. Within the democratised Catholic Party, the Christian social movement and the Flemish Movement will become inextricable, according to Lode Wils: the Christian workers' movement, which occupied a powerful place in the new circumstances that had arisen, joined Flemish interests to social interests and thereby sizeably increased the social and political base of *flamingantisme*. The integration of the Christian workers' movement into the construction of the Flemish nation allowed for a progressive transition to phase C.

Wils' thesis is not uncontested, but it nevertheless remains the case that after the First World War the construction of the Flemish nation and Catholicism were appreciably more tightly linked to each other than before the conflict. Before the war there still existed an anticlerical Flemish Movement and Christian Democracy and *flamingantisme* followed different paths, as H. Van Velthoven has shown.⁴³ There is also no doubt that the Christian Workers' Movement (in Dutch, *Algemeen Christelijk*



This caricature from the *Ligue contre la flamandisation de Bruxelles et de Concentration antiflamande* [League against the Flemish appropriation of Brussels and for the Amassment of anti-Flemish sentiments] portrayed Frans Van Cauwelaert as the undertaker of the Belgian unitary state. The tractor refers to the Catholic *Boerenbond* [Farmers' Union] which had its foothold in Flanders, but it also juxtaposes the agrarian region of Flanders against the metropolitan capital Brussels. In addition, the plough is adorned with an abbreviation that can also be found on the pro-Flemish monument that commemorates the strife at the warfront at the river Yser to advance Flemish interests during the First World War: 'Alles Voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen Voor Kristus' [All For Flanders – Flanders For Christ]. A quarter century later when the largest ever pro-Flemish manifestation marched through Brussels to protest against the francisation of Brussels, counter-protesters carried signs that said 'go back to your hamlet'. The linguistic disparity in Belgium had also been a social divergence for a long time, contrasting the alleged cultural superiority of the Francophone urbanites and inhabitants of an industrialised region with the alleged backwardness of Flemish townsfolk who spoke Dutch. [Drawn from: L. Wils, *Frans Van Cauwelaert. Politieke biografie* (2017, p. 717)]

Werknemersverbond – ACW, in French, *Mouvement ouvrier chrétien* – MOC) played a crucial role in the adoption of the language laws in the 1930s. It reached an internal agreement between its francophone and Flemish wing combining the monolingualism of Flanders with forms of decentralization of public services allowing monolingual individuals to make a career in the administration. The former was a demand defended by the

Flemish wing of the movement, the latter of the francophone wing.⁴⁴ The ACW/MOC supported this vision within the Catholic Union and Catholic parliamentary groups and thus imposed the language laws.⁴⁵

The paradox of this situation lies in the fact that the evolution of the Flemish Movement – which, from a small group of patriots enjoying little social impact became a vast popular movement – was only made possible by a development to which the Flemish Movement itself contributed but little. The establishment of full democracy (at least for men) in 1919 structurally undermined the linguistic relations inherited from the nineteenth century over the medium term. These linguistic relations, which were a form of expression of class society, underwent a definitive shift. From a political point of view, the overrepresentation of the often French-speaking higher social classes came to an end and the Dutch-speaking lower social strata gained importance. The establishment of mass democracy was a prerequisite for the triumph of the vernacular language; the introduction of democracy got rid of the hurdle that stood in the way of the construction of the Flemish nation. By fighting for universal suffrage, the socialists unintentionally rolled out the red carpet for the *flaminganten*. The effect was even stronger than in 1893, when, by introducing plural voting, they reinforced the importance of Dutch as a means of political communication. The socialist-Catholic coalition in the municipal government of Antwerp of Frans Van Cauwelaert and Camille Huysmans, both partisans of the policy of active Dutchification, is a textbook case. The so-called ‘democratic’ coalition, supported by the growing Catholic and socialist social organisations, put an end to the domination of representatives of powerful French-speaking Catholics and liberals. This case illustrates the fact that the political emancipation of the lower social classes allowed for Dutchification. Their representatives were generally opposed or indifferent to maintaining the official position of French in Flanders. This attitude allowed for the triumph of the principle of territoriality in language matters, as the adoption of the principle by the ACW/MOC and the adoption of the ‘Compromise of the Belgian Socialists’ by the BWP/POB in November 1929 show. This position statement included cultural autonomy for Flemings and Walloons based on the principle of regional monolingualism.⁴⁶ The imbrication of Flemish and social emancipation guaranteed a social and political base that allowed for the imposition of Dutchification of the administration, education, the army and the justice system in barely two decades.

It is worth noting here that this victory was only possible at the price of tolerating the maintenance of linguistic discrimination in Brussels. In the

capital, legal bilingualism would still be trampled underfoot for a half-century and the pressure in favour of Francisation would still make itself felt over this same period. The absence of a significant *flamingant* base in Brussels, due in part to the First World War, is an important factor in this scenario.

As for the anti-Belgian Flemish nationalists, they took another path, which emerged during the First World War. The development of this new political trend seems, at first glance, obvious for the advancement of the construction of the Flemish nation. Its principle *raison d'être* was the creation of a Flemish state.

