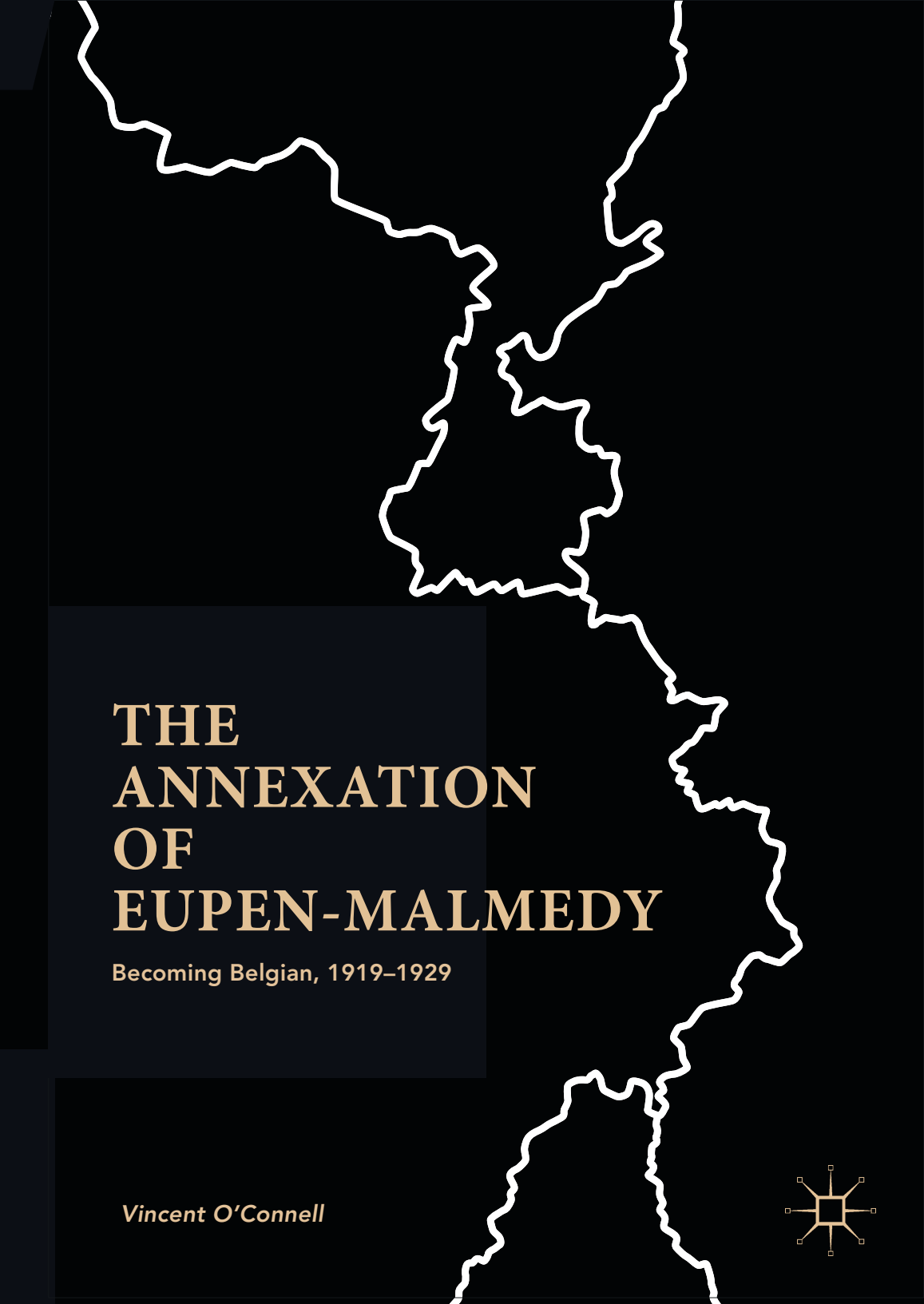

THE ANNEXATION OF EUPEN-MALMEDY

Becoming Belgian, 1919–1929

Vincent O'Connell

The Annexation of Eupen-Malmedy

Vincent O'Connell

The Annexation of Eupen-Malmedy

Becoming Belgian, 1919–1929

palgrave
macmillan

Vincent O'Connell
Cork, Ireland

ISBN 978-1-137-59089-3 ISBN 978-1-349-95295-3 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95295-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017950723

Cover credit: PeterHermesFurian/iStock/Getty Images

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Nature America Inc.
The registered company address is: 1 New York Plaza, New York, NY 10004, U.S.A.

for
Ellie & Bess

Acknowledgements

Throughout my time spent researching and writing this work, I was truly fortunate to have encountered such generous people who provided me with information, advice, direction, support and encouragement. I equally benefited from the assistance of a number of archival and scholarly institutions in Belgium, Germany, the UK, and Ireland. The assistance and encouragement that I received from my colleagues at the University of Limerick is very much appreciated. I must first express my sincerest gratitude to Prof. Anthony McElligott at the University of Limerick for his unwavering encouragement and confidence in my work throughout the course of my doctoral research and beyond. I thank him for his honest and forthright critique and for his guidance. I especially wish to thank Prof. Martin Conway at Balliol College, Oxford, for inspiring me through his incredible talent as a historian. His contribution to our understanding of the complexities of Belgium's recent history is unmatched. I am grateful to Prof. Barry Doyle and also to Dr. Nico Wouters for their comments and critiques during various stages of my study. My thanks also to Dr. Christoph Brüll, whose work on Eupen-Malmedy is as engaging as his nature is generous.

I am extremely grateful for the time afforded to me by staff at the *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de Belgique* (AAEB) in Brussels. Documents relating to Eupen-Malmedy held at the AAEB offer a fascinating insight into the Belgian government's thinking, from its initial annexation of the territory, through to the attempted retrocession in 1926.

