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COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL CHANGE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISORDERS AND STRIKES OF 1868 AND 1886 IN BELGIUM

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to the Department of History
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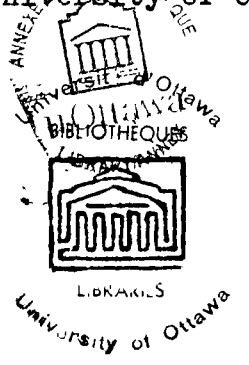

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Aux "cinq houilleurs de Péronnes-lez-Binche," qui "pour avoir mendié chez M. Paris, - en retournant du charbonnage où ils n'avaient pas reçu de salaire depuis cinq semaines" ont été condamnés par le Tribunal correctionnel de Charleroi à 8 jours, le 9 avril 1886."

Gazette de Mons, April 10, 1886.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1886, a series of strikes and riots broke out in the Liège coal and steel area. They rolled up the Meuse and Basse Sambre river valleys and soon engulfed all four of Belgium's main coal fields, i.e. Liège, Charleroi, the Centre and the Borinage. This was the most serious industrial violence in Belgium's history. The object of this study is to determine the impact of the insurrection on the middle class industrialists, opinion molders and political leaders who monopolized political power in Belgium. They alone, through their control of the levers of power, had the means to carry out needed social reforms, because polity membership was based on property qualifications.

In view of their dramatic nature, the events of 1886 have not escaped the interest of Belgian scholars. As early as 1886, Louis Bertrand wrote his pocket book edition of La Belgique en 1886 which was supposed to be inexpensive enough to capture the attention of the working class in whose cause Bertrand labored as a Socialist journalist. In his history of "l'année terrible", Bertrand based his research on three Brussels newspapers, the Socialist Peuple, the Doctrinaire-Liberal Gazette and the Progressive-Liberal Réforme. The work was basically a colorful narrative with a definite Socialist orientation. While its treatment of the causes of the strikes

was superficial and oriented toward the Marxist view of history, nevertheless, the little book was factually correct.

Twenty-five years later, Gustave Houdez, a carolorégien who had witnessed the events in Charleroi, wrote a short description (120 pages) of the burning and pillage of the Baudoux glassworks in the Charleroi. The work was entitled Quatre-vingt-six. Vingt-cinq ans après. Houdez concentrated on the events in Charleroi on a particular day, hence his study lacked even the scope of Bertrand's work. Nevertheless, the description of the Baudoux events was quite detailed. Houdez, however, lacked sources such as the archives of the police and the Parquet Général as well as the reports of the Ingénieurs des Mines. Houdez concentrated on the trial of the alleged leaders of the crowd that attacked the Baudoux works as the proceedings were reported in the press, for none of the official documents were as yet open to the public. Both Houdez's and Bertrand's early works were descriptions of the events rather than systematic analysis of the events in terms of their ultimate impact on the social reform movement.

In June 1969, Philippe Mottequin, in an unpublished Licence thesis for the University of Louvain entitled Les grèves de 1886 à 1888 dans la région du Centre, attempted to carry out a historical comparison of the coal strikes in the area just west of Charleroi. This excellent regional history also analysed the reaction of the local press. But as Mottequin himself noted, the main events of 1886 did not have much impact in the Centre area, and hence they

were not emphasized in his thesis. By the time the strikes reached La Louvière, the economic capital of the Centre, the real crisis in Charleroi and Liège was over.

René Van Santbergen's Une bourrasque sociale. Liège 1886 (1969) was a lively narrative of the outbreak of the insurrection. Professor Van Santbergen viewed the events as a purely historical phenomenon, a fortuitous incident with no prior, immediate or ulterior significance — a "bourrasque sociale" similar to the one described by Zola in Germinal. He saw the Liège affair as an incident which caused few political ripples, and consequently he devoted most of his book to analyzing the events themselves without attempting to relate them to the broader issue of political change.

The only work which attempted to analyse the strikes as well as their national political consequences was France Geerinck's unpublished Licence thesis entitled Les grèves dans le Hainaut en 1886 et la Commission du travail (University of Brussels, 1953). The first part of her thesis was devoted to describing the events in Charleroi. Her approach to these events was neither original nor systematic. The work was basically a narrative. Geerinck used Houdez and only four newspapers, the Catholic Journal de Bruxelles, the Progressive Réforme, the Doctrinaire-Liberal Indépendance Belge and the Journal de Charleroi. Apparently the Archives du Parquet Général, the Administration des Mines and the Archives Royales de la Dynastie were still closed to the public. Nor did the work systematically analyse the reaction of the press, or attempt to explain

why the strikes broke out, or why they caused more public consternation than, for example, those of 1868 and 1869. Finally, France Geerinck failed to relate the insurrectional strikes to the total political context in which they occured.

In part two of her thesis, Mrs. Geerinck did not analyse the public reaction to the repression, the throne speech or the appointment of the commission of inquiry and thereby more closely link the strikes to their political consequences. On the other hand her analysis of the work of the Commission du travail was extremely precise and very worthwhile. For it was the work of this commission of inquiry which established the program of legislation which the Catholic government of Premier Auguste Beernaert tried to implement in succeeding years. But her study, for obvious reasons, one of which was length, stopped with the recommendations of the Commission. She did not attempt to study the fate of these proposals in Parliament or in the press.

Geerinck's, Van Santbergen, Mottequin and Houdez hold in common a certain dysfunctional conception of the 1886 events and the political context in which they occurred. They do not view the events as an integral part of the political process of change. They implicitly attribute an irrational incidental character to collective violence. These studies leave the reader with the impression that the violence was an act of collective madness engendered by accumulated frustrations. It seems from these works that the insurrection did not involve any strategies, coordination or goals.

It was nihilistic. In short, the strikes were apolitical, and they did not involve any issues relating to inter-group competition for polity membership and a redistribution of values such as wealth and power (Cf. Charles Tilly).

In terms of the traditional economic approach, which these works implicitly adopt, the insurrectional violence of 1886 was dysfunctional to the political process, because politics involved a minimum degree of rational bargaining. Since violence was assumed to be irrational, it constituted a rupture in political bargaining, and it was not an integral part of the process of change. Either the violence reached revolutionary proportions and brought about the overthrow of the existing order, or else the insurgency was crushed and the old politics went on as before. According to the traditional economic approach, working class hardships during the 1877-1896 depression caused frustration which in turn exploded into a spontaneous blind rage of destruction.[1]

Being a blind spontaneous explosion, the collective violence was "senseless"[2] "without organization, the consequence of bitter

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1 Philippe Mottequin, Les grèves de 1886 à 1888 dans la Région du Centre (Louvain: Unpublished Licence thesis for the University of Louvain, 1969), p. 128. The 1886 strikes "were incontestably an economic movement, a type of spontaneous revolt".

France Geerinck, Les grèves dans le Hainaut en 1886 et la Commission du travail (Brussels: Unpublished Licence thesis for the University of Brussels, 1953), Part I, p. 37. "La classe ouvrière doit soudain affronter une telle somme de privations et en conçoit ainsi vive amertume qu'à la première occasion, on sent qu'elle cherchera à extérioriser un mécontentement trop longtemps contenu".

2 Ibid., Pt. I, p. 47.

circumstances, the product of misery".[1] The strikes and violence had no goals, they consisted of "indiscriminate armed attacks against everything".[2]

According to the traditional approach as well as Chalmers Johnson's systemic theory[3], the strikes were merely a fortuitous incident which consituted a temporary break in the political process. They arose from a dysfunctional situation which was caused by the hardships of the economic crisis. When the authorities crushed the revolt a new equilibrium was reestablished and politics went on much as before.[4] If according to Geerinck, the insurgency was a mere incident which "erupted with no precise reason [or goal] except for the frustration of its propagators"[5] then it is outside the scope

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1 René Van Santbergen, Une bourrasque sociale, Liège, 1886 (Liège: Commission communale de l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1969), p. 67.

2 Geerinck, Pt. I, p. 47. "Il faut avoir feuilleté les journaux qui parurent alors, pour réaliser le degré de folie et d'égarement où arrivèrent ces malheureux pendant quelques jours. On y voit se déchaîner les instincts les plus sauvages et les plus primitifs: des actes absurdes sont commis par une foule anonyme grisée à la fois par son audace et par l'impunité ..."
Gustave Houdez, Les troubles de Charleroi, 1886 (Frameries: Dufranc-Friart, 1911), p. 6.

3 Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).

4 René Van Santbergen, p. 146. Using the traditional systemic approach, Van Santbergen defined the four essential moments of the strikes: "(1) La détérioration d'un équilibre social déterminé par des facteurs économiques, politiques, culturels. (2) Le dépassement d'un point critique caractérisé par une explosion brutale et soudaine dont la violence est proportionnelle à l'intensité de la tension antérieure. (3) Le développement de réactions en chaîne accusant l'opposition entre les couches sociales ... (4) Le retour à un équilibre à son tour précaire".

5 Geerinck, Pt. II, p. 174.

of systematic analysis – without scientific significance. It would provide no lessons for further study and would have no impact on historical trends. At best it could only serve as an interesting source for a descriptive narrative of an isolated unique case of social pathology, with no possibility of cooperation between Social Science and History.[1]

Social Science has provided a new approach which envisages collective violence as an integral part of the on-going political process. Authors such as Charles Tilly, Barrington Moore and Erich Wolf see a dynamic relationship between collective violence and inter-class political relations. This rational conception extends not only to the political implications of the violence, but also to the internal dynamics of the groups who are involved in the violence, according to Smelser's Theory of Collective Behavior and Thomas Schelling in his Strategies of Conflict.

If collective violence is not merely collective madness, then it can be analysed systematically. An analytical model can be used to compare violence in 1868-1869 and 1886. The etiological relationships can also be studied and compared. This work will attempt to apply a model that combines the political approach with the collect-

1 Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 1. "Even though many thinkers in this field attempt to be objective, they frequently describe collective episodes as if they were the work of mysterious forces. Crowds, for instance are 'fickle', 'irrational' or 'spontaneous', and their behavior is 'unanticipated' or 'surprising'. For all their graphic quality, such terms are unsatisfactory. They imply that collective behavior flows from sources beyond empirical explanation".

ive history approach of Rudé and Soboul, who carried out a systematic straight forward but very demanding analysis of the population and local leadership that were involved in the French revolution. They studied the events from the bottom-up, and then developed a theory of the dynamics of the revolution.[3]

The dissertation is directed toward the impact of industrial violence on middle class attitudes about the need for social reform. This orientation is justified by the fact that the middle class — the industrial and political elites — ruled Belgium because of the property qualification electoral system. They did not share political power with either the peasants, the small bourgeoisie or the working class. In 1888, only about one per cent of the population had the right to vote. The small upper middle class elite monopolized the government of Belgium and they alone determined the governmental policy as well as the distribution of resources. They were the educated and articulate portion of the population. Being the literate and influential element in Belgium, most of the country's 300-400 daily and weekly periodicals were directed toward the 175,000 middle class subscribers.[1]

Since the middle class monopolized political and economic power[2], and because theirs was the most numerous and influential

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1 A. Boghaert-Vaché, "la Presse" in La Patrie belge: Pour la commémoration du centenaire de notre indépendance, 1830-1930 (Brussels: Editions illustrées du "Soir", 1930), p. 433.

2 Auguste Melot, "Beernaert: le régime bourgeois et la législation sociale", La Revue Générale, n° 60 (1927), p. 130.

3 Charles Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence," preliminary draft of an article for the Handbook of Political Science, Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., Addison-Wesley Publisning Co., p. 27.

press in the country,[1] it is thus necessary to concentrate on their attitudes as reflected in the Catholic, Doctrinaire (right wing) Liberal and Progressive (left wing) Liberal press. Particular attention must be devoted to the views that they expressed, in the Parliament and through their economic pressure groups as the chambers of commerce and various industrial associations, about the situation of the working class and its involvement in the 1886 insurgency.

The dissertation will attempt to find out what impact the 1886 insurrectional strikes had upon the middle class. To evaluate the impact of the insurrection on middle class attitudes, it is necessary to have some idea of the state of these attitudes before 1886. This can be done by evaluating the impact of prior governmental social inquiries and strikes in 1843-46 and 1868-1869. This, the first chapter, shall concentrate on a series of similar riots and strikes in 1868-1869 to determine the nature and gravity of the collective violence and to establish the impact that these events had upon the middle class press as well as upon the political authorities. The work will also attempt to ascertain the perceptiveness of any inquiries and legislation that the events might have engendered.

Chapter One will provide previous examples for comparison with

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1 The only two viable Socialist dailies were the Peuple (Brussels) and the Flemish Vooruit (Ghent). Neither had more than a few thousand subscribers. Most of the working class were illiterate and the middle class clientele would have hardly read the "revolutionary" press.

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the insurrection of 1886 and its impact on the ruling elites. Chapter Two is devoted to the political and economic situation that existed when the insurrection of 1886 broke out. The dissertation will attempt to evaluate the validity of the traditional economic explanations for the outbreak of collective violence. The relationship between the political context and the insurrection in 1886 must also be considered. This involves studying the political groups that were competing for political control and whose respective situations as contenders for political were affected by the insurrection. After having analyzed the etiological context in which the collective violence occurred, the two most significant day/place units of the insurrection, Liège March 18th and Charleroi March 26th-27th, must be studied in order to analyse the nature and gravity of the insurrection. The outbreak of the violence in Liège was chosen for special attention, because the political competition in the form of an anarchist demonstration on March 18th precipitated the outbreak of the violence. The ensuing struggle in Charleroi on March 26th-27th was the culmination of the destruction and bloodshed involved in the revolt. Since this study is not oriented toward the strikes themselves, but only to those aspects which had the most significant impact on middle class attitudes, it will only examine the most significant day-place units of analysis.

The role of precipitants, the methods by which the insurgents and coercive elements mobilized their forces, the role of ideology in the mobilization process, the composition, organization and

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strategies of the groups that were involved in the violence in each of the two day/place units will be studied. Also to be studied is the number of insurgents and coercive forces as well as the tactics that were employed within each of the day/place units. Finally, the analysis of the events requires an evaluation of the arrests, casualties, and destruction which occurred within each day/place unit and during the insurrection as a whole.

By analyzing the most significant events of the insurrection, it will be possible to evaluate how clearly the middle class perceived the gravity, nature and political significance of the insurrection. In the following Chapter the author will attempt to determine how clearly the press and the industrial elites perceived the etiology and nature of the insurrection and whether or not the press discussed the issues which were at stake and what they thought should be done about the problem.

The last Chapter is devoted to the reaction of the political authorities at the municipal, provincial and national levels of government to the events and to the press' comments concerning them. Both this and the preceding Chapter discuss the initial reactions, whether or not the press clearly perceived what issues were at stake and, finally, what the press and the political authorities decided to do to improve the lot of the working class.

The study will not be a definitive analysis of the strikes, because, in terms of the topic, it is only concerned with those aspects of the insurrection which were significant for their impact

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on middle class attitudes toward social reform. Nor is this work devoted to studying the parliamentary mechanisms involved in the legislation of social reforms measures through the operation of the Commission du travail and the intra-party politics of 1886-1889. There is already Geerinck's study of the operation of the Commission du travail. Defourny, Neuville and Rezsohazy have already written a great deal about the ruling Catholic party's history and the policies which were laid down by the Congrès des oeuvres sociales in 1886, 1887 and 1890.[1] Furthermore, all of these aspects of the social reform movement are distinct topics in themselves and are worthy of separate treatment.

The orientation of the thesis is directed toward the middle

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1 There are quite a few sources and studies on the Catholic social congresses:

Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886 (Liège: Demarteau, 1886), pp. 5-12, 22-23, 34-37, 40-43, 146-147, 151, 174-175, 188-189, 202-207, 221-225, 282-291, 352-377.

Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Deuxième session, 4-7 septembre 1887 (Liège: Demarteau, 1887), vol. I, pp. 36-43, 150-181; vol. II, pp. 16-45, 60-61, 320-27, 342-365, 376-377, 402-491.

Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Troisième session, 7-10 septembre 1889 (Liège: Demarteau, 1890), pp. 3-19, 40-49, 59-69, 84-87, 95, 133-138, 209, 224-225.

Maurice Defourny, Les congrès catholiques en Belgique (Louvain: Bibliothèque de la "Revue Sociale Catholique", 1906) pp. 147-205.

Paul Gérin, Les Catholiques liégeois et la question sociale, 1833-1914 (Brussels: Cahiers des études sociales, 1959), pp. 16-97.

Jean Neuville, Il y a 75 ans naissait le premier syndicat chrétien (Brussels: La pensée catholique, 1961), pp. 1, 5-7, 26-55.

Rudolf Rezsohazy, Origines et formation du catholicisme social en Belgique, 1842-1909 (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1958), pp. 58-113, 171-203..

Arthur Verhaegen, Vingt-cinq années d'action sociale (Brussels: Dewit, 1911), pp. 10-19, 20-23, 42-69.

class opinion makers, industrialists and political leaders who held many ideas in common despite Catholic-Liberal party division. The ideas that they held in common were the premises upon which they based their sharing of power within the Belgian polity; and these premises also provided the grounds on which they excluded other contending classes. Before 1886 both Catholics and most Liberals were firm believers in laissez-faire economics, elitist politics based on property qualification, and paternal care for the lower classes through privately sponsored charities. This study shall be particularly concerned with the impact of the insurrection on middle class attitudes regarding these premises.

The principle sources for studying whether there was a change in middle class attitudes were the newspapers.[1] The choice of newspapers was determined by two criteria. The first was to choose newspapers which represented the three prevalent middle class political tendencies, i.e. Catholic, Progressive Liberal and Doctrinaire Liberal. Second, newspapers had to be chosen on the basis of the degree to which they demonstrated a certain amount of editorial originality. This was particularly a problem for the newspapers in

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1 It is of course impossible to completely equate the press with public opinion. To some extent the press made opinion rather than simply representing or reflecting commonly held views. Newspapers oftentimes reflected the particular views and interests of their publishers or of particular interest groups with whom the their publishers shared goals. Yet at the time of the insurrection, the press was the only broadcast means of communication, and it came nearer than any other forum to expressing the main ideas that were abroad amongst the country's political and economic elites. Faute de mieux, the press had to be a principal source of research.

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the industrial Walloon provinces of Hainaut and Liège. Most of these provincial papers parroted the views of the national press in Brussels. Furthermore, the Catholic press was never strong in the Liberal industrial stronghold of Hainaut. With few subscribers and without adequate funds, the Catholics in Hainaut looked to the more prestigious Journal de Bruxelles or Namur's Ami de l'ordre for original and influential views rather than to their own daily or semi-daily Union de Charleroi or Le Hainaut of Mons, which had ceased daily publication after 1866.[1] Finally these local Catholic organs generally imitated the views of the more important national Catholic papers in Brussels.

Chronological problems also affected the choice of newspapers. Wherever possible, the author tried to choose organs whose publication overlapped both the crises of 1868-69 and 1886-89. There were, however three exceptions to this rules. In Charleroi, the Gazette de Charleroi only began publishing in 1878. It was consulted because it was the only Doctrinaire Liberal competitor to the Progressive (left wing) Liberal Journal de Charleroi. The Patriote was the first (1883) left-wing Catholic organ in Brussels, while the Réforme (1884) was the most important left wing Progressive Liberal newspaper in the capital.

All the other newspapers bridged the crises of 1868-69 and 1886-89 and we were able to analyze the evolution of their editorial

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1 Louise Henneaux-Depooter, Misères et luttes sociales dans le Hainaut, 1860-1869 (Brussels: Institut de sociologie Solvay, 1959), p. 35.

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opinion during both periods of collective violence. The research required the systematic perusal of the daily columns of the following newspapers during the six years 1868-1869 and 1886-1889. The Journal de Bruxelles (Catholic), the Indépendance Belge (Doctrinaire Liberal, Brussels), the Ami de l'Ordre (Catholic, Namur), the Gazette de Liège (Catholic), the Meuse (Doctrinaire Liberal, Liège), the Journal de Charleroi (Progressive Liberal), the Gazette de Mons (Doctrinaire Liberal), the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut (Progressive Liberal). The more recent Gazette de Charleroi, the Patriote and the Réforme were consulted for the years 1886 to 1889 inclusive.

Founded in 1840 as the chief organ of Catholic ultramontain opinion, the Gazette de Liège had swung away from its extreme theocratic views by 1886 under Joseph Demarteau, its editor-in-chief and publisher. The newspaper nevertheless emphasized the role of the teachings of the Church on social life and often deplored many aspects of the secularization of Belgian society and what it believed to be an attendant moral degeneration of the middle class and the working class.[1] The Gazette opposed abolition of the paid replacement system for military service and also took a stand against universal suffrage. There was also a note of anti-semitism within this sheet which it held in common with other Catholic dailies like

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1 Joseph Demarteau, 1916. Un demi-siècle de journalisme à travers la "Gazette de Liège" (1863-1910) (Liège: Demarteau, 1916), p. 123; Jacques Lory, Panorama de la Presse belge en 1870-1871 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1963), p. 25.

the Ami de l'Ordre.[1]

The Meuse was one of the Gazette de Liège's competitors (along with Frère-Orban's alter ego, the Journal de Liège). The Meuse was founded by a banker (Jules Nagelmackers), a president of the Chamber of Commerce (Félix Capitaine) and two aristocrats (the brothers de Thier). The two de Thier brothers dominated the newspaper until 1899. The Meuse proclaimed itself the champion of national defense and independence as well as defender of doctrinaire liberalism which it termed 'the cause of liberty and progress'. Though the liberal newspaper asserted that it was not anti-religious, it demanded absolute separation of Church and State. The Meuse was always quick to defend the interests of Liège's industrialists and businessmen, for Liège's industry was one of the 'finest jewels in the national crown'. It was the 'most fruitful source of the prosperity and well being' of Liège.

By 1886, the paper's circulation had risen to approximately 10,000 and it became a powerful competitor for both the Gazette and the Journal de Liège. Though often considered a siamese twin of the latter, the Meuse was somewhat more moderate than the organ of the Doctrinaire leader of the Liberal party. Nevertheless, its relations with Frère-Orban were excellent. On the other hand, the Meuse bitterly opposed Catholic efforts to obtain a state subsidized system of religious schools. For this reason it lauded Frère-Orban's

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 6, 1889. For example in one article, it gravely headlined a "blood crime by the jews" who had allegedly carried out a "blood ritual".

1879 secularization of education act, and strongly condemned the Beernaert Catholic government's 1884 school law.

At the same time the Meuse assailed Paul Janson, the leader of left wing Progressive faction, for his support of universal suffrage, even though Frère-Orban had come around to some sort of a compromise solution in 1889. The Meuse opposed enfranchising '500 or 600,000 ignorant people'. It regarded universal suffrage as an 'absurdity'.[1]

The Meuse had another Catholic competitor, the Ami de l'Ordre in Namur. Théodore de Montpellier, bishop of Liège in 1830, founded the newspaper in 1839.[2] In the 1880's it was under the direction of Alphonse Charneux, a fervent ultramontain and Victor Delvaux, who had considered a religious vocation but had instead turned to teaching and journalism.[3] By the 1890's the Ami was publishing from 20,000 to 25,000 copies per day whereas its poor cousins in Mons and Charleroi were limping along at 2,000 to 3,000.[4] The newspaper's editorial direction was under the influence of Mgr Belin the Bishop of Namur.[5] It opposed electoral reform and bitterly assailed Frère-Orban's Liberal government in 1880 for breaking relations with the

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1 Denise Lambrette, Le journal "La Meuse", 1855-1955 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1969), pp. 5-19, 26-45.

2 Marie-Louise Warnotte, "L'Ami de l'Ordre. Quotidien Catholique Namurois de 1839 à 1914 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1970), p. 17.

3 Ibid., p. 29.

4 Ibid., p. 43.

5 Ibid., p. 53.

Vatican.[1] It also opposed the 1879 school law, which it called an 'excecrable law', the 'law of misfortune that had been born in the gutter of the Loges and the International'.[2] Conversely, the Ami lauded the 1884 law which nullified the Liberals' 'Godless schools.'[3]

The Ami de l'Ordre opposed increasing the size of the army and warned that conscription would "expose Catholic youth to the officiers corps and the Loge".[4] Throughout its existence it aimed its editorial fire at left wing social theories and advocated a traditional approach based on Christian charity.[5] It also railed against "jewish bankers, rich voltairiens",[6] the "jewish press"[7] in Bismarckian Germany, and above all the insidious influence of the Free Masons.[8] Both the Free Masons and the Jews did not have a country of their own. They were spread among the peoples of the world like enemies".[9]

The Gazette de Charleroi was founded in 1878. It was the Doctrinaire competitor of the Progressive Journal de Charleroi. By the mid-1880's its circulation had reached 8,000 to 9,000 copies per

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1 Ibid., p. 87.
2 Ibid., p. 88.
3 Ibid., p. 89.
4 Ami de l'Ordre, October 31, 1889.
5 Warnotte, p. 90.
6 Ami de l'ordre, May 25, 1887.
7 Ibid., October 31, 1889.
8 Ibid., July 1, 1889.
9 Ibid., October 13, 1886.

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day.[1] Its managing publisher, Lucien Giroul, had moved the paper in the direction of supporting the interests of the industrialists and the policies of Frère-Orban.[2]

The Journal de Charleroi, was initially (1845) Doctrinaire-Libéral and anti-clérical.[3] But by the 1880's, under its new editor-in-chief Jules des Essarts, who represented the Charleroi delegation at the Progressive convention of 1887, the Journal de Charleroi had swung around to the left.[4] With a circulation of 10,000, the paper became a powerful voice in favor of universal suffrage and social reform.[5]

The Organe de Mons et du Hainaut was slightly to the right of the Journal de Charleroi. This moderate liberal organ was founded in 1862 by Edouard Degouy.[6] It supported the Progressive Convention of 1887 despite the opposition of the Doctrinaire majority of the Liberal party. But on the other hand it warned against adoption of a frankly pro-universal suffrage policy. The Organe wanted a compromise solution which would reunite the Liberal party.[7] This is typical of the left and moderate wings of the Liberal movement in

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1 Jacques Lefebvre, "La presse locale" in Caroloregium Valde Concelebratur, 1666-1966 (Charleroi, 1966), p. 307.

2 Mottequin, p. 32-34.

3 Lefebvre, pp. 297-298.

4 Mottequin, p. 37.

5 Lefebvre, p. 297-298

6 Mottequin, p. 27.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 17, 1887.

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Hainaut in the era before 1886. Generally the press which supported such views was far more moderate than its Progressives cousins in Brussels. The Organe would never advocate the Réforme's demands for universal suffrage, nationalization of the mines and stringent state intervention in economic affairs. Nevertheless, it was "slightly more open to the problems of the working class.[1]

The Doctrinaire Liberal Gazette de Mons was founded in 1839 and by 1886 its circulation had reached 3,000-3,500. Though a staunch defender of Manchesterian economics, it was willing to support general military conscription, a limited extension of the franchise as well as certain Progressive candidates during the 1888 elections. However, it remained an anti-clerical organ par excellence in the old Doctrinaire Liberal tradition.[2] According to Lory, it was the "echo of the sentiments and aspirations of the majority of the Montois bourgeoisie".[3]

The most radical Liberal organ in Belgium was the Réforme of Brussels. It was under the direction of Emile Feron, a friend and collaborator of Paul Janson, who was the head of the Progressive wing of the Liberal Party in Brussels. It led the way in advocating universal suffrage, the incorporation of trade unions, comprehensive state intervention in economic affairs and a vast social reform program. The Réforme also advocated an electoral alliance between

1 Henneaux-Depooter, pp. 32-33.

2 Mottequin, p. 30.

3 Lory, p. 34.

the emerging working class and the "petite bourgeoisie", once both groups had obtained universal suffrage. Ever since its founding in 1884, the leadership of the Réforme believed that the Liberal party should move to the left before the Socialists monopolized this position by taking complete control of the working class movement and gaining universal suffrage; or else before the Catholics moved leftward though their potentional base of power with an enfranchised peasantry.[1]

The Indépendance Belge was founded in 1843 by a French journalist named Marcelin Faure. At first, most of its shares belonged to French investors, and its editorial policy reflected the source of its funds. The Doctrinaire Indépendance Belge was Belgium's most prestigious newspaper.[2] It was the only truly international newspaper in Belgium. It had correspondents in London, Berlin, Vienna, Saint Petersburg, Warsaw, Moscow, Turin, Lisbon, Athens, Constantinople and New York. Under its managing director Gaston Berardi, who had taken control in 1884, it was a staunch supporter of Frère-Orban's wing of the Liberal party. It opposed universal suffrage and remained a supporter of the on-going Manchesterian economic theories, while bitterly criticizing the divisive tendencies of

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1 A. Ooms, "La presse belge depuis ses origines jusqu'au centenaire de notre indépendance nationale" in La presse (Brussels: la maison de la Presse, 1949), p. 30; Lionel Bertelson, Tableau chronologique des journaux belges (Brussels: la maison de la Presse, 1956), p. 27.

2 Bertelson, ibid., p. 21; Ooms, p. 26.

Paul Janson's Progressives.[1]

The Journal de Bruxelles was two years older than the Indépendance.[2] Under de Haulleville, the Journal became the spokesman for moderate Catholics who supported Beernaert's government. Perhaps this was due to the earlier influence of Edouard Ducpétiaux who had been one of the leading advocates of social reform and who had directed the newspaper between 1863 and 1878.[3] But the Journal's editorial policy displayed a tinge of opportunism; it tended to support whatever Catholic government happened to be in power. For example, while it supported the moderate Beernaert government in 1886, in 1870 it had also supported the ultramontain policies d'Anethan.[4]

The Patriote of Brussels was founded in 1883. It represented the left wing of the Catholic party and demonstrated far more independence vis à vis the Catholic governments of the 1880's than the Journal had done. For example, it often criticized the right wing Catholic governement of Woeste, Malou and Jacobs, and particularly Woeste's school bill of 1884 that was intended to abolish the school secularization act of 1879.[5] In general, the Patriote supported the reform program of Beernaert's government as well as the leftward movement of Catholic social policy during the Catholic Social Con-

1 René Feibelman, L'évolution de la presse bruxelloise (Brussels: L'Expansion belge, 1911), p. 18.

2 Bertelson, p. 20.

3 Ibid.

4 Lory, pp. 13, 15.

5 Feibelman, p. 39.

gresses of 1886, 1887 and 1890.

The author also systematically, consulted the following dailies, weeklies and semi-weeklies for the months of March and April 1886: The Etoile Belge (Brussels, Doctrinaire), La Belgique militaire. Organe des intérêts militaires (Brussels), L'Illustration (Paris), Le Monde Illustré (Paris), Le Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels (Brussels), Le Peuple (Brussels, Socialist), Le Temps (Paris), and The Times (London). There were several manuscript collections which were particularly useful for studying the insurrection, i.e. the Archives du Parquet Général, the Archives de l'Administration des Mines, the Archives Militaires, as well as the Archives de la Sûreté et de la Ville de Liège.

In writing this work, the author relied on the resources of the Archives Générales du Royaume (Brussels), the Bibliothèque Royale Albertine (Brussels), the Archives Royales de la Dynastie (Brussels), the Archives d'Etat à Liège, the Archives d'Etat à Mons, the Archives de la Ville de Charleroi, the Bibliothèque Communale de Charleroi and the Library of Congress in Washington. It was also necessary to obtain the inter-library loan services of the university libraries in Ghent, Brussels, Liège and the municipal libraries and archives of Antwerp and Seraing.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY APERCU OF THE STRIKES AND SOCIAL REFORM EFFORTS BETWEEN 1843 AND 1885

The gravity of the 1886 industrial insurrection in Wallonia, the force of its impact on the attitudes of Belgium's industrial and political elites towards the working class, and the significance of the social reforms that the insurgency generated can best be evaluated by placing these events in historical context. A juxtaposition the events of 1886-1889 to the back drop of the four preceding decades of Belgian social history will make it possible to place the insurrection and the reform movement in perspective. By describing the back drop to 1886 it will also provide the means to establish a basis for comparing the relative importance of the post-1886 reforms with the reform efforts of the preceding forty years. During those years, there were also depressions, strikes, and investigations into the situation of the working class; yet they had little impact on the country's political and industrial elites.

A study of the subject involves determining what social reforms and inquiries were carried out before 1886. Also of interest were the pre-1886 attitudes of the country's intellectual, political and industrial elites to earlier crises, inquiries and

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social reform proposals. These are the main questions which must be answered in order to lay a basis of comparison for studying the significance of the events of 1886-89.

The first major inquiry into the situation of Belgium's working class was published during 1846-48. It was the only comprehensive social inquiry to precede the one carried out by the Commission du Travail in 1886. But the three massive in-folio volumes of this report were not only less significant in terms of their social and political impact, but also in terms of the type of situation under study in this thesis. Whereas the 1886 report dealt with living conditions that allegedly caused an insurrection by Belgium's industrial population, the 1843 commission studied the situation of a pre-industrial population; a rural population, partially engaged in home manufactures; a nascent working class composed of part-time coal miners in the Borinage[1] area, and the workers employed in the textile industry in Ghent. In view of the pre-industrial nature of Belgium's working population at this time, the situation that led to the inquiry was altogether different from the one which existed un 1886. In the 1840's there was no industrial insurrection by a defiant homogeneous industrial population, but merely the silent suffering of a desoriented semi-industrialized population

1 During this period miners were only partially engaged in extractive industry. In fact they were still peasants, supplementing their income from farming by working in the mines during off-season. They lived on farms around the pit head, and during winter and in between harvests, they worked as miners in the small pits near the villages.

caught up in a famine that was linked with an economic decline. Because of this basic difference between the situation in 1843 and 1886, it is only necessary to briefly describe these early social reform endeavors.[1]

The economic situation in 1843 was catastrophic. Wages had fallen to levels of 20 years earlier. In 1823 a coal-miner in the Charleroi area earned from 1.40 to 1.60 francs per day; in 1837, 1838 and 1839 he earned 3 to 4 frs; but by 1843 his wages had dropped to 1.80 to 2.25 francs.[2] The situation in the Flemish linen industry was hardly any better. Ever since 1836 German and British competition was making itself felt. These countries' textile industries had become mechanized earlier and their cheaper goods were capturing markets in Belgium and elsewhere on the continent.[3] Meanwhile the cost of living went up, but wage levels declined or remained stationary at a very low level. An average Liège miner's wage declined from 1.68 frs in 1841 to 1.10 frs a day in 1845; the daily wage of a weaver dropped from .75 - 1.20 frs (1840) to .36 - .75 frs (1846).[4] Declining wages generated some unrest in Flanders and in the Walloon coal fields. In July 1839, the miners protested

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1 Most of the information on the 1843 inquiry is based on an excellent study by France Van Santbergen, L'Accueil reservé à l'Enquête de 1843 sur la condition des ouvriers et sur le travail des enfants (Liège: Unpublished Mémoire de licence at the University of Liège, 1968). For further information, see this monograph.

2 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

against the arrival of foreign workers. They feared that the mine owners intended to bring in cheap labor to drive wage-levels down. The 100 per cent wage gains of the previous twenty years were threatened. When the Belgian government imposed work books[1] on the miners in 1840 the climate deteriorated even further.[2] Meanwhile, in Flanders unemployed workers roamed the countryside extorting alms from travellers.[3]

At the height of the crisis, Minister of the Interior, J.-B. Nothomb signed a royal decree on September 7th, 1843 that instituted a special commission which was to study the situation of the working class and ultimately draft a bill on child labor[4] and

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1 This 1840 Royal decree required the worker to carry a note book which was issued to him by the municipal authorities. He had to deposit this book with employer. It contained a record of his career and included any misdemeanors he may have committed while employed. The book actually bound the worker to his employer since he could not obtain work elsewhere unless his previous employer had returned the book to him with no derogatory comments.

2 Ibid., p. 5.

3 Ibid., p. 6. By 1846-47, at the height of the potato famine in Flanders, the number of persons on relief had reached 671,000, 28 per cent of the population of East Flanders and 34 per cent of the population of West Flanders. Vicomte Charles de Terlinden (éd.), L'Histoire de la Belgique Contemporaine, 1830-1914 (3 vols; Brussels: Dewit, 1928), vol. II, pp. 253-54.

4 The only child labor law in the Belgian statute books was inherited from the French Imperial Regime. This 1813 enactment prohibited children under ten years of age from working in the mines. England had already legislated child labor regulation as early as 1802 and France had recently gone beyond the 1813 law when it enacted a more comprehensive bill in 1841. La Flandre Libérale (Ghent) April 3, 1886, a "doctrinaire" (rightwing) Liberal organ in Flanders. Louis Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830 (2 vols; Brussels: Dechenne et cie, 1907), vol. I, p. 99. Though this was not a scholarly work, Bertrand's history makes extremely interesting and lively reading; and even if

regulation of working conditions.[1] Edouard Ducpetiaux,[2] who had devoted his entire life to social reform and who was at the time Inspector of Prisons, was the principle author of the questionnaire which was sent out to industrialists, Chambers of Commerce,[3] provincial medical boards and medical societies throughout the country.[4] Ducpetiaux was also the most influential of the commis-

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it lacks footnotes, crosschecking with other works confirms his narrative.

1 Marie Van Santbergen, pp. 1, 30, 43.

2 Edouard Ducpétiaux had even broken with the Liberal party because of its economic policy; he advocated government intervention in social and economic affairs. He believed that it was the government's duty to take a leading roll in improving social conditions. Ducpétiaux accused western European governments of shrouding themselves in a false sense of security before the imminent social crisis. He called for stringent regulation of working conditions, protection of the working class (while it faced on-rushing mechanization), control over the anarchical state of market place, worker-employer sharing and other avant-garde ideas. These views were elaborated in his numerous writings: De l'état des aliénés en Belgique et des moyens d'améliorer leur sort (1832); De l'état de l'Instruction primaire et populaire en Belgique comparé avec celui de l'instruction en Allemagne, en Prusse, en Suisse, en France, en Hollande et aux Etats-Unis (1838); "Budgets économiques des classes ouvrières en Belgique" in the Bulletin de la Commission de Statistiques (1855); Des Sociétés de tempérances (1836); "Du sort des enfants trouvés et abandonnés en Belgique" in the Bulletin de la Commission de Statistiques (1855); Le paupérisme en Belgique, causes et remèdes (1844); Des causes d'épargne et de leur influence sur la condition des classes laborieuses (1851). Cf. Marie Van Santbergen, pp. 35-37; Paul Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 a 1886 (Louvain: C. Peeters, 1904), pp. 330-56.

3 At the time the Chambers of Commerce had a quasi-official status in Belgium. They were frequently consulted on economic affairs and their yearly economic reports were included in their respective provinces' Mémoires Administratifs.

4 France Van Santbergen, p. 33; No workers or their organizations were called on to testify. Louis Bertrand a Social Democrat of the late nineteenth century condemned the report on these grounds

sion members[1] when it came to analysing the answers to the questionnaire and drawing up the massive report.

The findings of the commission were published at a politically fortuitous moment. The 1846 parliamentary session opened under the Comte de Theux-Malou-Dechamps-d'Anethan Catholic government, and this ministry had stated through Leopold I's throne speech that "the situation of the poor classes will be the object of their constant attention."[2] The same year the Liberal party congress pledged that the Party would "devote itself to improvements, urgently required in view of the situation of the working classes."[3] In this politically propitious milieu, the heart-rending findings pointed out that children worked the same hours as adults and under the same brutalizing conditions; that their education was completely neglected; that children were often obliged to work night

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but in view of the nature of the working class at this time, their muteness is hardly surprising cf. Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique (Brussels, 1888), pp. 76-77 . In view of his political affiliations, Bertrand was naturally critical of what had been accomplished by preceding middle class governments. He was particularly opposed to the idea of any philanthropic efforts requiring personal initiative, which he considered to be completely futile. Instead, he advocated direct governmental intervention, particularly in public housing. Enquête sur la condition des classes ouvrières et sur le travail des enfants de 1843; vol. 2, Réponses, mémoires et rapports des chambres de commerce, des ingénieurs des mines et des colleges médicaux (3 vols; Brussels: Lesigne, 1846-48), vol. II, p. 663.

1 The other commission members were chosen among the upper echelon ministerial bureaucracy or within the academic community. For a biography of the rest of the members cf. France Van Santbergen, pp. 31-32, 34, 44.

2 Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, p. 97.

3 Ibid., p. 98

shifts;[1] that these conditions were creating an industrial class of mental and physical runts; that living conditions were atrocious in the early industrial slums;[2] that workers were often exploited in company stores; that relief agencies were utterly inadequate to the unemployment situation ....[3]

The Commission of Inquiry proposed a comprehensive bill regulating child and female labor as well as working conditions. The reforms were mainly directed toward the young working population and were of a protective nature. They were justified upon Ducpetiaux's thesis that state regulation of working conditions was not an infringement on the right to work. Statal regulation was merely an auxilliary tool of the government to maintain a balance of duties and privileges between labor and management in the market place.[4] The Commission's report went on to call for prohibition of those under eighteen of age from working more than twelve hours a day; no children under ten would be allowed to work; those between

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1 Léon Delsinne, Le mouvement syndical en Belgique (Brussels: Castaine, 1936), p. 29; F. Gunther Eyck, The Benelux Countries: A Historical Survey (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1959), p. 71. Both of these are short surveys.

2 I. De Camps, L'évolution sociale en Belgique, ses péripéties au point de vue des classes ouvrières (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe, 1890), pp. 60-61, 72-73, 88. This work is an excellent compilation and explanation of various phases of social legislation enacted through 1890. It begins with a brief summary of pre-1886 reforms and the rest is devoted to the work of the Commission du travail. Unfortunately in view of its date, it lacks historical perspective.

3 France Van Santbergen, p. 83.

4 Ibid., p. 107.

ten and fourteen years of age could only work six and a half hours per day, the rest of their time should be spent in school; and finally, women and boys under twelve were to be excluded from collieries. According to the report, the government would appoint industrial inspectors for ensuring that the industrialists conformed to these prescriptions,[1] while the government's Corps of mining engineers would have the same task in the mining industry.[2]

The Belgian political and industrial elites reacted in a lethargic manner to the proposals in the report. France Van Santbergen asserted that the press "responded to the report with stolid silence."[3] Its findings were hardly controversial. Being against poverty was like opposing sin; the real question was could either one ever be done away with. Both Catholic and Liberal Papers saw no solution outside traditional means - private charity and soup kitchens.[4] The press saw poverty as an unavoidable evil inherent in the human condition. Those who found themselves impoverished could only seek compensation in the Hereafter, and in the meantime, they were advised to accept their status on earth with humble stoicism and frugality. Meanwhile the social order would be maintained

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1 Ibid., pp. 106-107.

2 The Corps of mining engineers was a division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Public Works. It was charged with assuring the execution of all legislation regarding mining, steam-powered machinery and the exploitation of all mining concessions which were accorded by the state.

3 France Van Santbergen, p. 84.

4 Ibid., p. 85, 108, 109.

through the paternal leadership of the industrial elites and their various charitable endeavors.[1] And as far as the projected law on child labor was concerned, the Liège Chamber of Commerce echoed the on-going economic dogmas of the majority of the country's wealthiest industrial elites when it warned that regulation of child labor would result in "higher production costs and that it would make Belgium less competitive vis à vis other nations whose industries were unencombered by regulatory legislation."[2] Then perhaps to assuage its conscience the Chamber pointed out that the government had no right "to take away the supplementary income from child labor which was one of the main contributors to the relative well-being of working class families."[3]

In August, 1847 a new Liberal party government headed by Charles Rogier with Hubert Frère-Orban[4] as Finance Minister, came to power, and it seemed more receptive to the report than the press and the industrial elites had been. The Liberal cabinet's program

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1 Ibid., p. 110, 112, 121.

2 Avis de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège sur le projet de Loi relatif à la condition des classes ouvrières et au travail des enfants (Liège:J. Desoer, 1849), p. 20. The Liège Chamber of Commerce was composed of powerful industrialists and very wealthy merchants. It saw the report as an "indictment against the morality of all industrialists." Cf. France Van Santbergen, p. 133.

3 Avis de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège sur le projet de Loi relatif à la condition des classes ouvrières et au travail des enfants, p. 21. The Chambers of Commerce were para-statal organizations. They were responsible for keeping the authorities informed about the economic and social situation in their areas.

4 For biographical data cf. Les grandes figures de la Belgique indépendante (Brussels, 1931), pp. 57-60; Jules Garson and H. Van Leynseele, Frère-Orban, le Crépuscule, 1876-1896 (Brussels: La

declared that the government was "inspired by a sentiment of distributive justice for all interests and classes of society, and that the government would devote a major part of its attention to the moral and material well-being of the needy and laboring classes."[1] Frère-Orban noted that "the middle class ... must concern itself with the situation of the working class... The hour" had "come when all polities must turn upon the heart, soul and situation of the working class."[2]

Such words seemed to bode well for the fortunes of reform. Whether or not the government actually did much about the proposals in Ducpetiaux's report and whether or not their statements actually reflected the intentions of the political leadership are key issues of analysis. In the case of Charles Rogier, most probably so. Miss Van Santbergen[3] pointed out that he "had a sincere desire to obtain enactment of the bill[4]" which he introduced in Parliament on August 19, 1847.[5] But Rogier's views were not those of the majority of the

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Renaissance du Livre, 1954).

1 Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, p. 98.

2 Ibid.,

3 France Van Santbergen, p. 140.

4 Marc Antoine-Pierson, L'Histoire du socialisme en Belgique (Brussels: Institut Emile Vandervelde, 1953), pp. 92-93; "L'Histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique," Bulletin de la Confédération des syndicats chrétiens (September, 1953), p. 15; France Van Santbergen, pp. 118, 122, 126-29, 145.

5 Ducpetiaux had also advocated a housing bill to improve sanitary conditions in working class quarters. But the proposal ran into stiff opposition, particularly from the Brussels health board which went out of its area of competence to find arguments against

Liberal party. Hubert Frère-Orban was the real representative of the party, and despite Frère-Orban expression of general sentiments (seen above), he finaly opposed regulation of child and female labor.[1] Frère-Orban represented Liège — and its Chamber of Commerce. He was also leader of the "clique aristo-métallique" which had taken over the Liberal party at the 1846 Congress according to the minoritarian left wing Progressives.[2] Frère-Orban's Doctrinaires invoked three arguments against labor regulation. First, they pointed out that there was no significant movement of public opinion in favor of such legislation, and strong public support was needed if the government was to be able to effectively enforce such an enactment. In view of the hostility among the country's industrialists. Frère-Orban therefore, turned the same argument against the very necessity of regulating child and female labor. He noted that no public support existed because the need for

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it. Ducpetiaux had envisaged the construction of new workers housing projects in the outlying suburbs where the air was cleaner and where land was cheaper. The Brussels health board fought the idea claiming it would cause a labor shortage for industry because the labor supply would be too far away. Cf. De Camps, pp. 79-80; France Van Santbergen, p. 146; Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, pp. 104-106; Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête faite au nom de l'Académie royale de médecine de Belgique par la commission chargée d'étudier la question de l'emploi des femmes dans les travaux souterrains des mines (Brussels: Manceaux, 1870), p. 2.

1 France Van Santbergen, p. 140.

2 Henri Pirenne, L'Histoire de Belgique; vol. 4 De 1830 à la première guerre mondiale (4 vols; Brussels: Lamartine, 1932), vol. IV pp. 70-72. The right wing of the Liberal party were called "Doctrinaires" because of their rigid adherence to the doctrines of Manchesterian economic ideas, such as free trade, non-intervention, etc

such action did not exist![1] Belgium was not confronted with the same problem as England, where a genuine proletariat had arisen from the industrial revolution and where "revolting abuses" had caused "generalized indignation."[2] The Finance-Minister also argued that those countries that had enacted such legislation were unable to enforce it effectively. In Britain, industrialists consistently frustrated the efforts of government inspectors.[3] France had recently (1844) conducted an inquiry into the implementation of its 1841 child labor regulation law. The law, the study found, was not being enforced in half of the departments, because of local inertia, and because of complicity between factory inspectors and industrialists, who were often chosen by those they were supposed to inspect. Finally, the Doctrinaires pointed up the impact of such legislation on the general economic situation. Wage costs would go up, and Belgium's position in foreign markets would deteriorate even further.[4]

Faced with the apathy of the press and the hostility of the various industrial elites and the opposition within his own party, Charles Rogier allowed the reform bill to die quietly without a vote ever being taken.[5] The interval between 1850 and 1868 did not

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1 France Van Santbergen, pp. 143-44.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 142.

4 Ibid., p. 141.

5 L'Evolution et structure du mouvement ouvrier socialiste en Belgique (Brussels: Centrale d'éducation ouvrière, 1961), p. 12.

herald any major change in social policy. These years were relatively prosperous ones and the country's leaders congratulated themselves on the fact that the country had not been affected by the great upheavals of 1848 in France and Germany. In the meantime, Belgium was being launched on the ever accelerating industrialization process. The country was booming. But social problems were not entirely forgotten even if they did not elicit massive concern. Various congresses, reports and studies regarding child and female labor were carried out in 1852,[1] 1853,[2] 1856,[3] and 1859-60.[4] Finally in 1862 a parliamentary commission submitted a bill for regulating child labor. According to the proposed legislation, the number of hours a child could work would vary with his age.[5] This bill was

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See also France Van Santbergen, pp. 153-55; Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 168.

1 Louise Henneaux-Depooter, Misères et luttes sociales dans le Hainaut, 1860-69 (Brussels: Institut de sociologie Solvay, 1959), p. 100.

2 The Congrès général de statistique met in Brussels in September 1853; Ducpétiaux was one of the secretaries. Dr. H. Kuborn, physician for the Seraign welfare board described the impact of working conditions on the health of children in the mines. Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 94, 136.

3 Congress of welfare boards in 1856 called for limiting the work hours of women and children, prohibiting women and children from working at night and on Sundays, and excluding women from the mines. Ibid., p. 168; Henneaux-Depooter, p. 104.

4 On July 20th the Rogier government launched a new inquiry. The Chambers of Commerce, Provincial Councils and various industrialists were polled. Whereas non-industrialized Flanders was not strongly opposed to regulatory legislation, Wallonia and particularly the industrial centers of Hainaut and Liège fought general regulation of child and female labor. Ibid., p. 101.

5 Ibid., p. 102.

even more anodine than its predecessor of 1847, since it did nothing about female labor and it did not exclude child labor from industry on an absolute basis. Nevertheless, the bill never got beyond being debated.

In 1851, a law and royal decree accorded corporate status to mutual-aid societies, but only under certain conditions, i.e. they could not provide pensions nor could their funds be guaranteed by the national treasury. By 1860, there were only 285 incorporated societies, whereas following the 1894 reform, the number leaped to 2000.[1] The system of Industrial Tribunals was modified slightly in 1859. But foremen still were elected to the tribunals as worker's judges and were thus able to tip the verdict in favor of the judges who were elected by management[2]. Parliament enacted legislation to create a voluntary national savings and pension fund in 1850 and 1865.[3] But its flaws extended beyond the evident ineffectiveness of

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1 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 114-116.

2 Ibid., pp. 145-47; Henneaux-Depooter, pp. 93-94.

3 Ibid., p. 97; De Camps, pp. 60, 64-65; "Histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique," p. 16; Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 105-106, 108, 111, 113, 117-118; de Terlinden, vol. II, p. 287; E. Cornez, Cent ans de législation sociale en Belgique (Brussels: Editions "Labor", 1949), p. 7; Maurice Defourny, Les Congrès catholiques en Belgique (Louvain: Bibliothèque de la "Revue sociale catholique", 1908), pp. 115-127, the Malines Catholic Congress of 1863-64 supported this legislation; M. Mahaillon, L'Epargne: L'Exposition universelle, 1889 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), pp. 10-11; J. Galesloot, Les Sociétés de secours mutuels: l'Exposition universelle, 1889 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), p. 57.

voluntarism. The fund paid low interest on deposits (only 3%)[1] and furthermore, even after fifty years of contributions, the maximum pension varied between 2.5 and 5 frs per week.[2] By 1887, there were only 8,872 participants.[3]

In 1858 and 1867 Parliament enacted legislation authorizing local authorities to expropriate slums and turn them over to public housing commissions that would construct new low-income housing.[4] The law however, had little impact. Like similar slum clearance efforts in Britain, France and Germany, the public housing commissions were unable to interest investors in the project because they could only offer a return of 3 - 3.5 per cent on their capital. If the investors were offered 5 - 6 per cent the buy-rent housing became too expensive for workers.[5] Vast tracts of slums were cleared and their inhabitants were driven off to the outlying countryside where new slums arose, meanwhile the expropriated lands

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1 P. Van Nerom, Les lois ouvrières et sociales en Belgique (Brussels: Emile Bruylant, 1890), p. 22.

2 Ibid., pp. 38-39.

3 Joseph Bégasse, Les assurances sociales en Belgique: Recueil de documents sur la Prévoyance sociale remis par le Ministère du travail et de la prevoyance sociale (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1907), pp. 21, 23.

4 Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, pp. 112, 121; De Camps, 81-84, 88; l'Amélioration des logements ouvriers; rapport fait au Ministre de l'intérieur (Brussels: Deltombe, 1866), pp. 1-15; cf. also l'Amélioration des habitations ouvrières. Circulaires du Gouvernement. Resolutions et propositions du Congrès général d'hygiene de 1852. Rapport du Conseil supérieur d'hygiène et de la Commission permanente des societes de secours mutuels (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1855), p. 4.

5 Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, pp. 109, 104.

remained barren or became speculative housing ventures for middle class house buyers.[1]

The last piece of labor legislation enacted between 1850 and 1868 was an 1867 act that abrogated the Le Chapelier law of 1791, which had prohibited trade unions and articles 412-420 of the Penal Code, forbidding workers from striking.[2] The new legislation was inspired by laws in Britain (1859) and France (1864) that permitted workers to go on strike.[3] At the same time, however, the enactment guaranteed the right to work. Hence the police authorities were free to interpret any effort to induce others to join a strike as an infringement of the right to work! Yet during the years that followed the new law strikes did occur, particularly those of 1868 and 1869.

The events of 1868 and 1869 are hypothetically similar to what occured in 1886. In both cases three salient points of comparison stand out. First, in 1868-69 and 1886, the economic causal contexts ressembled each other; there was a depression in the industrial and agricultural sectors when the strikes and collective violence occurred. Second, both disorders engendered a series of

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1 Ibid., pp. 121, 129-30.

2 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 85; Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 148-49, 157; J. Dhondt and V. Robert, "De Arbeidersbeweging in België" in J.A. Van Houtte et al., Algemene Geschiedenis Der Nederlanden (Brussels: Standaard Boekhandel, 1956), vol. XI, p. 333; Cornez, p. 7; "L'Histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique," p. 17; Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique, vol. VII, pp. 264-65.

3 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 78.

repressive measures by the authorities. And finally, the events of 1868-69 and 1886 generated pressure for an investigation into the situation that had caused the violence.

These hypothetical similarities raise certain questions which will also be posed regarding the 1886 events, such as the impact that the 1868-69 strikes had on public opinion among the country's industrial and political elites, the amplitude of the public reaction regarding social reform efforts, and whether or not any of these were enacted. This involves studying the causal relationship between reform endeavors and the strikes of 1868-69.

The coal-miners' strikes of 1868-69 occurred during a downward spiral in nominal and real wages. During the 19th century, wages fluctuated widely; these cycles even revolved within a year. Part of the fluctuation was due to seasonal factors.[1] Henneaux-Depooter found that there was a seasonal rythm in coal production and co-relatively in wages. In spring, there was an annual production slow-down, because most orders had been filled for industrial consumers, while orders from home owners virtually stopped with the warm weather. Declining demand led to a certain degree of under-employment or lay-offs and wages also declined.[2] But these seasonal slow-downs were not drastic enough to cause collective violence by themselves.

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1 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 65. This work is the best study of the situation in the coal fields of Hainaut during the 1860's.

2 Ibid., p. 56.

When, however, seasonal adjustments occurred while a depression was in progress, then the situation in the mining areas became inflammable. By 1868 the depression was on. Money was getting tighter not only in Belgium, but also in Prussia and Saxony.[1] The boom, engendered by the American civil war and the wars in Germany during 1864-65, was over. Belgium's coal industry also had to face a new competitor; by 1867 Ruhr coal was more and more competitive. The Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut of 1868 showed that coal imports from the Zollverein had increased by 400 per cent between 1866 and 1868; meanwhile coal stocks outside of Belgium's collieries continued to accumulate, while coal prices declined.[2] In 1866 a tonneau of coal was worth 1.97 frs; by 1868 only .84 frs and in 1869 .59 frs.[3] Wages declined too. In 1867, the average wage in the Hainaut-Namur-Liège areas was 885 frs per year (2.95 frs per day). In 1868 it dropped to 804 frs (2.68 per day).[4] In the Borinage fields, wages had risen 35.5 per cent between 1859 and 1867, then suddenly in 1868 they dropped by 15.61%. In the Charleroi area, they

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1 Eric J. Hobsbawm, Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne (Paris: Fayard, 1963 - originally published in english in 1959), pp. 10, 12. The book is mainly devoted to the "primitive" - pre-industrial - revolts of the era preceding the French revolution. Hobsbawn makes a distinction between 18th century urban revolts and those that occurred in industrial syndicalized Europe during the 19th century. In terms of this distinction, the 1868-69 strikes were really "industrial jacqueries."

2 Henneaux-Depooter, pp. 26-27.

3 Ibid., p. 268.

4 Armand Julin, Recherches sur le salaire des ouvriers des charbonnages belges, 1810-1889 (Liège, 1889), p. 20.

fell by 9 per cent.[1]

Heretofore the discussion has been in terms of nominal wage fluctuations, which can be meaningless if they are paralleled by a decline in prices, particularly the cost of flour. For 60 per cent of the miner's wage went for food and the major portion of his food was bread (and potatoes).[2] Hence if flour prices declined enough, the real wage remained the same. Unfortunately for the miner, food prices like wages fluctuated on a seasonal basis. Each year the price of wheat and rye generally rose in late spring and summer because the previous years harvest had been consumed and the new one had not yet been reaped.[3] This fluctuation was more dramatic when harvests had been poor. Consequently when food prices fluctuated upward very rapidly during the spring of a year of bad harvests, while during the same season wages fluctuated downward more violently than usual because of an economic downturn, then the real wages

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1 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 152: Yearly wages in the Mons, Charleroi and Centre-La Louvière fields during 1867 and 1868 descended from 935 frs to 789, 900 to 832 and 870 to 824 respectively (cf. p. 270); daily wages declined from 2.91 frs to 2.58 and from 3.05 to 2.79 in 1867-68 in Mons and Charleroi (cf. p. 272).

Henneaux-Depooter pointed out that not all workers engaged in the collieries underwent the same size wage cuts. The ouvrier à veine, who hacked out the coal, were the most specialized worker. They were paid on a piece-rate basis and their wages underwent the greatest fluctuations. Unskilled laborers in the mines such as releveurs and meneurs de terre (excavators), shaft maintenance crews, coal-cart loaders and pullers were not paid as highly, but there wages were so low they could hardly fluctuate a great deal (cf. pp. 54, 152).

2 Ibid., p. 61.

3 Ibid.

of a worker declined brutally. This situation constituted the economic context[1] of the strikes of 1868. Rye prices had shot up by 63% between 1865 and 1868;[2] wheat prices went up from 15.80 frs to 25.97 frs during the same period.[3] Taking into consideration this relationship, real wages went down from 135.70 frs in 1867 (with 100.00 as the base index in 1852-54) to 126.80 frs in 1868.[4] This represented a 20% decline in one year's real wages! Such a decline, characterized the precariousness of the miner's wage in the 19th century, and it provided the inflammable tinder which the precipitants of strikes and collective industrial violence ignited.

There were two types of precipitants that unleashed the strikes which broke out on March 25th[5] at the Gouffre mine in Chatelineau near Charleroi and soon spread to surrounding mines.[6]

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1 The economic context is not necessarily a direct causal factor in industrial violence. It is wiser to avoid an economic determinist approach, by simple viewing economic factors as providing necessary milieu for collective violence in the early industrial era. We shall consider this later when we analyze the various possible causal factors of the 1886 insurrection.

2 Ibid., pp. 60-61.

3 Ibid., p. 273.

4 Ibid., p. 280.

5 On exactly the same day eighteen years later at the Bois Communal de Fleurus mine, the insurrectional strikes in Charleroi broke out.

6 E. Harmant gave three types of precipitants; wage scales, work hours and distribution of work hours, Les grèves, études sur leurs causes et leurs remèdes (Brussels: Mommens, 1890), p. 4. These seem too rigid and exclude precipitants related to interpersonal relations between foremen and workers, working conditions and safety conditions. Hence, I have incorporated Harmant's two latter precipitants into a broader more inclusive categorie, "working conditions."

Wages were an important issue, in the case of the Gouffre[1] but other precipitants, related to working conditions, caused deep dissatisfaction in other mines particularly at the Arsimont Colliery at Auvelais (mid-way along the Basse Sambre river between Charleroi and Namur). The strikers also complained that they were fined up to 2.5 frs per day for banking up the tunnels with coal mixed with rock.[2] Many miners were embittered. Even if they finished their consignment for the day, they had to wait in the central elevator shaft exposed to the cold air which was being pumped downward. The wait often lasted three hours before they were hauled up. The delay caused illnesses,[3] because in the extreme ends of the tunnels, where the coal was being hacked out and where the air was not as fresh, the temperatures were so high that the miners worked virtually naked. When they went, perspiring, to the elevator shaft to be taken out, they were chilled by the cold air. The miners also complained that the work between the various pits was unfairly distributed.[4] And finally, they complained "they had only worked seven-

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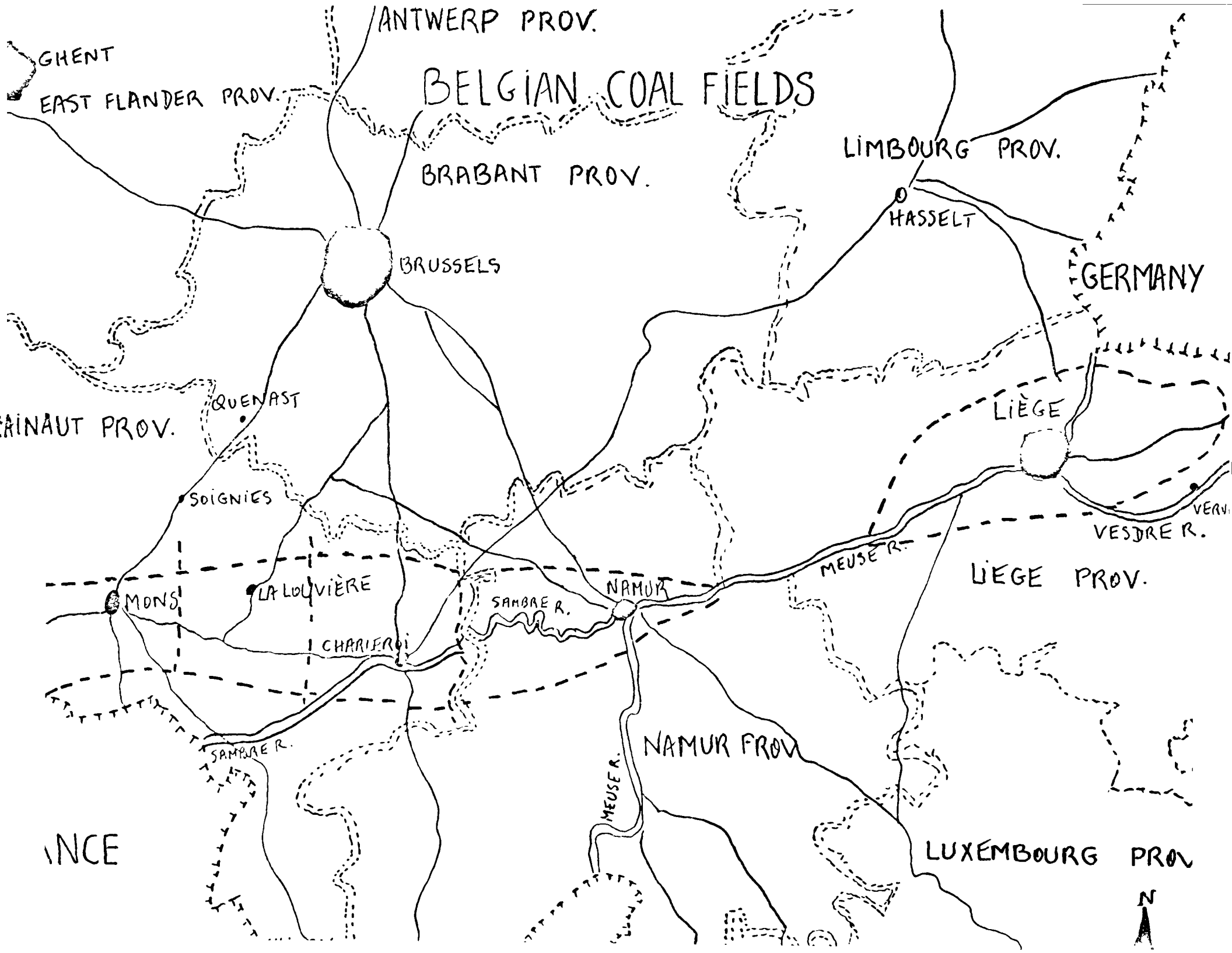
1 In general, wages at the Gouffre Colliery were somewhat higher than those in surrounding collieries, but by March 25th, the wages had dropped more surreptitiously than those of the other mines, i.e. from 3.72 frs per day (1866) to 2.86 frs, i.e. 25 per cent. Cf. Henneaux-Depooter, p. 172; Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868 and April 4, 1868; cf. also Gazette de Mons, March 27, 1868, and the record of the subsequent trial in the same newspaper of August 12, 1868 and August 13, 1868; Meuse (Liège), March 27, 1868 and March 30, 1868; Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868.

2 Indépendance Belge (Brussels), April 14, 1868; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 15, 1868.

3 Ibid.

4 Gazette de Mons, March 3, 1868; Independance Belge, April


ANTWERP PROV.
GHENT
EAST FLANDER PROV.
BELGIAN COAL FIELDS
BRABANT PROV.
LIMBOURG PROV.
HASSELT
BRUSSELS
GERMANY
QUENAST
LIÈGE
SOIGNIES
VESDRE R.
MEUSE R.
LIEGE PROV.
MONS
LA LOUVIÈRE
SAMBRE R.
NAMUR
CHARLEROI
SAMBRE R.
NAMUR PROV
MEUSE R.
LUXEMBOURG PROV
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teen days" during March.[1]

Having some notion of why the strike broke out, the question arises as to how the strikers were able to spread the stoppages; the manner in which the strikers mobilized against the collieries, and the way they mustered support among fellow workers. The methods varied a great deal, ranging from friendly persuasion to outright terror. On the day the strike broke out the men from the Gouffre mine marched peacefully from one pit head to the next calling out their fellow miners.[2] But during the night of the 25th-26th hand bills[3] appeared warning the workers not to return to work unless they obtained a 30 per cent wage increase, otherwise strike-breakers risked the "death penalty and" would be "executed by the decent workers."[4] The following day the mobilization continued. Bands of strikers continued to move about the various collieries, where they threatened to cut the elevator cables[5], or else they threatened to destroy the steam engines that powered the air pumps.[6]

11, 1868, Journal de Charleroi, April 11, 1868.

1 Ibid.; Gazette de Mons, August 14, 1868.

2 Meuse, March 30, 1868.

3 The Procureur du Roi's indictment tried to prove conspirational basis of the strikes. The indictment made a great to-do over the distribution of hand-bills during the night of the 25th-26th March. For the text of the indictment cf. Gazette de Mons, August 2, 1868.

4 Ibid., April 23, 1868; Meuse, March 27, 1868; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 17-18, 1868.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 28, 1868 and March 29, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 27, 1868.

6 Meuse, March 30, 1868.

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They did not stop there. The strikers also destroyed equipment in order to paralyze industries. When miners mobilized the steel-workers at the Société de Chatelineau and Gallez and Cie rolling mills in Chatelineau, they tore out gratings from the blast furnaces in order to delay a return to work by any recalcitrant followers.[1]

Anticipating such occurences, the managers of the surrounding collieries and steel works called their respective mayors asking forprotection by the police, gendarmerie or army. The sequence of events was almost automatic and the cause-effect relationship between the mobilization of forces by the strikers on one hand, and management on the other, led to tragedy.[2] Collective violence was most likely to occur as each side mobilized. In the process of mobilizing support for the strike a band of miners drove off a squadron of gendarme cavalry near the town of Montigny-sur-Sambre (near Charleroi) and took over the Epine colliery just before the mobilized coercive forces arrived. The troops had the same idea in mind. At the Epine, on March 26th, a confrontation occurred between 500 to 600 strikers and a company of the 11th Infantry. When summoned to disperse, the strikers refused to allow the troops into the colliery; rocks were thrown from the barricade; Major Quenne, the commander, gave the order; the troops opened fire.[3]

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1 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 27, 1868.

2 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 201; Gazette de Mons, August 17, 1868

3 Journal de Charleroi, March 27, 1868; Indépendance Belge,

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The group of miners and their families that marched into the encounter with the 11th Infantry were not ideologically mobilized. According to Henneaux-Depooter, the Brussels section of the First International (International workingmen's Association) had not begun proselytizing in Hainaut until the month of May.[1] This point seems to be confirmed by the descriptions in the press of the 1868 events. No structured ideological content appeared either in the hand-bills circulating in Chatelineau or in the slogans and shouts of the demonstrators.

This ascertainment provides a negative clue about the types of groups involved in the strikes. The groups were not associational organizations. The miners had no large, extensive complex specialized organizational structures whose membership was based on intention and performance.[2] No such formal organizational structures had yet been established in the area where the collective violence occurred. The Brussels headquarters of the Belgian section of the International had not penetrated Charleroi. It had little or no influence over the miners; they refused to follow the advice of the

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March 27, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868, March 28, 1868; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29 and August 17-18, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868; Meuse, March 30, 1868; Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 176.

1 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 171.

2 Charles Tilly had kindly authorized me to refer to a draft of his article entitled "Revolutions and Collective violence" which was as yet unpublished when this dissertation was being written. Tilly's distinction between "associational" and "communal" groups in cases of collective violence was extremely useful.

International's cadres, sent south from Brussels, who warned against a strike when the collieries had large stocks of coal and when the market for coal was soft.[1] Further proof of the lack of organizational structure of the strikers is illustrated by the fact that the miners did not have a strike fund, and they soon ran through their meager savings and had to beg for food and money.[2]

Ultimately, the strikers relied on undifferentiated communal structures. Recruitment was based on ad hoc circumstances, surrounding the strike and the outbreak of collective violence. Groups were composed of those persons who were on the scene where collective action occurred. The strike at the Gouffre was begun by the miners who worked there. The crowd of strikers involved in the collective violence before the Epine mine was recruited where the group initially formed, at the Sebastopol pit and the Gouffre mine. In other words, there was no artificial structure that traversed the boundaries of the various mining concessions and which centralized the coordination of the strategy of the miners. Leadership was recruited on an ad hoc basis within each communal group; coordination was non-existant; and the choice of goals was virtually tacit within and between each of the marching crowds.

All this is not meant to imply that the groups were leaderless mobs guided by blind fury. On the contrary there was a modicum of diffused leadership which was inspired by common grievances and

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1 Gazette de Liège, September 9, 1868.

2 Ibid., April 23, 1868.

had a relatively clear idea of the relationship between the targets of the violence and the grievances that they symbolized. How else could two separate groups unite into an army of several thousand, out-manoeuvre the coercive forces and converge on a target, the Epine mine, at approximately the same moment.[1] The communal associations of industrial Wallonia were inappropriate for effective political action, because they only recruited locally. This organizational weakness prevented the workers from spreading the strike to the various Liège fields to the east, and to the Centre-La Louvière Mons and the Borinage fields to the west. The strike remained local (around Chatelineau); thus the authorities were able to mobilize and concentrate their coercive forces and crush the "insurgents".

The fact that the workers organizations were undifferentiated and ad hoc organizations also affected composition of the crowds that were involved in the violence. Their recruitment of participants like the organizations' leadership was carried out on an ad hoc basis. The descriptions in the press all concur in the view that the crowds were composed of coal miners and their families:[2] the "angry crowd (marching on the Epine) was led by women waving aprons, handkerchiefs and rags tied to the end of sticks like flags Behind them came the children ... and finally the big batallions of

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1 Gazette de Mons, March 29 and Chatelineau trial record August 14, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868.

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, Chatelineau trial, August 15 1868; Gazette de Mons, Indictment, Chatelineau trial, August 2 and 12, 1868; Meuse, Chatelineau trial, August 11, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, August 27 and 28, 1868.

husbands, fathers and sons."[1] The majority of those involved in the shooting were from pits number three, five and seven of the Gouffre Colliery and the "Sebastopol" of Trieu Kaisin.[2]

The middle-class press implied that the individuality of the members of a crowd had been transcended by blind irrational rage which was directed at anything and everything.[3] In fact however, little evidence substantiated the irrational-mob theory. Generally, the targets of collective violence were related to the goals of the crowd and the precipitants which had unleashed the strikes. The strikers wanted to paralyze the other industrial establishments in order to spread the strike. To stop the machinery; they threw steel bars into flywheels;[4] they cut off fuel supplies by cutting gas mains;[5] they wrecked a steam engine to stop the ventilation;[6] or else they destroyed coal loading bins.[7] The destruction was rational in the sense that it seemed to follow a causal pattern. Where the workers joined the strike mobilizers and where management did not intervene, there was less destruction. Where however, workers and management refused to cooperate with the strikers, e.g. the

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1 Gazette de Liège, quoting the Catholic Union de Charleroi, March 28-29, 1868.

2 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868.

3 We shall discuss how the press characterized the strikers in detail after we finished the description of the events.

4 Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1868.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.; Meuse, March 27 and August 14 and 15, 1868, Chatelineau trial.

7 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868.

steel workers; there, the violence became more indiscriminate. The strikers not only tore grills off the blast furnaces, but they broke window panes, tore up the company ledgers and smashed lighting fixtures at the Dorlodot, Gallez, S.A. de Chatelineau and Dumont mills.[1]

The gravity of the industrial violence in 1868 can be determined quantitatively. It is possible to estimate the approximate number of strikers and the number of coercive forces that the authorities mobilized against them. In attempting to determine the number of participants in the strikes, it is only possible to give total figures, history has hidden the conscience intime of the participants; thus impeding distinctions between voluntary and "involuntary" strikers, who were forced off the job against their will. The strike first broke out around Chatelineau where "600 or 700"[2] miners from pits no. five and seven led the way for the miners of pit no. 3 of the Gouffre.[3] The strike at the Gouffre only lasted one day (26th) – the day the violence occurred.[4] It spread rapidly to two of Trieu Kaisin's active shafts, one of which was the

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1 Ibid., Indictment Chatelineau trial, August 2, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 28, 1868; Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1868.

2 Ibid., March 31, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 28 and 31, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 27 and 31, 1868; Gazette de Liège March 28-29, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868.

3 Ibid., March 31, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 31, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1868.

4 Journal de Charleroi, March 29, 1868; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 31, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 29-30, 1868.

"Sebastopol".[1] The strike also spread to the Marcinelle township mines[2] as well as the Epine[3] mine at Montigny-sur-Sambre and those in the Mambourg area.[4] All of these areas were in the townships southeast of Charleroi. Later the trouble also spread to the towns north of Charleroi. At the height of the strike there were at least 2,000 workers who were refusing to work in Chatelineau,[5] and there were at least 13,000 to 15,000 on strike in the other townships, or about 15,000 workers.[6] The strike later spread eastward along the Basse-Sambre as far as Auvelais.[7]

Among the strikers only a small percentage witnessed the violence, much less participated in the destruction and fighting. The

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1 Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1868.