Flemish nationalism essentially developed within the Catholic population. If there were a few noteworthy exceptions, such as the Antwerp *Frontpartij*, the Flemish nationalists presented themselves to the voters under a Catholic or Christian banner around the middle of the 1920s. The social composition of Flemish nationalist militants is less homogeneous. A socio-professional analysis of the candidates for the municipal elections of 1932 and 1938 in the constituencies of Ghent-Eeklo and Aalst shows, in comparison to other parties, an overrepresentation of small business-owners, artisans and farmers and, on the other hand, a large share of skilled workers.⁴⁷ A similar analysis looking at all constituencies of West Flanders for the municipal elections of 1938 shows that the socio-professional distribution of the Flemish nationalist candidates was quite similar to the average of the candidates presented on all electoral lists.⁴⁸ Flemish Nationalism had at least a broader social basis than the Flemish movement before the First World War but it could only attract a minority of the population. In the national elections of 1939 some 15% voted for a Flemish nationalist party in the Flemish constituencies.

The aforementioned evidence, according to which a Flemish nationalist party fighting for Flemish independence is favourable to the construction of the Flemish nation requires a critical analysis. When we look more closely, the development of Flemish political nationalism in the inter-war era also constituted a hindrance to the construction of the Flemish nation. Flemish nationalism went through a deep ideological crisis which divided it on the question of the possibility of reconciling Flemish independence and parliamentary democracy. In 1933, the creation of the 'Flemish National Front' (*Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* – VNV in Dutch) led to a definitive change of course towards the creation of a new antidemocratic order. The generation of Flemish nationalists who belonged to the VNV dissociated the Flemish nation from the economic, political and

social reality in Flanders. Industrialisation was associated with socialism and Francisation, obtaining a post in the 'Belgian' industrial world was associated with snobbishness and a *nouveau-riche* mentality as well as betrayal of the people. Fascist corporatism provoked by socioeconomic oppositions offered an ideological alternative to liberalism, capitalism and socialism. The VNV formulated an avant-garde ideal, integrated with an antidemocratic ideology, in order to set themselves up as a counter-elite, relatively isolated from the dominant Belgian and Flemish elites, as well as from the Flemish workers' movement(s), including the ACW/MOC. This situation provoked a brain drain and severely hindered the construction of the Flemish nation, at the very moment when many indicators seemed to show that the Flemish Movement was attracting broader and broader swathes of the population.

Olivier Boehme has demonstrated the fact that radical Flemish nationalism placed ideological purity above the economic development of Flanders. Better a 'poor' but 'pure' Flanders than a 'denatured' Flanders. Paradoxically, or perhaps not, the economic centre of gravity began to progressively shift from Wallonia towards Flanders and a Flemish capitalist class began to come into existence, such as that which took form in the framework of the Flemish Economic Union (in Dutch, *Vlaams Economisch Verbond* – VEV).⁴⁹

Certain external factors, such as the international emergence of fascism, undoubtedly contributed to these developments, but their roots are nevertheless to be found in the internal dynamics of nationalism. Elitist tendencies continued to reverberate within Flemish political nationalism and presented an obstacle to the democratic and reformist path. Its ultramontane heritage, its cult of idealism riddled with Christian integrism, its position as a minority within Flemish society and its petty-bourgeois base favoured the deepening of antidemocratic, avant-garde thought, especially in a crucial time when mass democracy and the growth of the capitalist economy overturned the moral and social order and did not seem to be heading in the direction of the construction of a Flemish nation.⁵⁰

To support the hypothesis that the avant-garde thought of the VNV hindered the construction of the Flemish nation, let us cite the episode of the 'Flemish Concentration' (*Vlaamse concentratie*), after the legislative elections of 24 May 1936. The electoral victory of the far-right populists of Rex⁵¹ and the VNV was most damaging to the Catholic Party. This led to the BWP becoming the largest party. In October 1936, the Catholic Party

regionalised itself and the 'Catholic Flemish People's Party' (*Katholieke Vlaamse Volkspartij* – KVV) came into being. This latter group immediately concluded an agreement in principle with the VNV with an eye towards the creation of an electoral pact, namely the Flemish Concentration, with a right-wing programme and a common demand for the devolution of Belgium.

This Flemish Concentration remained a dead letter, however. The agreement was immediately rejected by two factions: on the one hand, the fascist faction of the VNV, which could not tolerate cooperation with a democratic centrist party and which was convinced that the VNV needed to work on its own to make a revolution which would put an end to Belgium and situate the VNV as the only political power, on the other hand, the ACW/MOC, which vetoed cooperation with the fascist VNV. The ideological profile of the VNV was explicitly seen as an insurmountable problem, as well as the fact that the party repudiated the idea of independent labour unions. The devolution of Belgium did not itself seem to be a stumbling block. Frans Van Cauwelaert was one of the fiercest opponents of the Flemish Concentration; he too was repulsed above all by the ideological profile of the VNV.

The gap between the VNV and the KVV was not as wide in reality as it might have seemed. So, in Antwerp, in East Flanders and in West Flanders, the supporters of the KVV and the VNV concluded an electoral agreement after the provincial elections and, during the municipal elections of 1938, lists of the Flemish Concentration were registered in some one hundred municipalities. The presentation of candidates on a joint list happened most often in the municipalities where the Flemish Concentration hoped to break a liberal and/or socialist majority or where a liberal-socialist coalition was likely to obtain the majority.⁵² There was thus indeed at the basis a willingness to cooperate between Flemish Catholics and the supporters of the VNV, but this willingness was not present everywhere. However, it no longer existed among the leadership of the two parties on the eve of the Second World War.