In addition, the Belgian parliamentary papers, together with cabinet minutes, which I consulted at the *Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* (KBR) provide a useful insight into the differing perspectives on Eupen-Malmedy in Belgian political circles. The cabinet minutes demonstrate that what was digested at the cabinet table did not always equate with what the people were fed, and in particular during the deliberations over the potential retrocession of Eupen-Malmedy. Both the parliamentary papers and the cabinet minutes are fully accessible online.[1] At the *Archives Générales du Royaume* (AGR), Filip Strubbe and Pierre Alain Tellier were especially diligent in dealing with my queries. The AGR library houses the entire collection of the *Journal Officiel-Amtsblatt Malmedy–Eupen*, in which all legislation and decrees enacted in Eupen-Malmedy from 1921–1925 were published. Documents pertaining to Baltia's military record and that of his father, consulted at the *Musée Royal de l'Armée et d'Histoire Militaire* (KLM-MRA) in Brussels, were helpful in gaining an insight into the evolution of Baltia's character from his days as an army officer in the Great War through to his period as Royal High Commissioner of Eupen-Malmedy. Extremely important are Baltia's official reports and his memoirs, which are located at both the *Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen,* Düsseldorf, and at the *Staatsarchiv Eupen*.[2] At both locations, one may consult his three official reports compiled between January 1920 and July 1922, in which the machinations of his Eupen-Malmedy government are detailed under various headings from finance to military, and policing to agriculture and education. The *Staatsarchiv Eupen* also holds additional documentation relating to the government of Eupen-Malmedy along with material in the Nachlass Baltia pertaining to the Baltia family and Baltia's private memoirs (as distinct from the memoirs relating to his tenure as Royal High Commissioner of Eupen-Malmedy).[3]

[1] http://primary-sources.eui.eu/website/belgië-notulen-van-de-ministerraad-1916-1979; https://www.lachambre.be/kvvcr/index.cfm; http://www.senat.be/www/?MIval=/index_senate&LANG=fr.

[2] This is a typed version of the original (now lost), which was made during the Second World War. Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen: Sammlung Baltia, Abteilung Rheinland, Standort Düsseldorf: RW 0010 (1920–1922).

[3] SAE X85, which comprises the following: Dekreten und Verordnungen; Archives de guerre; Archiv des Pressedienstes; Verwaltungsakten; Nachlass Baltia.

In Malmedy, I visited the archive at the Royal *Club Wallon* (RCW) where I consulted local newspapers of the period, including *Die Arbeit*, *La Semaine*, *Der Landbote* and *La Warche*. A special word of thanks is due to Raymond Blaise, curator at the RCW, for his professionalism and patience during my consultations there. Without the kindness shown to me by a truly remarkable local historian, Raymond Jacob, President of Malmedy-Folklore, I may never have begun this project. I thank Raymond for his kindness, and for the direction which he gave me during the nascent stage of my research. In Eupen, Dr. Alfred Minke (now retired) and Dr. Els Herrebout at the *Staatsarchiv Eupen* were gracious in giving of their time and expertise from the earliest stages of this study. I am also indebted to their colleague, Monique Beuken, for her expert assistance. My research in Germany was equally well facilitated at the *Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen,* and by the guidance I received from Frau Küchler and Alois Fischer at the *Bundesarchiv Koblenz*, not forgetting Franz Göttlicher at the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin. Among the papers consulted at The National Archives in Kew are Belgian, German, and British government and diplomatic reports detailing the socio-political situation in Eupen-Malmedy at various stages throughout the interwar period.

This study would not have been possible were it not for the very generous support which I have received from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Limerick, which part-funded this project. I also received funding from the *German History Society* in London towards my study at the *Universität Heinrich Heine* in Düsseldorf. This was a particularly wonderful experience and I am grateful to Dr. Annika Mombauer and to Dr. Stefan Berger for facilitating my time there. While in Düsseldorf, I was made to feel very much at home by Anne and Sofia Minarik—thank you both for putting up with me. In Malmedy, the Sante and Legros families were wonderful hosts during my visits to the town and its hinterland.

I greatly appreciate the support of so many of my colleagues at the University of Limerick, but particularly the library staff, whose expertise, patience and good humour have been invaluable. I especially wish to thank Pattie, Helen, Sinéad, Ken, Evelyn, Monica, Ciara, Anne, and Carmel for going above and beyond the call of duty at times. Special thanks also to Irene for your intelligent insight and pertinent observations. My thanks also to Julie for your time and assistance.

My greatest inspiration has been the love, understanding and friendship of my two beautiful daughters, Ellie and Bess; I owe you both so much. Thank you to Maggie also for your friendship and support over such an unusual journey. Finally, I wish to thank my mother, Kathleen, for her prayers and encouragement over the years.

May 2017 Vincent O'Connell

Contents

Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt
AAEB	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de Belgique
ADV	Alledeutscher Verband
AGR	*Archives Générales du Royaume*
AO	*Army of Occupation (Armée d'Occupation)*
APB	Annales Parlementaires Belges
APR	*Archives du Palais Royal*
BAB	*Bundesarchiv Berlin*
BAK	*Bundesarchiv Koblenz*
Bd.	Band
CVP	*Christliche Volkspartei*
DNVP	*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*
DKG	*Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*
Ét.Maj.	*État Major*
FO	Foreign Office
GQG	*Grand Quartier Général*
HC	High Commissioner (Haut Commissaire)
HF	Heimattreue Front
IARHC	Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission
JOME	*Journal Officiel—Amtsblatt—Malmedy-Eupen*
KBR	*Bibliothèque Royale du Royaume de la Belgique (Brussels)*
KLM/MRA	*Musée Royal de l'Armée et d'Histoire Militaire*
LANRW	*Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen*
NSDAP	*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*
POB	*Parti Ouvrier Belge*
RCW	Royal Club Wallon

SAE	*Staatsarchiv Eupen*
SS	*Schutzstaffel*
TNA	The National Archives (Kew)
UDC	Union of Democratic Control
ZBV	*Zur besonderen Verwendung*
Zgs	*Zeitgeschichte*

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Straddling the frontier between Belgium and Germany, with Luxembourg to the south and the Netherlands to the north, the territory encompassing Belgium's Eastern Cantons of Eupen, Malmedy and St Vith rested for centuries on the cusp of conflict and compromise.[1] The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 set in train a series of events that would see these *Kreise*, which since 1815 occupied the most westerly corner of the German Reich, once more become the focus of renewed claims and counter-claims by rival protagonists. In January 1919, representatives from the victorious nations set about to once more reconfigure the map of Europe at the Peace Conference in Paris.[2] It is only as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles that the term 'Eupen-Malmedy' came into being, for the sake of political expediency.[3] This convenient creation owed much to the diplomatic dexterity of Belgium's foreign minister and senior plenipotentiary to the Paris Peace Conference, Paul Hymans.[4] As part of the post-war

[1] In 1985, the communal council of Malmedy voted to dispense with the accent from the spelling of its name. *Le Soir*, 7 February 2000.