2 Journal de Charleroi, March 31, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1868.

3 Ibid., Chatelineau trial, August 19, 1868.

4 Ibid., March 31, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 31, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1868.

5 The Journal de Bruxelles, March 27, 1868, estimated 4,000 were out of work, but the other newspapers consulted gave a figure 25 to 50 per cent lower; cf. Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1868; Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 27 and 28, 1868. Two thousand strikers seems like the most realistic estimate in view of the fact that there were surely many workers laid-off for seasonal reasons or because of the recession.

6 Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1868, stated that 15,000 were back at work obviously this must have been the approximate number of strikers. This represented about half of the workers in the area.

7 The strike spread to the Roton mine at Farciennes, Bonne Espérance at Lambusart, and to the mines in Baulet, Loignelée, Tamines and Auvelais (350 at the Arsimont Colliery). Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 30, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 29, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 29, 1868.

skirmish on March 26th with the gendarmes under Lieutenant Hollain involved a crowd of approximately 1,500 workers and their families.[1] While at the Epine fusillade there were about 1,700 workers.[2] How many of these people actually threw stones is virtually impossible to estimate – 28 persons were indicted.[3] It seems that at the very most only ten per cent of the workers were ever involved in the collective violence in the most indirect manner.

When the Liberal Frère-Orban (Finance) - Jules Bara (Interior) cabinet met on the evening of the 27th,[4] they did not benefit from hindsight to determine the gravity of the situation. They ordered General Thibault[5] to take over divisional command and send 2 battalions of the 8th Infantry and 1 battalion of carabiniers from Brussels,[6] and 1 battalion of the 9th Infantry as well as 4 squadrons of 2nd Cavalry from Namur.[7] By March 30th there were 2,500[8] cavalry and infantry on duty in Charleroi of which only one battalion of the 11th Infantry saw action – at l'Epine.[9] The 11th

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1 Gazette de Mons, Chatelineau trial, August 14, 1868.

2 Ibid., Chatelineau trial, August 13 and 17, 1868.

3 Ibid., Indictment Chatelineau trial, August 2, 1868. Meuse, March 28-29, 1868, stated there were 3,000 workers at the Epine; this figure seems exaggerated since it almost double the number of strikers who came from Chatelineau.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 28, 1868.

5 Meuse, March 27, 1868.

6 Ibid., March 28-29, 1868.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 30, 1868.

8 Meuse, March 30, 1868.

9 Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868.

Infantry was there in the first place; it was part of the Charleroi garrison.[1]

By March 31st the coercive forces had crushed any further efforts to mobilize support for the strike.[2] When the army moved in to assure order, the police authorities were free to begin their arrests. Seven strikers from Baulet were herded to prison between the horses of the gendarmerie à cheval.[3] Nine more, from Gilly, went to jail in Charleroi.[4] Twenty-eight of those involved in the Epine shooting went to jail which brought the total of arrests to approximately forty persons.[5] They were luckier than the ten wounded and the ten dead. These were shot down before the Epine colliery.[6] Approximately a half dozen gendarmes were injured, most of them only slightly.[7]

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1 The troops were deployed in the following manner; Marchienne-au-Pont, 1 battalion of infantry; Gilly 1 battalion cavalry, and 1 battalion of carabiniers; Chatelineau-Chatelet, 1 battalion infantry and 2 squadrons of light cavalry; Tamines-Baulet 1½ battalion infantry and 2 squadrons cavalry; Charleroi, 2 battalions infantry and 2½ squadrons of cavalry; Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1868.

2 Ibid., April 2, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 31 - April 1, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1868.

3 Gazette de Mons, March 31 - April 1, 1868.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 1, 1868.

5 Meuse, March 28-29, 1868; Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 172.

6 Ibid.,vol. I, p. 176; Meuse, March 28-29, 1868; Journal de Charleroi, March 27, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868; Gazette de Liège, March 28-29, 1868; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1868; Indépendance Belge, March 28, 1868.

7 Most of these were in Lieutenant Hollain's detachment (the name was also spelled Hollin). Hollain was the most seriously in-

Such disproportionate casualties were typical of all civil violence where untrained unarmed crowds collided with trained well-armed coercive forces. On the other hand, the same disproportion was reversed in favor of the strikers when damages were measured. While more strikers were usually killed and wounded than coercive forces, the strikers usually did much more property damage unless the coercive forces resorted to artillery. But the industrialists would never have sanctioned the use of artillery; their property might have been used for cover. The 1868 events did not contradict this disproportion in losses of property and life among coercive and insurgent forces. The strikers caused 10,000 frs damage.[1] One of the attorneys for the accused rightly took note of this disproportion: "Our victims lay in their graves. Yours [the industrialists and police authorities] are here before us in the best of health."[2]

The same tragic scenario was repeated in much the same manner in the spring (April) of the following year.[3] This time, the collect-

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jured soldier. Meuse, March 27, 1868.

1 The S.A. de Chatelineau suffered 800 frs damage to its steamengine, Chatelineau trial, Meuse, August 14, 1868; Gazette de Mons, August 14, 1868. The Gallez rolling mills claimed between 1,6000 and 1,800 frs damages, Ibid. The total damages came out in the Chatelineau trial indictment, cf. Gazette de Mons, August 2, 1868, and in subsequent testimony, Ibid., August 17, 1868.

2 Ibid.

3 To avoid becoming repetitions we will avoid a systematic analysis of the various aspects of these strikes, i.e. precipitants mobilization processes and the outbreak out of collective violence numbers of insurgents and coercive forces, etc.

ive violence broke out among the Cockerill steel workers of Seraing, near Liège. The strike broke out, over piece-work norms.[1] About 5,000[2] of these workers left work, and during the ensuing mobilization, 1,200 to 1,500 strikers[3] collided with the coercive forces. The strike spread to the surrounding coal mines[4] and then jumped to the Mons-Borinage area[5] where, before the Agrappe colliery at Frameries, a bystander was killed during[6] a confrontation between "7000" strikers and "43" chasseurs.[7] During the height of the mobilization, "almost all the workers in the Borinage were on strike." The storm left Charleroi untouched except for the Bois d'Heigne and Bordia mines,[8] and by the second half of April, the strike had collapsed.

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1 Meuse, April 14, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 14, 1869; Indépendance Belge, April 13, 1869; Journal de Charleroi, April 17, 1869; Gazette de Mons, April 11-12, 1869; Journal de Bruxelles, April 16, 1869.

2 Ibid., April 12, 1869.

3 Meuse, April 14, 1869.

4 The Flémalles, Angleur, Many, Sclessin, Jemmeppe, cf. Ibid. April 15, 16 and 19, 1869; Gazette de Liège, April, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 21, 1869; Journal de Bruxelles, April 20, 1869.

5 Quaregnon, Pâturages, Jemappes, Bouverie, Boussu, Dour, Cuesmes, Flénu and Frameries, cf. Gazette de Mons, April 15,17, 27 and 28, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 17, 19, 20 and 22, 1869; Journal de Bruxelles, April 16 and 20, 1869; Gazette de Liège, April 19, 1869; Meuse, April 16, 17, 19 and 20, 1869.

6 Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, pp. 167-88;

7 Journal de Bruxelles, April 17, 1869.

8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 21, 1869; Gazette de Liège, April 19, 1869.

The middle class' interpretation of the strikes depended ultimately upon how it viewed the precipitants and economic context within which the strikes occurred. They viewed the economic context in terms of the Manchesterian socio-economic ethos. The third quarter of the nineteenth century marked the high point of free trade, laissez-faire and economic self help ideas.[1] Guy de Molinari, Belgium's leading Manchesterian economist,[2] asserted that the economy functioned according to "natural laws" of supply and demand and labor like management had to comply to these eternal economic principles. Both could only endure the irresistible unfolding of an economic downturn. When times were better those who, nevertheless, remained poor had themselves to blame, for according to the social darwinian theories of the time, they were the misfits of society.[3] According to de Molinari and his disciple, Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu,[4] economics had a deterministic influence on all social and

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1 Stein Rokkan, "The Structure of Mass Politics in Smaller European Democracies," Comparative Studies in Society and History (1968), n° 10, p. 334; Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 459. "... de 1850 à 1886, la note dominante de l'Economie politique en Belgique fut et resta libérale."

2 Born in Liège in 1819, de Molinari went on to take an active part in political campaigns for free trade. His brilliant economic weekly, l'Economiste, was in the forefront of economic polemics of the day. Ibid., p. 258.

3 Ibid., pp. 242,246.

4 Ibid., pp. 261-73; de Beaulieu was born in Uccles, near Brussels, in 1816. He studied in Paris and then went on to become professor of mineralogy, mining and metallurgy at the school of mines in Mons. In 1849-50, he taught a course in Economics was oriented toward de Molinari's Manchesterian free trade views.

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economic activity.[1]

Ideologically, these individualistic concepts could not easily be reconciled with trade-unionism, the right to strike and the need for social reform.[2] The Manchesterians believed that strikes had a harmful effect on the economy. They were futile — incapable of improving the lot of the worker; not even "The greatest and most generous power on earth would ... be able to raise wages unless there" was "a spontaneous improvement in the general economic situation."[3] The Catholic Gazette de Liège pointed out that "nothing was more illogical" than a strike.[4] "What had they gained... nothing, absolutely nothing!... Will throwing bricks through windows improve economic conditions? Will the price of bread go down? On the contrary public confidence will only be shaken further,"[5] concluded the Gazette de Mons.

The Indépendance Belge (Liberal) wondered why the coal-miners, of all people, would go on strike. "Granted living conditions" were "not as good as they had been a few years ago. But the coal miners" were "not the worst off ... they were actually a lot better off than the workers in Flanders."[6] The press assumed that the strikes

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1 Ibid., p. 244; Auguste Melot, "Le régime bourgeois et la législation sociale," La Revue Générale (August 15, 1927), n° 60, p. 136.

2 Rokkan, pp. 334-35.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 24, 1869.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 30, 1868.

5 Gazette de Mons, March 30, 1868, the moderately Progressive Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 7, 1869, took the same view.

6 Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1868.

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were futile, and that the coal-miners and steel workers earned more than workers in other industries. Consequently economic precipitants were not the real cause of the strikes. They had to be politically inspired. A conspiracy was abroad amongst the working population; "the workers had obeyed orders that had been transmitted to them by unknown messengers."[1] The Journal de Bruxelles [Catholic] asserted that "the bloody strikes in Seraing and the Borinage [were] provoked by the International."[2] The Meuse (Liberal) also, blamed the "intrigues of the Société International (sic)."[3] Le Hardy de Beaulieu joined the country's opinion makers in warning that "whenever a strike broke out one would have to reckon with the International's efforts at stoking the fires of discord between industrialists and workers."[4]

In a letter to the editor of the Journal de Bruxelles, E. Hins, member of the General Council of the Brussels Section of the International, denied such "slanderous accusations."[5] Hins' letter was to no avail. The Gazette de Liège reported that "a worker from Farciennes had been seen distributing money among the rioters at the Epine."[6] The Meuse and the Indépendance Belge even

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1 Indépendance Belge, April 5, 1868.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1869.

3 Meuse, April 19, 1869.

4 Ibid., April 16, 1869.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, April 16, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 22, 1869.

6 Gazette de Liège, June 1, 1868.

fixed the amount at "700 frs"[1]. No one was ever able to substantiate these allegations; much less were the authorities ever able to prove that the International had participated the strikes of 1868-69. The majority of Belgium's opinion makers had misconstrued the causal context of the tragedy. Ironically, Guy de Molinari, the arch-Manchesterian, was the only one to show more perception than imagination. He layed the blame squarely on the shoulders of "the managing directors of the corporations, who" were "only interested in providing large dividends to the stockholders instead of showing more concern for the well-being of the workers."[2]

The opinion makers'perception of the causal context of the strikes colored their characterization of the strikers. Both Liberal and Catholic newspapers implied that the workers were "the victims of the intimidation of a few ring-leaders;"[3] that they were generally well intentioned, but "under the influence of copious libations"[4] and "the tiranny of a turbulent minority."[5] The majority was victimized by a group of "fools or mischief makers."[6] Such "good for nothings,"[7] and "meetingnistes ... talked the workers

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1 Meuse, April 2, 1868; Indépendance Belge, April 2, 1868.
2 Meuse, April 3, 1868.
3 Ibid., March 30, 1868; Gazette de Mons, March 30, 1868.
4 Meuse, March 30, 1868.
5 Gazette de Mons, April 4, 1869.
6 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 12 and 24, 1869.
7 Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1869.

into walking off the job."[1] These "desperate",[2] "hare-brained characters",[3] had led the "honest hard-working majority ... astray."[4] The workers were not really a bad lot, but unfortunately, they were "too susceptible to the advice and perfidious harangues"[5] of a "minority of black sheep" in their midst.[6] These "black sheep" the "fire eaters"[7] from the International, had betrayed the innocent and naive working class. They had promised "money and help from England", but the money never came. The workers had been duped.[8]

Both Catholic and Liberal opinion agreed that the right to strike was not at stake; nor was it the chief issue that was raised by the events of 1868-69. The right to strike was "an undeniable right";[9] however, with the restriction that "the workers [of course] were free to withhold their services, [but] they were not permitted to infringe on the freedom of other."[10] This was not, by any

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 24, 1869.

2 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1868; Meuse, March 28, 1869.

3 Gazette de Liège, April 29, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 29, 1869.

4 Meuse, April 16, 1869.

5 Gazette de Liège, April 29, 1869.

6 Meuse, April 16, 1869.

7 Gazette de Mons, March 30, 1868.

8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 13, 1869; Journal de Bruxelles, April 14, 1869.

9 Journal de Bruxelles, April 28, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 24, 1869.

10 Ibid., April 23, 1869.

means, the real issue, according to the press. There was more at stake, because the strikers were not merely after immediate goals. Actually Belgium faced "a socialist movement";[1] "revolutionary socialism had raised his head"[2] and it was launching a "social war, a war against property".[3] This revolutionary movement hoped to attain such an end by "organizing a general strike".[4] Meanwhile, "time was running out; ... orders [for Belgian coal] were being diverted to England".[5] Belgian industry was being ruined. All this could be explained by the fact that "the big-shots of the International were foreign agents working for English speculators. After they had destroyed Belgium's competitive position in world markets by sowing discord [between labor and management], they would disappear [to England] in order to enjoy the fruits of their labor".[6] In other words, the middle class press tried to show the working class, that they were being betrayed by foreigners. By involving nationalism and the common interest of management and labor in the country's economic position, the press hoped to turn the provincial rank and file against the leadership in Brussels.

The strikes also generated a round of inter-party polemics.

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, April 28, 1869.

2 Meuse, May 5, 1868.

3 Ibid.

4 Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1868.

5 Gazette de Mons, April 23, 1869, quoting the (Liberal) Organe de Namur.

6 Ibid.

Afterall, blaming everything on the Socialists did not win elections, since the workers were disenfranchized anyway. So the Catholics and Liberals blamed each other for the strikes. The (Catholic) Gazette de Liège carried the banner for the Catholic press in a long series of articles. It saw the strikes as a further manifestation of a revolutionary trend that had been unleashed by the Liberal upheavals of 1789 and 1848. By pointing up apparent similarities between socialism and liberalism, it attempted to show complicity between the two.[1] "Liberalism had cleared the way for the missionaries of the international".[2] It quoted a Brussels confrère, l'Echo du Parlement, which warned the Liberals that they "were now reaping what they had sown: they had sown irreligion, violence and discord in the country: now they reaped insurrection, pillage and civil war".[3] Specifically, "Liberal policies had set examples for revolt.... They had taught the masses to disdain authority ... and by the same token they had destroyed the chief basis for civil authority by attacking the country's religious authority".[4] One of the Gazette's rivals[5] in Liège, La Meuse responded, by pointing out

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1 "La Doctrine (Libérale) conteste aux religieux la liberté de se dévouer; la Révolution dénie aux riches la liberté de jouir.
La Doctrine déclare l'Etat propriétaire des biens de l'Eglise; la Révolution déclare le peuple propriétaire de tout.
La Doctrine met à l'ordre du jour le temporel des cultes; la Révolution dit à ses adeptes: Partageons-nous le temporel de l'industrie". Gazette de Liège, May 7, 1869.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., May 13, 1869; cf. also May 10, 1869.

5 The other Liberal newspaper in Liège was the Journal de Liège.

that the whole problem went "back to the winter of 1867-68 when the Catholic leadership had joined socialist orators in opposing the establishment of a standing army and military conscription .... Actually, those clerical conferences ..." were "after the International, one of the most important generators of the violence".[1]

The press coverage of the context, causes and issues in the strikes thus finally degenerated into inter-party squabbling. Since its belief in the on-going economic and social doctrines remained intact, the middle class completely mis-perceived the social and economic context of the strikes as well as the immediate causes and issues which were involved. Consequently, none of its proposals for solving the problems of Belgium's working class went beyond the bounds of statal non-interventionism in economic affairs. The Gazette de Mons came out for "a vast inquiry, like the one conducted in England, in order to find the real causes of the agitation in this province".[2] The Gazette wanted the investigation to find out why "strikes were so frequent in one province (Hainaut) and so rare in another (Liège)? ... Why was the attitude of the working class better in Liège than in Hainaut?" Why did "the Liège working class have a better understanding of its ... obligations?"[3] The Gazette de Mons suggested terms of references implied certain presuppositions; (1) that the Liège industrialists were able to handle

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1 Meuse, April 13, 1869; cf. also May 24, 1869.

2 Gazette de Mons, April 2, 1868.

3 Gazette de Mons, August 2, 1868.

their working population more effectively, and (2) that the Hainaut working class had not been adequately indoctrinated in Manchesterian economics.

Despite its dogmatic rigidity, the Gazette de Mons joined the Meuse and the Journal de Bruxelles in supporting a proposal against child labor in the mines. But its sponsors were only willing "to persuade [the italics are mine] the industrialists and working class parents" not to allow youngsters into the mines.[1] The Meuse, also called for more schools for working class children and the development of unemployment and health funds for workers. These would "moralize" workers. "Morality is order. Order is security (and education) .... Industry had a moralizing role" vis à vis the working class.[2] But the Meuse envisaged this as a purely voluntary program, which excluded the intervention of the government.[3] Even an anodine proposal to make work books optional was opposed. The Chamber of Commerce of Mons came out in favor of maintaining obligatory work books."Work books aided in maintaining industrial discipline; and if the industrialist" could "no longer count on the diligence and quality work of his workers, the wage levels would immediately decline".[4] Furthermore, the Chamber asserted that obligatory work books were "in the interest of workers ... [for they provided] proof

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, April 19, 1869; cf. also, Meuse, April 16, 1869; Gazette de Mons, April 26, 1868.

2 Meuse, April 7, 1868.

3 Ibid.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 25, 1869; cf. also April 24, 1869.

of the existence of a contract between employee and employer".[1] The Chamber's view prevailed, and like the other reform proposals in the press, this one, too, came to naught.

The reaction of the political authorities depended to a large extent on the manner in which the authorities defined the issue between themselves and the insurgents concerning the on-going economic system. Summing up the case for the crown before the jury for the 28 accused during the Chatelineau trial, Assistant Procureur-Général Melot defined the issue as succinctly as anyone representing the political authorities.[2] "Now workers are perfectly free, they do not have to work unless conditions suit them; they can organize and take what measures they may deem necessary. The law only prohibits one thing, that is to infringe on the right to work, for if there is anything that is odious, it is to prevent workers from earning their daily bread".[3] Melot realized that "the coal miners" had "recently been enduring an extremely severe crisis, but we all know that the coal industry pays higher wages than other industries do".[4] The implications of this statement were that authorities not only viewed the insurgents as outlaws. Furthermore, the government either did not believe that the alleged reason for

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1 Ibid., April 25, 1869.

2 The author wishes to remind the reader that the year before, the penal code was amended to allow the right to strike.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, Chatelineau trial, August 17-18, 1868; cf. also Gazette de Mons, August 17, 1868.

4 Ibid.

the strike was justified, since, according to the authorities, other workers made less money than the miners; or else the government agreed with the press and adopted the conspiracy thesis. The answer to this type of question is primordial to the nature of government's reaction to an insurgency. But it would take time to amass proof for a case for justifying repressive measures on these grounds. Consequently the authorities needed an interim justification for military repressive measures. This was usually provided by the local authorities. The mayors of the towns simply raised the "law-n-order" banner as a justification for immediate coercive measures to prevent mobilization by the strikers. The mayor of the municipality of ... (X) simply declared that ... In view of article 94 of the Municipal Act and articles 9 and 27 of the Act of July 26th-27th and August 3rd, 1791[1] it was decreed that: "... All public assemblies and gatherings of more than 15 persons are prohibited... These ... will be dispersed by the armed forces and those persons who participate will be immediately arrested".[2] In Seraing, the mayor invoked article 310 of the Penal Code "which punishes all infringements on the right to work" along with the Municipal Public Order acts.[3]

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1 Public order laws.

2 Meuse, March 30, 1868.

3 Gazette de Mons, April 11-12, 1869. "Sera puni d'un emprisonnement de 8 jours à trois mois et d'une amende de 26 frs à 1,000 francs ou d'une de ces peines seulement, toute personne qui, dans le but de forcer la hausse ou la baisse des salaires ou de porter atteinte au libre exercice de l'industrie et du travail, aura commis des violences, proféré des injures ou des menaces, prononcé des

The local decisions were followed up by declarations by the national authorities to the effect "that the government is resolved to maintain respect for the law, to assure the right to work and to protect industrial properties".[1] Such statements were immediately followed by the dispatch of the first troops from the Brussels garrison.[2] One of the few articulate witnesses for the "other side", E. Hins who had been dispatched to Seraing by the International, during the 1869 strikes, described the consequences of the military measures which had been taken by the government: "We arrived at the station without any trouble. Inside, in the waiting room, we saw a man ..., covered with blood; he was a worker who had three bayonet wounds in the back. We exited through the track side; two wounded are sitting there: one had been beaten almost unconscious with a rifle butt; ... the other had been bayonetted in the side. Then the rumor spread that the gendarmerie was invading the station .... We heard the sound of charging troops outside and two men ran into the station: one's arm had been sliced through, the other had a bayonet wound in the side .... It was a cavalry charge. There were two hundred people in the station; they tried to escape from the build-

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amendes, des défenses, des interdictions ou toute prescription quelconque, soit contre ceux qui travaillent, soit contre ceux qui font travailler.

Il en sera de même de tous ceux qui, par des rassemblements près des établissements où s'exerce le travail, ou près de la demeure de ceux qui le dirigent, auront porté atteinte à la liberté des maîtres ou des ouvriers", cf. also October 13-14, 1868.

1 Gazette de Liège, April 14, 1869.

2 Meuse, March 28-29, 1868; Journal de Bruxelles, April 24, 1869.

ing and headed for the three exit doors which broke under the crush".[1]

Commenting on the military repression he had carried out in Seraing, Lieutenant Général Renard observed that "if there was any error on the part of the troops, it was that they had put up with screams, catcalls and threats from the strikers too long". And the War Minister stated that "the troops had behaved admirably on every occasion".[2] The (Catholic) Journal de Bruxelles' reporter commented on Liberal governments measures in 1869, "Let's say it loud and clear: Thanks to the energetic military repression, industry has been able to continue to function".[3] And during the 1868 strikes, the (Liberal) Gazette de Mons called for "a stronger garrison in Charleroi to impose its will on trouble makers".[4]

While the troops were crushing the efforts of the 1868-69 strike mobilizers, the police judiciaire, the local procureurs du roi and the juges d'instruction were preparing evidence for an indictment that would substantiate the seditious conspiracy thesis to which the press had alluded. Twenty-eight demonstrators were in-

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1 Hins memoirs were serialized in the Journal de Charleroi (1911) and later quoted by Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, pp. 184-85.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, April 15, 1869. The Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 17, 1869, commented "Nous sommes d'avis qu'il eut pu s'abstenir de prononcer de semblables paroles, qui dans les moments critiques que nous traversons, peuvent être mal interprétées et amener de fâcheux événements".

3 Journal de Bruxelles, April 24 and 26, 1869.

4 Gazette de Mons, March 28, 1868.

dicted, accused and tried for seditious conspiracy following the Chatelineau strike.[1] During the 1869 strikes, the authorities were after bigger fish. B. Delecasse, editor of the Socialist Nouvelle Tribune du Peuple was arrested. The Brussels police judiciaire also searched his home and "seized his personal papers as well as the list of subscribers to his newspaper".[2] Mr. Delecasse had allegedly telegraphed "Courage! Courage!" to Condroy de la Bouverie the representative of the International in the Borinage.[3] Condroy de la Bouverie was, himself arrested, soon after, along with Hins, the Secretary General of the International. Both were arrested as "agents of the International".[4]

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1 Ibid., August 18, 1868. They were all acquitted, thanks partly to their excellent defense attorneys Messrs Janson and Robert, who were both leaders of the Progressive wing of the Liberal party.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, April 19, 1869.

3 Meuse, April 19, 1869.

4 Ibid.; Journal de Bruxelles, April 19, 1869. Hins described his arrest with certain degree of humor. "Je me trouvais chez Brismée, lorsque la police s'y présenta munie d'un mandat de perquisition. Lorsqu'il eut accompli là sa besogne, le commissaire me fit savoir qu'il était chargé de semblable mission en ce qui me concernait et m'invita à la suivre à mon domicile. La perquisition terminée, le commissaire m'exhiba un mandat d'amener libellé selon la formule de de Bavay, et me conduisit tout d'abord devant le juge d'instruction Célurier. Celui-ci s'efforça de me faire avouer que j'avais provoqué les ouvriers au soulèvement, et comme je protestais, il me montra triomphalement une dépêche, à moi adressée de Liège et qu'on venait de saisir: "Envoyez de suite 500 Internationale". Evidemment, Liège me demandait du renfort pour quelque tentative désespérée. Le pauvre homme tomba de son haut, lorsqu'il apprit qu'il s'agissait de numéros du journal.

A mon tour, j'essayai vainement de lui faire comprendre que les iniquités sociales suffisaient bien à elles seules, sans aucune impulsion externe, à susciter le mécontement des ouvriers et que c'étaient elles qui devaient porter la principale responsabilité

As the judicial and military repression steam rolled over the Liège area and the Borinage, J.B. Coomans, Catholic deputy from Turnhout, asked Eudore Octave Pirmez, Liberal Minister of the Interior, "if it was true ... that the army and the gendarmerie had acted too harshly and too hastily".[1] To which Pirmez noted that the coercive forces "had conducted themselves with the greatest modération" and had only reacted when thoroughly provoked.[2] Meanwhile, the City Councils of Ghent and Brussels had petitioned Parliament for action on the problem of child and female labor in the mines,[3] and their members asked whether or not the government would take up this issue.[4]

Two commissions eventually carried out inquiries in the aftermath of the 1868-69 strikes, a special commission composed of members of the Belgian Academy of Medicine and an inquiry by the Corps of Mining Engineers[5]. The Medical Commission was the first to complete its report. Dr Hyacinthe Kuborn, a Seraing physician, was

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des assassinats (j'insistai pour que le mot figurât au procès-verbal de l'interrogatoire) commis par la troupe." Quoted in Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 190.

1 Journal de Bruxelles, April 14, 1869.

2 Ibid.

3 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 174; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1868.

4 Ibid., May 22-23, 1868.

5 Gazette de Liège, April 23, 1869.

the most active member[1] and it was he who presented the findings of the commission. Though the commission had not interviewed any workers[2] and though the research methods were hardly scientific,[3] the scope of its research on child and female labor was quite impressive. Kuborn and his associates read the reports of various medical commissions, Chambers of Commerce, and memoranda of the Ministry of the Interior; they interviewed physicians throughout the industrial areas, and they even carried out on-the-spot inspections.[4] And if one allows for the comparatively rudimentary state of medical science of the day, one cannot but be impressed with the research which had gone into its recommendations and findings.

Kuborn found that women and children in the mines worked under extremely difficult conditions. "The temperature ... varies from one part of the mine to the other ... In what are called the

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1 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête faite au nom de l'Académie royale de médecine de Belgique par la commission chargée d'étudier la question de l'emploi des femmes dans les travaux souterrains des mines, p. 3 (Hereafter referred to as Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ...) The other members of the commission were Doctors Vleminckx, Boulvin and Covet; H. Kuborn, Rapport sur l'enquête faite au nom de l'Académie royale de médecine de Belgique par la commission chargée d'étudier la question de l'emploi des femmes dans les travaux souterrains des mines (Brussels: H. Manceaux, 1868).

2 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 108.

3 Ibid., pp. 102-103. "Ils se basent sur des données soi-disant scientifiques (déformations du corps humain provenant du travail des mines, accouchements plus difficiles chez les femmes ayant travaillé au fond, etc...) mais qui ne sont pas suffisamment statistiques pour avoir de la valeur à nos yeux et auxquelles se mêlent des jugements sentimentaux (la bonne tenue du foyer, la moralité des populations ouvrières, etc...)".

4 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 3.

'working shafts' it reaches ... 26 degrees (C.) .... The air is cooled in the ventilation shaft where it is only 16 or 18 degrees (C.) .... Covered with perspiration and dust, the women and children find themselves, depending on where they work, alternately exposed to now cold pure air, now warm stale air; the work finished .. they wait their turn shivering in the cold elevator shaft".[1] The hiercheur and hiercheuse were still women and children; for they were small enough to be hitched to coal carts and "pull them on their hands and knees" through the narrower veines of many coal-mines[2]. The report, also, found "degeneration in all its form" among the women and children in the mines. On the one hand, scrofula (king's evil),[3] rachitis,[4] carreau, consumption,[5] ... abortions, higher infant mortality, lack of education, concubinage, adultery, and finally general listlessness"; Kuborn generalized even farther, by concluding that "the race [of coal-miners] was being becoming bastardized!"[6] To support the commission's findings, Kuborn asserted that "medical commissions, health boards, corps of mining engineers, almost all the medical practitioners involved in industrial health in France, Germany, England and also in Belgium ... [had] acknowledged the evil effects that mining had on the weaker

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1 Ibid., p. 22.

2 Ibid., p. 20.

3 Tuberculosis of lymp glands especially in the neck.

4 Inflamation of the spine.

5 Could have also meant "black lung".

6 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 87.

sex and children".[1]

The findings were subjected to a barrage of criticism by the industrialists, and even some of Kuborn's own colleagues. Dr Boens, also a member of the Academy, asserted that the report went "into great detail concerning the social aspects of the problem. But the Commission had not devoted much research to the medical aspects of the problem".[2] "According to the (Liberal) Journal de Charleroi, the Commission had become involved in things which were not within its sphere of competence".[3] G. Goret, President of the Conseil Charbonnier, said that the report had "degenerated into exaggeration and untruth".[4] The Conseil Charbonnier's president took aim at Kuborn's assertion that women and children working in the mines were more immoral than their counterparts in other industries. "Kuborn had only raised part of the veil which hid the evils of contemporary society, but he should [have] pulled back the whole veil so that he could show the turpitudes, scandals, moral disorder illegitimate births, concubinages of other working class groups or for that matter other classes of people ..."[5] The most intransigent view regarding the report came from the Association Charbonnière de Charleroi. Its members completely disagreed with the findings. The

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1 Ibid., p. 23.

2 Journal de Charleroi, February 12, 1869.

3 Ibid., January 19, 1869.

4 Ibid., January 20, 1869; Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 7.

5 Ibid., p. 8.

report was "full of false judgments and errors" and constituted an "unfair attack on the whole working class" and particularly working women "from whom it [report] proposes to take away their livelihood".[1]

The recommendations of the Commission were hardly revolutionary. They proposed to exclude women and girls from the mines only after a delay of three years! But fourteen year-old boys could still go into the depths provided they "could read, write and count". As for everyone else who could pass a physical examination, the mine fields would continue to provide a career full of opportunities.[2] However, those who drew up these recommendations knew that proposals would be bitterly criticized. They mustered every authority they could in favor of the idea of regulation of child and female labor - foreign and domestic. Upper Silesia excluded women from the mines,[3] so did a French law of 1841.[4] They cited the Prussian decree of 1854.[5] And finally they laid great stress on the British law of 1843, the Factory Acts of 1864 and 1866, and the Health Act of 1866.[6] They pointed out that the manager of the Espérance Colliery and the owner of the Société de Marihaye mines as well as

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1 Journal de Charleroi, February 1, 1869.

2 Ibid., January 20, 1869; Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 6.

3 Ibid., p. 568.

4 Ibid., p. 75. Cf. also Journal de Charleroi, January 18, 1869.

5 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 75.

6 Ibid., pp. 75, 81-82, 245.

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the Chamber of Commerce of Mons did not oppose its recommendations.[1] Anticipating claims that such legislation would raise the cost of labor, and that Belgium would not be able to compete in world markets, the Commission noted that "the regulations had not ruined England, Prussia, Saxony or France."[2] And furthermore large corporations such as Belgium's Société Cockerill, had excluded women from three of its mines on its own initiative and its competitive position at home and abroad was not weakened.[3]

G. Goret and the Conseil Charbonnier were not impressed with the regulations in England; for despite the injunction against female labor it "was still tolerated".[4] The English experiment had proved such an injunction could not be enforced against the will of the operators. Furthermore, if one prohibited women from working in the mines, "27,000 persons would have to be subsidized; for there were 13,500 women miners ... and each one's wage also [provided] for a second family member".[5] Goret concluded: "We do not consider the law responsible or feasible";[6] and besides it "infringes on the freedom to work and would condemn brave hard working people, who only ask the right to earn a living, to the most atrocious misery".[7]

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1 Ibid., p. 74.
2 Ibid., p. 75.
3 Ibid., p. 74.
4 Ibid., p. 8.
5 Ibid., p. 9; Journal de Charleroi, January 20, 1869.
6 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 10.
7 Ibid., p. 9.

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The Conseil Charbonnier's negative stand received some support from the press and from the political leadership. The Meuse stated that "in the present economic conjuncture, female and child labor" was "an absolute necessity".[1] And Octave Pirmez, Minister of the Interior stated that though regulation of child and female was based on the best intentions, "the government [could] intervene in the domain of private enterprise.... If the government embarked on this path, it would soon mix into everything".[2]

Kuborn needed all the help he could get in order to carry the day. Perhaps he hoped that the inquiry by the Royal Corps of Mining Engineers would come up with similar recommendations and tilt the see-sawing debate in favor of those who demanded regulation of child and female labor. Minister of Public Works, A. Jamar, had ordered the inquiry in November 1868.[3] The terms of reference were fairly broad;[4] the Mining Engineers were to study virtually every

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1 Meuse, January 13, 1869.

2 Gazette de Mons, May 22-23, 1868.

3 Résultats de l'enquête ouverte par les officiers du corps des mines sur la situation des ouvriers dans les mines et les usines métallurgiques de la Belgique, en exécution de la circulaire adressée le 3 novembre 1868, par le Ministre des Travaux publics, aux ingénieurs en chef des mines (Brussels: Bruylant-Christophe, 1869); hereafter referred to as Résultats de l'enquête ouverte par les officiers du corps des mines ...

4 The Administration générale des mines had a wide area of competence since it ultimately accorded mining concessions and then oversaw their operation. R. De Boek-Doenaerd, Inventaire des archives de l'administration générale des mines, n° 1 (Brussels; unpublished manuscript at the Archives Générales du Royame - A.G.R.), "Introduction".

aspect of the coal-miner's life – "wages, housing, diet etc..."[1] But the report, though a long one (500 pages), was filled with flaws. The Mining Engineers only sent the questionnaires[2] to the industrialists, whose answers were not confronted with the views of the working population.[3] Both De Camps and Henneaux-Depooter claimed that the report was "too superficial"[4] and did "not have any quantitative references".[5] The latter remark is difficult to substantiate in view of the fact that the report devoted pages 162 to 433 to statistics. The writer submits that if the report was inadequate, this was not due to alleged prejudice, superficiality or lack of quantitative references, but because it made no recommendations. This was hardly surprising since Jamar, himself, opposed government intervention in economic affairs and considered the ongoing industrial system "one of the most beautiful creations in modern times".[6] According to Jamar any governmental regulations in this area were "utopian".[7]

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1 Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, pp. 149-50.

2 Résultats de l'enquête ouverte par les officiers du corps des mines ..., p. 156 (questionnaires).

3 Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 180; cf. also Le Logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, p. 150.

4 De Camps, p. 90; Heanneaux-Depooter, p. 44.

5 Ibid.

6 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 176.

7 Résultats de l'enquête ouverte par les officiers du corps des mines ..., p. XIII.

Those who supported the Kuborn report in Parliament had to confront the country's political leadership without any support from Jamar and the Officiers des Mines; while the Chambers of Commerce of Liège and Charleroi were openly hostile.[1] On the other hand, the Chambers of Commerce of Verviers and Mons were willing to accept a limited degree of regulation of child and female labor in the mines.[2] The supporters of reform, also had the support of Conseils Communaux of Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels, which had petitioned Parliament to legislate on child and female labor, whereby "No child, twelve to fourteen years, would be allowed to work in... factories or mines ... [and those] between fourteen and eighteen would not be authorized to work more than twelve hours per day".[3]

As the petitions came in, Representative D'Elhoungne noted that "the number of demands [for regulation] was growing every day".[4] But the government "was no closer to a solution to the problem than it had been twenty-five years ago [1843]".[5] Both D'Elhoungne and Vleminckx (who had been a member of Kuborn's Commission) criticized the government for not taking the Medical Commission's report seriously. The Minister of the Interior, Pirmez, replied that "several passages ... were exaggerations" of the real situation.

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1 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 76.

2 Ibid.

3 Journal de Charleroi, December 12, 1868; Gazette de Mons, January 18, 1869.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, January 21, 1869.

5 Ibid.; Gazette de Mons, January 21, 1869.

According to the report "the woman miner had lost all her sexual distinctness; ... one can just imagine her squatting on her door step while she tapped out her pipe on her thigh".[1] While the Chamber laughed[2], Vleminckx became flustered; someday the minister would "regret having taken its recommendations so lightly".[3] But Pirmez took the very basis of the report to task. As far as Pirmez and the Liège Chamber of Commerce were concerned, "the Commission had not proved a thing".[4] The Commission claimed that women in the mines had more miscarriages than other women, yet "doctors from the mining area said just the contrary".[5] He could cite statistics which contradicted the report; for example, there were no more dead births in Charleroi than anywhere else".[6] And as far as the alleged immorality of the women miners was concerned, "there were more bastards in Brussels than in Charleroi and Mons".[7] Regarding the alleged physical "degeneration" of the mining population, "there were more persons exempted from military service due to physical deformities in Brussels than there were in Charleroi".[8] Statistics were a double-edged sword.

Pirmez then took aim at d'Elhoungne's proposal for regulatory

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1 Ibid., January 17, 1869.
2 Ibid.
3 Discussion du rapport sur l'enquête ..., p. 76.
4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, January 22, 1869.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., Gazette de Mons, January 17, 1869.
7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, January 22, 1869.
8 Ibid.; Gazette de Mons, January 17, 1869.

legislation based on the Brussels petition. "If the law could prohibit someone from working a certain number of hours, it could also oblige a worker to labor a fixed time!"[1] The law would also be able to "infringe on the father's right to determine his child's profession". Frère-Orban, Minister of Finance, also opposed d'Elhoungne: "The State's main function is to assure individual liberty[2]... any regulatory legislation would be ineffective, ... and would be an infringement on individual liberty, and only by developing individual freedom"[3] can social problems be solved. A short time later the Liberals fell from power.

A bill to make work books optional also ran into bitter opposition; and in the end, neither proposal ever came to a vote.[4] In 1870, the Franco-Prussian war broke out. With its two large neighbors at each others throats, foreign affairs took precedence over domestic issues.[5] Not until 1878 did a child and female labor bill reach the floor of the Chamber. This time, Pirmez did not oppose the Kuborn report's findings in toto: "Without a doubt", he said "there

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, January 22, 1869.

2 Gazette de Mons, January 17, 1869; cf. also Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 179.

3 Meuse, January 20, 1869. The Meuse agreed with Pirmez and Frère-Orban, cf. January 21, 1869.

4 For the text of the bill, see Gazette de Mons, April 28, 1869. Regarding the debates see ibid., March 27 and April 23, 27-28, 1869; Indépendance Belge, January 1 and April 25, 1869; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 28, 1869; Meuse, April 27 and 28, 1869.

5 De Camps, p. 90.

were special diseases and physical alterations which" derived "from the coal mining profession". Pirmez, however, remained a firm opponent of such legislation because "work in the mines" provided "a livelihood for women and families which would otherwise starve".[1] Auguste Beernaert, Catholic Minister of Public Works, managed to rally a majority of the Chamber behind the new bill (53 to 27).[2] But Beernaert's efforts in the Senate were in vain; the Senate rejected the measure. The Catholic government then proceeded to exclude boys under twelve and girls under thirteen by administrative fiat; the Royal Decree of April 1884 was, however, of "doubtful legality".[3]

The 1870-1886 era was not completely barren. In 1883 two minor enactments by the Belgian parliament at least prevented social historians from being able to simply write off whole period as a com-

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1 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 184; cf. also Albert Nyssens, Eudore Pirmez (Brussels: 1898), pp. 232-33.

2 Auguste Melot, "Beernaert; I: Le régime bourgeois et la législation sociale", La Revue Générale, vol. 60 (1927), pp. 136-37; Ernest Mahaim, "La législation du travail", in La Patrie belge: Pour la commémoration du centenaire de notre indépendance, 1830-1930 (Brussels: Editions illustrées du "Soir", 1930), p. 223; Pierson, p. 93; Rudolf Rezsohazy, Origines et formation du catholicisme social en Belgique, 1842-1909 (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1958), p. 106.

3 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 182; cf. also, A. Cauvin, La durée du travail dans les houillères de Belgique (Paris: Giard et Brière, 1909), p. 30; L. Biolley, La question du travail des enfants dans les manufactures et de l'instruction de la classe ouvrière. Rapport présenté à l'assemblée générale de la Chambre de Commerce de Verviers du 20 janvier 1877 (Verviers: 1877), pp. 10-12.

pletely insignificant one.[1] One enactment abolished Article 1781 of the Civil Code, which had heretofore given precedence to an employer's testimony over the worker's claims in wage disputes.[2] Parliament, also, made work books optional;[3] and it enacted regulations concerning the status of cooperatives.[4] In the meantime, sporadic strikes continued to plague the country.

The miners in the Centre-La Louvière walked out in January-February, 1876;[5] the glassworkers in Charleroi struck in May 1884[6] and the Mons area miners walked off the job in March 1885.[7] Yet the years immediately preceding the upheaval of 1886 were no more productive of reform legislation than those which followed the 1843

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1 Armand Julin, "La condition des classes laborieuses en Belgique, 1830-1930", Annales de la Société scientifique de Bruxelles: Séries D; Sciences économiques, vol. 55 (October-December, 1935), p. 272.

2 "L'Histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique", pp. 17-18; R. Gorreux, Au bon vieux temps du cléricalisme, 1884-1894 (Brussels: Centrale de l'éducation ouvrière, 1959), p. 118; La législation ouvrière. Recueil des dispositions légales et réglementaires en vigueur au 1er mai 1895 (Brussels: Société générale d'imprimerie, 1895), pp. 7-8. The Recueil was compiled by the Ministry of Public Works.

3 Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 250; Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 161.

4 "L'Histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique", p. 18.

5 Charles Renault, L'Histoire des grèves (Paris: Guillaumin, 1887), pp. 71-72. Renault covers all types of strikes in Western Europe, many of which were extremely minor ones in Belgium. When he comes to the year 1886 he mentioned the Lille-Roubaix coal strike, but has absolutely nothing to say about the insurrection in Belgium. makes the work suspect!

6 Ibid., p. 155.

7 Ibid., pp. 164-67.

inquiry or the strikes and inquiries of 1868-69.[1] During the whole era, neither the middle class press nor the political leadership were, as yet, prepared to come to grips with the fundamental issue of the day — the governmental regulation of work conditions and social security through public laws and public money. Henneaux-Depooter implied that this was partially due to the fact that the working class was not really well enough organized to articulate its demands in the 1860's and 1870's.[2] The International never really got a strong foothold in the 1860's; and with the collapse of the Paris Commune, the ensuing repression in Europe and the doctrinal schisms within the International, this foothold was virtually wiped out in Belgium. As shall be seen, however, the Socialists were not any stronger in 1886. Nor were the strikes, following the rise of the Socialists in 1887-1888, any more effectively organized. Furthermore, throughout the late 1880's the Parti ouvrier belge was deeply divided between Anarcho-Syndicalists and Bernstinians. In view of these considerations, the workers' movement was not a decisive factor in the enactment of social reform legislation.

Ultimately, the reason for the failures of the preceding forty years were not mainly due to the lack of organization of the workers' movement. The principal explanation for the lack of progress toward social reform can be found in the attitude of the middle

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1 Pierson, p. 92; M.A. Bourré, Les conditions du travail en Belgique (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1890), p. 9. Bourré was a special envoy of the French government in Brussels. His report on the situation was an extremely percptive report.

2 Henneaux-Depooter, p. 177.

class, who controlled the levers of power and who did not consider social issues and economic problems to be within the realm of political action. Furthermore the civil violence of 1868-69 was not serious enough to frighten the middle class sufficiently to oblige it to formulate an intellectual subterfuge, whereby the government could intervene in social and economic questions and at the same time maintain a semblance of doctrinal impermutability. It is necessary examine the events of 1886 to see if the collective violence was serious enough to capture the imagination of the political and industrial elites and engender the formulation of a new doctrinal subterfuge for justifuing statal intervention and enactment of social reform.

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CHAPTER II

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE 1886 INSURRECTION

There are two broad approaches that can be used for explaining the causes of the outbreak of the 1886 civil disorders. On the one hand, the historian may stress the impact of economic conditions on the plight of the Belgian workers. According to this approach, the process of industrialization and urbanization, combined with boom/bust economic cycles, could have caused ever deepening resentment among the Belgian working class until the frustration had accumulated to the point where an uprising broke out among the industrial population. The violence put an end to the on-going political bargaining while the authorities exerted all their efforts for crushing the insurrection. Violence was a socially pathological phenomenon; it was extra-parliamentary and hence outside the scope of political analysis. On the other hand, theorists like Barrington Moore and Charles Tilly stress the role of political struggles between various European social groups as a chief cause of collective violence. They view collective violence as an integral part of the political process, as politics by other means. According to this approach, violence was just another strategy and consequence of a broader struggle between various Belgian social classes as they sought to gain or retain more influence in the polity.

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Both the economic and the political approaches provided valid explanations of the Belgian insurrection, though the political approach contributes some particularly interesting insights into the relationship between the Belgian situation that preceded the upheaval and the outbreak of the violence in Liège. The political theory points up the significance of the on-going political competition between the various Belgian social groups which, in competing for power and in testing each others influence, reverted to demonstrations and other types of activities that precipitated violence. This approach provides, for example, criteria for evaluating the significance of the disorders by stressing the impact of the disturbances on the relative influence of interested groups. The political approach, also, casts light on the gravity of the situation in 1886 through its concept of multiple sovereignty, where the insurgents very nearly could have managed to take over a portion of the country and establish a counter government that could have competed with the Brussels authorities for the loyalty of the populace.

Before applying the political approach to the 1886 crisis, a brief analysis of the situation, using the economic approach, will outline the economic conditions that engendered the explosive situation. The short-comings of the economic view should also be pointed out before going on to applying the political theory of the outbreak and significance of the disorders.

The more traditional economic view of industrial insurrections emphasizes the development in Belgium of a desperate lumpen prole-

tariat in conjunction with the unfolding of the process of urbanization and industrialization. Ultimately, frustration and desperation grew until an economic crisis finally brought on a massive revolutionary orgy during which the working class, in a fit of insurrectional madness, attempted to overthrow the existing order.[1]

In Belgium's case, by 1886, the industrialization process was progressing very rapidly. The country sat astride the main European coal belt stretching from Wales and the Pas de Calais on into the Ruhr. At the same time industrialization was facilitated by British investments and guarantees for Belgian national security.[2] The transportation system grew rapidly; the road network increased from 6,000 km. in 1850 to 8,000 km. in 1875; while the railway system expanded from 60 km. in 1834 to 3,400 km. in 1875.[3] Technical and commercial techniques increased apace. The wool textile industry in Verviers was the first one on the continent to become mechanized. Belgium's steam power totalled only 51,000 h.p. in 1850, but as industrialization proceeded, it grew to 228,000 h.p. by 1875.[4] By 1870, Belgium was the fifth largest iron producer in the world, immediately behind such colossi as Britain, the United States, Germany and France. Bel-

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1 Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective in H.D. Graham and T.R. Gurr (eds.) Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 33.

2 Laurent Dechesnes, L'histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914 (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1932), p. 444.

3 Ibid., p. 462.

4 Ibid., p. 463; Ben Serge Chlepner, Cent ans d'histoire sociale en Belgique (Brussels: Institut de Sociologie Solvay), pp. 47-48.

gium's iron industry was one of the world's modern ones. The country averaged 12,000 tons per year per blast furnace, whereas its four major competitors only produced an average of 9,000 tons of iron per furnace.[1] In fifty years, Belgium glass production grew from 20,000 cubic meters to 2,500,000 m^2.[2] Walloon coal production rose from 2.9 million tons in 1836 to 18.4 million tons in 1886.[3] But as industrialization advanced, the number of collieries declined from 408 to 265 during the same period.[4]

The economic approach stresses the impact of urbanization that developed apace with industrialization and engendered the development of the industrial working class. During the last half of the 19th century, Belgium witnessed vast population movements toward the burgeoning industrial centers. The population of industrial Wallonia increased by 100 per cent between 1864 and 1889.[5] Urbanization and industrialization engendered two potentially volatile de-

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1 Léon Delsinne, Le Parti ouvrier belge des origines à 1894 (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1955), p. 11. By 1886, however, steel production underwent a decline while the industry converted to the Bessemer process. Cf. Léon-Hugo Dupriez, Le progrès économique en sidérurgie: Belgique, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas, 1830-1955 (Louvain: Béatrice Nauwelaerts, 1960), pp. 71-72. Despite the increasing importance of steel, iron production continued to grow: 1836, 136,000 tons; 1851-60, 284,000 tons; 1861-70, 442,000 tons; 1871-80, 549,000 tons; 1881-90, 750,000 tons. Delsinne, pp. 11-12.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Dechesnes, L'histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914, p. 444.

5 Eugene and Pauline Anderson, Political Institutions and Social Change in Continental Europe in the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 22.

velopments in Belgium. On the one hand, the size of the productive units grew (see above) to be operated by ever larger work forces. For example the coal mining population increased from 48,000 in 1848 to 116,000 in 1896 while the number of mines decreased by approximately one third.[1] On the other hand, mechanization and standardization of production procedures depersonalized labor conditions. During the 1840's, counting 8 men per horse power unit, mechanical power represented 19 per cent of the productive power, but by 1886 it was approximately 60 per cent.[2] The workers' contribution began to consist of routine tasks that required a minimum of skill.

In the economic view, urbanization and industrialization engendered the development of a new class consciousness among the Belgian workers. Herded into larger and larger enterprises, the Belgian workers became appendages to the machinery. Their craft spirit disappeared. And instead a feeling of frustration, a new sense of class consciousness arose.[3] New group identities and similarities emerged among the workers as Belgian peasant lads joined thousands of similar youths in the homogenous work force in the mines and mills of Wallonia.[4] According to the economic explanation,

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1 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine 1830-1914, vol. I, pp. 244-45.

2 Dechesnes, L'histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914, p. 464.

3 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine 1830-1914, vol. I, pp. 244-45; cf. also Hector Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix (Brussels: G.J. Huysmans, 1852), p. 263.

4 Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1953), p. 174.

the "hump of radicalism" occurred while the changes that had been unleased by the industrial revolution were proceeding at the most rapid pace.[1] Hence, worker protest in Belgium should have peaked relatively early in the industrialization process. It was supposedly at that moment that the most radical reallocation of resources had been required and the most taxing demands on the working populace were being made by the new industrial system.[2]

In Belgium by the 1880's, vast changes in methods of production, in the types of labor demanded, in the geographical confrontation of production, in the ways and places people lived, and in the distribution of wealth shattered class bonds and engendered a new mass of déclassés.[3] To aggravate things further, when the economic crise of 1883 occurred in Belgium, the newly industrialized country did not have suitable institutions for mitigating the adversities that were the result of unemployment.[4] While traditional social institutions like the extended family often had ways of helping some of those who suffered adversities, Belgium, like other European countries in the throws of the industrialization process, did not have adequate social organizations to cope with widespread misery.

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1 Val Lorwin, "Working Class Politics and Economic Development in Western Europe", American Historical Review (1958, n° 63, p. 344.

2 C. Kerr, J.T. Dunlop, F.H. Hartison and C.A. Myers, Industrialism and Industrial Man (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 208-209.

3 Mancur Olson, Jr., "Rapid Economic Growth as a destabilizing Force", Journal of Economic History (1963), n° 23, p. 532.

4 Ibid., p. 537.

In a semi-rural economy, the unemployed city worker could often return to the family farm and eke out a living until the depression was over. But in an urban industrial society like Belgian Wallonia, he could only rely on his wages. When the depression occurred, the Belgian worker's entire means of subsistance disappeared,[1] and he had to turn to public welfare agencies for succor.

The Belgian welfare system of 1886 consisted of an inadequate patchwork of parish charities and municipally sponsored bureaux de bienfaisance, which were often administered by corrupt individuals who used the organizations' funds for speculative purposes instead of alleviating the rampant misery that had been engendered by the economic downturn.[2] The welfare system went back to the Middle Ages, and its manner of funding had remained virtually unchanged. At its inception, various municipalities had entrusted commons and buildings to "upstanding" community leaders, who were supposed to use earnings from investments and properties for alleviating the lot of the poor.[3] Rudimentary at best in normal times, but chaotic during the industrial revolution and its concomittant economic crises, during 1885-1886, the welfare system virtually collapsed. Private donations, profits from the Monts-de-Piété (municipal pawn shops), and taxes on "luxury" entertainment all failed to breach the gap

1 Ibid., pp. 537-38.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel (4 vols; Brussels: Lesigne, 1887), vol. I, pp. 520-21.

3 Ibid., p. 525.

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between the needs of the unemployed and the means to succor them.[1] Furthermore, there were only 161 townships out of the country's 2,500 municipalities which even had a bureau de bienfaisance.[2]

By winter of 1885-1886, the Brussels welfare agency was only able to provide a basket of coal and two loaves of bread per week to indigent families.[3] In La Louvière, the main city of the Centre region, the municipal welfare agency's funds had dried up.[4] Twenty-five thousand out of Molenbeek-lez-Bruxelles' 45,000 inhabitants needed welfare assistance.[5] The welfare board in Arlon could afford to distribute only 15 frs per month to recipients.[6] Of Soignies' 2,500 workers, 1,500 were on welfare; in Tournai, 30 per cent of the population required aid.[7] One official summed up the situation by pointing out that "in the majority of municipalities ... no funds at all are available for public health and welfare or else absurdly little .... Many townships simply refuse to help the poor — just like in Central Africa — under the pretext that they lack money".[8]

An economic explanation of the outbreak of the 1886 insurrection stresses that as the economic situation in Europe worsened, the

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1 Ibid., pp. 196-97.

2 Ibid.; Journal de Bruxelles, January 22, 1888.

3 Commission du Travail, Procès verbaux des séances, vol. II, Section B, p. 89.

4 Ibid., vol. II, Section C, p. 57.

5 Ibid., vol. II, Section B, p. 18.

6 Ibid., vol. II, Section C, p. 102.

7 Ibid., vol. II, Section C, pp. 84, 174, 236.

8 Ibid., vol. II, Section C, p. 182.

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frustration of the Belgian workers increased until it boiled over into an industrial insurrection. Thus the outbreak and degree of collective violence was in direct proportion to the amount of frustration that the Belgian workers had to endure. The more severe the economic crisis became, the more likely the insurrection and the graver its violence.[1] Theorists of "economic frustration thesis" such as Chalmers Johnson claim that the degree of malaise can be measured in terms of the degree of anti-social behavior, for example, by using crime statistics.[2] Some confirmation for this theory is found in the Belgian situation in 1886. The country's crime rate rose to a high point at the same time that the country's economic indicators declined to a low point.[3] In 1882, there were 123 trials before the Assizes Court; but with the beginning of the depression in 1883, the numbre climbed to 137, then 157 in 1884-1885. It jumped to 270[4] during 1886.[5] The Gazette de Mons commented, that the Assizes "no longer meets exceptionally, but is holding sessions without interruption".[6] The Socialist Peuple also echoed the economic

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1 E.J. Hobsbawm, "Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements, Economic History Review (1952), Series 2, n° 1, pp. 11-13.

2 Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), p. 120.

3 See Appendixes n° 3-5.

4 Only approximately six of these trials were related to the insurrection itself.

5 Ministère de la Justice, Administration de la justice criminelle et civile de la Belgique: Années 1861 à 1897 (Brussels: Lesigne 1884-1897), p. 3.

6 Gazette de Mons, January 1, 1887. "Nous avons eu cette année bien de la misère; le travail est mourant, la famine frappe à la

crisis-frustration thesis: "The wretched, the workers, cannot stand any more, preferring death to their horrible situation, they go forth to destroy everything before them, the factory, the means of production...".[1]

The economic explanation for the Belgian insurrection of 1886 is based on two points: (1) The economic crisis bred desperation and frustration among the workers which erupted into irrational destruction and violence. And (2) collective violence was thus an act of madness by the workers; a socially pathological phenomenon that was without any rational political motivation.[2]

The economic approach, however, leaves some unanswered questions about the reasons for the insurrection. For example, there is no proof that the economic downturn was a necessary cause of the

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porte de l'ouvrier, quand elle ne règne pas en maîtresse à son logis. Avez-vous lu ces longues listes que la presse enregistrait chaque jour, et où les crimes et les suicides se succédaient sans interruption et se déroulaient dans tout ce qu'ils avaient d'horrible, de poignant? N'est-ce pas quelque chose d'affreux que le spectacle de cette infortune? Le coeur le plus insensible doit être ému, attendri devant ces tristes tableaux. La cour d'assises ne siège plus exceptionnellement, elle tient à présent des sessions régulières et nombreuses. Quand le ventre crie la faim, l'esprit peut-il toujours demeurer sain et fort?"

1 Peuple (Brussels), March 30, 1886; the Liberal-Progressive Réforme (Brussels), March 28, 1886, also thought that an insurrection was an irrational act of desperation.

2 Arnold S. Feldman, "Violence and Volatility: The Likelihood of Revolution", in H. Eckstein (ed.), Internal War: Problems and Approaches (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 111. "The structure of social violence is typically viewed as an area of social pathology.. In this sense, violence is conceived as being incidental to the basic character of social structure ordinarily excludes the sources of structural destruction". Crane Brinton's The Anatomy of Revolution (New York: Norton, 1938) is an example of the pathological approach.

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1886 industrial insurrection. Hobsbawm has shown that other European industrialized countries underwent violent outbreaks in the 1870's when a boom period was in progress.[1] This was also true of Belgium in the 1870's.

Theorists who have studied collective violence in Western Europe also point out that urbanization and industrialization do not necessarily engender disorders. A well known social theorist has shown that in the short run, the growth of large cities, in Belgium for example, and rapid migration from rural to urban areas ... probably acted as a damper on violent protest, rather than a spur to it .[2] The process withdrew discontented peasants and small-town workmen from their villages and herded them into cities, where they lost their old collective identity as well as the means for concerted action. They were initially preoccupied with settling into their new environment and reorientating themselves rather than organizing an upheaval.[3] The experience in Belgium and France confirm this initial trend in the industrialization and urbanization process. The new industrial classes were just beginning to develop a sense of class consciousness by the 1880's.[4]

Nor does the fact that there was abject misery among Belgium's industrial classes during depth of the depression necessarily ex-

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1 Hobsbawm, "Economic Fluctuations and Some Social movements", p. 15.

2 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p.11.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

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plain the outbreak of the insurrection. Trotsky's comments on this might be applied to Belgium: "If poverty and oppression were a precipitant of revolution, the lower classes would always be in revolt".[1]

Absolute abject poverty might actually impede the development of revolutionary sentiments. Those who were involved in the 1886 insurrection were hardly in such a state of misery as to be threatened with complete starvation. Even if this had been the case, a revolt would not necessarily have developed, because enduring starvation often increased concern with one's solitary self or family, it numbed the senses, and it reduced such persons to resignation or mute despair.[2]

Actually, the Belgian insurrection occurred following a period of general economic growth that was followed by a period of sharp reversal in 1883.[3] The all important effect on the minds of the Belgian workers was to produce, during the preceding years of rising living standards, an expectation of continued ability to satisfy needs — which continued to rise — and after 1883, a mental state of anxiety and frustration when these hopes were threatened by the depression. The actual economic situation played a less significant causal role than the Belgian working class expectation that past

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1 Ibid., p. 35.

2 Harry Eckstein, " On the Etiology of Internal Wars", History and Theory (1965), n° 5, p. 142; James C. Davies, "Toward Theory of Revolution", American Sociological Review (1962), vol. 27, p. 7.

3 Davis, op. cit., p. 6.

progress, now threatened could and would continue into the future.[1] Hence economic developments such as unemployment, wage levels and other quantifiable factors did not necessarily predicate an insurrection in Belgium.[2] Because it was ultimately a question of psycho-social perception of the economic situation, there must have been a delay between the quantifiable reality of the economic situation in 1886 and the insurrection that broke out. Political stability and instability were ultimately dependent on a state of mind, the mood in the country.[3]

Since the relationship between the outbreak of the Belgian insurrection and economic factor was tenuous in view of the problem of delays in psycho-social perception, the historian must avoid stressing a unicausal economic explanation for the outbreak of the insurrection. At best the economic explanation demonstrates that all things being considered, the economic situation created a context that facilitated, but did not necessarily cause, the insurrection. The immediate cause involved a human element, i.e. a political decision by a large number of Belgian workers to gain advantages through violence. It did not involve a blind reaction that had been activated automatically by economic forces.

Thus the economic explanation must be combined with a polit-

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1 Lorwin, p. 340.

2 Davies, p. 6.

3 Charles Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence" preliminary draft of an article for the Handbook of Political Science, Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), Addison Wesley Publishing Co.

ical theory for the outbreak of the Belgian insurrection. If the Belgian revolt were viewed as a political act based on rational decisions by the workers, some other worthwhile insights might be gained. Studies of collective violence in Western Europe — and the case of Belgium does not seem to contradict them — show that collective violence was not only a virtual "parameter" of change in Western Europe[1], but social and political changes were always close partners of reactionary and progressive revolts.[2] Violence was an integral part of Western European politics from the days of the bread riot and Hobsbawm's[3] other types of "primitive" revolts to the modern general strike.[4] Throughout western European history, and Belgium was not an exception, collective violence was inspired by political motives and consequences. Even the 17th and 18th century tax-riots or the anti-tax riots were directed against political authorities or other symbols of power in society. Violence was usu-

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1 Ibid., "Collective violence in European Perspective", pp. 4-5.

2 Eric J. Hobsbawm, Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne (Paris: Fayard, 1963, originally published in 1959 in English). This was a useful work for determining and categorizing the different forms of collective violence. The book is mainly devoted, however, to the "primitive" revolts of the pre-1789 era. His distinction between pre-industrial urban revolts in the 18th century and post-industrial syndicalism left a gap, i.e. the industrial insurrections, during the industrializing period, but before the development of a strong syndicalist movement. He solved this problem in his article entitled "Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements", when he refered to the transitional form of insurrection as an industrial jacquerie. In this case communal groups in industrial areas instead of syndical associational groups were involved in the collective violence.

3 Tilly, "Collective violence in European Perspective", p. 10.

4 Ibid.

ally accompanied by insurgent demands upon the authorities and complaints about the way they had met their reponsabilities. Such violence in 19th century Belgium, for example, usually paralleled non-violent political action by reform-minded individuals and political parties.[1]

Collective violence was often a consequence of the competition for power in Belgium where the working class was seeking to participate in government. The possibility of violent outbreaks increased between groups that were threatened with the loss of their predominant position, such as the industrialist-dominated Doctrinaire Liberal party, or groups like the workers movement that was attempting to gain representation and predominant positions in the Belgian polity.[2] For example, Tilly's model seemed relevant to the Belgian situation in 1886, which could have consisted of

> a division among groups unrepresented in the existing structure of power, groups holding defined positions in that structure, and groups in the process of losing defined positions. Then it would be accurate to say that, on the whole, primitive disturbances involve defined positions in a (certain kind of) structure of power, whereas reactionary disturbances involve groups losing such positions, and modern disturbances involve groups acquiring them.[3]

In terms of this model, collective violence in Belgium occurred

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 11, cf. also the theories of Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) and Eric Wolf, Peasant Wars in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

3 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 38.

when there was a change in the power relationships between new and old groups, between defenders of their privileged position and challengers for power.[1] Thus outbreaks of collective violence seemed to be an integral part of the reform processes in European history. An insurrection like the one that occurred in Belgium could be conceived as a continuation of the normal competition between contending political groups, but with a greater rythm of testing and the presentation of more contradictory claims arising from non-members who were outside, and who were not represented in the polity.[2]

The most obvious contenders for power were the political parties, which in turn represented various socio-economic groups seeking to maintain privileged position in regard to authoritative value distribution that arose from membership or control in the national polity.[3] In Belgium initially polity membership was extremely limited, because membership in the polity was limited by property qualification. The corps censitaire was limited at 128,000 voters out of approximately five million inhabitants. These voters came from several socio-economic groups. The upper echelon bureaucracy provided 6,000 members or 7.7 per cent of the total polity. Professional group such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, artists and educational elements totaled 25,000 voters or 19 per cent of the body politics. The two more powerful groups were, on the one hand

1 Ibid., p. 41.

2 Ibid., "Revolutions and Collective Violence".

3 Ibid., cf. Tilly's model.

the 40,000 (30.5 per cent) landowners, rentiers and large-scale farmers; and on the other hand, 59,000 industrialists and merchants (46 per cent). Together the landed and moneyed classes had overwhelmingpower; they represented 76.5 per cent of the total polity membership. The two principal polity member parties (Catholic and Doctrinaire Liberal) were both devoted to the interests of these two groups.[1] Policy distinctions between the Doctrinaire Liberals and the Catholics were limited to philosophical issues, particularly the religious issue, army expansion and education.[2] A de facto consensus regarding economic affairs existed. The Catholics and Doctrinaires both believed in the on-going laissez-faire doctrines; consequently there was no real left in Belgium among the dominant polity members.[3] These two parties were the defenders of the existing power structure and had every intention of maintaining their position.

The Catholics and the Liberals were challenged by a some-time tacit coalition between a polity-member wing of the Liberal Party, the Progressives and a non-member party, the Socialist Parti ouvrier belge (P.O.B.). Both of the contenders for power wanted to enlarge the polity membership. The P.O.B. favored universal manhood suffrage in order to reach a dominant position within the polity by riding in

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1 Réforme (Brussels), May 25, 1888.

2 Karl Van Isacker, "La querelle des Catholiques et Libéraux et des Ultramontains", La Revue Nouvelle (February 15, 1956), n° 23, p. 251.

3 Ibid.

on the crest of an enfranchised working class totalling approximately 600,000 potential voters. Though the Progressives were divided on the question of how far enfranchisement should be extended, they nevertheless wanted the number of polity members increased in order to take control of the Liberal party from the Doctrinaire "agents of the clique aristo-métallique"!

The main economic ideas which dominated the policies two of the four principal contenders, whose positions in relation to the power structure would be affected by the insurgency, provided a certain basis of consensus between the ruling elites. The Doctrinaire wing of the Liberal party had dominated Belgian parliamentary politics from 1847 when the Unionist regime collapsed — until 1870. The Doctrinaires represented a politico-economic coalition composed, on the one hand, of high level bureaucrats, magistrates and "notables" who advocated secularization and statism; on the other hand the party received strong support for its laissez-faire policies from the rising commercial, financial and industrial elites.[1] These two groups were united in supporting Frère-Orban's advocacy of "the greatest possible freedom in the greatest possible number of areas of human endeavor".[2] The specifics of this wish were embodied in the Liberal Program which had been adopted at the Party's Congress in June 1846. The Liberal program called for separation of Church

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1 M. Hensman, Les origines de la démocratie chrétienne en Belgique (Brussels: Editions du "Mouvement ouvrier chrétien", 1959), p. 13.

2 Ibid.

and State and development of secular public education under the sole direction of the State.[1] True to their program, the Liberals enacted a law in 1850, which according to Wilmotte, a liberal apologist, "revolutionized" the educational system by placing it under the authority of the state.[2] By 1879-84, the whole issue of Church-State relations finally was at stake in the "school war", which arose when Van Humbeek's 1879 law on public education was enacted.

Adam Smith's ideas keynoted liberalism's economic policies the same way that Locke's ideas dominated the party's political doctrine. Article 544 of the country's Code Civil defined the liberal notion of property as "the right to enjoy and dispose of things in the most absolut way". This in turn prevented Liberals from accepting the key principle of all social reform legislation, i.e. that the legislator has the right to discriminate between legitimate or moral uses of property and abuses of proprietory rights. For the Doctrinaire Liberal, individual proprietory rights were absolute. The Liberals' chief legislative achievements were the establishment of the foundations for the country's industrialization. In 1850, they created a National Bank. They cut tolls on the transportation system and they launched the country's free trade policy in the wake of the Franco-British treaty of 1860. Nevertheless, at no time

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1 Frans Van Kalken, L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine des origines à 1914 (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1944), p. 480.

2 Maurice Wilmotte, La Belgique morale et politique, 1830 à 1900 (Paris: A. Colin, 1902); Hensman, p. 14.

during its hegemony, did the Liberal party accept the idea of intervening in economic affairs in order to regulate the working class' situation. The ideas of the party's leading economists, Guy de Molinari (1819-1911) and Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1811-1876) opposed such action. They both believed that the economic system, operating in equilibrium according to its own laws, would be threatened if the state intervened and impeded its self motivating progressive evolution.[1]

Between 1831 and 1884 most Catholic leaders shared the ideals of the leading proponents of economic liberalism (Smith, Ricardo and Say) with their opponents in the Liberal party. Only a minority agreed with Charles Perin (1815-1905) of the University of Louvain, who was a disciple of Charles de Coux. Perin had called for a reordering of priorities so that the economic order would be subordinate to the moral order as laid down in the Bible. Such a doctrine held the germ of social and economic engineering through Parliamentary action. But up to 1886, Jules Malou (1810),[2] Auguste Beernaert (1829-1912)[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 20.

2 Jules Malou was born in Ypres, studied law and took a position in the Ministry of Justice in 1836. In 1841, he was elected deputy from Ypres. Later he served as governor of Antwerp and then obtained the Finance portfolio in the Vande Weyer unionist cabinet and the de Theux government. Defeated for reelection in 1848, but victorious in 1850, Malou headed a parliamentary committee until 1857. In 1862, he became Senator for Saint-Nicolas. He was one of Frère-Orban's and Bara's most formidable opponents. Between 1870 and 1878 he formed the d'Anethan-Jacobs Catholic government. Malou formed one more government in 1884, but the municipal election defeats that the Catholics sustained obliged Malou to cede power for good. He died two years later.

3 Auguste Beernaert was born in Ostend and studied at the

and Charles Woeste (1837-1922),[1] the Party's leaders, continued to oppose statal intervention in economic affairs.

The Catholic party was born in the polemical struggles that followed the Liberal government's enactment of the anti-clerical Convent Law in 1857.[2] By 1863 Catholic riding associations were springing up all over the country, and by 1868 they were unified into the Fédération des cercles catholiques et des associations conservatrices (F.C.C.A.C.). Two years later, the new organization carried the party to power between 1870-1878. The victory was relatively short-lived, because of a split between the ultramontain wing

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Universities of Paris, Bonn and Heidelberg. Later he was a lawyer for the vast economic empire of the Société Générale. A"Liberal" Catholic and protégé of Malou, Beernaert first entered the Chamber in 1873 as Minister of Public Works and deputy from Thielt. He was President of the F.C.C.A.C. when he took over the leadership from Malou in 1884. He was President of the Council of Ministers in 1886 and the key figure behind the reform program that was enacted in the aftermath of the strikes.

1 Son of a protestant German father, but converted to Catholicism to become leader of its ultramontain wing thereby becoming Beernaert's right wing opponent in intra-party struggles, Charles Woeste nevertheless was a protégé of Malou at about the same time as Beernaert. He became deputy for Alost. He was a consistent opponent of the rising tide of Liberalism both within and outside the Catholic party. He was only Minister of Justice in the 1884 Malou cabinet for a short time and from then until his last campaign in 1891 he sat on the non-cabinet benches of the hemicycle. He was a prolific writer of memoirs, i.e. Echos des luttes contemporaines (2 vols; Brussels: O. Schepens, 1906), Oeuvres de combats (Brussels: Action catholique et de Lannoy réunis, 1921), Vingt ans de polémique (3 vols; Brussels, 1925), Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique (3 vols; Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1927-37).

2 Hensman, p. 28.

and the "liberal wing" of the party. In 1879 Frère-Orban[1] and Jules Bara[2] reconstitued a new liberal government, bent on rooting out clericalism in Belgium. Frère-Orban promptly secularized primary and secondary education in 1879 and 1881. His measures galvanized a new union between the two Catholic wings who ultimately joined in driving the Liberals from power. After the 1884 elections the Catholics and their allies the Independants, held 70 seats in the lower house, while the Liberals, including the Progressives with 4 seats, held a total of 52 seats, down 27 when compared to 1879.[3]

While the defenders of the Belgian power structure justified their privileges by invoking constitutional principles and Manchesterian economic theories, the Progressive-Liberals and the Socialists, the contenders for power based their arguments on general principles of justice.[4] The Progressive leaders, Paul Janson, Emile

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1 Hubert-Joseph-Walthère Frère-Orban, studied at Paris and Liège, the city of his birth, and finally at Louvain. He was admitted to the bar in 1832. He played a leading role in the Liberal victory between 1848 and 1884. He was de facto leader of the Doctrinaire majority of the Liberal party and stoutly defended the idea of non-intervenism, anti-clericalism and free trade.

2 Protégé and life long admirer of Frère-Orban, Jules Bara was born in Tournai. He studied and later tought law at the Free University of Brussels, the intellectual bastion of Belgian Liberalism. He entered the Chamber in 1862 for Tournai. Stout defender of Liberalism, both political and economic, he served as Minister of Justice from 1866 to 1870 and from 1879 to 1884. When the Catholics came to power in 1884 he was one of the leading opposition critiques until 1900. See also Jules Garsou, Frère-Orban (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1945), Garsou and H. Van Leynseele, Frère-Orban, Le crépuscule, 1876-1896 (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1954).

3 De Terlinden (ed.) L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine de 1830 à 1930, vol. I, p. 141; Van Kalken, L'Histoire de la Belgique des origines à 1914, p. 485.

4 Tilly, "Revolution and Collective violence".

Feron, Victor Arnould, J.G. Fléchet, Crocq, Vancamps and Guillery[1] believed that the key to a predominant position in the polity and the best means toward assuring social justice was the enfranchisement of a greater number of citizens. The problem for the Progressive-Liberals was to find a formula which would satisfy their wing of the party and eventually obtain the support of the Doctrinaire wing as well.[2] How far the polity should be democratized proved to be an insuperable problem among the members of the Progressive wing of the party, while the idea was completely rejected by the majority of Doctrinaires. The Progressive program, also, called for obligatory public schools, absolute separation of Church and State, free trade, personal military conscription and an end to the practice of bounty-replacements.[3]

The Progressive program's two most important socio-economic reform proposals were the establishment of personal income tax and the enactment of regulatory labor legislation.[4] This aspect of the Progressive program originated in the humanistic economics of François Huet[5] and Emile de Laveleye.[6] Of the two, de Laveleye was the

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1 Meuse, May 30, 1887.

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 17, 1887.