Whether or not the avant-garde thought of the VNV hindered the construction of the Flemish nation in the 1930s is subject to discussion. Whatever the case may be, it is certain that the fascist faction of the VNV resolutely pushed the party into a new adventure of collaboration, indeed a new Activism, during the Second World War. Antidemocratic collaboration was the logical extension of the VNV's avant-garde elitist thought. Collaboration with the National Socialist regime sealed the failure of that

generation of Flemish nationalists. By giving their support to an occupier whom the vast majority of the Flemish considered a threat to its prosperity and well-being, they deliberately isolated themselves from the population and thus undermined the social base of the construction of the Flemish nation. The VNV's dictatorial assumption of power was light-years away from the interests and aspirations of the Flemish population. In the 'daily plebiscite' of national sentiment, the Flemish nationalist choice made in favour of the Nazi occupier reinforced Belgian national sentiment, as Martin Conway has demonstrated.⁵³ The First World War had also consolidated Belgian sentiment in its time.

The shadow of war would linger over the processes of national identification in Belgium for a long time afterwards. The policy of collaboration undertaken by Flemish nationalism caused the heavy burden of the anti-democratic 'New Order' – an ideology which, especially because of the number of deaths attributable to National Socialism, would never again find a foothold among the generations following the Second World War – to weigh down the construction of the Flemish nation. It is obvious that many French-speaking circles saw in collaboration an opportunity to stigmatise the Flemish Movement in a long-lasting way. In Brussels and in the municipalities along the language border, such as Enghien/Edingen, Flemish nationalist collaboration contributed to the discrediting of Dutch, as had been the case during and after the First World War. In Flanders as well, collaboration hindered the construction of the Flemish nation, given that whole swathes of public opinion associated the Flemish nation with the erroneous choices made during the war. So, on the left, where identification with the resistance was strong, Belgian patriotism experienced a major boost. The processes of identification with Belgium which had already characterised Belgian socialism during and after the First World War manifested again and became more deeply ingrained.⁵⁴

IV. PEOPLE FOR THE FATHERLAND

As the anti-Belgian tendency went into decline as the Third Reich fell, the Flemish Movement as a whole got back on the loyal Belgian path. Flemish nationalists disappeared from Parliament and were pushed into the political margins. The newly-constituted 'Christian People's Party' (*Christelijke Volkspartij* – CVP) hoped to attract the right-wing *flamingant* electorate. Frans Van Cauwelaert's strategy was reactualized: within a restored Belgian fatherland, equality between the language groups should be made a reality, and the demographic superiority of the Flemings in a unitary state led to predictions of a long-lasting Flemish Catholic domination. A whole generation of CVP *flaminganten* would embody this programme, relying on the electoral power of Catholic social organisations.

For all that, the anti-Belgian tendency did not throw in the towel. The post-war purge of collaborators, seen as an anti-Flemish operation, fanned the flames of anti-Belgian sentiment. At first, in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, the old ideas and forms seemed to rear their head again. Post-war nationalism was not however, a resurrection of the VNV's Flemish National Socialism or a resentful club of nostalgic old-timers. An improbable political duo, consisting of the former leader of the VNV, Hendrik Elias, and his attorney, Frans Van der Elst, quickly adopted a strategic and ideological position which would shape the future of Flemish nationalism as a political tendency. Confronted with the failure of collaboration, they came to the conclusion that the party that they were about to create could not be a rehash of the VNV. On the ashes of the revolutionary, antiparliamentary, and 'Dietsch' nationalist *alliance*, a real *party* needed to be built, aiming for the federalisation of the Belgian state via parliamentary reform. This was a fundamental reorientation towards democracy, even if a certain ambivalence persisted in day-to-day political practice, given that the 'Union of the People' (*Volksunie* – VU) continually hammered on the necessity of rehabilitating the supporters of the National Socialist occupier who had been punished and that small elitist cells continued to be active in and around the party.

The rupture with nationalist elitism had consequences which were enormous, to say the least. A new generation of Flemish nationalists emerged from the 1960s on. They intended to reshape the Flemish nation on the one hand and their specific role in that nation on the other. They envisioned the construction of the Flemish nation as a democratic process and

ardently hoped to serve the interests of the Flemish economic elites and (to a certain extent) the workers' movement and new social movements. They made a breakthrough among the leading Flemish/Belgian elites in order to accomplish the process of the construction of the Flemish nation. Hugo Schiltz was probably the purest representative of this new generation of Flemish nationalists. Schiltz and his generation managed to align the project of a 'small' national movement with the interests of vital economic and social groups in Flemish society. Still, this achievement was only made possible by the specific socioeconomic and cultural context in which they operated. Distancing themselves from the avant-garde thought of the past was not enough. The existence of a reinforced social base was indispensable for the achievement of a breakthrough.

The massification of Flemish nationalism took place from the 1960s on. Too few studies have been done concerning the way in which this evolution unfolded. In the limited context of the current essay, we will point out three essential developments that occurred in the socioeconomic sphere. First, Flemish economic expansion and the appearance of a class of Flemish entrepreneurs whose interests heavily diverged from those of the 'old' Belgian captains of industry. Second, the expansion of a tertiary sector in which language was important, supported by a powerful workers' movement (above all, white-collar workers' unions). Third, the development of social classes within the expanding Flemish industrial and post-industrial society, characterised by interests and needs different from those of the dominant social classes of Walloon industrial society, which was losing speed (the same argument explains the expansion of the Walloon Movement). The reinforcement of cultural autonomy in Flanders, associated with the socially improved status of Dutch also played a role.