[2] *Kreis* refers to an administrative district; the plural is *Kreise*. At that time, Saint Vith was an integral part of the *Kreis* of Malmedy.

[3] The Treaty of Versailles, iii. 34.

[4] However, the laconic term itself is credited to a member of the American delegation. Sally Marks, *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Pairs Peace Conference of 1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 137–147; David H. Miller, *My Diary at the*

V. O'Connell, *The Annexation of Eupen-Malmedy*,
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-95295-3_1

Fig. 1.1 Belgium in 1919. Credit: Alina O'Shaughnessy (www.alinaoshaughnessy.com) and Vincent O'Connell

process of territorial amputation, Germany was forced to cede Eupen-Malmedy conditionally to Belgium, pending the outcome of a popular consultation in the territory within six months of the Versailles Treaty becoming effective (Fig. 1.1).

The *Kreis* of Malmedy encompassed an area of 813 square kilometres with 36,916 inhabitants. While the vast majority of Malmedy's population identified as German, this number included around 10,000 Walloons who, for over a hundred years, had been subjects of the *Kaiserreich*.[5] More than half of these were concentrated in the town of Malmedy, with the remainder residing in the surrounding hinterland of 'Prussian Wallonia'.[6] The *Kreis* contained fourteen town councils or *Gemeinderat*, four of which were solidly Walloon, three mixed and eight German; one of these was St Vith. The town of Malmedy itself had just 6,000 inhabitants, and was largely dependent on its famed paper milling

Conference of Paris (with documents), (New York: Appeal Printing Company, 1924), 435–437; Jane Kathryn Miller, *Belgian Foreign Policy Between Two Wars* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), 72–78.

[5] Staatsarchiv Eupen (SAE), Nachlass Baltia, C.3.3.III.191, *Haut Commissariat Royal d'Eupen Malmedy*, Rapport sur l'activité générale du Gouvernement *d'Eupen et de Malmedy*, September 1919–*July 1920* (Hereafter, *Rapport sur l'activité*, i), 148.

[6] Prussian Wallonia comprised the towns of Malmedy and Waimes.

Fig. 1.2 The Eastern Cantons. Credit: Alina O'Shaughnessy (www.alinaoshaughnessy.com) and Vincent O'Connell

and tanning industries.[7] Eupen was geographically a much smaller *Kreis* than Malmedy, at just 176 square kilometres, albeit more densely populated. From the fourteenth century, Flemish weavers from Bruges and Ghent had established themselves in Eupen, beginning a tradition of textile production era (Fig. 1.2). By the turn of the twentieth century, the majority of Eupen's 27,360 inhabitants were in the main employed in textiles, weaving, or agriculture.[8] By the end of the war, the town of Eupen had a population of around 15,000. As was the case with Eupen,

[7] *Rapport sur l'activité*, i, 148.

[8] Klaus Pabst, Eupen Malmedy in der belgischen Regierungs- und Parteienpolitik 1914–1940, *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*, 76 (1964), 206–515 (219).

the surrounding towns of Hergenrath, Eynatten, Kettenis, Lontzen, Neutral Moresnet, Walhorn, and Raeren were overwhelmingly German-speaking.[9] Now, in the wake of the war, the inhabitants of these two *Kreise* would have to accommodate themselves to a new reality, as these former subjects of the now-defunct *Kaiserreich* prepared to become Belgian. This significant alteration to the status of this borderland territory was just the latest in its long and complex history.

From the latter half of the sixth century, Irish Columban monks introduced Christianity to the southern Rhineland, culminating in the founding of the abbatial principality of Stavelot-Malmedy in 651 by a community of Frankish monks. Malmedy fell under the auspices of the diocese of Liège, while Stavelot was attached to the diocese of Cologne.[10] As a consequence of the Treaty of Verdun in 843, the principality of Stavelot-Malmedy became absorbed into Middle Francia following the tripartite division of the Carolingian Empire.[11] However, the principality continued to be an independent state within the Holy Roman Empire up to 1795.[12] Like Malmedy, Eupen also formed part of Middle Francia (later Lotharingia), and from the eleventh century became part of the Duchy of Limburg.[13] St Vith dates back to 836 as a medieval settlement. From the late twelfth century, it served as the customs post for the dukes of Limburg. As a consequence of the battle of Worringen in 1288, these territories were annexed by John I of Brabant. From the fifteenth century up to 1795, they fell under the control of the dukes of Burgundy and later the Habsburg dynasty: the

[9] Lucien Colson, *Malmédy et les territoires rétrocédés* (Liège: Joseph Olivier, 1920), 21.

[10] In circa 648 AD, St Remacle was granted vast concessions of land by King Sigebert III of Austrasia (the homeland of the Franks from the sixth to the eight century). St Remacle laid the first stone for the monastery in Malmedy, which at this time was attached to the diocese of Cologne. Within a short period, he began to construct a convent in Stavelot in the diocese of Liège. The then principality of Stavelot-Malmedy was contained within the empire of Charlemagne. Sebastian Scharte, *Preußich-deutsch-belgisch: Nationale Erfahrung und Identität, Leben an der deutsch-belgischen Gernze im 19. Jahrhundert* (New York, 2010), 31.

[11] Scharte, *Preußich-deutsch-belgisch*, 34.

[12] Andrea Velz, 'La vie en Wallonie prussienne entre nationalisme et Kulturkampf: étude illustrée par l'exemple de l'abbé Nicolas Pietkin' [Unpublished thesis] (Université Libre de Bruxelles [ULB], 2002), 17.

[13] Scharte, *Preußich-deutsch-belgisch*, 34.