3 Gazette de Liège, May 31, 1887.

4 Ibid.; Gazette de Mons, June 1, 1887.

5 Born in France of peasant stock in 1814, Huet was extremely conscious of class differences and injustices. He was a Catholic until the latter part of his life. Between 1860 and 1869, when he died, Huet turned away from religion and became an atheist. An admirer of the French revolution, he was eventually forced out of the University of Ghent because of his political sympathies. See Robert Kothen, La pensée et l'action sociale des catholiques, 1789-

most influential. Though a liberal, de Laveleye protested against the laissez-faire doctrine's over-emphasis on narrow individualism, which he warned, had anti-social implications. Ultimately, economic individualism would have to be tempered by a certain degree of re-distribution of wealth — by a government guided be principles of social morality.[1]

By proclaiming itself a proponent of political and economic democratization, the Progressive wing of the Liberal party, and its constituency of lawyers, intellectuals and a smattering of small businessmen and civil servants who already held polity membership, placed itself in an awkward position. The problem of how far the franchise should be extended was the political and economic crux of the whole problem; for if suffrage were extended too far, the Progressive polity member constituency would be enlarged so far as to

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1914 (Louvain: Presses de l'Université de Louvain, 1945), pp. 85-87 and l'Histoire des théories sociales (Louvain Warny, 1946); Rezsohazy, Origines et formation du catholicisme social en Belgique, 1842-1909, pp. 21-31.

6 de Laveleye was a native of Bruges. Born there in 1822, he then went on to study at the University of Ghent. In 1848 he published his first article in Ghent's Doctrinaire Liberal daily, la Flandre Libérale, which launched him on a prolific career as professor, journalist and public speaker. He was a prolific writer; his works totaled approximately 300 books pamphlets and articles. In 1864 he became professor of Political Economy at the University of Liège. He died in 1892. Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 292-94. His critique of socialism served as spring board for explaining his own economic theory; Emile de Laveleye, Le socialisme contemporain (Paris: Field et Tuer, 1891), pp. XLIII, 116-17, 120-21, 128-29. See also De Terlinden (ed.), l'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine, 1830-1914, vol. II, p. 279; Joseph Bondas, L'Histoire anecdotique du mouvement ouvrier (Liège: Editions Syndicales, 1955), pp. 99-100; Ben Serge Chlepner, pp. 156-57.

1 de Laveleye, pp. 120-121; Hensman, p. 21.

include pro-Socialist groups and thereby bring in a new polity member who would also compete for power — the P.O.B. On the other hand, if the franchise were not extended far enough, not enough members of the Progressive constituency would be included in the polity. The Party's voting constituency would be too small for the Progressives to gain ascendency. Consequently, gaining power depended on how far the Progressives wanted to carry their campaign for electoral reform and how they would define their relations with the Socialists.

The Socialist Parti ouvrier belge (founded in 1885)[1] and its constituency were also faced with the problem of how far its policy

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1 G.D.H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought (3 vols; London: Mac Millan, 1954), vol. II, pp. 120, 204. The Flemish Workers Party, created in 1879, an adherent to the principles of the Gotha program, joined the Parti socialiste brabançon in taking the initiative in creating the first all-Belgian party in 1880. But the new party was dissolved in 1880. See Emile Vandervelde, La Belgique ouvrière (Paris: Edouard Cornely, 1906), pp. 67-68, 70; Elié Halévy, L'Histoire du socialisme européen (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), pp. 159-60, 195-96; Pierson, p. 76; René Saedeleer, Grèves, syndicalisme et démocratie (Liège: Editions Desoer, 1961), p. 31.

The economic crisis spurred the various labor factions to unite in the pace of darkening situation. In February 1885, Louis Bertrand, president of the Ligue ouvrière de Bruxelles proposed a national congress which would federate all the local groups. Bertrand advocated a compromise solution constructed around two principles to satisfy the Walloon Anarcho-Syndicalists and the pro-Berstein Brabantines and Flemings; these principles called for improving the economic situation of the worker by establishing local organization and the launching of a public campaign for the obtention of universal suffrage. These principles were adopted at a meeting of the Café du Cygne when the delegates of 59 associations met. The leading delegates were César de Paepe, Anseele, Bertrand and Volders, who Gautier de Rasse, chief of the Sureté considered the most brilliant. Pierson, pp. 79-81; Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique, vol. II, p. 350; Letter Gautier de Rasse, Administrateur de la Sureté publique to the Comte de Borchgrave, February 1, 1887, A.R.D. (Archives Royales de la Dynastie)

should swing leftward. The moderate Berstinian[1] wing of the party wanted a policy which would be mild enough to open the electoral door to the proletarian masses so that this class could gain polity membership.[2] For the pragmatic wing of the party, the chief goal must be a political one, i.e. changing the membership criterion in the polity, by obtaining revision of Article 47 of the Constitution to provide universal manhood suffrage.[3] The P.O.B. would then dominate the polity and it could legislate other reforms.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist wing of the party asserted that such a strategy was futile. These idealists advocated political action by economic means - the general strike.[4] They proposed to take power, following a direct attack against the other contenders and then enthrone the working class as the exclusive polity members. The Anarcho-Syndicalists proposed to accomplish their revolution by drastically altering the polity membership criteria. Their strategy

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MSS, C.R. (Cabinet du Roi), n° C 14b.

1 Cole, vol. II, p. 87; Van Kalken, L'Histoire de la Belgique des origines à 1914, pp. 556-57.

2 Halévy, p. 150.

3 Chlepner, p. 177. N. Blanvalet called for patience and moderation: "les plis de notre drapeau rouge sont assez vastes pour abriter tous ceux qui veulent une répartition plus juste des richesses et du travail ... Contrairement à ce que l'on dit, le parti ouvrier n'est pas partisan de la violence; rapport du Commissaire de Police de la Ville de Liège, Service de la Sûreté, Dossier: Mouvement Socialiste et Anarchiste à Liège, 1878-1888, Archives Générale du Royaume (Brussels) MSS, Papiers de Frère-Orban n° 192 (Herein referred to as A.G.R. MSS. F.O., Rapport du Commissaire de Police).

4 Cole, vol. II, p. 175; Neal Ascherson, The King Incorporated: Léopold II in the Age of Trusts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 150.

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consisted of testing the coercive power of the dominant groups and escalating the political conflict until the final showdown occurred with general strike which would bring the regime to its knees.

N. Blanvalet of Liège, Edouard Anseele of Ghent, Jean Volders, Louis Bertrand, César de Paepe and Louis de Potter, the leaders of the moderate P.O.B. faction in Brussels, favored a Germanic pragmatic approach,[1] while many Walloon provincial leaders such as Alfred Defuisseaux were influenced by French Socialists such as François Baboeuf, Philippe Buonarrotti, Joseph Proudhon and Louis Blanc.[2] The Anarcho-syndicalists wanted the party to forge a network of militant trade unions which would be the party's revolutionary vanguard for action against the power structure through its economic soft underbelly. The pragmatists emphasized political action through demonstrations and propaganda for constitutional revision and electoral reform. They considered the strike a suicidal strategy when the authorities controlled the coercive machinery of the state.[3] Instead, the pragmatists advocated a holding action on the workers

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1 Louis Bertrand, Souvenirs d'un meneur socialiste (2 vols; Brussels: L'Eglantine, 1927), vol. II, p. 253 and L'histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. II, p. 380; Achilles Misson, Le mouvement syndical: Son histoire en Belgique de 1830 à 1914 (Namur: La Rapide, 1921), p. 56; Cole, vol. II, pp. 120-27, 206-207, 406; Halévy, p. 151. For biographies of some of the principal leaders, see Louis Bertrand's César de Paepe. Son oeuvre (Brussels: Librairie de l'Agence Dechenne, 1909) and his highly laudatory biography on Edouard Anseele. Sa vie, son oeuvre (Brussels: L'Eglantine, 1925).

2 Cole, vol. II, p. 69.

3 Pierson, p. 81; Peuple, February 1, 1886; Bertrand, Souvenirs d'un meneur socialiste, vol. II, p. 297; "Rapport du Commissaire de Police", A.G.R. MSS, F.O., n° 192.

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organization front. If the Party organized the workers into strike units, it might frighten the middle class polity members into opposing universal suffrage. Consequently workers organization would have to be subordinated to the main political goal. For this reason the party leadership advocated organizing the working class into passive organizations such as mutual aid societies and cooperatives[1] which would serve as a bastion from which the Socialists would "bombard the bourgeoisie with sandwiches and potatoes". And it is also for this reason that in 1886 trade union development was at an embryonic stage; there were only 15,000 union members out of a total working class of approximately 1,000,000 people.[2] When the strikes broke out, the P.O.B. had barely managed to paper over its internal differences; and these would come again to the fore when the insurrection spread.[3]

Having some idea of who the principal defenders and challengers for power were and what interest groups they represented in the political process within which the collective violence occurred, the next problem to resolve concerns the scenario of political and eco-

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1 Ibid.; R. Vandergucht, "La pensée socialiste de César de Paepe à Emile Vandervelde", Etudes Sociales (1961), n° 40, pp. 14, 18-20; Peuple, January 20, 1886.

2 J. Vandenheuvel, "Une citadelle socialiste: le Vooruit de Gand", La Réforme Sociale (March 16, 1897), n° 33, p. 505. Marius des Essarts and Sylain Masy, L'Histoire du Parti ouvrier belge (Huy: Imprimerie coopérative, 1938), p. 52; Peuple, January 12 and 15, 1886; Delsinne, Le mouvement syndical en Belgique, pp. 41, 118; Bondas, 200.

3 Arthur Shadwell, The Socialist Movement, 1824-1924 (2 vols; London: Philip Allan and Co., 1925), vol. I, pp. 109-110; Halévy, pp. 195-96; Peuple, January 1 and March 23, 1886.

nomic causal pre-conditions for the outbreak of the strikes. These preconditions should be clearly distinguished from the precipitants of collective violence. The causal context of the strikes and violence provided the political and economic tinder that the precipitants ignited.

The year 1873 signalled a period of economic decline which lasted until 1895.[1] Heretofore between 1850 and 1873, Belgium's economy and those of its European neighbors had expanded steadily except for a brief crisis in 1857.[2] During the mid-19th century gold found in California and Australia increased the world money supply and generated a general rise in prices which in turn made investment more profitable.[3] Investments, production, profits, jobs and of course wages roared upward. For example, the coal industry, in Hainaut increased its production from 4.4 million tons in 1850 to 19.8 million tons in 1873; during the same period profits per barrel of coal rose from 7 frs to 16.3 frs; the number of jobs also rose from 34,811 to 79,556 along with a general rise in yearly wages from 477 francs to 1,406 francs.[4] Then a steady decline began as indus-

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1 Deschesne, L'Histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914, p. 464.

2 See also de Terlinden (ed.), La Belgique socialiste et communiste (Paris: Librairie de l'Humanité, 1922), p. 43; Herbert Heaton, Economic History of Europe (New York: Harper and Row, 1948), p. 384; J.A. Van Houtte, Esquisse d'une histoire économique de la Belgique (Louvain: Presses de l'Université Catholique de Louvain), p. 153.

3 Deschesne, L'Histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914. p. 462.

4 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport

trialization and the need for greater liquidity outpaced the supply of gold.[1]

Neither industrialized nor agricultural countries were spared; France, Britain, Germany, the United States,[2] as well as Greece[3] and agricultural countries like Hungary and Rumania,[4] noted with increasing concern the gradual decline in production. The Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels noted that the coal market in France was in a "particulary difficult situation" while in Germany prices were "very low", in 1886.[5] In the spring of that year, some degree of industrial violence broke out in all the major industrialized countries on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain a "bloody battle" broke out in Leicester, while in Jarrow and London itself 3,000 unemployed, who were demanding relief, clashed with police.[6] In the

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du Directeur de la première division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et minéralurgique de l'année 1886 (Frameries: Dufranc-Friart, 1886), pp. 65-66, Annexe n° 2 "Relevé des opérations des Charbonnages de 1850 à 1886" (Hereafter referred to as Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la première division des mines ... 1886).

1 Deschesne, L'Histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914, p. 465.

2 Bourrée, pp. 11-12; Rondo E. Cameron, France and the Economic Development of Europe, 1800-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 196, 485; J. Marczewski "Le produit physique de l'économie française de 1789 à 1913 (Comparaison avec la Grande-Bretagne)", Cahiers de l'Institut de Science Economique Appliqueé (July 1965), AF, 4, n° 163, p. CXVIII

3 Charles Morisseaux, La crise économique (Paris: Librairie Guillaumin, 1884), p. 9.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 9, 1887.

5 Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels (Brussels), March 25, 1886, p. 559.

6 W.H.B. Court, British Economic History, 1870-1914 (Cam-

United States, there were one million unemployed;[1] the American Fifth Annual Trade Unions Congress had voted a resolution calling for a general strike.[2] In March 4,000 miners in western Pennsylvania were on strike, in Chicago – 15,000, in New York preparations were underway for a huge demonstration,[3] while in Missouri and Kansas, J. Gould was preparing to crush a strike by the railwaymen.[4] In May, 150,000 were on strike in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore and Washington.[5] The tempo of the strike movement was reaching a crescendo in America; in 1881 there had been 471 strikes affecting 2,928 establishments, but by 1886 there had been 1,412 strikes affecting one out of every seven enterprises.[6] Finally in May, the first major violence occurred during an Anarchist meeting at the Haymarket in Chicago when a bomb was tossed into a cohort of police killing 29 of them.[7] And in France, the miners of Decazeville launched a strike which degenerated into violence and death.[8] Not even bucolic Holland escaped the tide of strikes and riots; in July a riot

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bridge, U.K.: Cambridge, University Press, 1965), pp. 17-18; Peuple (Brussels; organ of the P.O.B.), February 11, 12 and 14, 1886; Etoile Belge (Brussels; Doctrinaire Liberal organ), February 12, 14 and 15, March 11, 1886.

1 Ibid., July 19-20, 1886.

2 Peuple, January 10 and 19, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, March 24, 1886.

4 Meuse, May 3, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, May 7, 1886.

6 Ami de l'Ordre (Namur; Catholic ultramontain), October 10, 1888.

7 Gazette de Liège, May 7, 1886.

8 Meuse, May 3, 1886; Ami de l'Ordre, April, 1886.

broke out in Amsterdam during which there were several deaths.[1]

In Belgium, the economic situation had deteriorated to a low point by 1886. Since 1880 the country's exports declined rapidly; coal was down 10 per cent; steel, 50 per cent; machinery, 15 per cent; while the general trade volume had dropped from 1.7 billion francs in 1880 to 1.3 billion in 1886.[2] Premier Auguste Beernaert blamed the general decline on protectionist policies in "certain countries" which, he warned, were "causing antagonism between labor and capital".[3]

Belgium's steel and iron industry was hard hit; between 1870 and 1890 the number of workers declined by 50 per cent while 40 per cent of the establishments had been forced to close down.[4] This trend had been aggravated by a movement toward increased capitalization and mechanization in the various mills;[5] the new Bessemer con-

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1 Gazette de Liège, July 7 and August 1, 1886.

2 Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, pp. 22-23. Between 1883 and 1009, Belgium's volume of international trade dropped to its lowest point. In 1886, using an index of 100 for 1883, her world trade dropped to 87 before increasing to 107 in 1889. Cf. p. 14.

3 Letter, Auguste Beernaert to Léopold II, Archives Royales de la Dynastie (Brussels) MSS, Cabinet du Roi, c 10 (Hereafter referred to as A.R.D.) "L'évolution économique à laquelle nous assistons, le développement énorme de la production dans tous les pays du monde et la baisse des prix qui en est la conséquence, les effets de la libre concurrence dans d'autres, ont amené des difficultés imprévues et créé entre le capital et le travail un antagonisme...". See also Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, pp. 62, 262.

4 Amé Wibail, "L'évolution économique de l'industrie charbonnière belge de 1830 à 1913", Bulletin de l'Institut des Sciences Economiques (1934-35), n° 6, p. 21.

5 Dupriez, p. 72.

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vertor was being installed.[1] The decline in this industry reached its lowest point in 1886 and then levelled out until 1891 when production and employment increased again.[2] By 1886, E. Harzé, the Director of the Corps des Ingénieurs des Mines for the Liège region, referred to 1886-1887 as the year when the industry "never needed more the attention of the government".[3] Since 1882, the market of Belgium's iron and steel production had dropped by 28 per cent, while 27 of the 57 blast furnaces had had to close down.[4]

Belgian coal production had declined from 18 million tons in 1884 to 17 million tons in 1885.[5] In 1872, out of the country's 160 mines, 128 were making a profit. That year total profits rose to 35.2 million francs. In 1886 only 77 mines of 144 showed gains; while total profits were only 5 million francs.[6] "A ton of coal had never been so inexpensive", remarked the Journal de Bruxelles.[7] Hainaut, which produced almost 75 per cent of the country's coal was hard hit by the crisis. Almost half the mines were in the red.[8] Profits had dropped by 2,000,000 francs[9] or 3.6 million francs in

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1 Ibid., p. 71.

2 Ibid.

3 Meuse, November 22, 1887.

4 Ibid.; see also Appendix n° 1.

5 Gazette de Mons, August 11, 1886; see also Appendix n° 2 and 3.

6 Ibid.; Gazette de Charleroi (moderately Progressive), July 6, 1887; Journal de Bruxelles, November 18, 1887.

7 Journal de Bruxelles, Novembre 18, 1887.

8 Ibid., October 13, 1886.

9 Ibid., October 3, 1887.

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1886 as compared to 5.6 million francs in 1885. This represented a drop of 27 per cent in one year.[1] In the Liège bassin (Division n° 2), 46 per cent of the mines had closed down because they were no longer competitive.[2] The price of coal mine stocks reflected the trend; Produits du Flénu had dropped from 7,800 (1873) to 2,350 (January 1886), Courcelles-Nord 28,000 to 600, Cockerill, 1,600 to 1,115.[3] Belgium had certain problem peculiar to it, which aggravated the economic decline. Productivity had increased by 25 per cent and 23 per cent in Germany and France respectively, whereas in Belgium, it only increased by 20 per cent.[4] Neighboring industrialists tended to be more venturesome and dynamic, capturing one market after

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1 Gazette de Liège, September 30, 1887. Thirty-nine of the area's 76 mines lost money in 1886. Not since 1850 had profits been so low. Cf. Mémorial administratif de la province du Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la premiere division des mines ... 1886, pp. 20-21. Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 9, 1887, G. Arnould, ingénieur-directeur des mines de Hainaut, remarked "pour l'année 1886, une aggravation nouvelle de la situation". See also report by Louis Timmerhans, directeur divisionnaire des mines for Liège: "Loin de s'améliorer, la situation industrielle du bassin de Liège s'est encore assombrie et les tristes prévisions qu'autorisaient les résultats défavorables de 1884 ne sont que trop réalisées", in the Meuse, July 1, 1886.

2 "Rapport du Conseil d'Administration à l'assemblée générale des actionnaires, 1886 (April 5, 1886)", Archives de l'Etat à Liège (A.E.L.) MSS, Archives de la S.A. des Charbonnages de Bonne-Espérance, Batterie et Violette, n° 12. Production dropped from 126,700 tons to 102,000 tons in 1886.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 4, 1886; Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du directeur de la première division des mines ... 1886, p. 42. The glass industry too suffered the consequences of the depression. The value of the total production, i.e. bottles, panes, etc., dropped from (1883) 42.9 million francs to (1886) 32.7 million in Hainaut.

4 Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 270.

the other from Belgium.[1] But Belgium's natural resources were, in certain cases, more difficult and expensive to exploit. This was particularly true regarding coal mining.

Coal was an important element in Belgium's industrial establishment. It was the main source of energy, and its cost, to a large extent, determined the production cost of Belgian goods. Unfortunately, for Belgian industry, Belgian coal was expensive. The Belgian mines were plagued with narrow veins which were often cut by faults; this militated against mechanized exploitation and required more manual labor, carried on in dreadful conditions. Methane gas rendered the mines more expensive to operate, as well as more dangerous, since extensive ventilation systems had to be installed — if the managers were conscientious about their miners' safety.[2] Due to these conditions, the Belgian worker was less productive. According to Denis, the Belgian miner produced 175 tons per day, whereas his French counterpart produced 200 tons and his German colleague produced 280 tons.[3] Haveu's figures are comparable: Belgium, 169 tons;

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, November 8, 1888, blamed the attitudes of the Begian business community: " Il faut bien le dire, le Belge, assez casanier de sa nature, n'a pas, à l'égal d'autres peuples industriels voisins, le génie de l'exportation. L'initiative lui fait un peu défaut, et la plupart de nos industriels ne se lancent pas volontiers dans des entreprises exigeant d'importants sacrifices préalables dont les bénéfices ne sont entrevus qu'à longue échéance. C'est là le secret de quelques uns de nos insuccès".

2 E. Haveu (alias for Emile Harzé of Administration des Mines), La crise charbonnière en Belgique (Brussels: Veuve Monnom, 1886), p. 4; Gazette de Charleroi, July 11, 1886.

3 Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 270.

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France 207 tons; Germany, 273 tons; and England 311 tons per day.[1]

Even if Belgian productivity had substantially increased, however, Belgium would still have faced restricted world markets,[2] because of increasing foreign competition. Wages were the most flexible element among production costs, and as the economic darkened, wages began to descend,[3] while unemployment rose.[4] From 1883, "wages had declined very rapidly"[5] for Belgium's 100,000 coal miners. Their average yearly wage had been 1,006 francs in 1883;[6] but it was only 914 francs in 1884,[7] 809 francs in 1885,[8] and 783 francs in 1886[9] - or a drop of 20 per cent. In one year alone, 1885-1886,

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1 Haveu, p. 4.

2 Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, March 25, 1886, p. 558.

3 Peuple, January 3 and 20, 1886; Report by Chief Engineer Cambier to the Board of Directors, i.e. Baron de Woëlmont, Comte de Ribaucourt and Abel Helin, April 5, 1886, "Délibérations du Conseil d'administration, 1878-1891", Archives de l'Etat à Mons (A.E.M.) MSS, Archives de Haine St. Pierre-La Hestre (Mariemont, Fonds II), n° 661.

4 The workers in Hainaut and Liège, the two most industrialized provinces, were especially taxed by the economic crisis. Unemployment at the John Cockerill works in Seraing rose to 20 per cent, while wages plunged 14 per cent. Wages in Verviers declined by 10 to 15 per cent. Cf. Denis, La dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 68.

5 Commission du Travail, Procès Verbaux des Séances, vol. II, Section D, p. 77.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, July 11, 1886.

7 Gazette de Mons, August 11, 1886.

8 Gazette de Charleroi, July 11, 1886; according to the Gazette de Mons, August 11, 1886, it was 813 francs.

9 Gazette de Charleroi, July 6, 1887; Journal de Bruxelles, November 16, 1887; see also Appendix n° 4 and 5. The Réforme, September 9, 1886, reported the Charleroi miners worked an average of 12 hours per day for 3 francs. R. du Sart de Bouland in his Le duc d'Ursel, 1848-1903 (Tournai: Casterman, 1913), p. 205, showed that

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2,813 miners found themselves out of work.[1] Things were no better in the steel industry; the Association des Maîtres des Forges de Charleroi was hardly one to admit that its worker were badly off; nevertheless it stated that wages had dropped by 40 per cent for rolling mill workers, i.e. from 4.22 francs per day in 1875, to 2.67 frs in 1886, while blast furnace tenders lost 32 per cent.[2]

If Karl Marx was correct when he asserted that Belgium was paradise for the rich, he also should have added that the country was hell for the poor.[3] Quite a few workers demonstrated this attitude toward their homeland as emigration figures increased from 12,500 in 1879 to 17,000 in 1885.[4]

Many of the poor who fled the homeland were also peasants; for Belgium's plight was aggravated by a crisis in the agricultural sector. Belgium's free trade policy proved disadvantageous when American wheat began to flood the Belgian market (as well as those of other Western European countries).[5] Gradually, declining wheat

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the Hainaut miner's average daily wage dropped from 3.35 francs (1884) to 3.05 francs (1886). The Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la premiere division des mines ... 1886, p. 19 stated that, between 1877 and 1886, wages declined by 56 per cent.

1 Journal de Bruxelles, November 18, 1887.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 255-60.

3 Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. I, p. 87.

4 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique Contemporaine, 1830-1914, vol. II, p. 269; Etoile Belge, November 30, 1886; Charles Michel, La grande et petite culture. Exposition universelle de 1885 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), Annexe, Table n° 1.

5 William Ashworth, Economic History of England, 1870-1939

prices outran the land rent rates because most leases had been signed long before when grain prices were higher. When grain prices declined by 50 per cent between 1880 and 1882, rents only declined by 10 per cent.[1] Dairy farmers and beef producers were soon demanding protective tariffs in reprisal for the turn of events.[2]

The advances in wages, which the working class had obtained between 1850 and 1873, had been gradually wiped out; the taste for a better life remained, but the means for achieving it were gone.[3] Little did anyone know that by the end of 1887 a very gradual im-

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(London: Methuen, 1960), p. 35; Henri Pirenne, l'Histoire de Belgique (7 vols; Brussels: Maurice Lamartine, 1932), vol. VII, p. 303; Georges Goyan, Les Catholiques au pouvoir, l'Oeuvre sociale de l'Etat belge, 1884-1912 (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Pousielgue, 1912), p. 4.

1 Deschesne, l'Histoire économique et sociale de la Belgique depuis les origines jusqu'en 1914, pp. 465-66.

2 Gazette de Liège, November 8 and 29, 1886.

3 Julin, Recherches sur le salaire des ouvriers des charbonnages belges, 1810-1889, pp. 24-25, quoted a miner: "alors (1873) on vivait convenablement et que maintenant on est misérable". See also, Mémoire administratif de la province de Hainaut. Session de 1886. Conseil provincial du Hainaut. Session de 1886. Recueil des procès-verbaux des séances (Frameries: Dufranc-Friart, 1886), p. 3; Indépendance Belge, September 26, 1888; Ami de l'Ordre, July 13, 1888; Gazette de Charleroi, September 9, 1888, "la production totale des mines du Hainaut s'est élevée en 1887 à 13,470,000 tonnes, elle est supérieure de 688,520 tonnes à celle de 1886 .... Cette augmentation de la production témoigne d'une reprise industrielle. La crise s'était aggravée encore au commencement de l'année 1887. Ce n'est que dans les derniers mois qu'une amélioration sensible s'est manifestée; elle paraît persister, mais cette amélioration n'a pu influencer beaucoup les résultats de l'année, parce que les engagements antérieurs, pris par les charbonnages, n'ont pas permis de profiter assez tôt de la hausse des prix. (But the recovery was extremely gradual) .... En 1886, le prix moyen de vente de la tonne de houille qui était de fr. 8.24 semblait avoir atteint sa dernière limite, pourtant, il est descendu à fr. 8.03 en 1887, inférieur ainsi, de 21 centimes, à celui de 1886"). By 1889, the recovery had taken a greater allure, the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 30, 1889,

provement would begin. The low-point had been reached in 1886, but all the workers saw ahead was a hard winter that would be accompanied by a spring during which the remaining portion of last year's grain supply would be consumed. In the course of these months bread prices rose until the new supply was harvested in summer. As Hobsbawm had preceptively noted, there was a seasonal pattern of unrest mounting towards a minor peak in late winter and early spring as the effects of the old harvest wore off but before the new crop was harvested.[1] The Belgian strikes of 1868, 1869, 1885 and 1886 conform chronologically to Hobsbawm's theory.[2] The price of grain could have a significant effect on the worker's standard of living, because 61 per cent of the worker's wage was devoted to food (and the major portion of the worker's diet consisted of bread) according to Nicolaï.[3] Hence, any rise in food prices could have a disastrous effect

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saw a definitive trend toward recovery.

1 Citing England as an example during the period 1800-1850, Hobsbawm found that 75 per cent of the cases of violence occurred in between harvests. After 1850, matters changed in England, because of improved storage facilities, social changes, and improved transportation. However in Belgium, where there was an exceptionally low general level of earnings, despite the country's high level of urbanization and industrialization, the old pre-1850 rythm remained prevalent, cf. "Pre-1850 Causes of Depression and Collective Violence", pp. 5-7. See also his Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne, p. 129.

2 On this point, Mémorial administratif de la province du Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la première division des mines ... 1886, pp. 16-19, stated that wages declined by 50 per cent between 1877 to 1886 whereas flour only declined by approximately 45 per cent and potatoes by only 50 per cent. This means a decline in real income of 10 per cent instead of 25 per cent in nine years. Lacking adequate statistics, I have cited percentages.

3 Edm. Nicolaï, Salaires et budgets ouvriers en 1853 et 1891 (Brussels: F. Hayez, 1895), pp. 10-11. See also Table n° 6.

on the worker's standard of living.[1] The fluctuation of flour prices provides a significant clue to the workers' situation in 1886. They showed that there was a sudden sharp climb in the cost of flour from 1883 to 1886 of approximately 10 per cent, whereas wages declined approximately 15 per cent; this meant that there was an actual decline in food purchasing power of 25 per cent.[2] Julin, who did considerable research on this problem, implied that this gap could have been aggravated even further because food prices tended to rise in the spring.[3] Finally many coal mines slowed down production in spring because the demand for coal declined after winter. This often brought on lay-offs, shorter hours and lower wage rates.

While the middle class elites were celebrating the new year at a reception at the Royal Palace,[4] the Socialist Peuple declared that it was glad that "the old year [1885] went to hell". Its passing left behind few regrets. In the meantime the workers faced yet another "year of deprivation".[5] According to Louis Bertrand, the 1886 situation resembled the situation that had preceded 1789.[6] Prince Pierre Kropotkine warned the middle class that Europe was "moving more and more rapidly toward a revolution, which" would "break out

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1 Ibid.; Julin, Recherches sur les salaires des ouvriers des charbonnages belges, 1810-1869, p. 36.

2 See also Table n° 7.

3 Julin, Recherches sur les salaires des ouvriers des charbonnages belges, 1810-1869, p. 36.

4 Etoile Belge, January 1-2, 1886.

5 Peuple, January 1, 1886.

6 Ibid., January 16, 1886.

in one country and then spread to all Europe, shaking the on-going society to its very roots".[1] It seemed to some that the capitalist system was on the verge of collapse; and that trade and prices were tumbling along with it.[2] The confidence of the middle class in the on-going economic doctrine also wavered.[3]

But Parliament and Beernaert's Catholic government[4] did not seem to be preoccupied with this problem. Elections were due in June 1886, and Beernaert did not want to shake the apple cart. "No new controversial measures" was the watchword of his government.[5] The Premier wanted to confront the electorate with a balanced budget,

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1 Ibid., January 4, 1886.

2 Nicolas Bardos Fetoronyi, Diffusion du progrès et la convergence des prix: l'Allemagne - Angleterre, 1792-1913 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1966), p. 193; J. Dallemagne, Memoire sur la situation de l'industrie en Belgique et sur la question ouvrière (Brussels: Société de la Libraire, 1894), Diagram n° 3; Marcel Peeters, "L'Evolution des salaires en Belgique de 1831 à 1913", Bulletin de l'Institut de Recherches Economiques de l'Université Catholique de Louvain (August 1939) vol. 10, n° 4, p. 413.

3 "Misère en Angleterre, surtout en Angleterre, car c'est là que les économistes ont le mieux appliqué leurs principes; misère en Belgique; la faim en Espagne, en Italie. Chômage partout; et avec le chômage, la gêne ou plutôt la misère ... voilà où nous sommes avec leur régime". Cf. Peuple, January 4, 1886.

4 Fernand Passelecq, Auguste Beernaert: Sa carrière et son oeuvre politique (Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1912?), p. 15. The Liberal government was defeated during the elections of June 1884. A right-wing Catholic government under Malou, Jacobs and Woeste held power until returns in the October 1884 municipal elections forced Malou and the leading members of his cabinet to resign in favor of the moderate Catholic, Auguste Beernaert.

5 Woeste, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine, vol. I, p. 319. Woeste came to head the rival wing of Beernaert's party hence one is left with the impression that he gloated over the fact that Beernaert and not he was in power when the storm broke.

for on-going theories prescribed limited government spending during downturns in order to free as much money as possible for the private sector of the economy.[1] This was not however an electoral issue; both dominant parties tacitly agreed that there was little else the government could do about the depression. They differed, however, over a bill to raise tariffs[2] on beef which the Catholic farmers[3] were demanding. The bill was opposed by the Liberals[4], who were free-traders, and by the Brussels Federation of Mutual Aid Societies[5] allied with the Socialists, both of whom warned of increased food costs for workers and thought that under the circumstances the bill was an "act of provocation".[6] During the 1885-86 session, Parliament was, also, preoccupied with the size of the year's draft, Church subsidies,[7] Flemish linguistic rights[8] and reduction of the

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1 Etoile Belge, February 28, 1886.

2 Ibid., February 2, 1886.

3 Ibid., February 6, 1886; Woeste, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine, vol. I, p. 319.

4 Etoile Belge, January 1, 1886, quoted Frère-Orban's Doctrinaire Liberal organ, the Journal de Liège regarding the proposed beef tariffs: "Les droits d'entrée sur le bétail vont être établis à un moment où les petites cultivateurs ont peu de bétail. On sait en effet que la récolte des plantes fourragères a manqué cette année, et que faute d'avoir la nourriture nécessaire ils ont été obligés de s'en défaire ... Une partie du bétail est entrée dans les étables des grands éleveurs. Ceux-ci en achetant ont fait une excellente opération. Maintenant ..., ils désirent vendre dans les meilleures conditions. C'est à ce moment qu'ils appellent l'Etat à leur aide afin de faire hausser le prix de bétail. C'est ainsi que l'on protège l'agriculture". Cf. Ibid., January 5, 1886. The Antwerp Chamber of Commerce and the Union Syndicale of Brussels also opposed the bill. Ibid., January 9, 1886.

5 Ibid., February 16, 1886.

6 Peuple, January 1, 1886.

7 Etoile Belge, March 14, 1886.

legal costs of eviction proceedings, but the major issue was the question of Church-State relations.[1]

The Chruch-State issue elicited bitter debates over relations with the vatican, subsidies for[2] the organization of the school system,[3] which consumed two entire months of debate.[4] Finally there was a debate over whether or not non-Catholics could be buried in Parish cemeteries. The Peuple's comments on the parliamentary precedings were quite pungent: "Our honorable marmots are busy hiding holes to escape the dogs [problems]. The cemetery question has priority over all others for these representatives of the rotten moneyed electorate. They realize that the grave-digger is on the way to buy their impotent parliamentary carcasses!"[5] And a few days later, the Peuple again noted the "beotian" Parliament's preoccupation with the same issue which was "on the agenda again for the thousandth time".[6] According to Bertrand, the year 1886 would be like the preceding one which had witnessed the same outpouring of "stupidities and flunk-

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8 Woeste, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine, vol. I, pp. 315-18.

1 Ibid., vol. I, p. 319; Etoile Belge, February 3, 1886; Peuple, January 15 and February 2, 1886; Wilmotte, p. 120; De Camps, p. 93.

2 Etoile Belge, March 13, 1886.

3 Ibid., February 20, 1886; Woeste, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine, vol. I, p. 319.

4 Edouard Vander Smissen (ed.), Léopold II et Beernaert d'après leur correspondance inédite de 1884 à 1894 (2 vols; Brussels Goemaere, 1920), vol. I, pp. 76-77.

5 Peuple, March 3, 1886.

6 Ibid., March 8, 1886, cf. also February 20, 1886.

eyisms".[1] And finally there were the apocalyptic preachings of Kropotkine who proclaimed the proximity of the day of reckoning. The old Anarchist affirmed that "the workers have recognized that the rulers are incapable of understanding their problems, of managing industry and production", and that "soon the people will announce the demise of the bourgeoisie capitaliste, and at the opportune moment will take matters into their own hands".[2]

Nowhere on the European continent, had the middle class gained such a predominant position as in Belgium.[3] However, as the effects of the depression became more and more pervasive, the traditional economists groped for a way to reconcile the situation with the liberal assumption of linear progress. But without accepting the progressive concept of social engineering, the traditional liberal economists found the idea of linear progress extremely difficult to reconcile with the effects of the economic crisis. Being environmental determinists and refusing to tamper with the "natural economic equilibrium" and its mechanical operation, the traditional eco-

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1 Louis Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886 (2 vols; Brussels: Bibliothèque Populaire, 1886), vol. I, p. 8-9. Though a polemical narrative that was relatively narrowly researched (i.e. the Peuple, the Gazette de Bruxelles and the Réforme), Bertrand's work is clearly presented and factually correct. Cf. Henneaux-Depooter, p. 62 and Frans Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902 (Brussels: Office de publicité, 1936), p. 75.

2 Peuple, January 4, 1886.

3 Maurice Vaussard, l'Histoire de la démocratie chrétienne (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1956), p. 140.

nomists were faced with an irrevocable dilemna.[1]

Paralyzed by laissez-faire dogmas, all the laissez-faire economist could do was to call for patience on the part of the working class and try to show that the clouds of depression, hunger and unemployment had a silver lining.[2] Eudore Pirmez an economist, member of parliament, and poet, took this approach, and tried to whistle away the problem. He wrote that the effects of the crisis were not all bad, for in fact it was reducing class distinctions.[3] It was achieving this desirable social goal by reducing profit margins and lowering the middle class' standard of living by a nivellement par le bas.[4]

Pirmez explained that while the workers' pay fell somewhat, it could not obviously go below the subsistence level (why he did not say); hence, after a certain point the wage-profit ratio would change in favor of the worker;[5] for at this stage only profits could be cut, which was the case in 1886. Therefore, he alleged that not only did the crisis actually equalize the relative standard of

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1 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine, 1830-1914, vol. II, p. 278; Chlepner, p. 55.

2 Morisseaux, p. 16.

3 Denis, L'Histoire de la dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 76-79; Michotte, Etudes sur les theories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, pp. 187-188.

4 Eudore Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique (Charleroi: Auguste Pielte, 1884), pp. 30-31, 38.

5 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 189; Denis, L'Histoire de la dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 83.

living of the classes, but it also furthered class harmony.[1]

Pirmez glibly attempted to show that, in terms of the absolute wealth of the country, the depression was having no serious effect. He defined public wealth as everything one consumes. And Belgium was actually consuming more in 1886 than previously; in support of this, he asserted that imports (though this contradicts other sources) were up along with housing starts.[2] The only problem facing the country, therefore, was to produce enough to keep up demand for goods and services. Explaining that overproduction was the real cause of the depression,[3] Pirmez believed that overproduction was the sign of healthy economy, and once the depression got rid of the over supply of goods, then the economy would get back to normal.[4]

But Pirmez's theory had a more important aim: to reconcile the depression with the traditional liberal belief in a linear form of progress. To accomplish this, he explained that the depression

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1 Ibid., p. 87; Chlepner, p. 50.

2 "Ce qu'il importe de savoir, c'est si nos forces productives ne sont pas amoindries! C'est peu que nous ayons de quoi satisfaire à nos besoins présents; la consommation détruit chaque jour une énorme quantité de choses; la production peut-elle remplacer ce qui disparaît et maintenir le niveau? Tel est le sommet de cette partie du problème". Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique, pp. 7-8.

3 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 180; Parti Socialiste Belge, Les fastes du Parti, 1885 à 1960 (Brussels: Institut Emile Vandervelde, 1960), pp. 52-53.

4 Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique, pp. 18-19.

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served to bring about organic change.[1] Though certain private interests were of course sacrificed in the depression's wake, he argued that society as a whole eventually benefitted from the depression, and he again invoked its social equalizing effect as an example.[2] Pirmez's arguments about progress resulting from the depression oddly enough paralleled those of the left, though the latter expected the change to be not evolutionary, but revolutionary, because of the extreme poverty of the working class.[3]

Pirmez countered socialist revolutionary theories by asserting that poverty could never be eliminated from industrial nations. Poverty was a consequence of social changes resulting from economic transformation. It was a result of the transfer of wealth from one group to another, brought about by mechanization.[4] The Socialists scoffed at his apology for mechanization, asserting it increased the level of poverty, rendered the masses more brutish and stole the worker's individuality.[5]

Guy de Molinari's economic ideas went beyond those of Pirmez in exemplifying the rigidity and sterility of traditional economic doctrine. Molinari, editor of a well-known Brussels weekly, the Economiste, proudly described his laissez-faire liberalism as being

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1 Denis, L'Histoire de la dépression économique et sociale et l'histoire des prix, p. 80.

2 Ibid., pp. 82-83.

3 Peuple, January 8, 1886.

4 Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique, p. 3.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, February 15, 1886.

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"pure as crystal".[1] And indeed it was; for his conception of liberalism led logically to a strange form of idealistic Anarchism. According to Molinari, social progress advanced to the point where man reached his ultimate liberation from all legal institutions including the state. Once this point was attained, private enterprise would take over all social services.[2] Public education, the minting of money, postal services and police would all fall within the purview of business, and a form of "cheap government" would thereby be assured.[3]

"Cheap government" was constantly on Molinari's mind. He criticized the existing regime for subsidizing theaters and opposed any and all requests for increasing public appropriations. Private enterprise could assure any service more cheaply and more efficiently; and efficiency was Molinari's watchword.[4]

But efficiency could only be assured if one could maintain a situation which favored its development; in particular one had to maintain the socio-economic equilibrium upon which competition rested.[5] Molinari believed the economic crisis resulted from a dysfunctional social situation. To restore the social balance of power the labor movement had to be strengthened through establishment of

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1 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine 1830-1914, vol. II, p. 273; Chlepner, p. 57.

2 Chlepner, p. 57.

3 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

4 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

5 Ibid., p. 60.

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trade unions.[1] Above all, Molinari argued, one must not tamper with the operation of the economic system; a reform program based on government controls and inspired by ideas of social engineering was utterly futile if not nocive for the economic system.

The non-socialist maverick economists such as Victor Prins and Hector Denis argued against the ideas expounded by de Molinari and Pirmez, but they had little influence outside the academic community. The reformers' arguments ran into a wall of intellectual smugness. The complacency of the industrial and political elites was not hard to understand. These groups could look back over the preceding five decades with a measure of pride and satisfaction. They had industrialized Belgium. They had obtained a guaranty for its independence from the five major powers. And finally they had provided it with the most liberal constitution of the day — the envy of its neighbors.[2]

Still convinced of their ability to govern without the participation of the petite bourgeoisie and the working class, the political and economic elites called upon the toiling groups to accept their paternal leadership.[3] Furthermore, the industrial and political elites had some misgivings about the worker's ability to manage his own affairs or participate in the nation's politics. The worker was a shiftless irresponsible brute, and until he was properly

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1 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine, 1830-1914, vol. II, p. 273.

2 Vaussard, p. 140.

3 Pirenne, L'Histoire de Belgique, vol. VII, p. 296.

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trained for a more responsible role in society, any material improvement in his lot was useless. Raising wages would only had the improvident toiler to squander his new gains; it would not improve his standard of living. It would only debauch him.[1] Low wages combined with long hours for all workers, including women and children, would keep the working class on the "straight and narrow". They would lead a sober productive and uplifting life.[2]

The middle class also mobilized general economic arguments against state interference in business. Its spokesmen pointed out that Belgium could only survive by exporting a large part of its production.[3] Prices had to be kept competitive; production costs, including wages, had to remain low.[4] In view of the depressed nature of the foreign market, the country could ill-afford the costs of a

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1 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des Séances, vol. II, p. 626, A Boom physician echoed this attitude toward the working class: "... tout le monde sait ..., que le salaire élevé ne profite guère à l'ouvrier de fabrique et que celui-ci est le plus heureux, lorsqu'il gagne juste la somme nécessaire à son entretien; car à mesure que le salaire s'élève, il travaille moins et se livre davantage à la boisson". Some even had lower opinion of the worker. They considered him an instrument of production. One entrepreneur compared the worker to a machine: "Pour faire fonctionner une machine, il faut lui donner la force, de l'eau, du charbon, de l'huile, il faut l'entretenir. L'ouvrier, pour travailler doit être nourri, vêtu, il doit recevoir des soins médicaux ..." (p. 456).

2 Rezsohazy, Origines et formation du catholicisme social en Belgique, 1842-1900, pp. 9-10.

3 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine, 1840-1914, vol. II, p. 312.

4 Flandre Libérale, April 10, 1886.

social reform program.[1] Even the Socialist Peuple seemed to recognize the validity of this argument when it declared that wages and social security would best be regulated by international treaty thereby preventing any country from taking advantage of the additional costs of social reform that were being born by its competitors.[2] Viewing such a proposal as utopian, the elite press called on the worker to tighten his belt and wait until good times returned again.[3]

Would the workers wait. Already the previous February and March (1885) 10,000 miners had gone on strike in Hainaut.[4] Pay cuts lay offs and short days succeeded each other as tension grew.[5] While a strike broke out at the Grasfabriek in Ghent,[6] the Peuple

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1 De Terlinden (ed.), L'Histoire de la Belgique contemporaine, 1830-1914, vol. I, p. 312.

2 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des Séances, vol. II section A, pp. 6-7; "Il ne reste à ceux qui sont à la tête des nations qu'un seul moyen à employer pour remédier aux souffrances de la masse travailleuse: la réunion d'un congrès universel ayant à l'ordre du jour la réglementation internationale de la journée de travail, de façon à répartir la besogne entre tous. Dans leur intérêt même, les gouvernants devraient prendre cette décision, la seule qui leur reste, pour sauver le monde d'un cataclysme", Peuple, January 8, 1886.

3 "Il n'y a de salut pour tous que dans l'économie. — Que les affaires reprennent et les patrons ne demanderont pas mieux que d'augmenter ... [wages]. — Notez que tout le monde souffre de la crise et doit subir le sort commun et restreindre aussi ses dépenses inutiles au tabac, au cabaret", Etoile Belge, January 19-20, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, October 13, 1886.

5 Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886, vol. I, p. 133.

6 Peuple, January 7, 1886.

reported from Liège that the workers of the S.A. de Sclessin colliery were living in "mortal fear" of losing their jobs as one after the other were being layed-off. In the Borinage, the miners at the Agrappe colliery heard rumors that the mine was going to close down.[1] On March 3rd, someone had tried to assassinate a mine foreman in Mons;[2] then the next day a riot broke out in Renaix, because of the introduction of new machinery.[3] The gendarmerie had to be called in to prevent the workers from lynching the engineer who was in charge of the installations.[4] In the first half of the same month, approximately 100,000[5] copies of a pamphlet entitled le Catéchisme du peuple, written by Alfred Defuisseaux, a Republican and Socialist, appeared in Wallonia.[6] The pamphlet called on the workers to march on Brussels on June 13, 1886 to demonstrate for universal suffrage.[7] The impact that the pamphlet had as a mobilizing

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1 Peuple, January 10, 1886.

2 Ibid., March 4, 1886.

3 Etoile Belge, March 6, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, January 3, 1887; Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886, vol. I, p. 37; Peuple, March 6, 1886.

5 Peuple, March 13, 1886.

6 Alfred Defuisseaux, Le grand catéchisme du peuple (Brussels: Le Peuple, 1886).

7 By March 13th 51,000 copies had already been sold, asserted the Peuple in its edition of that date. A member of the P.O.B., Emile Vandervelde, Vers la souveraineté du travail. Le parti ouvrier belge, 1885-1925 (Brussels: L'Eglantine, 1925), p. 37, claims 260,000 copies were eventually sold. I have chose an intermediate figure for the period to March 18th.

"First lesson: Of the People and their Enslavement.
Q. What are you?
A. I am a slave.
Q. Therefore you are not a man?

agent within the economic and political context, is difficult to determine. On the one hand, the authorities later tried to prove that there was a conspiracy behind the strikes. They claimed the Catéchisme had had a major impact on working class attitudes; later

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A. From the human point of view, I am a man; from the social point of view, I am a slave.
Q. What is a slave?
A. A slave is a person who only has duties, these duties are to work and to suffer and to work for others.

Second lesson: Of the Constitution

Q. What does Article 25 of the Constitution state?
A. Article 25 of the Constitution states: 'All the powers belong to the Nation'!
Q. Is this really true?
A. It is a lie, because the Nation is composed of 5,720,807 inhabitants ... and of these six million, only 117,000 are consulted for making laws.
Q. Are all citizens taxed equally?
A. No, and I cite only one example, Leopold II, whose palace at Laeken was assessed for taxation by the Commune of Laeken. He had the assessment annuled by his minister, and therefore paid nothing.

Third lesson: Liberals and Catholics

Q. What is a Liberal?
A. He is a person who tries to get rich at the expense of the State and the Nation.
Q. What is a Catholic?
A. He is a person who tries to get rich at the expense of the State and the Nation.
Q. What is an Indépendant?
A. An Indépendant is a person who cannot call himself a Liberal or a Catholic, because the store has run out of labels, but uses his new label to get as rich at the expense of the State and the Nation.
Q. What really are these persons?
A. They are conservaties.
Q. Why were two parties invented?
A. Because they can both get rich at the expense of the country and can claim that by their competition, they are keeping an eye on each other's activities.
Q. What is the first statement a Catholic minister makes upon taking an office?
A. 'The treasury is empty, — the Liberals have taken everything'.
Q. What is the first statement a Liberal minister makes upon taking office?
A. 'The treasury is empty, — the Catholics have taken everything'(etc.)"

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on, Socialists like Vandervelde made the same claim; but during the insurrection the P.O.B. asserted that the pamphlet had had little effect and that the strikes were a spontaneous reaction to the economic misery of the workers. One point seems certain, the political and economic context certainly favored the Socialists' mobilization efforts. It also increased the chance that any further lay-offs and wage cuts could precipitate collective violence.

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CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF THE 1886 INSURRECTION

The events of the 1886 insurrection are so numerous and oftentimes so causally intermingled that a strictly descriptive narrative would entail considerable problems of accuracy. Furthermore, for the purposes of the study, a detailed panorama of the conflict is not essential for the understanding of the impact of the disorders on the attitudes of Belgium's ruling elites. The main area of interest in terms of the topic under study are only those events which had a significant impact on the imagination of the Belgian industrial and political leadership. To bring out and analyse the principal events involves determining upon some sort of conceptual scheme of analysis.

Amann[1] has pointed out in this vein that the traditional methodology for studying collective violence has been proved inadequate. First of all, it provides no conceptual framework for evaluating its impact on political change. There must be some sort of rational understanding of the dynamics of collective violence. Mere-

1 Peter Amann, "Revolution: A Redefinition", Political Science Quarterly (1962), n° 77, p. 36.

ly descriptively "reliving" the chaos "as it really was" is unlikely to provide such understanding. Amann has further added — and it seems to the writer correctly — that "though the advocates of Rankean detachment also want to draw conclusions and discover patterns, they feel that they can do this without bringing to their study any conceptual apparatus at all — merely a healthy curiosity and the canons of by which they are trained. I believe that they are deceiving themselves".[1] This dissertation has combined Rudé[2] and Soboul's[3] collective history method with Moore,[4] Wolf[5] and Tilly's[6] theories of collective violence as political competition. The collective history approach of Rudé and Soboul proceeds from the bottom up. The events must be broken down into the most significant (those above a certain magnitude or important in terms of the issues involved) and manageable units of analysis in terms of space and time. Each unit consists of a particular geographic area, population and time span; i.e. a town - day unit. Each unit will cover a time

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1 Ibid.

2 George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); see also David Pinkney, "The Crowd in the French Revolution of 1830", American History Review (1964), n° 70, pp. 1-17.

3 Albert Soboul, Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II (La Roche-sur-Yon: Potier, 1958).

4 Barrington Moore, Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasants in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

5 Erich Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

6 Tilly, "Revolution and collective violence".

span of approximately twenty four to forty-eight hours, while allowing for flexibility in view of the continuity of the collective violence within a particular place. Each town-day unit's contents of phenomena will then be broken down in terms of a theory of the dynamics violence. This requires analysing the precipitants which engendered the strikes and violence, i.e. those historically unique events which within a particular context cause the outbreak of conflict. One must also examine the methods of mobilization of the strikers, i.e. how they gathered support for their efforts, and how mobilization tactics often led to clashes with the coercive forces. Furthermore, an attempt must be made to determine the composition and the types of organizations that the strikers and the groups which actually participated in the violence had. It is also necessary to determine the gravity of the strikes in terms of the number insurgents that were involved in each day-town unit. The study will also find out how numerous were the coercive forces which were mobilized against them, and how effective their tactics were.[1] Finally, there is the problem of attempting to determine the number of casualties that were afflicted on both sides, and the number of arrests that were made, as well as the quantity of property that was damaged within each day-town unit.[2]

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1 Tilly, "Revolution and Collective Violence", pp. 49-50.

2 When studying the phenomenon of collective violence, the historian is plagued by two insolvable problems: First, he can never get entirely accurate statistics on the number of insurgents and casualties. Many escape the coercive forces and remain an anonymous atom in "the crowd". The same problem occurs with regard to casual-

The choice of units of analysis must be related to the events in terms of their significance regarding their influence on the dynamics of the collective violence and in terms of their impact on the political process and the changes that they engendered. The most significant day-town unit for the dynamics of the 1886 insurrection was the outbreak in Liège of disorders during the evening of March 18th. The most significant day-town unit as far as the impact of the disorders on the political process was the moment when the strikes reached the apogy of their gravity for the on-going polity, i.e. March 26-27 in the Charleroi area. At that moment, the Belgian insurrection nearly became a revolution for it was just possible for the insurgents to take control of a territorial unit and proclaim a counter-polity in Charleroi. Ultimately the crucial criterion for the success of the revolution is the establishment of multiple-sovereignty. By creating an opposing statal apparatus, the would-be revolutionaries in Belgian could have ral-

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ties; for many of those injured dragged themselves off to nurse their wounds or die among friends who hid them. Reporting at a local hospital would not only have been costly, but could have led to their being reported to the police. The second problem is that virtually all the historian's immediate written sources on the strikes come from court proceedings police and military reports and other agents of officialdom who were all working to repress the collective violence. The records may tend to support their views, and yet little control of their testimony can be carried out in view of the fact that the insurgent is the faceless man of history. Few workers could write, much less keep a diary, this was particularly true of communal groups. Only with the development of bureaucratized associational workers organizations by the P.O.B. in the 1890's were any archival sources developed. Cf. Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 8. Unfortunately, the Belgian Socialist party records were among the casualties of the Second World War.

lied more supporters to their cause, because of the appearance territorial legitimacy which accompanies such a situation. The question then is to determine how grave the Belgian insurrection was; and how close the situation reached the point of multiple sovereignty.

The outbreak of an insurrection is not generally a wild irrational explosion; the resort to violence in most cases is an integrally rational political act. By rational it is meant that collective violence in 1886 generally required a degree of strategy, and elementary leadership and organization even if its leadership was diffuse, only tacitly accepted and highly decentralized. The violence to be studied might also be considered a rational phenomenon in the sense that both sides (insurgent and coercive forces) adopted particular patterns of behavior; they chose symbolic targets to attack, and they were able to mobilize forces according to these purposes. This does not mean, however, that the outbreak of the insurrection was necessarily planned and organized in detail.

Incidents which precipitate an insurrection are often not intended as such; they may merely be a part of the normal testing process that goes on in any polity.[1] In 1886, groups were constanly vying for power and testing each other's strength to determine who was to hold power. The groups tested themselves as well by trying to demonstrate their power and challenge the on-going coalition by demonstrating their mobilization capacity. This very often took the

1 Johnson, Revolutionary Change, p. 154.

form of rallys, speeches and demonstration, and it is the preferred method of challenger groups which are excluded from power, e.g. the Belgian workers' movement. During the demonstrations the challengers often demanded privileges (the right to vote thus to participate in the sharing of power) and resources (higher wages, jobs, relief etc.).[1] Very often, as was the case in Liège, the groups in power attempted to prevent the challengers from mobilizing supporters. They would refuse to authorize rallies and demonstrations. (For example, the mayor of Liège, d'Andrimont, reported that he would not [or could not][2] provide a permit for mobilization activities as had been requested by the two "Anarchist" leaders, F. Billen and Rutters[3]). Such resistance by the power holders often led to challenges to their authority, and these in turn, could precipitate the outbreak of violence. Rallies and demonstrations served as the precipitants of disorders. Such events were inflammatory speeches and demonstrations. They were different from preconditions, in that they

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1 Tilly, "Revolution and Collective Violence", p. 54.

2 d'Andrimont reported to the city council of Liège: "Le dimanche 21 février, M. Rutters, se disant secrétaire d'un groupe anarchiste dont la création toute récente m'avait déjà été signalée, vint me trouver chez moi à midi, pour me demander l'autorisation de faire le soir une tombola dans une réunion qu'il avait organisée au Café des Quatre Nations.... Cette oeuvre avait pour but de favoriser une oeuvre de propagande.

Je lui répondis qu'il s'y prenait trop tard, que le Collège seul avait le droit d'accorder pareille autorisation, et qu'au surplus, le but poursuivi ne permettait pas de l'accueillir". Gazette de Liège, March 23, 1886; Bulletin administratif de la Ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège (Liège: Thiriart, 1886), Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 318).

3 Bulletin administratif de la Ville de Liège, ibid.

were unique events ephemeral in character, and they resulted from the vagaries of personality and fortuitous circumstances. Such occurences are the despair of social scientists but the meat and drink of narrative historians.[1]

To study the disorders, some knowledge is necessary about the groups that were involved as precipitants of the outbreak of the insurrection. The organization, composition and goals of these groups must also be analyzed. Generally, most provincial workers' groups would fit into the pre-syndicalist end of Hobsbawm's evolutionary continuum of nineteenth century workers organizations.[2] As Delsinne has pointed out, with the repression of the International and the onslaught of the economic crisis, the Belgian workers' movement had virtually collapsed in the 1880's.[3] In Brussels, the P.O.B. was just beginning to establish itself, but in the provinces, and in particular in Liège, there were numerous small groups that lacked members, money and organization. These sub-collectivities of activists had ephemeral loose organizations that consisted of a hand full of members. These various groups were constantly changing in a kaleidoscopic genesis of political travail.[4] Some activists were members of

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1 Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars", p. 140.

2 Hobsbawm, Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne, p. 16.

3 Delsinne, Le mouvement syndical en Belgique, pp. 13-14.

4 Archives Générales du Royaume (A.G.R.) MSS, Papiers de Frère-Orban, "Rapport du Commissaire de police en chef (J. Lignon) de la Ville de Liège sur le mouvement socialiste et anarchiste, 1878-1888", n° 192.

the Union démocratique (affiliated with the Socialist P.O.B.), such as Messrs Demblon, Blanvalet and Warnotte; others like Edouard Wagener, were Anarchists and they were opposed to the Socialist program. The former called the latter "organizational royalists".[1] These semi-elites[2] kept the leftist fires burning during the long night between the decline of the International and the rise of the P.O.B. Which of these groups were involved in the events is difficult to determine because they shared each others facilities and attended each others meetings.[3] Thus Warnotte of the Socialist Ligue ouvrière attended the Anarchists' conference at the Café National in Liège on the night of the 18th[4] when the riots occurred. But the real sponsors of the meeting were the Groupe anarchiste headed by Jean Rutters[5], a cabinet maker, and F. Billens.[6] Their group of

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1 Des Essarts, p. 54; Meuse, March 20-21, 1886. Wagener was 37 years old and had been born in Harmoncourt, Luxembourg.

2 Amitai Etzioni, The Active Society (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 406, pointed out that mobilization is actually a process where several elites compete for support among the citizenry: "There is not one elite and a mass of followers but rather several elites, semi-elites, and various sub-collectivities activated to varying degrees, ... as well as various groups of more passive sympathizers, onlookers, and occasional contributors".

3 A.G.R., MSS, Papiers de Frère-Orban, n° 192.

4 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L., MSS, Archives de la Police de la ville de Liège", 1886, Manifestations, liège et environs, Evénements de mars, n° XLIII, A.

5 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L., MSS, Archives de la Police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

6 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L., MSS, Archives de la Police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

twelve members[1] planned to hold a rally to "permit the unemployed workers to make their complaints known and thereby attract the attention of the ruling classes and the egotistical bourgeoisie" to the plight of the working class.[2] There would be an outdoor rally in Liège at the Place Lambert, a march to the Place Delcour and finally a meeting in the Café national where the Anarchist sponsors would share the podium with the Socialists.[3] The occasion for the testing was to be a demonstration in honor of the 15th anniversary of the ill-fated Paris Commune.[4]

Mobilizing support for a round of testing to challenge the dominant groups of the polity required a means of communication. Larger groups could develop their own newspapers and maintain a regular flow of propaganda. They could thus not only attract new adherents but they could also maintain a constant regular flow of information and thereby assure a constant regeneration of the commitment of their followers. Smaller organizations, such as the Groupe anarchiste, did not have the financial means to keep up a steady flow of propaganda and thus generate a high level commitment which

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1 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 318); Gazette de Liège, March 23, 1886.

2 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L., MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

3 Meuse, March 19, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886

4 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886; Meuse, March 19, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886; Bertrand, Souvenirs d'un meneur socialiste, vol. II, p. 283; Gazette de Liège, March 23, 1886.

was constantly being maintained by steady broadcasting of propaganda. For carrying out a large scale mobilization and generating a high degree of activism, the Groupe anarchiste had to rely on printed handbills and periodic public meetings. March 18th provided just such an occasion to express grievances.[1] Five thousand copies of a hand bill were distributed in Liège and the surrounding area.[2] This circular provided four essential functions for mobilizing support for challenging the authorities. First, it of course constituted an all important mean of communication.[3] Second, the content of the handbill generated a sense of social and culturalhomogeneity by pointing out grievances that were held in commun.[4] "Will we remain guilty of apathy? Will we have our women and children hungry, while the stores are filled with goods that we haveproduced? Will we eternally allow the bourgeois class to enjoy all rights and privileges and refuse justice and freedom to the producing classes?"[5] Third, the circular proclaimed the idea of the grandeur, of belonging to an on-going historical world-wide movement, of up-lifting heroism in

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1 Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 253; see also Rudé, pp. 62-63, 215-16, for comparable aspects in the methods of mobilizing crowds during the French Revolution.

2 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886. One of Mignon's reports to d'Andrimont.

3 Smelser, p. 240.

4 Ibid.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 19 and 29, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886; Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

the struggle for a noble cause.[1] "Everywhere the workers are on the move; ... everywhere the idea of emancipation is spreading among the exploited masses. In London, in Amsterdam, in New York, everywhere, the workers are making the selfish bourgeoisie sit up and listen .... Remember ... the heroic population of Paris rose up [in 1871] for the liberation of all peoples and remember also that this effort to renovate society was drowned in the blood of 35,000 workers".[2] Finally, the handbill provided for a place of contact which would facilitate communication and coordination of mass action.[3] The handbill invited everyone to the Place Lambert at seven o'clock on the evening of March 18th.[4]

Oddly enough, Rutters, one of the signers of the handbill, did not believe that it would mobilize many people for the demonstration and the meeting at the Café National. At least this is what he claimed during his interrogation by the police. He explained that "'many Socialists did not approve of our demonstration whose purpose they claimed, was not defined clearly enough'".[5] Rutters and his fellow Anarchists even planned to call off the whole project;"'if there

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1 Smelser, p. 240; Etzioni, pp. 388-89.

2 Gazette de Liège, March 19 and 29, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886; Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

3 Smelser, p. 240.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 19 and 29, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886; Bertrand, La Belgique en 1886, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

5 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

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were not enough demonstrators, we planned to call off the demonstration and individually stroll over to the conference at the Place Delcour (Café National)'".[1] But instead of finding 200 to 250 persons when Rutters and the other leaders of the Groupe anarchiste arrived at the Place Lambert at 6:30 p.m., they were surprised to find the square "'gradually filling up with workers and spectators'".[2] A strike had recently broken out at the near-by Tilleur rolling-mill and the strikers along with other workers from Seraing, Ougrée and Saint-Nicolas had decided to go to the demonstration.[3] The Groupe anarchiste had not expected them, but seeing such a large crowd, the Anarchists decided to go through with their demonstration.[4]

The organizers of the demonstration planned to lead a march from the assembly point at the Place Lambert across the Meuse, through the business section and then to the Place Delcour and the Café National.[5] The sequence of events which began with the march, unfolded according to the classic pattern. The collective violence occurred in two stages. During the first stage, while the demonstrators were passing through the business district on the way to the

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1 Ibid.

2 Patriote (Left wing Catholic, Brussels), March 20, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

3 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

4 Ibid.

5 For a detailed narrative which id almost entirely devoted to the events in the Liège area, see René Van Santbergen, Une bourrasque sociale, Liège 1886 (Liège: Commission communale de l'histoire de l'ancien pays de Liège, 1969).

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Place Delcour, the demonstrators had the initiative and most of the violence was directed against property. The second stage of the violence occurred when coercive forces tried to break up the demonstration and violence became directed against persons instead of property. The first stage of the violence was largely precipitated by the speech and actions of Edouard Wagener[1] one the members of the Groupe anarchiste, who led one part of the crowd to the Place Delcour. Exhilerated by the large turnout and the enthusiasm of the crowd which had bodily lifted Wagener up above the mass of people, Wagener launched into a tirade that was inspired by the circumstances. As the crowd moved past the stores in the business district and returned to the Place Lambert again, Wagener shouted "'all these goods displayed in the store windows were made by your hands and you can't get any of them! Your wives, your children are dying of hunger, and you leave all these riches there! You are a bunch of cowards!'"[2] Pro-

1 Edouard, chairmaker, barkeeper and revolutionary agitator was a perenial militant. His ideology and political stratety were embodied in the phrase he echoed at meetings — "Vive la bombe"; for he had little use for the evolutionary strategy of the P.O.B. and preferred "direct action" as exemplified by the 1871 Commune. Clinging to this "golden moment", he, like many veterans of the defunct International, saw in the short-lived Paris Commune the realization on earth of the anarchist utopia attained through revolutionary action. Cf. A.G.R., MSS, Papiers de Frère-Orban, n° 192.

2 This is the version of the two Liberal newspapers, Meuse, March 19, 1886 and Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886. There were two other versions, one of which was by the police, cf. Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A, and A.G.R. MSS, Papiers de Frère-Orban, n° 192: "Citoyens ouvriers, vous venez de passer par les rues les plus riches de la ville. Qu'avez-vous vu? du pain, de la viande, des richesses et des vêtements. Eh bien! qui a procuré

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voked in this manner, the people in the crowd shouted their approval and began to march back toward the business section, shouting "'à bas la calotte! à bas les bourgeois! à bas les capitalistes!'"[1] and then they launched into the refrains of the Marseillaise anarchiste[2] as they wheeled toward the Place Delcour. The crowd hardly seemed ideologized in any particular doctrine; besides denouncing two right-wing Catholic ministers, Vandenpeereboom and Malou, the people shouted clichés symbolizing anti-clericalism ('à bas la calotte'), anarchism and/or socialism ('à bas les capitalistes') and anti-royalism (la Marseillaise). But if the people in the crowd ex-

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cela. Est-ce vous? (Dans l'assistance on répond oui, oui, c'est l'ouvrier). Vous tous crèves de faim, vous n'avez pas à manger, vous n'avez rien sur le corps. Non, non. Eh bien, vous êtes tous des lâches." The Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886, had the longest version; "Citoyens! vous venez de parcourir les rues les plus riches de la ville. Eh bien, qu'avez-vous vu aux étalages? Y manque-t-on de pain? (Cris: Non! Non!) Y manque-t-on de vêtements confectionnés? (Non! Non!) Y manque-t-on de viandes? (Non! Non! Non!) De tout ce qu'il faut pour vivre? (Non! Non! Non!) Qui a procuré tout cela aux bourgeois? C'est vous autres. Et vous autres les ouvriers, avez-vous des habits? (Non! Non! Non!) Avez-vous soupé? (Non! Non!) Vous n'avez donc rien de toutes ces richesses! et elles sont là ... C'est que vous êtes tous des lâches!" In comparing the three versions of the speech, all the versions have three points in common, the workers starved while the bourgeoisie got rich, yet the workers had a right to these fruits of their labor and were fools not to help themselves.

1 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886; Patriote, March 20, 1886.

2 "Allons gueux, redressons l'échine,
Et réveillons notre fierté!
L'orient là-bas s'illumine,
Du soleil de la liberté (bis).
Que nos clameurs partout s'entendent:
Sus aux tyrans! Sus aux voleurs!
Les palais faits de nos sueurs
Et de notre sang, qu'ils les rendent
Fuyez! Fuyez tyrans! Place à la liberté!
Marchons, Marchons par l'Anarchie à la Fraternité!" Cf.

pressed little ideological homogeneity, they, nevertheless, reflected a certain degree of politization; for their rallying cries showed that they were translating immediate grievances, such as unemployment, bad working conditions and lack of food, into more general political slogans like the establishment of anarchist or socialist distribution of wealth and an end to royalist and middle class elitism. Grievances were already being transformed into mobiles for political action - however symbolic and vague they were.[1] This was no insane irrational mob.

Either by accident or by intention, Wagener was reported to have smashed a store window with his flag pole.[2] This was the second precipitating act which elicited immitation by the crowd. In effect, Wagener's first speech directed the crowds attention and indignation against the stores as symbols of 'bourgeois exploitation' and then

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Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique, depuis 1830, vol. II, p. 396.

1 Cf. Smelser, pp. 242,245; Rudé, pp. 196-200.

2 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A; Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886. Speaking for his fellow Anarchistes, Jean Rutters affirmed to the police that: "Nous n'avions pas l'intention de briser, de piller ou de commettre des dévastations, car l'anarchie ne veut pas dire destruction, mais nous y avons été poussés par des gens venus de l'extérieur. Remarquez que si là eût été notre but ce n'est pas aux petits magasins que nous nous serions attaqués, car ils ont déjà beaucoup de peine à faire face à leurs affaires et à payer les lourdes charges qui pèsent sur eux, mais à d'autres!" Rutters implied the real trouble makers were a "large band of workers from Seraing, Jemeppe and Tilleur who had joined the demonstration". Cf. also: Mignon's report to d'Andrimont of April 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A; Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

he virtually showed the crowd how to act against them. The significance of these precipitating actions is reflected in the targets of the crowds violence. It was directed against stores along the route of the march and it was followed by some looting. The only personal violence to occur, happened when a few solitary policemen tried to intervene and were driven off. The second stage of the collective violence was no longer directed against property, by 8:00 p.m. fighting had broken out at the Place Delcour as many members of the crowd left the Café National after the speeches were over.[1] When the demonstrators had arrived at the Place Delcour, many of the participants were in a euphoric state and they were probably impressed with the fact that the police had not been able to impede their activities. Being so numerous, much of the crowd was not able to squeeze into the Café National (300 managed to get into the hall)[2] for the speeches. The rest remained outside and milled about in the square.[3] The whole affair had come to a cross road: either the situation would degenerate into bloody rioting or the demonstrators would calm down. Warnotte, a "Socialist"[4] tried to restrain the audience. He warned the workers that demonstrations were not the solution.[5] Nor

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1 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 322).

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

3 Ibid.; Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

4 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A; A.G.R., MSS, Papiers Frère-Orban, n° 192; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

5 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andri-

were revolutions necessary to bring about changes. Instead of demonstrating, the workers should "organize into small groups which would study social problems and reforms".[1] But before he could finish, the crowds' chanting drowned him out. Cardinael, another "Socialist"[2] tried to make himself heard above the noise, but to no avail. Finally, Wagener leaped up and ended any further efforts to calm things: "'Hungry bellies don't have ears. You are pigs, he shouted at the audience, if you don't give your children food .... Those who have children that are starving and who don't feed them no matter what they have to do to get food are — God damn it — a bunch of bums. Let those with full bellies [Cardinael, Warnotte and other Socialists] argue and debate, what we have done is the right thing. And I'm ready to start doing the same again!'"[3] "'The propriétaires — God damn it — we'll deal with them with dynamite. An animal jumps at anything which threatens its young, but you, you c ... you can't even provide for your kids. Long live the Commune! We must keep on with what we've been doing — God damn it!'"[4] The meeting broke up as the crowd poured out of the Café National and on to the Place Delcour.[5] The people were primed for more destruction, but what turned

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mont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

1 Gazette de Mons, March 21, 1886.

2 Report, J. Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police to d'Andrimont, Bourgmestre de la ville de Liège, April 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

3 Ibid.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

the second stage of the rioting into bloody fighting, was the intervention of coercive forces, in particular the tactical misuse of coercive power.

Effective coercive action required precise information on the situation among the populace. According to Smelser in his Theory of Collective Behavior and Allport and Postman in The Psychology of Rumor, the interplay between generalized beliefs and precipitating factors, in the form of rumors of unrest, of misdeeds ascribed by each group to its opponents and of impending collective actions describing specific dangers, generally circulate during the period immediately preceding precipitating actions. Very often these rumors provide rough barometric measurements of unrest to which effect the authorities must be attuned.[1] The authorities must have adequate information during the initial stages of the unrest and they must exercise good judgment when they evaluate the significance of this information.[2]

The authorities did not seem to have anticipated the outbreak of collective violence. In his very readable narrative of the events in the Liège area, René Van Santbergen cited Bertrand's assertion that before the demonstration the workers districts in Liège were in a high state of agitation, that there was an air of expectancy among the working populace, that the Catéchisme du peuple was being hawked

1 Smelser, p. 247; see also G.W. Allport and L. Postman, The Psychology of Rumour (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), pp. 193-96

2 Smelser, p. 247.

throughout the area, that rumors had been circulating according to which "Louise Michel, heroine of the Commune had arrived from Paris" and finally that there was large number of workers from Liège and the surrounding industrial towns loitering about the city.[1] The latter assertion was made by the Catholic Gazette de Liège[2] which opposed d'Andrimont and his Liberal municipal administration of Liège. Yet this information was confirmed in the Progressive Gazette de Charleroi and the Liberal Meuse,[3] both of which had every interest in defending d'Andrimont. According to these newspapers "the miners of several of the nearby collieries had asked to be pulled up at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon in order to come to Liège."[4]

Bourgmestre Julien d'Andrimont and his Commissaire en chef de police, J. Mignon knew of the planned demonstration as early as March 14th. They also knew that trouble might be brewing in the outlying industrial areas, because d'Andrimont telegraphed E. Bougnet, bourgmestre of Jemeppes, asking whether it was true that the workers who had just gone on strike at that town's rolling mills, planned to come to Liège for the demonstration.[5] Bougnet telegraphed back, "not

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1 René Van Santbergen, p. 35; Bertrand, L'Histoire de la démocratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830, vol. II, p. 383.

2 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

3 Meuse, March 19, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

5 Telegram, d'Andrimont to Bougnet, March 15, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, 1886, n° XLIII, A.

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true ... my answer is categorical and you can depend on it"![1] On the day before the demonstration, Rigo, Chef du bureau de police, telegraphed d'Andrimont in Brussels[2] that "there is nothing to worry about regarding tomorrow's demonstration".[3] On the afternoon before the demonstration, d'Andrimont, nevertheless, asked that police agents be posted at the stations to see what type of persons were coming into Liège.[4] Mignon immediately reported that the working population seemed "calm" and that it was "quite improbable" that they would attend the demonstration". He doubted that more than "250 to 300" would participate.[5] By 5:30 p.m. the seven district police commissioners of Liège all reported that the "situation was good".[6] Major de Holain, commander of the gendarmerie, was sure everything would come off "peaceably" and advized the city police not to "appear too prominent". "The gendarmerie would remain in their barracks"![7]

Apparently convinced that no violence would occur, d'Andrimont went off to attend a dinner at Governor of Liège, Pety de Thozée's

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1 Telegram, Bougnet to d'Andrimont, March 15, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, 1886, XLIII, A.

2 d'Andrimont also held a seat as Liberal Senator from Liège.

3 Gazette de Liège, March 23, 1886; Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 320).

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid. (p. 321).