It is surprising that anti-Belgian Flemish political nationalism managed to break through precisely at a time when the Dutch-speakers of Belgium were making up their socioeconomic and cultural backwardness at break-neck speed. The breakthrough of Flemish nationalism did not come about during the dark days of socioeconomic stagnation and cultural underdevelopment but it in fact happened during the phase of acceleration of social and cultural emancipation of Dutch-speaking Belgians. How can we explain this apparent paradox?

The 'narcissism of small differences' might explain it.⁵⁵ The smaller that social differences are, the more that they are perceived as intolerable. As Dutch-speakers made their voices heard in the legislative domain and in day-to-day life and therefore the relations of linguistic hierar-

VOLKSUNIE



**VLAAMSE MACHT
VLAAMSE WELVAART**

Poster of the postwar Flemish nationalist party, Volksunie [Union of the People] (1954–2001). The heavy-duty vehicle exemplifies Flanders' economic expansion, spearheaded by the development of an industrial sector, at a time when the Walloon industry was stagnating. The slogan 'Flemish power, Flemish wealth' discloses an economic nationalist discourse that would gain traction in Flemish nationalism, ultimately becoming a dominant element in the National Flemish Alliance's contemporary interpretation of Flemish nationalism. [ADVN, Antwerp]

chy evolved in a fundamental way, tolerance of the social vestiges of the former linguistic supremacy of French melted away. In reality, it was not a high-stakes battle, given that the political power of the French-speaking Flemings had already been broken by the language laws of the 1930s. French-speaking Flemings kept to themselves and constituted a distinct French-speaking network which kept its social distance from Dutch-speaking society. It created an image of itself as a threatened minority.⁵⁶ The dialectic with the French-speakers of Brussels, who organised themselves within the framework of the 'Democratic Front of French-Speakers' (*Front démocratique des francophones* – FDF) and became more and more militant as Flemish pressure increased, reinforced this tendency even more. In part, this growing intolerance was tightly linked to a sense of dignity. From the moment when the symbolic system of the linguistic hierarchy had been annihilated by language legislation, any inequality of treatment of Dutch in daily life became less acceptable. Irritation toward forms of prejudice against Dutch in the central administration, in the universities, at the language border and, above all, in Brussels was grist for the Flemish nationalist mill. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, these linguistic questions were the principal mobilising force of old and new generations of Flemish nationalists. French-speaking opponents' perception that the actions that they organised in support of language equality, such as the Marches on Brussels, were 'disloyal' and even 'treacherous' contributed to their transition towards anti-Belgian nationalism.

Some people fell in with this kind of nationalism for reasons of personal interest. The growing Dutch-speaking middle classes perceived the vestiges of the superiority of French as an obstacle to their social mobility, all the more so because their knowledge of French was more fragile than that of their predecessors on account of the Dutchification of education. Flemish economic growth was also responsible for the expansion of the group of people having an interest in the reinforcement of the position of Dutch. In Leo Picard's terms, the ranks of the new Flemish (sub-)bourgeoisie grew and grew, and political nationalism continued to essentially represent the interests of that class. The real difference was that this middle class had grown considerably and thus constituted a significantly stronger electoral base for Flemish nationalism.

Flemish nationalism had not spread beyond its traditional breeding ground, namely the middle classes. Rather, these middle classes had expanded. As opposed to Hroch's schema, it was not the working class, but the growing group of white-collar workers that was behind the mas-

sive adoption of the ideas of Flemish nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. This generation – which could rightfully be called ‘the heirs of Frans Van Cauwelaert’ – went beyond their father figure and opted massively for a radical solution; that of anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism. In an insightful report of 1970, a year which corresponds more or less to the electoral zenith of the VU, Senator Lode Claes described the nationalist electorate as ‘mobile’ individuals, often young people, generally from the middle classes, undergoing upward social movement and feeling blocked in this vertical mobility by the dominant position of French. Flemish nationalist leaders such as Hugo Schiltz were perfectly aware that social frustration was the driving force behind the growth of Flemish nationalism. They interpreted the stagnation of the VU from 1971 on as a sign of the decline of this frustration, stemming from growing emancipation, which partly explains their relative haste to break the Belgian order and to impose a vast state reform. It seems however that this was a miscalculation; the failure of the Egmont Pact shows that, at the end of the 1970s, linguistic sensibilities still took precedence over the desire for autonomy.

Flemish Christian Democrats were the first to feel the consequences of the rise of the VU. We have seen that, after the First World War, the process of the construction of the Flemish nation was rooted in Flemish Catholicism and that, in the 1930s, it envisioned a political cooperation between Flemish nationalists and Flemish Catholics, having nonetheless created the gap between Christian Democracy and the VNV. This gap no longer separated the CVP and the VU. Consequently, many Christian voters who supported greater Flemish autonomy went over to the VU. In addition, secularisation loosened the grip of the clergy on the electorate. It was not surprising then that the CVP was the first Belgian party to opt for regionalisation, in 1968. Throughout the following decade, a war of orientation raged within the Flemish CVP between the unitarists and the federalists. The unitarists wanted to pursue Van Cauwelaert’s strategy despite all opposition: after the cultural autonomy which stemmed from the constitutional revision of 1971, the Flemings now had a ‘fatherland to cherish’. The federalists, for their part, aimed for a reform of the Belgian order in a federal sense. They were in part driven by competition from the VU, but, for some of their leaders, such as Wilfried Martens, Flemish national sensibilities were also undoubtedly an important factor.