Spanish Habsburgs until 1700 and, after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the Austrian Habsburgs.[14]

The incorporation of Eupen, Malmedy and St Vith into the French Republic following the Revolution saw these cantons eventually comprise the department of l'Ourthe, with Liège as prefecture.[15] As part of this new dispensation, a newly designated arrondissement of Malmedy was made up of eleven cantons, including those of Malmedy, Eupen and St Vith. Following the defeat of Napoleon in the summer of 1814, the Treaty of Paris defined the new borders of post-Napoleonic France. However, a number of territorial decisions remained to be resolved. The Congress of Vienna later that year oversaw a redrawing of the European map, and among the territorial transformations, Prussia was granted the greater share of Saxony as well as parts of Westphalia and the Rhine Province. The twin towns of Stavelot and Malmedy, along with the ancient abbey, would henceforth be divided between two separate states. Stavelot was claimed by the newly constituted Kingdom of the Netherlands (after 1830, it was absorbed into the newly independent Kingdom of Belgium), while Malmedy together with Eupen was ceded to Prussia. Malmedy, Eupen and St Vith would henceforth be located within the Grand Duchy of the Lower-Rhine inside a newly enlarged Prussia.[16] Following their annexation, Malmedy, Eupen and St Vith

[14]Léo Van Hommerich, Gouvernés et gouvernants dans le duché de Limbourg et les autres pays d'Outre-Meuse' in Émile Lousse, Walter Prevenier, Christiane Piérard, Paul Harsin, Roger Petit, Léo Van Hommerich, Henry Joosen, Josy Muller, Geneviève Moisse-Daxhelet, Gabriel Wymans, Pierre de Fraine, Jan Dhondt, John Gilissen, *Anciens Pays et Assemblées d'États*, XXXIII (Leuven: U. Nauwelaerts, 1965), 109–117.

[15]L'Ourte (later spelt Ourthe) was formed from parts of the county of Namur and of the duchies of Brabant, Limburg and Luxembourg (territories belonging to the Austrian Netherlands), the prince–bishopric of Liège, and the ecclesiastical principality of Stavelot-Malmédy. The French divided the department into three *arrondissements*: Liège, Huy and Malmedy. The *arrondissement* of Malmedy contained the towns of Aubel, Cronenbourg, Eupen, Limbourg, St.-Vith, Schleyden, Spa, Stavelot, Verviers, Vielsalm and Malmedy. Almanach Impérial, AN BISSEXTIL M. DCCC. XII (Paris: Chez Testu, 1812), 449–450.

[16]Following their annexation by Prussia, the two districts were transformed into three *Kreise* with St Vith forming a separate *Kreis,* having been separated from Malmedy. K.L. Kaufmann, *Der Kreis Malmedy*: Geschichte eines Eifelkreises von 1865 bis 1920 (Bonn: Wissenshafliches Archiv, 1961), 12–19; Pabst, *'Das problem der Deutsch-Belgischen Grenze',* 183–210; Christoph Brüll, 'Eupen-Malmedy 1918–1945: le temps des déchirures', in *Hommage à Henri Bragard (1877–1944),* Collection "Mémoire wallonne" (13) (Liège: Société de Langue et de Littérature wallonnes, 2009), 7–38.

were then divided between separate *Länder*—Jülich-Kleve-Berg and the Grand Duchy of the Lower Rhine (Großherzogtum Niederrhein).[17] The two provinces were governed from Cologne and Koblenz respectively. These two provinces would eventually merge in 1822 to form a single *Rheinprovinz*. From 1816, the *Regierungsbezirk* of Aachen had responsibility for the *Kreise* of Eupen, Malmedy and St Vith, the latter *Kreis* having been reattached to Malmedy in 1821.[18]

The immediate consequence of the appearance of these new frontiers was the emergence of linguistic minorities, this latest dissection, taking little account of the historical and linguistic complexities of the region. The new borders cut arbitrarily through centuries of tradition and community.[19] Yet in the fifty years or so following its annexation by Prussia, the Walloon inhabitants of Malmedy were, in the words of the revered abbot Nicolas Pietkin of Sourbrodt (a village on the outskirts of Malmedy), quite *'à l'aise'* with their minority status inside Germany, and 'worried only for themselves', as opposed to wanting to be united with their fellow Walloons on the far side of the German border.[20] Pietkin never advocated ceding from Prussia, in spite of the limitations placed on his own activities under Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*.[21] He believed that most of the Walloon population at that time preferred to be part of a 'little Walloon *patrie* within a greater Prussian *patrie*'.[22] When King

[17] Between 1808 and 1815, Prussia was divided into 25 *Länder*.

[18] Scharte, *Preußich-deutsch-belgisch*, 35–44.

[19] For example, the region of Montzen in the north-eastern pocket of the province of Liège, and the region around Arlon to the south near the border with Luxembourg, where a German dialect was spoken, was initially attached to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, following its recognition as an independent kingdom in 1830, both Montzen and Arlon were incorporated into Belgium. Beck, *Umstrittenes Grenzland: Selbst und Fremdbilder bei Josef Ponten und Peter Schmitz, 1918–1940* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2013), 75–76.

[20] Nicolas Pietkin, *La Germanisation de la Wallonie prussienne: aperçu historique* (Bruxelles: Schepens, 1904), 24. The first president of the Club Wallon was Guillaume Bodet. Elisée Legros, La wallonnie Malmédienne sous le régime prussien, *Le Pays de Saint Remacle*, xiii (1977), 273–302.

[21] Joseph Bastin, L'abbé Nicolas Pietkin à sa mémoire et à celle des défenseurs de la tradition latine en Wallonie Malmédienne, *La Terre Wallonne*, 21 (June 1921), 129–239 (152–153).

[22] '[U]ne petite patrie wallonne dans la grande patrie prussienne', Nicolas Pietkin cited in Christoph Brüll, 'Eupen-Malmedy 1918–1945: le temps des déchirures', in *Hommage à Henri Bragard (1877–1944)*, 9–10.

Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia paid a visit to Malmedy in 1856, he blissfully proclaimed his pride 'to have in my kingdom a little country where French is spoken'.[23] The coming to power of Bismarck in 1862 resulted in a souring of the relationship between the Walloon community and the Prussian state.[24] The culture struggle or *Kulturkampf* that accompanied the establishment of the unified German state in 1871 saw the level of mutual respect that had existed between the minority Walloon and majority German communities very quickly eroded, but not entirely obliterated.[25] Bismarck's *Kulturkampf,* described by its critics as 'Germanisation in excess' (albeit initially a war against the power of the Catholic Church in Germany), aimed at forging a culturally homogenous German nation.[26] Only the use of the German language was permitted, and those who dared to speak publicly in their native tongue were prosecuted.[27] The organized suppression of the French and Walloon languages in the areas of both communal administration and education was accompanied by the extirpation of Walloon administrators from schools in 1879. Henceforth, it was no longer the role of primary schools to 'conserve the maternal local language but uniquely the German language'.[28] Following the outbreak of the Great War, the fortunes of these borderland districts would once more fall under a cloud of uncertainty. While some would welcome the prospect of becoming Belgian, for the majority of the population, it was an assault on their identity as Germans.