6 Ibid. (p. 322).

7 Ibid. (p. 322-23).

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residence in honor of Franz Liszt.[1] d'Andrimont got the first hint of trouble from Pety de Thozée who warned him that the miners from the Concorde colliery in Bougnet's Jemeppe had quite work at "one o'clock in the afternoon" to come to Liège![2] By that time it was too late to prevent the violence,[3] the only thing to be done was to try to stop the spreading riots.[4]

After the destruction and looting along the route of march, but before fighting broke out at the Place Delcour, d'Andrimont issued a decree, between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m., forbidding all demon-

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

2 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 323). According to the Meuse, March 20-21, 1886, d'Andrimont left the gala as early as 6:30 p.m. This confirms the charges by the Gazette de Liège regarding the expectant atmospher which d'Andrimont failed to preceive.

3 The Gazette de Liège, March 20-21, 1886, accused Mignon of gross negligence: "Non seulement le chef de la police locale n'avait pas pris de mesures suffisantes à l'effet de réprimer les atteintes à l'ordre et à la propriété dans les villes, mais il avait fermé les yeux semble-t-il sur des dangers qui avaient sauté aux yeux de chacun; ainsi un tas de pierres ... avait été laissé en plein centre de Liège .... Les vandales qui ont passé par là, comme l'état des vitrines de la 'Taverne Munich' et d'autres tavernes voisines en témoigne, ont largement profité de cette incurie."

4 The Catholic press had a field day condemning the authorities for their alleged incompetence. Cf. ibid., March 19, 1886, "Il était trop tard alors pour prévenir les désordres ..."; or in the edition of March 23, 1886, "M. d'Andrimont s'est réfugié derrière les rapports de sa police pour se justifier .... En tout, M. d'Andrimont avait pu voir dès l'après-midi, les groupes d'étrangers arriver en ville, et c'est de son plein gré qu'il a laissé passer les drapeaux rouges dans divers quartiers de la ville." The Patriote (Catholic, Brussels), March 20, 1886, intoned that the Bourgmestre and the police had demonstrated their incompetence. "A qui la faute de ces excès? A l'incurie du bourgmestre d'abord, qui n'a rien su prévoir et qui banquetait lorsqu'il aurait dû veiller ... (and) la police brillait par son absence, non seulement à l'heure de la manifestation, mais même lorsqu'elle sévissait déjà avec certaine violence."

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strations or assemblies of more than five persons.[1] Well and good, but d'Andrimont needed adequate police forces to enforce the decision. He called out the gendarmerie and some militia (Garde civique) for apparently the police forces were quite inadequate for any serious crowd control measures.[2]

Accompanied by the General commending the militia, the Comte de Looz, and alderman Hanssens, d'Andrimont left the dinner and rushed to the Place Delcour to meet the coercive forces which were converging on the scene.[3] The authorities had already committed one tactical error by not stationing adequate police forces along the route of march in order to cow or dissuade the workers from breaking into the stores along the way. Now the authorities committed a second more costly error, they failed to mobilize adequate coercive forces early enough. The gendarmerie commanded by Lieutenant J.P.A. Hédo could only muster 18 troopers and 12 men on foot at the Place Delcour.[4] The Comte de Looz's militia consisted of two companies of

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1 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 317); Decree, d'Andrimont to L. Pety de Thozée, Governor of the Province, March 18, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, "1886, Manifestations", n° XIV, A.

2 Smelser, pp. 232-33.

3 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 323).

4 Report n° 214, J.P.A. Hédo, Commandant de la compagnie ad-interim (Liège) to H.J.F. Grégoire, Procureur du Roi, Arrondissement judiciaire de Liège, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, A; Report, Major-General J.M.J. Vedrine to Lieutenant-General Baron A.L.A.G. Vander Smissen, Commandant la 2ème circonscription militaire, May 13, 1886, Archives du Musée de l'Armée (A.M.A.) MSS, Fonds Dossier des Grèves de 1886, n° BL/6.

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light horse under Major Masille and a unit of horse drawn artillery (minus the artillery!).[1]

The nature of the collective violence changed when the coercive forces appeared on the scene. During this the second stage of the disorders, fighting broke out. The coercive forces charged and trampled the crowd at the Place Delcour; the crowd fought back with stones, clubs and bottles, a few shots were fired by demonstrators, the troups replied with a blank warning volley.[2] Preoccupied with the crowd on the Place Delcour, the coercive forces made a third tactical error; they failed to head-off other demonstrators who escaped the forces converging on the square. These bands of rioters swept around the troops and headed back to the other side of town toward the Place St-Lambert [3] where they committed more depredations and even stoned the town hall.[4] By nine o'clock, the coercive forces found themselves sitting on the Place Delcour while other demonstrators were already on the other - undefended - side of the city committing havoc there.[5]

After the fighting at the Place Delcour, the troops spent the rest of the evening dodging flaming canisters of kerosene and running up and down the streets of the city trying to catch looters.[6]

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886.

2 Report, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

3 Meuse, March 19, 1886.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil

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By ten o'clock, d'Andrimont realized his forces were spread too thinly. The Bourgmestre ordered de Looz to call out two more légions (probably battalion-size units) of the militia and to place the rest of the troops on alert.[1] In the meantime, the regular army garrison in Liège was placed on standby alert.[2] Ultimately none of these units were needed; by 11:00 p.m. the rioting had petered-out on its own.

The size of the crowds, that the coercive forces had had so much trouble to control, varied considerably. At the start of the demonstration at the Place Lambert, instead of the 200-250 that the police and Anarchists themselves had expected, there were approximately "800-900" persons.[3] When the crowd began moving it divided into two groups, because half the marchers had to wait for a street car that passes across the line of march. One of these groups included Wagener.[4] As the crowds moved through town toward

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Communal de Liège, Meeting of March 22, 1886 (p. 323).

1 Meuse, March 19, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886. The Garde civique had 34,985 men under arms of which 2,200 were garrisoned in Liège, of these 1,600 eventually reported for duty on the 18th, cf. Patriote, January 18, 1887 and Meuse, March 23, 1886; Van Santbergen, p. 47.

2 Rapport sur la répression des troubles dans les provinces de Liège et de Hainaut, en mars et en avril 1886, Vander Smissen to General Pontus, Minister of War, May 25, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Report, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A. The other estimates ranged from "several thousand", Meuse, March 19, 1886 and Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886, to "600 to 700", Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886 (The Meuse, however, might have been referring to the crowd at the Place Delcour two hours later, see below).

4 Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal de Liège, March 22, 1886 (p. 323).

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the Place Delcour, others joined, swelling the number of demonstrators to two or three thousand persons.[1] Only "300-400"[2] persons were able to enter the Café National salle Leclercq for the speeches, but in the meantime by 8:00 p.m. "all the streets [leading into the Place Delcour] were full of people" and "the crowd was so big [on the square itself] that it was impossible to move through".[3] In the square there were approximately 3,000 to 4,000[4] persons whose numbers overflowed into the streets leading to the Place, and this explains why the coercive forces had such a difficult time breaking up the throng. When they finally captured the Place Delcour from the demonstrators, many of these formed "bands of fifty" persons and slipped past police to cause trouble in other undefended parts of town.[5]

The demonstrators ability to outmaneuver the authorities was not due to the coordination of a conspiratorial Anarchist general staff which shuffled battalions of demonstrators about; nor was it due to sheer luck. As in most cases of mob violence, there was a minimum of organization and strategy. Johnson and Smelser have pointed out in this vein that "it is usually the essence of mob formation that

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1 Meuse, March 19, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

2 Report, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886. In 1886, the city of Liège had a population of 133,044.

5 Report, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

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the potential members have to know not only where and when to meet, but just when to act so that they can act in concert". Like other mobs, the crowd in Liège had a diffuse leadership, i.e. ad hoc leaders that chose symbolic targets of popular indignation and the mob moved in union against these targets. This ad hoc leadership and organization was imposed by precipitating incidents.[1] For example, when Wagener noted that the stores were full of goods and broke one of the windows the people turned on the stores.[2] When the troops charged they became symbols of the oppression against which the crowd had demonstrated. The troops became symbols of authority and the demonstrators fought them.[3] Later the people attacked the town hall as the seat of the authority over the troops.[4]

Mignon, Commissaire en chef de police, referred to the rioters as "gangs of madmen",[5] which they were not. Later, the middle class of Liège seemed to wish to disassociate the city of Liège from the crowd involved in the collective violence. The police and the press

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1 Johnson, p. 155, refers to Thomas Schelling, The Strategy Conflict (New York: Oxford Galaxy Books, 1963).

2 Gazette de Liège, March 20-21, 1886. Wagener's speech directed the workers attention to their lack of food and decent clothing as opposed to the extravagant wealth of the "bourgeoisie". Consequently the workers pillaged food stores and clothing stores, and then attacked symbols of bourgeois extravagance such as jewelry stores, flowershops and upper-class cafés!

3 Meuse, March 25, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 20-21, 1886.

5 Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.

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thought the participants came "from surrounding towns".[1] The Meuse asserted that the great mass of Liège workers along the route of the demonstration were "indifferent" to the crowds of protestors, but in the same paragraph it noted that the crowd grew to 2-3,000 as it moved toward the Place Delcour.[2] At the same time the press claimed "three fourths" of "the crowds were composed of ... youths".[3] It is virtually impossible to determine the exact composition of the crowd. Even in analyzing the lists of those who were brought to trial can be misleading, because many rioters escaped arrest, and furthermore there is no proof that everyone in a crowd had the same belligerent predispositions. Therefore, the historian can only present limited information which, at best, serves as a hypothesis. In this case, the writer only found one batch of 12 (approximately 20 per cent of total arrests) prisoners where the press[4] gave some information regarding the age, sex, profession, domicile, and offense committed by each prisoner in the batch. The group in question was sentenced a week after the riot by the tribunal correctional. Their ages ranged from 17 to 42 years of age, the average being 27 years of age. Everyone of them came from Liège. The group included, a stone mason, a tool maker, a violin maker, three miners, an "employee", a salesman, two "workers", a journeyman, and a rail-

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1 Ibid.; Meuse, March 19, 1886.

2 Ibid.; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

3 Ibid.; Gazette de Mons, March 21, 1886; Meuse, March 19, 1886.

4 I found nothing amongst the Liège police archives on this aspect of the events.

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road postman.[1] From this limited sample, it is possible to at least question the thesis that three-fourths of the crowd were youths and that the riots were caused by outside trouble makers from the surrounding industrial towns.

Estimates of damage ranged from 50,000[2] to 80,000[3] frs; virtually all of this was attribuable to the insurgents. The official police reports record that only seventeen[4] persons were injured and of these only three[5] were citizens of Liège. These figures should

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1 Ibid., March 25, 1886; Amongst another batch of 16 which were brought before the tribunal on the same day, only three were "youths". Adding the two batches together, we thus have some information on approximately half of the persons that were arrested and tried; and of these, only 21 per cent were teenagers.

2 Gazette de Mons, March 21, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 21, 1886. Many persons used the riots as an opportunity to make fraudulent claims on the municipal administration. The police spent a great deal of time verifying these claims. For example, a Mr. Alphonse De Gendt tried to claim money from the city for windows that were allegedly broken during the riots. The police later found out some children had done the deed, and that it had occurred three days after the riots. Cf. Letters, De Gendt to d'Andrimont, March 23, 1886; d'Andrimont to Mignon, March 26, 1886; Mignon to J.N. Cherbois, chef de la police de la 6ème division, March 28, 1886; Cherbois to Mignon, April 22, 1886; Mignon to d'Andrimont, April 24, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A. See also, Bulletin administratif de la ville de Liège. 1886. Conseil Communal, Meeting of September 29, 1886 (pp. 1165-66).

4 Letter, d'Andrimont to Pety de Thozée, March 28, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, A.

5 Letter, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 27, 1866, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A; Report, "Evénements sociaux des (sic) 18 mars 1886 et jours suivants" (insigned), March 28, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A. "Fonctionnaires de la Police, 9, Blessures et contusions légères; Gendarmes ... 2, Contusion peu grave et fracture d'une jambe; Civils ... 3 (1) Blessures et Contusions

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not be taken as final, neither concerning total casualties, nor regarding the ratio of casualties between coercive and insurgent forces. First of all, most of the injured were able to escape on their own or with the help of other members of the crowd; they naturally preferred getting medical attention among friends instead of in a hospital where the police might be alerted and called in. Second, even the police casualties are misleading; Lt. Hédo who commanded the gendarmerie during the fighting claimed "all my men were injured"; e.i. thirty gendarmes, not two.[1] This is confirmed in Major-General of Gendarmerie Vedrine's report to Lt. General Vander Smissen.[2]

The total number of arrests ranged from as many as sixty[3] persons to as low as forty-two.[4] Most of those arrested were charged with destruction of property, breaking and entering, resisting

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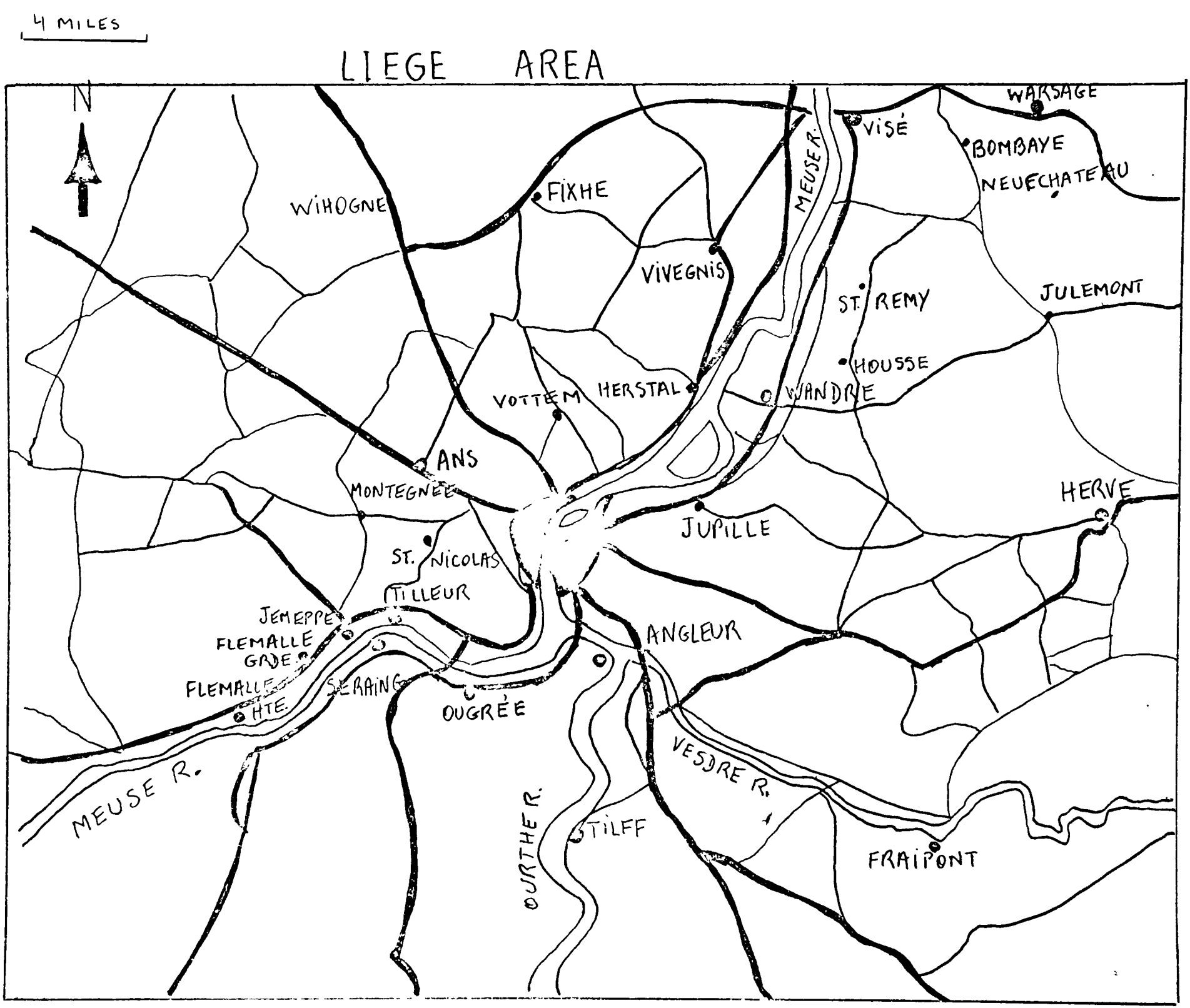
sans gravité. (2) Blessés assez grièvement; Garde Civique, 3, Contusions légères".

1 Report n° 214, Lt. Hédo to H.J.F. Grégoire, Procureur du Roi, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, A. The officers usually prepared several signed copies of each report and sent them to all authorities including the Governor of the Province.

2 Major-General Vedrine to Lt. General Vander Smissen, May 13, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Gazette de Mons, March 21, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886; reported 34 arrests during the night and 18 more the next morning. The Meuse, March 19, 1886, reported 31 arrests up to 11:00 p.m.; the Gazette de Liège, March 19, 1886, gave a total of 43; and the police reported that there were 49 arrests, Report, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A.


4 MILES
LIEGE AREA
N
WIHOGNE
FIXHE
VIVEGNIS
MEUSE R.
VISÉ
WARSAGE
BOMBAYE
NEUFCHATEAU
ST. REMY
JULEMONT
HOUSSE
WANDRE
VOTTEM
HERSTAL
ANS
MONTEGNÉE
JUPILLE
HERVE
ST. NICOLAS
TILLEUR
JEMEPPE
FLEMALLE GDE.
FLEMALLE HTE.
SERAING
OUGRÉE
ANGLEUR
VESDRE R.
OURTHER R.
TILFF
FRAIPONT
MEUSE R.

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arrest and, above all, for insulting the police.[1] Wagener and some of the other leaders were tried again later at the Assizes on more serious charges, but this will be examined below during the discussion of the political repression which was carried out after the insurrection was crushed.

The situation was calm in Liège the next day, the 19th, but trouble began brewing in the surrounding belt of industrial towns. Lay-offs, short pay, higher production quotas, lower wages and the events in Liège of Thursday night all combined to provide an insurrectional context that could easily be ignited. This situation provided a combustible atmosphere in which strikes and collective violence could spread throughout industrial Wallonia. Between March 18th and March 25th, the interplay between precipitating events[2] and efforts to mobilize[3] the workers in the area for collective ac-

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1 Meuse, March 25, 1886. Insulting the police encompassed shouting "Hou! Hou! ... down with the police ... thief! ... hunks of fireman" (morceaux de pompiers) etc.

2 On March 20 th, the miners of the Artistes, Xhorré and Marihaye collieries near Flemalle Grande marched through Seraing preceded by red flags. Lt. F. André, the commander of the local gendarmerie, "expected trouble"! Telegram, F. André to Pety de Thozée, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège. "1886, Grèves", n° XIV, B. Officers reported directly to superiors as well as the Governor by making several original signed copies of each report.

3 Lt. André also reported that while the strike at the Maquet mine of the Concorde colliery at Jemeppe was "general" and while 490 workers were picketing the mine producing a tense situation, the "Socialists" had called for two meetings at Seraing and Jemeppe for Sunday, the 21st. Report n° 155, Lt. F. André, Lieutenance de Seraing, to Pety de Thozée, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Meuse, March 20-21, 1886.

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tion combined to spread the troubles throughout the Liège area into Namur and Hainaut, in western industrial Wallonia. Political harangues along with triggering incidents such as strikes served as examples to be imitated. They provided ideologized incentives and models of action which were simply copied by other workers. The events in Liège were an example of collective violence which serves as a precipitant for galvanizing discontent and for engendering troubles elsewhere. In this sense, collective violence became self-generating.[1]

On Friday, the 19th of March, the morning shift of 236 miners refused to go down at the Concorde Colliery, at Jemeppe (population 7,245) and asserted that they would keep the evening shift away as well.[2] That afternoon, the Gazette de Charleroi received a dispatch stating that workers in Seraing (population 30,607) and Jemeppe were on strike: "There is talk of a new invasion of the city [Liège] this evening and there is fear of new disorders".[3] Lt. F. André of the

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1 The scenario for the spread of collective violence was not particularly spectacular. The strikes in the United States in 1877 spread according to the same scenario and did so over even greater distances. The initial riot in Baltimore touched off by a ten per cent reduction in firemen's and brakemen's wages, spread within a few days to Reading, Pittsburgh, Chicago and even San Fransisco. This shows the precipitatory power of collective violence over large distances. Cf. Smelser, p. 251.

2 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 25, 1886, A.M.A MSS, n° BL/6; Report n) 154, Lt. F. André, Lieutenance de Seraing to Pety de Thozée, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Telegram, Eustache Bougnet, Bourgmestre de Jemeppe to Pety de Thozée, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté Publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

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gendarmerie detachment did not think he could control the situation with his 21 men which he considered "insufficient".[1] His forces were sorely tried the next day; fighting broke out between the gendarmerie and demonstrators on the bridge over the Meuse which linked Jemeppe and Seraing.[2] During the same day, the strike spread to the Champs des Oiseaux, Xhorré and Marihaye coal-mines in Flémalle-Grande, to the Vieille Marihaye mine at Seraing and to the Yvoz mine at Yvoz-Rainet. Eustache Bougnet, bourgmestre of Jemeppe, pleaded for "a battalion of infantry without delay!"[3] According to Captain Grégoire, who commanded a gendarme detachment that was sent from Liège to reinforce André, there were approximately 2,000 workers on strike in the area.[4] In Tilleur (population 4,437), "190 to 200" workers were pillaging grocery and liquor stores and they were

1 Report n° 154, Lt. André to Pety de Thozée, March 19, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège n° XIV, B.

2 Report n° 1 and 2 bis, Captain T.F. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, March 20-21, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Report, Maj.-Gen. Vedrine, gendarmerie to Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen, May 13, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Telegram, P. Jacquemin, Bourgmestre de Flemalle Grande to Pety de Thozée, Governor, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Telegrams, E. Bougnet, Bourgmestre de Jemeppe to Pety de Thozée, 7:00, 7:45 and 9:54 a.m., March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Report 1 bis, Captain T.F. Grégoire, gendarmerie to Pety de Thozée, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Telegram, Pety de Thozée to Gen. Pontus, March 20, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6: "Grève menaçante dans bassin de Jemeppe Seraing ... Des troupes cavaleries me sont indispensables."

4 Report n° 1 bis, Cap. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de

"marching on Liège via St-Gilles"![1]

On Monday the 22nd, the morning shift (250-300 miners) at the Patience at Beaujonc colliery in Glain refused to go down.[2] And while the strike continued in the establishments which had been affected the previous week, it spread farther afield around Liège, i.e. to Cockerill's Fanny mine (Seraing), to the Horloz company's St-Nicolas and Tilleur pits.[3] The rolling mill of the Société des Toleries liégeoises (160 workers) was on strike.[4] At Artistes, Baldoz, Concorde, the St-Gilles pit of the La Haye colliery, Gérard Cloes, at both Société de l'Espérance collieries (in Montegnée), at

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Liège, n° XIV, B.

1 Copy of a report, signed by Sec. J. Corbay for J. Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 21, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, A.

2 Report n°226, Lt. J.P.A. Hédo, Compagnie de Liège - gendarmerie to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Letter, W. Harmay, Bourgmestre de Glain to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Letter, d'Andrimont to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Report, Louis Timmerhans, Ing. en chef du 5ème arrondissement des mines to Charles Hamal, Directeur de la 2ème division des mines, March 23, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'administration générale des mines, 1874-1889, "Dossier Grèves de 1886 dans tout les bassins houillers du pays, n° 1018, 85 out of 260 miners went down; cf. also Patriote, March 24, 1886.

3 Ami de l'Ordre (Catholic, Namur), March 24, 1886; Report n° 10 bis, Cap. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Telegram, A. Radelet, Bourgmestre, Ougrée to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

4 Report n° 18, Cap. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, March 23, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

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the Bonier, Grace Berleur, Bonne Fortune at Ans, the strike was totally effective; there was a partial strike at the Société Kessales, Gosson Co. pit n° 1, and Horloz's Braconnier mine in Tilleur.[1] By March 22nd, 2,300 men were on strike in the Seraing-Jemeppe-Flémalle area west of Liège.[2] Fighting broke out between mobilizing strikers and coercive forces in Jemeppe, Tilleur and Seraing, and for the first time the fatal scenario of troops shooting into crowds occurred.[3]

Within a week of the riots in Liège, all the major mines in the area had been affected by the strike: Artistes-Xhorré and Baldoz-Lahore's 700 workers were all on strike; also 700 miners of La Concorde were off the job; 750 out of 1,300 at Gosson Lagasse were away; 500 out of 1,500 at Horloz; all 600 workers at the Espérance mines refused to work; all 300 at Sarts au Berleur; 200 out of 200 at Ans; 900 out of 900 Bonne fin; all 100 at Bonne Foi-Hareng; all 350 at Grande Bacnure; everyone of the 350 workers at Patience-Beaujonc; 150 out of 150 at Petite Bacnure; at Val Benoit, Grand-Bac, Perron, however, only 60 out of 800 were on strike; while at the

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1 Letter inclosing report from Timmerhans dated March 23rd, Charles Hamal, Dir. 2ème division des mines to de Moreau, Ministre de l'agriculture , de l'industrieet des travaux publics, March 23, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'administration générale des mines, 1874-1889, n° 1018. At the Kessales and Braconnier mines, approximately one half of the workers had gone on strike.

2 Report n° 10 bis, Cap. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

3 Etoile Belge, March 24, 1886; Précurseur (Liberal, Antwerp), April 4, 1886; Meuse, March 23, 1886; Times (London), March 23 and March 24, 1886, Peuple, March 25, 1886.

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huge Cockerill in mining system only 400 of a total of 2,500 stayed away; at Marihaye 1,200 of the 2,000 struck; along with everyone of the Wandre's 250 miners. In other words, 7,500 out of 12,700 miners were on strike.[1] But the strike left the steel industry virtually untouched; the Toleries Liégeoises at Jemeppe was the only mill to

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1886; Moniteur des Intérets Matériels, March 28, 1886. The Times, March 25, 1886, claimed there were 11,000 strikes. Here under is a day-by-day account of the development of the strike in the Liège area through March 24th. March 22nd: Usines de zinc de Prayon, Liège, 32/350 strikers, "delegation of 11 strikers sent to managing director" (Report Auguste Roskam, chef de la 7ème division de la police de Liège to d'Andrimont, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège. "1886, Grèves", n° XLIII, B). March 23rd: Bois d'Avroy colliery at Ougrée, situation "tense" ..."12 troopers" on guard; Val Benoit, Ougrée, work force "all present", Espérance mine at Montegnée, "all present"; L'Aumonier at Liège, "all present"; Sainte Marguerite mine, Liège, "all present"; La Haye collieries, Liège-St-Nicolas, "attitude menaçante"; Gerard-Cloes, Herstal, "130 out of 150" on strike; Bonne Fortune, Sart Berleur, and Six Bonniers at Grace-Berleur, 700 men on strike (Report n° 229, Lt. Hédo, Compagnie de Liège to Pety de Thozée et al., March 23, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la Province de Liège, n° XIV, B). March 24, 1886: La Haye, on strike; "Baneux", Liège, strike by 112 miners; Ste-Marguerite, strike breaks out, 160 workers out, L'Aumonier, still all present, but workers "demand a raise"; Espérance and Bonne Fortune, Montegnée-Ans, strike by "a few workers" (Letter, Mignon to d'Andrimont, March 24, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, B) ... etc. By March 25th there were 3,100 miners on strile in the Jemeppe, Seraing, Tilleur area (cf. Report n° 31, Cap. Grégoire to Pety de Thozée, March 26, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; and 3,000 were on strike in Liège and vicinity (Lt. Hédo, Compagnie de Liège to Pety de Thozée, March 26, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B. The

The Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, March 28, 1886, reported the following list of mines which were on strike (N.B. These statistics were at least three days old, because the Moniteur was a weekly):

"Charbonnages.	Nombre d'ouvriers	Ouvriers en grève.
Artistes-Xhorré et Baldoz-Lalore,	700	700
La Concorde	700	700

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face a strike. The mills in Liège and in Seraing, Ougrée, Sclessin, Grivegnée and Jupille kept right on working throughout the troubles.[1] The inability of the coal-miners to obtain support from other groups such as the weapons makers and steel workers was one of the main distinctions between the Liege strikes and those in Charleroi.

On Monday, the 22nd, the Meuse reported scenes of "pillaging" and "complete devastation" in Tilleur, St-Nicolas (population 5,236), Seraing and Jemeppe where "the number troops was insufficient for repressing the excesses of these savage hordes".[2] In Glain (population 1,719) the managing director of the Patience-Beaujonc colliery pleaded for troops to protect his establishment, in view of the fact that "the attitude of the strikers [was] becoming more menacing".[3] d'Andrimont, in Liège, feared that the strikers from the industrial belt might march on Liège; he begged Governor Pety de Tho-

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Gosson-Lagasse,	1,300	750
Horloz,	1,500	500
Espérance,	600	600
Sarts au Berleur,	300	300
Ans,	200	200
Bonne-Fin,	900	900
Bonne-Foi-Hareng,	100	100
Grande-Bacnure,	350	350
Patience Beaujonc,	350	350
Petite-Bacnure,	150	150
Val-Benoit, Grand-Bac et Perron,	800	60
Cockerill,	2,500	400
Marihaye,	2,000	1,200
Wandre,	250	250"

1 Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, March 28, 1886.

2 Meuse, March 22, 1886.

3 Letter, Félix Durieu to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

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zée to get in touch with military authorities "immediately".[1] In Brussels, Minister of Justice Devolder was champing at the bit to move against the strikers and asked Pety de Thozée to "requisition troops to prevent unfortunate incidents".[2] Fearing the worst, Pety de Thozée began to call for army reinforcements;[3] and troop trains from all over Belgium began converging on the coal fields of Liège. As early as the 20th, Maj.-General A.C.I. Delescaille, commander of the troops in the province had sent three battalions and a squadron of lancers under Lt.-Col. E.A.G. Callataij with instructions to "maintain respect for the law at all costs" even if the troops had to "use their weapons".[4] The next day another infantry battalion of the 12th Infantry as well as two squadrons of the 12th Cavalry (Liège) arrived accompanied by Maj.-General F. Ayou, who set up his head quarters in Seraing.[5] At the same time troop trains transport-

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1 Letter, d'Andrimont to Pety de Thozée, March 23, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; see also, Letter, Georges Dewandre, Managing Director of the S.A. de Sclessin to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, "1886, Affaires Diverses", n° XIV, C.

2 Telegram, Devolder to Pety de Thozée, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, C.

3 Telegram, Pety de Thozée to Pontus, March 20, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6; Copy of a letter, Pety de Thozée to General Delescaille, Commander of troops in Liège province, March 21, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, C.

4 Report n° 1 bis, Cap. Grégoire, gendarmerie, to Pety de Thozée, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B; Report, Lt.-Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

5 Report Lt.-Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, ibid.;

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ed two infantry battalions and two squadrons of lancers from Namur along with two squadrons from Louvain.[1] The gendarmerie also sent reinforcements to Seraing; Captain Grégoire led a detachment of 60 men from the Liège captaincy to join Lt. André's 12-man platoon.[2] In the meantime, in accordance with the advice of Premier Beernaert,[3] Governor Pety de Thozée began to organize a citizen's militia in order to free the army units to operate in flying columns.[4] By March 26th, the authorities were able to conclude that "the military forces are sufficient to deal with any situation".[5]

René Van Santbergen[6], referring to the Peuple of March 22nd and the Meuse of March 21st, claimed there were 6,000 troops in the Liège area by the 21st. This figure seems possible since in Jemeppe alone, there were 1,000 troops[7]; which were part of a force of

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, March 24, 1886; see also, Telegrams, J. Demarteau, Commissaire de l'Arrondissement de Liège to Pety de Thozée, March 21, 1886, Vander Smissen to Pety de Thozée, March 24, 1886, J.J. Thonissen, Minister of the Interior and Education to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, Col. Callataij to Pety de Thozée, March 21, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

2 Report, Maj.-Gen. Vedrine to Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen, May 13, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Letter, Beernaert to Pety de Thozée, March 28, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, C.

4 Printed Circular, Pety de Thozée to "All Bourgmestres of the Municipalities of the Province", March 24, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, C.

5 Letter, Thonissen to Pety de Thozée, March 26, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, A.

6 René Van Santbergen, p. 53.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 23, 1886.

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3,000 troops covering the entire Seraing vicinity.[1] The other three thousand troops were in Liège and in the eastern and southern townships toward Jupille (population 4,367) and Herstal (11,918 population).[2] As early as Monday, the 21st, "the Seraing coal-fields [were] entirely occupied by the army; all the mines, all the establishments, all access routes and bridges on the Meuse, ... all the town halls are guarded by the troops ... cavalry everywhere ... patrols with fixed bayonets".[3]

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1 Meuse, March 22, 1886; Ami de l'Ordre, March 22, 1886.

2 The only official source on the number of troops was an undated unsigned memorandum giving the number of troops in Liège on April 12th, 17 days after many had been pulled out and sent farther west. This memorandum stated that there were "139 officers and 3,307 men in the Liège area". Another unsigned memorandum entitled "Déploiement des troupes le 30 mars 1886 au matin ", A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6, gave detailed information on the distribution of the units. Liège; Chartreuse fort, 3rd bat., 14th Inf., Citadelle, 3rd bat., 9th Inf., 3 companies of the 1st bat., 14th Inf. and 87 gendarmes: Montegnée; Patience-Beaujonc mine, 1st co., 1st bat. of carabiniers, Espérance mine, 2 co., 1st bat. of carabiniers, Bonne Fortune mine, 3rd co., 1st bat. of carabiniers, Gosson-Lagasse mine, 4th co., 1st bat. of carabiniers: Herstal; Gerard-Cloes mine, 4th co., 2nd bat., 14th Inf., Bonne foi-Hareng, 1st co., 1st bat., 14th Inf.; Houillère de Wandre, 1st co., 2nd bat., 14th Inf.; Laminoirs de Jupille, 2nd co., 2nd bat., 14th Inf.; Vottem, Nlle Batterie mine, 3rd co., 2nd bat., 14th Inf.; all troops were commanded by Maj.-Gen. Delescaille. In the Seraing area, the following units were under Maj.-Gen. Ayou's command. 1st sector under Col. Vander Oost in Seraing 1st and 3rd bat., 10th Inf., 2 and a half squadrons 2nd Cav.; 2nd sector under Lt. Col. de Schrynmakers in Jemeppe and Flemalle area, 2nd and 3rd bat., 12th Inf., 1st squadron 2nd Cav.; 3rd sector under, Sclessin and Tilleur area, Col. Callataij, 1st and 2nd bat., 9th Inf., 2nd bat. of carabiniers and one and a half squadrons of the 2nd Cav. [lancers]. This constituted the 9th, 10th, 12th and 14th Infantry as wele as the 2nd Cav. and the Carabiniers, or 6 regiments all at full strength or minus, at most one battalion, i.e. between 4,000 and 6,000 men, since an infantry regiment at full strength totalled 900 to 1,000 men and officers.

3 Réforme, March 22, 1886.

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City halls, the homes of mayors and management, and other symbols related to the economic and political elites were under guard. The strikers were prone to turn their vengeance on these places.[1] Following the classic scenario of collective violence, the insurgents did most of the property damage; but most the casualties were caused by the coercive forces. Between the 20th and 25th at least 50 persons were injured and 3[2] were killed (all by the coercive forces). During the same period, in the area where the violence occurred (i.e. the Flemalle, Seraing and Jemeppe) approximate-

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1 Peuple, March 25, 1886; Times, March 24, 1886; Telegram, Maj.-Gen. Ayou to Gen. Pontus, March 29, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6; Letters, E. Bougnet, Bourgmestre, Jemeppe to Pety de Thozée, March 28, 1886, and L.C. Piérard, Bourgmestre, St-Nicolas to Pety de Thozée, March 28, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, C.

2 Letter, L.H.N. Bozet, Bourgmestre, Seraing to Pety de Thozée, March 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, A; Peuple, March 22 and 25, 1886; Patriote, March 22, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March, 1886. René Van Santbergen, pp. 83-84, claimed "there were at least 6 persons killed according to the press", and that the authorities hid the real facts because of the gravity of the situation. Comparing reports among officialdom certain "discrepancies" do appear; for example Vander Smissen reported only "one dead, three wounded" (Report, Lt. General Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6), when in Seraing alone, one person was killed (cf. Bozet's letter) and "five were wounded" according to General Ayou (Telegram, Gen. Ayou to Gen. Pontus, March 29, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6) — but "one wounded"according to Bozet in Seraing. Alderman Collin in Tilleur reported 3 wounded, whereas the Peuple and Times reported "15 to 16", Letter, A. Collin, Alderman, Tilleur to Pety de Thozée, March 27, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, A.

However, as far as Van Santbergen's figure of "at least 6 dead", this writer could not substantiate the extra 3 casualties. R. Van Santbergen, himself, did not mention which newspapers stated there were six killed. The problem was that the very the same death was mentioned in different newspapers on different days without mentioning the victims' name. They and their tragedies have been depersonalized by history.

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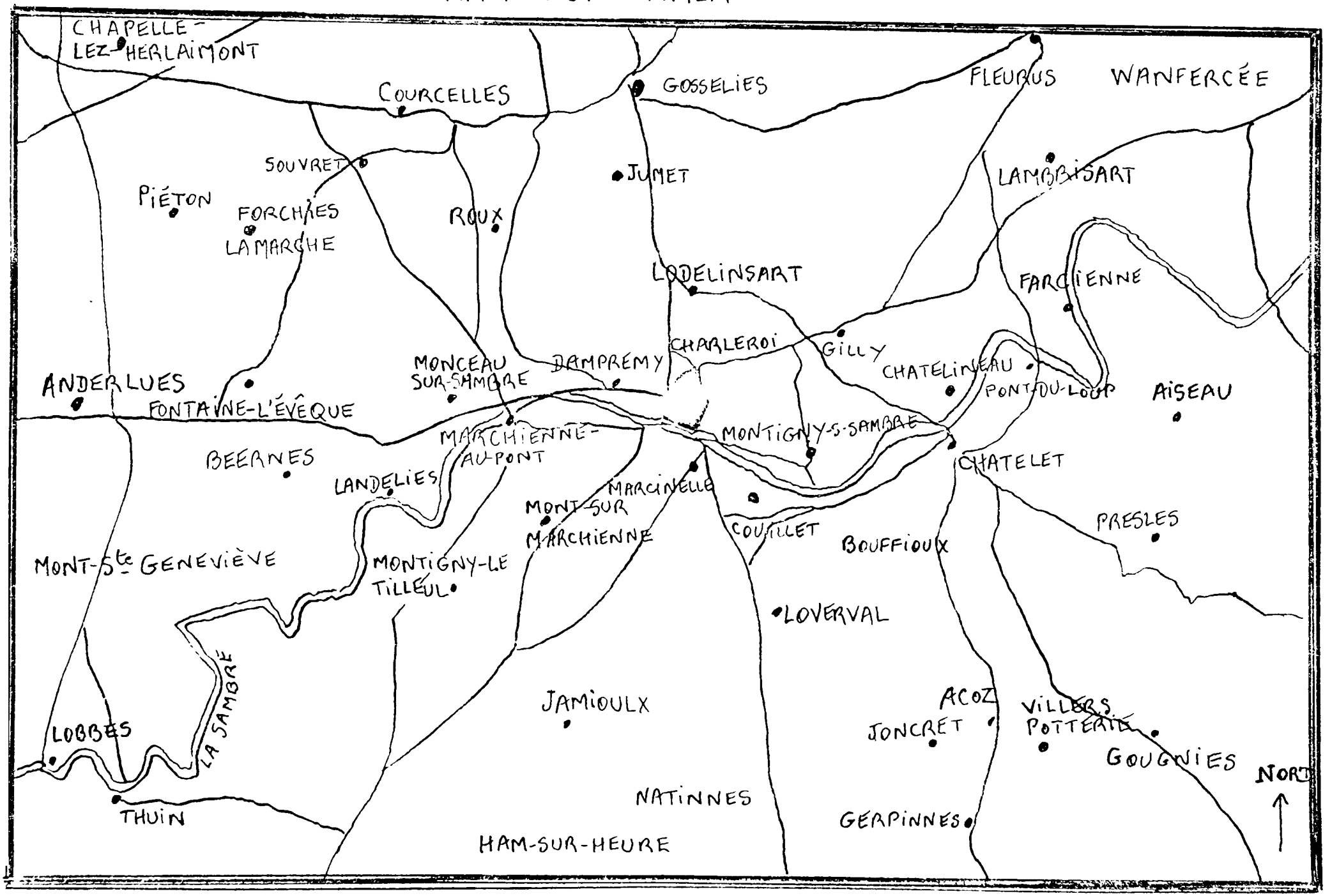
3.7 MILES

CHARLEROI AREA



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ly 125 persons were arrested according to the Patriote.[1]

As mentioned above, the strikers in the Liège-Seraing area were virtually all miners. However, when the strikes spread to the Charleroi region, everyone of the area's major industries was involved. Charleroi and the industrial towns around it, Lodelinsart, Châtelet, Jumet, Gilly, Montigny, Châtelineau, Dampremy and Marchienne, virtually constituted one industrial unit where glass factories, mines and steel mills, the three major industries, often stood side by side.[2] Furthermore, as Hobsbawm has pointed out "It is not ... necessary that all sections of labour should be at the point of spontaneous ignition, for 'explosions' have great power to propagate themselves, once they began in one area of industry".[3]

In Charleroi, the precipitant for the strikes and violence occurred among the miners on March 25th. The major collective violence occurred on the 26th-27th when the glass workers joined the miners. This forty-eight hour unit – within the period of the industrial insurrection – was significant not only in terms of the degree of violence and the types of workers who were involved, but

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1 Patriote, March 27, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 25, 1886, claimed 30 were arrested in Seraing on the 24th, The Peuple, March 22, 1886, claimed 38 were arrested around Jemeppe on the 21st and according to the gendarmerie, 16 were arrested in Tilleur on the same day, Report n° 2 bis, Col. Grégoire to "the military authorities", March 21, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV, B.

2 Gustave Houdez, Les troubles de Charleroi, 1886 (Frameries: Dufranc-Friart, 1911), p. 5.

3 Hobsbawm, "Economic Fluctuations and Some Social Movements", p. 15.

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also regarding the evolution of the nature of the violence. On the first day when the insurgents had the initiative, most of the violence was directed against property. And according to the traditional scenario, when masses of coercive forces were mobilized on the 27th, the violence became inter-personal.

The Charleroi strike broke out among the miners of the Bois Communal de Fleurus colliery near Gilly (population 18,896), which was northeast of Charleroi. Yet the miners at the Bois Communal along with the other miners in the Charleroi area had a higher wage than the miners at the neighboring Namur coal fields. By the end of 1885, wages in Charleroi were 3.05[1] frs per day; while in the nearest coal field in the Mons area, the average daily wage was 2.76 frs per day.[2] Furthermore, whereas the average miner in Anderlues (west of the Charleroi bassin) worked a 12 hour 15 minute day, the Charleroi miner worked only 10 hours 15 minutes (Nord de Charleroi).[3] What is of particular interest, regarding the Charleroi coal fields and what distinguishes them from those in Liège, is the fact that wages fluctuated more rapidly in the Charleroi mines than they did in Liège. Between 1884 and the beginning of 1886, wages in Charleroi dropped

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 4, 1886. The Liège area miners, who were the initiators ot the insurgency had the highest pay in the country during the year leading to the strikes, i.e. 3.07 frs per day.

2 Report, C. Lambert, Directeur de la 1ère division des mines (Mons) to de Moreau, Ministre de l'agriculture, de l'industrie et des travaux publics, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'administration générale des mines, n° 1018.

3 Réforme, September 9, 1886.

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by at least 15 per cent, whereas in Liège they dropped by only 7 per cent.[1] But people do not revolt against statistics. Precipitants are seldom based on quantitative appreciations of the general economic situation. Furthermore, such a study must take into account a time-lag between political consciousness and the workers' response to the objective conditions.[2] Though the miners at the Bois Communal colliery were unhappy with the wages which they had received on the 24th,[3] nevertheless, they came to work as usual on the 25th, ready to descend into the mine. The immediate precipitant of the insurrection in Charleroi was not, however, wages but a delay in taking the workers down. Water in the Ste-Henriette shaft was being pumped out and the miners had to stand about and wait until the work was completed so that they could descend.[4] Each passing minute meant a loss in wages, because miners were paid according to the quantity of coal extracted and not by the hour. Frustrated by the delay and given the opportunity to discuss the situation while they waited, the miners began complaining about wage levels and demanded a nullification of the recent wage cuts; the manager refused,[5] and the miners walked

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 4, 1886.

2 Lorwin, "Working Class Politics and Economic Development in Western Europe", p. 340.

3 Letter, E. Depoitier, Ingénieur en chef, 3ème arrondissement des mines to C. Arnould, Directeur divisionnaire des mines, 1ère division, March 26, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, "Grèves, Rapports, 1886-1889, n° 307.

4 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

5 Letter, Depoitier to Arnould, March 26, 1886, A.G.R. MSS,

off the job calling out the rest of the miners at the Bois Communal. The strikers divided into two groups; one went north to call out the Nord de Gilly miners; the other group headed toward Ransart to call out the miners at the Marquis mines of the Appaumée-Ransart colliery. The strike had begun at about 6:00 a.m.; five hours later it had spread south to the Gouffre mine (Chatelineau) and the Trieu Kaisin mine (Gilly). By the end of the day, it had reached the rolling mills in Chatelineau (population 9,238), Chatelet (population 11,116) and Montigny (population 13,153), as well as the Bonne Espérance (Montigny-s/Sambre), Aiseau-Presles (Farciennes), Boubier (Châtelet), Poirier (Charleroi), and Resolu mines.[1] The major industries in the eastern vicinity were grinding to a halt. The gendarmerie arrested a few of the strikers when they obliged the collieries to withdraw the miners; and "apart from a few scuffles at the Charbonnage des Viviers Réunis (Gilly), the whole affair resembled previous strikes in that very little damage occurred".[2]

The Cecil B. De Mille version of insurrections has the slaves rising up simultaneously against their masters,[3] but this was cer-

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Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, n° 307.

1 Ibid., Telegrams, Depoitier to Arnould, March 25 and 26, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307; Telegram, A.T.M. De Busschere, Procureur du roi, Charleroi to H. Bosch, Procureur générale, Brussels, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, "Agitations politiques et sociales, Congrès, Troubles, Grèves, Elections, Attentats à la dynamite, 1886-1887". N) 223 B.

2 Report, Vander Smissen to Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Etzioni, p. 406.

tainly not the case in Charleroi. The miners from the Gilly area had decided to meet again the next day at 9:00 a.m. in the Gilly town square.[1] A short distance west of Gilly, the road going west crossed a north-south axis, one branch leading north and west of Charleroi to Lodelinsart and Jumet, the other branch going south and east of Charleroi to Chatelet and Chatelineau. Approximately 500 meters farther west the road then forked west and south; the western fork went toward Charleroi, and the southern fork went toward Montigny-s/Sambre and Couillet. When the strikers left Gilly along the road west, groups peeled off from the main body and headed in different directions as the marchers passed the north-south axis and then divided at the fork in the road a little further on.[2] No one stopped them before they reached this strategic point. Now the mobilizers were at an advantage for they had been able to spread their mobilization efforts in several directions simultaneously thus quadrupling the difficulty of the coercive forces.

The groups of strikers, having confused the authorities by chance or by plan moved against Société des Fonderies de Gilly, the Libotte machine-works, the Frère copper-works.[3] When they reached the northern portion of Charleroi, they invaded the Brasseur glass-

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

2 Letter, Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307. He claims they divided into 5 groups, one for each road, Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902, pp. 98-100, claims they divided into only 3 groups.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

works[1] and chased "the glass blowers out of the factory; they even obliged a teamster to turn his wagon, loaded with glass panes, around and return to the warehouse.[2] Joined by another group which was equal in size, as well as some of those workers they had mobilized along the way at the various establishments, the main body of strikers wheeled away from Charleroi and headed north, calling out the workers at the Charbonnages-Réunis' pits n° 1, 2 and 12. Moving along the road from Charleroi to Gosselies, they invaded virtually every establishment along the way through Lodelinsart and Jumet.[3] One after the other, the mobilizing insurgents cajoled and threatened workers into joining them and they committed various degrees of devastation at the Casimir-Lambert, Brasseur, Bastin-Williams, Schmidt-Devillez, Morel, Fourcault-Frison, Mondron, Dulière, de Dorlodot, Deulin, Daucloy et Cie, Louis Lambert, Eugène Bandoux, Sadin (verreries nationales) and Gregorius glassworks.[4]

Meanwhile, east and south of Charleroi, other groups moved against the coal-mines and metallurgical industries which were concentrated in this area. The Fiestaux mines, the Agglomérés de houille colliery, the Delloye rolling mill at Montigny-s/Sambre as

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1886.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

3 Letter, Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307 "Incendie et Pillage du Chateau et des Verreries Bandoux, Acte d'Accusation", cf. Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886; Journal de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

well as the Marais rolling mill were forcibly closed down. The same happened at Société du Laminoir de Châtelet and the Société d'Acoz mill in Châtelet and the Société de Couillet mill. After a brief skrimish with 25 gendarmes near Châtelet, the workers moved on to the Ormont colliery and then they proceeded toward Pont-de-Loup and Farciennes.[1] Marauding bands were operating as far south west as Marchiennes and they had extended the strike as far north and west as Mariemont, Fleurus, Wagnelée and Wayaux.[2] The same evening and the next morning, the insurgents had moved on Roux, north west of Charleroi. This was the high point of the insurgency. Here the coercive forces, which had been pouring into Charleroi during Friday and Saturday (26th-27th) night, were finally strong enough to challenge the insurgents. At Roux mobilizing strikers collided on two occasions with the army; after several volleys they were driven back.[3]

The miners had managed to mobilize a coalition of strikers from each of the three major industries in Charleroi. The methods of mobilization varied from the passing of rumors[4] to the other extreme of direct threats against those workers who refused to join

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1 Journal de Charleroi, ibid.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

3 Ibid., March 28 and 29, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 28 and 29, 1886; Meuse, March 29, 1886; Telegram, Col. Kerrinckx, "temporary commanding officer" in Charleroi to Pontus, March 27, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

4 Smelser, pp. 247, 252; Allport and Postman, pp. 193-96.

the strike.[1] The bourgeois press claimed the strikers were "driven by a destructive"[2] rage as they went crashing into one establishment after the other to spread the strike; in fact, however, the destruction that they inflicted seldom deteriorated into vandalism except at a few establishments particularly Bandoux's glassworks which was completely destroyed.[3] Most of the destruction was strategically inspired and was related to the mobilization effort. The strikers possibly intended to accomplish two things; they wished to make sure that workers would have to join the strike, and they also wanted to demonstrate to the industrialists that their factories and mines were hostages in the struggle between themselves and the strikers. If the employers were intransigeant, their establishments would suffer the consequences, or else their production would be sabotaged. In terms of their two-fold strategy in mobilizing workers to join the strike and to put economic pressure on the employers, the strikers did their best to paralyse production, keep workers from being able to return to work and to make the strike costly for management. In the glass industry the workers put out the fires in the furnaces,[4] and destroyed glass products (e.g. at Mondron,

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1 Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence", p. 79.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 26, 1886.

3 Ibid.; "Incendie et Pillage du Chateau et des Verreries de Bandoux, Acte d'Accusation", July 15 and 16, 1886; see also Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

4 Ibid.; Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

Sadin and Baudoux).[1] At Fourcault-Frison they sabotaged the power system by cutting one of the tubes in the steam engine.[2] At de Dorlodot's works they first got the idea of adulterating the molten glass by throwing in scrap iron and thus ruining the production and raising costs.[3] They also paralyzed ovens by taking out the grilles de stracous at de Dorlodot's.[4] Much the same mobilization strategy was used in the metallurgical and coal industries. They released all the steam at the Marais mill and brought production to a halt.[5] They starved the fires in the furnaces of the Société de Laminoirs de Châtelet and the Société de Coullet.[6] In the mines they paralyzed production by throwing debris down the main shaft and by overturning bins in the coal yards at the Dechassis colliery.[7]

The strikers also used terror to mobilize support from other workers. As late as March 30th, E. Depoitier the Ingénieur en chef des mines in Charleroi was complaining that the delay in a "return

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1 Letter, Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307

2 "Incendie et Pillage du Château et des Verreries Bandoux, Acte d'Accusation", Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

3 Letter, Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, and July 15 and 16, 1886, "Incendie et Pillage du Château et des Verreries Baudoux, Acte d'Accusation"; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

to work movement ... was due to terrorism".[1] Though Depoitier might have exaggerated, there was an element of truth in his statement. Groups in any sort of war-like situation can seldom sacrifice unity to tolerance; they cannot afford individual deviation; for if their organizational infrastructure is weak they must impose mobilization.[2] Such action of course elicits counter measures by the authorities, i.e. counter terror which is usually far more bloody because of the superior fire power of the coercive forces.[3] When the strikers threatened to cut elevator cables at pit heads, or waved picks and shovels "in a menacing manner", or threatened to throw recalcitrant steel workers into furnaces[4] or broke down doors to get at workers who refused to join,[5] they were in fact terrorizing workers and were of course inviting reprisals by the authorities.[6]

Though most industrial nations in Europa permitted strikes, none of them in fact allowed the sine qua non for organizing a

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1 Telegram, Depoitier to Arnould, March 30, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307.

2 Letter, Renier Malherbe, Ingénieur en chef, 1er Arrondissement des mines to Arnould, April 6, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307; Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

3 Thomas Perry Thornton, "Terror as a weapon of Political Agitation", in Harry Eckstein (ed.), Internal War: Problems and Approaches, p. 72.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

5 Ibid.; Letter, Malherbe to Arnould, April 6, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la première inspection générale des mines, Mons n° 307.

6 Thornton, p. 72.

strike.[1] None of them allowed workers to mobilize support and spread the strike to other establishments. This engendered confrontations and violence between mobilizing strikers and coercive forces. The shootings at Roux are an example of such a confrontation. After being repulsed at the south bridge into Charleroi — the bridge was a revolving one and the attendant had turned it around so that the workers could not cross the river — a crowd of mobilizing strikers swung around the western parts of the city and headed north via Marchienne-au-pont; they turned off at the Souvret road and headed for Roux along the Brussels rail line and the Charleroi-Brussels canal. The strike was now threatening the 2nd mining district which constituted the western fringes of the Centre-La Louvière coal bassin.[2] The strikers reached Roux and demanded to talk to the managing director of the glassworks, Mr. Monseau. They wanted him to call the workers off the job. At the same time, other members of the group tore up company records and destroyed products in the warehouse and then they set the place on fire. Suddenly they ran head-long into a

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1 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 26, the strike was legalized in England in 1824, in Saxony in 1861, in France in 1864, in Prussia in 1869, Austria in 1870, the Netherlands in 1872 and in Belgium in 18 6.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886. The Gazette de Liège claimed they "behaved menacingly" and that the troops followed procedures laid down in the Riot Act, by summoning the workers to disperse on three occasions. How fast the call was repeated, whether the strikers heard it over the shouting and whether or not Captain Bulot himself was really sure will never be ascertained. Cf. also, Telegram, Col. Kerrinckx to Gen. Pontus, March 27, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

company of the 3rd Chasseurs, which was hurrying to the town. The workers advanced toward the troops. Their commanding officer, Captain Bulot, became frightened; the troops fired into the crowd. The next day, Saturday the 27th, another collision between workers and troops occurred. And another batch of workers went to the improvized morgue at the Roux school house.[1]

In analyzing the last few seconds of the lives of the persons whose cadavers were laid out in the Roux school house, one can see that they did not charge wildy into the poised muzzels of the troops as if driven on by what Bernoux called the "collective soul" of the "mob".[2] These were not the depersonalized automatons of the will of

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28 and 29, 1886; Meuse, March 29, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 28 and 29, 1886. The Gazette de Liège claimed that "they were throwing stones" at the troops. But this does not coincide with the events. The strikers did not see the troops; as they turned a corner they collided into the troops. The soldiers were not far enough away from the intersection to be seen by the strikers and for the officer to summon the strikers to halt in time. It was an inadvertant ambush in that the crowd ran into the ranks of the troops by its own momentum after rounding the corner. The officer called the summation just quickly enough to repeat it three times as the first marchers crashed into the troops. He, thereby maintained the legality of the massacre, but tactically it was a botched up affair and could have been handled more effectively by a more intelligent officer without all the bloodshed. Generally, the historian is struck by the utter brutality of the saber wielding gendarmes and the utter incompetence of the field officers of the Belgian army. Cf. also Réforme, March 28, 1886.

2 Philippe Bernoux et al., Violences et société (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1969), p. 18, believe their is a transcendental "soul", a collective will which emerges from the attitudes of the people in a mob. "La loi du groupe ne fait pas que renforcer ou développer la psychologie individuelle, elle la transforme. 'Si l'on peut continuer à parler de psychologie des foules, c'est que la psychologie des hommes diffère essentiellement de leur psychologie individuelle. Le fait seul de faire partie d'une foule modifie l'individu.... Par suite ... le rassemblement d'individus dans une foule

the mob. They were simply part of a noisy crowd of workers who accidently ran into some frightened troops. The insurgency in Charleroi was not a case of pathological, i.e. irrational, collective behavior; for in most cases, rioters knew what they are doing and what they intended to move against and why they chose targets of attack.[1] Most cases of collective violence, and the 1886 insurrection was no exception, develop according to a crude rationale which establishes focal points of concerted action, provides coordination and gives reasons for and mutual expections from such action.[2] For example, the crowd at Gilly on the morning of the 26th divided into fairly equal groups and headed in separate, but strategically significant, directions. This was not a question of pure chance. The people in crowd knew where the roads led and why they should divide up, and if some did not know, there were surely ad hoc leaders, co-opted within the crowd, who explained the strategy.[3] The strikers also knew why

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conduit à la formation d'un être nouveau, supra-individuel, d'une âme collective'".

1 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 20, has pointed out that even in the cases of the most primitive forms of communal violence such as machine breaking in England in the early 19the century, the rioters knew what they were doing and what to attack according to a crude rationale. They were not behaving capriciously.

2 Thomas Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (New York: Oxford, 1963), p. 90. "It is usually the essence of mob formation that the potential members have to know not only where and when to meet but just when to act so that they can act in concert. Overt leadership solves the problem; but leadership can often be identified and eliminated by the authority trying to prevent mob action. In this case the mob's problem is to act in unison without overt leadership, to find some common signal that makes everyone confident that, if he acts on it he will not be acting alone."

3 Hobsbawm, "Economic fluctuations and Social Movements".

they cut telephone and telegraph wires around Charleroi, particularly those leading to the Baudoux glassworks, which they eventually sacked and burned down.[1] All this is not to imply that there was a national Haupt Quartier whose tentacles stretched to the streets of the Charleroi area and which directed the various insurgent groups. The strikers had a diffused and decentralized leadership within each group, which directed the workers from one place to the other.

Broadly speaking, two types of organizational groups — associational and communal[2] — are involved in outbreaks of collective violence, and their nature, goals and strategies have an important impact on the unfolding of events. Both types existed in Charleroi in 1886. Associational groups such as the Parti ouvrier belge, had large relatively complex organizations and recruited through open tests of intention and performance. Groups of this sort are politically more sophisticated; they prefer peaceful political action to large-scale violence. Associational groups are also characterized by a high degree of ideologization. By analyzing the degree of ideologization and the activities of the P.O.B. during the events of 1886, one can estimate the role of such groups as the P.O.B. in the disorders in Charleroi. Police reports on the activities of P.O.B. agents in the area of the insurrection all confirm its peaceful role.

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p. 23; Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902, pp. 98-99.

1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886

2 Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence", p. 38.

This despite the hope of the judicial and police authorities to demonstrate that there was a conspiratorial relationship between the P.O.B., particularly Alfred Dufuisseaux the author of the Catéchisme du Peuple and the insurgents. Secret police agents infiltrated a meeting in La Louvière where they heard Jean Volders[1] and Alfred Defuisseaux[2] speak to a crowd of "2,000" people. Defuisseaux asserted that political rights had priority over economic objectives; he called on the workers to mobilize massive support for the demonstration for universal manhood suffrage which the P.O.B. was sponsoring for June 13th. Jean Volders recommended that the workers return to peaceful testing processes. He exhorted the workers to "'calm things down'". The P.O.B. advocated a "'peaceful solution'" to the social problems of the country and it termed the insurgents "'our misled brothers'".[3] Three days later in Frameries and Wasmes, Defuisseaux and Fauviaux called on the workers to develop passive-type organizations, such as cooperatives and to prepare an economic infrastructure for the toilers' movement. Defuisseaux again called for support for the June 13th demonstration and he warned against

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1 Volders was a leading Socialist from Brussels. He was also a key member of the P.O.B. organ, Le Peuple.

2 Defuisseaux, later led the anarcho-syndicalist wing of the P.O.B. out of the part. After 1886, he came to be an advocate of the General strike. In 1888, many socialists in Wallonia formed a Republican party and held a rump convention.

3 Report n° 156, Cap. J.B. Liégeois, Compagnie du Hainaut (gendarmerie) to H. Bosch, Procureur général of the Court of Appeals in Brussels, March 28, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général Registres et Dosiers, 1812-1914, "Affaires J. Volders, L. Bertrand, A. Defuisseaux, 1885-1895", n° 238.

any further violence.[1] On March 27th, the Procureur du Roi in Mons, Henry Levy was confirming the fact that the P.O.B. affiliates were advocating non-violent testing.[2] On April 1st, he admitted that Defuisseaux's speeches were "'extremely peaceful, calling on the workers to return to work'".[3] C.P. Vanschoor, Premier avocat général for the Court of Appeals in Brussels, who was sent to Wallonia to direct the purge, telegraphed to Brussels that Defuisseaux, Volders and Fauviaux were "stressing universal suffrage, recommending calm and advising against the strike".[4]

Actually, the P.O.B. program to ideologize the working class seems to have, as yet, had little impact. Georges Sorel's Réflexions sur la violence was not yet published.[5] Defuisseaux's pamphlet had

1 Report, Liégeois to Bosch, March 31, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, "Agitations politiques et sociales, Congrès, Troubles, Grèves, Elections, Attentats à la dynamite, 1885-1895", n° 224.

2 Letter, Henri Lévy, Procureur du Roi, Mons to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, n° 223B. "Un meeting a été tenu aux Ecaussines d'Enghien par les nommés Maheu, typographe et Pierron, mécanicien tous deux membres de la Ligue ouvrière de Bruxelles; 1,200 ouvriers carriers y assistaient; les orateurs ont préconisé le suffrage universel, l'abolition de la conscription, la séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, l'instruction laïque, gratuite et obligatoire, l'augmentation des salaires etc. etc.; ils ont conclu en conviant les ouvriers à se rendre à la messe à Bruxelles le 13 juin [Socialist demonstration for Universal suffrage]".

3 Letter, Lévy to Bosch, April 1, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, "Agitations politiques et sociales, Congrès, Troubles, Grèves, Elections, Attentats à la dynamite, 1885-1895", n° 225.

4 Telegram, C.P. Van Schoor, Premier avocat général to Bosch March 28, 1886, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223.

5 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspectives", p. 28.

been distributed but estimates of its impact vary. While Van Kalken and de Terlinden believed that it "excited" the workers, Destrée and Vandervelde denied its alleged influence.[1] Evidence can be found in support of either view. Those municipalities around Charleroi which were not affected by insurrection often reported that the Catéchisme du Peuple had been distributed on pay day, the 25th, as the workers left the mines and mills; but they did not believe that the pamphlet had had any effect in view of the fact that their towns had been spared.[2] Whereas in Fleurus, Dampremy, Monceau-s/Sambre, Forchies-la-Marche and Châtelet, to name just a few examples, the authorities asserted that "the brochure had caused extraordinary agitation among an already embittered populace";[3] and that "almost all the workers agreed with its contents and felt that it spoke for the worker".[4] H.J. Biset, Commissaire de police, in Monceau-s/Sambre reported that a "minimum of 700 copies ... were sold to artisans and workers", perhaps even "a thousand". According to the Commissaire "about 4,000" were distributed in the Marchienne-au-Pont, Leernes, Fontaine-

1 Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902, p. 101.

2 For example the town of Mont-s/Marchienne, cf. Letter, V. Bruyr, Bourgmestre to A.J.M. De Busschere, Procureur du Roi, Charleroi, April 20, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, "Affaires J. Volders, L. Bertrand, A. Defuisseaux, 1885-1895", n° 239A.

3 Letter, M.J. Lefebvre, Bourgmestre, Fleurus to De Busschere, April 30, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239A.

4 Letter, L.V. Jamain, Commissaire de police, Dampremy to De Busschere, April 24, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239A.

L'Eveque, Landelies area.[1] And Bourgmestre J.D.O. Hackin of Forchies-la-Marche concluded:"The Catéchisme du peuple ... had caused regrettable consequences".[2] In Châtelet, the authorities alleged that the pamphlet had had "an unfortunate impact" on the events of March 26th-27th.[3]

Most probably the Catéchisme du Peuple did increase the already enormous polarization between the middle class elites and the working class by articulating and mobilizing sentiments for political and economic changes. Yet as Van Kalken pointed out - without proving the assertion - it probably only directly influenced a restrained group of activist, i.e. the literate individuals among the workers.[4] By word of mouth through discussions and public meetings these persons in turn articulated the discontent, among the other semi-literate workers. In studying the composition of a group of 186 persons indicted for having extorted money from M. Dumont de Chassart near Fleurus on March 26th-27th, all except one were semi-illiterate and would have had a difficult time to read and clearly

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1 Letter, H.J. Biset, Commissaire de police, Monceau-s/Sambre to De Busschere, April 22, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239 A. One of his sources claimed 20,000 had been sold in the area.

2 Letter, J.D.O. Hackin, Bourgmestre, Forchies-la-Marche to De Busschere, April 23, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239A.

3 Letter, A. Rousseau, Commissaire de police, Châtelet to De Busschere, April 23, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239A.

4 Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902, p. 101; cf. also Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective violence", p. 38.

understand the Catéchisme du Peuple on their own, despite its simple style.[1] A Meuse reporter who had extended contacts with the workers noted that all those he met were illiterate.[2] Nor did the chants of the crowds reflect any ideological precision; the most common were "Vive la République!", "A bas le Roi de Carton!"[3] and the refrains of the "Chant des Prolétaires"[4] to the tune of the "Marseillaise",

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1 Gazette de Liège, August 12, 1886.

2 Meuse, March 24, 1886. "Notre collaborateur, sans se décontenancer le moins du monde, lui présenta sa carte de journaliste et lui fit connaître le but de sa visite à Montegnée. Aucun des ouvriers ne savait lire! — ce qui prouve, en passant, combien l'instruction est peu répandue parmi nos mineurs; — on dut faire lire la carte à la femme du cabaret. Quand ils furent rassurés, quelques 'tournées' délièrent les langues et l'on s'expliqua.
Inutile de leur parler d'abord de la crise, de la situation de l'industrie charbonnière, de la concurrence étrangère et de toutes les questions économiques, ils n'en connaissent pas le premier mot. Ils n'ont retenu que quelques bribes du 'Catéchisme du peuple,' qu'on leur a lu et qu'ils n'ont pas compris."

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

4 "Affaire Bandoux, Acte d'Accusation", Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 18, 1886; Gazette de Liège, August 4, 1886:

"Jusqu'à ce jour la bourgeoisie,
Foulant aux pieds nos justes droits,
Consacre son apostasie.
Par les plus révoltants exploits! (bis)
Quatre-vingtneuf a vu nos pères,
Pour conquérir la liberté
Qui conduit à l'égalité
Donner la main au prolétaire.
Aux urnes! citoyens; formez vos bataillons!
Marchez! (bis) que le progrès féconde vos sillons!

Assez d'affronts! assez d'entraves!
Nous voulons tous place au soleil!
Nous ne voulons plus être esclaves!
L'heure a sonné pour le réveil! (bis)
Sur nous pèsent toutes les charges,
Et nous sommes exclus de tout.
Allons,bourgeois, allons, debout!
Au vote ouvrez les portes larges!

which was the most articulate expression of discontent.

The insurgents were not ideologically articulate, nor did the strikers have a strong associational group infrastructure; there were few trade-unions or cooperatives for mobilizing economic resources for the insurgents. The barren environment, caused by the collapse of the International and the deepening economic crisis, were not propitious for the development of such organizations. Trade-union membership ranged between 2,000 and 3,000 in the Charleroi area, but organizations such as modern industrial unions were virtually non-existent.[1]

In view of the weakness of associational groups like the P.O.B. and the trade-unions, the most characteristic groups to form in the Charleroi area were communal groups, such as craft guilds or informal groups of acquaintances who happened to work at the same place mine or mill. These groups were local, small and their members'

Aux urnes! citoyens! formez vos bataillons!
Marchez! (bis) que le progrès féconde vos sillons!

Place au travail que tout féconde!
Honte aux oisifs, aux exploiteurs,
Que notre ignorance seconde
Et qui vivent de nos sueurs! (bis)
Le jour est proche où l'homme utile
Occupera le premier rang:
Lui seul produit, verse son sang;
C'est lui qui rend le champ fertile.
Aux urnes! citoyens; formez vos bataillons!
Marchez! (bis) que le progrès féconde vos sillons!"

1 Jean Neuville, La concentration des forces ouvrières en Belgique, vol II; Des compagnonnages à la fin du XIXe siècle (Brussels: la pensée catholique, 1956), pp. 64-66.

organizational roles were relatively undifferentiated except in the case of the craft unions such as the Union des Verriers.[1] Recruitment did not depend on a test of intention, but upon circumstances, e.g. working in the same place, or upon inheritance as in the case of the glass blowers guild. These were a mixture of craft brotherhoods and semi-clandestine local ad hoc clubs.

The events in Charleroi mirrored the characteristics of the groups that were involved. Communal group violence generally has defensive goals, which was the case in Charleroi; the insurgents were attempting to stop a decline in living standards and protect their jobs against lay-offs. To accomplish this they demonstrated their discontent in order to awaken the authorities to their plight.[2] In this sense the Charleroi communal-type groups' actions were similar to earlier cases of communal group violence such as the food riot, anti-conscription rebellions, anti-tax riots and the machine-breaking riots in England in the early 1800's. Just as the 18th century riots in France those in Charleroi occurred on special occasions, on pay days, while their predecessors occurred on market days, harvest days or during a kermess.[3]

Certain communal groups were more violence-prone than others. Miners, steel workers and glass-makers, with an esprit de corps and

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1 Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence", p. 38.

2 Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspectives", pp. 36; Hobsbawm, Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne, p. 130.

3 Hobsbawm, ibid., pp. 16, 38.

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longer tradition of cooperation were often more militant than workers in other trades and industries.[1] Furthermore, in Charleroi, where industrialization and urbanization were more recent than in the older industrial areas such as Liège and Mons, the workers were less disciplined and more prone to collective violence. The Borinage miners who had a longer industrial tradition and who went on strike were often less prone to collective violence, because their fellow workers could mobilize support more easily.[2]

The main characteristic of the communal industrial violence in the Charleroi area – and this is typical of communal group violence in general – was its defensive and inarticulate nature. This is reflected by the targets of the collective violence, and by the types of groups involved, i.e. miners and glass-makers. Neither group's wage was below the national average.[3] This was particularly true of the glass-makers, whose average wage ranged between 1,150 francs to 2,250 francs for ten months;[4] some blowers made from 400-800 frs per month.[5] Yet these workers were among the most militant insurgents, and the targets of their violence reflects the defensive character of their actions. The worst damage the insurgents caused occurred at

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1 Hobsbawm, Les primitifs de la révolte dans l'Europe moderne, p. 128; Rokkam, p. 331.

2 Henneaux-Depooter, pp. 200-201.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, January 1, 1887.

4 Indépendance Belge, September 26, 1886.

5 "Incendie et Pillage du Chateau et des Verreries Bandoux, Acte d'Accusation", cf. Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

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Baudoux's glassworks; this was the most modern installation in the area, with a progressive employer and a relatively well paid work force of 600 people.[1] Yet this establishment was the only one which was completely destroyed.

The answer to this problem lays in the defensive nature of the collective violence. Baudoux's factory was a menace to the glass-makers' livelihood, because Baudoux's works had adopted a new process of production[2] which threatened to force other glassworks to reduce costs and wages, or even drive other glassworks out of business.[3] Furthermore, Baudoux had challenged the glass-makers craft tradition by arbitrarily raising work norms and hiring apprentices to do more and more of the work of the master blowers.[4] In pursuing this policy, he had received the support of other glass producers,

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1 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

2 R. du Sart de Bouland, Le duc d'Ursel, 1848-1903 (Tournai: Casterman, 1913), p. 205. "Le système dit des Fours à bassins qui venaient d'être installé dans les usines Baudoux, remplaçait par les fours des pots où se faisaient la fusion et l'affinage du verre. Il en résultait une économie considérable du combustible et de main d'oeuvre par la suppression de la manoeuvre des pots; une grande régularité de travail; une facilité pour les ouvriers souffleurs; mais aussi — et surtout — une capacité presque indéfinie de production".

3 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6; Letter, Depoitier to J. Van Scherpenzeel Thim, Directeur général de l'Administration des mines, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, Grèves, 1874-1889, n° 1018.

4 "Incendie et Pillage du Chateau et des Verreries Baudoux, Acte d'Accusation", cf. Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

but he brought on a confrontation between the artisan-workers and the glass industrialists amongst whom Baudoux came to be visualized as the driving force.[1] The workers mobilized against this threat. Destroying the Baudoux works or pillaging the owner's house was not a threat to the majority of glass-makers; and the miners, who formed a majority of the roving crowds, could not have cared one iota about what happened to the glassworks that they visited. They not only attacked the symbol of the power of industrial elites, but as far as the glass-workers were concerned, they also eliminated a potential menace to their jobs, their craft and their wages, and they defended their livelihood.[2]

It should also be noted that no mining installations were destroyed nor were the other glassworks completely burned down. Damage in these establishments would seem to have been tactical; it could very well have been done to paralyze them for a certain number of days. For example, by pulling out the gratings in the glass ovens, the workers knew that the work would be suspended for at least four days; they also knew that the adulteration of molten glass would

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 17, 1886.

2 J.P. Nettl, Political Mobilization (London: Faber and Faber 1967), p. 329. The spur to sudden increases in mobilization for collective violence is a defensive (conservative one — in protection of existing interests. This is espacially true of industrial violence in time of economic decline. "Even when this is not the case, and people do in fact for improvement or advantage, the mobilizational reference is still presented as defensive". Thus many cases of collective violence are initiated for conservative and defensive reasons and not for revolutionary motives.

delay production while the oven was cleaned. During this period, everyone would have to join the strike whether they liked it or not. Even destroying finished products could be in the glass workers interest since more would have been produced after the strikes in order to replace the destroyed stock. Thus much of the destruction was not necessarily blind and indiscriminate. It could very well have been tactically inspired.

The miners tried to paralyze the mines; they did not destroy their own livelihoods. Destruction at the mines was intended to stop production and maintain solidarity. There were, however, cases of apparently capricious destruction, looting and extorsion of industrialists estates. The strikers gathered "menacingly" before the homes of Joniaux [1], Managing-Director of the Charleroi-Nord colliery; Mockel,[2] Managing-Director of the Marcinelle-Nord colliery; the accounts manager[3] of the Gouffre colliery; Poncelet,[4] manager of the Houillères-Unies; Fromont,[5] Managing-Director of the Appaumée colliery; Clercx[6], Managing-Director of the Houillères-Unies; and Mondron[7], the glass factory owner, to name a few. The insurgents

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

2 Ibid.; Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

4 Meuse, March 29, 1886.

5 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

6 Ibid.

7 Report, De Busschere to Bosch, April 8, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

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also invaded the Abbaye de Soleilmont, an academy for young ladies, which the workers called the "Collège des Jésuites".[1]

This apparently indiscriminate violence also involved political and strategic considerations, even if one takes into consideration the behavior of potential deviants in any crowd.[2] All of these places were symbols of authority; furthermore money could be extorted from their owners in order to supplement lost wages and keep the strike going.