The other parties followed the path laid down by the CVP, with the Socialist Party bringing up the rear in 1980. The social democrats’ integration into the Flemish nation happened with difficulty, even after the first state reforms and the disappearance of the unitary state structure in

1980. Throughout the last quarter-century, a new generation of socialist leaders took part in the process of the construction of the Flemish nation within the framework of the Belgian state, even if internal disagreements on this subject remained. This permanent ambivalence is perhaps linked to the emergence of a 'neo-Belgian' discourse among the left-wing intelligentsia and the sociocultural sector starting in the 1990s. This discourse, which highlights the supposedly hybrid character of the Belgian nation, is in large part a reaction to the electoral gains of the 'Flemish Bloc' (*Vlaams Blok* – VB). Appearing at the end of the 1970s, from middle of the 1980s on this Flemish nationalist party fed on the new rupture which consumed Belgian politics, namely the ethnic division between immigrants and natives. Flemish nationalist discourse rested on a distinction that was originally centred between native Flemings and new Belgians of Moroccan or Turkish origin. The VB attracted many voters both in traditional bastions of socialism and beyond. For the first time, a separatist party managed to make headway outside of the traditional middle classes and to occupy a position at the head of the working-class electorate. The supposed conflict of interests between the Flemish 'people' and 'foreigners' became the driving force of separatism. In and of itself, it was paradoxical that the VB thereby enlarged the base for the construction of the Flemish nation. In reality, the leaders of the VB came from the class that had never come to terms with the reformist and democratic turn taken by nationalism after the war. Nevertheless, unlike its elitist predecessors, the VB managed to connect with the aspirations of greater swathes of the population.

The federalist turn among the classic political parties and the xenophobic separatism of the VB undermined the VU. The party lost its electoral appeal and its ideological cohesion. While a fringe of the party did not see a future for a Flemish national party after the adoption of federalism, another faction chose to rush headlong into advocating separatism. The VU fell apart and its radical wing founded the 'New Flemish Alliance' (*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* – N-VA). The declaration in its founding text of the desire for the emergence of an independent Flanders can only be explained in the context of a major rehabilitation of separatism in the 1990s. It is rather surprising, although logical, to note that at the end of the century, important nationalist voices rose in favour of the end of Belgium, even if that had to lead to the loss of Brussels.

From a historical point of view, it is too early to talk about the remarkable electoral rise of the N-VA. Diverse electoral analyses have demonstrated that the party has, on the one hand, appealed to the electorate of the

VB and, on the other hand, been able to appeal to the voters of other parties, notably the voters of the liberal party (Open VLD) and Christian-Democratic party (CD&V), through electoral campaigns presenting the construction of the Flemish nation and state as an indispensable necessity for a 'hard-working Flemish middle class' whose ambitions and prosperity are threatened by a Belgian state controlled by the (French-speaking) Socialist Party.⁵⁷ Somewhat surprisingly the president of the N-VA, Bart De Wever, has admitted that this strategy was partly inspired by his reading of the work of Miroslav Hroch: 'What an insight! Nationalism that wants to be successful must not have the nation as its end. It must see the nation as a means to tackle issues that are important for large groups of people: lower taxes, stronger migration control, et cetera. If you can spread this message as a politician: bingo! That is what I have always aimed for with the N-VA: Flanders as a means, not an end'.⁵⁸

V. CONCLUSION

According to Miroslav Hroch's classic schema, the construction of the Flemish nation brought on by the developments discussed above is practically complete. Nowadays, the small Flemish nation largely reflects the class structure, or, to use a less ideologically-laden term, the social composition of the Flemish population. Today, vital social groups express their interests more and more in Flemish terms and not Belgian terms.

Along with the Belgian patriotic project, the extraparliamentary Flemish Movement has also lost much of its importance. The two go hand-in-hand. The success of the construction of the Flemish nation generated Flemish institutions which demand more and more responsibilities and, thus, an enlargement of the construction of the Flemish nation. This Flemish state in the making is, like all nation-states, the carrier of a patriotic project which produces one thousand and one confirmations of the existence of a Flemish nation, just as during the long nineteenth century and part of the twentieth century, the Belgian state embodied the Belgian nation and thus had no need of a Belgian movement as such. It remains to be seen if this process is irreversible and also if it must sound the death knell for the Belgian state, which is still strongly supported by powerful social groups, such as the Christian and socialist workers' movements, business associations and other social organisations whose interests are linked to Belgian structures such as social security. Moreover, it seems like only a small minority of public opinion is favourable to the separatist project. The large majority of Flemings identify with both Flanders and Belgium at the same time (along with other forms of identification, naturally). Depending on the context or subject, the feeling of belonging to Flanders or to Belgium will prevail. The idea of an insurmountable opposition between Flanders and Belgium is thus still not shared by most Flemings, more than a century after it came into existence.