---

[23] Colson, *Malmédy et les territoires rétrocédés*, 25.

[24] Otto von Bismarck was appointed prime minister of Prussia in 1862. He became chancellor in 1866.

[25] The *Kulturkampf* lasted from 1873 to 1887, when German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck clashed with the Catholic Church over the latter's claim that obedience to the Catholic Church trumped obedience to the State. The First Vatican Council's proclamation of papal infallibility in 1870 was deemed to threaten the authority of the German state. However, the phenomenon also affected the secular realm, not least in the area of language.

[26] Velz, La vie en Wallonie prussienne entre nationalisme et 'Kulturkampf', 4.

[27] Although the Walloon community in Malmedy was directly affected by these new measures, the most extreme manifestation of the *Kulturkampf* in practice was experienced by Germany's Polish minority in East Prussia. Klaus Pabst, 'Die preussischen Wallonen—eine staatstreue Minderheit im Westen', in H.H. Hahn & P. Kunze (eds) *Nationale Minderheiten und Staatliche Minderheitenpolitik in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 71–79.

[28] *La Semaine*, 30 March 1889.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, the concept of 'Germanness' underwent something of a transformation. While the Prussian citizenship law of 1842 had stipulated the revocation of citizenship following ten years of uninterrupted residence abroad, the revolutions of 1848 led to a reconsideration of the concept of what it meant to be German. The North German Confederation's citizenship law of 1870 replaced the local conception of citizenship inherent in the Prussian legislation with a more inclusive version, enabling a citizen from one German state to be considered as an equal citizen in all.[29] The law also allowed for the retention of German citizenship among emigrants by registration at a consulate. The arguments on what it meant to be German orbited around an ethnonational conception, or one based on the notion the *Staatsnation*. Rogers Brubaker has shown how with German national consciousness, which Brubaker tells us had as its 'institutional incubator' the Holy Roman Empire, the concept of nationhood and statehood were two separate and distinct entities.[30] This *Kulturnation*, as distinct from the *Staatsnation*, was fuelled by the philosophy of German Romanticism of the nineteenth century, which gave credence to the idea of a *Volksgeist* or national spirit.[31] This concept of *Volksgeist* aspired to unite territories inhabited by the one *Volk*. The creation of the German Empire in 1871 from the mosaic that was the German Confederation was its ultimate manifestation.[32]

The ever-growing numbers of *Auslandsdeutsche*, or Germans living beyond the borders of the *Vaterland*, became increasingly important to the aims of the German state by the latter years of the nineteenth century. An increased emphasis on a cultural national identity was promoted

[29] Howard Sargent, Diasporic citizens, in Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagin (eds), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 17–39.

[30] Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Belgium* (Cambridge, Mass, & London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3–6.

[31] The terms *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation* were originally formulated by the German historian Friedrich Meinecke in *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat: Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates* (München & Berlin: Druck & Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1908), 4–8 & passim.

[32] Andrea Velz, 'La vie en Wallonie prussienne entre nationalisme et Kulturkampf: étude illustrée par l'exemple de l'abbé Nicolas Pietkin' [Unpublished thesis] (Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), 2002), 29–30.

by colonial and patriotic societies, such as the *Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland* (Association for Germans Abroad) founded in 1908 for the protection and promotion of German culture abroad.[33]

The German concept of *Heimat* is important here. Celia Applegate has assessed the meaning of *Heimat* in German history and culture, and argues that the very elusive nature of its meaning allowed it to be moulded to fit the exigencies of particular interests at various times in German history.[34] The term is not so easily translated into English, or any other language for that matter. While the concept of the *Vaterland* encompassed the anthropomorphic idea of the German nation, the *Heimat* evoked the essence of the local, the home, the community, its culture, its traditions and its language. The *Heimat* in this way entailed the psychological and emotional liens between an individual and their locality. In terms of the German nation, however, a perceived common culture and language saw 'the nation claim the individual'.[35]

It has been demonstrated elsewhere how the concepts of nationhood and citizenship differ essentially between German and French interpretations. Historically, the French model was linked to the spatial and institutional frame of the state, where the idea of nation and kingdom were conflated. Juxtaposed against the German concept of nation, in France, nation-building took place within the contours of pre-existing borders. At the centre of this process was the 'social contract' based on the idea of the general will, and not dependent on a predetermined national character or *Volksgeist*.[36] Like France, the Belgian state allowed the individual to 'claim the state as nation'. However, in

[33]Thomas Lekan, German landscape: Local promotion of the Heimat abroad, in Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal & Nancy Reagin (eds), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 150–155.

[34]The fusion of sentimental arousal with more practical and social–economic considerations exposed the term to a multiplicity of interpretations. This rather pliable concept was easily twisted to serve both local and national demands for a more homogenous German nation after 1871. Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 8–10; John Alexander Williams, 'The movement to preserve the natural Heimat from the *Kaiserreich* to the Third Reich' in *Central European History*, 29 (3) (1966), 339–384.

[35]Jena M. Gaines, The politics of national identity in Alsace, *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism/Revue Canadienne des Études sur la Nationalisme*, xxi (1–2) (1994), 99–109.