There are several problems in determining the composition of the bands of insurgents who committed much of the depredation in the Charleroi area. The only source of information on the composition of the crowds that were involved in the collective violence were the newspaper reports on the judicial proceedings, which – compared to those of today – were relatively detailed, but they were not systematic. The age of the indicted individuals, their professions and the specifies of the offense were often omitted. Furthermore, in many cases the participants were never caught and consequently they have left behind them no historical record of their activities. Finally, those who were detained were arrested in different places at dif-

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1 Réforme, March 28, 1886; Meuse, March 29, 1886; Gazette de de Liège, March 30, 1886; Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

2 Smelser, p. 260: "This movement from object to object stems not from a kind of emotional capriciousness which some have attributed to the mob, but rather from the fact that once a violent outburst has commenced, it attracts potentially deviant and destructive persons in the population. Participants represents a diversity of motivations; the attack may shift from one object of attack to another; indeed, different parts of the mob may attack different objects simultaneously.

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ferent times and they were usually tried in mixed groups. So it is virtually impossible to know the composition of each group which invaded specific establishments. In view of these limitations, it is only possible to propose tentative explanations concerning the composition of the various crowds.[1]

After examining the press reports of the cases of 700 individuals who were indicted during the disturbances in Charleroi, certain findings come to light. All the workers who participated in the violence lived and worked in the Charleroi area, only four of those whose birth place was given were foreign-born (2 from France and 2 from Germany), hence the violence was not carried out by "foreigners" or "outsiders", as asserted by the press. Where the sex of the defendants could be ascertained, 60 of the 650 cases (approximately 11 per cent) were women, and the rest were involved in various other trades.[2] The women's ages were distributed according

1 A detailed study of the Charleroi events would require an analysis of the municipal archives of all seventy-two municipalities in the Arrondissement de Charleroi. It would involve studying the police registers of each of these towns, as well as those of the Compagnie de Hainaut Gendarmerie in Mons. When I was in Charleroi, the city's archives could offer very little, and the provincial police archives in Mons had been destroyed during a fire. The documentation of those municipalities, which had not been deposited at the provincial depot at the A.E.M., most probably would have been just as spotty.

2 These statistics were garnered from newspaper reports on the trial of 700 individuals before the tribunal correctionnel of Charleroi and the Cour d'Assises du Hainaut in Mons, the provincial capital. Gazette de Charleroi, April 10, 12, 13, 20 and 24, 1886, May, 5, 12, 13, 27 and 29, 1886, July 3, 7, 14 to 16, 20 and 30, 1886, August 5 and 12, 1886, January 1, 1887; Gazette de Mons, July 4 and 8, 1886, August 1, 1886; Gazette de Liège, July 24-25, 1886.

to much the same proportions as the men. Over 60 per cent of those workers who were arrested were between the ages of sixteen and thirty; the youngest, most dynamic age group among the working population. Of the 590 men, whose ages were stated, 23 were between 10 and 15; 119 were 16 to 20; 131 were 21 to 25; 138 were 26 to 30; 75 were 31 to 35; 39 were 36 to 40; 36 were 41 to 45; 18 were 46 to 50 and 11 were over 51. There were few middle-aged or older workers among those arrested, because most of these people were miners. And miners aged more rapidly than other workers; by the age of forty most miners were ready to retire. Of the 647 cases where the profession was given, 480 of these were miners. On the other hand only 23 were glass workers; fifteen were steel workers; 44 were day-laborers; 23 were artisans and most of the remaining 52 were housewives.

Though the miners were the largest industrial group in the Charleroi area – there were 24,878 miners in the 3rd (Charleroi) mining district[1] – this alone might not account for the enormous proportion of miners involved in the violence. By examining the 982 charges which were levied against the 700 individuals, it was determined that 729 of these charges were specifically related to the mobilization of the strikes, i.e. infringement of Art. 310 which guaranteed the right to work and Articles 342 and 345 of the penal

1 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du directeur de la première division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et minéralurgique pendant l'année 1886, p. 70. See appendix n° 6 for the names of the collieries in Hainaut as well as the number of workers which were employed in each one, the annual production figures of the year 1886 and the number of pit heads for each colliery.

code against vagrancy, extorsion and begging in bands. Deprived of their relatively meager wages and lacking a strike fund, the miners turned to begging to keep the strike going.[1] The glass makers had higher wages; they were also better organized and were not as apt to be involved in begging; and since they were not involved in mobilizing support for the strike, they were not often involved in charges under Article 310. On the other hand, the glass makers were most often involved taking the lead in sabotaging the glass works, because they were most familiar with production processes and they had grudge of their own on this score.[2] These findings point up the significance of the relationship between the different professional groups and the types of collective violence in which they were to be involved as well as the types of age groups and professional groups which were involved in the collective violence, but they should not

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1 A case in point would best illustrate this type of offense. Aimé Raymacker, a 23 year-old miner from Charleroi was sentenced to four months in prison and costs by the Tribunal correctionnel on April 9th for "extorting food"!, cf. Gazette de Charleroi, April 10, 1886. He had been with a band of strikers begging for the means to stay alive. (As pointed out above, the relief and welfare system was already over-taxed by the normal unemployment during a depression. Besides, few of the middle class would have been amenable to the idea of subsidizing a strike through the facilities of the welfare system). Raymacker may have been involved in an incident which was described by the Peuple, March 29, 1886."Un groupe [of strikers] passant en face de la boucherie Duperroy ... obligea le boucher à distribuer sa viande. Il y avait une trentaine de kilos de viande... Les grévistes se sont mis à dévorer la viande crue".

2 "Incendie et Pillage du Chateau et des Verreries de Baudoux Acte d'Accusation", cf. Gazette de Charleroi, July 15 and 16, 1886; Meuse, July 16 and 17, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July, 17, 1886.

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be construed as absolute proof of the types of persons involved in the strikes.

The 700 cases of arrests represented a very small portion of the number of persons who were involved in the strikes. The number of persons in the groups which were involved in the mobilization process and which participated in the collective violence varied a great deal. On Thursday morning, March 25th, 150[1] workers marched from the Bois Communal colliery to call out the Nord de Gilly miners. By afternoon, this group had grown to 400[2] when it reached the Trieu Kaisin mine. The next morning, the 26th, 1,000[3] miners met at the Place de Gilly but the number apparently grew when the crowd began moving in separate groups in different directions. The group which headed for Charleroi that morning numbered "500 to 600"[4] persons; another totalled "600 to 700"[5] and a third "1,300"[6] according to a reporter of the Gazette de Charleroi who stood near the cross roads and saw the chanting miners swing past. The first group, which headed for the Brasseur works in Charleroi, the Charbonnages Réunis and then to the Jonet Glassworks, numbered "1,500"[7] by noon as the miners closed down one glasswork and mine after the other. By the

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1 Report, Maj.-Gen. Vedrine (Gendarmerie) to Lt.-Gen. Vander Smissen, May 13, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, No.BL/6.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 26, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1886.

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time, this, the most numerous and most destructive of the groups of strikers, had worked its way north to Lodelinsart (population 7,199) and Jumet (population 2,281) there were 3,000 participants.[1] When they reached the Baudoux works at 3 p.m. the band of strikers had been joined by other groups and totalled between "5,000"[2] and "6,000"[3] workers. The other groups which were engaged in mobilizing support for the strike were much smaller; "3,000 men marched through Marchiennes-au-Pont"[4] on the evening of the 26th; and "700"[5] other strikers got as far as Roux (population 8,319) when they ran head-on into the troops.

These groups, which were involved in the collective violence, represented a fraction of the total number of strikers in the Charleroi area. Initially, on the evening of the 25th, only 1,500[6] men, all miners, were on strike; but by noon of the 26th the number ballooned to 15,000;[7] by evening, there were 20,000 men on strike.[8] The strike peaked on the 27th. The Ingénieur en chef des mines, De-

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1 Letter, Depoitier to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, Grèves, 1874-1889, n° 1018.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

3 Ibid.; Indépendance Belge, March 27, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 28, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886.

4 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, March 29, 1886.

6 Ibid., March 26, 1886.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 28, 1886.

8 Patriote, March 27, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886.

poitier, reported that "the strike might as well be considered to be generalized throughout the metallurgical and coal mining establishments"[1] of the area. The Procureur du Roi, De Busschere, claimed that "100,000" workers and their families were on strike;[2] while the Journal de Charleroi claimed there were "40,000" people who were not working that day in the Charleroi area.[3] Due to the lack of national coordination, the strike in Charleroi peaked two days after the miners' strike in the Liège region had reached its apogy, and a day before the strike began to spread west to the Centre and the Borinage – where the movement never really got off the ground anyway. By the 31st, between 15,000 and 20,000 men were still on strike.[4] By April 5th, there were only 10,000 strikers who were

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1 Letter, Depoitier to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, Grèves, 1874-1889, n° 1018; Telegram, Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la Première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307.

2 Telegram, De Busschere to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

3 Meuse, April 1, 1886; Journal de Charleroi, March 31, 1886. The Etoile Belge, March 29, 1886, estimated that there were 50,000 workers marching in the Charleroi area. The population of the city of Charleroi was 20,664; the population of the whole area was about 150,000.

4 Etoile Belge, April 1-2, 1886, reported that 15,000 had returned to work in the Charleroi area by the 31st and that 20,000 men were till on strike. The Patriote, April 3, 1886, the Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1886, and the Réforme, April 3, 1886, put the figure on strike at 15,000. The Gazette de Liège, April 3-4, 1886, claimed there were 17,500 workers who were still on strike in the Charleroi area: Charleroi, 6,500; Gilly, 5,450; Fleurus, 1,500; Châtelet, 2,000; Marchiennes, 1,100; Jumet, 1,000; cf. also Peuple, April 14, 1886.

still holding out.[1] It was all down hill from then on.

The quantity of violence against property was particularly great, because the power of the insurgents had peaked a full twenty-four hours before the power of the coercive forces had been mobilized. Consequently, most of the property damage occurred on the 26th when the insurgents over-powered and out-maneuvred the coercive forces. Whereas the main bloodshed occurred after the first coercive forces arrived, during the night of the 26th and 27th, but before the troops were strong enough to overawe the strike movement. The troops had arrived too late to prevent the mobilization process from gaining momentum. In other words, the authorities had not counter-mobilized rapidly enough and they had, thereby, lost control of the situation. By the 27th, only bloodshed could now restore order. This is a classic and often fatal error in dealing with any form of insurgency.

According to General Vander Smissen, "there was nothing to lead one to suspect that a strike would break out" on the 25th.[2] Not one company had been sent to the other industrial centers during the crisis in Liège in anticipation of trouble elsewhere.[3] Charle-

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1 Patriote, April 6, 1886; for day by day reports of the progression of the strike in the 3rd mining district see the reports of the Ingénieur en chef, Depoitier to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 30 and 31, and April, 1 and 2, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, Grèves, 1874-1889, n° 1018.

2 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Here we shall only be concerned with the numbers of coercive forces which were deployed against the insurgents in Charleroi. The motivations, tactics and strategy behind repression, carried

roi's forces were wholely inadequate to stem a major insurrection. In all Hainaut there were approximately 300 gendarmes of which only one hundred at most could be within operational distance of Charleroi.[1] These combined with the militia and police could not have totalled more than 600 men.[2] The Charleroi garrison consisted of two battalions of the 1st Chasseurs à pied or about 450 to 500 men.[3] These troops could either protect Charleroi or they could be sent to the surrounding towns, but they could not do both. The commander of these troops, Col. Kerrinckx was obliged to divest Charleroi of its troops when at 0400 hours on the 26th he sent one bat-

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out by the authorities, will be discussed in Chapter IV in the context of the reaction of the political and military authorities to the overall crisis, i.e. throughout Wallonia as well as Charleroi. In that chapter, we shall discuss the general problems involved in carrying out counter-insurgency measures and how they were related to the manner in which the authorities initially defined the issues and the adequacy of the information that the various levels of officialdom (municipal, provincial and national) received. How clearly the local officials in Liège and Charleroi evaluated the situation, how this effected the strategy and taches of the military authorities; what was the state of military -civilian relations, particularly in Charleroi; and the reaction of the press to all these aspects of the military repression form a separate problem distinct from "objective" facts of the insurrection, which are being dealt with here. In other words, here we are concerned with what happened in chapter IV, we shall deal with why coercive measures were carried out in a particular manner, and this of course was closely related to the initial attitude of the authorities.

1 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Conseil provincial du Hainaut. Session de 1886. Recueil des procès-verbaux des séances, p. 371.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

3 Report, Jules Audent, Bourgmestre of Charleroi to C. Allard, Secrétaire communal, April 5, 1886, (A.V.C.), Archives de la ville de Charleroi MSS, "Grèves Mars 1886: Dossier Défense".

Col. Kerrinckx could not bring his battalions up to full strength. When the alert was called, many troops straggled in very slowly. Fifty men showed upon the night of the 25th; 250 on the

talion to Châtelet and 3 companies to Couillet.[1] Even when Charleroi was stripped of troops, Kerrinckx had deployed his troops too widely in the surrounding area. He assumed that they would be able to head off all the insurgent bands. Throughout the 26th, industrialists, mayors ... everyone wanted troops, but there were not enough to go around.[2] Even where troops did manage to head off a group of strikers, they were often too weak to stop them. For example, on the morning of the 26th, 25 gendarmes were swept aside at Châtelet;[3] that afternoon some 6,000 rioters easily repulsed three charges by a mere 30 lancers,[4] and after that "not a képi, not a set of stripes could be seen on the horizon".[5] Actually, the first reinforcements,

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26th; 50 on the 27th, and 20 more on the 28th. This was not a very rapid mobilization. Gazette de Liège, April 6, 1886.

1 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6; Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

2 Letter, Depoitier to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, Grèves, 1874-1889, n° 1018; Letter Depoitier to Arnould, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la Première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307; Telegram, De Busschere to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B; "la troupe est impuissante" cf. Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 28, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 26, 1886, reported that the industrialists in Roux had been begging for troops since 9:30 a.m. on the 27th, but to no avail. "L'autorité militaire a compris mais trop tard à mon avis que le seul moyen de rétablir l'ordre c'était d'envoyer dans toutes les communes importantes des troupes ...", cf. Letter, De Busschere to Bosch, April 8, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B. See also Cicular by Duc d'Ursel, March 29, 1886, Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Année 1886. Première partie comprenant les Arrêtés, Circulaires, Instrucions et Avis officiels (Frameries: Dufranc-Friart, 1886), pp. 189-190.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

4 Ibid.; Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, March 27, 1886.

one squadron of the 4th lancers, arrived from Tournai at about 11:00 a.m. on the 26th.[1] But only one platoon got into position in Roux by evening.[2] During the night of 26th and 27th, four more squadrons from the same regiment, along with 2 battalions from the 3rd Chasseurs arrived.[3] Here again these troops were inadequate. The 3rd regiment only had one company in Roux facing at least 700 strikers.[4] During the 27th large numbers of troops began arriving. By the evening of the 28th, there were between 8,000 and 12,000 troops in the Charleroi area.[5]

The odds had definitely shifted in favor of the coercive for-

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1 Ibid., March 28, 1886; Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886. The 4th Lancers' sent a platoon to Roux which arrived soon after the 3rd Chasseurs' company, came upon scene.

5 Nine regiments were deployed in Charleroi: 2 battalions of the 3rd Chasseurs à pieds; 3 squadrons of the 4th Lancers; 3 battalions of the 1st Infantry; 3 battalions of the 6th Infantry; 2 squadrons of Lancers; 4 squadrons of light cavalry; 3 battalions of the 2nd Infantry; 1,000 Carabiniers; and the 1st Chasseurs. Together they totalled 8,000, according to the Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886, the Réforme, March 29, 1886, and the Meuse, March 29, 1886. The Gazette de Liège, April 6, 1886, claimed there were 12,000 in the Charleroi coal fields.

But these troops were not considered adequate. When on the 28th news that the strike was spreading into the Centre, the authorities were fearful of pulling any troops out of Charleroi to help the authorities in La Louvière; cf. Réforme, March 28, 1886.

To supplement the troops, the municipalities in industrial Wallonia had to create "patrouilles bourgeoises" since the troops could not protect all the towns. Cf. Indépendance Belge, April, 1, 1886; Telegram, De Busschere to Bosch, March 28, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223; Copy Letter, G. Mabille, Bourgmestre of Roeulx to A. Ansiau,

ces. No further major destruction occurred; all of the pillaging and damage occurred during the 26th when the balance of power was entirely in favor of the strikers. Estimates of the damages varied a great deal. General Vander Smissen reported 23 million 80 thousand[1] francs of destruction; the Indépendance Belge asserted that there was 4 million 220 thousand[2] francs of property damage; while totals of individual cases reported in other newspapers ranged from 3,580,000[3] to 3,350,000 francs.[4] This figures all seem inflated;[5] the only establishment to suffer complete devastation was the Baudoux works; and Baudoux, himself allegedly admitted that he could have his facilities operating for 300,000 frs.[6] (He had actually

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Commissaire d'Arrondissement of Soignies, April 7, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Roeulx, "Registres de la Correspondance envoyée, 1885-1888, n° 31.

1 Report, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, May 1, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6: 1,000,000 frs damages to the glassworks north of Charleroi; Baudoux, 2 millions; Charbonnages de Martinet, 20 millions (no confirmation of this could be found); glassworks in Roux, 80,000 frs.

2 Indépendance Belge, May 7, 1886; Baudoux, 4 millions; Verreries nationales, 145,000 frs; Société des Glaceries (Roux), 16,000; Jouet, 16,000; Charleroi industrialists claimed 75,000 damages.

3 Peuple, April 8, 1886; Copy Letter, Audent to Col. Kerrinckx, April 7, 1886, A.V.C., "Dossier administratif"; Patriote, March 26, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 30, 1886, reported that the damages were distributed in the following propositions: Baudoux, 3 millions; Jouet, 100,000; Roux, 100,000; Verreries Nationales, 300,000; and Etoile works, 80,000.

4 According to the Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886 reported only 40,000 frs damage at Jonet's and only 200,000 at the Verreries Nationales; While the Meuse, March 29, 1886, reported only 50-60,000 frs damage in Roux.

5 Réforme (Progressive-Liberal, Brussels), April 2, 1886.

6 Indépendance Belge, May 7, 1886.

claimed 4 million francs[1] for damages). In view of these considerations, 2,500,000 francs seems nearer to the actual value of the losses incurred by the industrialists.[2] Ironically, the losses which occurred equaled only half the 5 million francs which the authorities spent for the military repression.[3]

Furthermore the local authorities were saddled with the obligation to reimbourse the industrialists for their losses; for according to law dating back to the French revolutionary regime, the municipalities were held responsible before the burgers for any losses that were incurred because the township did not maintain law and order. The industrialists sued the communities and these were paying off the claims until the outbreak of the First world war.[4]

Though the press reports made the strikers out as very menacing characters carrying "rifles",[5] "clubs and picks",[6] "drunk",[7] and "armed to the teeth", with "guns, dynamite, clubs and axes",[8] not one soldier, militiaman, gendarme or policeman was shot or, for that matter, even seriously injured. There was, however, one military fatality, a captain became so excited when his battalions ar-

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1 Réforme, April 4, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

3 "Notes relatives à la grève [no signature]", July 2, 1886, A.V.C. MSS, "Defense"; Indépendance Belge, May 7, 1886.

4 Réforme, April 2, 1886; Houdez, 122.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

6 Ibid.

7 Réforme, March 28, 1886.

8 Meuse, March 29, 1886.

rived in Charleroi that he had a heart attack.[1] All the casualties were borne by the insurgents' side; because of their superior organization, discipline and weaponry, the coercive forces had a massive superiority in firepower which more than made up for their smaller numbers (It is for this reason, that few insurrections could succeed without the support of some portion of armed forces). Officially the number of killed, during the two shootings at Roux on the 27, was nineteen,[2] while the number of wounded totalled 11 or 12.[3] A few days later, an additional striker probably died from wounds inflicted at Roux, and another died at Gosselies, according to the Gazette de Mons,[4] which brought the total of dead to 21 as reported by Vander Smissen[5] and the Meuse.[6] The Gazette de Liège went as far as claiming that 27 persons eventually died at Roux.[7]

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

2 Journal de Charleroi, March 29 and 30, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 28 and 29, 1886; Meuse, March 29, 1886; Indépendance Belge, March 30, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 30, 1886.
The Patriote, March 29, 1886 and De Busschere in a letter to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B, reported were 17 killed at Roux.

3 Patriote, ibid., reported 11 wounded; Indépendance Belge, March 30, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 29, 1886, both reported 12 wounded at Roux.

4 Gazette de Mons, April 5, 1886. On March 29th, two persons were killed in Carnières, perhaps the Gazette was referring to this incident, when it mentioned one death in this town.

5 "90 cartridges fired; 21 killed; 10 wounded" reported Lt Gen. Vander Smissen in his report to Gen. Pontus, May 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

6 Meuse, August 11, 1886.

7 Gazette de Liège, August 11, 1886.

These estimates are the most conservative ones. Most probably there were others who were carried off by friends to die at home. The fact that there were quite a few unsubstantiated reports of other casualties cannot be merely brushed off as rumor. Ingénieur en chef Depoitier, reported 2 deaths[1] at Montigny; the Meuse reported a total of 42 killed[2] (but it did not give their names); the Patriote reported that there were ten killed at Marchienne-au-Pont.[3] Furthermore, many of the "100"[4] wounded probably died later on, because the troops were often armed with large-bore weapons (Albini rifles), which fired soft bullets that splintered bones and cause a great deal of internal damage.[5]

While the authorities were carrying out body counts, "the jails were overflowing".[6] De Busschere, the Procureur du Roi in Charleroi, complained that he did not have enough personnel to prepare indictments, and that even without counting the vagrancy and extorsion cases, there were so many cases to deal with that "we will not be able ... to punish everyone ...".[7] There were at least 700 arrests

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1 Telegram, Depoitier to Arnould, March 29, 1886, A.G.R. MSS Archives de la Première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307.

2 Meuse, March 29, 1886.

3 Patriote, March 29, 1886. The Etoile (Brussels), March 27, 1886, reported 9 killed and 32 wounded in the skrimish and fire at the Baudoux works, 19 killed and 28 wounded at Roux and 3 killed at Aizelles.

4 Gazette de Mons, April 5, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 30, 1886.

6 Report, De Busschere to Bosch, April 8, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

7 Ibid.

perhaps as many as one thousand in the Charleroi area.[1]

As the army gradually regained control of the situation in the Charleroi area, the troubles threatened to continue spreading west into the 3rd mining district, the Centre-La Louvière, where the authorities anxiously awaited the arrival of bands of mobilizing strikers. On the 27th, the miners of pit n° 2 of the Beaulieusart colliery at Fontain-L'Eveque went on strike and then they marched to the colliery's pit n°1 to call out their fellow workers.[2] Strikes also broke out at the Bois de la Haie (Anderlues), Courcelles Nord, Monceau-Fontaine, Falnuée and Viernoy, Houssu collieries.[3] On the same day Henri Lévy, Procureur du Roi in Mons, reported that the situation in La Louvière and Haine-St-Paul was becoming "menacing" and that Mons could not spare any troops.[4] But this was a false alert; the strike did not spread on the 27th or on Sunday the 28th. Finally on 29th, the crest of the strike movement finally rolled into the Centre with its 22,600 miners.[5] The authorities mustered

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, April 10, 12, 13, 20 and 24, May 5, 12, 13, 27 and 29, June 2, July 3, 7, 14-16, 20 and 30, August 5, 12, 1886, January 9, 1887; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 4 and 8, August 1, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 6 and July 24-25, 1886.

2 Letter, Henri de Simony, Ingénieur en chef des mines, 2nd District to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018.

3 Letter, de Simony to Arnould, March 29, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la Première inspection générale des mines, Mons, n° 307.

4 Telegram, Henry Lévy, Procureur du Roi, Mons to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, n° 223B.

5 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la Première division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et minéralurgique pendant l'année 1886, pp. 68-

citizens' militia, police and whatever troops could be spared to try to keep the strikers of Charleroi from making contact with the Centre miners. The opposing sides collided at the Bascoup colliery's "Placard" shaft in Mariemont, when 300[1] mobilizing strikers, marching from the Charleroi fields[2] to garner support from the Centre's miners, crashed into one company of the 7th Infantry.[3] The troops sent a volley crashing into the strikers killing two and wounding twelve others,[4] including a little girl.[5] These casualties had not prevented the strike from spreading beyond Mariemont, all the way to La Louvière's Sart-Longchamp mine where 500 workers quit work.[6] Nevertheless, all the other important collieries withstood the strike movement; there was only a partial strike at St-Algonde, at La Louvière colliery and at one of the pits of the Charbonnages de Mariemont.[7] Only seven of the region's 20 collieries were affected,

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69. Cf. also Appendix n°8.

1 Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886. The strikers came from "Forchies or Pieters" and 20 strikers were shot according to the Gazette de Liège, March 30 and 31, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Report by the managing-director, Lucien Guinotte, October 4, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives du Charbonnage de Mariemont, Fonds I, "Procès-Verbaux des Séances de l'Assemblée Générale, 1882-1886", n° 26.

4 Report by the managing-director, Lucien Guinotte, May 4, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives des charbonnages du Bascoup (Mariemont, Fonds I), "Procès-Verbaux des Scéances de l'Assemblée Générale, 1881 1888", n° 130; Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886.

6 Telegram, Levy to Bosch, March 29, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B; Letter, de Simony to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 29, 1886, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018.

and even among many of these, only a minority joined the strike.

The strike also reached the 1st mining district, i.e. the Borinage-Mons area with its 27,500 miners working in 20 collieries and 57 pits. At noon on Monday, March 29th, 106 miners at two of the Charbonnage les Produits' seven pits, which employed 3,125 men, went on strike. At the little Ciply mine, all 358 miners were on strike, while at the Levant du Flénu only 204 out of 3,826 workers went on strike.[1] Tuesday, n° 6 at Hornu et Wasmes lost "42 per cent" of its work force, while the Grand Bouillon shaft in Dour lacked "13 per cent" of its work force.[2] At the Levant du Flénu only lack 4 per cent of its work force was on strike; at Bonne Veine only 24 out of 469 were on strike, at Ciply there were only 50 men still holding out.[3]

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7 Letter, de Simony to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 30, 1886, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018.

1 Letter, Renier Malherbe, Ingénieur en chef, 1st District to Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 29, 1886, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018. Lévy and Cap. Liégeois of the gendarmerie exaggerated the number of strikers at the Produits and Levant du Flénu. Perhaps they did not know that many of those they thought to be on strike had actually been layed off earlier because of overproduction; cf. Telegram, Lévy to Bosch, March 29, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B; Report n° 157, Cap. Liégeois, Commander, Compagnie du Hainaut, probably to Lévy, March 29, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

2 Telegram, E. Dejaer to De Moreau and Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 30, 1886, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018. Because of the urgency of the situation lower officials often communicated news immediately to the ministers or departmental heads.

3 Telegram, Malherbe to De Moreau and Van Scherpenzeel Thim, March 30, 1886, Archives de l'Administration générale des mines, n° 1018.

Actually the strike in the Centre-La louvière and in the Borinage-Mons region was still-born; for in those few places where the strike broke out, the miners were already returning to work on the 31st, Wednesday.[1] The troops which had been sent into the area on the 30th were really unnecessary.[2] There was, also, some trouble in the quarries and mines north and west of Mons in the Tournaisis and around Soignies, but these were only the final convulsion of the insurrection. It had already been crushed on the 27th in Charleroi.[3]

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1 Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886. "Au Levant du Flénu et au charbonnage des Produits, à Flénu, les deux tiers des ouvriers sont retournés à la besogne ce matin; on espère que la reprise du travail sera générale demain.

Au différentes fosses de Quaregnon, de Boussu et de Dour, le travail n'a pas été interrompu et continue comme d'habitude".

2 Ibid., March 31, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1886. The authorities probably panicked in view of what had happened in Charleroi. Lt Gen Vander Smissen telegraphed Pontus on March 29, 1886, that he was "receiving more requests [for troops] than ever before during the crisis", cf.A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6. The initial deployment of troops in the Borinage was composed of the 8th Infantry and 2nd Chasseurs; Wasmes, 3rd battalion, 8th Infantry and a platoon of cavalry; Hornu, 2 companies, 2nd battalion, 8th Infantry and a squadron of cavalry; Bois-de-Boussu, one company, 8th Infantry; Dour, one company, 8th Infantry; Warquignies, one company, 8th Infantry; Pâturages, two companies, 8th Infantry; Cuesmes, on company, 8th Infantry and One company of the 2nd Chasseurs; Flénu, two companies, 2nd Chasseurs; Quaregnon, 2 companies from the 8th Infantry and 2nd Chasseurs, cf. Gazette de Liège, April 2, 1886.

A week later there were 7,639 officers and men deployed around Mons, "Note", undated, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

The Gazette de Liège, April 1, 1886, reported that the French authorities in Maubeuge had deployed troops along the border to prevent the strikes trom spreading into the French coal fields. Two strikes had already broken out at Roubaix and the French were taking no chances, cf. ibid., March 28, 1886.

3 Strikes broke out at Quenast, Ecaussines, Lessines and Tournai, cf. Telegram, A.O.A. Leschevin, Procureur du Roi, Tournai to Bosch, April 2, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général,

No longer able to mobilize massive support for a strike, the more militant among the workers resorted to clandestine resistance in the form of symbolic terrorism. The terror was directed against the symbols of the economic and militarily authority. At Roux, where the workers had been shot down, the quarters of the commanding officer were almost blown up.[2] At Corn festu (Centre), the managing director of the St-Algonde colliery, Mr. Panaux narrowly escaped injury when someone blew out the front of his home with dynamite.[3] The same happened to the home of the managing director of the Viernoy colliery[4] as well as to a mine director in Gilly.[5] Everywhere in industrial Wallonia, dynamite stores were checked, guards increased and arms distributed among "responsible" citizens.[6]

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1 Thornton, p. 73.

2 Réforme, March 31, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, April 2 and 3-4, 1886.

4 Ibid., April 16, 1886.

5 Ibid., June 19-20, 1886.

6 For examples see, Letter, Petit, managing director, Charbonnages du Val-Benoit to d'Andrimont, April 5, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Police de la ville de Liège, n° XLIII, A; Copy of a letter, L.G. Vereycken, Bourgmestre, Jemappes to E. Stockart, Commissaire de police, March 28, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Jemappes, Fonds II, "Police, Registres aux Procès-Verbaux et Correspondance principalement avec le Procureur du Roi, 3 mai 1885 - 28 mars 1886", n° 684, "Il y a actuellement 19 caisses de dynamite dans les magasins de la Moirette, des malintentionnés pourraient se servir de ces engins, près de M. Vanderkelen, une grande quantité de capsules pour cartouches de dynamite dont les malfaiteurs pourraient également se servir. Il serait peut être prudent de signaler cet état de choses à l'autorité supérieure [to Lévy?]". In Roeulx, there were requests for armed guards to protect persons and property, cf. Minutes, signed by G. Mabille, Bourgmestre, April 7, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Roeulx, "Délibération du collège échevinal, 1827-1901", n° 14.

Though tensions continued through spring, the strike was over in all the industrial areas by the beginning of April.[1] The end of the strike is only of passing interest to the subject of this study; thus the statistical details of the return to work movement will be left to others. Lt Gen. Vander Smissen returned to Brussels on April 7th and turned over the Hainaut command to General Wellemans. He issued his final ordre du jour before he left: "Order has been re-established in Liège, Namur and Hainaut; everywhere the decent workers have returned to work with confidence. The right to work will still have to be protected for awhile in certain areas, but gradual withdrawal of troops to their garrisons ... will continue".[2] A few weeks later the two classes of reserves had also been demobilized; the fires were out; the bodies were buried.[3]

The 1886 industrial rebellion was neither a revolution, i.e. an attempt to overthrow the existing ruling coalition and install a new one; nor was it merely an industrial jacquerie, a reaction to economic deprivation. Collective violence is closely related to the political, social and economic context in which it occurs; and this context, as was seen in the beginning of Chapter II, was rapidly evolving toward complex new industrial urban relationships. The 1886 strikers occurred at a moment when Belgian society was in far more profound travail than it had been in 1868-69. In the intervening

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1 Patriote, April 4, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, April 8, 1886.

3 Ibid., June 19-20, 1886.

eighteen years tremendous advances in urbanization and industrialization had occurred; more factories and mines, more and larger cities and above all a larger work force had developed in industrial Wallonia. The old exclusive worker organizations such as guilds were threatened as the workers saw an increasing need for mutual aid societies, strike funds, industrial unions and national political organizations such as the P.O.B.[1] The first embryonic efforts had occurred in this direction in the mid of 1880's and the insurrectional strikes accelerated the trend. On the other hand, old fashioned organizations still existed and their goals remained conservative and professionally protectionist. The events of 1886 reflected both the conservative and the modern aspects of industrial relations. Many, particularly the glass-blowers were engaged in an industrial jacquerie to protect their old professional status, many miners were defending their jobs against lay-offs, higher work norms and wage cuts. They engaged in communal rioting much as that which had occurred in 1868-69, but on a much larger scale. However, there was also a new element which tinged the 1886 events.[2]

The political atmosphere had evolved, the threat of a new challenging coalition, composed of all the discontented peasants and

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1 De Camps, pp. 193-194, describes some of these nascent organizations, e.g. cooperatives like the Vooruit in Ghent, the various Maisons du peuple, new mutual-aid societies and Sociétés de résistance, as well as trade unions which were particularly active in Verviers.

2 Van Kalken, Commotions populaires en Belgique, 1834-1902, p. 97.

workers who had demonstrated their potential strength in stark terms seemed to be a distinct possibility; especially if the Progressive-Liberals could agree to lead such a populist movement. The insurrection boded the potentiality of a new inter-class coalition, that would be united in support of the downtrodden. It would be based upon a program which would revize polity-membership criterion in favor of workers, soldiers, progressive bourgeois and peasants through the establishment of universal suffrage. And it could be led by a new national better-organized coalition of trade-unions, the P.O.B. and the Progressive mavericks of the Liberal party. The workers had demonstrated the potential power which they could wield. If they had been propertly led and organized, and if they had been able to coalesce into a power bloc with other key elements, such as the army, the peasantry, the P.O.B. leaders and the left-leaning intellectuals, the insurrection would not have been a rebellion, but a revolution. Though this latent political potentiality, loomed over the events of 1886, it did not materialize. It did, however, make the insurrection politically far more significant than the preceding industrial jacqueries of 1868-69. This latent looming threat, in itself, sufficed to heighten the political significance of the events. This possibility was illustrated by the situation of the Belgian peasantry. Initially the peasants were non-contenders in the insurrection of 1886.[1] They however had every reason to be discon-

1 In examining the cases of 700 individuals who were involved in the acts of collective violencé, of the 647 cases where the individuals profession was given, only one was a farmer.

tented; for as it was pointed out above, the depression and foreign competition was driving agricultural prices down and the beef tariff bill was stalled in Parliament. The peasants were thus potential allies for the workers. However, instead of gaining their support, the insurgents alienated the peasantry and people in the villages. Lacking organization and a strike fund and driven out of the industrial towns by the troops, the workers formed roving bands to solicit funds throughout the countryside. The mayor of Lantin, a small town (population 575) in the Liège area complained to Governor Pety de Thozée, that "bands of coal-miners, numbering 5, 10, 20, 50 and more", were "going from house to house to beg for food and money which the inhabitants dared not refuse".[1] The villages and rural areas were stripped of coercive forces who were engaged in the industrial areas.[2] The mayor of Noville-lez-Fixhe remarked: "we do not have anyone to protect us from the strikers".[3] The villagers claimed that the bands of strikers that were marching behind "red flags" extorted money by "menacing" the inhabitants. Actually the line between extorsion and begging was hard to draw; such bands would have

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1 Letter, N. Paque, Bourgmestre, Lantin to Pety de Thozée, March 25, 1886; A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV C.

2 Letters, J.F. Debrassinne, Bourgmestre, Wihogne (population 310) to Pety de Thozée, March 25, 1886; A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV C.

3 Letters, G. Streel, Bourgmestre, Noville-lez-Fixhe (population 285) to J. Demarteau, Commissaire d'Arrondissement, Liège, and Pety de Thozée, March 23, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV C.

inspired fear even if they asked, instead of demanded, alms.[1] Furthermore, the roving bands of strikers interrupted road communications between town and country and thus they cut off many peasants from their markets; market days in many towns were probably cancelled. The strikers activities "sow terror among all the villages",[2] the inhabitants "[dared] not leave their homes at night".[3] Nothing moved, the countryside was paralyzed while the inhabitants "barricaded themselves in their homes",[4] "fearing attack from one moment to the next".[5] Finally the villagers armed themselves with the encouragement of Lt Gen. Vander Smissen,[6] and they greated the begging workers with rifle volleys.[7] Threatened by the strikers, cut off from the local markets, the villagers finally became hostile toward the insurgents.

The workers also tried to win over the troops. In its edition of March 27-28th and 29th the Flemish organ of the P.O.B. in Ghent, Vooruit, published an appeal by its editor in chief Edouard Anseele, "Readers! ... at Seraing and vicinity, they [the bourgeoisie] are

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1 For examples, see Letters, E. Hallet, Commissaire d'Arrondissement, Waremme to Pety de Thozée, March 24 and 28, 1886; C. Piérard, Bourgmestre, St-Nicolas to Pety de Thozée, March 21, 1886; Telegram, V. de Clercx, Bourgmestre, Avins (population 931) to Pety de Thozée, March 25, 1886, all in the Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV C.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, March 25, 1886.

3 Meuse, March 24, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 25, 1886.

5 Meuse, March 24, 1886.

6 Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886.

7 Journal de Bruxelles, March 30, 1886.

forcing the troops to fire on the people. We can't stop this fratricidal affair. But you, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, loved ones, you can! Write immediately to your relatives and friends in the army; beg them, in the name of all that is dear to them, not to fire upon the people!" "The rulers and the rich are making murderers out of your children! The strikes are breaking out everywhere. Soon all soldiers will be forced to become the assassins of the people for the sake of the exploiters".

"Fathers, Mothers! Stop these crimes! Don't let your children soil their hands with the workers' blood. Write to them immediately, if you don't know how to write have someone do it for you and remind them that their mothers and their relatives are all workers and that they themselves will be workers once they are freed from the army's yoke! Plead the cause of humanity and the love of the people ..."[1]

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1 Gazette de Liège, May 19-20, 1886; Ami de l'Ordre, May 26, 1886. The workers in England also made appeals to the coercive forces not to fire on their fellow workers.

"You are Workingmen's Sons.

When we go on Strike to better Our lot which is the lot of your Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters, You are called upon by your Officers to Murder Us.

Don't do it ...

Don't you know that when you are out of the colours and become a 'Civy' again, that You, like Us, may be on strike, and You like Us, be liable to be Murdered by other soldiers.

Boys, Don't Do It.

'Thou shalt not kill', says the Book.

Don't forget that!

It does not say, 'unless you have a uniform on'.

No! Murder is Murder

Think things out and refuse any longer to Murder your Kindred." Cf. Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 26.

It is difficult to assess the direct impact this editorial had upon the soldiery. While some of the officers viewed the situation without qualms and said that "'if anyone does not obey, stick a bayonet in his gut'",[1] the troops did not relish the idea of shooting compatriots.[2] The Gazette de Charleroi affirmed that the strikers "were convinced that the officers were the only ones who fired at them".[3] In support of this assertion the Gazette claimed that "all the wounds had been inflicted by revolver bullets whereas the troops fired into the air".[4]

Vander Smissen was worried about the morale of his men. When he received reports that the anarchist organ, Ni Dieu, ni maître, was circulating among the enlisted men, he demanded that his subordinates establish enquiry commissions to check into the situation.[5] He also advised all commanding officers to develop "theories" for explaining to the men in "every necessary detail, what this anarchist movement really was, with all the arson, brigandage and horrors which had been committed in the Charleroi area and which the soldiers must repress". They should tell the troops about "the cries of indignation which" arose "from the breasts of all Belgians". The officers should also describe how "honest people of all classes" were "arming themselves to help the army beat back these scoun-

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1 Réforme, March 26, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 25, 1886.

4 Ibid.; Patriote, April 4, 1886.

5 Ibid.

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drels".[1] General Vander Smissen also informed Parliament that "some fairly serious incidents of indiscipline" had occurred, during the deployment in Liège and Charleroi.[2]

The army held a Court Martial in Mons to try the cases of 86 men for various acts of indiscipline.[3] Three men were tried for assaulting railway personnel and shouting "Vive la République!", while entraining for the fighting in Wallonia;[4] others had "menaced their officers" and one had even attempted to shoot his superior.[5] The sentences ranged from a few days in the stockade to death by firing squad.[6] The fact remains, however, that the army repressed the insurrection in Charleroi in two days, and no trace could be found where a unit broke ranks to join the insurgents and thereby tilt the balance of power in favor of the workers. The cases of indiscipline seemed to be isolated affairs.

Besides the support of the soldiers and peasantry which would have provided greater numbers for the insurgency, the movement needed elite leadership. If their is an art of revolution, as Malaparte has suggested, it does not involve making or subduing unrest, instead it involves capitalizing on the opportunities that the vio-

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1 Gazette de Liège, April 5, 1886.

2 Ibid., February 11, 1887.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., April 1, 1886; Gazette de Mons, May 9, 1886; Indépendance Belge, March 28, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 9, 1886.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 9, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, February 11, 1887.

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lence provides and then leading the movement.[1] The potential allies who could have provided such leadership were the middle class Progressive dissidents[2] of the Liberal party and the P.O.B. The eventuality of a coalition between the left wing of the middle class and the P.O.B. hung over the insurrection. The Temps of Paris quoted a Belgian socialist who referred to Janson, the leader of the progressives, as a "friend" of the working class.[3] There was also talk in February of an "entente" between the P.O.B. and the Progressives regarding the municipal elections, where the working class had the right to vote since 1883.[4] The right wing Liberals and the Catholics were certainly suspicious of any overtures toward the P.O.B.[5] Frère-

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1 Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars", p. 141.

2 It is extremely advantageous for the insurgents to gain the support of dissident middle class groups such as intellectuals, the upper strata of the bureaucracy and highly idealistic middle class politicians. These elements can often paralyse the coercive counter measures, because of their influence within the ruling polity coalition.

3 Le Temps (Paris), April 4, 1866.

4 Peuple, February 13, 1886; Bertrand, Souvenirs d'un meneur socialiste, vol. I, p. 250.
A year later at the Progressive Convention, Progressive leaders such as Janson and Jules Guillery (M.P.) were still calling for a rapprochement with the working class. Janson: "Saluons aujourd'hui ... l'union du peuple et de la bourgeoisie pour qu'enfin la Révolution de 1830 faite pour le peuple et par le peuple, tourne réellement au profit du peuple!" Guillery: "Il faut ... que nous donnions la main à la classe ouvrière." Meuse, May 30, 1886.

5 The Doctrinaire Liberal Indépendance Belge, August 10, 1886, warned the middle class not to "line up under the red flag of the Peuple" or the "pink flag" of the Réforme. The Meuse, March 30, 1886, called the Progressives "discredited rose water republicans". The Journal de Bruxelles (Catholic) warned the Progressives that they "would not keep anyone from doing his duty" during the repression of the insurrection, cf. March 23, 1886.

Orban even accused Janson of being a Socialist in disguise. But the Socialists, such as Bertrand, were just as suspicious; they saw the Progressive overtures as an effort to draw the working class constituency away from the P.O.B.[1] Besides, neither party was a revolutionary party. Both could sympathize[2] with working class but neither was prepared to lead it on a revolutionary course.[3] Thus though the potentiality of a coalition of challengers to the ongoing political order existed, it never materialized. Still the insurrection made this potentiality far more significant politically.

The looming eventuality of such a coalition paralleled with the quantitative significance of these strikes. Estimates of the overall number of workers in both Liège and Hainaut who were involved in the strike ranged up to 150,000[4] strikers and down to approximately 40,000 or 50,000 persons.[5] Even if the conservative figure

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1 Bertrand, Souvenirs d'un meneur socialiste, vol. I, p. 261.

2 The Anseele's Ghent Federation of the P.O.B. decided to send 5,000 loaves of bread to the strikers, but as was seen earlier, their agents in Wallonia advised against continuation of the violence and the strike, Bertrand, Edouard Anseele, sa vie, son oeuvre, pp. 50-51.

3 In an 1886 election speech, Anseele explained that the Socialist party's program was to be obtained through a strategy of peaceful democratic action as befitted a reform party. "[Ce] que nous demandons, c'est la paix, c'est la résolution, sans secousse, de la question sociale ... Nous ne voulons pas de moyens violents... Si la lutte des classes continue, notre pays court aux abîmes". Cf. Etoile Belge, October 25, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 31, 1886.

5 See above regarding numbers of strikers involved in the insurrection of 1886 in this Chapter for the figures and references for each of the main coalfields as well as, Réforme, March 31, April 2, 3 and 4, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 6-7, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1886; Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, March 31,

were accepted, the strikers of 1886 were far more serious than those of 1868-69 when approximately 15,000[1] workers were involved. The 1886 strikes seemed to augur Sorel's cataclysmic general strike, which would bring the whole political, social and economic order to a grinding halt. Never before in Belgium had such large numbers of strikers of so many different types of industries acted at the same time; never had the bourgeois apocalypse seemed so near at hand.

In view of the numbers of insurgents involved in the strikes, the geographic extension of the strikes and the number of different types of industries which were affected, the authorities had to carry out and coordinate a nationwide repression which required the mobilization of two classes of reserves. When the strikes broke out there were 24 to 44,000[2] men under arms. These proved insufficent in view of the gravity of the situation. On March 27th, the 1882 and

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1886; Report n° 10bis, Cap. Grégoire, Compagnie de Liège, gendarmerie to Pety de Thozée, March 22, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIV B; Telegrams, De Busschere to Bosch, March 27, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B. According to the industrial census of 1888, there were about 1,200,000 industrial workers in Belgium about 50 per cent worked in Liège and Hainaut, cf. Indépendance Belge, April 5, 1888 and Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 8, 1888.

1 See Chapter I regarding total number of strikers in 1868-1869 strikes.

2 The opposition Liberal press, particularly the Gazette (Brussels), March 30, 1886, had claimed that only 24,000 men were on active duty (not counting these who were sick or on leave), Beernaert and his Minister of War, General Pontus, claimed there were between 44,750 and 44,732 men in the army on March 18th, cf. Times, March 31, 1886; Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1886; Peuple, April 5, 1886 (43,000) and a signed letter (perhaps a copy) from Gen. Pontus to King Léopold II, April 13, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

1883 classes of reserves were mobilized, raising the number of troops to between 39,000 and 60,000[1] men, of which approximately 20,000[2] were involved in the events in Wallonia.

The official number of dead for Hainaut and Liège was 24 and the number of wounded was 26. But unofficial estimates ranged up to 50 or 60 persons and the number of wounded totalled as many as 100 serious injuries.[3]

The number of arrests could have reached 2,000 persons. At least 1,000 persons were eventually tried, convicted and jailed, be-

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1 The Gazette, March 30, 1886, claimed that the two classes totalled 14,000 to 15,000 men which brought the strength of the army to 39,000 men. The Catholic Ami de l'Ordre, March 31, 1886, asserted the two classes totalled 16,000 reservists. The most probable figures were given in an unsigned undated report by an unsung hero of the Ministry of war bureaucracy, cf. A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6, who claimed that the army totalled 39,948 men on March 26th, that the reservists who were actually mobilized numbered 12,093 men, giving a final figure of 52,001 men at the end of the strike. He concluded: "D'après les projets de répartition des troupes en cas de grève générale ou de troubles éclatant simultanément dans toutes les parties du pays l'effectif qui était sous les armes en 1886 après le rappel des deux classes de milice de l'infantrie n'était pas encore suffisant pour parer à tous les besoins. On peut donc dire qu'il faudrait d'au moins 60,000 hommes".

2 Ami de l'Ordre, ibid. According to the same report, on April 12th the army still had 139 officers and 3,307 enlisted men in the Liège area, 69 officers and 1,136 men in the Namur area, 277 officers and 6,561 enlisted men in the Charleroi area, 311 officers and 7,328 men around Mons and 48 officers and 1,102 men in the Tournaisis, or a total of 840 officers and 19,614 men (20,454) in industrial Wallonia, if one adds a mobile reserve of 83 officers and 2,070 men which was deployed until the evening of April 9th. See also "Situation des troupes employées dans un but de sécurité au 12 avril 1886: Récapitulation des forces stationnées dans les divers centres, Tableau n° 2", December 12, 1894, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Cf. various figures given in Chapter III for the Liège, Charleroi and Mons and Centre coal fields.

cause they were still imprisoned three months after the strikes were over.[1] There were 200 convictions in Liège and the surrounding area, and most of the rest were in the Charleroi area.[2] Fifty persons were eventually tried before the Assizes courts for serious acts of violence: 19 for pillaging the Formont estate at Ransart, 22 for sacking the Roux glassworks, and 23 for burning the Baudoux works.[3] There were also a series of political trials of working class leaders such as Alfred Defuisseaux, Roche Splingard, Edouard Anseele and Edouard Wagener, which will be discussed in Chapter IV regarding the judicial repression.

Besides the large number of persons who were involved in the insurgency and the potential danger that a new inter-class coalition of contenders might emerge as a result of the violence, there was also the prospect that the insurrection might engender a civil war. This can perhaps best be calculated by applying Tilly's and Amann's criteria of 'multiple sovereignty' in determining revolutionary situations. In 1886, the insurgents were potentially numerous enough to overwhelm the weak Charleroi garrison and establish a revolutionary counter government, a commune with its own territoriality. Such a regime would have been able to compete with Brussels for the loyalty of the rest of the populace.[4] On the 26th, the insurgents out-

1 Gazette de Mons, August 3, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, August 11, 1886.

3 Gazette de Mons, July 10, 1886.

4 Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence", p. 84; Amann, p. 39.

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numbered the city of Charleroi garrison by ten to one, but as things turned out insurgents had no intention to march into Charleroi and organize a Commune, and then risk a civil war. But the Gazette de Charleroi certainly envisaged the possibility. On March 28th, the newspaper noted that "large numbers suspicious characters" were "circulating within Charleroi, while other groups" were "trying to break in". The leadership at the Hotel de Ville feared that "the strikers planned to take Charleroi as a center of action".[1] The night before, the "besieged" city was alerted to the threat of a break-through at the Marcinelle bridge gate; all the revolving bridges were turned in so that no one could cross the river into the city, and a battery of artillery rushed to defend this portion of the town.[2] The Patriote called on the burgers of other Belgian cities to organize their own defenses because of the lack of regular troops.[3]

The events had raised the question of whether or not the revolution was at hand. The significance of events of 1886 was that they included all the potential ingredients of a revolution; a large mass of insurgents acting more or less together; the latent threat of a challenger coalition; and finally the possibility of the establishment of multiple sovereignty. The issue at hand is to determine how the political and industrial elites perceived the political significance of the insurrection.

1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Patriote, April 2, 1886.

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CHAPTER IV

THE MIDDLE CLASS OPINION LEADERS' PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION

The middle class' reaction to the insurrection can probably best be studied through the comments in the Liberal and Catholic press. There were the two broad partisan divisions within the 120,000 odd people who were wealthy enough to qualify to vote in national elections and who in fact formed the ruling coalition in Belgium's polity. The Socialist press, embodied in the french-language Peuple of Brussels and the flemish Vooruit in Ghent, was still at an embryonic stage in its development – the Peuple was only a few months old when the strikes broke out. It is probably a safe proposition to assume that the Belgian "bourgeois" seldom took a copy of one of these "upstart" newspapers with him to read in the "Café de la Bourse".

The middle class' reaction to the insurrection unfolded according to a thematic and, to a certain extent, chronological model, which parallelled the reaction of the authorities. At first the press attempted to explain what had occurred in terms of the etiological context of the strikes. It also tried to define the issues which were at stake in order to mobilize support for the on-going political system and clarify the urgency of the situation. Chronologically, most of the press focused on this theme during the events

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themselves. Once the insurgency subsided and the survival of the dominant coalition was assured, tensions among the polity members tended to increase as they jockeyed to improve their position in view of the new situation that had been engendered by the strikes and disorders. During this, the second stage, a new theme emerged. The industrial and political opinion molders tried to relate the new situation to the traditional issues; but the debate was still carried on in terms of the old rhetoric. Chronologically this stage more or less overlapped the third stage of the reaction of the middle class press; during this stage the "social question" began to emerge as a major issue in itself, as an issue upon which future political coalitions could rise or fall. This stage became a quasi-permanent theme of Belgian politics between 1886 and 1889. This latter theme loomed over the final development of the reaction during the summer and autumn of 1886 until the Throne speech, when the press made various proposals for legislating a solution to the social crisis.

Here the dissertation is only concerned with the opinion-making elites of the Belgian press and not with the political authorities. The political authorities' reaction (i.e. the authorities decision-makers; those who actually possess and use the imperium of the state) and the manner in which press commented upon their use of statal power to deal with the new emerging social issues, will be dealt with in Chapter V. Though the attitudes of the press and the municipal, provincial and national authorities were similar and

often related to each other due to a cross-fertilization of ideas and beliefs, their functions were basically different. Whereas the press influenced and was in turn affected by the reaction of the political authorities, the ultimate implementation of counter-measures fell upon the government leaders — they alone had the coercive and economic resources to bring about any changes.

Both the political authorities and the middle class industrial elites were thoroughly alarmed by the events of March 1886. "Bloody collisions",[1] "Terror in Charleroi",[2] "Pillaging, Destruction"[3] blared the headlines of both the Catholic and the Liberal newspapers. As "panic reigned supreme"[4] among the ruling classes, the good burgers of Wallonia volonteered for military service in view of the "menacing situation".[5] Appeals for all "men of good will"[6] to serve in the "municipal guard"[7] units were broadcast in Charleroi. In Liège, a gunsmith sold out his entire stock of 260 revolvers in four days.[8] The industrialists of Fontaine-L'Eveque offered their workers the day off with pay, hoping thereby to buy the benevolence of the

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

4 Ibid.

5 Meuse, March 29, 1886; Meeting of April 7, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Roeulx, "Délibérations du Conseil communal, 1883-1893", n° 8; Meeting of April 3, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Roeulx, n° 14.

6 Meuse, March 30, 1886.

7 Ibid., March 29, 1886.

8 Patriote, March 27, 1886.

insurgents.[1] The manager of the Charbonnage de Wandre envisaged converting industrial buildings into housing units for the workers.[2]

Many residents in north Charleroi fled on the 26th to the southern part of town to spend the night with relatives.[3] Someone shouted "Fermez vos volets! fermez vos volets!" and the merchants of Ste-Marguerite street in Charleroi battened down the shutters of their store windows, but all that appeared was a gang of children led by a drunken woman.[4] Rumors that a contingent of "Anarchists had left Paris for Wallonia",[5] that the "Ghent Anarchists were marching"[6] on Brussels, that a "cache of petrol had been discovered on Fripiers street",[7] spread like wild fire. And while the imminent arrival of the Walloon insurgents caused all the hoteliers to close up and flee the Quartier Léopold which was next to the Luxembourg station,[8] municipal and national bonds on the Brussels Bourse were "literaly unsaleable".[9]

Fearing another upheaval, Charles Buls, Doctrinaire-Liberal

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 30, 1886.

2 Copy of letter, Malaise, Managing-Director to Suermondt, President, July 29, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives du Charbonnage de Wandre, "Registres aux copies de la correspondance expédiée entre 1882 et 1895", n° 1203.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 25, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, March 30, 1886.

6 Meuse, March 20-21, 1886.

7 Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1886.

8 Réforme, March 28, 1886

9 Journal de Charleroi, March 29-30, 1886; Times, March 29, 1886.

mayor of Brussels, decided to cancel the authorization for a public demonstration in favor of universal suffrage, which the P.O.B. had planned for June 13th.[1] Mayors Audent of Charleroi and d'Andrimont of Liège did not forbid the Mardi-Gras celebrations, but they did decree that "no one would be allowed to appear in the streets with a disguise or a mask.[2] The mayor of Seraing was not taking any chances either; the town council voted money to establish a direct telephone link up between the Hôtel de Ville and the gendarmerie barracks.[3]

During the insurrection, only the Progressive-Liberal Réforme systematically warned the citizenry against "absurd alarmist rumors".[4] It accused the "conservative" press of "sowing terrifying rumors"[5] and called on the populace "to keep calm and maintain sang froid".[6] Talk of the "social peril", and the "campaign of terror" were being used to justify protective measures which were "absolutely out of proportion" to the real situation, and which were directed

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1 Etoile Belge, March 21 and May 27, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, June 15, 1886; Réforme, March 22, 1886; Patriote, April 8, 1886; Gazette de Liège, May 27, 1886; Gazette de Mons, March 23, 1886.

2 "Copy of Audent decree of March 30, 1886", A.V.C. MSS, "Dossier administratif"; Réforme, April 4, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 31, 1886.

3 Rapport sur l'administration et la situation des affaires de la ville de Seraing, Année 1886 (Seraing: Martino-Paul, 1886), p. 11.

4 Réforme, March 21, 1886.

5 Ibid., March 23, 1886.

6 Ibid., March 29, 1886.

to preparing for a "regime of terror during the up-coming elections".[1] The Journal de Bruxelles, spokesman for Beernaert's Catholic government, replied by implying that the Réforme had incited the civil violence by taking a condescending stand on the insurgency.[2]

The Doctrinaire and Catholic newspapers acknowledged the disastrous economic and social etiological context of 1886; the Doctrinaire Gazette de Mons admitted that the "year 1886" was "one of the most terrible ones that the population had had to endure in a long time".[3] There was, however, nothing one could do about the iron laws of economics, and the Réforme and the Progressives were merely pouring oil on an inflammable situation which was beyond the realm of political action. The press tried to explain the causes of the crisis; yet at the same time, it affirmed that nothing could be done. Economic trends would have to take their course. The Liberal economist, Emile de Laveleye, blamed the problem on the "loss of foreign markets because of rising tariffs".[4] The Liberal Gazette de Charleroi quoted in extenso from an article by a French economist named Paul Strauss who, in the review Voltaire, had written that Belgian industry had "expanded too quickly", especially during the Franco-Prussian war, and that now the bottom had fallen out with

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1 Ibid., March 23, 1886.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, March 24, 1886.

3 Gazette de Mons, March 22, 1886.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 15, 1886.

the French and German reconversion to non-military production.[1]

Speaking before the Fédération des Cercles Catholiques in Verviers, the Catholic leader, Pierre Limbourg, asserted that the "crisis was due to overproduction throughout Europe".[2] Limbourg merely echoed Pirmez's two-year old apologia for the economic depression which he claimed was not a negative phenomenon since it was accompanied by falling prices which redistributed wealth in favor of the workers because profits fell more rapidly than wages.[3] Arnould, of the Administration des mines, pointed out that while wages between 1850 and 1885 almost doubled, the cost of coal had only risen by 57 per cent.[4] The Journal de Bruxelles, the Catholic spokesman for Beernaert's government, agreed with de Laveleye. It pointed out, with "unimpeachable statistics" in hand, that coal corporation dividends during the past year had only risen by 1.68 per cent.[5] Furthermore, falling prices stimulated consumer demand which in turn used up production surpluses; thus they "readjusted

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886.

2 Ami de l'Ordre, May 20, 1886.

3 Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique, p. 15; see also Nyssens, pp. 209-214. The Secretary of the Association charbonnière des bassins de Charleroi et de la Basse-Sambre, Stainier, completely agreed with Pirmez's analysis. "Nous sommes heureux d'avoir l'occasion de rappeler sur cette brochure l'attention de ceux de nos compatriotes qui s'occupent de la situation économique actuelle. Ils ne peuvent prendre un meilleur guide dans leur étude". Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des Séances, vol. II, Section E, p. 80.

4 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des Séances, vol. II, Section E, p. 80.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1886.

economic trends and laid the foundations for a new period of expansion".[1] In view of the descending prices, this was a "bargain-rate depression" for which, claimed de Laveleye, "one should be thankful".[2] Calling de Laveleye and Pirmez "false profits" and "augurers of servile wars"[3] whose theories were "out of touch with the times",[4] the Réforme was the only middle-class newspaper to challenge Pirmez's theories. Pirmez's Crise was a "monument to blind improvidence",[5] wages were declining faster than profits. The Réforme cited the same source that the Journal de Bruxelles had used, i.e. the Administration des mines' annual report. According to the Progressive newspaper coal industry wages had fallen during 1885 by 11 million francs, while profits had risen by 10 per cent.[6]

The right wing Catholic Ami de l'Ordre (Namur) blamed the whole problem on industrialization and urbanization which had excited the "greed and love of luxury of many peasants who sought their Mecca in the factory towns instead of in their rural villages". "Unleashed by the absence of religious tenets, and manipulated by political agitators", the working class had become a "loom-

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1 Pirmez, La crise: Examen de la situation économique de la Belgique, p. 11.

2 Indépendance Belge, August 9, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 12, 1886.

3 Réforme, April 5, 1886.

4 Ibid., September 9, 1886.

5 Ibid., September 29, 1886.

6 Ibid.

ing menace" to society.[1] Its Catholic confrere, the Gazette de Liège, agreed and added that the "steam engine had taken man's place";[2] wages dropped because machines were cheaper and more productive. Mechanization was causing unavoidable transformations which of course caused suffering and ruin.[3]

Transportation was modernizing, and distances between markets[4] shrank. French and German collieries, which were more productive, were stealing foreign markets and their products were even invading Belgium itself.[5] To remain competitive, Belgian collieries had to cut wages. Ironically, Belgian corporations had financed Franco-German competition. "Belgian capital had founded ... these competing firms; ... the Longwy, Athus and Grand Duchy fields had been developed with Belgian capital".[6] A Belgian industrialist writing in the Réforme concluded that "the crisis" was "due in large part to the larger industrialists' immoderate greed for ever greater profits. They had "lacked foresight"; yet the press was "trying to generate sympathy for the plight they had brought upon themselves".[7]

Passelecq, Managing-Director of the Charbonnage d'Amercoeur near Charleroi, blamed foreign competition and discriminatory

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, May 20, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, April 17-18, 1886.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 17, 1886.

4 Réforme, April 4, 1886.

5 Haveu, p. 7. "Haveu" was an alias for Emile Harzé, a high official in the Administration des mines.

6 Réforme, April 4, 1886.

7 Ibid.

tariffs for the decline in markets for Belgian coal; he called for preferential rail and barge rates for coal. Showing up the hypocrisy of the industrial elites, he proclaimed that "it did not make any difference whether the [state-run] railroads made a profit as long as private enterprise was succored".[1] Raising tariffs would only invite reprisals[2] and besides free trade was the bond that "governed civilization" and maintained international solidarity, while at the same time it "reduced the misery ... of the poor by reducing the cost of goods", according to the Doctrinaire Gazette de Mons.[3]

Quoting an English source, the Catholic Gazette de Liège asserted that the economy operated according to irons laws, and the drop in wages was a "natural consequence"[4] of these dictums. According to the Liberal Meuse, violence simply "paralyzed ... industry and took away the workers' only means of existence".[5] "Violence did not put bread on the worker's table",[6] agreed the Réforme. In view of this preordained situation the Doctrinaire Etoile Belge advised the working class to economize, pull in its belt, and realize that "once business" improved "the employers will be only too anxious to raise wages".[7] The middle class opinion leaders did not deny that

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1 Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886.

2 Etoile Belge, July 19-20, 1886.

3 Gazette de Mons, May 23, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, June 28, 1886.

5 Meuse, March 20-21, 1886.

6 Réforme, March 21, 1886.

7 Etoile Belge, July 19-20, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 26, 1886: "Il ne faut donc pas exagérer à plaisir la description de

the etiological context of the strikes was terrible in 1886, but Catholics and Doctrinaire Liberals agreed that in view of the mechanistic nature of the economic system, the free enterprise economy could do little for the working class until a general upswing set in.

How did the middle class preceive the precipitants of the insurrection? The Progressive Réforme led the way in pointing out the effect of wage cuts in generating the disorders:[1] "Wages had been reduced almost below the vital minimum".[2] The Journal de Bruxelles flatly desagreed, "wages ... had not diminished".[3] The Liberal Gazette de Charleroi and the Meuse asserted that the workers wage demands "were exaggerated".[4] In view of the laws of economics "absolutely nothing could be done in this area", said the Doctrinaire Indépendance Belge.[5] Besides, "the miners were no worse off than the unskilled laborers, glassworkers and steelworkers" and "they were better off than other workers such as agricultural laborers who did not complain as noisily about their plight".[6] Quoting E. Haveu, the

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la vie de mineur. Dans plusieurs de nos cantons charbonniers il faudrait, au contraire, leur prêcher l'épargne, l'ordre, la tempérance, l'esprit de conduite et surtout la modération dans les dépenses."

1 Réforme, March 22, 1886.

2 Ibid., March 27, 1886.

3 Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 25, 1886; Meuse, March 24, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, Septembre 15, 1886; see also Journal de Bruxelles, March 26, 1886.

6 Journal de Bruxelles, March 26, 1886; see also, Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des Séances, vol. II, Sec. E, p. 77. The Union des Charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège noted the same thing.

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Indépendance Belge noted that "the strikes broke out in the Liège area where the miners' wages had not declined as rapidly" as those in the other coal fields.[1]

The Progressive and the moderate Liberal press also took note of the arbitrary manner in which wage cuts were announced. "The cause of the strikes was not so much the reduction of wages as the manner in which these were announced and carried out. Nor were they always caused by the harassment [of workers] by foremen, and the petty vexations of shop rules".[2] The right wing Catholic Ami de l'Ordre could "not believe that the mining companies reduced wages without giving advance notice to the miners".[3]

The Journal de Bruxelles remarked: "Anyone who" had any "knowledge about the ... coal industry realized that the industry faced a very difficult future, prices had declined and competition had increased";[4] "many mines were virtually exhausted";[5] still others "were in the red and could hardly make ends meet".[6] Victor Tesch,

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1 Indépendance Belge, July 11, 1886.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4, 1886.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, March 26, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, March 26, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, July 3, 1886.

6 On the other hand there were other collieries which were doing fairly well, despite the depression; they reported profits, made plans to hire more workers, etc. Meeting of Board of Directors, April 5, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la S.A. des Charbonnages de Bonne Espérance, Batterie et Violette, "Registres aux procès-verbaux des réunions du Conseil d'administration 1884-1907", n° C79; Meeting of Board of Directors and Stockholders, April 5, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la S.A. des Charbonnages de Bonne-Espérance, Batterie et Violette, "Registres aux procès-verbaux des réunions de l'assemblée

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president of the Charbonnages réunis de Charleroi, warned a delegation of strikers that it was "absolutely impossible" to raise wages to four francs per day.[1] Another industrialist regretted that the Belgian "working class was not equal to the British working class. If they were intellectually more advanced it would be possible to discuss the facts of economic life with them".[2] "On the other hand", remarked the Réforme, "engineers and managerial personnel still ... earned up to 12,000 francs" per year. Such a large gap (1,200 per cent) between the workers' wages and managements' salaries could not but "strike the imagination of the worker".[3]

If, as some newspapers claimed, the miners had relatively little to complain about in view of the over all situation, then the glassworkers had even less reason to go on strike. The glassworkers were the "aristocracy"[4] of the working class. They had not gone on strike to prevent starvation-level wages. The glass blowers earned a "minimum of 12,000 frs per year";[5] not even a minister earned that

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générale et du Conseil général, 1885-1901", n° B8; Report of Managing-Director to Board of Directors, September 24, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives des Charbonnages de Bonne-Espérance, Batterie et Violette, "Rapports adressés au Conseil d'administration, 1886", n° C85; Report of Managing-Director, Amour Sottiaux, to Board of Directors, April 22, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives du Charbonnage de Strépy-Bracquegnies, "Rapports de l'administrateur-délégué au Conseil d'administration, 1878-1886", n° 18.

1 Etoile Belge, September 18, 1886.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, April 21, 1886.

3 Réforme, April 2, 1886.

4 Indépendance Belge, September 27, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, April 5, 1886.

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much!" Yet they "were behind the strategic sabotage"; for they alone had the required degree of familiarity with the glass production process.[1] Both the Catholic and the Liberal press clearly perceived the defensive nature of the glassmaker-inspired violence;[2] and they also comprehended the glassworkers' fear that the new production processes would threaten their wages and jobs.[3] But overlooking the problems associated with industrial mechanization, the Gazette de Mons drew the wrong conclusion from the explanation of this precipitant, when it asserted that the glassmakers revolt "had nothing to do with the social question".[4]

Neither the miners' strike, nor the glassworkers' strike was necessarily precipitated by starvation-level wage cuts, according to both Doctrinaires and Catholics. Le Hardy de Beaulieu, the dean of the Belgian Manchesterian economists, believed that "political issues were the main cause" of the strikes.[5] M. Collinet, a Catholic leader speaking before the Congrès Catholique des Oeuvres Sociales, spoke

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1 Indépendance Belge, September 27, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886: "Parmi les bandes on aurait vu plus d'un verrier et que d'autre part, ils ont employé contre certains fours a verre des moyens qui reclament la participation ou l'inspiration d'un homme du métier. Ce n'est pas un houilleur qui sait que le fer jeté dans le bassin de matière à fusion suffit à gaspiller tout le 'pot' en abimant a fond la marchandise".

3 Gazette de Mons, April 2, 1886: "Les verriers s'assuraient un véritable privilege en s'interdisant de créer des bâtards, c'est-à-dire d'instruire dans leur métier d'autres apprentis que leurs enfants".

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 15, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, May 5, 1886.

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of a "crisis of false ideas ... of impious ideas".[1] Emile de Laveleye hinted at the inroads that socialism was making among the working class as the "most profound and permanent cause of the disorders".[2]

A public debate also developed over the causes of the collective violence. The opinion leader of the challenging coalition, the Progressive-Liberal Réforme, naturally interpreted the precipitants of the violence in such a way as to diminish the credibility of the government. The initial deployment in Liège was "superfluous",[3] and it was itself "the most dangerous threat to public order".[4] The very presence of the troups "overexcited ... the working population".[5] According to the Réforme, the strikes had been "spontaneous", they were the result of blind frustration which was caused by the economic crisis; the authorities aggravated the tense situation by the "ostentatious shuffling of troops", which was accompanied by the "alarmist campaign in the doctrinaire and clerical press".[6] "A panic had taken hold of the authorities" as was shown by repressive measures and "above all by the exaggerations and false alarmist news

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1 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886 (Liège: Demarteau, 1886), p. 36 (minutes of the meetings).

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 15, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 22, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 23, 1886.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., March 22, 1886.

spread by the press".[1] Later, "the wild reaction of the Charleroi workers" was "a reaction to the panic of the authorities when the Liège strikes had broken out".[2]

The Journal de Bruxelles replied by expressing its "profound disgust" for the Réforme's revolutionary rhetoric, which was "the envy of the anarchist papers".[3] "The Réforme" was "imitating the rhetoric of the Decazeville communards".[4] "What", asked the Journal de Bruxelles, "would have happened if the precautionary measures had not been taken in the Liège area: It was not the presence of the troops that "provoked the violence; on the contrary it was their absence which must be regretted".[5] But the Réforme continued to blame the authorities for precipitating the violence. As late as July, it was pointing out that "the workers who" went on strike "were regarded as revolutionaries and public enemies. Their villages were besieged; they were surrounded by troops, they were prohibited from meeting, from demonstrating from leaving their homes — under pain of

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1 Ibid., March 27, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Journal de Bruxelles, March 24, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 25, 1886.

5 Ibid., March 28, 1886; see also March 29, 1886: "Hier [during the Liège disorders, Réforme] il dénonçait avec indignation le gouvernement parce que, par la'présence des troupes', il avait 'provoqué' les désordres de Liège; aujourd'hui [during the rioting in Charleroi], avec le même accent d'indignation, il dénonce le gouvernement parce que, à cause de 'l'absence des troupes', il a laissé les pillages et les désordres se commettre à Charleroi! Voilà la logique radicale".

death".[1] They were " presumed guilty before anything happened. The authorities immediately sided with the industrialists, and declared a priori that the workers would be wise to 'be good' and go back to work. The authorities refused to intercede for them, then they shot some, emprisoned others ...; and that was how the right to strike was interpreted".[2]

Catholic and Liberal newspapers agreed that the workers had the right to strike.[3] When, however, the "right to work was threatened"[4] by violent actions "which jeopardized the social order",[5] then the threats against the right to work must be repressed "with utmost energy".[6] When the strikers infringe on the right to work, then "society has the right and the duty to oppose them by force".[7] In its edition of March 29th, the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut stated that "for the moment, there was no question of searching out and solving the country's social problems", first, "order must be reestablished ...; for today, "the events speak fro themselves".[8] In view of this state of affairs, "law and order must reign supreme".[9]

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1 Réforme, July 9, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Indépendance Belge, March 26, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 29, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, June 26, 1886.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, June 26, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, March 26, 1886.

6 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, June 26, 1886.

7 Indépendance Belge, March 26, 1886.

8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1886.

9 Indépendance Belge, March 30, 1886.

"The nation's laws and institutions, must be defended just as they are, we will not allow any amendments by mob action .... The use of force is a cruel necessity".[1] The press had defined the issue as a struggle between law and order, on one hand, and revolution, on the other. The very existence of Belgian society seemed to be at stake as the headlines thundered about "Troubles Anarchistes",[2] "Désordres Socialistes",[3] "Désordres Anarchistes"[4] and "horreurs épouvantables"![5] The Doctrinaire Indépendance Belge warned that "class war"[6] must be avoided at all costs; the Catholic Ami de l'Ordre harked back to the "absolute nihilism" of the French revolution, of Pierre Kropotkine and of the Paris Commune.[7]

The manner in which the press defined the issues at stake affected its attitude toward the insurgents. If someone were fomenting a revolution, then the culprits had to be exposed. The press attempted to distinguish the mass of workers from the alleged instigators of the disorders. The decent workers who were involved in the violence had virtually gone mad in an "orgy of destruction".[8] Most of those who were involved in the disorders were "misguided individu-

1 Indépendance Belge, March 30, 1886.
2 Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886.
3 Journal de Bruxelles, March 20 and 21, 1886.
4 Gazette de Liège, March 29, 1886.
5 Gazette de Mons, August 3, 1886.
6 Indépendance Belge, September 9, 1886.
7 Ami de l'Ordre, March 25 and 31, 1886.
8 Gazette de Liège, March 27-28, 1886.

als",[1] who had been led astray by "loud-mouthed ranters".[2] Normally hard-working, law-abiding workers had been turned into "howling bands"[3] of "wildmen".[4] Honest labouring people had become "barbarian mobs"[5] of "pillagers who were in a state of delirium".[6]

Catholics and Liberals agreed that agitators were behind the 1886 insurrections. The Gazette de Liège flatly stated that the riots could be blamed on "the provocations of a few anarchists and the avant garde press".[7] The Gazette de Mons agreed that the agitators had an "enormous responsibility" with regard to the occurrences of March.[8] The press tried to prove this point by citing alleged activities of so-called agitators, by describing their modus operandi, by explaining why certain targets were chosen in terms of a precise plot and by trying to explain who the instigators were. The press made much of the fact that Wagener, an avowed Anarchist, had been involved in the demonstrations of March 18th in Liège. The Ami de l'Ordre complained that the authorities had allowed people of Wagener's ilk "to work in broad daylight to provoke the masses

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1 Patriote (Catholic), April 2, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

3 Gazette de Mons, March 23, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, March 20, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

7 Ibid., March 19, 1886.

8 Gazette de Mons, March 23, 1886. See also, Indépendance Belge, March 22, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 24, 1886.

against the government and against the wealthy class".[1] "Most of those who had been arrested following the Liège riot had revolvers and had their pockets filled with stones", which according to the Gazette de Mons, proved that the "riots were premeditated".[2] The Meuse wondered how a certain group of rioters had obtained several drums of kerosene for igniting fires.[3] The Journal de Bruxelles accused the Union verrière of having "taken over" the miners' strike in Charleroi in order to obtain "vengeance against the glass manufacturers".[4] In describing the situation in Seraing, the Patriote forewarned that "disorders had been announced" for the next day.[5] The Gazette de Mons and the Indépendance Belge noted that an Anarchist, named Prudent Zeller from France, had been arrested in Jemappes![6] The Ami de l'Ordre described how "an articulate individual who spoke perfect french and flemish" had harangued the crowd by "reeling off several passages of the Catéchisme du peuple".[7]

These agitators' modus operandi generally consisted of making "incendiary speeches"[8] "at outdoor meetings and in the bistros" of

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, March 24, 1886.