Even if the dynamic 'from the Belgian nation to the Flemish nation' is clear, it is essential to be aware of the open-endedness of the historical process.⁵⁹ It is obvious that the result of this process will be largely determined by the European, indeed worldwide, context. It is also obvious that in all likelihood, nationalism will remain an important factor in the world of tomorrow. In Belgium and elsewhere, new conflicts of interests are appearing and being expressed in national terms. Let us especially point out the growing tension between 'cosmopolitan' elites and the

mass of the population that is sympathetic to 'nationalist', 'regionalist' or 'populist' tendencies. These elites call for neoliberal globalisation, hope to profit from it, and are less and less subject to the nation-state. The mass of the population, for its part, sees in globalisation a threat to its well-being and prosperity, and hopes for a 'restoration' of the sovereignty and identity of the nation. It remains to be seen to what this 'new national opposition' will lead in Flanders and in Belgium.

ENDNOTES

¹ An earlier version of this article appeared under the title ‘De Vlaamse patriotten en de natievorming: Hoe de Vlaamse natie ophield “klein” te zijn’, in: *WT: Tijdschrift over de geschiedenis van de Vlaamse beweging*, vol. 74, 2015, n° 4, pp. 217–248. Later, a revised French translation appeared under the title ‘Les patriotes flamands et la construction de la nation: Comment la nation flamande a cessé d’être “petite”’, in: *Courrier hebdomadaire*, n° 2316, 2016. The authors wish to thank David J. Hensley and Kasper Swerts for the translation into English, Robert Phillips for proofreading.

² M. Hroch, *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe: a comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations*, Cambridge, 1985.

³ See, among others, A. Maxwell (ed.), *The comparative approach to national movements: Miroslav Hroch and nationalism studies*, London and New York, 2012.

⁴ Hroch formulated his theory in 1968 (M. Hroch, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen*, Prague, 1968), but it did not spread to a worldwide audience until after it had been translated into English.

⁵ M. Hroch, *European nations: explaining their formation*, London and New York, 2015 (translation of *Das Europa der Nationen. Die moderne Nationsbildung im europäischen Vergleich*, Göttingen, 2005).

⁶ L. Wils, Naties en nationale bewegingen. De aanbreng van internationaal historisch en sociologisch onderzoek, in: *WT*, vol. 52, 1993, n° 2, pp. 86–89; B. De Wever, *From language to nationality. The case of the Dutch-speaking Belgians in the 19th Century*, in: P. Broomans et al. (eds.), ‘The Beloved Mother tongue’. *Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Small Nations. Inventories and Reflections*, Leuven, 2008, pp. 49–61 (*Groningen Studies in Cultural Change*).

⁷ O. Boehme, *De welvaart en trots van naties. Een geschiedenis van*

het economisch nationalisme, Antwerpen, 2013.

⁸ G. Akerlof & R. Kranton, 'Economics and identity', in: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 115, 2000, n° 3, pp. 715–753.

⁹ M. Hroch, *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe [...]*, pp. 107–116.

¹⁰ M. Hroch, *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe [...]*, pp. 110–116.

¹¹ H. Van Velthoven, *Scheurmakers en carrièristen: de opstand van christendemocraten en katholieke flaminganten (1890–1914)*, Kalmthout, 2014, p. 291.

¹² M. Hroch, *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe [...]*, p. 228.

¹³ L. Picard, De formatie van een Vlaamse sub-bourgeoisie, in: *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, vol. 2, 1970, n° 1, pp. 145–149.

¹⁴ See A. Blok, The Narcissism of Minor Differences, in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1, 1998, no. 1, pp. 33–56.

¹⁵ E. Witte & H. Van Velthoven, *Languages in contact and in conflict. The Belgian case*, Kalmthout, 2011, p. 26.

¹⁶ See, among others, A. De Swaan, *Words of the World: The Global Language System*, Cambridge, 2001.; D. Laitin, 'The game theory of language regimes', in: *International Political Science Review*, vol. 14, 1993, n° 3, pp. 227–239.

¹⁷ N. Bracke, *Vrouw*, in: *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, Tielt, 1998, p. 3606.

¹⁸ L. Wils, 'Het officiële taalgebruik in België in de negentiende eeuw', in: *WT*, vol. 76, 2008, n° 2, pp. 115–127.

¹⁹ M. De Metsenaere, *Taalmuur: sociale muur? De negentiende-eeuwse taalverhoudingen te Brussel als resultaat van geodemografische en sociale processen*, Brussel, 1988.

²⁰ H. Van Velthoven, Taaldiscriminatie en taalstrijd. De Vlaamse tolbeambten en het ministerie van financiën, 1894-1914, in: *WT*, vol. 58, 1999, n° 2, pp. 67-85; L. Vandeweyer, Vlaamse ambtenaren en volksvertegenwoordigers: één strijd! De studiec commissie voor de Vervlaamsing der Openbare Besturen in Vlaanderen: 1911-1914, in: *WT*, vol. 60, 2001, n° 2, pp. 67-95.

²¹ D. Luyten, *Economie*, in: *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, Tielt, 1998, pp. 1028-1031; M. Reynebeau, *Het klauwen van de leeuw. De Vlaamse identiteit van de 12de tot de 21ste eeuw*, Leuven, 1995, pp. 149-154.

²² H. Van Velthoven, *Scheurmakers en carrièristen [...]*, p. 30.