[36]Velz, La vie en Wallonie prussienne, 29.

the Belgian case there is an added complication. Not long after its inception as an independent state, Belgian nationhood became bifurcated along the Flemish–Walloon fault line, thus complicating the very essence of what it meant to be Belgian. The Belgian state was born out of a rigid opposition to Dutch authoritarianism, and protestant pre-eminence. Once divested of the blanket of Dutch dominance, the extent of the cultural cleavage between the Flemings and Walloons became exacerbated. If following the French Revolution 'all of France's traits were set and definitive', in Belgium after 1830 this was certainly not the case.[37] In the words of Jules Destrée, the socialist deputy for Charleroi, not only were there no such things as Belgians, but Belgium was no more than 'a political state, somewhat artificially constructed', and 'not a nation'.[38] Even Belgium's first monarch, Leopold I, observed in 1859 that 'Belgium does not have a nationality, and seeing the character of its inhabitants, will never be able to have one'.[39] Despite the fact that the vast majority of the country's population was Catholic, in essence the idea of a Belgian nation was imposed from above by a French-speaking elite, to which the Flemish majority was subordinate, both culturally and linguistically. The bifurcation of Belgium along cultural and linguistic lines would dominate the state's nascent stage. However, the First World War served to ignite a sense of Belgian nationalism. This was in spite of the threat posed by the occupying German authority's policy of *Flamenpolitik*, which favoured the Flemish majority over the Walloon minority.[40]

While allowing for the degree of divergence between Belgian and German approaches to the concept of nationhood and citizenship, both states shared a trait in common with all states in looking for

[37] French historian Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893), cited in Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 95.

[38] Jules Destrée, Open Letter to the King concerning the separation of Flanders and Wallonia, cited in Theo Hermans, Louis Vos & Lode Wils (eds), *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History, 1780–1990* (London & Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1992), 206.

[39] Jean Stengers, La Belgique de 1830, une nationalité de convention? in Hervé Hasquin (ed.), *Histoire et historiens depuis 1830 en Belgique* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1981), 8–9.

[40] Sarah van Ruyskensvelde, Wartime Schooling and Education Policy in the Second World War (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 30.

precedents in the past to justify the exigencies of the present. In the case of Belgium, the various terms employed both during and after the Paris Peace Conference to describe the affinity felt towards the newly annexed districts of Eupen and Malmedy, had the aim of promoting the notion of a shared past that justified the annexation.[41] *'Les nouveaux belges'*, *'les frères retrouvés'*, and *'les cantons rédimés'* were terms used interchangeably to give the impression of what Benedict Anderson refers to as 'a deep horizontal comradeship' between these former German subjects and their new Belgian 'brothers'.[42] However, such identifiers are, as Anderson would argue, mere constructs, as are all collective identities other than those of family, tribe or perhaps a small village.[43]

As was the case with his French counterpart Ernest Lavisse, Belgium's revered historian Henri Pirenne embellished the idea of Belgium within a historical framework that lent a scholarly credibility to the 'Romantic' notion of a national past.[44] In doing so, he constructed the 'historical essentials' that reinforced the motif of a Greater Belgium.[45] Works such as Maurice des Ombiaux's *Les revendications territoriales de la Belgique* and Eugène Baie's *La Belgique de demain* contributed to a fomentation of nationalist discourse in the post-war period.[46] In this way, the journey from myth to that of a durable collective historical consciousness involved not only the literary endeavours of such luminaries as

[41] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 259–261; Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity* (2nd ed.) (Malden, MA: Polity, 2010), 71–84.

[42] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Rev. ed.) (London: Verso [1983], 1991), 7.

[43] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 15.

[44] Sophie de Schaepdrijver, Het koninkrijk België tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog (Amsterdam & Antwerp: Atlas, 1997), 39–40; Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique* (Bruxelles: Henri Lamertin, 1908–1920) & (Maurice Lamertin, 1926–1932); 'Belgique' in *Histoire et historiens depuis cinquante ans: Modèles, organisations et résultats du travail historique de 1876 à 1926* (New York, 1927), 51–71.

[45] Frank R. Ankersmit, *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 81.

[46] Eugène Baie, *La Belgique de demain—la question du Luxembourg—nécessité d'une barrière rhénane—les Pays-Bas* (Paris: Perrin & Cie, 1916); Maurice des Ombiaux, *Les revendications territoriales de la Belgique* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1916). Philippe Beck, *Umstrittenes Grenzland,* 81–82.

Nothomb, Pirenne, des Ombiaux, and others, but also the country's political representatives at the Paris Peace Conference.[47]

During the war, an organization called *La Grande Belgique*, later renamed *Le Comité de Politique Nationale* (CPN), was founded by Pierre Nothomb, who served as a junior secretary in the Justice Ministry.[48] The CPN began to build on the literary and academic foundations of Pirenne and his contemporaries by substantiating the myth of a Belgian nation through imagery and rhetoric. This was achieved while appealing to the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of a country whose sense of nationhood had reached its apogee as a result of the war.[49] The CPN's primary objective was the reannexation of territory 'taken from Belgium' by the treaties of 1815 and 1839. The treaty of 1839 had resulted in the nine-year-old breakaway Kingdom of Belgium relinquishing its claim to Flemish Zeeland and part of the Duchy of Limburg in return for official recognition by all the signatories as well as the granting of navigation rights on the Scheldt.[50] In addition, the country was furthermore bound by the terms of a perpetual neutrality endorsed by the Great Powers. Nothomb's concept of a 'Greater Belgium' set much of the tone for the post-war approach later adopted by the Belgian plenipotentiaries

[47] An interesting analogy on historians and nationalism is made by Eric Hobsbawm, who observes that 'Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts; we supply the essential raw material for the market'. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Ethnicity and nationalism in Europe today', in *Anthropology Today*, 8 (1) (February 1992), 3–8.

[48] Pierre Nothomb studied law at the Université catholique de Louvain. During the First World War, he served under the Belgian Minister for Justice Carton de Wiart, and was active in propagandizing during the war. He was a Belgian poet, novelist and Catholic politician who founded the movement known as *La Grande Belgique*, which would eventually become the *Comité de Politique Nationale* (CPN). He was a member of the Parti Catholique until 1924, when he left it to form the more radical right-wing party, Action Nationale. He rejoined the Catholic Party in 1927, leaving it once more in 1949 to join the Christian Social Party. He served as a member of the Belgian Sénat from 1936 to 1965. For more on Nothomb and Belgian nationalism, see Francis Balace, 'Pierre Nothomb et les autres nationalistes belges, 1924–1930', in *Pierre Nothomb et le nationalisme belge de 1914 à 1930* (Arlon: Cahiers de l'Académie Luxembourgeoise, 1980).

[49] One of the signatories to a petition organized by Nothomb in December 1918 was none other than the future Royal High Commissioner for Eupen-Malmedy, Herman Baltia.