2 Gazette de Mons, March 21, 1886.

3 Meuse, April 5, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, July 16, 1886.

5 Patriote, March 22, 1886.

6 Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1886. See also Entries for March 29-31, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Jemappes, Fonds II, Police, Ordres et Signalements, 30 janvier 1885-1 janvier 1887", n° 655. Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886.

7 Ami de l'Ordre, March 25, 1886.

8 Gazette de Mons, March 23, 1886.

industrial towns.[1] The Catholic and Liberal newspapers also attempted to show that agitators had had a hand in fomenting attacks against specific targets such as the Baudoux glassworkers against which the leaders of the Union des verriers had had a grudge. How else could the sabotage have been as effective if glassworkers had not been involved.[2] They thought significant the fact that "the mobs travelled long distances several kilometers from one glassworks to another, which "proved" quite clearly that they were operating according to a precisely prepared plan of operation".[3] Most of the newspapers incorrectly assumed that a riot was either an act of blind rage and thus entirely apolitical and an aberration in the political system or else it was highly coordinated quasi-military operation conducted by a clandestine political organization's haupt quartier which manipulated the various bands from its hide out.

Who were the people of the alleged revolutionary organization that was fomenting the "revolution"? "The order has been circulated throughout Europe to prepare the way for the revolution"; according to the Catholic Ami de l'Ordre leader of the jew baiters and a fierce critic of Free Masonry, "this order came from the Loges".[4] Its Catholic confrère in Brussels, the Patriote, joined the Liberal papers in blaming the riots on a group of "déclassés, Prussian de-

1 Meuse, April 6, 1886.
2 Réforme, March 28, 1886.
3 Gazette de Mons, April 2, 1886.
4 Ami de l'Ordre, March 23, 1886.

serters and other bad elements".[1] Undoubtedly, "certain foreigners",[2] quite probably "Anarchist agitators who were in league with the local good-for-nothings",[3] were the people who were responsible for the riots. What kind of people, asked the Patriote were these "exotic trouble-makers"?[4] They were " depraved and perverted members of the middle class".[5] Even the Réforme noted that there were "quite a few Germans" among the strikers".[6] The Patriote claimed that the plot was fomented by the German collieries in order to eliminate Belgian competition; it warned the Belgian miners of the conspiracy to destroy their industry. "The German agitator-miners, who provoked the Belgian strikers, were sent in by the German coal companies. While you are idle, the German colliers are grabbing up all the orders and are working full time. Miners you are being duped!"[7]

In the immediate aftermath of the strikes, the Meuse thought that "the most important thing to do was to search-out these agitators and try to unravel and take hold of the various tentacles of this vast conspiracy which threatened to spread throughout the country".[8] "Those foreigners who have abused Belgian hospitality should

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1 Patriote, March 22, 1886.
2 Gazette de Mons, August 3, 1886.
3 Meuse, April 6, 1886.
4 Patriote, March 27, 1886.
5 Ibid., March 31, 1886.
6 Réforme, March 29, 1886.
7 Patriote, March 28, 1886.
8 Meuse, March 25, 1886.

be deported without trial, that is what must be done". The Meuse added that "it was not as if Belgium lacked workers, what it really lacked was jobs". This would probably mollify the Belgian workers who saw "the foreign immigrant as competitor".[1]

The Progressive Réforme disagreed with the Liberal and Catholic press that there was a conspiracy afoot that was allegedly fomented by agitators — foreign or domestic. The stories about an anarchist conspiracy were nothing but a "scarecrow" to frighten the people into supporting reactionary policies.[2] "Show us these alleged agitators", asked the Réforme.[3] In fact, asserted the Réforme, "the police and the district attorneys had not managed to lay their hands on a single agitator"; it was all a "fairy tale".[4] The Réfor-

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1 Ibid., April 6, 1886. To my surprise, I found no really significant correspondance relating to the alleged influence of"foreign agitators" on the insurrectional strikes in the A.G.R. MSS. Archives du Ministre de la Justice, Administration de la sûreté publique, Police des étrangers, Dossiers généraux, "Rapports avec la gendarmerie et les autorités militaires, Instructions générales, 1834-1896", n° 137, "Anarchistes étrangers non-résidants, Procès-verbaux d'interrogatoires, Renvoi 1883-1888", n° 142, "Dynamite, 1881-1886", n° 152, "Transport de poudres", n° 152, "Correspondance avec la Ministre de l'Intérieur, 1839-1889", n° 206, "Correspondance avec les pays étrangers et les représentants des puissances accréditées à Bruxelles, 1834-1913", n° 210, "Correspondance avec le Procureur général près de la Cour d'Appel de Liège, 1835-1901", n° 429, "Correspondance avec le Procureur général près de la Cour d'Appel de Bruxelles, 1839-1914", n° 430, "Correspondance générale avec la Procureur du roi à Liège, 1835-1914", n° 433, "Correspondance générale avec la Procureur du roi à Charleroi, 1886-1911", n° 438, "Correspondance périodique établie entre la gendarmerie nationale et la gendarmerie des pays limitrophes, 1886", n° 494.

2 Réforme, March 22, 1886.

3 Ibid., April 5, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 22, 1886.

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me took the opposite view when it asserted that the workers had been "driven to revolt by misery and despair",[1] caused by the "malevolent attitude of the ruling classes" and by the "oppression ... of the financial and industrial feudality", which was as sad and odious as the old landed feudality".[2] There was "absolutely no conspiracy" or "criminal intentions; ... misery was the only culprit".[3]

Neither the Catholic nor the Liberal newspapers were satisfied with this explanation. They mustered other circumstantial evidence in favor of the conspiracy theory. They over-emphasized the role of ideological precipitants and the fact that the strikes had broken out in several places in a short span of time. Therefore some national or international organization had provided ideological inspiration and homogeneity as well as inter-regional coordination for the insurgency. The Ami de l'Ordre noted that "the riots had ... broken out at diverse points in Belgium"[4] and were inspired by the same slogans "'Down with capitalism! death to the rich, long live dynamite!'"[5] The Doctrinaire-Liberal Journal de Charleroi claimed that the whole crisis was the "final conclusion of the exhortations of the Catéchisme" which had caused "antagonism between the bourgeoisie

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1 Ibid., March 27, 1886.

2 Ibid., August 3, 1886.

3 Ibid., April 5, 1886. "La grève, dont le nom seul effraye aujourd'hui, n'est qu'un fait économique parfaitement licite; mais sous les coups de fouet de la faim et dans la terrible ivresse qu'elle engendre, la grève dégénère aisément en excès et en violences".

4 Ami de l'Ordre, April 8, 1886.

5 Ibid., March 28, 1886.

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and the wage earners".[1] The same newspaper went on to imply that there was a "correlation" between the acts of savagery and the demonstration which [the P.O.B.] ... planned for June 13th".[2]

The P.O.B., allegedly acting under the orders of the International, had precipitated the strikes; how else, asked the Catholic and Liberal papers, could one explain that the "riots in Liège had followed the riots in London, Manchester and Amsterdam".[3] All this "proved"[4] that "the International played no small role in the movements".[5] The Association houillère du Couchant de Mons demanded that the authorities take all "necessary measures" to prevent any further meetings by the "agitators of the International and of socialism".[6] The international conspiracy theory was "a sham",[7] replied the Réforme; "The International had disappeared many years ago, but apparently the Meuse had not found out about it".[8] Nor was the P.O.B. responsible for the disorders. "The strongest and most deeply entrenched Socialist movement in the country was that of the Ghent workers whose program was peaceful".[9] The Réforme went on to quote a passage from the Vooruit, the Socialist organ in Ghent, which

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1 Journal de Charleroi, March 22-23, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Meuse, March 25, 1886.

4 Patriote, March 24, 1886.

5 Meuse, March 25, 1886.

6 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 453.

7 Réforme, April 2, 1886.

8 Ibid., March 26, 1886.

9 Ibid., March 21, 1886.

"disassociated it from the troubles in Liège".[1]

The Réforme counter-attacked; it hinted at the alleged activities of agents provocateurs in the area of the disorders. Why was the Doctrinaire-Liberal and Catholic press so bent on "aggravating the situation, frightening the public and implicating the working class in these disorders?"[2] Perhaps the authorities were trying to cover up the activities of agents provocateurs, who may have been charged with instigating an incident which would have opened the way for the government to crush the workers' movement once and for all.[3]

The Réforme was the only newspaper, which seemed to perceive the organizational (or rather the lack of associational) infrastructure of the riots, when it noted that those workers who were the least familiar with working class organizations were the most apt to become involved in the pillaging and destruction in Charleroi.[4] The Réforme thus correctly perceived the correlation between the

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1 Ibid., The Réforme quoted the Vooruit's reply to these accusations. "'Il est à remarquer que ces desordres sont produits precisément dans la ville qui compte le moins d'associations ouvrières. Dans ces circonstances on doit redouter a tout moment de pareilles bagarres'. Les ouvriers qui n'ont d'appui sur aucune association, qui ne disposent d'aucune force pour engager la lutte contre le capitalisme, ne peuvent recourir qu'à la violence."

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., August 22, 1889. Three years later as a result of a political scandal, it was revealed that the Administrateur de la sûreté nationale, Gautier de Rasse, had two agents provocateurs in the Charleroi area in 1886. Eight witnesses claimed to have seen these individuals among the crowds in Charleroi on March 26th.

4 Ibid., March 30, 1886.

lack of associational infrastructures and the potentiality for the outbreak of collective violence. Associational function-oriented groups, such as trade unions, with their superior organization, with training and expertise for mobilizing protests and political testing, generally avoided violence and "advised calm and attempted to head off trouble" whenever possible. Associational organizations such as trade unions,

> are, therefore, an element favoring order and social tranquility and a guarantee for industry, itself.
>
> And the reason is simple. There where the workers are organized, they are naturally led by the most intelligent ones among them, who become regular or habitual spokesman for their comrades.
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> If a conflict of interest between labor and management occurs, the negociations for an agreement can be more easily established between the two parties, both being represented.
>
> A breach in relations is more easily avoided. Or at least an understanding is reached more easily. When the industrialists only have an inchoate mass of workers before them, this lack of organization allows the [employer] to control their complaints, but this same weakness leads to the worst, most bitter, anger and explosions[1]

because of the break down of communications.

For the Liberal and Catholic press to admit this interpretation would have jeopardized its initial definition of the problem, i.e. that the social question did not exist. If the social question did not exist, the cause of the riots was not due to general misery among the working class, but rather activities of "outside agitators". The press' perception of the composition of the crowds was, therefore, colored by this initial assumption. Since the riots re-

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1 Réforme, March 30, 1886.

sulted from a conspiracy and since the mass of workers were not that badly off, then the mobs must have been mainly composed of all sorts of canaille, but not honest working men. The "savage hordes"[1] only included a "hand-full"[2] of honest workers who were "merely onlookers"[3] but they were not really precipitants. If they were eventually involved in the violence this was due to "copious libations"[4] and the "esprit d'imitation".[5] The Réforme pointed out that the press should make a distinction between the actual mobilizers and those decent workers who were forced to go on strike against their will.[6] Most of the rioters were "vagabonds and blackguards",[7] "Flemings from Ghent, Bruxellois and Germans [where the Socialists were well organized]"[8] and other sorts of "outsiders".[9]

No community wanted to live with the thought that its own inhabitants were actually capable of such class bitterness; for life in such a community would be ever after strained by inter-class tensions and fear. When the maverick Réforme claimed that "kids committed most of the damage"[10] during the Liège riot, the Catholic

1 Ami de l'Ordre, March 24, 1886.
2 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 3, 1886.
3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4, 1886.
4 Ibid., March 25, 1886.
5 Ibid., April 4, 1886.
6 Réforme, March 28, 1886.
7 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4, 1886.
8 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.
9 Gazette de Mons, April 3, 1886.
10 Réforme, March 21 and 22, 1886.

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Journal de Bruxelles, and the Liberal Indépendance Belge and Meuse disagreed,[1] and the Patriote claimed that "very few Liège workers" were in the crowds on March 18th.[2]

The press assessed the goals of the insurgents in a very contradictory manner. On the one hand, some extreme right-wing Catholic and Liberal newspapers remained true to the logic of the agitator - revolutionary theory and implied that the workers intended to overthrow the existing social order.[3] On the other hand, the Meuse thought there were no goals at all, except the "sterile pleasure of destroying things".[4] The Indépendance Belge minimized the whole Baudoux affair as just another "machine breaking incident";[5] and the Doctrinaire Liberal Précurseur of Antwerp wondered whether the "workers realized that science and industry were here to stay".[6] Others thought the working class had undergone a fit of nihilistic madness. "Will you get any satisfaction by breaking windows?" asked the Gazette de Mons.[7] The press assumed that the working class and the bourgeoisie were bound together by common interest and that the industrial destruction hurt the workers as much as it affected the industrialists. When the strikers wrecked factories, they elimina-

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, March 28, 1886; Indépendance Belge, March 26, 1886; Meuse, March 26, 1886.

2 Patriote, March 20, 1886.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, March 27, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 1,

4 Meuse, March 29, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, April 1, 1886.

6 Précurseur (Antwerp), March 22, 1886.

7 Gazette de Mons, March 22, 1886.

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ted jobs; and then "who will suffer most? It will be the worker", answered the Gazette de Charleroi.[1] While industries were paralyzed trains loaded with German coal were pouring into Belgium through the railway yards at Herstal.[2] It was like cutting off one's nose despite one's face in view of the economic solidarity between the two classes. Any strikes and riots were non-sensical in terms of the lot of the working class. This talk of management-labor solidarity was all very nice, but "real solidarity between the two would only become a reality when this principle" was "embodied in concrete actions and in the law" answered the ever present middle class maverick, the Réforme.[3]

Though opinion in the middle class press varied a great deal about the causes and precipitants of the violence as well as the composition of the mobs and the goals of the insurgents, all the newspapers which were consulted agreed as to the gravity of the situation. A sense of the approaching apocalypse of "class war"[4] loomed over the horizon. "Step by step misfortune advances upon us".[5] The crisis was characterized as a "formidable explosion of hate".[6] "For eight days" the country was "hanging on the precipice

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 31, 1886.

2 Ibid.; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 4, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 28, 1886.

5 Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, April 19, 1886.

of anarchy"[1] as "unbelievable scenes of vandalism" broke out "all around".[2] At first during the Liège crisis, the Réforme refused to be impressed; the Réforme nicknamed the Liège riot the "broken window demonstration"[3] and it considered that its importance was "over-exaggerated".[4] But after the events in Charleroi, the Réforme beat a hasty retreat to join its alarmed confreres. It was now the "gravest crisis that the country had ever faced".[5] "Belgium" was "on the verge of a great struggle".[6] "A social war with all its horrors" was imminent.[7]

Even after the military had regained control of the situation the fear remained. The Gazette de Charleroi warned that "the country" was "sitting on top of a volcano!"[8] "If there ever was a time of troubles" it was "1886".[9] The problem seemed to affect the whole industrial world. Speaking before the Cercle Saint-Ambroise, the Catholic lay-leader, Henri Francotte, stated that the "social ques-

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1 Patriote, April 2, 1886

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 26, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 22, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 21, 1886.

5 Ibid., March 30, 1886.

6 Ibid., November 2, 1886.

7 Ibid., March 29, 1886. "Une heure a passé sur le pays où l'on sentait tout vaciller, ordre social et institutions politiques: le sol se serait ouvert pour nous engloutir que l'on eût accepté la catastrophe comme l'inévitable conclusion d'un état de choses intenable désormais". Cf. April 12, 1886.

8 Gazette de Charleroi, June 2, 1886.

9 Gazette de Mons, August 3 and November 25, 1886.

tion presented itself in the same terms throughout Europe".[1] Belgium, however had the most at stake. As an artificial entity created by the common interest of the great powers, Belgium was supposed to be a neutral buffer whose only international raison d'être was its ability to defend its neutrality and thereby contribute to the stabilization of the balance of power. In view of the internal weaknesses that had been caused by the strife, the Réforme wondered whether the country was becoming the "sick man of Europe"; would it be liquidated by the same powers that had created it.[2] This was, however, a hypothetical question.

The press perceived more clearly the quantifiable gravity of

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1 Gazette de Liège, April 17-18, 1886, "En France, Decazeville montre dans toute sa hideur l'antagonisme entre l'ouvrier et le patron. En Allemagne, le socialisme s'est très souvent signalé par des attentats répétés contre l'Empereur, et il compte des représentants nombreux au Parlement. En Saxe, le parti socialiste est tout-puissant. L'Angleterre a eu, quelque temps avant nous, des scènes analogues à celles de Liège. En Russie, le socialisme revêt un caractère spécial de gravité et d'activité; il s'est attaqué maintes fois à la vie du Czar et des grands personnages de l'Etat. Dans ce pays, la propriété n'est plus respectée; les moyens violents sont employés.

En résumé, partout les classes inférieures sont profondément troublées, agitées et portées aux moyens violents pour améliorer leur sort. Tel est le premier caractère de la question sociale: l'universalité."

2 Réforme, April 12, 1886. "Mais l'Europe, qui a vu l'excès, s'interroge sur l'état du malade. Et si alors elle nous retrouve déprimés, stupéfiés, incapables d'une résolution virile ou seulement d'un examen réfléchi de notre état morbide, si elle ne découvre sur notre face que le sourire vague de l'inconscience devant le désastre, ou le regard louche de la défection devant le devoir, ou elle croyait une âme elle ne reconnaît plus qu'une guenille et où elle croyait une nation, elle ne voit plus qu'un troupeau. Et sur ce cadavre d'un peuple, bientôt vient planer l'ombre immobile du vautour chauve, attendant patiemment que la proie qui ne lui échappera plus, dégage l'odeur fétide de la maturité."

the insurrection in terms of the large numbers of insurgents and coercive forces, the number of arrests and casualties, and the extent of property damage. The Gazette de Mons ominously noted that there were "almost 100,000 miners in Belgium's coal industry: That" was "as many as there" were "in the army when it" was "on a war footing". Add to this "black army" its dependents and it "totals a half million souls, a tenth of the Belgian population".[1] Despite the fact that "every garrison in the country" was "on the march",[2] the troops were "powerless"[3] and were "unable to prevent the devastation".[4] The "existing army" was "inadequate"[5] and the country "would have to mobilize".[6] Even the day after mobilization when the Charleroi insurgency was already crushed, the Réforme wondered whether "the army would be strong enough to check this unprecedented rebellion".[7] In the meantime, the Charleroi prison was "jammed with people".[8]

The press had little to say about the numbers of casualties. One possible reason was that they were relatively few in number. Perhaps the authorities wished to hide the truth from the people,

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1 Gazette de Mons, May 7, 1886.

2 Ibid., April 1, 1886.

3 Indépendance Belge, March 27, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 26, 1886.

4 Réforme, March 27, 1886.

5 Ami de l'Ordre, March 27, 1886.

6 Meuse, March 25, 1886.

7 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

8 Meuse, April 5, 1886.

or more plausibly perhaps, as the Réforme correctly perceived, "the victims" made "every effort to escape" since they feared that they would be "denounced to the police if they reported to a hospital".[1] As to the gravity of the damage, the press was divided; on the one hand, there were those who spoke of "complete devastation"[2] and "extensive damages",[3] and on the other hand, there was the Réforme which tended to minimize the degree of damage and which pointed out that the reconstruction was certainly "not beyond the resources of the people".[4]

During the initial period of the strikes and in their immediate aftermath the press was mainly concerned with the immediate issue of mobilizing public opinion to realize the gravity of the situation, to understand what was at stake, and to support the efforts to crush the insurgency. These immediate problems were dealt with in an atmosphere of some tension. Once the emergency had receded and the tensions were reduced, the press tried to place the insurrection in political context. At first, political debate was still carried on in the rhetoric of past issues, which had heretofore dominated Belgian politics. That is to say, the politics of "the social question" were initially wrapped in, and related to, the Church-State relations question, which had dominated the country's

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1 Réforme, March 27, 1886; see also April 2, 1886.

2 Ami de l'Ordre, March 24, 1886.

3 Patriote, March 20, 1886.

4 Réforme, April 2, 1886.

politics since independence. Both the Catholics and Liberals asserted that one of the overall reasons for the civil disorders was the general decline in respect for law and order. Who was to blame for this state of affairs? The Liberals blamed the Catholics; for "anarchism" was "not alien to the principles of clericalism".[1] The Catholics had "made anarchy a reality",[2] when they sabotaged the implementation of the Liberal government's 1879 law which secularized public education. Priests "foamed at the mouth" as they vented their spleen against the law; they "instigated the people against public school officials", and they "sowed ... discord, hatred and disdain for law and authority".[3] The Catholic party had "openly resisted civil authority with the complicity of the clergy".[4] Thus they came to power in 1884 by "thumbing their noses at the law".[5] In view of its past behavior, how could "the government set an example for the working class?" asked the Journal de Charleroi[6]. For in their hands, the "power of the government has lost its prestige and moral authority".[7]

The Catholic press replied by claiming that public demonstrations were the standard Liberal method of political testing.

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1 Journal de Charleroi, March 29-30, 1886.
2 Ibid.
3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 12, 1886.
4 Gazette de Mons, June 6, 1886.
5 Etoile Belge, March 27, 1886.
6 Journal de Charleroi, March 29-30, 1886.
7 Ibid.

The Liberals were the real inventors of "mob rule".[1] It had been "inaugurated, with the use of cobblestones", during the riots of 1857; and "it was used again in 1872, to the chant of 'down with the phoney king'".[2] The same thing happened in 1884 during a demonstration led by a group of "grubby Liberal mayors, who told the king to 'listen to the voice of the people'; and each time the Catholic government had capitulated before the mob".[3]

The debate extended beyond specific issues such as law and order and the school issue. The historical role of Catholicism and Liberalism and the age-old dichtonomy between order and change confronted each other. The "deplorable events"[4] of March 1886 proved "that the country faced a profound moral crisis due to a gradual "perversion of ideas",[5] which was in turn related to the "absence of God"[6] and "the Christian spirit",[7] according to Bishop Doutreloup at the Congrès Catholique des oeuvres sociales in Liège. Modern society had forgotten that order and religion were interdependent; for "when moral restraint no longer exists, political restraint [also] disappears".[8] "Without God at the top of the hierarchical

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1 "Politique de la grande voirie".
2 Patriote, March 20, 1886.
3 Ami de l'Ordre, March 24, 1886.
4 Journal de Bruxelles, April 5, 1886.
5 Gazette de Liège, August 4, 1886.
6 Journal de Bruxelles, March 22, 1886.
7 Gazette de Liège, September 27, 1886.
8 Journal de Bruxelles, March 22, 1886.

moral order, the social order collapses into anarchy – "suppress God, and you suppress authority .... Contempt for the Church and its teachings engenders ... contempt for all authority".[1]

The belief in God made the working class passive and docile. The "decent worker who" followed "Christian precepts ..." knew "that there was a life in the hereafter where vice" was "punished and virtue" was "rewarded"; and he realized "that the present life" was "only transitory", consequently he did not "suffer without hope".[2] On the other hand, the worker, who was brought to believe that there was no God and that the only compensation in life consisted of satisfying his material appetites, presented an unfortunate image. This worker cultivated all the vices – "laziness, corruption and passion";[3] for such an individual, "God" was "only a hypothesis". And the sad consequences of his error were borne out by the events in Charleroi. The pillaging and arson were not organized by workers who believed in God, but by those who were not believers and who had no other religion except the belief in satisfying their appetites.[4]

Catholics claimed that unfortunately, "these workers" were "an exact copy of their employers, for whom [also] God no longer existed".[5] The working class had learned atheism from their Liberal

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, April 6, 1886.

2 Ibid. June 3, 1886.

3 Ibid.; see also, Journal de Bruxelles, March 22, 1886.

4 Ami de l'Ordre, March 22, 1886.

5 Ibid.

employers, because "liberalism had given birth to radicalism (Progressive-Liberalism) from which workers [had in turn] derived their socialism".[1] "Socialism" was "the masses' equivalent of bourgeois liberalism";[2] and "the Socialists demagogical tactics were the same as those employed by [Liberal bourgeoisie's] Free Masonry".[3] Like the Socialists, "Free Masonry" worked "relentlessly toward the destruction of religion, the Church and the royalty, i.e. toward the triumph of revolution, [and the resulting] overthrows, confiscations and proscriptions".[4] "Le libéralisme et la maçonnerie, voilà le socialisme et l'anarchie".[5] Their lies and slander incited the disorders and bloodshed".[6]

The Liberals argued that these nefarious activities which had been directed at the Church since 1789, were now comming back to plague the very people who had launched the anti-clerical movement. The revolution would now devour its own — the atheistic bourgeois industrialists. The revolution had begun with the rallying cry "à bas la calotte", "à bas les châteaux",[7] and now its rallying cry was "à bas le capital". The explanation was to be found in the logic of the bourgeois revolutionary impulses. Christ had said "fortunate

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, June 5, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, July 7, 1886; see also, March 27-28, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 4 and June 5, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, July 7, 1886.

4 Ami de l'Ordre, June 10, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, July 7, 1886.

6 Patriote, April 2, 1886

7 Ibid.

are the poor! ..., but materialistic liberalism" had "made poverty a mark of reprobation".[1] At the Liège Catholic Congress, the renowned French Catholic reformer, theComte de Mun, warned that ever since the 1789 revolution "materialistic greed" had "taken over".[2] From the "confused babbling of contemporary literature" arose "only one theme — the sad refrain of decadence: now! Sensual pleasure!"[3] The Liberal bourgeoisie had taken away the worker's soul and his belief in God and had replaced it with the belief in material wealth: The worker no longer desired salvation in heaven, he sought it on earth.[4] "The Liberal bourgeoisie began [in 1789] by saying that the clergy had stolen the [nation's] wealth, that the convents were amassing fortunes ..., that the monks were parasites etc. etc.",[5] and "today, the workers" were "told that the mines and factories" belonged "to them — so take them!"[6] In fact according to the Catholic press, "property" was "in graver danger than the Church. There" was "nothing left to take from the Church, but the Jewish bankers, industrial barons and rich bourgeois" had "estates, castles, farms, gold, fine horses and carriages ... and that "was what "tempted the famished, the impoverished and the déclassés" who

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1 Patriote, April 2, 1886.
2 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.
3 Patriote, March 31, 1886.
4 Ibid.
5 Ami de l'Ordre, March 28, 1886.
6 Ibid.

were "no longer restrained by the fear of God".[1]

The Liberals replied that the "jesuit press"[2] seemed to have overlooked the fact that the Abbey of Soleilmont had also been attacked.[3] These "Loyolist"[4] organs had the "impudence" to make unpatriotic accusations at a time of national emergency.[5] Furthermore these "black clowns" could only offer "one panacea";[6] the "Black International"[7] proposed a "reactionary solution" whereby society would become "pietist" and it would establish the "priest and the monk as the corner stones for the whole system. No thanks!", replied the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut.[8] This was typical of the Catholic Congress of Liège (September 1886) which, "like all other Catholic Congresses had plenty of speeches but not one new idea ... only narrow-minded proposals".[9]

After the ideological debate reached a crescendo, it began to be tempered by a new theme that was echoed in both the Catholic and Liberal newspapers. An effort was under way to adjust issue priorities in terms of the "new" problem that was confronting the country. As early as April, the Réforme called for an end to petty politics

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, April 17, 1886.
2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 1, 1886.
3 Journal de Charleroi, March 28, 1886.
4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 1, 1886.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., September 30, 1886.
7 Gazette de Charleroi, October 1, 1886.
8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 25, 1886.
9 Gazette de Charleroi, April 10, 1886.

"in view of the gravity of the situation".[1] At the same time the Impartial a Catholic newspaper in Ghent, was calling for the laying aside of past differences.[2]

Collinet, a Catholic lay-leader speaking before the Liège Catholic Congress, declared: "Let us admit [our errors], let us now resolve to make corrections".[3] After forty years of hunger, misery and social unrest, the Belgian middle class was in the process of "discovering" the social question.

Belgium joined Europe in making this discovery. "In the process of industrialization western Europe went through a period of serious social tensions. For a while this phenomenon became of the utmost concern to all men engaged in socio-political thinking and action .... [Everywhere]one spoke ... of 'the social problem' or 'the social question' in the singular to indicate its over-all importance".[4] The vaguest notion of the 'social question' as an ensemble of social problems related to industrialization was developed in German speaking countries. In Germany, 'Die soziale Frage' became very widely used, largely because of the predominant interest of Catholic writers.[5] In France, the discussion seems to have taken place more under the concept of 'organisation du travail' and of

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1 Réforme, April 2, 1886.

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 9, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, September 27, 1886.

4 Wolfram Fischer, "Social Tensions at Early Stages of Industrialization", Comparative Studies in Society and History, n° 6 (1966), p. 64.

5 Ibid., p. 65.

socialism. The social problem was seen as an alternative stage between the laissez-faire system and a completely new economic organization which would have to be either cooperative or state-directed or a combination of both solutions. In France, Spain and Italy, the approach was basically political rather than philosophical.[1] In Britain and the English-speaking countries outside of Europe, the term social question did not become a standard notion.[2] While in Belgium, the conception of the social question seemed to reflect the philosophical-German approach due to the influence of Catholic writers and the purely political approach of the Doctrinaire and Progressive Liberal spokesmen.

While not mentioned per se during the disorders of 1868 and 1869, the social question gained recognition and ascendancy among the various issues in Belgian politics in 1886. Hereafter, parties and leaders might stand or fall on the new prime issue. "Everywhere [in Europe] the labor question is a subject of anxious preoccupation", noted the Catholic Ami de l'Ordre.[3] The social question was the "issue of the day"according to the Comte de Mun speaking at the Catholic Congress.[4] It was the "most important" issue of the 19th century.[5] "In the sinister light of the rebellion in Charleroi, ...

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1 Ibid., pp. 65-66.

2 Ibid., p. 66.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, July 8, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1886; Etoile Belge, October 26, 1886.

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it was time to study and resolve this terrible problem", commented the Progressive Liberal Réforme.[1] "Belgium had unfortunately ignored the social problem far too long", admitted the Liberal Organe de Mons et du Hainaut.[2] The Catholic Patriote added that the "country had done very little for the working class".[3] A reordering of priorities was in order. "The social question had to take precedence over all other political questions".[4] "The situation was too serious to allow it to degenerate into petty politics".[5] Such politics "appeared very narrow in view of the formidable issues that the

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1 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

"Nous sommes tombés de haut. De la fiction, du mensonge universellement consenti, qu'on appelait paix sociale, liberté, prospérité, nous nous sommes effondrés d'un coup dans la réalité noire, faite de misères, d'iniquités, d'oppression et de désespoir". Ibid. April 2, 1886.

"La crise sociale, d'ailleurs, est la grande question, vivante et vibrante sous vos yeux, à vos oreilles et dont on ne saurait trop s'entretenir.

"Le prince de Bismarck l'a dit: les questions économiques seules s'imposent à tous aujourd'hui, la politique est démodée. Il faut aller à la question sociale comme on court au feu lorsqu'éclate l'incendie." Bishop Mermillod of France speaking before the Catholic Congress, Gazette de Liège, September 30, 1886.

"Les derniers troubles ont ramené l'attention publique sur la question sociale et plus que jamais chacun est à la recherche du remède qui la résoudra." Patriote, April, 1886.

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 5, 1886.

"Le devoir des libéraux, en ces douloureuses circonstances, c'est de se mettre sérieusement à étudier — non la question sociale mais les questions sociales, et d'aviser à ce qu'il conviendrait de faire pour améliorer de certain point de vue la situation des travailleurs. Les classes dirigeantes, il faut avoir le courgge de le dire, ont trop longtemps négligé ce devoir; qu'elles se décident enfin à remplir leurs obligations morales vis à vis des déshérités qu'elles ont en tutelle." Ibid., March 25, 1886.

3 Patriote, April 3, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1886.

5 Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886.

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situation of the proletariat had brought to light".[1] The Fédération des Cercles catholiques advised all Catholics that it was their "right and duty to face up to the labor question".[2] The Catholic Congress met in September to debate the issues; the Gazette de Liège devoted five of its six pages to covering its proceedings,[3] where Collinet called for "economic improvements" and "prudent legislative reforms".[4] Meanwhile, Mgr Belin, the Bishop of Namur, contacted all the priests in his diocese to "draw their attention to the problems of the working class".[5]

Liberals and Catholics agreed that the alternative to facing up to the new issue was quite unacceptable. "Either the ruling classes take up the cause of the proletariat, [or else] the Anarchist movement will take over!" warned Professor F. Laurent of the University of Ghent.[6] "The salvation of the country" had "become the supreme law".[7] Bishop Doutreloup of Liège, warned that the "lower classes ... might seek a solution through violence and revolution",[8] if nothing were done. "Take guard, the centenary of 1789 might wit-

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, May 20, 1886.

3 Ibid., September 30, 1886.

4 Congrès des Oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 37, speech by Collinet.

5 V. Robert, L'histoire du mouvement ouvrier dans le Namurois (Brussels: La pensée catholique, 1957), p. 25.

6 Réforme, April 8, 1886.

7 Ibid., March 28, 1886.

8 Gazette de Liège, September 27, 1886.

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ness a repetition of the same errors and the same consequences".[1] The time had come to discuss the question of social justice. It was no longer possible for Catholics to "pretend to reconcile order with the abuse of privilege".[2] The Progressive commentator G. Degreef showed that there was an interrelationship between social justice and general well-being. "The most just society" was "also the happiest and the most prosperous"; for one could not "discriminate against some without causing all others to suffer" as was

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1 Congrès des Oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 37.

Comte de Mun: "Voilà la raison décisive qui suffit contre toutes les autres, contre les difficultés, les fatigues et les découragements!

Nous n'avons pas le droit! Non possumus! nous ne pouvons pas abandonner la cause des ouvriers. Que ferons-nous donc pour la servir? Messieurs, faites-y bien attention, il y a dans l'Europe, dans le monde entier, un mouvement qui ne s'arrêtera plus; il ne sera ni vaincu par la force, ni comprimé par l'oubli; tout a échoué, tout échouera contre son irrésistible puissance, parce qu'il prend sa source dans le sentiment de l'injustice, le plus profond qui soit au monde, celui qui soulève le plus facilement l'émotion des hommes.

Ou bien ce grand mouvement qui emporte notre temps sera livré au hasard des passions et des intérêts, et, alors il conduira les nations chrétiennes à la barbarie — ou bien ceux qui ont charge et souci de la conservation sociale s'en empareront résolument et le dirigeront vers les réformes fécondes. C'est là qu'est la question. Les avertissements se multiplient autour de nous: je ne parle pas seulement des violences, des grèves menaçantes, des révoltes sauvâges, de Montceau-les-Mines, de Charleroi et de Decazeville...

Ce sont les explosions soudaines du feu qui couve et se répand partout; mais jetez les yeux sur l'Europe et sur l'Amérique: l'idée, la formule socialiste fait son chemin avec une rapidité que rien n'arrête... Elle entraîne le peuple, elle captive son imagination et peu à peu elle envahit tous les esprits." Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

2 Pamphlet by L.J. Gathoye, a Social Catholic leader, A.G.R. MSS, Fonds J. Helleputte et E. Schollaert, "Sociale Congressen", 1880-1889", n° 548.

proven by the insurgency.[1]

The reevaluation of economic priorities implied a need for the reevaluation of the middle class' on-going economic doctrines concerning the role of the State in economic affairs. While die-hards like G. De Molinari,[2] the Chamber of Commerce of Verviers[3] and industrialists such as the directors of the Est. Bleyberg[4] continued to rail against any state intervention whatsoever, reform-oriented economists such as Hector Denis proclaimed that there was an "urgent necessity for a profound change in relations between labor and capital".[5] The Réforme warned that "this was no time to hesitate" in carrying out a fundamental reevaluation of the on-going economic theories.[6] More conservative Liberal organs such as the Meuse and the Gazette de Charleroi were also willing to envisage such a course. "Other than the governments, who could intervene more effectively in times of crisis?"[7] When "the most fundamental issues" were "at stake, the government had a right" to take whatever measures were necessary.[8] "When misery" loomed "over the land, when the people" looked "pleadingly to the government for succor",

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1 Réforme, May 22, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, January 27, 1886; G. de Molinari, Les lois naturelles de l'économie politique (Paris: Guillaumin, 1887).

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 8, 1887.

4 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 452.

5 Réforme, March 30, 1886.

6 Ibid.

7 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4, 1886.

8 Meuse, September 9, 1886.

to turn a deaf ear to these pleas would be both "stupid and callous".[1] Speaking for many Catholics, the Gazette de Liège admitted that the idea of intervention might contradict traditional beliefs in laissez-faire, "but the exceptional circumstances which were confronting the country might require a certain departure from these ideas, without necessarily entirely discarding them".[2] The same newspaper, also, warned against succombing to the erroneous belief that the "State alone could save [the country]".[3] The Organe de Mons et du Hainaut tried to delimit the sphere of intervention. It drew a line between regulatory legislation, which clarified and equalized relations between labor and management and protected the worker from certain abuses, and state control of the economy, where the government fixed wages, and thereby sapped the basis of the whole economic and political order.[4] The Belgian middle class remained convinced that capitalism was the only correct system of economic relations. What the 1886 events did accomplish was to oblige the country's industrial and political elites to envisage some modification of the prevailing doctrine in order to allow the State to indirectly influence economic relations by regulating the manner in which these relations were conducted. The whole idea was based on the hope of re-establishing an equilibrium of power be-

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1 Réforme, April 8, 1886.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, July 29, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, September 11-12, 1886.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 17, 1886.

tween labor and management relations in a free market place, but with the state acting as ultimate arbiter in favor of one social group over another, when the equilibrium threatened to collapse.

The press began to envisage a humanitarian role for the State by discussing the need for a minimal degree of social justice. The State could no longer be a detached observer of economic relations, who could plead non-competence when one social group oppressed another all in the name of laissez-faire. Consequently, the country's elites now had to seriously consider the causes of alienation and alsowhat means were appropriate for reestablishing a modicum of inter-class harmony.

Charles Perin, Professor of Political Economy at the Catholic University of Louvain, blamed much of the alienation of the working class on the "propagation of revolutionary ideas".[1] It was all due to a "crisis of false ideas, particularly a blasphemous idea .... The idea of diminishing the role of God, of making man prideful".[2] The social hierarchy leading up to God combined with the idea of equality before God, had been destroyed and in its place there was only the equality of greed, of each for himself, without any correlation between rights and duties in the social order.[3] Society had become depersonalized and demoralized. "Great corporations treated the worker like an "accessory of the workshop, another machine, which

1 Ami de l'Ordre, July 8, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, September 27, 1886.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, July 8, 1886.

could be thrown aside when it became useless.... The employer, forgetting divine law ..., had become motivated by materialist greed for bigger profits .... A struggle for wealth had been unleashed [accompanied] by limitless competition that ended in overproduction and terrible depressions". "All this went back to the French revolution".[1] "It had destroyed the corporate structure of economic relations; for by attacking the Church, the revolutionary middle class had eliminated the moral underpinnings of the social order; for "capitalism had no soul".[2]

The Catholic solution to this problem went back to the pre-1789 era and to some of the ideas of Joseph de Maîstre. It was based on the old conviction that there had been a basically sound and undisputed social order before the industrial revolution which either has to be restored in toto or could at least serve as a model for an integrated society. Believing in the justness of a traditional society, Catholics tended to place blame for the disoriented social life of their time on the decline of the natural order as laid out by Catholic religon's-moral tenets.[3] They called for a "return to the principles of the Christian Constitution of society",[4] when, as Comte de Mun stated, "Christianity governed the world".[5] Before the

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1 Gazette de Liège, December 28, 1886; see also September 29, 1886.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, March 29, 1886.

3 Fischer, p. 67.

4 Ami de l'Ordre, July 8, 1887.

5 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

French revolution, society was one industrial family "of corporations wherein the employer had a paternal role vis à vis his employees and he exercized this role according to the moral tenets of God. In this system, stockholders and management had duties and responsibilities toward the moral and physical welfare of their employees. "Only religion" had "the authority to make the ruling classes and the employers understand that they have certain duties to fulfill towards the poor and the workers, for whose souls they are responsible, and who they must treat as brothers in Jesus-Christ". The industrialists had to be made to face the fact that if they did not provide their workers with a "decent" wage, they committed "a crime which cries out for the vengeance of God".[1]

The Réforme and the Journal de Charleroi called the Catholic proposals "authoritarian" and "feudal" and warned that they would lead to the "reimposition of the Ancien Régime", under the ultimate authority of "papal absolution".[2] All the "Clerical"[3] "Socialist"[4] Congress proposed was the reestablishment of "industrial feudalism" based on "religious morality which was in turn founded on the mo-

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, May 24, July 8, 1886 and September 15, 1887. See also Auguste Onclair, La question sociale ou ceux qui possèdent en face de ceux qui n'ont rien (Liège: 1886), pp. 6-7, 18-19, 28-31, 42; Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, July 11, 1886.

2 Réforme, September 29, 1886; Journal de Charleroi, October 1, 1886.

3 Journal de Charleroi, October 1, 1886.

4 Indépendance Belge, October 1, 1886.

rality of swindlers and jesuits".[1] Liberals tended to place greater trust in the role of self-adjusting socio-economic forces in a free society. Nor did they blame industrialization for the social question and its concomitant pauperism. Liberals believed that pauperism was a much older phenomenon than the problem of industrial labor and that industry tended to ease the burden of the poor because it provided them with the chance for working much more productively than before. Granted that industrialization and urbanization aggravated the situation of the poor, but one could not impede the modernization process. In fact, if there was a real failure, it consisted of the inability of society to adapt the working class to the new conditions, by creating better communications between labor and capital through institutions as conciliation commissions.[2] Management also should have explained the economic community of interests between labor and capital as well as the role that competition had in determining profits and wages.[3] Improved educational facilities would also make the worker more aware of the role of the market place in determining his wages and would render the worker less intransigeant in demanding wage increases when these militated against logic of the business cycle.[4] For whereas the Catholics tended to place the social question in a moral philosophical con-

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1 Réforme, September 29, 1886.

2 Ibid., August 27, 1886.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 4 and September 9, 1886; "E. Haveu" in the Indépendance Belge, July 11, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, July 18, 1886.

text, Liberals tended to view the whole social question as a political phenomenon; it was a question of developing better institutional mechanisms to increase the working class' understanding of the way that the market economy operated. That way the working class would bargain more reasonably.

Despite these conceptual distinctions, neither the Catholic nor the Liberal press was blind to the economic situation of the coalmining population. Even the right wing organs of the two parties were willing to admit that the situation of the working class was "abnormal"[1] and "hardly satisfactory".[2] The left wing Catholic Patriote and the Progressive Liberal Réforme went even further; the general situation of the miners and steel workers was "deplorable".[3] "The Belgian working class was crushed and brutalized far more than proletariats of other countries".[4] On the same day that it launched

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1 Gazette de Liège, January 1, 1886.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, July 12, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 27, 1886.

4 Ibid., November 2, 1886. The above quotation was taken from a particularly florid editorial by Victor Arnould, whose style and earnestness made the entire text worth quoting in extenso. "Chez nous l'ouvrier est empoigné, étreint de tous les côtés à la fois: le salaire dérisoire, non assuré même pour le lendemain, rogné dès le paiement par l'amende, agrippé par la cantine obligatoire, entamé par le crédit usuraire du boutiquier, parfois confisqué en presque totalité par le patron lui-même ou par le contre-maître, s'imposant comme fournisseurs forcés. S'il en reste quelque chose, ce ne sera plus, dans la main de l'ouvrier, la petite somme réglementaire et fixe qui donnera tout au moins la sécurité de la quinzaine; ce ne sera qu'une monnaie éparpillée, qui glissera sou par sou, aux tiroirs des cabarets de la route. Car c'est sur la route que vit l'ouvrier belge, lui, le misérable et sa famille, entre l'usine ou le charbonnage, noirs, béants, armés de leurs règlements de fer, buvant sans jamais s'assouvir les heures de travail jusqu'à épuisement des

a subscription campaign with the slogan "The tears of hungry children make revolutions", the Patriote demanded: "Will Belgian Catholics answer the appeal of these starving people".[1]

While some industrial groups such as the Association houillère du Couchant de Mons demanded "the rapid repression of all infringements on the right to work and an increase in the gendarmerie in all industrial centers",[2] the moderate-to-left wing Liberal and Catholic newspapers were most vocal in advocating reforms. The moderate Liberal Gazette de Charleroi warned that even if order had been reimposed, "who could guarantee that this would remain so in the foreseeable future".[3] The Réforme asked whether the social order would be really secure, if it had to be "imposed by terror";[4] "for it would be foolish to believe that force alone would suffice in solving this terrible problem".[5] The "social question" would "have to

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forces humaines, et le foyer désert, à l'abandon, où l'homme, la femme et l'enfant ne rentrent que pour se repaître un moment et dormir dans l'accablement des fatigues excessives. Ne parlons plus de famille."

1 Patriote, April 4, 1886.

2 Commission du ravail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 453. "Prendre les mesures nécessaires, au besoin par une loi, pour empêcher dans les meetings les excitations anarchistes et les tendances qu'ont le plus grand nombre des meneurs à pousser à la haine du patron, car il est à remarquer que les grèves se produisent depuis 1869, époque de l'apparition des orateurs de l'Internationale et du socialisme."

3 Gazette de Charleroi, May 3, 1886. See also Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1886: "Parce que le général Vander Smissen a promptement dompté les fauteurs des derniers troubles, il ne faut pas s'endormir de nouveau dans une fausse sécurité."

4 Réforme, April 5, 1886.

5 Patriote, April 3, 1886.

hold precedence over political questions".[1] "This required an end to the wretched squabbling between parties".[2] If the authorities really wanted to bring about "social tranquility",[3] "establish justice in the world, ... spread general well-being and wipe out the empire of poverty",[4] then "now was the time" to "respond to the complaints of the working class".[5] The government must ... act without hesitation".[6] First, however, the middle class should adopt the rallying cry of its "sworn enemy" Bakunin. "Let us go to the people ... to find out what they suffer from and to find out what they want".[7]

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1 Journal de Bruxelles quoted by Gazette de Charleroi, April 7, 1886.

2 Patriote, March 27, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 27, 1886.

4 Patriote, March 27, 1887.

5 Réforme, March 27, 1886. See also March 29 and 30, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1886.

6 Réforme, March 28, 1886.

7 Patriote, April 3, 1886: "Que faire donc? Notre ennemi juré, le socialiste Bakounine, a donné aux siens ce cri de ralliement: Allons au peuple. Eh bien! c'est à nous de le répéter pour nous-mêmes. Combattons le socialisme par ses propres armes. "Allons au peuple, s'écrie à son tour un des plus grands chrétiens de notre âge. Allons au peuple: c'est l'oeuvre des siècles à venir. Quittons les sentiers battus où se traînent les conventions de la politique et les préjugés du monde! C'est dans son sein que s'agiteront désormais les grandes questions de notre temps!

Allons à l'ouvrier, pour le connaître, pour l'aimer. Allons à lui pour savoir ce qu'il souffre et ce qu'il demande: Nous ne le savons pas assez, nous ne le voyons qu'à travers ses égarements, et cependant, exploité par ceux qui le flattent, opprimé par la fausse liberté qui l'écrase, déshérité par l'impiété qui l'avilit, il est là dans son lamentable isolement, sans autre force que la violence sans autre appui que la révolte, victime de ses propres emportements et cherchant en vain des amis qui le servent au lieu de se servir de

In effect this was the guiding idea behind the establishment of the Royal Commission du travail,[1] which was to carry out an investigation of situation of the working class in a manner that was similar to the inquiry commissions that were established by Belgium's British,[2] Dutch[3] and German[4] neighbors. The Commission du travail received considerable press coverage from its inception by a royal decree in which Beernaert declared that "the government" had "to pay more heed to the needs of the working class". In view of the crisis the "moment [had] ... come to study the situation of our laboring population and to determine what institutions should be established and what measures should be taken to improve the situation".[5]

While the Catholic press was favorably impressed by the establishment of the Commission, the opposition Liberal press reacted cynically to the whole idea. "The August [play of words with Beer-

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lui.

Voilà notre devoir, à nous catholiques."

1 For a detailed study of the creation, composition, operation and findings of the Commission du travail, see France Geerinck, Les grèves dans le Hainaut en 1886 et la Commission du Travail (2 parts; Brussels: Unpublished licence thesis at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1953), part II.

2 Tilly in Graham, "Collective Violence in European Perspective", p. 23; Journal de Bruxelles, August 8, 1886; Gazette de Liège, January 26, 1887.

3 Gazette de Liège, March 8, 1887.

4 Rokkam, p. 31.

5 Gazette de Liège, April 18, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 18, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 19, 1886.

naert's first name – Auguste] head of the great ministry of Saviors could not think of anything better to do ... than establish a commission", remarked the Organe.[1] "A commission if you please! Ah, if by this stroke the whole social question would go away"; and the Journal de Charleroi added mockingly; "if the workers ... [did] not appreciate such magnanimity, they [were] ... ungrateful wretches".[2] The Indépendance Belge wondered if "that was all the government could come up with";[3] while the Gazette de Mons hoped that "by accident" the Commission might arrive at some conclusions."[4] The Journal de Charleroi doubted that such commission, "ever produced anything worthwhile ..., except a "thick volume" with little or no meaningful follow-up measures.[5] The Gazette de Charleroi agreed with its sister paper in Charleroi; it believed that the Commission's unfulness was at best "uncertain".[6] Finally, the Meuse was convinced that the government was simply stalling for time.[7]

The establishment of the Commission was an "admission of [the government's] helplessness";[8] it was simply a political subterfuge for "avoiding responsibility".[9] The government was so fearful of

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 19, 1886.
2 Journal de Charleroi, April 19-20, 1886.
3 Indépendance Belge, April 18, 1886.
4 Gazette de Mons, May 4, 1886.
5 Journal de Charleroi, September 4-5, 1886.
6 Gazette de Charleroi, May 3, 1886.
7 Meuse, April 19, 1886.
8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 21, 1886.
9 Journal de Charleroi, April 19-20, 1886.

alienating any of the interest groups which had brought it to power that it feared to take even the "most innocuous stand".[1] The government had also unloaded the whole problem on a royal commission because it really had no program of its own; "it had been taken by surprise for it had not foreseen the crisis".[2] If the government really wanted to take strong measures, it would have acted on its own or else it would have appointed a "parliamentary commission; for a royal commission had no powers".[3]

Leopold II had a hand in choosing the thirty seven members of the commission which was headed by none other than Eudore Pirmez who believed that there was no crisis in the first place (cf. La crise). He was seconded by Victor Malou, a right wing Catholic.[4] The other members were industrialists, financiers, politicians, administrators, journalists, clerics and academics, except for one trade union leader, who later resigned in protest.[5]

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, May 3, 1886.

2 Réforme, April 4, 1886.

3 Meuse, October 12, 1886.

4 Letter, Beernaert to Léopold II, April 17, 1886, Archives Royales de la Dynastie (A.R.D.) MSS, Cabinet de Léopold II, "Correspondance, Léopold II et le Ministre des Finances", n° C, 10.

5 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 1; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 19, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 18, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 18, 1886: "Voici la composition de ce comité:

Parlementaires: MM. Balisaux, Cornet, Lammens, Malou, Montefiore-Levi, Simonis, sénateurs; L. d'Andrimont, De Bruyn, comte Ad. d'Oultremont, V. Jacobs, Janssens, Hanssens, baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, Meeus, E. Pirmez, Sabatier, Sainctelette, représentants; et Jules Guillery, ancien président de la Chambre.

Fonctionnaires: MM. Arnould, ingénieur divisionnaire des mi-

While the Catholic Patriote announced that it had the "greatest confidence in the disinterestedness"[1] of the members, the moderate Liberal Organe and the Progressive Réforme bitterly criticized the composition of the Commission. Even the Doctrinaire Indépendance joined the Réforme in criticizing the government for including only one representative of the workers.[2] The Réforme was "stupefied" to find so many industrialists, financiers and "reactionary politicians" among the members of the Commission.[3] In view of such a composition, the Commission was bound to be "biased"[4], especially since "most of the members were clericals"[5] and representatives of the country's "economic oligarchy".[6]

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nes; Dauby, régisseur du Moniteur; Harzé, ingénieur en chef; Lagasse, ingénieur principal des ponts et chaussées; Prins, inspecteur général des prisons.

Professeurs: MM. Brants, de l'Université de Louvain; E. De Laveleye, de l'Université de Liège; Hector Denis de l'Université de Bruxelles; De Ridder, de l'Université de Gand.

Ecclésiastiques: MM. Cartuyvels, vice-recteur de Louvain, et Henry, chanoine.

Publicistes: MM. De Jace, G. de Molinari, et Edmond Picard, avocat à la cour de cassation.

M. Buls, bourgmestre de Bruxelles; M. A. Dansaert, président de l'Union syndicale de Bruxelles; et M. A. t'Kint de Roodebeke, conseiller provincial de la Flandre orientale pour le canton d'Assenede.

Secrétaires: M. P. de Haulleville, rédacteur en chef du Journal de Bruxelles, et M. Ch. Morisseaux, chef de cabinet de M. de Moreau."

1 Patriote, May 8, 1886.

2 Indépendance Belge, April 18, 1886; Réforme, July 10, 1886.

3 Réforme, April 19, 1886.

4 Ibid., July 10, 1886.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 19, 1886.

6 Réforme, April 19, 1886.

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Despite its hostile reception in the Liberal press, the Commission set about its task. The Commission began by preparing a long questionnaire concerning every aspect of the workers life, such as working conditions, labor relations, living conditions and the workers' intellectual situation. The questionnaire was sent to workers organizations, industrialists, welfare organizations and to various officials. Then the Commission divided into several subcommittees which held hearings in the various provinces.[1] The Catholic leadership was apparently sincere in its hope to carry out the inquiry with all the systematic objectivity of Le Play's sociological studies.[2] The Commissions modus operandi limited its perceptiveness by not specifically inviting various groups. The Commission remained passive; it waited for the witnesses to come to it instead of taking the initiative and directing its research along certain fruitful paths.[3]

Nevertheless, the Commission's four-volume study was a mine of information on the living conditions of the working class. The Catholic press was of this view,[4] but the Liberal press remained highly skeptical about some of the Commission's activities. The

1 De Camps, pp. 98-105.

2 Undated letter, probably of summer 1886, De Ridder, member of the Commission to Lammens, Catholic political leader and publisher of the Ghent Bien Public, A.G.R. MSS, Papiers Lammens, "Commission du Travail", n° 1247; Letter t' Kint de Roodebeke, Catholic S Senator and member of the Commission to Lammens, October 8, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Papiers Lammens, "Commission du Travail", n° 1251.

3 Julin, "La condition des classes laborieuses en Belgique, 1830-1930", pp. 275-76.

4 Patriote, August 4, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 23, 1886.

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Meuse continued to believe that a parliamentary commission would have had more authority to ferret out information.[1] While the Réforme criticized the Commission for not acting energetically to protect the workers who testified from reprisals by their employers. After twenty eight workers in Liège were fired,[2] the Réforme launched a public subscription to aid such individuals.[3]

Though the Liberal and Catholic press failed to agree on just about every aspect of the Commission's work, they were, nevertheless, equally impressed by its findings. These left the Gazette de Liège with a "feeling of sadness and apprehension".[4] The Meuse was struck by the "veritable oppression" that was endured by the workers.[5] The Journal de Bruxelles remarked that "as splendid as modern industry" was it had, nevertheless, "reduced many people to abject poverty".[6] The chief proponent for social legislation, the Réforme, however, commented that the Commission had "uncovered what had already been known long ago".[7] Nevertheless, it had to admit that "the ruling classes" were "beginning to comprehend the degree of suffering among the people [and they were beginning] to understand and examine their demands".[8]

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1 Meuse, October 12, 1886.
2 Réforme, September 6, 1886.
3 Ibid., September 9, 1886.
4 Gazette de Liège, September 8, 1886.
5 Meuse, October 12, 1886.
6 Journal de Bruxelles, September 8, 1886.
7 Réforme, July 9, 1886.
8 Ibid., July 25, 1886.

While the Commission travelled throughout Belgium between April and November 1886 and invited testimony from interested parties, the press brought forth various proposals for social legislation. Some of the proposals preceeded the events of 1886, but they became more timely as a result of the insurrection. Others emanated from a process of cross fertilization between the press and the hearings of the Commission du Travail. Taken together they constituted a reservoir of ideas for social legislation, many of which would be taken over by the political authorities as proposed social legislation, while others were completely rejected.

One pre-1886 proposal was the establishment of universal manhood suffrage. This idea was strongly advocated by Janson's Réforme. As challengers to the defending political coalition, the Progressives were determined to change polity membership rules in order to bring themselves and their lower middle constituency into the Parliamentary system. The Peuple, organ of the P.O.B., and self-appointed spokesman of the working class joined the Réforme in demanding this change.[1] The Réforme blamed the property qualification system for the events of March.[2] "The old system had been condemned long ago; the strikes in Liège had [only] given it the death blow".[3] "Now the ruling class" had "to realize that without the right to vote, the workers had no other means to express their discontent ... except

1 Peuple, March 19, 21 and 30, 1886.

2 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

3 Ibid., March 27, 1886.

[by] throwing paving stones".[1] Thus, for the sake of the country, "the middle class" had "to break its ties with the [ruling] oligarchy and join with the masses in a holy alliance ... for electoral reform",[2] because only universal suffrage could provide a "safety valve" for tensions in modern societies.[3] The Réforme naïvely believed that once the workers became voters, "they soon would learn that they were the masters of their own destiny".[4] They would have a means for bringing about political change without resorting to violence.

Though the Liberal Meuse[5] and the Catholic Journal de Bruxelles,[6] both had mixed feelings about the proposal; the other Liberal and Catholic newspapers were patently hostile to the whole idea. When the Journal de Bruxelles editorialized that universal suffrage "did not frighten" the Catholics and that the government "should finish with the whole business" by enacting electoral reforms, the Liberal Organe de Mons et du Hainaut[7] joined the Catholic Ami de l'Ordre[8] in condemning the whole idea. The Gazette de Charleroi pulled no punches, calling it "charlatanism by trouble making spell-binders".[9]

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1 Réforme, March 21, 1886.
2 Ibid., April 11, 1886.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Meuse, May 30, 1886.
6 Journal de Bruxelles, August 16-19, 1886.
7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 20, 1886.
8 Ami de l'Ordre, July 2, 1886.
9 Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886.

When the Réforme launched its editorial campaign in favor of universal suffrage, the Patriote scoffed: "There is it - the Panacea! What a mockery! The Anarchists in Liège and Charleroi, the arsonists of Baudoux's estate and glassworks will become legislators, can you imagine that!"[1] The Gazette de Liège had long ago taken a stand against universal suffrage and now it congratulated itself for taking that position.[2] The Indépendance insinuated that Janson's newspaper was engaged in a demagogical campaign;[3] while the Gazette de Liège correctly observed that the Progressives saw this proposal as a ticket back into the Chamber.[4] Furthermore, the idea was an irrelevant "panacea",[5] for universal suffrage "would not change the laws of economics".[6] It "would not make workers any wealthier";[7] "it would have no effect on wages".[8] Nor was universal suffrage a "safety valve". In France, it "had not prevented the disasters and crimes at Anzin, Montceau-les-Mines, Creuzot [and] Decazeville".[9] The opponents of universal suffrage remained convinced that it was basically an economic problem.

The Réforme proposed a radical economic solution in conjunc-

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1 Patriote, April 1, 1886.
2 Gazette de Liège, August 20, 1886.
3 Indépendance Belge, April 7, 1886.
4 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.
5 Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886.
6 Gazette de Mons, March 29, 1886.
7 Journal de Bruxelles, September 8, 1886.
8 Ami de l'Ordre, May 20, 1886.
9 Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886.

tion with the idea of universal suffrage. It proposed that the state expropriate the mining concessions. It could buy them up and then lease them to administrators as well as to workers' cooperatives.[1] Such a move was quite legal since a concession implied no proprietary rights, only extractive rights. This was theoretically feasible because the state had the authority of eminent domain.[2] The Réforme justified this proposal on several grounds. First, it would rationalize and stabilize wage levels. In good years such as 1873, the collieries yielded a net profit of 38 per cent, but they never bothered to lay aside a reserve for the lean years. When, as in 1885-86, profits dropped to 1.5 per cent, wages had to be suddenly slashed; thus the mining population was constantly the victim of boom-bust cycles.[3] The mining industry had an average profit of between 6 to 9 per cent, if this went to the State it could improve workers wages by at least 120 frs. per year, or 10 per cent.[4] Furthermore, the state could rationalize exploitation. Instead of overproducing to cut prices and to invade the French market, Belgian mines would limit production to home consumption by driving French coal from the Flanders, and they would then hold a stable domestic market that would assure stable wage levels and a stable work force. It would be possible to conserve the nation's coal reserves by

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1 Réforme, April 2, 1886.
2 Ibid., March 30, 1886.
3 Ibid., April 2, 1886.
4 Ibid., April 6, 1886.

limiting exports.[1]

"A pretty utopia",[2] "an idle-dream",[3] "pure fantasy"[4] replied the Liberal and Catholic press. No one doubted that the state had the right to expropriate the collieries,[5] the whole thing had already been envisaged in 1837,[6] but the real issue was related to the scheme's practicality, its "public usefulness".[7] The whole thing would require enormous sums[8] in order to buy up the 130 million[9] mining shares. Where would the state borrow such a large amount of money?[10] Besides even if the state could obtain the money, where would it obtain the working capital to exploit the mines?[11] Furthermore, the state would become the new "boss" with all the incumbent labor relations problems.[12] Granted it could stabilize wages, but in good times, when wages sky-rocketed in the private sector, the state-employed miner would become restless as his wages remained level.[13] Finally, expropriating the mines set a dangerous precedent;

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1 Réforme, April 8, 1886.
2 Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1886.
3 Patriote, November 1, 1886.
4 Indépendance Belge, March 20, 1886.
5 Ibid., April 4, 1886.
6 Ibid., July 9, 1886.
7 Ibid., April 4, 1886.
8 Ibid., July 9, 1886.
9 Meuse, March 29, 1886.
10 Gazette de Liège, April 2, 1886.
11 Patriote, November 1, 1886.
12 Gazette de Charleroi, July 18, 1886.
13 Indépendance Belge, July 9, 1886.

would the state buy up every ailing industry;[1] would it eventually nationalize the entire economy,[2] wondered the Meuse and the Indépendance.

A less controversial, but nevertheless important, proposal that received bipartisan support was the idea of improving public educational facilities. There were, however, strong differences of opinion between Liberals and Catholics regarding the type of system that should be developed. The Liberals advocated free, obligatory non-religious public education.[3] The Union commerciale et industrielle de Liège voted a petition in favor of the proposal. The members of the Union believed that this approach had an ancillary advantage because it solved the child labor regulation problem indirectly by keeping children in the schools and out of the mines and mills[4] without voting regulatory legislation. On the other hand the Catholic Gazette de Liège and the Catholic Congress supported Pope Leo XIII's ideas regarding the development of adult education and trade schools near or in the factories. These programs could be attended outside work hours.[5] Catholics may also have envisaged

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1 Meuse, April 5, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, April 2, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 31, 1886; Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886; Gazette de Mons, September 9, 1886.

4 Bulletin de la Chambre de commerce de Liège, 1885-1886 (Liège: Thiriart, 1885-1886), Session extraordinaire, November 7, 1886, pp. 33-35; see also E. Rombaut, Etude sur la question ouvrière (Liège: Hayez, 1886), p. 48. Rombaut, a Catholic, actually seemed to favor the public education approach .

5 Gazette de Liège, October 30, 1886.

this solution because they feared the anti-clerical implications of an expanded public school system.

Educational issues were of less immediate importance than the broader issue of labor relations, and particularly the problem of workers' professional organizations. Each side, Progressive, Doctrinaire and Catholic, had its own approach to the question. While Adolphe Buls, the Doctrinaire-Liberal bourgmestre of Brussels advocated the establishment of labor exchanges,[1] the Progressive Liberal Réforme came out in favor of the incorporation of trade unions. In the Middle-Ages, the workers had been allowed to organize, but in the 19th century they had become atomized "beasts of burden", and if they tried to organize they were reduced to "cannon fodder", or else called Anarchists and "drummed out" of the factories and mines.[2] Citing the French Waldeck-Rousseau law of 1884, the Réforme called for similar legislation for Belgium; whereby the trade unions could become legal entities with the right to negotiate collective agreements, to sue in court and to own property.[3] Such a system would provide "better coordination" and "more harmonious" labor relations.[4] Furthermore, as in Britain, the development of trade unions would pacify labor relations, and provide the workers with peaceful means for mobilizing their strength against indus-

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 23, 1886.

2 Réforme, March 25, 1886.

3 Ibid., May 14, 1886.

4 Ibid., March 30, 1886.

trialists, according to economist Hector Denis.[1]

Speaking for the Catholics, Professor of Economics Charles Perin opposed the legalization of trade unions because they were potentially "revolutionary organizations" that were the "main source of [the] ... disorders".[2] Instead, the Catholic press supported the Catholic Congress' resolution in favor of the creation of "mixed corporations" composed of workers and employers;[3] for as "men of order [they wanted] a social peace" based "on a reconciliation between labor and management".[4] Inspired by the examples that were initially provided by French[5] and German[6] Catholics, the Belgian Catholics, initially favored creation of Church-sponsored organizations which were based on the restauration of medieval corporative antecedents.[7] These would reunify the atomistic liberal society into an organic, hierarchical and interdependent whole under the leadership of the Church.

Trade unions caused strikes, and strikes were basically anti-social, because they widened the class breaches in society. The Catholic Congress did not, however, take a clear-cut stand on the

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1 Ibid., May 14, 1886.

2 Michotte, Etudes sur les théories économiques qui dominèrent en Belgique de 1830 à 1886, p. 397.

3 Journal de Bruxelles, June 7, 1886; Gazette de Liège, September 29 and 30, 1886.

4 Patriote, April 3, 1886; see also Gazette de Liège, October 30, 1886.

5 Patriote, April 3, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, September 11-12, 1886.

7 Ibid.

issue; its resolution opposed anti-strike legislation, but at the same time, it declared that the right to work must be defended. This argument was always the standard pretext for strike-breaking by industrialists.[1] The Meuse took the same position: "The duty of the authorities" was "to guarantee ... the right to work".[2] The Réforme disagreed. "While the coal mine managers" could "form associations and organize under the protection of bayonets, the least suspicious meeting between miners ..." was "prohibited; they" were "forbidden from going out of their homes after seven in the evening [during a strike] and their villages" were "invaded by bevies of troops".[3]

It could be argued that many strikes could have been avoided if some form of institutionalization of labor relations had existed. For example, the Réforme noted that had their been a network of conseils de prud'hommes (labor courts) in the mining industry, they would have served a as "unifying link" between management and

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1 Gazette de Liège, September 28 and October 30, 1886.

2 Meuse, March 24, 1886.

3 Réforme, March 25, 1886: "Quand ils s'étonnent de toute cette agitation, on leur enjoint de se disperser, on les charge, on les provoque, on leur interdit toute communication avec leurs compagnons de travail des villages voisins; puis, s'ils se réunissent à plus de quatre dans une rue, s'ils se montrent à leur fenêtre, s'ils s'approchent d'un charbonnage, on les fusille. Et par dessus le marché, on les calomnie; la presse conservatrice s'acharne à les rendre solidaires d'excès qu'ils réprouvent, à les représenter comme des révolutionnaires et des provocateurs alors qu'ils sont des malheureux poussés à bout par la misère et surtout par cette odieuse provocation des autorités!"

labor".[1] Another similar institution was the conciliation and arbitration board. Almost everyone enthusiastically viewed this institution as the cure-all for avoiding strikes and trade unions.[2] The idea was supported by such Catholic intellectuals as Dauby,[3] Rombaut[4] and Brants[5] of the University of Louvain as well as the Catholic Congress in Liège.[6] Progressives and Doctrinaire Liberals such as Denis[7] at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, de Laveleye[8] of the Université de Liège and such divergent newspapers as the Indépendance[9] and the Réforme,[10] also warmly endorsed the idea.

This institution originated in England in 1867 and had developed rapidly during the 1870's. Ad hoc conciliation boards soon blanketed England's industrial areas.[11] Austria followed suit with its permanent official corporative organizations, and by 1886,

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1 Réforme, March 31, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

3 Jean Dauby, Des grèves ouvrières (Brussels: Delfosse, 1879, 1884), pp. 34-35, 48.

4 Meuse, June 30 and July 2, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

6 Ibid., October 30, 1886.

7 Réforme, March 30, 1886.

8 Gazette de Mons, August 25, 1886.

9 Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 23, 1866.

10 Réforme, March 30, 1886.

11 Ami de l'Ordre, May 25, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 26, 1886; Gazette de Mons, August 25, 1886; Dauby, Des grèves ouvrières, p. 34; V.L. Allen, "The Origins of Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration", International Review of Social History, vol. 9 (1964), p. 240.

France had a similar bill before its parliament. Even the United States seemed to move in this direction.[1] Meanwhile in Belgium, the first important effort in this direction had been instituted at Charbonnages de Mariemont et Bascoup in the Centre.[2]

The conciliation and arbitration boards were to deal with any labor relations problem, whether it be hours, wages or working conditions.[3] They were supposed to establish lines of communication and negotiation for settling disputes before a strike broke out.[4] They were to be permanent organizations (as in Austria), and they were to be established in each industry and region. Labor and management would each elect half the members of the board; and if the board failed to conciliate the dispute, then the two groups would agree on an arbiter for settling the problem.[5]

These institutions could coincide with the on-going economic system without requiring any revolutionary transformation. Such a pragmatic institutional solution naturally appealed to the middle class; for it maintained the best of both worlds. It prevented further industrial violence and yet at the same time it kept the on-going economic tenets intact without statal intervention and regulation of labor relations.

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1 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Réforme, March 30, 1886; Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886.

4 Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 25, 1886.

Nevertheless, in view of the events of March 1886, the middle class could no longer avoid the issue of legal regulation of working conditions, particularly state regulation of child and female labor. The Catholic Patriote came out flatly in favor of some form of state regulation for "moral, hygienic and material" reasons. France, England, Holland and Germany already had such legislation in force, but despite these precedents Belgium had "heretofore done nothing" to solve this "fundamental problem".[1] "Belgium had refused to intervene on the grounds that such intervention was an infringement on individual liberty, yet England, America and Switzerland had a tradition of defending individual liberty which was just as illustrious as Belgium's was, yet they had intervened to regulate child and female labor".[2] The British laws on this subject went back to 1802 and 1819.[3] They excluded most boys and girls below the age of fourteen. They forbade women under 18 from working at night. Furthermore, children between 14 and 16 had to have a medical certificate to gain employment.[4] Switzerland had enacted legislation of this sort in 1815 and 1877;[5] France had voted such a law in 1874. This law fixed the minimum age at twelve years of age.[6] The most progressive legis-

1 Patriote, October 1, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 17, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886; Gazette de Mons, September 9, 1886.

4 Patriote, October 1, 1886.

5 Gazette de Mons, September 9, 1886.

6 Patriote, October 1, 1886.

lation, however, existed in Austria. There a law forbade all boys under 14 and all women under 18 years of age from working in any factory or mine.[1] In 1883, the Germans had followed the Austrian example.[2]

Though some Doctrinaire newspapers joined the Chamber of Commerce of Liège in questioning the wisdom of such legislation by raising the old arguments of 1846 and 1868 regarding the disastrous effect that the exclusion of children and women from the mines and mills might have on family budgets,[3] there nevertheless seemed to be a general sentiment in favor of some sort of reform. The press consensus had changed since 1868-1869; now there was bipartisan support, among both Catholic and Liberal newspapers, for regulatory legislation.

Child and female labor was one of the "scandals of the property voting regime", according to the Réforme.[4] The Progressives, also, reminded their compatriots that fifteen years had passed since the Medical Academy Commission had recommended the exclusion of children under 14 from industry.[5] Bishop Doutreloup called the present situation "odious"[6] and strongly supported the Catholic

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1 Ibid.

2 Gazette de Mons, September 9, 1886.

3 Bulletin de la Chambre de commerce de Liège, 1885-1886, p. 12; Flandre Libérale (Doctrinaire, Ghent), April 10, 1886.

4 Réforme, March 31, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

Congress' resolution that called for a regulatory law on child and female labor, "without delay".[1] The Liberal Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, also came out in favor of regulatory legislation; it did so not because women were physically unable to carry out industrial work, but because such work "would impede them in carrying out their role as wives and mothers".[2]

The press in general also made other proposals for regulatory legislation. The Doctrinaire Liberal Gazette de Mons discussed the possibility of limiting the work day; for after all the worker was not a "beast of burden".[3] The Catholic Congress at Liège demanded that all Sunday work be prohibited.[4] The Réforme and Emile de Laveleye advocated regulation of health conditions in mines and factories.[5] Citing German and Russian legislation as an example, Pierre

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1 Ibid., October 30, 1886; Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre, 1886, p. 149.

2 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, October 9, 1886: "Mais cette égalité, il faut bien le comprendre, ne pourra jamais être atteinte qu'au prix de la beauté et de la maternité. Si la femme prétend remplir les fonctions de l'homme, il faut qu'elle se soumette d'avance à ressembler de plus en plus à l'homme, en perdant ses propres attributs caractéristiques: la grâce, la finesse, la douceur de la voix et des attitudes; elle subira les déformations du métier; elle portera des lunettes; sa démarche deviendra masculine, sa physionomie s'accentuera; le système pileux de son visage se développera à proportion des progrès qu'elle fera dans sa nouvelle carrière; elle deviendra de plus en plus impropre à la fonction maternelle, que ses nouveaux devoirs interdiront d'ailleurs."

3 Gazette de Mons, August 4, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, October 30, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, April 6, 1886; Réforme, March 31, 1886; Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886.

Limbourg,[1] a Catholic lay leader, and the Réforme[2] joined forces in demanding abolition of the truck system. Even the Liège Chamber of Commerce, through its President M. Goebel, come out in favor of the abolition of such abuses as those which existed in the firearms industry in the Vesdre valley, where workers were payed 80 per cent of their wage in kind.[3]

The Belgian press made several social security proposals that involved the improvement of workers' housing and the development of a social insurance program. Catholic[4] and Liberal[5] newspapers joined economists such as Emile de Laveleye[6] and even the Liège Chamber of Commerce,[7] in calling for a workers' housing program which they termed a "meritorious",[8] "patriotic and humanitarian project",[9] and which would respond to one of the workers' "most urgent and imperative needs".[10] The idea of workers housing captured the imagination of the middle class press, because it embodied a large number of con-

1 Ami de l'Ordre, May 22, 1886.

2 Réforme, September 20, 1886.

3 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-1886, p. 10.

4 Patriote, April 27-28, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, July 18, 1886.

6 Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886; Réforme, September 9, 1886.