²³ On the importance of De Raet in the Flemish Movement, see O. Boehme, *Greep naar de markt: de sociaal-economische agenda van de Vlaamse Beweging en haar ideologische versplintering tijdens het interbellum*, Leuven, 2008, pp. 53-92; L. Boeva, De sociale taalgrens in Vlaanderen en de reactie van de Vlaamse Beweging en de Sociale Beweging (1830-1914), in: *WT*, vol. 53, 1994, n° 2, p. 80.

²⁴ H. Van Velthoven, *Scheurmakers en carrièristen [...]*.

²⁵ L. Wils, *Honderd jaar Vlaamse beweging: geschiedenis van het Davidsfonds tot 1914*, Leuven, 1977.

²⁶ Concerning the commonalities between flamingantisme and ultramontanisme, see E. Lamberts, *Het ultramontanisme in België, 1830-1914*, in: E. Lamberts (ed.), *De kruistocht tegen het liberalisme. Facetten van het ultramontanisme in België in de 19de eeuw*, Leuven, 1984, pp. 54-56.

²⁷ Concerning this mechanism, see A. Schuurman & P. Spierenburg (dir.), *Private domain, public inquiry. Families and life-styles in the Netherlands and Europe, 1550 to the present*, Hilversum, 1996.

²⁸ For a more detailed insight into the sociocultural aspect of progressive liberalism, in the Flemish Movement, see especially D. Vanacker, *Een averechtse liberaal. Leo Augusteyns en de liberale arbeidersbeweging*, Gent, 2008; H. Van Velthoven, *Tussen opportunisme en radicalisme. Het Willemsfonds en de Vlaamse kwestie in 171 petitie (1860-1913)*, Gent, 2008.

²⁹ Studying the relationship between the Flemish Movement and the social movement, Luc Boeva arrived at the conclusion that the two movements ‘mostly followed different paths’ (L. Boeva, “*Pour les Flamands la même chose*”: *Hoe de taalgrens ook een sociale grens was*, Gent, 1994, p. 146).

³⁰ H. Van Velthoven, *De Vlaamse Kwestie 1830-1914: Macht en onmacht van de Vlaamsgezindheden*, Kortrijk-Heule, 1982, p. 213 (*Standen en Landen*, LXXXII).

³¹ M. Van Ginderachter, *Het rode vaderland: de vergeten geschiedenis van de communautaire spanningen in het Belgische socialisme voor WO I*, Tielt, 2005; H. Van Velthoven, De versnippering van het rode vaderland, in: *WT*, vol. 65, 2006, n° 2, pp. 122-133.

³² A new book of Van Ginderachter on this issue is forthcoming in July 2019: *The Everyday Nationalism of Workers. A Social History of Modern Belgium*, Stanford, 2019.

³³ F.-J. Verdoodt, De virtuele vervlechting tussen katholieke flaminganten en christendemocraten. Een recente studie van H. Van Velthoven, in: *WT*, vol. 74, 2015, n° 2, pp. 125-131.

³⁴ ‘Activism’ was the name the flamingant collaboration gave to itself. To avoid confusion, this article uses ‘Activism’ and ‘Activist’ with a capital ‘A’ to refer to the Flemish collaborationist tendency.

³⁵ L. Vandeweyer, Activisten op veroveringstocht in de administratie. Machtverwerving in het ministerie van financiën tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog, in: *WT*, vol. 55, 1996, n° 1, pp. 49-57.

³⁶ L. Vandeweyer, Taalstrijd en volksgezondheid. De Eerste Wereldoorlog als breekpunt in de Vlaamse artsenwereld, in: *WT*, vol. 66, 2007, n° 2, pp. 117-145. This article demonstrates the extent to which the First World War and its consequences led to a linguistic divide within physicians’ organisations.

³⁷ L. Picard, *Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse en Groot-Nederlandse beweging*, volume 2, Antwerp, 1959, pp. 279-280. See also M. Reynebeau, *Het besef om de ijdelheid. Paul van Ostaijen en de postactivistische subcultuur*, in: G. Buelens, M. De Ridder & J. Stuyck (eds.),

De trust der vaderlandsliefde. Over literatuur en Vlaamse Beweging 1890-1940, Antwerpen, 2005, pp. 92-113; L. Vandeweyer, Herman Van den Reeck: pacifist in een gewelddadige beweging?, in: *WT*, vol. 55, 1996, special issue, pp. 37-66; P. van Hees, De antiburgerlijke strekking in de Vlaamse Beweging na de Eerste Wereldoorlog in betrekking tot het activisme en de Frontbeweging, in: *WT*, vol. 55, 1996, special issue, pp. 23-29.

³⁸ A. Vrints, “All the butter in the country belongs to us Belgians”. *Well-being and lower class national identification in Belgium during the First World War*, in: M. Beyen & M. Van Ginderachter (eds.), *National identification from below. Europe from the late 18th century to the end of the First World War*, Houndmills and Basingstoke, 2012, pp. 230-249.

³⁹ L. Wils, *Frans van Cauwelaert en de barst in België 1910-1919*, Antwerp / Baarn, 2000, pp. 309-310.

⁴⁰ F.-J. Verdoodt, “Wij, ontwikkelde Vlamingen van de Voorlinie...” *De Frontbeweging tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog: een culturele identiteit geprangd tussen een reële Belgische natie en een ideële Vlaamse natie, tussen het soldatenoffer en de politieke droom*, in: E. Witte et al. (ed.), *Natie en democratie - Nation et démocratie. 1890-1921*, Brussel, 2007, pp. 293-304.