[50] During the First World War, Belgian defences were hampered by this nub of Dutch territory which had scored a perilous gap in Belgian defences along the Meuse. C.P. Sanger & H.T.J. Norton, *England's Guarantee to Belgium and Luxemburg: with full text of the treaties (*London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1915), 139–141.

to Paris. Demands made by the CPN included the annexation of a considerable tranche of territory west of the Rhine encompassing Eupen and Malmedy, as well as the city of Aachen, including the towns of Bitburg and Neuerburg.[51] In addition to this, it sought the requisition of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the recovery of Dutch Limburg and Flemish Zeeland.[52] Indeed, the Paris Peace Conference has been described as Belgium's 'last chance' to revise the treaty of 1839.[53]

As Roger Collinet has observed, juxtaposed against romantic notions of a 'Greater Belgium', the raw political realities of the post-war period were not lost on Belgium's Catholic politicians. The post-war 'democratic wave', underscored by universal suffrage, would prove to be to the benefit of the socialists in Belgium, and in particular the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (POB). It was not surprising then that the territories with which the Belgian government of Charles de Broqueville were concerned were staunchly Catholic, thus providing a useful counter-weight to the anticipated socialist tide following the introduction of universal male suffrage in the wake of the war.[54] However, one voice within the Belgian delegation was out of tune with the appetite for annexation, whether of Dutch or German Territory. Émile Vandervelde, leader of the POB, was, like most of his contemporaries on the Left, opposed to the concept of territorial annexation. Despite Vandervelde's stance, the Belgian delegation displayed a certain naivety in what it hoped to achieve at the peace negotiations. In the end, however, the outcome of the negotiations in Paris saw Belgian hopes of territorial aggrandizement evaporate

[51] Beck, *Umstrittenes Grenzland,* 81; Klaus Pabst, Das Problem der deutsch-belgischen Grenze in der letzten 150 Jahre, *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtvereins* (1965) 77, 198–199.

[52] Although Belgium also possessed the ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend, they were by no means as significant in terms of either size or economy. Brussels would also have benefited greatly in terms of trade in the event of Flemish Zeeland falling to Belgium. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris,* IV, 435–437; Marks, *Innocent Abroad,* 139 & 146–147; Miller, *Belgian Foreign Policy,* 72–78; Pierre Nothomb, La déclaration de Sainte Adresse (14 février 1916): ses origines et ses conséquences, *Le Flambeau*, 31 January 1922, 10–36.

[53] Hubert P. Van Tuyll, Last chance: Belgium at Versailles, in Benjamin Kaplan, Marybeth Carlson & Laura Cruz (eds), *Boundaries and their Meanings in the History of the Netherlands* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2009), 178.

[54] Roger Collinet, *L'annexion d'Eupen et Malmedy à la Belgique en 1920* (Verviers: Librairie 'La Dérive', 1986), 5–6.

almost entirely.[55] Apart from gaining the colonial territory of Ruanda-Urundi, which was mandated to Belgium by Great Britain in 1920 (not without a considerable period of procrastination by the latter),[56] the two German districts of Eupen-Malmedy, together with Neutral and Prussian Moresnet, were to be the only tangible territorial acquisitions the country would have to show for its efforts.[57] Moresnet had belonged to the Duchy of Limburg until 1815 when, following the defeat of Napoleon, the Treaty of Vienna divided it between the United Kingdom of the Netherlands and Prussia. However, an oversight during the drafting stage of the treaty left a small triangular part of the territory containing a number of zinc spar and lead mines unassigned to either power.[58] In 1816, a provisional arrangement between the Netherlands and Prussia, known as the *Aachener Grenzvertrag*, placed the disputed 3.13 square kilometres of Neutral Moresnet under the administration of two commissioners, one Dutch and one Prussian.[59] In 1830, the Dutch interest was assumed by Belgium following its independence. This situation lasted until the end of the Great War when, under Articles 32 and 33 of the Versailles Treaty, both Neutral and Prussian Moresnet were unconditionally ceded to Belgium.[60] Juxtaposed against the great expectations that consumed the minds of Belgium's representatives at the Paris Peace

[55] Hymans was assisted at the Paris Peace Conference by Émile Vandervelde the leader of the POB, and Jules van den Heuvel who later had a seat on the Reparations Commission. Archives du Palais Royal (APR), I/981, '*La Belgique et la paix*' 8 March 1920.

[56] By the Treaty of Versailles, i. 22, Belgium was granted a mandate over the former German colony of Ruanda-Urundi. This was confirmed by the League of Nations on 20 July 1922 and reaffirmed on 31 August 1923, William R. Louis, Great Britain and the African peace settlement of 1919, *American Historical Review*, 71 (1966), 875–892.

[57] Alfred Minke & Fabrice Müllender, *800 Jahre Eynatten: 1213–2013 Beiträge zur Dorfgeschichte: Band 1 / mit einer chronologischen Übersicht 1000–1750* (Eynatten: Verkehrsverein Eynatten, 2013), 88–90.

[58] A mining company called the *Société Anonyme des Mines et Fonderies de Zinc de la Vieille Montagne* was established there in 1837. The territory became a lucrative location for industry and investment. However, it also experienced considerable levels of smuggling owing to its neutral status. At the turn of the century, the linguistic movement Esperanto considered making Neutral Moresnet the first Esperanto-speaking state, having established its offices there. Iwan Jungbluth, *Der Bärrech—die Neutralität—der Schmuggel* (Eupen: Grenz Echo Verlag, 2011), 5–6.

[59] These were later replaced by a panel of ten councillors and a burgomaster.

[60] Minke & Müllender, *800 Jahre Eynatten*, 88–90.

Conference, the rather anti-climactic acquisition of Eupen-Malmedy and Moresnet may thus be viewed as nothing more than meagre crumbs of consolation that had fallen from the table of post-war negotiations.[61] The future governor of Eupen-Malmedy, Herman Baltia, viewed the granting of such a diminutive portion of territory to Belgium as akin to 'giving a gourmand a bone to chew'.[62] However, in time, this tranche of territory would become a bone of contention as much within Belgium as it would between Belgium and Germany.