7 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-1886, p. 14.

8 Pierre Limbourg in the Ami de l'Ordre, May 22, 1886.

9 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, October 20, 1886.

10 Ibid., December 14, 1886.

verging motivations and interests. First, the idea was a means of confirming the materialist anti-revolutionary beliefs of the middle class. "The single-room dwelling" was "the primary cause ... of the disorders".[1] On the other hand, a workers' housing program might "pacify the population",[2] because it was a well-known fact that "socialism stops where property ownership begins".[3] By becoming a home owner, the worker gained a material stake in the established order, and consequently a "well-housed worker" would "become a supporter of law and order".[5]

A workers housing program would also serve the interests of the industrial elites by providing opportunities for investment at reasonable rates of return.[6] Furthermore, decent housing would provide a more stable, healthier work force for the employers. "The attraction of the tavern" would "soon lose its influence on the man who" enjoyed "the pleasures of domestic life".[7] Finally, the program would indirectly improve the lot of other workers by increasing the total quantity of housing and thereby bringing down rents elsewhere.[8]

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1 Patriote, April 27-28, 1886.
2 Indépendance Belge, July 11, 1886.
3 Patriote, April 27-28, 1886.
4 Rombaut, p. 49.
5 Patriote, April 27-28, 1886.
6 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 5, 1886.
7 Patriote, April 27-28, 1886.
8 Emile de Laveleye in the Indépendance Belge, September 4, 1886.

The press cited numerous workers housing programs outside of Belgium, such as those of the Houillères du Nord et du Pas de Calais program, the projects in Mulhouse, Amsterdam, London and Wathamstove (Britain).[1] These schemes were financed through public or quasi-public bodies, such as the Bureaux de Bienfaisance and through privately-purchased bonds at reasonable rates of return, thereby making them interesting for financiers, as well as small investors[2] and cooperatives.[3] The housing corporations and house buyers could be accorded tax-exempt status for six to eight years. This would reduce costs for both the investor and the purchaser; especially if the worker did not have to make a down payment, and instead his rent would go toward the purchase of the house.[4] In the meantime, various municipalities would have to suspend the expropriation law of 1867 and stop the "Hausmanisation"[5] of many urban areas. The 1867 scheme had destroyed slums but it did not replace them with any new housing.[6]

The worker could hardly be secure in the new housing projects if after retirement or because of a work accident or illness, he was unable to continue to pay rent. The country needed measures for

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, December 14, 1886.

2 Ibid., April 5, 1886; Patriote, April 27-28, 1886; Indépendance Belge, September 4, 1886.

3 Catholic Congress, Gazette de Liège, October 30, 1886.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., September 30, 1886.

6 Ibid., October 30, 1886.

the development of mutual aid societies, pension schemes and work accident funds. Reforms in these areas were based on bipartisan approval of the middle class newspapers. The Indépendance proposed measures which would favor the development of mutual aid societies, such as free franking privileges and incorporated status so that these organizations could receive inheritances and donations;[1] it also suggested that mutual aid societies be authorized to establish closer relations with the General Pension Fund (a state-guaranteed voluntary pension plan).[2]

The Gazette de Liège and the Comité Général de l'Industrie Charbonnière Belge (C.G.I.C.B.) came out in favor of the development of a national pension system.[3] On the initiative L. Guinotte, the president of the Comité des houillères du Centre, the C.G.I.C.B. called for the establishment of a pension fund which would be financed by contributions from workers, employers, the national government, the provinces and the Bureaux de Bienfaisance. The scheme would be obligatory for all workers.[4]

There was also bipartisan support for the development of some sort of work accident insurance program. The press devoted considerable space to discussing the recent Bismarckian legislation on this

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1 Indépendance Belge, February 2, 1887.

2 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 150; Gazette de Liège, October 30, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, October 15, 1886.

4 "Projet", October 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives du Charbonnage de Strépy-Bracquegnies, "Correspondance reçue par l'Asministrateur délégué, 1886, n° 292.

problem.[1] There were 17,000 work accident funds in Germany by 1886.[2] This legislation, that had been enacted in 1876 and 1886, was based on cooperation between the German national pension fund and the various local work accident insurance funds.[3] These funds had to conform to national criteria, and they were subject to national control.[4] The whole program was obligatory; it was operated and financed jointly by workers and employers.[5] If a worker was injured he received up to 60 per cent of his wage;[6] but if he were at fault, the worker had to reimburse the fund for the expenses.[7] Though the German workers had representatives on work accident inquiry committees,[8] in Belgium the workers had no say at all. Furthermore, the Belgian worker had only one resort to gain compensation for work accident losses. He had to file suit against the employer, which was difficult indeed;[9] for few if any of his colleagues dared join

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1 Gazette de Liège, September 28 and October 2-3, 1886; Haveu, p. 22; Vernon L. Lidtke, "German State Socialism, 1876-84", International Review of Social History, vol. 9 (1964), p. 213; see also proposal of De Boom committee of the Chambre de Commerce de Liège, Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-86, p. 24.

2 Indépendance Belge, September 4, 1886.

3 Gazette de Liège, October 15, 1886.

4 Ryckel Report at Catholic Congress, ibid., September 28, 1886.

5 Ibid., October 30, 1886; Rombaut, pp. 48-49.

6 Ryckel Report, ibid., September 28, 1886.

7 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-86, p. 30.

8 Catholic Congress, Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886.

9 Ibid., October 15, 1886; Réforme, March 31, 1881.

the injured worker in such an action for fear of losing their own jobs.[1] In a related area, the Catholic Congress adopted a resolution in favor of extending the 1873 law on cooperatives so that incorporated status could be extended to non-profit workers' organizations such as retail cooperatives and recreational facilities.[2]

"Drinking, Sir, there is the terrible evil"!, thundered a Catholic pamphleteer.[3] Intemperance was the "greatest enemy" of the working class; for the most "horrendous plans were hatched" in the taverns of industrial towns, echoed another middle class pamphleteer.[4] The "scourge of alcoholism" had brought about the "collective delirium-tremens" of March.[5] The tavern owner was the true "agent provocateur"[6] and the vendor of the "source of most of the workers' problems".[7] An "all out fight"[8] against this "public scandal" had to be undertaken.[9]

Statistically, every man, woman and child consumed 13 liters of spirits and 240 liters of beer per year.[10] The country had the

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1 Réforme, November 21, 1886.

2 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 147; Gazette de Liège, September 26, 1886; Rombaut, p. 49.

3 Rombaut, p. 10.

4 Dauby, Des grèves ouvrières, p. 88.

5 Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886.

6 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

7 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-1886, p. 13.

8 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 20, 1886.

9 de Laveleye, Indépendance Belge, September 1, 1886.

10 de Laveleye, Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, October 20, 1886

highest tavern density in the world — one tavern per 44 inhabitants.[1] In the Borinage, there were towns where there was one tavern per every five inhabitants;[2] while in Brussels there were 8,099 bistros.[3] Alcohol consumption per inhabitant had increased at an "unheard of rate"; in 1855, consumption was 5.90 liters per person per year; but in 1885, it had climbed to 13 liters.[4]

Something had to be done according to both the Catholic and the Liberal press, for alcoholism was absorbing "an enormous part of [workers'] wages".[5] It was undermining the health and morality of the working class.[6] "At forty, the worker was an old man, no longer capable of working. The working class was degenerating into a mass of "runts and monsters".[7]

The Gazette de Liège demanded that the employers take a hard line by "throwing drunkhards out of their factories".[8] Despite a warning by the Patriote that the liquor interests perhaps had considerable political influence,[9] the Liberal Organe de Mons et du

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1 Ibid.

2 Rombaut, p. 11.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, October 20, 1886.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., September 17, 1886; Indépendance Belge, August 17, 1886; Patriote, August 17, 1886.

6 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 17, 1886; Indépendance Belge, August 17, 1886

7 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

8 Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886.

9 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

Hainaut[1] and the Indépendance[2], through a series of articles by Emile de Laveleye, called for an augmentation of liquor taxes. They were joined by the Liège Chamber of Commerce[3] and the Catholic Patriote.[4] The Indépendance pointed out that taxes in France were four times higher than in Belgium, and in Britain they were five times higher.[5] The Patriote suggested that legislation be enacted that would limit the number of taverns to a fixed proportion to the population.[6] Such legislation already existed in Holland where the limit was one bistro to 300 to 500 persons, depending on the size of the community.[7] The Patriote also proposed a more severe licencing system, more strict closing laws, a prohibition against serving inebriates, stiffer penalties for public drunkenness and legislation forbidding credit purchases in bistros.[8]

While the intemperance question was virtually a non partisan issue, the question of abolishing the paid replacement system for military service, whereby wealthier draftees could pay a needy individual to replace them, engendered a split among the middle class press. Right wing Catholic organs such as the Gazette de Liège and

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 17, 1886.

2 Indépendance Belge, August 17, 1866.

3 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1885-1886, p. 13.

4 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, August 17, 1886.

6 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

7 Gazette de Liège, September 29, 1886; Rombaut, p. 11.

8 Patriote, August 17, 1886.

Namur's Ami de l'Ordre were lukewarm to the idea. The Ami warned of encroaching "militarism";[1] and the Gazette claimed that the army officier corps was dominated by non-believers and free masons whose potential influence on middle class Catholic draftees might be "pernicious".[2] Moderate and left wing Catholic lay leaders and newspapers such as Arthur Verhaegen,[3] the Journal de Bruxelles[4] and the Patriote[5] were in favor of the reform. The Liberal press generally seemed to favor abolishing the substitute system. The maverick Réforme[6] joined the moderate Liberal Organe de Mons et du Hainaut[7] and the Doctrinaire Liberal Gazette de Mons in demanding "immediate changes".[8] The present system was a "screaming iniquity".[9] The abolition of the substitute system was "an equitable reform if there ever was one"[10] – "a great moral progress".[11]

The Gazette de Liège doubted that "militarism" was the answer, and it warned that the induction of middle class elements into the army would drive out working class soldiers who would glut the soft

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, May 20, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, November 4, 1886; Patriote, September 24, 1886.

3 Patriote, September 24, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, November 7, 1886.

5 Patriote, September 24, 1886.

6 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

7 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 5, 1886.

8 Ibid., August 20, 1886; Gazette de Mons, July 18, 1886.

9 Meuse, July 22 and 28, 1886.

10 Gazette de Mons, July 18, 1886.

11 Meuse, July 22, 1886.

labor market.[1] The Patriote argued that the army needed "new blood". If the army was mainly composed of proletarians and if a new uprising occurred, "the soldiers might some day – not far off – decide that the factories and estates of the middle class were not their concern, and that they did not have to protect them".[2] The Doctrinaire Gazette de Mons agreed and it pointed out that it was intolerable to allow wealthy people to save their skins at the expense of the poor.[3]

Finally the middle class elites made other proposals such as a program for aiding and encouraging workers to emigrate to Australia, Brazil and Argentina.[4] But the Réforme and the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut branded such a project as a means for avoiding reform at home.[5] Industrialists and their spokesmen often took advantage of the crisis to demand legislation which would favor their own interests while allegedly indirectly helping the working class. Coal interests demanded an increase in spending on public works to hasten completion of canals between Charleroi, Brussels and Mons so that they could ship their coal more cheaply.[6] In the same vein, they

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1 Gazette de Liège, November 4, 1886.

2 Patriote, September 24, 1886, supported the measure if there was an adequate chaplaincy for the army.

3 Gazette de Mons, July 18, 1886.

4 Meuse, September 24, 1886; Gazette de Liège, September 30 and October 30, 1886; Congrès des oeuvres sociales. Première session 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 147.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, December 24, 1886; Réforme, January 17, 1886.

6 Moniteur des Intérêts matériels, March 25, 1886; Indépen-

demanded lower freight rates, protective tariffs for Belgian coal and pressure on the French to lower their tariffs.[1] Notwithstanding these last opportunistic or socially irrelevant proposals, the middle class opinion makers made a systematic effort to discuss various proposals to alleviate the situation; while at the same time, they attempted to reconcile the momentous events with their own belief system.

Generally, the opinion-makers of 1886, i.e. intellectuals, journalists and industrialists, perceived the disorders in much the same way as their predecessors had in 1868-69. Just as in those years, the press still accepted laissez-faire doctrine as an article of faith, in both cases, 1868-69 and 1886, this economic theory had an important influence upon the way the middle class conceived of the causal context of the disorders. The laws of economics were virtually transcendental; they were beyond human manipulation. It was also assumed in 1868-69 and 1886 that irreversible economic trends had driven the working class to frustration and irrational rebellion against a situation over which the working class had no control in view of the supra-political nature of the economic system. Hence, the strikes and disorders were a socially pathological act; they were utterly pointless and damaging to both labor and management. If

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dance Belge, July 11 and September 1, 1886; Gazette de Liège, July 14, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, June 26, 1886.

1 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des séances, vol. II, Sec. A, pp. 7, 31, 46; Indépendance Belge, July 11 and September 25, 1886.

the strikes were an act of mob madness, the press in 1868 and 1886 concluded that the precipitants of industrial violence might be related to some malevolent conspiracy. In both 1868-69 and 1886, the press blamed the "Socialists", the "Anarchists", "the International" and other "bad" people of the proletarian underworld. On each occasion, the press adopted a paternalistic characterization of the average worker; the middle class opinion makers tended to view the worker as an ignorant individual who was gullible enough to be "led astray", by unsavory characters. In 1886, however, the Socialists were better organized and their denunciations of violent tactics rang out in their speeches and newspapers. Their position statements also appeared in the middle class press. Therefore, it soon became apparent that a "devil theory" did not provide an adequate explanation for the events.

Though in both 1868 and 1886, the opinion makers did not challenge the right to strike; in both cases the opinion leaders condemned any violence or threats against those who wished to go to work; but in 1886, the press made it clear that the issues at stake went beyond these immediate questions which were only related to trade unionism. This time, the very existence of the social and economic order, as well as the predominant position of the ruling coalition, were at stake. Something would have to be done. Something that went beyond merely repressing the disorders and forgetting the problem until the next strikes occurred. It is true that inter-party polemics did not end with the strikes. The Liberals

avenged themselves on the Catholics. They remembered the Catholic accusations which blamed the Liberal government for the disorders of 1868-69, but the press of 1886, also, discussed much broader issues. "The social question" as a general issue, which had priority over all other questions, became the key problem of the day. For the first time, the press discussed in some detail the pros and cons of state intervention in economic affairs and thereby implicitly questioned the laissez-faire thesis. The press also recognized the desperate situation of the working class. It admitted something would have to be done.

The need for reform became an accepted fact in 1886. How to go about it was a lively issue of debate during the rest of the year as the press closely followed the activities of the Commission du Travail and made numerous proposals for social legislations. For example the middle class press of 1886 had finally accepted the need for some form of regulatory legislation to protect child and female labor; whereas in 1868-69, the middle class press had been almost uniformly hostile to such an idea, and the project was rejected. And whereas in 1868-69, only two reform proposals (child and female labor and abolition of work books) came to the fore; in 1886, the press suggested at least twenty topics for legislative action of which almost half were relatively important. The press had taken a greater and more sustained interest in the problems which were related to social reform.

The disorders of 1886 had contributed considerably to implant-

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ing "the social question" as a primary issue among middle class opinion makers. The effect that the events and the press reaction had upon the political authorities would determine whether or not Belgium would start upon the road of social reform.

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CHAPTER V

THE REACTION OF THE POLITICAL AUTHORITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT

The political authorities, who alone had the coercive power of the state at their disposal for implementing decisions to resolve the crisis, were not only the members of Parliament and the national government. At certain moments, municipal and provincial authorities as well as administrative agents of the state, such as military officers and judicial authorities, also played an important role in the over-all reaction of the political authorities to the industrial insurrection. All the political authorities had one thing in common; they were official agents, armed with a monopoly of coercive power which the imperium of state conferred on its agents.

This does not necessarily exclude the press from any further analysis. Political authorities never act in a vacuum. They naturally attempt to obtain feedback information on the impact of their decisions on the public. Some of this was provided by the state's own agents, such as the Procureurs du Roi, the military officers, the gendarmerie in the field as well as the mayors and even members of parliament; nevertheless, much of the feedback to the governments decisions came from the newspapers. In this sense, when the reform movement in general is discussed in this Chapter, it includes both

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the decisions that were taken by authorities and the comments that the governmental actions elicited in the press and the business community.

The reaction can be broadly broken down into four stages that are similar to the break-down of the stages of the reaction of the press because of the two-way traffic of information that flowed between the governmental and non-governmental elites. In the first stage, the authorities concentrated on mobilizing public support and coercive power for crushing the rebellion. This involved a temporary issue definition of what was at stake in such stark terms that the public would immediately be aroused against the insurgents and would support the political authorities. Here, issue definition had a propagandistic operational role.

Once the insurgency was crushed and once the level of tension declined, a new stage in reaction developed. In this, the second stage, the authorities attempted to relate the new problem to the traditional issues of Belgian politics, such as the old Church-State relations question. The discussion of the new problem was, thus, wrapped in the rhetoric of the past. Later as these arguments were worn out or proven invalid in terms of the old rhetoric and as the situation cooled down even further, the third stage set in. During this stage the "social question" came into its own, completely divorced from more traditional issues of Belgian politics. As a distinct phenomenon with its own dynamics, the discussions of the "social question" ranged wider afield to the broad issues of the ques-

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tion of state intervention in economic affairs, the scope of political action and other broader social problems. Once the philosophical foundations of social reform were established and a new value consensus was formulated, the political authorities proceeded to the fourth stage of their reaction. The specific social reform legislation was enacted on the basis of the new ideas.

None of these stages of the government's reaction were entirely separate; there was some degree of chronological over-lapping during the months which followed the insurrection. Nevertheless, chronological precision must, to some extent, cede to conceptual clarity in order to avoid bogging down into a jumbled day by day narrative.

The opposition newspapers, such as the Gazette de Mons, claimed that only Adolphe Buls, the Liberal mayor of Brussels, Lt. Vander Smissen and the King remained calm during the crisis, while Beernaert, the Catholic head of the government, "lost his head".[1] This was probably a partisan characterization of the governments' initial reaction. At all events, the government was certainly initially surprised, even overwhelmed, by the events in Liège and Hainaut, as calls for troops poured into Brussels.[2] The opposition press displayed a common misconception that is characteristic of those who are outside the decision-making process. They expected the government to be informed of all potential troubles and to be equipped to

1 Gazette de Mons, April 6-7, 1886.

2 Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1886.

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deal with any emergency. In fact this is rarely the case.[1] Political scientists have asserted that "decision-making at the beginning of an insurrection is complicated by the fact that it must take place in a vacuum; in the sense that officials must accept an entirely new frame of reference for policy before they can appreciate the full facts of the situation. Without having experienced the realities of coping with rebellion, it is almost impossible for officials to visualize the complete significance of looming developments. Even more, when faced with the prospect of widespread terror and violence, the human imagination is often a peculiarly unreliable guide to rational choice".[2] The press often contributed to the exaggeration of the situation. For example, the Etoile Belge[3] claimed that demonstrations had broken out in Jodoigne-le-Marché; but as it turned out, one window was broken and that was done by a youngster.[4] If one multiplied such rumors one hundred-fold one would have some idea of the problems confronting the authorities in preparing their initial reaction to the disorders.

The immediate reaction of the authorities involved defining

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1 Lucian W. Pye, "The roots of Insurgency and the Commencement of Rebellions" in H. Eckstein (ed.), Internal War: Problems and Approaches (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 176.

2 Ibid., p. 173.

3 Etoile Belge, March 26, 1886.

4 Letter, L. Baivy, Commissaire de police of Jodoigne-le-Marché to E.B. Ischecque, Procureur du Roi at Nivelles, March 26, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet Général, Registres et Dossiers 1812-1914, n° 49 A.

the nature of the insurgency, that in turn meant defining the causal context within which the insurrection broke out. This first decision was ladened with political implications, because it defined the issues of the first stages of the confrontation. The definition of the nature and causal context of the emergency was also intended to generate public support for the government in its repression of the insurrection. Beernaert's government could not afford to appear to immediately change policies during the insurrection. Such action would make the authorities appear to be giving in to illegal threats. Above all, it would also appear as an avowal that the government's ineffective policies had caused the insurrection.[1] Thus any errors or bad faith had to be blamed upon the insurgents.

On March 30th Beernaert finally outlined the government's position on the emergency before an impatient parliament. He did his best to blame the whole problem on the unrealistic demands and irresponsible actions of the workers. The workers' demands were utterly extravagant; for they wanted higher wages along with a shorter work day.[2] He conceded that the workers' plight merited attention; but it was unrealistic to expect the government to accomplish miracles, because this was "the consequence of an exceptionally unfortunate [economic] situation"[3] over which the political authorities had

1 Pye, p. 167.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886; Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, April 1, 1886.

3 Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, April 1, 1886; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886.

no control. The workers had to realize that industry was also suffering from the same depression; half the collieries were in the red and profits were very low (one per cent). Even if profits were all distributed to the workers, and the stockholders received nothing, then the workers would still only receive a raise of 20 francs for the year.[1] In view of these facts, management "could not be expected to raise wages and reduce the work day".[2] Finally, the workers were behaving irresponsibly; for by going on strike and destroying factories they not only aggravated the plight of the country's industries, but they also wiped out their own jobs.[3]

The government spokesman, the Journal de Bruxelles, opined that "public opinion" had "never before so strongly supported the policy of order and conservatism of Beernaert's cabinet".[4] The leader of the Liberal opposition, Frère-Orban, withheld any criticism, because of the urgency of the situation.[5] The Liberal press had, however, no intention of accepting a political truce. It condemned Frère-Orban for withholding his criticism of the government's poli-

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1 Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886; Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, April 1, 1886; Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886.

3 Ibid.; Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886; Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, April 1, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886. Frère-Orban did right begin attacking the Catholic government until the session of April 13, 1886.

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cy.[1] By doing so, Frère-Orban had given the Catholic government a "blank check".[2] Beernaert had "pleaded his case, [and] he had condemned himself".[3] The government's statement showed it had "deserted its duty".[4] The cabinet was "incompetent",[5] and its whole policy was an example of "miserable impotence" before the crisis.[6] The Réforme criticized Beernaert for expressing "not one idea, not one hope, not one word of compassion" for the unfortunate workers.[7]

At this stage of the insurgency, such a statement was probably irrelevant to Beernaert's main considerations, which for the moment were mainly devoted to mobilizing massive public support for crushing the insurgency. Only much later, would other political contingencies be considered. The authorities were bent on defining what was at stake and on characterizing the insurgents in such a way as to obtain bipartisan support from the middle class. The authorities took the position that law and order was at stake, that the insurgents were criminals, and that there could be no appeasement while the violence and strikes continued. This was the classic position of a government which felt strong enough to crush a challenger.[8] When the cabinet met on March 27th, it ordered mobilization and a massive

1 Journal de Charleroi, April 1-2, 1886.
2 Réforme, April 2, 1886.
3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886.
4 Réforme, March 31, 1886.
5 Ibid., April 5, 1886.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., March 31, 1886.
8 Pye, pp. 169, 170.

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deployment to crush the insurgency.[1] This definition of the issue proved politically expedient; for it rallied the support of the Liberals. Just as the cabinet had probably hoped, Jules Bara, ex-Minister of Justice during the strikes of 1868 and number-two man in the Liberal party, declared that "public order must be maintained". "The law must be respected" no matter who was right.[2] By taking a law and order stance at the onset of the insurgency, Beernaert had not only rallied bipartisan support at a critical moment. He had also kept his options open; for by invoking the law and order issue he could momentarily avoid getting bogged down in the entangling problems of social reform and thereby paralyzing the government in long debates.[3]

Beernaert, however, could not plausibly accuse the whole working class of being criminals. He therefore, took the position that the insurgency could be attributed to "agitators who had exploited the unfortunate economic situation".[4] His Liberal opponent, Frère-Orban was receiving the same information from his constituents in

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1 Réforme, March 28, 1886.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 6, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 7, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 7, 1886.

3 Smelser, p. 267, explains the variety of positions open to a government when it is confronted by an insurgency.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 31, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886. The Meuse agreed with this assessment in its editorial of May 27, 1886.

the Liège region.[1] The local authorities in Liège, E.H. Bocquet,[2] Procureur du Roi and J. Mignon,[3] Commissaire en chef de police, also arrived at the conclusion the agitators were behind the disorders. They based much of their case on the fact that the Catéchisme du peuple had been distributed just before the insurrection. They made it appear that tha pamphlet was part of an orchestrated conspiracy to launch a rebellion.[4] Local authorities of the towns, which were affected by the disorders, came to the same conclusion.[5] Basing him-

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1 Letter, Charles Chantraine to Frère-Orban, March 26, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Papiers de H.J.W. Frère-Orban, "Lettres au Sujet des Grèves et Troubles à Liège et Charleroi, en mars 1886", n° 479.

2 Letter, Bocquet to J.C. Detroz, Premier Avocat Général, May 14, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, "Affaires J. Volders, L. Bertrand, A. Defuisseaux, 1885-1895", n° 239B.

3 Letter, Mignon to Bocquet, May 13, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239 B.

4 Ibid. "Cette publication anarchique doit être considérée comme ayant exercé une grande influence sur les déplorables excès qui ont été commis". See also, letter, Bocquet to Detroz, May 14, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers 1812-1914, n° 239B.

5 "La brochure de Defuisseaux a fait une terrible impression sur les masses ouvrières". Report, M.J. Fleury, Commissaire de police of Charleroi to De Busschere, April 20, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239A (and B).

See also letters from the following local officials to De Busschere in the same collection: F.J. Huie, Commissaire de police (Chatelineau), April 22, 1886; L. Foulon, Echevin (Acoz), April 22, 1886; M. Roels, Bourgmestre (Gouy-lez-Piéton), April 21, 1886; F.V. Boursier, Bourgmestre (Manage), April 23, 1886; V. Tranchant, Officier de police (Wanfercée-Baulet), April 22, 1886; L.J. Bastin, Commissaire de police (Gosselies), April 26, 1886; A. Rousseau, Commissaire de police (Chatelet), April 23, 1886; J.D.D. Hackin, Bourgmestre (Forchies-la-Marche), April 23, 1886; H.J. Biset, Commissaire de police (Monceau-sur-Sambre), April 22, 1886; L.V. Jamain, Commissaire de police (Dampremy), April 24, 1886; M.J. Lefebvre, Bourgmestre (Fleurus), April 30, 1886; L.P. Hissette, Commissaire de police (Montigny-sur-Sambre), April 18, 1886; A. Poskin, Commissaire de po-

self on the inquiries which he had addressed to the municipal authorities in the Charleroi area,[1] A.J.M. De Busschere, Procureur du Roi in Charleroi, reported to his superior in Brussels, Bosch, that there was a causal relationship between the pamphlet and the violence.[2]

The authorities took the view that the Parti ouvrier belge's agitation had fomented the dissatisfaction and bitterness of the working class.[3] They blamed the violence "on the dregs of society as well as criminal elements".[4] These bad elements had taken advantage of the tense situation which had been created by the P.O.B. The repression would be directed at both transgressors; the military would crush the instigators of the violence; and the judicial authorities would purge the country af the Anarchist and Socialist agitators. Both were criminals and these insurgents would be dealt with, not as military opponents, but as common felons.

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lice (Roux); April 18, 1886; C.A. Houart, Commissaire de police (Lodelinsart), April 19, 1886; H.E. Henrion, Commissaire de police (Gilly), April 20, 1886.

1 Circular by De Busschere to all mayors and police chiefs Charleroi judicial district, April 17, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239B.

2 Report, De Busschere to Bosche, April 21, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239B. "Je me rappelle cependant fort bien que lors des conférences que j'ai eues les 23, 24 et 25 mars avec la plupart des commissaires de police des localités industrielles, presque tous ces fonctionnaires m'ont déclaré que le catéchisme du peuple ... avait été acheté par nombre d'ouvriers et que l'on en parlait beaucoup".

3 Letter, Gautier de Rasse, Administrateur de la sûreté to Comte de Borchgrave, Chef de Cabinet du Roi, February 1, 1886, A.R.D MSS, Cabinet de Léopold II, n° C14b.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, March 31, 1886.

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The first step in this process was the reestablishment of public order by the military authorities. In terms of the relative power of the insurgents and the authorities, the governmental forces could have easily crushed a rebellion if both sides had confronted each other in a pitched battle, but this did not occur in Belgium. The authorities were confronted with enormous strategic problems. Despite their control of the capital's centralized levers of command and coordination which gave the authorities important advantages, the government's forces were not numerous enough to occupy all of industrial Wallonia, let alone the rest of the country. Strategically, they had to get the right number of troops to the right place at the right time. On the other hand, though the rioters were not strong enough to take Brussels (nor did they even envisage it), and though they lacked a centralized hierarchical organization, they did, however, benefit from the element of surprise, and they held the initiative throughout the first week of the disorders. Consequently, the governmental repression always followed one step behind the outbreak of destructive violence. Or else the authorities overreacted and sent the troops to the wrong place at the wrong time.

Immediately after the violence broke out in Liège, General Pontus, the war Minister, received numerous alarmist reports from the authorities in Liège area.[1] Lieutenant General Vander Smissen who commanded the 2nd military region, which included Hainaut and

1 Cf. p. 126; telegram Pety de Thozée to Gen. Pontus, March 20, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de l'Administration de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, n° XIVC.

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Namur, reported that "everyone seemed terrified. If one had taken all the demands [for troops] seriously, every infantryman in the country would have had to have been sent" to Liège.[1] Apparently, Pontus took the reports more seriously than Vander Smissen; for by the 20th, he pressured Vander Smissen into pouring troops into the Liège area. During the next days, one troop train after another headed for Liège and Seraing.[2] Pontus was right in the sense that the authorities could not give the impression of delay and hesitation; for the rioters and the strikers might interpret this as a sign of weakness, and it might encourage other workers elsewhere to join the insurgency. Furthermore, a rapid repression, that would nip the revolt in the bud, might prevent the development of an ad hoc leadership within the rampaging crowds from crystallizing.[3]

While the military effort concentrated on Liège, the national authorities made a strategic error by not carrying out a precautionary deployment in Hainaut. When Bourgmestre Audent of Charleroi headed a delegation to Brussels to beg for cavalry reinforcements, the authorities brushed him off with vague promises.[4] Charleroi, with over 100,000 workers only had one under strength infantry regiment of 450 to 500 men.[5] In the meantime, Vander Smissen had easi-

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1 Letter, Lt.Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, March 21, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, "Dossier des Grèves", n° BL/6.

2 Ibid.; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, December 24, 1886.

3 Smelser, p. 262.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, May 12, 1886; Gazette de Mons, May 16, 1886.

5 Report on strikes by Audent, Bourgmestre of Charleroi,

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ly crushed the insurgency in the Liège area and had come to the conclusion that the reports of the local authorities had exaggerated the gravity of the situation. Consequently, when the Duc d'Ursel, Governor of Hainaut, wired for help on the 26th,[1] Vander Smissen thought he was dealing with another panicky civilian. This time, he decided he would wait and see how things developed, and he kept a large portion of his troops in the Liège area.[2]

Strategically the authorities had made a grave error. They had not shifted military power westward early enough, and they had mobilized one day too late. When the riots broke out in Charleroi on the 26th, there were only two battalions on the spot. The first reinforcements consisting of only one battalion of infantry and two squadrons arrived in Charleroi well into the afternoon of the 26th. Their train had passed right through Roux and they had to double back toward the north as soon as they detrained.[3] With mobilization proclaimed, and assured of adequate reserves in a few days, Vander-Smissen finally shifted attention to Charleroi. His strategy consisted of a military cordon sanitaire around Charleroi in a wide circle

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April 5, 1886, A.V.C. MSS, "Dossier administratif".

1 Telegram, Duc d'Ursel to Gen. Pontus, March 26, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6: "La situation me paraît extrêmement grave. Mêmes désordres, incendies et devastations partout. Faute de troupes aucune répression n'a eu lieu aujourd'hui. Ce soir plusieurs points seront occupés. Une répression énergique est indispensable. Faites envoyer cette nuit toutes les troupes disponibles". See also Gen. Pontus' report to the Chambre, Annales parlementaires, December 24, 1886.

2 Louis Leconte, Les deux Généraux Vander Smissen (Brussels: L'Avenir, 1947), pp. 52-53.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, December 24, 1886.

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extending from Gosselies-Roux in the north to Marcinelle and Courcelles in the south and west.[1] This strategy prevented the mobilizing crowds from penetrating into the Centre and Borinage area. By the 30th, his reserves were on hand and the insurgency had been crushed.[2]

Though the organ of the military interests, the Belgique Militaire[3] and the Catholic press[4] served up one compliment after the other in adulation of Pontus, Vander Smissen and Beernaert, the Liberals bitterly criticized the authorities in their newspapers and in Parliament. Frère-Orban and Sabatier, from Charleroi, claimed that "the troops had taken too long in arriving".[5] The Gazette de Charleroi claimed that the Beernaert government had "allowed itself to be taken by surprise".[6] They had "inundated Liège with troops, where nothing serious occurred",[7] while in Charleroi the troops "arrived too late"[8] and were "conspicuous by their absence".[9] Furthermore, the Liberal press claimed that the army only had 24,000 men

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1 Réforme, March 28, 1886.

2 Pontus Report to Chambre, Annales parlementaires, December 24, 1886.

3 Belgique Militaire (Brussels), 1pril 25, 1886.

4 Patriote, April 3, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, December 25-26, 1886.

5 Flandre Libérale, December 26-27, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886; Belgique Militaire, April 11, 1886; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, December 24, 1886.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886.

7 Réforme, March 29 and December 24, 1886.

8 Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886.

9 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 28, 1886.

on active duty when the strikes broke out; too many troops had been allowed to go on leave.[1]

The tactics of the repression were brutal but effective. "The name of the man Vander Smissen leads one to assume that [the repression] will be carried out without pity".[2] "The outcry of misery will be drowned in blood", warned the Réforme.[3] Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen arrived in Charleroi at 5 o'clock on the afternoon of the 26th.[4] He began by calling on his troops to be "pitiless"[5] and "not to hesitate to open fire". Any innocent persons who were killed "should have gotten out of the way".[6] The danger need not be immediate to justify shooting civilians; if it were merely "imminent",[7] the troops could even open fire without first warning the crowd to disperse. The simple order to 'prepare to fire'[8] would be warning

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, March 31, 1886.

2 Réforme, March 29, 1886. Vander Smissen had served in Napoleon III's expeditionary force in Mexico in the 1860's, see Leconte.

3 Réforme, April 5, 1886.

4 Indépendance Belge, March 29, 1886.

5 Meuse, March 29, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, March 28, 1886.

7 Réforme, July 14, 1886.

8 Ibid.; Ami de l'Ordre, April 8, 1886; Copy of Vander Smissen's order, April 3, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6: "2e circonscription militaire.

A TOUTES LES TROUPES REQUISES POUR LE MAINTIEN DE L'ORDRE:

J'ai reçu un rapport où l'on m'annonce qu'un feu a été exécuté après sommations faites par un officier.

Le signataire ne connaît pas la loi et n'a pas lu mes instructions.

Les sommations ne peuvent être faites que dans certains cas particuliers et par des autorités civiles que la loi indique; aucun militaire n'a le droit de se substituer à ces autorités.

L'usage des armes est au contraire fait sans aucune sommation,

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enough for the "rabble".[1] Furthermore, he authorized his officers to arbitrarily arrest any "suspicious characters", and to disperse any meeting they thought might menace public order.[2]

By the 28th, the cavalry was mopping up the remaining pockets of hostility in the Charleroi area;[3] while Beernaert and the Catholic press were paying their compliments to the Belgian Boulanger.[4] He had "saved the country".[5] If the "Belgian flag was carried by men like General Vander Smissen, [it]" would "triumph over the bloody rag of revolution".[6]

Vander Smissen's repressive tactics did not engender laudatory remarks among the Liberals. Though Jules Bara, a Liberal right-hand man of Frère-Orban, condemned the rioters, he also warned the government that the "repression had to remain within legal bounds". He also criticized Vander Smissen's arbitrary arrest policy.[7] The Réforme agreed with Bara,[8] and went on to term Vander Smissen's flam-

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dans les cas que prévoient mes instructions.
Il n'est nullement nécessaire que les violences soient effectives pour être repoussées par la force des armes; il suffit qu'elles soient imminentes, attendu qu'une troupe ne peut jamais se laisser culbuter."

1 Telegram, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, March 28, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

2 Réforme, April 6, 1886.

3 Ibid., March 28, 1886.

4 Beernaert in Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886.

5 Ami de l'Ordre, April 8, 1886.

6 Patriote, March 28, 1886.

7 Gazette de Charleroi, April 7, 1886.

8 Ibid.; Réforme, April 1, 1886.

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boyant statements "dictator's edicts".[1] On the other hand, the Indépendance Belge broke ranks with Bara. It was better to have a minor infringement of the freedom of trouble makers than to give them a "free hand in carrying out provocations which would require a bloody repression later on".[2] According to the Réforme, Vander Smissen's imminent danger doctrine gave the authorities the right to shoot someone for throwing rocks.[3] The army's brutal policy provoked the workers to violent actions and aggravated the whole problem.[4] After the first killings, the Réforme demanded an inquiry.[5] The Patriote replied to the Réforme: "It is all very well to prohibit the use of arms against assassins, but who would protect the tax-payers and gendarmes".[6] Finally, the Réforme declared that the General's no summons policy was a "savage order" which was in "flagrant contradiction to the law".[7]

None of this affected Vander Smissen. He had little respect for civilians, particulary journalists and politicians. When the civil authorities asked him for reinforcements, in exchange Vander Smissen demanded a free hand[8] and he demanded that the civilian

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1 Réforme, April 6, 1886.
2 Indépendance Belge, April 8, 1886.
3 Réforme, July 29, 1886.
4 Ibid., March 26, 1886.
5 Ibid., March 25, 1886.
6 Patriote, March 20, 1886.
7 Réforme April 9 and July 14, 1886.
8 Gazette de Liège, March 30, 1886.

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authorities reword their request: "Just ask me to reestablish order; I will give the orders to the troops".[1] "Reestablishing order" was a broader command. He would be free to take actions without consulting the civil authorities, who he considered incapable of taking a strong stand against "the rabble".[2] When Defontaine, an alderman of Charleroi, criticized Vander Smissen's brutal policies, the General gave him a humilating tongue lashing and threatened any politician who hindered military operations with arrest.[3]

The military authorities and the tribunaux correctionnels (local courts) dealt with those who were suspected of directing or participating in the actual violence. As was shown in Chapter Three, over a thousand persons were arrested throughout Wallonia.[4] Other lesser individuals who escaped arrest and prosecution or who were found not guilty were later subject to economic reprisals by their employers who suspected them of being trade union supporters. The mine owners had a tacit agreement to keep each other informed about such individuals, and they cooperated in refusing to employ them.[5]

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1 Letter, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, March 20, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

2 Letter, Lt. Gen. Vander Smissen to Gen. Pontus, March 28, 1886, A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

3 Gazette de Mons, April 1, 1886; Réforme, March 30, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 1, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, March 29, 1886; Bertrand's pamphlet entitled Général Vander Smissen, pp. 13-14, in the A.M.A. MSS, n° BL/6.

4 See pp. 153 to 163.

5 Report Renier Malherbe, Ingénieur en chef du 1er Arrondissement to Arnould, Directeur 1ère Division des mines, April 6, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives de la Première inspection générale des mines, n° 307: "Il est ... du plus haut intérêt que les exploitants, par

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The country's political figures and the left wing press also faced hard times after the insurrection was crushed. The judicial authorities launched a campaign to harass various Socialists, Anarchists, trade unionists and those newspapers which were advocates of their cause. Gautier de Rasse of the Sûreté Publique and the Procureur du Roi in Brussels, H.H. Willemaers, began preparing dossiers against leading Socialists[1] as well as general lists of members of "suspect" organizations.[2] Gustave Desmet, juge d'instruction of the Tribunal de Première Instance in Brussels, issued an injunction against any further distribution of the Catéchisme du peuple and ordered the authorities to seize any copies in public hands.[3] Commissaire de police De Gieter of Ghent raided the Socialist Vooruit's

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une entente commune, répudient de leurs travaux tout ouvrier qui aura été reconnu avoir émeuté ou propagé la grève, et montrent la plus grande circonspection dans le recrutement de leur personnel. Si cette entente était acquise, le pays aurait bientôt, par ces listes de proscription, été purgé de tous les meneurs." Here is a flagrant example of agents of the government actively siding with management against labor.

Some mine operators probably took Malherbe's advice. Letter, Georges Ermel, Charbonnages de La Louvière, La Paix et St-Vaast to Sottiaux, Directeur gérant of the Charbonnages de Bracquegnies, April 2, 1886, advised the blacklisting of two suspected strikers: "Nous conformant à des instructions, nous nous empressons de vous informer que le livret vient d'être remis aux ouvriers grévistes Antoine Léon, Ernest Simon, qui étaient occupés à notre puits Ste-Barbe." A.E.M. MSS, Archives du Charbonnage de Strépy-Bracquegnies, n° 292.

1 Report Gautier de Rasse to Bosch, April 16, 1886, in answer to Devolder's request of April 11th for dossiers on leading leftists, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 225.

2 Report, Willemaers to Bosch, April 17, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 225.

3 Injunction by judge Desmet, May 5, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 238.

offices to seize all copies of the Catéchisme.[1] Jean Volders, a P.O.B. leader in Brussels, came under investigation, but Minister of Justice Devolder advised Procureur Général Bosch that he doubted there was "adequate proof" to prosecute Volders.[2] In East Flanders, municipal authorities in Aalst, Eecloo, Renaix and Wetteren prohibited any display of red flags or the public sale of the Vooruit.[3] The Réforme and the Organe de Mons et du Hainaut assailed the police raids and harassment of the press. "No! a thousand times no! It is not legal", thundered the Réforme.[4] And the Organe asked itself if the constitution still existed, or had Belgium become another country under the regime of the cossacks.[5]

The judicial authorities launched a massive search for "foreign agitators".[6] The Belgian national police established contacts with neighboring border authorities[7] and provincial govern-

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1 Gazette de Liège, August 4, 1886.

2 Letter, Devolder to Bosch, April 11, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 225.

3 Report, R. de Kerchove, Gouverneur de la Flandre orientale to Léopold II, May 13, 1886 (?), A.R.D. MSS, "Cabinet de Léopold II" "Grèves et Troubles", n° C 14b.

4 Réforme, September 6, 1886.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 10, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886, e.g. Letter, Willemaers to Gautier de Rasse, April 23, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Ministère de la Justice, Administration de la Sûreté publique, Police des étrangers, n° 152. E.g. text of Telegram, Vereycken to Lévy, March 29, 1886, A.E.M. MSS, Archives communales de Jemappes, Fonds II, "Police, registres aux procès-verbaux et correspondance principalement avec le Procureur du Roi, March 29, 1886 to December 31, 1886", n° 685.

7 Letters, Thonissen, Ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Instruction publique to Devolder (?), May 3 and November 25, 1886, A.G.R.

ments[1] in order to arrest and deport foreign trouble makers.[2]

The most significant judicial repression, however, consisted of a series of trials before the Mons, Ghent, Liège and Brussels Assizes. Some of these trials seemed to be motivated more by politics than by purely judicial considerations. Wagener and Rutters, the two Liège Anarchists who had been involved in the demonstration of March 18th were accused of "having ... provoked actions with the purpose of causing destruction, massacres and pillage".[3] In the indictment, Delwaide, the avocat-général, stressed broader political considerations rather than the specific actions of the accused. He spent a great deal of time attacking the ideas of the workers movement as a "barbarian" menace to the social order. On the other hand Delwaide spent very little effort proving that Wagener and Rutters had engaged in seditious activities.[4] He called on the jury to join

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MSS, Archives du Ministère de la Justice, Administration de la Sûreté publique, Police des étrangers, "Correspondance périodique établie entre la gendarmerie nationale et la gendarmerie des pays limitrophes, 1886", n° 494.

1 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut, vol. LVII, Année 1886. Première partie comprenant les Arrêtés, Circulaires, Instructions et Avis officiels, pp. 704-705.

2 Letter, J.C. Detroz, Procureur général, Liège to Pety de Thozée, March 24, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Sûreté publique de la province de Liège, 1886, n° XIV C.

3 Transcript of judicial decision in Rutters-Wagener case, August 10, 1886, A.E.L. MSS, Archives de la Cour d'Assises de Liège, "Registres aux audiences et aux jugements, February 1885 to December 1886", n° B95.

4 Meuse, August 11, 1886: "Mais, phénomène étrange, un grand nombre de ceux là même qui doivent le jour à cette organisation la déclarent injuste, monstrueuse! Ils repoussent les progrès encore réalisables à l'aide de la science et du temps et veulent d'un changement immédiat et radical. Ils se déclarent socialistes, anarchis-

in "fighting against another collapse of the Roman empire".[1] The jury did its duty for civilization and condemned Wagener and Rutters to five years in prison.[2]

Edouard Anseele, Socialist leader in Ghent went on trial before the Assizes in Ghent for having called the King an "assassin" and for having published an article in the Vooruit, which called on the people to convince their friends and relatives in the army not to fire on the workers.[3] His conviction and sentencing to 6 months in prison[4] was applauded by the Journal de Bruxelles, because acquittal would have constituted a "dangerous encouragement" for further "flaunting of the authority of the law".[5]

Alfred Defuisseaux was arrested by the Belgian authorities in June when he arrived in Mons.[6] His mail had fallen into the hands of

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tes et, s'il le faut, prêts à devenir nihilistes pour atteindre leur but. Ils se réservent de commander, à leur heure, le branle-bas et le massacre des institutions. Je voudrais, dit l'honorable avocat général, vous montrer aussi les progrès accomplis par la moralité publique, mais ici il ne me serait pas possible de faire le même tableau. La réalisation des théories des gens dont nous avons parlé amènerait une catastrophe qui rappellerait la chute de l'Empire romain, moins les barbares. Il faut donc lutter pour empêcher ce résultat. Cette lutte nous impose, à vous, Messieurs les jurés, et à moi également des devoirs."

1 Gazette de Liège, August 11, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 See pp. 164-165; Gazette de Liège, May 20 and June 5, 1886; Bertrand, Anseele, sa vie, son oeuvre, p. 53; Peuple, April 10 and 12, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, June 5, 1886; Réforme, August 3, 1886.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, June 7, 1886.

6 Gazette de Liège, June 5, 1886.

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police.[1] Police detectives had been following him about; they had built up a massive dossier for use against him.[2] He was tried for inciting the populace to rebel.[3]

In Mons, Oscar Falleur and Xavier Schmidt, the glassworkers' trade union leaders, went on trial for having incited the pillage of the Baudoux works.[4] They were convicted[5] and sentenced to twenty years of hard labor.[6] These "draconian"[7] sentences created a cause célèbre for the workers movement. Petitions calling for amnesty for Falleur and Schmidt poured into the Parliaments.[8] Workers testifying before the Commission du travail repeated the appeal.[9] In November, the mother of Falleur and the fiancee of Schmidt led over a thousand Carolorégiens to Brussels to demonstrate for amnesty; delegations of workers from Ghent, Saint-Gilles, Bruxelles and Molenbeek joined the march.[10] The same month, a Brussels Senator submitted an amnesty

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1 Police copy of a letter from, Alfred Defuisseaux to his brother Léon, February 25, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 238.

2 Report of Detectives Ferrooz and Decoux et al. to E.C.A. Crabbe of the police of St-Gilles (n.d.), A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 239B.

3 Gazette de Liège, June 5, 1886.

4 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, August 13, 1886.

5 Gazette de Liège, August 12, 1886.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, August 12, 1886; Réforme, August 12, 1886.

7 Réforme, August 12, 1886.

8 Text of a petition by the Glassmakers' Union of Lodelinsart, March 9, 1886, A.R.D. MSS, Cabinet de Léopold II, "Grèves et Troubles", n° C 14b.

9 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des séances, vol. II, Sec. D, p. 139; Meuse, September 24, 1886.

10 Patriote, November 10 and 12, 1886.

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bill before Parliament.[1] Finally in 1888, a bill providing for their release emerged from Parliament.[2]

During the interval, the Réforme led the attack against the severity of the judicial repression. It considered these "judicial reprisals"[3] to be "disproportionate"[4] to the nature of the alleged crimes. Furthermore, the Réforme cast doubt on the impartiality of the jury which was composed of "bosses" who were unable to "judge questions in which they had a direct interest".[5] Writing in the Réforme, even Octave Pirmez, the leader of the Doctrinaire economists, warned that laziness and ignorance inspired people to denounce crimes and demand more severe punishments, but they did not hasten efforts to eliminate the conditions which caused them.[6]

The authorities were,also, determined to provide themselves with the means to crush any further insurgency. To strengthen their coercive power, they enacted legislation which would facilitate prosecution of future insurgencies and which would increase the size of the coercive forces, particularly the gendarmerie. While the strikes were still spreading,[7] the cabinet already decided to introduce legislation which would regulate more stringently the purchase, storage

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1 Gazette de Mons, November 11, 1886; Ami de l'Ordre, February 4, 1888.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, August 18, 1888.

3 Réforme, September 1886.

4 Ibid., August 16, 1886.

5 Ibid., August 3, 1886.

6 Ibid., April 8, 1886.

7 Meuse, April 1, 1886.

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and use of dynamite. The bill also provided for controls on the purchase and storage of such material,[1] and it authorized the authorities to arbitrarily revoke any permits for its use.[2] The new bill, revising the law on explosives of October 1881, became law during the summer of 1886.[3] The authorities hoped to prevent any further efforts to sabotage the mines while a strike was in progress.

During the same time, the government obtained the enactment of a bill which required that anyone who purchased a firearm, even a hunting weapon, would have to have a permit before hand. Furthermore all arms would now have to be registered.[4] The Liberal press attacked the measure as "vexatious" and "absurd" because it would unduly complicate the purchase of firearms.[5] It constituted the "last blow to the arms industry of Liège"; for now even foreigners who wished to purchase arms, would first have to obtain a permit just to buy them.[6]

Neither of the above laws elicited as strong a reaction from

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 16 and May 13, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 20, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 17, 1886; Times, April 17, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, April 18, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886.

2 Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 13, 1886; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 15, 1886.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 16, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, April 18, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 20, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886; Indépendance Belge, April 17, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886.

5 Gazette de Mons, April 27, 1886.

6 Ibid.; Gazette de Charleroi, April 21, 1886.

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the Liberal press as the "provocation bill" did. This bill also came before Parliament in the aftermath of the strikes. This legislation was directed at the ubiquitous "agitators" whose alleged activities during the strikes had inspired the vengeance of the conservative press. Minister of Justice Devolder's bill was directed not only at the actual acts of sedition, but it was even directed against speeches and writings which might – but not necessarily did – cause sedition.[1] The authorities apparently had taken seriously the alleged causal relationship between the distribution of the Catéchisme du peuple and the outbreak of the strikes.

Leopold II supported the measure and probably agreed with Devolder's speech in favor of the bill.[2] According to Devolder, recent events demonstrated the absolute necessity of such legislation in order to prosecute agitators who caused rebellions; but since the alleged political agitators themselves committed no actual criminal acts, they had heretofore been able to escape prosecution.[3] The Doctrinaire Liberal Gazette de Mons joined the Catholic press in defend

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 16, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 17, 1886, April 20 and August 30, 1887; Indépendance Belge, April 17, 1887, Meuse, April 19, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886 and September 2, 1887.

Malou had submitted a bill which would have limited prosecution to speeches and not writings, but Devolder wanted to go further, cf. Indépendance Belge, April 23, 1886.

Devolder also avoided trials before the Assizes, thereby avoiding a jury trial; but due to the pressure by the Liberal press, he was obliged to drop this portion, cf. Etoile Belge, April 17 and 22, 1886.

2 Letter, Leopold II to Beernaert, March 31, 1886, in Vander Smissen (ed.), vol. I, p. 84.

3 Meuse, April 17-18, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886.

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ing the measure. The Gazette claimed it did not infringe on freedom of speech - only seditious speech.[1] The Patriote remarked that "nothing" was "more just than to prosecute an orator or writer who deliberately" instigated "crime",[2] for "if the act of rebellion was punishable, then the provocation of such an act was also punishable".[3] Ultimately in times such as these, "every society" had "the right to defend itself" against seditious agitation.[4]

The Réforme thought the measure was "more vexatious than effective".[5] It was more than a mere nuisance. This "odious measure"[6] would "suppress freedom of the press".[7] It was a "detestable proposal";[8] it was filled with "monstrous illegalities",[9] because "it was so elastic that it" would "permit preventive prosecution and arrest of anyone who [dared] tell the truth".[10] The Indépendance, reminded the Catholics that the Dutch regime had had such a law, but Belgium's first government had abolished it in 1831.[11] The Réforme warned that the "prosecution of free speech had led to the downfall

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1 Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886.
2 Patriote, April 26, 1886.
3 Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886.
4 Patriote, April 26, 1886.
5 Réforme, April 19, 1886.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid. August 9, 1887.
8 Gazette de Charleroi, May 10, 1886.
9 Réforme, April 19, 1886.
10 Ibid.
11 Indépendance Belge, August 15, 1887.

of the Restauration, the Second Empire and the Dutch regime".[1] It would take a "veritable coup d'état"[2] to obtain enactment of this "chef d'oeuvre of stupid incoherent reactionary policy".[3] Despite the Liberal criticism, the bill became law; for a large number of Liberals joined the Catholics to enact the measure by 76 to 16 votes in the Chambre.[4]

While the national government shipped carload after carload of arms and munitions to the Garde Civique to ensure that it would have adequate arms the next time that troubles broke out,[5] it also realized that the Garde and the army were expensive and cumbersome units for repressing civil disorders. Nor were they very reliable in view of the age and lack of training of the Garde and the high proportion of workers within the army. Because of these considerations, the only really effective tool for repressing insurrections was the gendarmerie.[6] Beernaert obtained enactment of a bill (by unanimous votes in the Senate[7] and the Chambre[8]) which would authorize the government to spend 217,750 frs to increase the size of the gendar-

1 Réforme, April 19, 1886.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., August 9, 1886.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, August 9, 1887; Gazette de Liège, August 10, 1887.

5 Indépendance Belge, April 7, 1886.

6 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 13, 1886.

7 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 19, 1886.

8 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 13, 1886.

merie.[1]

But a larger gendarmerie or new repressive legislation would hardly solve the immediate financial problems of numerous industrial communities in Hainaut, where the industrialists, whose factories had been damaged, were suing the municipalities for the damages which they incurred during the riots.[2] They invoked a French law of the 10th Vendemiaire Year IV which held municipalities responsible for any damage which their citizenry committed.[3] The revolutionary law was supposed to serve as a damper on counter-revolutionary activity. But in Belgium it was invoked in an entirely different context. The law was never intended to deal with a modern industrial insurrection.[4] Furthermore, the only way that the towns could avoid repaying the damages was to prove that the roving bands were all outsiders. This, the municipalities were unable to do.[5] Nor was the national government prepared to accept the financial responsibilities for the insurgency or abrogate the French statute.[6] It did,

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1 Ibid., April 16, 1886; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 19, 1886; Meuse, April 19, 1886; Gazette de Liège, May 20, 1886.

2 Baudoux sued Jumet. By 1887, his factory was operating again. Meuse, May 10-11, 1886; Gazette de Liège, May 25, 1887.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 2, 1886; Ami de l'Ordre, March 31, 1886; Moniteur des Intérêts Matériels, April 4, 1886; Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut, vol. LVII, Année 1886. Première partie comprenant les Arrêtés, Circulaires, Instructions et Avis officiels, pp. 710-711; Eugene Bernimolin, Attroupements ou Emeutes (Brussels: Bourlard, 1887), p. 8.

4 Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1889.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, April 3, 1889.

6 Réforme, March 29, 1886.

however, appropriate a credit of 1,000,000 francs to provide reconstruction loans to industrialists at 3.5 per cent (the going-rate) interest.[1] Though the measure was unanimously adopted in the Chambre,[2] the Charleroi delegation of Liberal members, led by Giroul, was not satisfied.[3] Three years later, these members were still demanding that the government come to the aid of the afflicted towns.[4]

The authorities took more immediate emergency measures to prevent a new explosion, by enacting special appropriations for public works to create jobs. This action had been demanded by both the Catholic and Liberal newspapers.[5] "Now or never the State must intervene to prove that it is not concerned only with the privileged class", declared the Organe.[6] Besides, labor was inexpensive at the moment, and it was a good opportunity to carry out a vast public works program at less expense to the public treasury than during prosperous years.[7] The Liège Chamber of Commerce agreed and petitioned Parliament to that effect.[8]

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 11 and 16, 1886; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 17, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, April 18, 1886; Gazette de Mons, April 19, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, April 23, 1886; Meuse, April 17-18, 1886; Réforme, May 13, 1886; Gazette de Liège, April 17, 1886.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 12, 1886.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, April 3, 1889.

4 Indépendance Belge, March 31, 1886.

5 Réforme, March 29, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 28-29, 1886; Gazette de Mons, May 4, 1886.

6 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, March 29, 1886.

7 Etoile Belge, April 6, 1886.

8 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886.

The hue and cry for public works was just as loud and just as bipartisan in the Chambre as it was in the press. Frère-Orban (Liège),[1] Paternoster (Soignies),[2] Tack (Courtrai),[3] Houzeau de Lahaie (Mons),[4] Doucet (Namur),[5] Jamme (Liège), Bara (Tournai) and Gilleaux (Charleroi)[6] all demanded a share of the 43,5 million public works money which Beernaert had promised the country on March 30th. Beernaert's government had initially planned to spend only 32 million;[7] but after the strikes broke out, he raised the special appropriation to 43,5 million and finally to an approximate over-all total of 100,000,000 francs.[8]

Generally, the initial emergency measures to strengthen anti-insurgency legislation and the enactment of legislation, which provided funds for aiding reconstruction and which provided jobs through public works, were stop-gap actions that received bipartisan support. At the same time, however, the strikes generated inter-party tensions over the social question. At first, this debate ressembled the press' initial reaction to the social question, in that

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1 Annales parlementaires, May 5, 1886.

2 Ibid., March 31, 1886.

3 Ibid., May 8, 1886.

4 Ibid., May 5, 1886.

5 Ibid., March 31, 1886.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., March 30, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, March 31, 1886; Gazette de Liège, March 31, 1886; Précurseur, March 31, 1886; Meuse, April 1, 1886.

8 Gazette de Charleroi, April 16, 1886.

the political debate over the new issue was clothed in the rhetoric of the past, i.e. religious-versus-public school issue. This is partly explained by coincidence; for when the insurrection occurred, Parliament was debating the Ministry of Education budget. However, simply writing this off as petty party politics or as proof of the inability of the middle class leaders to envisage the country's new problems seems to be a superficial assessment of the middle class' reaction to the insurrection. Actually, it was a transitory stage in the articulation of the social question, during which the authorities were attempting to place the new problem in relation to their past political experience.

The two main parties were trying to evaluate the causes and implications of the insurgency in terms of their own past experience. This explains why Liberals blamed much of the social tension on "disrespect for the law" which had been inspired and instigated during the Catholic campaign against the Liberal school secularization law of 1879.[1] It also explains why right-wing Catholic leaders, like Charles Woeste, blamed the strikes on the very same Liberal law, which, he claimed, had "destroyed the faith of the people" and their respect for authority.[2]

The old rhetoric could not, however, explain away the crisis; neither could the old religious issues turn attention from the

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1 Neujean, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 17, 1886; Frère-Orban, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 13, 1886.

2 Congrès des oeuvres sociales. Première session 26-29 septembre, 1886, p. 41.

social question. Nor did the June election campaign, which reaffirmed Catholic primacy, blot out the social issue.[1] During the election period, new strikes broke out in Cuesmes, Monsville, Flénu, Jemappes, Wasmes and Quaregnon; these involved 5,000 coal miners in the Borinage area.[2] The strikes dragged on into July. There would be no reprieve from the constant reminders of the continuing unrest in industrial Wallonia.

Realizing that the country could not afford to become bogged down in a vicious cycle of insurgencies, strikes and new repressions Beernaert told Parliament that now that order had been reestablished "we must think of tomorrow".[3] The Journal de Bruxelles agreed. "The working class problem entailed two types of measures: the need for energetic repressive measures ... and just reforms which, alone", could "prevent revolutions".[4] Such action was "the country's duty"

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1 In Bruxelles, the pro-Catholic Independants carried all 17 seats because of a Liberal split between Doctrinaires and Progressives. In the provinces only Hainaut (23 out of 25 seats) and Liège (14 out of 17 seats) remained Liberal. Luxembourg was 60 per cent Catholic, Brabant was 96 per cent Catholic; while Catholics held every seat in East and West Flanders, Antwerp, Limbourg and Namur. Consequently the Catholics had won 98 seats to the Liberals' 40. The Etoile Belge, June 10, 1886, commented that Belgium now had a "pontifical government" based on the "work of bishops and monks". The same newspaper, June 16, 1886, noted that the "Papal nuncio" had "arrived on the scene to oversee the christianization of our democracy" to see that the "Encyclical laws" were "implemented".

2 See the reports of Henri Lévy, Procureur du Roi in Mons and of Cap. Liègeois, commanding the Hainaut detachment of the gendarmerie, to Bosch, Procureur Général in Brussels, June 17, 18, 19, 21, 29, 30 and July 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, June 7, 1886.

added the Gazette de Charleroi.[1] Beernaert and other leaders of the middle class realized that very often mere repressive measures were inadequate for maintaining long range social control. Efforts at re-integrating the alienated elements into society eventually would be necessary. The cost of maintaining an army on war-time footing for long periods, the danger of new economically disruptive violence, and the risks of strengthening insurrectional tendancies required long range solutions. There was also the danger that a new insurrection might split the governing coalition, or even bring about a foreign intervention.[2]

The deepening crisis inspired the leaders of both parties to bridge their differences. Beernaert expressed an "ardent désir" to draw the country together.[3] Thonissen, his Minister of the Interior, joined in calling for bipartisan cooperation.[4] Speaking for the Liberals, Frère-Orban, also, called for "national reconciliation".[5] Leaders of both parties probably realized that a minimum level of consensus had to exist in order to push through a broad social reform program. The debate among the country's political leaders con-

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, April 7, 1886. The City Council of Liège voted a resolution calling on the immediate implementation of a social reform program, Indépendance Belge, April 15, 1886.

2 David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley and sons, 1965), p. 122; William A. Gamson, Power and Discontent (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1968), p. 16; Smelser, p. 261.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 6, 1886; Etoile Belge, July 23, 1886.

4 Etoile Belge, April 8, 1886.

5 Ibid., May 20, 1886.

cerning certain fundamental aspects of social reform revealed a minimum degree of consensus on such issues as recognition of the social question and the need to reorder priorities. It also showed a modicum of agreement about the need for government intervention to impose an economic solution – which might have to be contrary to on-going economic dogmas – and finally the need to reintegrate the working class into the social order. This debate paralleled the second stage of the reaction of the press.

Like the country's newspapers, both Catholic and Liberal municipal, provincial and national political leaders showed new concern about the significance of the social question and the need for launching a social reform program. Bourgmestre Audent in Charleroi bluntly stated that a "solution to the social question" was the most "urgent problem" confronting the nation, because it threatened "the very existence of the country".[1] The Duc d'Ursel, Governor of Hainaut, called for supreme efforts to institute social "justice and renovation".[2] Woeste, declared that the workers' complaints were "legitimate";[3] and in his mea culpa, he admitted that the political leaders had "not given enough attention to the plight of the peo-

1 "Rapport du bourgmestre de Charleroi Audent devant le Conseil Communal du 9 mai 1886 sur les grèves", A.V.C. MSS, "Registres des Procès-verbaux"; Gazette de Mons, May 16, 1886.

2 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut, Conseil provincial du Hainaut. Session de 1886. Recueil des procès-verbaux des séances, p. 12.

3 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session, 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 41.

ple".[1] Speaking for the cabinet, Beernaert promised that the government would "devote more efforts to [improving] the lot of the working class".[2] He already appeared to have the support of the opposition leader, Frère-Orban, who had also demanded that the government take up the social question.[3]

Suddenly, the social question seemed to have gained primacy over the old Church-State relations question, which had dominated the preceding half century of Belgian politics. In a speech before the Provincial Council, Monsieur de Montpellier d'Annevoie, Governor of Namur, clearly articulated the transformation in issue priorities. "At last" the leaders were "free of the old liberal-clerical issue the dull rut in which the wagon of politics ... [had] rolled. Providence had surely required that all men of good will [had to] devote their intelligence and study to finding ways for alleviating the suffering of the working classes". "Men of all parties" had to join in arriving at a solution to this problem.[4]

Any solution would require a reevaluation of the heretofore unquestioned laissez-faire economic doctrine. According to the Duc d'Ursel, the insurrection and the economic crisis had "reduced

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1 Woeste, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire contemporaine de la Belgique, vol. I, p. 325.

2 Letter, Beernaert to Leopold II, April 14, 1886, A.R.D. MSS, Cabinet du Roi, n° C10. See also, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 30, 1886.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 9, 1886.

4 Ami de l'Ordre, July 25, 1886.

[these ideas] to nothing".[1] Belgium's leaders had deceived themselves into believing in "alleged natural laws of economics", which held that "individual well-being would infallibly coincide with the common good and that competition was a remedy for greed".[2] Beernaert spoke of "exceptions" to the "heretofore absolute policy of non intervention".[3] Woeste mentioned "certain areas" where "intervention [was] necessary".[4] Beernaert called for intervention "to protect the poor and the weak members of society" when they did not have the means to compete effectively in the economic system.[5] According to Nothomb, the "law of humanity" had "priority over the law of economics".[6]

Speaking for the Doctrinaire Liberal members of Parliament, Frère-Orban assented to these broad principles for justifying state intervention in economic affairs. The opposition leader joined the Catholic majority in opposing Janson and the Progressives' conception of intervention which provided for a far more pervasive state role in economic affairs. The Progressives envisaged nationalization of major sectors of the economy as well as regulation of prices and wages. Catholics and Doctrinaires tacitly coalesced around a far

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1 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Conseil provincial du Hainaut. Session de 1886. Recueil des procès-verbaux des séances, p. 4.

2 Ibid.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 6, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, September 28, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 6, 1886.

6 Ibid., June 24, 1886.

more limited conception of the scope of state intervention. They envisaged a conservative form of "subsidized liberty", whereby the government would regulate economic and social affairs, not in contradiction to, but in support of competition. By protecting the weaker groups in society the state would reestablish an equilibrium between competing labor and business groups, thus it would "guarantee individual competition".[1] This form of "indirect" intervention salvaged a semblance of integrity for the laissez-faire doctrine and reconciled it with the urgent need for social reform legislation to the satisfaction of most Catholic and Doctrinaire political leaders. The new doctrine, also, laid a basis for cooperation between Catholics and Doctrinaires in supporting social reform legislation. Moreover, at the same time, both groups could oppose the admission of the new challenging groups – the Progressives and Socialists – who hoped to gain polity membership through universal suffrage and then enact far more drastic reform legislation of their own.

Beyond these strategic political consideration there was a much broader issue; the problem of reintegrating the alienated class into the social order. The liberal myth of integral prosperity and industrialization had been exploded during the insurrection. Beernaert, like other leaders of the day, had believed that industrialization, progress and improved living standards for every social class went hand in hand, and that ever greater social harmony would grow as industrialization proceeded. "But instead of this idyll

1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 5, 1886.

[i.e. industrialization bringing about a greater distribution of wealth], we see more and more violent explosions of hatred and anger. Capital is reviled as an enemy and the workers attack the factories", lamented the head of the government.[1] He agreed with his opponent in Parliament, Frère-Orban, that the upper classes had to somehow close the gap between themselves and the laboring masses.[2] Right wing Catholics such as Woeste, claimed that the whole problem was due to the secularization of society. He warned against society's moral erosion which had generated greed and interclass hatred and the destruction of a community spirit.[3] Businessmen had lost their moral consciousness, and they had treated workers like "beasts of burden".[4] Workers saw happiness not in God, but in the acquisition of wealth; there was no God-given social authority to guide them, and they looked enviously at the riches of the upper-classes. Catholics were stumbling toward a reordering of economic priorities and humanitarian social priorities, and this could serve as the justification for using the State as a representative and arbiter of social humanitarian priorities over purely economic interests. At the same time, Governors de Montpellier d'Annevoie and d'Ursel joined Woeste who advocated reestablishing the idea of an integrat-

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 6, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, September 27, 1886.

3 Journal de Bruxelles, April 4, 1886.

4 Ibid.; Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Première session 26-29 septembre 1886, p. 42.

ed community as had been embodied in the medieval corporation.[1]

As the spring and summer of 1886 wore on into autumn, the Commission du Travail completed its hearings and began to prepare its recommendations.[2] Between October 1886 and June 1887 its four-volume in-folio report gradually reached the press. The Commission recommended legislation on virtually every aspect of the social question.[3] It recommended legislation concerning conciliation and arbitration boards,[4] child and female labor regulation,[5] trade-unions,[6] intemperance,[7] payment and garnishment of workers' wages,[8] industrial courts,[9] cooperatives,[10] mutual aid societies,[11] workers' housing,[12] savings funds,[13] trade schools,[14] personal military con-

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, July 25, 1886.

2 See pages 212-216.

3 Geerinck's, Les grèves dans le Hainaut en 1886 et la Commission du Travail, part II, provides a very precise explanation of the recommendations of the Commission as well as an excellent analysis of how the members and subcommittees arrived at their final proposals. I have not gone into any detail on this aspect of the events of 1886.

4 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 593; Gazette de Charleroi, June 9, 1887.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, June 9, 1887; Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 594.

6 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 599; Gazette de Mons, December 4, 1886; Meuse, December 5, 1886.

7 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 601.

8 Ibid., vol. III, p. 597.

9 Ibid., vol. III, p. 605.

10 Gazette de Charleroi, June 9, 1887.

11 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 604; Gazette de Liège, February 11, 1886.

12 Gazette de Charleroi, November 8, 1886; Commission du Tra-

scription,[1] relief funds,[2] pension funds,[3] and work accident insurance.[4] Finally, the Commission recommended that the government establish a permanent Commission that would oversee industrial relations and would make periodical recommendations for further social legislation as new problems arose.[5]

The authorities were well informed about the Commission's general recommendations for social legislation even before the final report was published. Thus, Beernaert was already able to launch his government's social reform program when Parliament reassembled in November 1886.[6] The actual enactment of the social reform legislation constituted the final stage of the government's reaction to the strikes. This stage lasted several years, i.e. from 1886 to 1889. During this period, social tensions continued. The continuing working class fermentation prevented the authorities from forgetting the in-

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vail, Rapports, vol. III, pp. 595-596, 607-608.

13 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, pp. 603-614; Gazette de Liège, February 2 and May 31, 1887; Gazette de Charleroi, November 8, 1886.

14 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 602.

1 Ibid., vol. III, p. 603.

2 Ibid., vol. III, p. 611-612.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., vol. III, pp. 609-610; Ami de l'Ordre, January 5, 1887; Gazette de Liège, January 3 and 14, 1887; Meuse, January 4, 1887; Journal de Bruxelles, January 3, 1886; Réforme, July 9, 1887; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, January 6 and May 25, 1887.

5 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, July 3, 1887.

6 In session, during which Beernaert launched his social reform program, there was so much legislation that Parliament sat from November 1886 to August 1887, instead of adjourning in May.

surrection of 1886 and constantly spurred them on to enact the promised social reforms.

Though the economic situation improved somewhat in 1887, 1888 and 1889,[1] these years continued to be plagued by labor agitation, strikes and dynamitings in the Hainaut coal fields. In August 1886, the P.O.B. finally launched a series mammoth demonstration for universal suffrage. Originally scheduled for mid-June, they had been forbidden following the insurrection of March.[2] Meanwhile in Charleroi, new strikes broke out in summer and fall of 1886; and when these failed, the workers resorted to terrorism and sabotage.[3] The authorities were extremely worried: When Beernaert proposed reinforcing the garrison in Charleroi, Leopold opposed the idea, because he feared that the strikers "would stir up and win over" the soldiers to their cause.[4] In 1887, strikes broke out again, this time they extended from Charleroi[5] through the Centre[6] and into the Borinage.[7] In 1888, the Centre was again plagued by industrial violence.[8]

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1 Gazette de Liège, February 15, 1888; Réforme, October 1 and November 21, 1888.

2 Meuse, August 15, 1886.

3 Letter, De Busschere to Bosch, December 2, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Ministère de la Justice, Administration de la sûreté publique, Police des étrangers, Dossiers généraux, n° 153.

4 Copy letter, Leopold II to Beernaert, November 26, 1886, A.R.D. MSS, Cabinet du Roi, n° C10.

5 Ami de l'Ordre, June 5, 1887.

6 Gazette de Mons, May 25, 1887.

7 Gazette de Liège, May 20, 1887.

8 Réforme, December 8, 1888.

Despite the constant unrest and the continuation of the depression, Beernaert's Catholic government remained firmly in power during this period. The elections of 1886 and 1888 increased or maintained Catholic control in both houses.[1]

Amidst stringent police and military protections in anticipation of a new outbreak of disorders,[2] Leopold II, proceeded to the Palais de la Nation on November 9, 1886 to open the new session of Parliament and to deliver the Throne Speech wherein Beernaert was to unveil his social reform program. After promising "clemency" for the major portion of the "misguided unfortunates" who had been involved

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1 In Belgium, half the seats in each house were up for election. For the Chambre, there were 138 seats up for election every two years. The elections for the Sénat occurred every four years. In 1886, the Catholics held 98 seats and the Liberals held only 40 seats in the lower house. In 1888, the Catholics again held 90 seats to the Liberals' 40; while in the Sénat the Catholics held 47 to the Liberals' 18, cf. J. Gilissen, Le régime représentatif en Belgique depuis 1790 (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1958), p. 103 and Annex n° 1.

In a way, Belgian political institutions made enactment of reform legislation somewhat easier. Whereas upper houses in Spain, Russia, Austria, Britain and Prussia did not provide for direct representation of population, in Belgium a portion of the members of the Sénat were elected directly while the rest were chosen by Provincial Councils. Consequently both houses usually were politicized and under the control of the same party and the upper house was seldom involved in vetoing legislation, cf. Anderson, pp. 56-58.

2 The authorities deployed a battalion of the Chasseurs-éclaireurs, the Chasseurs belges, the artillery division of the Garde Civique as well as all the infantry of the Gardes of Brussels and the surrounding towns, cf. Gazette de Liège, November 4, 1886.

Procureur du Roi, H.H. Willemaers and Brussels Commissaire en chef de police, Rosseele feared that workers from Hainaut might descend upon Brussels to demand amnesty for Falleur and Schmidt, cf. letters, Willemaers to Bosch, November 4 and 11, 1886, and a copy letter, Rosseele to Willemaers, November 8, 1886, A.G.R. MSS, Archives du Parquet général, Registres et Dossiers, 1812-1914, n° 223B.

in the insurrection, the speech went on to summarize the consensus which had emerged from the general debate over the social question, such as the need to reorder priorities: "The plight of the working class deserves our utmost attention and it will be the duty of the legislation to bring about ... an improvement in the situation". The throne speech also questioned the heretofore sacrosanct laissez-faire economic doctrine: "We have relied, for too long, on the principles of economic liberty". Finally, the speech laid down the guide lines according to which the state would hereafter be authorized to intervene in social and economic questions. "It is only just that the law provide special protection for the weak and unfortunate".