⁴¹ See the epitaph written by the Flemish nationalist priest Cyriel Verschaeve and engraved on the Yser Tower: ‘Here lie their bodies like grains of sand ; have faith in the harvest, O Flanders’. (*Hier liggen hun lijken als zaden in ‘t zand, hoop op de oogst o Vlaanderland’*.)

⁴² L. Wils, *Frans van Cauwelaert. Politieke biografie*, [Antwerpen], 2017.

⁴³ H. Van Velthoven, *Scheurmakers en carrièristen [...]*.

⁴⁴ L. Wils & E. Gerard, Het ACW, de katholieke partij en de taalwetgeving, 1922-1932 (eerste deel), in: *WT*, vol. 55, 1996, n° 4, pp. 235-255.

⁴⁵ L. Wils & E. Gerard, Het ACW, de katholieke partij en de taalwetgeving, 1922-1932 (tweede deel), in: *WT*, vol. 56, 1997, n° 1, pp. 3-24.

⁴⁶ H. Van Velthoven, 'Amis ennemis'? Communautaire spanningen in de socialistische partij 1919-1940. *Verdeeldheid. Compromis. Crisis. Eerste deel: 1918-1935*, in: *WT*, vol. 77, 2018, n° 1, pp. 27-72.

⁴⁷ Br. De Wever, *Greep naar de macht. Vlaams-nationalisme en Nieuwe Orde. Het VNV 1933-1945*, Tielt / Gent, 1994, pp. 250-252.

⁴⁸ J. Adam, Een electorale en socioprofessionele analyse van het Vlaams-nationalisme in West-Vlaanderen, 1938-1976-2000, in: *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, n° 1, 2004, pp. 79-131. Jeroen Adam's results have been confirmed for the arrondissement of Dendermonde: A. Vandebuerie, *Een electorale en socio-professionele analyse van het Vlaams-nationalisme in het arrondissement Dendermonde 1938-1976-2000*, unpublished thesis, University of Ghent, 2009. The analysis concerning the potential preponderance of certain professional groups in Flemish nationalism and in the Flemish Movement, and the extent of this preponderance is only in its early stages. Peter Heyrman has put middle-class organisations under the microscope and established a negative correlation: P. Heyrman, *Middenstandsbeweging en Vlaamse beweging (1880-1940)*, in: *WT*, vol. 58, 1999, n° 4, pp. 211-227. Bart Coppein makes the same observation for agrarian organisations and Flemish nationalism, even if personal networks link the two: B. Coppein, *De hand aan de ploeg. Vlaamse landbouworganisaties en Vlaams-nationalistische partijen in de twintigste eeuw. Deel II*, in: *WT*, vol. 64, 2005, n° 3, pp. 131-148.

⁴⁹ O. Boehme, *Greep naar de markt [...]*, pp. 942-951.

⁵⁰ Br. De Wever, *Greep naar de macht [...]*, pp. 61-63; D. Luyten, *De zoektocht naar een "gemeenschap": revolutionair rechtse intellectuelen in Vlaanderen tijdens het interbellum*, in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, n° 8, 2001, pp. 385-398.

⁵¹ Léon Degrelle founded Rex as a rightwing dissident group within the Catholic Party. In 1935 it became a separate party.

⁵² Br. De Wever, *Greep naar de macht [...]*, pp. 218-219 and 248-249. See also Br. De Wever, *De Vlaams-nationalisten in de gemeentebesturen tijdens het interbellum*, in: *Les élections communales et leur impact sur la politique belge (1870-1970)*, Bruxelles, 1992,

pp. 196–230.

⁵³ M. Conway, *Les chagrins de la Belgique: libération et reconstruction politique, 1944–1947*, Bruxelles, 2015, pp. 301–355. Originally published in English: M. Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium. Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944–1947*, Oxford, 2012.

⁵⁴ Br. De Wever, Links en het Vlaams–nationalisme: “Living apart together in Belgium”, in: *Samenleving en Politiek*, vol. 18, 2011, n° 8, pp. 4–12.

⁵⁵ A. Blok, Het narcisme van kleine verschillen [...], pp. 159–187.

⁵⁶ C. Préaux, *La fin de la Flandre belge?*, Waterloo, 2011, pp. 11–36.

⁵⁷ M. Swyngedouw, Les électeurs de la N-VA aux élections fédérales du 13 juin 2010, in: *Courrier hebdomadaire*, n° 2125, 2011; M. Swyngedouw, Verkiezingsonderzoek 25 mei 2014 revisited, in: *Samenleving en Politiek*, vol. 22, 2015, n° 1, pp. 60–72.

⁵⁸ "Wat een inzicht! Nationalisme dat succesvol wil zijn, schreef Hroch, mag de natie niet als doel zien. Het moet de natie als middel zien om thema's aan te pakken waar grote groepen van wakker liggen: minder belastingen, strengere migratie, enzovoort. Als je die boodschap als politicus onderbouwd kunt brengen, is het bingo. Daar heb ik met de N-VA altijd naar gestreefd: Vlaanderen als middel, niet als doel" (*De Standaard Weekblad*, 27 August 2011).

⁵⁹ L. Wils, *Van de Belgische naar de Vlaamse natie: een geschiedenis van de Vlaamse beweging*, Leuven, 2009.

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