By the law of 15 September 1919, a provisional government of indefinite duration was established in Eupen-Malmedy to oversee its transition from German to Belgian sovereignty. The law provided for the appointment of a Royal High Commissioner entrusted with full legislative and executive powers to head the transitory regime.[63] The man eventually chosen to undertake this task was Lieutenant-General Herman Baltia, a decorated war hero born in Brussels, but of mixed Luxembourg and German parentage. The success of Baltia's mission to make *bon belges* out of former German subjects would be measured against his regime's ability to combine the political and administrative incorporation of the territory with the cultural and national assimilation of its people.[64]

Under Article 34 of the Versailles Treaty dictated to Germany in the wake of its defeat, it had to 'renounce in favour of Belgium all rights and title over the territory comprising the whole of the *Kreise* of Eupen

[61] Although Belgium also possessed the ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend, they were by no means as significant as Antwerp. Brussels would also have benefited greatly in terms of trade in the event of Flemish Zeeland falling to Belgium. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, 435–437; Marks, *Innocent Abroad,* 139 & pp. 146–147; Miller, *Belgian Foreign Policy*, 72–78; Pierre Nothomb, La déclaration de Sainte Adresse (14 février 1916): ses origines et ses consequences, *Le Flambeau*, 31 January 1922, 10–36 (11–14).

[62] Landesarchiv Nordrhein Westfalen (LANRW), Sammlung Baltia, RW/10/5, Erinnerungen des belgischen Generals Baltia, 1918–1922, Gouverneur (Hochkommissar) für die abgetretenen Gebiete Eupen-Malmedy aus seiner Tätigkeit (Hereafter: Erinnerungen), 0007–0009; Els Herrebout, *Generalleutnant Herman Baltia: Memoiren 1920–1925* (Eupen: Archives générales du Royaume, 2011) (Hereafter: *Memoiren*), 21.

[63] Loi concernant le gouvernement des territoires annexés à la Belgique par le traité de Versailles du 28 june 1919, 15 September 1919, Annales Parlementaires Belge (APB), *Chambre,* 17 October 1919, 5480; Hans Doepgen, *Die Abtretung des Gebietes von Eupen-Malmedy an Belgien im Jahre 1920* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1966), 98–101.

[64] Rapport sur l'activité, i, 5–7.

and Malmedy'.[65] Any perceived disadvantages in acquiring this territory from a Belgian perspective were initially subsumed by concerns for its future security, and the desire for economic recompense in terms of its extensive forestry and agriculture, quite apart that is from the palpable appetite for retribution.[66] Yet to many inside Belgium, gaining Eupen-Malmedy risked inviting trouble rather than securing the borders of the state. So soon after the war and the oppressive German occupation, a tangible distrust among the Belgian populace towards these *frères retrouvés* was in evidence in both the press and in parliament.[67] Attempts by certain sections of the Belgian press to whip up nationalistic sentiment by advocating territorial annexation did not produce the desired effect. Even during the war, the Belgian government in exile in Le Havre was hardly of *una voce* behind the annexation. The socialist minister Émile Vandervelde argued during a cabinet meeting on 24 February 1916 that the de-annexation (*désannexion*) of Eupen-Malmedy would have the potential to become an apple of discord between Germany and Belgium in the post-war period.[68] In time, Vandervelde's prophesy would come to pass as Belgium's annexation of Eupen-Malmedy took on a more pronounced political potency, becoming at once the *pièce de résistance* of German revanchism and the coping stone of Belgium's post-war recovery.

This study demonstrates how Belgium's approach to the assimilation of '*les cantons rédimés*' was flawed from the outset. Even before the annexation had become definitive following the outcome of the much-discredited popular consultation, the government, in the words of Baltia, seemed 'ill-prepared […] to deal with the numerous questions and delicate problems that had to be resolved'.[69] Even as early as the negotiations in Paris, Belgium's attitude to Eupen-Malmedy was lukewarm at best, until it soon became clear that save for some

[65] Treaty of Versailles, Article, iii, 34.

[66] Robert Devleeshouwer, L'opinion publique et les revendications territoriales belges à la fin de la première guerre mondiale, in *Mélanges offerts à G. Jacquemyns* (Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, Editions de l'Institute de Sociologie, 1968), 207–238 (209–211).

[67] *Le Courrier de l'Armée*, 23 November 1919 and 21 December 1919.

[68] Freddy Cremer & Werner Mießen. 1996. *Spuren: Materialien zur Geschichte der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens* (Eupen: Werner Miessen), 8.

[69] Herrebout, *Memoiren*, 26.

colonial mandates in Africa, no other territorial acquisitions were on offer. From the establishment of the provisional Eupen-Malmedy government in 1920 to its termination in 1925, Brussels seemed ignorant as to the magnitude of Baltia's mission. Chapter 2 explores the effect that the push towards annexation had on the people of these districts. It assesses developments on the ground in Eupen and Malmedy from 1919 while the protracted peace negotiations continued in Paris. The impact of the sudden transfer from German sovereignty to allied occupation, and the ensuing struggle between pro and anti-annexationist camps for political advantage in the days leading up to the signing of the treaty are also examined. During this time, it was not only the border between Belgium and Germany that had become blurred. The dividing line between politics and religion in the territory was equally obscured. Still under the auspices of the Bishopric of Cologne, pro-German clerics in Eupen and in Malmedy used their privileged positions to dissuade their congregations from attachment to Belgium. The tug-of-war for the hearts and minds of the population continued apace even after the appointment of Herman Baltia as Royal High Commissioner for Eupen-Malmedy in September 1919.

When Baltia assumed office in January 1920, he did so not as someone elected by the people, but as one imposed by what was up to then a foreign power. His role was described by none other than the Belgian prime minister, Léon Delacroix, as akin to that of 'a colonial governor'. If Baltia were indeed expected to perform his duties in that manner, what did this say about the people over whom he was to rule? As shall be argued in Chap. 3, despite Delacroix's unfortunate terminology, Baltia's role was more on a par with that of a commissarial dictator in the classic Roman sense, as opposed to that of a colonial governor or a dictator in the sovereign sense.[70] Whatever the extent of Baltia's power in the districts, he would still have to find a *modus vivendi* with the people of Eupen-Malmedy if he were to succeed in his mission of nation-building.

[70]Vincent O'Connell, Dictating democracy: The impact of governor Baltia's 'dictatorship' on local government in Eupen-Malmedy 1919–1925, *International Journal of Regional and Local Studies* (Special Issue on the rise and fall of municipal government.) vol. 7 (1–2) (Spring 2011), 160–192; George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936* (2nd ed.) (New York & London: Greenwood Press, 1989), 32.