After paying homage to the work of the Commission du travail, the speech went on to enumerate the various bills of the reform program. The government promised to "foster free development of professional organizations, establish new lines of communication between labor and management through the creation of arbitration and conciliation boards, regulate child and female labor, curb abuses in the manner of paying wages, facilitate construction of decent workers housing, aid the development of social security, relief, work accident insurance and pension funds, and combat the ravages of drunkenness and immorality". Over half the speech was related to the social question.[1]

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, November 9, 1886; Gazette de Liège, November 10, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, November 10, 1886; Meuse, November 10, 1886; Indépendance Belge, November 10,

The Liberal press opened fire the next day. These newspapers described the speech as "colorless",[1] "the vaguest, most banal since 1830",[2] without any real substance",[3] "empty and pretentious",[4] "a collection of empty phrases and trivialities".[5] According to the Réforme, Beernaert had not really come to grips with "the most vital question of the day, the problem of poverty", and the "great ministry" had extricated itself from having to take bold action by invoking an "absolutely grotesque truism". Beernaert had merely offered "minimum elementary reforms that no ministry in its right mind could have avoided to provide". Even these, however, probably went too far for the right-wing of the Catholic party, led by Jacobs and Woeste. These "fanatics" and "reactionaries" were "even more blind" than the Réforme's Doctrinaire opponents in the Liberal party; for "the laissez-faire ... doctrine had no more fervent adepts than the right-wing Catholic capitalists of Flanders".[6] On the other hand, the Doctrinaire Etoile Belge attacked the speech because of its "openly socialist tendancies", i.e. government intervention in favor of the poor.[7]

1886; Patriote, November 10, 1886; Réforme, November 10, 1886; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, November 11, 1886.

1 Réforme, November 10, 1886.

2 Meuse, November 10, 1886.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, November 11, 1886.

4 Réforme, November 10, 1886.

5 Gazette de Mons, November 12, 1886.

6 Réforme, November 10, 1886.

7 Etoile Belge, November 10, 1886.

The Catholic Journal de Bruxelles thought the speech was "full of serious promises" and believed that the speech was characterized by a "tone of noble boldness ..., which would certainly have an important impact".[1] The Social Catholic Union nationale pour le redressement des griefs, whose leaders (Verhaegen, Schollaert and Collinet) had organized the Catholic social congress, expressed its "appreciation to the king and members of the cabinet".[2]

The most interesting reaction, symbolizing the tacit alliance between Frère-Orban's Liberals and Beernaert's Catholics, over the need for social reform, came from the Indépendance Belge, Brussels spokesman for Doctrinaire liberalism. While disagreeing with most everything else in the speech, the Indépendance did, however, agree with the Catholics in calling the speech "quite precise as far as the working class question was concerned".[3]

One of the first reform proposals to be discussed in Parliament originated with Hector Denis, a Progressive-oriented economist from Brussels. In an article in the Réforme, Denis had proposed the creation of a system of conciliation and arbitration boards throughout the country.[4] Frère-Orban snapped up the idea, drafted a proposal and submitted it to Parliament in early May 1886.[5] Meanwhile,

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, November 10 and 11, 1886.

2 Petition addressed to the Parliament, n.d., A.G.R. MSS, Fonds J. Helleputte et F. Schollaert, "Sociale Congressen", n° 449.

3 Indépendance Belge, November 10, 1886.

4 Réforme, July 25, 1887.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 5, 1886.

Victor Brants' sub-committee of the Commission du Travail and Beernaert's cabinet made their own proposals.[1] Frère-Orban wanted to create conciliation and arbitration boards through government, management and labor initiative. The bi-partite boards would first attempt to conciliate disputes with the possibility of resorting to arbitration if conciliation failed.[2]

The scheme received support from diverse groups. The Chambre de Commerce de Liège came out in favor of the idea and reminded the public that it had suggested such a scheme as far back as 1876.[3] But other business leaders were divided over the conciliation scheme. On the one hand the Charbonnages du Levant du Flénu and the Association charbonnière des bassins de Charleroi et de la Basse-Sambre supported the measure, and believed it would "render an important service" toward improving industrial relations.[4] On the other hand the Société Cockerill and the Société de Marcinelle-Couillet opposed the whole idea.[5]

The workers representatives who testified before the Commission du Travail manifested luke-warm support for the scheme.[6] What

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887; Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 593; Meuse, July 20, 1887.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887.

3 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1886, pp. 31-33; Gazette de Liège, September 16-19, 1886.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, July 27, 1887.

5 Ibid.

6 Gazette de Liège, September 10, 1886.

they really wanted, according to the Ligue ouvrière de Verviers, was to have the arbitral aspects rendered obligatory.[1] Significantly, quite a few industrialists were willing to go along with the idea in the hope of preventing further strikes, riots and destruction.[2]

Since the conciliation scheme was Frère-Orban's, the Liberal press thundered its applause. "Distinguished by its soundness",[3] "the only proposal with genuine social significance", trumpeted the Meuse.[4] The Meuse liked the idea because it would supposedly reduce industrial tensions with only a little organizational tinkering; and at the same time it would avoid state intervention in industrial relations.[5] It was "the best way to end these confrontations and head them off".[6] That the Doctrinaire Gazette de Mons would term Frère-Orban's proposal an "excellent one" was no surprise,[7] but even the Réforme grudgingly avowed that "as inadequate as it was ... it could be of great importance" in improving industrial relations.[8]

Actually, the boards were to operate on a strictly voluntary

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, July 27, 1887.

2 Ibid., the Société Cockerill, the Forges Gobeaux, the Association houillère du Couchant de Mons, the Charbonnages des bassins de Charleroi et de la Basse-Sambre, the Charbonnages de Conty et Spinoy, the Charbonnages de Noël Sart Culpart and the Maîtres de verreries belges all supported this idea.

3 Meuse, May 11, 1888.

4 Ibid., August 14-15, 1887.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., May 11, 1888.

7 Gazette de Mons, May 18, 1888 and February 21, 1889.

8 Réforme, September 5, 1887 and July 22, 1889.

basis. Their decisions could only be obligatory by mutual consent. Their only real sanction was to publicize their findings and, thereby, to appeal for public pressure.[1] This alternative gave them a quasi-arbitral role in Frère-Orban's view.[2] The committee which drafted the bill maintained this aspect of the scheme despite government pressure to reduce the arbitration role of the boards.[3] To criticism that the conciliation boards merely duplicated the functions of the Conseils de prud'hommes (industrial courts),[4] supporters of the bill pointed out that the Conseils de prud'hommes handed down legally binding decisions only after a dispute, whereas the conciliations had a preventive role[5] and their decisions were not binding on the parties without their prior consent.[6] Conservative Catholic senators like the Comte de Borchgrave d'Altena (Tongres) and J.A. Casier (Ghent) expressed fears that the boards would augment tensions rather than reduce them, because their meetings would be public and open to agitational demagoguery.[7] Beernaert disagreed. He believed that the boards would "provide more direct and more regular contacts; ... workers and employers" would "get to know each

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1 Meuse, June 29, 1887.

2 Ibid.; Gazette de Charleroi, July 1, 1887; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887.

3 Meuse, June 29 and July 20, 1887.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1886.

5 Meuse, June 30, 1886.

6 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887.

7 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 11, 1887.

others problems better".[1] Both would better understand that they were united by common interests.[2] Furthermore, workers would realize that management could not break the laws of Manchesterian economics by maintaining wage levels during a depression. The bipartisan support for this view led to its adoption in August 1887.[3]

Another aspect of labor-management relations which the Beernaert government hoped to improve was to amend the 1859 law on labor courts. Though some representatives of the industrial groups did not think that the 1859 law needed amending,[4] the workers who testified before the Commission du Travail wanted the law changed so that the Conseils de prud'hommes would be truly representative of the workers as well as the employers.[5] The Commission du Travail took the workers' side on this issue and the new Minister of Industry, De Bruyn agreed with the essence of its proposal.[6]

The legislators who participated in drafting the bill, Ministers of the Interior De Moreau, De Bruyn (his successor) and Senator

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887.

2 Réforme, May 24, 1887.

3 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 11, 1887, voted 41 - 0 and one abstention, see also Indépendance Belge, August 12, 1887. For the text of the law, see Gazette de Charleroi, August 9, 1888; Journal de Bruxelles, August 6, 1888; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 5, 1887; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1887; Loi du 16 août 1887 instituant le Conseil de l'industrie et du travail (Liège: J. Godenne, 1893), pp. 3-5.

4 Gazette de Liège, September 17, 1886; Meuse, September 24, 1886.

5 Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, July 22, 1887.

6 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

Lammens, adopted virtually in toto the recommendations of the Commission du Travail.[1] They, like the Journal de Bruxelles, viewed the measure as a means of "social pacification".[2] The new bill would reduce industrial tension and aid in settling industrial disputes before they degenerated into strikes and new riots. The bill provided for extending the industrial court to every major industry in an area, instead of merely having a court for all the establishments in each city.[3] The new bill provided for more specialized and more numerous tribunals. It assured that the parties to a dispute would have their case decided by judges who came from the same industry within their locality.[4] The courts were democratized. Hereafter, the workers were granted universal suffrage to elect their representatives on the tribunals. Though, the bill abolished the literacy test it required that all voters would have to have resided and practiced their trade within the tribunal's region for at least four years.[5] The Réforme criticized this provision. It reminded the public that in France the law required a residency of only three years. It favored a residency of only six months.[6] Finally, the bill provided

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1 Réforme, January 14, 1887; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, March 29 and July 26, 1889; Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 605.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, January 16, 1888.

3 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, March 29, 1889.

4 Journal de Bruxelles, January 16, 1888.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, January 16, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, January 14 and March 29, 1889; Journal de Bruxelles, January 14, 1888; Indépendance Belge, January 19, 1889.

6 Réforme, January 14, 1887.

for voting by secret ballot; and it declared that foremen would no longer be considered workers' delegates. Heretofore, the foremen had used their authority to pressure workers to elect them as their representative. They would then vote the same way as the employers on all disputes.[1]

The bill was enacted in 1889.[2] It elicited very little debate between the political parties. Generally, in view of its technical and administrative nature, it did not capture the imagination of the political leaders or the press. On the other hand, the bill on the construction of low-cost housing engendered a great deal more interest in the press and in the Parliament. The housing situation of the poorer classes was atrocious. Both the municipal authorities[3] and the workers who testified before the Commission du Travail painted the same dismal picture of life in the industrial slums.[4] While rents had risen 30 per cent between 1871 and 1886, conditions seemed to be deteriorating.[5] The workers' ghetto lacked sewers, garbage was

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, January 16, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, January 14, February 14 and March 29, 1889.

2 Journal de Bruxelles, January 30, 1889; La législation ouvrière. Recueil des dispositions légales et réglementaires en vigueur au 1er mai 1895, pp. 14-32.

3 Gazette de Liège, September 2, 1886.

4 Ibid., August 27, 1886.

5 Ibid., September 17, 1886; Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 556, 583.

The Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège, 26-29 septembre 1886, pp. 150-151, also recommend reform legislation in this area.

thrown into the street.[1] In one area of thirty houses, there were only two toilets.[2] The streets were narrow, ventilation was inadequate and epidemics were able to spread rapidly;[3] the last serious cholera epidemic had occurred in 1866.[4] The slums were breeding grounds for all sorts of "crimes that were related to promiscuity of adults, brothers and sisters thrown together with children, five or six to a bed", intoned the Catholic Patriote.[5] Bad housing tore the family apart; it drove the father into the pub to get drunk and engage in all sorts of immoral politics.[6] No worker could escape the slum; homes cost 3,000 to 4,000 francs, while the average wage was only 800 or 900 francs per year.[7]

Despite the inquiries in 1843-46 and 1851 which showed that

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 3, 1889.

2 Baron Melot quoted a report of the Public Health Council. "Il existe encore 'des cabanes, misérables tannières, trop étroites, mal éclairées; de tas de guenilles dans tous les coins, de la poussière et des ordures partout; les fosses d'aisance n'y sont que de simples excavations pratiquées dans le sol! Dans ces lieux, tout est ... réuni pour engendrer des infections.

Les accouchements et les opérations chirurgicales se font devant les enfants, et lorsqu'il y a un décès, le cadavre est conservé jusqu'au moment de l'inhumation au milieu de la famille et communique parfois, à toute une population, le choléra ou d'autres maladies contagieuses.'" Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

3 Patriote, June 22, 1889.

4 Réforme, September 19, 1888, quotes from Louis Bertrand, Le logement de l'ouvrier et du pauvre en Belgique, cf. pp. 265-282.

5 Patriote, June 22, 1889.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, September 19, 1889; Journal de Bruxelles, April 3, 1888.

7 Journal de Bruxelles, October 18, 1888.

two thirds of the working class families lived in one or two room flats,[1] even conservative legislators such as the Baron de Coninck de Merckem had to admit that "little had been done".[2] There were a few company-owned housing projects. Most workers, however, disliked living in employer-owned housing, because it reduced their mobility and their bargaining power.[3] Meanwhile, various types of low cost housing programs, which often included a rent-purchase plan, were being developed in France, Britain, Switzerland, the United States and Holland.[4]

The government submitted a bill, inspired by the recommendations of the Commission du Travail,[5] to Parliament on March 28, 1888. It was finally reported out of committee in May and July 1889.[6] There was bipartisan support for the objectives of the bill. The general idea behind the bill was to make the worker a property owner like the middle class. He would then be endowed with a vested interest in maintaining the social order.[7] With a happy home to return to after work was finished, the worker would stay out of both the

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1 Réforme, September 19, 1888.

2 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 2, 1889.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, June 21, 1888 and March 10, 1888.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 2 and 3, 1887; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

6 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, May 25, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, July 25, 1889.

7 Journal de Bruxelles, April 3, 1888; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 3, 1889.

taverns and revolutionary politics.[1] Though Janson and the Progressives had advocated achieving this goal by direct governmental control and direct financing of public housing,[2] Beernaert asserted that over-reliance on the state was "simplistic".[3] Woeste, opposed any scheme which "stifled individual initiative" and the majority of Liberals agreed.[4]

Beernaert favored a system whereby the government would only provide incentives for the construction of low cost housing, but would leave the development of the program to the private sector. Beernaert desperately wanted to reconcile laissez-faire ideas with social reform, wherever this was possible.[5] To accomplish this, Beernaert proposed to accord corporate status to private agencies and workers' cooperatives[6] which would build low cost housing. The government could provide these organizations with municipal tax exceptions for up to 12 years.[7] The government and municipalities would only maintain a regulatory role through their expropriation powers and the authority to oversee and enforce adequate sanitary

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, March 28, 1888.

2 Ibid., July 5 and 9, 1889.

3 Ibid., October 22, 1888.

4 Ibid., July 4, 1889.

5 Ibid., July 3, 1889.

6 Journal de Bruxelles, April 3, 1888; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 18, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

7 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889; the Commission du Travail's proposal was influenced by Hector Denis' ideas on funding through public sources, Indépendance Belge, April 25, 1887.

conditions.[1] Beernaert also proposed to aid the financing of the new housing projects by authorizing the national pension and savings fund to loan its funds to the workers' housing agencies,[2] despite the fact that the conservative members like De Smet de Naeyer feared that such a measure would "endanger its solvency".[3] Janson, however, doubted whether this would pump enough money into the housing market. His acolyte from Charleroi, Giroul, claimed that the 500,000 frs.[4] Beernaert proposed to pump into low cost housing was a mere "sop to the working class".[5] Finally, Janson managed to obtain Beernaert's support for a compromise amendment which would open another source of funds for the program. The government would be able to direct the country's Hospices and Bureaux de Bienfaisance to provide capital, earned on their property holdings, for low cost housing.[6] The vote for the bill was almost unanimous in both the Chambre and the Sénat. The bill became law on August 9, 1889.[7] By 1914, 100,000

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 18, 1889.

2 Ibid., July 3, 1889.

3 Ibid., July 2 and 3, 1889.

4 Ibid., July 9, 1889.

5 Ibid., July 10, 1889; Indépendance Belge, July 11, 1889.

6 Indépendance Belge, July 10, 1889; Patriote, July 7, 1889; Gazette de Liège, July 12, 1889; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 9 and 11, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

7 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 8, 1889; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 16, 17 and 18, 1889;
For a detailed study of this law, see Raoul Mangot, Les habitations ouvrières en Belgique (Paris: Sirey, 1913).

houses had been built under this program.[1]

The same year that the housing bill became law, the cause célèbre of the social reform movement also came up for a final vote. As the reader has seen in Chapter I, regulation of child and female labor had been a lost cause in 1846, 1870, 1878. In 1886, the Commission du Travail recommended such legislation, and when the Commission finally completed its report,[2] the government introduced a bill.[3] It took two years to finally enact this heretofore perennial issue. In the meantime, a Royal Decree of 1884 had, to some extent, reduced female and child labor in the mines. But the measure was an executive decision, and it was not binding enforceable legislation.[4] The Union des charbonnages et usines métallurgiques of Liège reported that 20 per cent of the labor force in heavy industry, including the mines, consisted of women and children.[5] In the mines, children were employed at greasing machinery, cleaning and maintaining the lighting system and they were harnassed to coal carts to drag them through narrow tunnels where neither a grown man nor a poney could

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1 Mahaim, in La Patrie belge, pp. 167-168.

2 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 594; Gazette de Charleroi, June 9, 1887.

3 Gazette de Liège, June 20, 1887.

4 Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la Première division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et minéralurgique pendant l'annee 1886, pp. 16-17, showed that between 1877 and 1886, the number of children and women in the mines dropped from 10,439 to 7,237 and from 3,802 to 3,285 respectively. See also Haveu in the Indépendance Belge, July 6, 1886.

5 Meuse, August 6, 1889.

enter.[1] The children worked adult hours, from 12 to 16 hours per day, six days a week, sometimes at night as well as on Sundays.[2] The Association des maîtres de forges of Charleroi admitted that "33 per cent" of its child and female labor force worked the night shift.[3] Ninety per cent of the steel mills employed children from the ages twelve to fourteen;[4] and they worked in the terrible heat around blast furnaces and rolling mills.[5] However, most of the child labor worked in the textile industry around Ghent. There the child labor force was actually increasing.[6]

When adult male workers testified to the Commission in opposition to such practices, they invoked humanitarian and also economic arguments against these practices. Such practices drove their wages down and, in a vicious cycle, forced workers to send their daughters to the mines and mills to inflate the labor market and to compete with them for ever lower wages.[7]

Heretofore, the bill had engendered a bitter debate, and each time it had gone down to defeat because it involved several important issues, such as the competitive position of Belgian industry, the Liberal ideal of the right to work, paternal authority, and

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 48-51.

2 Ibid., vol. I, p. 56.

3 Ibid.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, August 4, 1889.

5 Gazette de Liège, September 1, 1886.

6 Meuse, September 24, 1886.

7 Gazette de Liège, September 27 and 28, 1886.

above all the right of the state to intervene in economic relations to regulate labor. These same issues arose again in 1886-89. In a circular, the Chambre de Commerce of Liège repeated the old arguments of 1869 that the legislation would raise costs and disorganize industry.[1] The Société industrielle et commerciale (Verviers) claimed regulation of child labor would "lead to desastrous consequences".[2] The Charbonnages, hauts-fourneaux et usines de Strépy-Bracquegnies agreed.[3] According to J. De Hemptinne, a member of parliament and industrialist from Ghent, such legislation would "reduce productivity", and it could not be uniformly applied because of the diversity of industry's man power requirements.[4] For example, industries which had to maintain ovens, e.g. the glass industry, could not afford to exclude their child and female labor force from night work. The fires had to be kept going.[5] The bill would also "paralyse" the textile industry, according to the Société industrielle et commerciale.[6] A. Peltzer, industrialist and member of parliament, argued that the textile industry needed full-time children employees whose small hands and manual dexterity permitted them to handle thin threads.[7]

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1 A.G.R. MSS, Papiers de H.J.W. Frère-Orban, n° 476.

2 Gazette de Charleroi, February 21, 1887.

3 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 165.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

5 Meuse, August 6, 1889.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, February 21, 1887.

7 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

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The Charbonnages du Levant du Flénu claimed that inexpensive child and female labor was needed to reduce already high production costs that resulted from the narrow twisted coal veins. Cheap labor maintained the competitiveness of Belgian coal.[1] Consequently, such legislation would undermine the country's position in world markets,[2] unless all the industrial nations agreed to lower tariffs[3] and simultaneously instituted the same regulatory legislation.[4] Not true replied Paul Janson, who in 1888 had again been elected to lead the Progressives in Parliament.[5] "All other industrial countries already regulated child labor, Belgium had only to follow their example", asserted the Gazette de Liège. The newspaper went on to remind opponents of the bill that England's first factory act was enacted 87 years ago.[6] Janson added that in England, the reform legislation had not threatened productivity.[7]

The Charbonnages réunis (Charleroi) and the Société anonyme des Charbonnages Noel-Sart-Culpart (Gilly) opposed any infringement of the right to work.[8] The Charbonnages de Grand Conty et Spinois

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 167.

2 Association des Maîtres des forges de Charleroi, ibid., vol. I, p. 160; see also, "Réglementation du travail des femmes et des enfants", Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège, n° 9 (juillet 1887), p. 119.

3 De Hemptinne, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

4 Gazette de Liège, September 17, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 31, 1889.

6 Gazette de Liège, June 20, 1889.

7 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 31, 1889.

8 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concer-

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claimed that every woman "must have the right to pursue any career she chose".[1] According to the Meuse it seemed that "the male legislator was bent on avenging himself against women".[2] The newspaper also asked what the government would do to supplement the women's and children's lost wages, would it "condemn them and their children to death".[3]

Opponents of the bill raised the parental authority issue. The state took away the father's authority to decide when and where they would work.[4] The Gazette de Liège answered that child labor engendered parental laziness and dependance on the children's earnings; while in the meantime, the father quit work and went drinking and wenching.[5] The Gazette concluded that "the exploitation of children [was] more obnoxious than any other sort of exploitation. It [was] more criminal because it [was] based on [the children's] duty to obey their parents".[6]

By what right could the State oblige the workers to keep their women and children at home, asked the De Hemptinne and the Société

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nant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 165, 167; Procès-verbaux des séances, vol. II, Sec. E, p. 85.

1 Ibid., Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 166.

2 Meuse, July 29, 1889.

3 Ibid.

4 Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège, n° 7, p. 119.

5 Gazette de Liège, June 26, 1889.

6 Ibid.

industrielle et commerciale.[1] Besides, the workers would send their women and children to work despite the legislation, according to the spokesman of the Charbonnage d'Amer-coeur (Charleroi).[2] Peltzer and M.V.A. Magis (member of parliament from Huy) warned that the government would be morally responsible for supplementing the lost incomes.[3] There were, however, more important considerations than merely money. Dr. Kuborn, the Seraing industrial physician who had fought so hard for the legislation in 1868-70, was back on the scene in 1886-89. He again warned of the ill effects of a long industrial work day on women. Women working in the mines and mills had more frequent miscarriages, dead births, deformed babies, retarded puberty because of lead poisoning, inadequate fresh air and aniline poisoning.[4] De Hemptinne disagreed; conditions were not so bad and the twelve-hour day was not too long.[5]

The debate also revolved around the moral and intellectual issues which were involved in the regulation of child and female labor. Early employment instilled a sense of responsibility and diligence in the young.[6] "A child who worked" was "a child saved; the

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1 Gazette de Charleroi, February 21, 1887; Indépendance Belge, August 1, 1869; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1869.

2 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des séances, vol. II, Sec. E, p. 83.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26 and 31, 1889.

4 Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

6 Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège, n° 7, p. 119.

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one who did nothing was lost".[1] And when Dr. Kuborn claimed that women's involvement in industry was "a violation of the law of nature which had created women to create, engender, conceive, nourish and raise children" and not to work in industry,[2] the Gazette de Charleroi brushed the idea off as "very poetic", but unrealistic.[3] But Catholics (Woeste) and Progressives (the Réforme) and Kuborn claimed that the legislation would in fact assure morality in the mines;[4] it would reduce "promiscuity between the sexes",[5] and it would end a situation in the mines where "women were debauched by the foremen".[6] The Association charbonnière of Charleroi called all this a "fairy tale".[7] "Really, replied the Gazette de Charleroi, the idea of throwing all the blame on the mining industry [was] funny. What [was] tolerated above ground [was] prohibited below ground".[8]

The key issue of the whole bill was related to the question of government intervention economic affairs. "Labor and management" had "to remain free" from state interference.[9] The Union des char-

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 31, 1889.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 150-160.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, January 29, 1887.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 30, 1889.

5 Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886.

6 Réforme, August 6, 1886.

7 Commission du Travail, Procès-verbaux des séances, vol. II, Sec. E, p. 85.

8 Gazette de Charleroi, June 29, 1887.

9 Charbonnages du Levant du Flénu, Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 167.

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bonnages et usines métallurgiques of the province de Liège was "most assuredly opposed" to the bill.[1] The Charbonnages de Grand Conty et Spinois claimed that the bill "appeared to be illegal".[2] The Etablissements Bleyberg and the Société anonyme de Marcinelle et Couillet demanded the maintenance of the free enterprise system.[3] The Association houillère du Couchant de Mons claimed that by only applying to certain industries, the bill was discriminatory.[4] The symposium of Catholic industrialists at the 1887 Congrès des oeuvres sociales declared that they had "never been supporters of such regulatory legislation". The Catholic businessmen considered the proposed bill "ineffective, vexatious, always inadequate [and] ... even dangerous".[5] And though some Catholic (De Hemptinne)[6] and Liberal (Peltzer)[7] members of Parliament opposed the measure, the Catholic Congress[8] joined the parliamentary majority of Liberals and Catholics, their press and other business elements in supporting the measure. Janson decried the "old arguments" as "completely unjusti-

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1 Meuse, August 6, 1889; see also Secrétaire des Ingénieurs des mines de Charleroi, Gazette de Charleroi, March 21-22, 1887.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 166.

3 Ibid., vol. I, p. 163.

4 Ibid., vol. I, p. 165.

5 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Deuxième session, 4-7 septembre 1887 (2 vols; Liège: Demarteau, 1887), vol. II, p. 29.

6 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26, 1889.

7 Ibid.

8 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Deuxième session, 4-7 septembre 1887, vol. I, p. 169.

fied".[1] The Governor of west Flanders joined d'Ursel in supporting regulatory legislation.[2] The right-wing Catholic Ami de l'Ordre thought that the measure was "inspired by the greatest wisdom".[3] While the Progressive Réforme considered the bill "too limited and too timid",[4] the Doctrinaire Liberal Indépendance Belge thought it included "wise rules which" suppressed "quite evident abuses" and established "protective measures in favor of women and children".[5] Even the Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques of the province of Liège promised to support the measure provided that such regulatory action was not "pushed to extremes".[6] This hardly satisfied the conservative minority. "Look out!" warned Magis, someday the government would invoke the precedent to go as far as fixing wages.[7]

The opposition was, nevertheless, overwhelmed as the press and the parliamentary majority showed that other industrial countries had gone well beyond Belgium in reconciling capitalism with the need for regulatory social legislation. They cited the recent British laws of 1872 and 1878,[8] the French laws of 1874 and 1887 and the

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 31, 1889.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 154.

3 Ami de l'Ordre, July 29, 1887.

4 Réforme, August 1, 1889.

5 Indépendance Belge, July 30, 1889.

6 Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège, n° 7, p. 119.

7 Charbonnages du Horloz, Meuse, October 3, 1886.

8 Ibid, July 29, 1889.

German legislation of 1887.[1] Even tiny Switzerland and autocratic Austria had moved in this direction.[2]

The bill was successfully guided through Parliament by Beernaert and his Catholics largely because they did not have a power base in the two industrial provinces, Hainaut and Liège.[3] The 1889 law limited the work day of women and children, it forbade night work and excluded all women and children from working in the mines. The legislation was amended in 1892, 1905, 1911 and 1914, raising the minimum ages each time while extending its scope.[4]

Regulatory measures regarding work safety rules and conditions were part and parcel of the narrower problem of child and female labor.[5] Shop rules were often not displayed and fines were arbitrarily imposed.[6] Discipline was extremely severe. An infraction of the shop's code of conduct often brought a fine of five francs, which was equivalent to two days average pay.[7] Oftentimes the employer obliged a prospective employee to deposit a sum, often equivalent

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 26 and 31, 1889.

2 Meuse, July 29, 1889.

3 Etoile Belge, July 11, 1886.

4 Ministère de l'Intérieur, Lois et règlements concernant la police des établissements dangereux, insalubres et incommodes, la salubrité des ateliers, la protection des ouvriers contre les accidents du travail et la réglementation du travail des femmes et des enfants (Brussels: Hayez, 1894), pp. 5-13; Chambre, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

5 "L'histoire de la législation sociale en Belgique", p. 22

6 Réforme, September 5, 1887 and November 29, 1888.

7 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 212, 291-292.

to several days pay, prior to being hired as a guarantee of good behavior. Wages varied from week to week. Foremen often arbitrarily imposed disciplinary fines in the employers name. The employer then substracted the sum from the deposit that the worker had made.[1] The worker was quite resentful of such practices, and managers entered the workshop in fear. One factory director in Verviers allegedly came into the workshop with a dog, a sword-cane, a revolver and a rifle.[2] Because of his brutality and arbitrariness,[3] the foreman became a ready target for all the pent up resentments that the worker harbored toward his employer. One worker described his relations with the foreman, tongue-in-cheek: "Disputes are not frequent, because the worker knows that the boss will always take the foreman's side. The cause of the problem is the brutality and vulgarity of the foreman and managerial personnel who are dirty b.....".[4]

Working conditions were often terrible. In the mill of one of the member's of parliament, temperatures rose to 35 or 40 degrees centigrade.[5] Asthma, lung diseases, bone deformations plagued the working populace. Life was short and brutish.[6] The Association des sociétés mutuelles put the average workers life-span at 50 years;

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 212.

2 Gazette de Liège, September 17, 1886.

3 Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886.

4 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 388.

5 Gazette de Liège, September 18-19, 1886.

6 Ibid.

by the age 35, most workers already ressembled men of 60.[1]

Frequent work accidents made it problematical whether a toiler would even make it to retirement, according to workers delegates who testified before the Commission du Travail. Adequate safety measures were often non-existent; few of the great machines had safety housings; their gears, fly wheels and grinders ground up, tore off and otherwise mutilated their share of legs, arms, hands ...[2] A small notice in the Peuple reported that on the 10th of March a child ... fell into a blast furnace at Herstal ... and was literally carbonized". Mine tunnels often had inadequate shaft supports. While in steel mills, splashing molten steel often caused severe burns, throughout industry first aid facilities, such as stretchers, were often inadequate.[4] Many industrialists, of course, denied that such conditions existed,[5] but if a change of heart was occuring among the industrial leadership this was signalled by the Chambre de Commerce of Liège which admitted that something was amiss in this area.[6]

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponse au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 127.

2 Ibid.

3 Peuple, March 14, 1886.

4 Gazette de Liège, August 27, 1886.

5 Ibid., August 27 and October 2-3, 1886; Meuse, September 7 and October 3, 1886; see also replies of the Société industrielle et commerciale de Verviers, Association des maîtres de forges de Charleroi, Etablissements belges de la Vieille-Montagne, Grand-Conty et Spinois, and Charbonnages du Levant du Flénu, Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 179-181.

6 Bulletin de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 1886, p. 14: "L'hygiène dans les ateliers semble n'avoir pas été, jusqu'ici, de

The government introduced bills in the Chamber[1] and Senate[2] which provided for a corps of safety and health inspectors to oversee whether decent conditions existed. Royal decrees in 1886[3] and 1887[4] had broadened the categories of industries which would eventually be subject to the surveillance of the health and safety inspectors. This bill engendered little but technical debate[5] over problems like providing adequate protection for the inspectors[6] or whether or not the Criminal Code should be used against infractions.[7] The bill on health and safety inspections was enacted by spring 1888.[8]

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la part de la Commission d'hygiène, l'objet d'études et de constatations suffisamment sévères. On a signalé des établissements dont la situation, sous ce rapport, est fort peu satisfaisante et qui, n'étant pas soumis à la surveillance du corps des mines, ne sauraient être contrôlés que par la dite Commission, qui ne s'en est, paraît-il, point occupée. Il est, sans aucun doute, dans presque toutes les branches de l'industrie, des inconvénients inhérents au genre de travail et qu'il serait impossible d'éviter entièrement. Il appartiendrait à la Commission d'hygiène, de signaler les progrès réalisables pour sauvegarder la santé des travailleurs, et à l'autorité publique d'imposer l'application de ces progrès."

1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, November 15, 1887. For text of the bill see, April 26, 1888. The bill was reported out of committee on February 3, 1888.

2 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 1, 1888.

3 Police des établissements dangereux, insalubres ou incommodes (Brussels: Hayez, 1887), pp. 41-44.

4 Lois et règlements concernant la police des établissements dangereux, insalubres et incommodes, la salubrité des ateliers, la protection des ouvriers contre les accidents du travail et la réglementation du travail des femmes et des enfants, pp. 8-15.

5 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 4, 1888.

6 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 26, 1888.

7 Ibid., May 1, 1888.

8 Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 4, 1888.

While the industrial health and safety bill went to committee, Parliament was well on the way to adopting legislation which would in effect abolish the truck-system in industrial relations. Workers, who testified before the Commission du Travail termed the system of company and foremen's stores and taverns, which sold commodities such as groceries, beer and coal, "slavery".[1] They accused foremen of forcing workers to do business in their stores and taverns in exchange for "favors".[2] To draw them into their stores, foremen obliged workers to come to collect their pay in the store.[3] In company stores, workers bought goods on credit at inflated prices and became indentured servants to their employer, because of the debts that they had accumulated.[4] Other employers, particularly, in the gun-making trade, paid their workers up to 50 per cent of their wages in kind.[5] In view of this testimony, the Commission du Travail recommended legislation to require that all wages be paid in legal tender, that the truck-system be prohibited, that employers be forbidden from putting any pressure on workers not to buy in other stores, that no wages be paid in taverns, that workers be paid regularly at least twice a month, and that no wages be withheld for

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, August 27, 1887; Gazette de Liège, September 2, 1886.

2 Gazette de Liège, September 1, 1886.

3 Ibid., September 17, 1886; Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 267.

4 See Appendix n° 9; Gazette de Liège, August 27, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 27, 1887.

debts incurred at the company store.[1] In July 1887, a bill, based on these recommendations came up for debate.[2]

The idea of forbidding employers from withholding workers wages for debts at the company store was the most strongly challenged provision of the bill. The Ingénieurs des Mines joined the industrialists in claiming that the provision hurt the poor workers. These workers badly needed credit.[3] The Meuse called the foreman's activities and payment in goods "scandalous", but it defended the company stores.[4] The Chambre de commerce et des fabriques of Arlon lined up alongside the Meuse.[5] The Gazette de Charleroi took the same editorial view, and it pointed out that such legislation blemished countless honestly run, paternally inspired, company stores which were not motivated by profits but by considerations for the well-being of workers.[6] Despite the Réforme's demand that the company store be abolished,[7] the Catholic press lined up with the Liberal press to oppose the abolition of company store credit arrangements. The Patriote joined the Meuse,[8] when it claimed that the

1 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 597.

2 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 27, 1887.

3 Gazette de Charleroi, March 21-22, 1887.

4 Meuse, September 7, 1886.

5 A.G.R. MSS, Papiers de H.V.W. Frère-Orban, "Généralités 1886-1888", n° 463.

6 Gazette de Charleroi, January 24, 1887.

7 Réforme, November 29, 1888.

8 Patriote, June 19, 1887.

credit system need not be abolished if the company stores' credit arrangements and pricing systems were controlled by state inspectors. The Journal de Bruxelles and the Patriote proposed such a system of inspection and they also suggested that the company stores' books be made public.[1]

In Parliament, the bill was most bitterly assailed by the members from the two industrial provinces. J. Bara, J.G. Fléchet (Liège), V.S. Gillieaux (industrialist from Charleroi) and Joseph Warnant (Huy) led the assault against the bill. They considered the bill "inflexible".[2] They claimed that there were very few abuses of the kind the bill was supposed to eliminate.[3] Gillieaux cited examples of company stores which marked down their goods at ten per cent below the prices demanded by the regular merchants.[4] Fléchet pointed out that company stores were often the only source of food in isolated areas.[5] Bara claimed that the measure infringed on the individual liberties of those who wished to open businesses, and that it discriminated against honest companies.[6]

The Catholics, however, had the support of the Liberal opposition. The Liberal member of Parliament and industrialist from Char-

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1 Patriote, June 19, 1887; Journal de Bruxelles, June 12, 1887.

2 Indépendance Belge, July 28, 1887.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 27, 1887.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., July 28, 1887.

leroi, G. Sabatier reminded his recalcitrant colleagues in the Liberal party of the gravity of the situation. Granted "the reforms" were "not perfect, but they" did, "to some extent, respond to the complaints which had been articulated in 1886".[1] De Moreau, Minister of Industry and Public Works, recited the abuses that had been engendered by the truck-system.[2] The most significant element in the tacit coalition between moderate Catholics and some Liberals was the support of the leader of the Catholic right-wing, Charles Woeste. Woeste tried to allay the fears of state intervention which still prevailed among many conservatives. He explained that the exigencies of the industrial crisis required a new approach to the problem, especially in view of "the Commission du Travail's heart-rending revelations".[3] Finally, to ensure more support for the bill, De Moreau relented and eliminated the provision for the abolition of company stores; but he provided a proviso that required public surveillance of their activities.[4] The bill was enacted in August 1887.[5]

The state also intervened to protect the worker-consumer outside the confines of the factory and mine. It was common practice for workers to assign future wages to creditors or for merchants to garnish the worker's entire wage because of outstanding debts.

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, August 2, 1887.

2 Ibid., July 27, 1887.

3 Ibid., July 28, 1887.

4 Ibid., July 27, 1887.

5 Ibid., August 2 and 5, 1887; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 11, 1887; Indépendance Belge, August 4, 1887; Gazette de Liège, August 5, 1887.

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Neither employers nor workers liked this sort of thing. For example, both the Charbonnages du Levant de Flénu[1] and the S.A. John Cockerill[2] came out in favor of legislation prohibiting such business practices. In 1887, the government submitted a bill, which, in its amended form, forbade assignment of more than 40 per cent of a workers wage and prohibited garnishment of more than 20 per cent of the earnings.[3]

The bill ran into bitter opposition from the Liège and Hainaut industrialists of the Liberal party, who claimed it would restrict the worker's means of obtaining credit when they lacked adequate collateral.[4] Others claimed that the legislation could be considered discriminatory, depending on whose side one took,[5] because it accorded special favors for a certain class or placed that class under government tutelage by limiting their freedom in a certain area. Magis and Bara joined Pirmez in trying to stress this argument against any "infringement on the freedom of contract".[6] Leading Catholic leaders such as Woeste replied that such legislation was absolutely essential in view of the situation, no matter how far the

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1 Réforme, August 6, 1886.

2 Woeste, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, June 24, 1887.

3 Ibid., June 30 and July 1, 1887; Gazette de Liège, July 1, 1887; Indépendance belge, July 1 and 28, 1887.

4 Jules Warnant, De Smet de Naeyer, Magis and Gilleaux, Chambre, Annales parlementaires, June 23-24 and 28, 1886; Gazette de Charleroi, June 26, 1887; Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, June 29, 1886.

5 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, June 25, 1887.

6 Ibid., June 23-24, 1887; Meuse, June 24, 1887.

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bill went in contradicting traditional liberal individualism's doctrines.[1] C.X. Sainctelette, liberal member from Charleroi, led Liberal supporters of the bill who opposed Bara and Magis' rigid attitudes on the social question. He reminded his fellow members of the Chambre that the bill was a response to tragic abuses which often had a catastrophic effect on the worker and his family. Employers were often hostile to workers whose wages were being garnished.[2] They often fired workers who incurred such obligations.

Due to the coalition between almost half the Liberals and the Catholic majority,[3] the Chambre voted the bill by 47 to 20, while Bara, Frère-Orban, Magis and Peltzer continued to oppose the measure.[4] The Sénat voted the same way a few days later.[5]

Existing social insurance arrangements were inadequate. The worker and his family were often at the mercy of unemployment and starvation caused by sickness and work accidents. Most workers were already destitute and had no insurance against such calamities. Those workers with some sort of social insurance were members of local factory-initiated plans or else they had joined mutual aid

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1 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, June 24, 1887.

2 Ibid., June 28, 1887.

3 Gazette de Liège, July 1, 1887.

4 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, June 30, 1887.

5 Gazette de Liège, July 1, 1887.
For text of law, see La législation ouvrière. Recueil des dispositions légales et réglementaires en vigueur au 1er mai 1895, pp. 9-11; Gazette de Mons, September 2, 1887.

societies.[1] Unfortunately, there were very few of these. There were approximately 270 various societies with a total membership of 48,187 according to Emile Vandervelde; while according to M. Ninauve, there were only 220 with 32,042 members.[2] Whichever figure is closest to the truth, 30 to 50 thousand represented a minute proportion of the country's total working population of about 1,600,000. Furthermore, as the effects of the depression became more and more severe, the financial position of the mutual aid societies deteriorated; membership and dues declined by twenty per cent during the economic crisis.

Those workers, who had some sort of insurance, were provided with medical treatment and incapacitation benefits amounting to approximately 2 frs or 2.50 frs per day for up to six months;[3] but premiums were 5 to 10 frs per month or between two and four days wages. Few workers could afford such high premiums.[4] Consequently,

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 556, 583; Alfred Soupart, Rémunération du travail: Exposition universelle de 1889 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), p. 81.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 672-726. Most larger industrial centers had mutual insurance schemes, but they, as yet, had very few members; Flémalle-Grande, 6 per cent (p. 699); Uccle-lez-Bruxelles, 10 per cent (p. 704); Charleroi, 250 members (p. 705); Monceau 70 in 7,000 inhabitants (p. 726).

3 Emile Vandervelde, Institutions économiques du Parti ouvrier belge (Brussels: Institut des Sciences sociales, 1894), p. 14.

4 M. Ninauve, Associations professionnelles en Belgique: Exposition universelle de 1889 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), pp. 83-85.

these arrangements had little impact on the total situation.[1]

The workers who testified before the Commission du Travail demanded an effective obligatory work accident, pension and sickness insurance program, as well as an end to the system whereby it was up to the insured worker to prove in court that there was negligence on the part of his employer in order to obtain compensation.[2] Few of his fellow workers would dare testify in his behalf for fear of the employer's reprisals.[3] The Conseil provincial de Liège,[4] the Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques of the province of Liège,[5] the Governor of West Flanders,[6] the Conseil provincial de Hainaut[7] and the Congrès Catholique des oeuvres sociales all voiced their sympathy with and support for the workers complaints.[8]

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1 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 745; J. Galesloot, Sociétés de secours mutuels: Exposition universelle de 1889 (Brussels: Weissenbruch, 1889), p. 6; Charles Cambier, Réflexions sur la situation de la classe ouvrière (Ghent: Van Doosalaere, 1880), p. 41, presents information on the situation preceding 1886; Gazette de Liège, September 17 and 18-19, 1886; Indépendance Belge, September 25, 1886; Meuse, July 28, 1886.

2 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, pp. 328-329, 339.

3 Ibid., vol. I, pp. 338-339. One worker testified: "L'on fait peur aux témoins, on leur promet toutes sortes d'avantages à l'avenir, ne pouvant désobéir, le témoin ment quand il peut et c'est toujours au détriment de son compagnon ...".

4 Meuse, July 16, 1886.

5 Gazette de Charleroi, October 15, 1886.

6 Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, p. 413.

7 Gazette de Charleroi, July 21, 1886.

8 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Deuxième session, 4-7 septembre 1887, vol. I, pp. 179-182.

The De Jace sub-committee of the Commission called for an obligatory work accident insurance program,[1] while another section of the Commission proposed state subsidies for other types of insurance schemes.[2] The obligatory work accident insurance scheme elicited strong opposition in Parliament, despite the efforts of its supporters to show how well the German 1884 law, which established an obligatory program, was operating.[3] Not until July 1890 was a compromise proposal enacted, which facilitated the formation and incorporation of various workers insurance organization and guaranteed them state financial support.[4]

The political authorities enacted other less significant social legislation between 1886 and 1889. This legislation was not as important either because it was not directly related to the immediate issues that were brought to light by the insurrectional strikes, or else because it was not related to the doctrinal problem of state intervention in economic and social affairs. Welfare reform was one such area. The municipally-run system of bureaux de bienfaisance

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 25 and June 1, 1887; Meuse, April 1, 1887; Réforme, July 9, 1887; Ami de l'Ordre, January 5, 1887; Gazette de Liège, January 3 and 14, 1887; Journal de Bruxelles, January 3, 1887; Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, pp. 609-610.

2 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, pp. 611-612; Gazette de Liège, May 31, 1887; Gazette de Charleroi, August 11, 1886.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, May 9, 1886; Journal de Bruxelles, November 26, 1888; Indépendance Belge, March 27, 1889.

4 Emile Vanderauwera, Les assurances ouvrières et l'assistance publique (Mons: Charles Levert-Descamps, 1894), p. 5.

was plagued with corruption.[1] The welfare officials also discriminated against welfare recipients for political and religious reasons.[2] In 1888, Parliament enacted legislation authorizing the national authorities to oversee and control the operations of these organizations.[3]

The Commission du Travail, also, recommended legislation which would foster the development of trade schools for young workers who wished to improve their general knowledge as well as learn industrial skills.[4] The proposal obtained support from Catholic[5] and workers elements, and in 1887, [6] the government obtained enactment of legislation which provided 30 to 40 per cent subsidies for provincially-run trade schools.[7]

The Commission du Travail recommended,[8] and Parliament enacted, legislation to foster the development of mutual aid societies and credit unions in 1887.[9] The number of such organizations grew

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1 For examples see Meuse, October 10-11, 1886; Gazette de Mons, March 31, 1886.

2 Congrès des oeuvres sociales à Liège. Deuxième session, 4-7 septembre 1887, vol. I, p. 184.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, April 20 and 24 1888; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, May 3, 1888.

4 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 602.

5 Patriote, April 23 and August 15, 1886.

6 Indépendance Belge, September 26, 1886.

7 Ibid., April 16, 1886.

8 Gazette de Liège, February 11, 1887.

9 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 5, 1889; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 7, 1889.

by about 65 per cent between 1887 and 1889.[1]

Finally upon the recommendation of the Commission du Travail, the authorities tried to inaugurate a movement against intemperance among the lower class.[2] A law, voted in July-August 1887, increased penalties for drunkenness in public places, it declared null and void any debts which were incurred in taverns, and it prohibited the sale of liquor to inebriates.[3]

Between 1886 and 1889, Belgium enacted more social legislation than it had during the five preceding decades of its history. Despite the middle class' awakening to "the social question" and its acceptance - albeit often reluctant - of the need of government intervention in economic affairs, in order to resolve many of the problems, Parliament did not legislate Belgium into a proletarian's utopia; for example the Réforme proposal for nationalization of the coal-mines was never taken seriously. Throughout these years the Réforme remained critical of Beernaert's reform program. It called the ensemble of reforms a "travesty and denial of justice" to the working class, because the legislators had refused to enact farther-reaching reforms. It accused the government of "hypocritical procrastination", regarding some of the most important demands that the workers had made.[4] On the other hand, the Catholic press,

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1 Journal de Bruxelles, January 14, 1889.

2 Commission du Travail, Rapports, vol. III, p. 600.

3 Chambre, Annales parlementaires, July 19 and 20, 1887; Sénat, Annales parlementaires, August 4, 1887.

4 Réforme, July 25, 1887.

particularly the Ami de l'Ordre and the Gazette de Liège lauded Beernaert's "marvelous understanding" of his duty to the working class.[1]

Nevertheless, it seems that the Réforme had a valid point in reminding Parliament of its failure to legislate provisions to revise the constitution for universal suffrage and also of its refusal to enact a law to foster the development of trade unions. Such legislation was the "basis for all other reforms" because it would "provide the only legal means for the worker to protest peacefully".[2] Furthermore, asserted the Réforme, paternally-inspired middle class reforms would not satisfy the workers: they had to "emancipate themselves".[3] The Commission du Travail had proposed to accord trade unions legal status, through incorporation. It recommended that such status be accorded, provided that the union promise to accept mediation before they could go on strike.[4] The Commission was also of the opinion that trade unions should be authorized to draw on their aid funds to support strikes.[5] The proposal ran into opposition from both Catholic and Liberal opinion-molders, who feared that the development of trade unions would enlarge the abyss between the two classes and that it would cause more, not less,

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1 Ami de l'Ordre, July 29, 1889; Gazette de Liège, July 28, 1889.

2 Réforme, July 25, 1887.

3 Ibid., September 5, 1887.

4 Gazette de Mons, December 4, 1886; Meuse, December 5, 1886

5 Gazette de Liège, December 3, 1886.

strikes.[1]

The Catholic congresses of 1886 and 1887 opposed trade unions, and instead, they proposed the development of worker-employer "mixed" corporations, which would be under the auspices of the Church and which would serve to bind the two classes together in a "second family" rather than further divide society.[2] The liberal press did not relish the idea any better than the proposal for establishing trade unions. The Organe de Mons et du Hainaut warned that the whole idea was a clerical scheme whereby the "Church will rule the masses";[3] and the Gazette de Charleroi claimed that the corporate system's medieval precepts were inapplicable to modern industrialized society.[4] The Journal de Bruxelles spokesman for Beernaert's moderate wing of the Catholic party, came out in support for legislation in this area.[5] Nevertheless, when Beernaert submitted a bill in 1889, it was rejected.[6] The bill was defeated again in 1894. It was not enacted until 1898.[7]

It took almost as long to enact constitutional reforms, which established universal manhood suffrage. Here again, the delay was due to intra-party divisions. The Doctrinaire Liberals and most of

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1 Gazette de Liège, August 27 and September 17, 1886.

2 Ibid., September 9, 1887.

3 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, September 22, 1887.

4 Gazette de Charleroi, September 9, 1887.

5 Journal de Bruxelles, February 23, 1888.

6 Indépendance Belge, August 7, 1889.

7 Cornez, Cent ans de législation sociale en Belgique, p. 24.

the Progressives had opposed the idea. The Organe de Mons et du Hainaut called the idea a "dangerous adventure" and it warned that such a system would put the country under the thumb of the Catholics who would obtain all the peasant votes.[1] At their 1887 Congress the Progressives voted 317 to 127 against a universal suffrage plank.[2] The Catholics were also divided on this question so that the proposal was rejected in 1887. Finally, Parliament agreed to take it up in 1890 and in 1893 universal suffrage, tempered by a plural vote system, became a part of the constitution.[3]

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1 Organe de Mons et du Hainaut, June 7-8, 1887.

2 Meuse, May 30, 1887; Gazette de Mons, May 31, 1887.

3 Mahaim in Patrie Belge, p. 232.

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CONCLUSION

The events of 1886 forced the opinion molders and the political and economic elites to realize that social reform was essential, whereas in 1843 and 1868-1869 they rejected the implications of the social crises and they refused to take substantive action. When compared to the collective violence of 1868-1869, the 1886 insurrection was far more significant. Quantitatively, the 1886 violence involved more coercive forces, more insurgents, more destruction and more casualties. Geographically it was more widespread. The area of conflict extended throughout Wallonia, from Herstal in the east to Boussu and Dour in the west, whereas the strikes of 1868 and 1869 were relatively isolated, occuring in Charleroi, or Seraing, or the Borinage. The 1868-69 strikes were also of shorter duration in comparison to the 1886 events which lasted well into April and which were followed by sporadic strikes every few months in 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1889. These strikes of course, kept the elites from ending their preoccupation with reform legislation.

The 1886 insurrection had more political significance than the violence of 1868-1869. Contrary to 1868, in 1886 the political and economic context was far more propitious to political change. Economically, the depression was a longer one and it was far more demoralizing for the political and industrial elites. Despite Pirmez's

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apologetica of 1884, the duration of the crisis seemed to have had already shaken the middle class' faith in the on-going economic doctrine. A slight down turn had begun in 1877, and in 1886, nine years later, there were still no signs of better times.

Politically, by 1886, there were two new political challengers vying for leadership of a contending coalition that would be based on the emerging working class. The Progressives and above all the P.O.B. had much stronger roots in the country than the 'foreign' imported Association Internationale des Travailleurs of 1868, with all its internal doctrinal squabbles, its top-heavy organization, and its lack of adequate grass roots support. The Progressives and the Socialists invoked the discontent of 1886 to justify their demands for polity membership and political change. Though the insurrection was not instigated by a vast conspiratorial Haupt Quartier of the P.O.B., the P.O.B. most certainly benefitted from the implications and consequences of the insurrection.

The insurrection itself was neither the result of a fit of proletarian madness, nor was it a centralized conspiracy. Instead, it was a locally-run affair led by ad hoc leaders who directed the movements of the insurgents on the spot. In this sense, the collective violence was tactically rationally led and it was not merely incomprehensible social madness which was impervious to rational study. A greater sense of solidarity, fortuitous precipitants elsewhere, as well as faulty coercive strategy allowed the 1886 strikes to take on a greater amplitude than those of 1868-1869.

In view of the gravity of the 1886 insurrection, the ruling elites realized they could no longer reject the reform proposals as they had done in 1869, but they hoped that they could carry out social and economic reforms without at the same time affecting the polity membership criteria. They accorded economic reforms but refused to give the working class political power by authorizing trade union incorporation and universal suffrage. They hoped thereby to eliminate the causes of the discontent without relinquishing their control over the polity. Despite their efforts to retain a monopoly of power, the country's elites were forced to destroy the economic underpinnings of the elitist political system when they accepted the idea that economic affairs were subservient to social and political considerations. Logically, the next step occurred when the universal suffrage bill came before Parliament in 1890.

Though universal suffrage modified future inter-class political relations, the middle class not only saved itself, but it also avoided a full-blown revolution. On the eve of the centenary of the French revolution, Belgium seemed to be on the threshhold of a repetition of 1789; but by the time the centenary rolled around in 1889, the middle-class had definitely launched Belgium on the road to social reform, instead of the road to revolution.

The 1886 events had also disproved both Marxist and Liberal doctrines. Before 1886, Doctrinaire Liberals had argued that economic development would resolve the very protest which industrialization had engendered. On the other hand, in his Communist Manifes-

to, Marx had declared that until the coming of the new order class antagonisms would develop apace with economic growth, that tensions would increase to an ultimate apocalyptic crescendo. These predictions seemed to be put in question by the events that followed 1886. Actually the worst antagonism existed in the least industrialized nations such as France and Italy, where the very slowness of growth evoked protest; whereas the very reconciliation of the highly industrialized Belgian working class to the existing polity was in vivid contradiction to the experience of France. Contrary to Marxist predictions, the Belgian middle class realized that as rulers of the "cockpit of Europe", they could not risk the existence of the Belgian nation by opposing all social reforms.[1] Perhaps they feared that the revolution might engender foreign intervention (the Réforme hinted at this, cf. Chapter IV).

There remain several aspects of the development of the Belgian reform movement which have yet to be studied in more detail. In recent years sociology and political science have begun developing models for analysing collective violence as a rationally ascertainable phenomenon, which occurs according to certain behavioral patterns. Most of these analytical models have been developed for application to 20th century violence such as urban rioting and rural guerrilla uprisings; nevertheless, many of these might be fruitfully applied to industrial violence in the 19th century.[2] Charles Tilly

1 See also Lorwin, pp. 342-344.

2 Several articles which may pertain to this field were sched

has suggested an approach based on the political implications of inter class relationships as developed by Barrington Moore and Erich Wolf and combined with the "collective history" approach of Soboul, Hobsbawm and Rudé, whose work has heretofore been mainly applied to 18th century collective violence and not to the era of 19th century industrialism.

These new approaches combining History and the Social Science might provide a better understanding of civil disorders in industrial countries such as Belgium through their conceptualization, classification and analysis of violence ranging from the Chartist era of machine-breaking to the era of the politico-economic strike. The 1886 events manifested characteristics of both types of industrial action. Whereas the Charleroi glassworkers' violence was reactionary in the sense that they were attempting to prevent the implementation of new industrial processes which might have reduced wages, artisanal skills as well as the number of jobs, the coalminers were striking to gain progressive goals many of which were to be legislated in succeeding years. Their testimony before the Commission du Travail in favor of universal suffrage and trade-unions also showed the progressive political nature of their goals.

It would be interesting to see the "collective history ap-

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uled for publication, while I was completing the dissertation. Cf. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, "The Shape of Strikes in France, 1830-1960", Comparative Studies in Society and History; Richard Tilly, "Popular Disorders in Nineteenth Century Germany: A Preliminary Survey", Journal of Social History; James Rule and Charles Tilly, "1830 and the Unnatural History of Revolution", Journal of Social Issues.

proach", applied exclusively to a day by day, town by town analysis of the 1886 insurrection. Such a study would, however, encounter certain difficulties. First, there is a gap in sources regarding the activities of the insurgents. The P.O.B. archives were victims of the German occupation during 1940-1944 according to the archivist of the Parti socialiste belge. In Mons, much of the Archives d'Etat of Hainaut's collection on police and security were lost due to fire.

The same problem exists for examining the parliamentary history of the reform movement. The personal papers of such political leaders as Woeste, Janson and Beernaert are either closed to the public because of family reasons, or else have disappeared. Furthermore, little has been done in the area of developing theoretical models for studying the behavioral patterns of governing authorities to insurgencies. While there are several studies on the insurgents side of insurrections, the author only came across one theory on the reaction of the political authorities: Lucien W. Pye's "The Roots of Insurgency and the Commencement of Rebellions", which was, however, developed for studying 20th century insurgencies. In this area, perhaps International Relations theories on decision-making such as those in Snyder, Bruck and Sapin[1] as well as the work by Glenn D. Paige[2] might provide a starting point for analyzing cabinet-level

1 Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin (eds.), Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (New York: Free Press, 1962).

2 Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision, June 24-30, 1950 (New York: Free Press, 1968).

countermeasures during crisis. These studies might be used successfully in conjunction with broader psycho-sociological studies.

Pending other interdisciplinary studies of social history, it seems safe to make the general conclusion that the events of 1886 unleashed some far-reaching changes in Belgian political affairs. The insurrection of 1886 underminded the laissez-faire doctrine which had affirmed economic conditions were outside the scope of politics. The elites could no longer avoid responsibility for the impact of economic developments on the less advantaged members of society. That the insurrection was the midwife for the birth of 'the social question' in Belgium, was borne out by the middle class' new concern with social problems and also by the efforts of the political authorities to enact much of the regulatory legislation that had been recommended by the Commission du Travail.

If the economy could no longer be an autonomous determinator of social conditions, then it would eventually follow that the distribution of wealth according to free market conditions could no longer determine whether certain groups should hold power. This conclusion was confirmed in 1893-94 when the Belgian parliament enacted a constitutional revision which authorized universal manhood suffrage. In this way, the 1886 insurrection and the economic reforms that it engendered set the stage for the 1893-1894 political reforms.

APPENDIX N°1

	Indices des prix				
	Houille	Fonte	Produits agricoles	Produits de culture	Produits d'élevage
	base 1884 = 100				
1871	118	127	125,5	148	103
2	140	172	112	118	106
3	225	200	116,6	122	111
4	172	154	116,5	130	103
5	161	130	113	122	104
6	142	116	121	133	109
7	115	108	121	133	109
8	104	108	112	119	105
9	98	95	108,5	117	100
1880	106	106	116,5	126	107
1	102	101	114,5	124	105
2	105	104	113,5	120	107
3	107	96	108	109	107
4	100	100	100	100	100
5	93	79	95	95	95
6	87	76	92,5	94	91
7	84	78	86,5	89	84
8	88	84	90,5	94	87
9	99	92	92	92	92
1890	138	109	91,5	91	92
1	132	96	99	105	93
2	108	88	95,5	98	93
3	98	83	89	92	86
4	98	86	85,5	82	89
5	99	84	80,5	74	87
6	100	93	76	73	79
7	108	101	80,5	81	80
8	115	102	83	87	79
9	130	126	83,5	82	85
1900	183	155	87	88	86

Dupriez, L.H. and Fontigny, L.H., "L'évolution de la Belgique en période de baisse fondamentale des prix, 1871-1896", Bulletin de l'Institut des sciences économiques, n° 4 (1933), p. 430.

APPENDIX N°2

STATISTIQUE DE LA PRODUCTION DES BASSINS HOUILLERS DE BELGIQUE
(tonnes métriques)

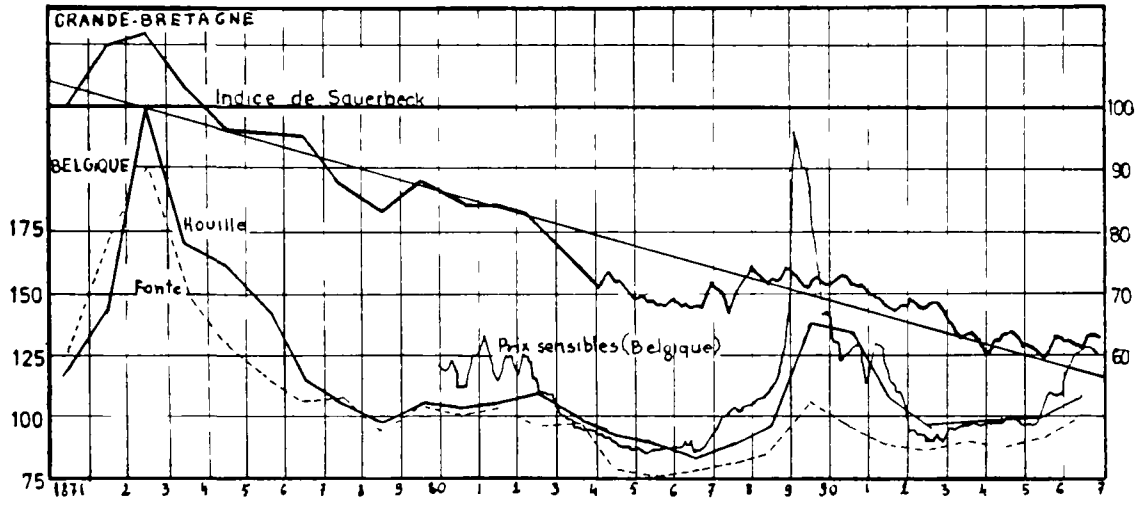
Années	CHARBON			Ensemble
	Hainaut	Namur	Liège	
1877	10 259 374	371 388	3 307 761	13 938 523
1878	11 003 423	414 320	3 481 432	14 899 175
1879	11 448 351	417 456	3 581 305	15 447 292
1880	12 548 507	494 562	3 823 629	16 866 698
1881	12 554 506	419 569	3 899 876	16 873 951
1882	13 131 342	466 165	3 993 482	17 590 989
1883	13 497 113	485 450	4 195 191	18 177 754
1884	13 510 996	477 439	4 063 064	18 051 499
1885	12 925 815	439 953	4 071 835	17 437 603
1886	12 801 540	384 660	4 484 003	17 285 540

Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la 1ère division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et minéralurgique pendant l'année 1886, p. 27-28.

APPENDIX N°3

MARCHE DES AFFAIRES: LES PRIX DE GROS

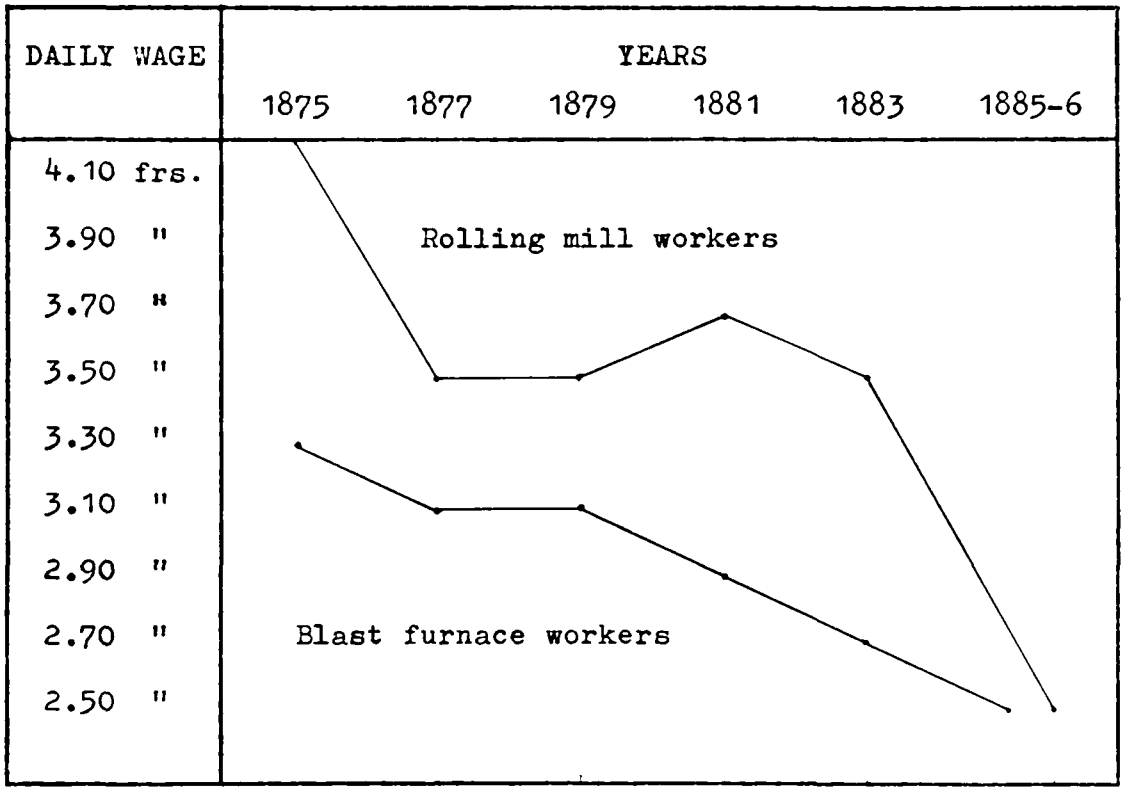
Indice anglais de Sauerbeck (1867-1877 = 100), indices belges des prix de la houille et de la fonte et des prix sensibles (1884 = 100).



Dupriez, L.H. et Fontigny, L.H., "L'évolution de la Belgique en période de baisse fondamentale des prix, 1871-1896", Bulletin de l'institut des sciences économiques, n° 4 (1933), pp. 419.

APPENDIX N°4

COLLAPSE OF WAGES IN THE CHARLEROI STEEL INDUSTRY



Commission du Travail, I, 253.

APPENDIX N°5

DECLINE IN WAGES, 1882 to 1886

STEELMILLS	1882	1886
John Cockerill of Seraing	3.80frs.	3.00frs.
Vieille Montagne at Tilff	3.68 "	3.17 "
S.A. Marcinelle et Couillet	4.00 "	2.80 "

Commission du Travail, I, 236, 250, 254-55.

Appendix n°4 shows how wages in Charleroi's steel industry moved from an all-time high level, due to the Franco-Prussian war, to a lower level during the late 1870's, and then, finally collapsed, following a short period of stability (1880-1882) which lasted until 1883.

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APPENDIX N°6

ANNUAL BUDGET OF FAMILY OF SIX, ROLLING MILL WORKER

ITEM	COST	ITEM	COST
Bread and Flour	360.00 frs.	Miscellaneous	28.80 frs.
Meat	126.00 "	Rent	120.00 "
Eggs	43.00 "	Clothes	360.00 "
Butter	54.00 "	String	4.80 "
Lard	26.40 "	Bedding	42.00 "
Potatoes	57.60 "	Heating	42.00 "
Vegetables	19.20 "	Lighting Oil	18.00 "
Coffee and Chicory	48.00 "	Bleaching	9.00 "
Milk	36.00 "	Entertainment	258.00 "
Furniture Maintenance	36.00 "	TOTAL	1689.00 "

Commission du Travail, I, 472.

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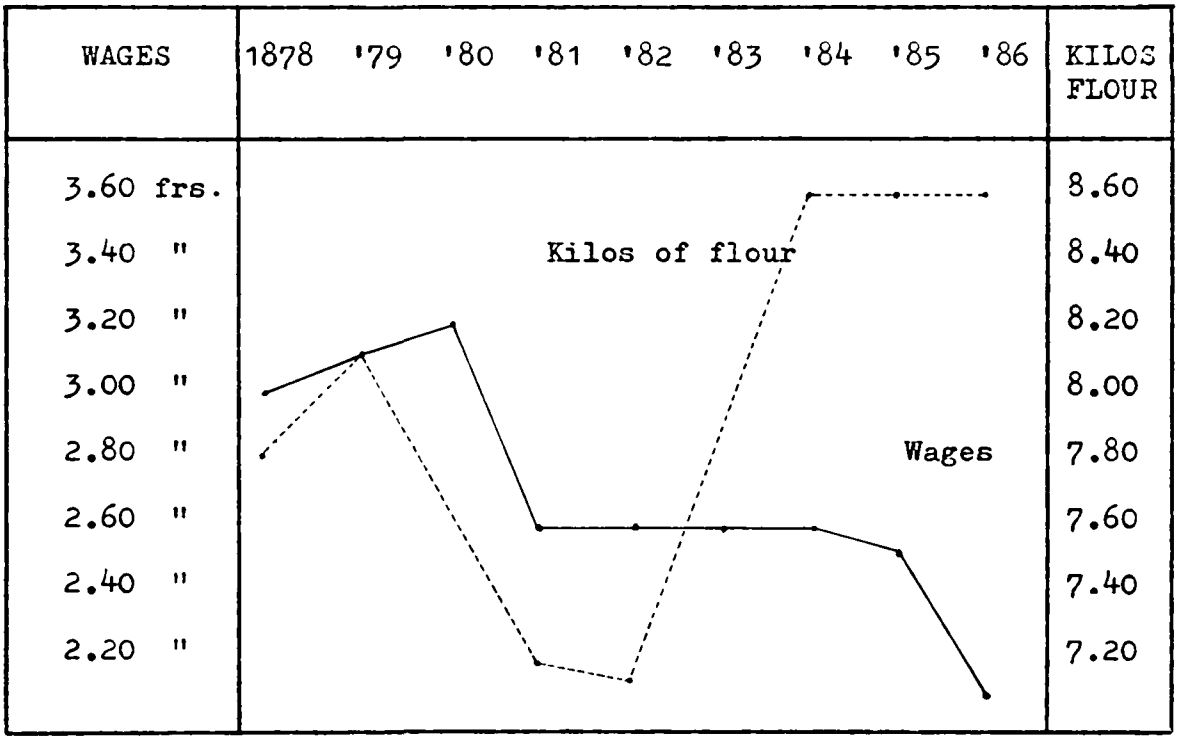
APPENDIX N°7

RELATIVE BUYING POWER OF THE WORKER IN TERMS OF FLOUR AND WAGES, 1878-1886



Commission du Travail, I, 507. These statistics were presented by the Société Anonyme de Marcinelle et Couillet in Couillet.

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APPENDIX N°8

THE HAINAUT COAL-MINES:
1st DISTRICT MONS-BORINAGE

NOMS DES CHARBONNAGES	Nombre de puits en activité d'extraction.	Nombre d'ouvriers.	Production en 1886 (Tonneaux)
Blaton	2	959	118 270
Belle-vue	5	1 372	222 180
Bois de Boussu	4	2 267	278 060
Grande machine à feu de Dour . . .	2	909	137 460
Chevalières et Midi de Dour	2	447	84 090
Grand-Bouil. du Bois de St-Ghislain	1	466	62 260
Grande veine du Bois de St-Ghislain	1	475	68 360
Escouffiaux	3	794	99 920
Buisson	3	1 198	197 020
Hornu et Wasmes	2	2 237	261 500
Grand Hornu	3	1 353	213 220
Grand Bouillon sur Paturages . . .	2	331	69 950
Grand Grisoeuil	"	55	"
Agrappe	3	1 409	193 780
Bonne veine	1	469	74 670
Ciply	1	358	50 250
Rieu du coeur	8	4 077	592 070
Belle et Bonne	2	1 376	116 840
Produits	5	3 125	475 340
Levant du Flénu	7	3 826	691 000
Totaux . . .	57	27 540	4 006 240

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THE HAINAUT COAL-MINES:
2nd DISTRICT LA LOUVIERE-CENTRE

NOMS DES CHARBONNAGES	Nombre de puits en activité d'extraction.	Nombre d'ouvriers.	Production en 1886 (Tonneaux)
St-Denis, Obourg, Havré	2	375	65 610
Bray, Maurage, Boussoit	1	649	122 000
Strépy-Thieu	3	1 636	309 130
Bois-du-Luc	4	1 498	344 070
La Louvière et St-Vaast	4	1 421	221 900
Sars-Longchamps	3	1 023	185 650
Houssu	3	847	162 800
Centre-Sud	2	407	46 680
La Hestre	2	975	135 720
Mariemont	7	2 910	458 040
Bascoup	4	3 002	530 680
Ste-Aldegonde	1	225	46 370
Trahegnies	1	315	54 300
Carnières Sud et Viernoy	1	293	45 800
Bois de la Haie	2	714	212 400
Courcelles-Nord	3	1 252	205 300
Falnuée-Wartonlieu	2	475	105 000
Nord de Charleroi	5	1 599	284 000
Monceau-Fontaine et Martinet	6	2 295	498 900
Beaulieusart	2	771	172 970
Totaux . . .	58	22 682	4 207 400

THE HAINAUT COAL-MINES:
3rd DISTRICT CHARLEROI

NOMS DES CHARBONNAGES	Nombre de puits en activité d'extraction.	Nombre d'ouvriers.	Production en 1886 (Tonneaux)
Appaumée Ransart	3	705	123 200
Mass et Diarbois	2	260	62 900
Grand Conty Spinois	1	350	74 100
Grand Bordia	1	185	21 900
Rochelle et Charnois	1	355	87 000
Vallée du Piéton	1	280	60 700
Amercoeur	3	1 550	308 500
Bois Delville	1	185	34 500
Bayemont	3	930	180 400
Sacré Madame	4	1 210	254 800
Charbonnages réunis de Charleroi . .	5	1 840	353 300
Bonne Espér. à Montigny-s/Sambre . .	1	520	61 000
Grand Mambourg Liège	2	920	150 700
Poirier	2	1 270	213 600
Marcinelle-Nord	6	2 075	390 200
Marchiennes	1	410	88 300
Bois de Cazier	1	190	37 400
Forte taille	1	195	30 600
Bois communal de Fleurus	1	430	89 400
Bois de Soleilmont	1	200	53 500
Noël Sart Culpart	1	605	120 700
Centre de Gilly	4	1 645	215 400
Viviers réunis, à Gilly	2	565	88 400

NOMS DES CHARBONNAGES	Nombre de puits en activité d'extraction.	Nombre d'ouvriers.	Production en 1886 (Tonneaux)
Trieu-Kaisin	5	1 715	264 700
Boubier	2	838	168 000
Petit Try	1	340	90 100
Bonne Espérance, à Lambusart	1	390	74 300
Roton	2	555	103 800
Masse St-François	1	310	53 000
Gouffre	3	1 370	251 700
Pont-de-Loup Sud	1	490	88 600
Carabinier	2	505	109 700
Ormont	2	605	131 600
Aiseau Presles	1	625	88 100
Oignies Aiseau	1	260	63 800
Totaux . . .	70	24 878	4 587 900

Mémorial administratif de la province de Hainaut. Rapport du Directeur de la 1ère division des mines sur la situation de l'industrie minérale et mineralurgique pendant l'année 1886, p. 67-70.

APPENDIX N°9

COMPARISON OF PRICES IN COMPANY STORES AND MERCHANT'S STORES

ARTICLES	COMPANY STORES	MERCHANTS' STORES
1 kg. flour	0.32 frs.	0.27 frs.
1 " butter	3.66 "	2.76 "
1 " coffee	2.79 "	1.83 "
1 " sugar	1.80 "	1.18 "
1 " lard	2.06 "	1.58 "
1 " salt	0.10 "	0.06 "
1 litre genièvre	1.25 "	1.03 "
1 " kerosene	0.27 "	0.16 "
1 kg. soap	0.53 "	0.30 "
1 " rice	0.92 "	0.35 "

Commission du Travail, Réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol. I, 285.

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