

Belgium Is Often Referred to as the Crossroads of Europe

(Editor's note: On a recent television quiz program, the contestants could not answer the question: Who is king of Belgium? Can you? How much do you know of that tiny, historic country? This is another in a series of dispatches called "Nations of the World." They are up-to-date sketches of the countries of our world written by correspondents who work and live there.)

By STANLEY KETELE and HERMAN SAEN

United Press International Brussels—UPI—Belgium has often been called "the crossroads of Europe."

It straddles the invasion routes of the continent. For 2,000 years armies have tramped across it.

It is a bridge between the two major powers of Western Europe—Germany on the east and France on the southwest—and as a result it has been forced to take sides in wars that were not of its making.

Its relations with its other neighbors have caused it less national anguish—Holland in the north and the little duchy of Luxembourg in the southwest.

To the northwest, across the North Sea, is Britain.

Larger Than Maryland

Belgium is only slightly larger than the state of Maryland—11,500 square miles—but it is crowded with 9,190,000 people. Only Japan is more densely populated.

To many, Belgium is a sort of Europe in miniature. Not only because it is the headquarters of such international bodies as the Common Market but because it presents many features, on a smaller scale, that can be found in other West European countries.

Sloping down from its highest point of 2,300 feet in the southern Ardennes (where one of the crucial battles of World War II was fought) toward the North Sea, it can be divided into two main geographical regions.

The northern half, with its seaside dunes and beaches, is part of the great plain stretching from northern France into Russia. It includes flax fields in the west, rich farmlands and pastures in the northeast as well as abundant coal.

The hilly Ardennes in the south are part of the ancient mountain chain stretching from France into Germany. North and south are linked by a gently undulating belt running across the middle of the country.

It is the boundary between fertile farmland and orchards on one side and stone quarries with important steel and



LANGUAGE FRONTIER—This UPI news map shows how the "language frontier" runs through the middle of Belgium, often called "the crossroads of Europe." To the north of the line live the Dutch-speaking Flemings. To the south are the French-speaking Walloons. (UPI)

chemical industries on the other.

Less tangible but just as real is the "language frontier" that runs through the middle of Belgium.

To the north of this linguistic line live the Dutch-speaking Flemings. To the south are the French-speaking Walloons.

Separates Old Cultures

The "line" separates two old cultures—the Latin and the Germanic, two anthropological types, two ethnic groups, one with Teutonic and the other with Alpine characteristics.

There are slightly more Flemings, just over 5 million, than Walloons. But the French speakers constitute a majority of the population of the country's capital and most important city, Brussels.

There are strongly marked differences between the regional conditions and habits of these components of the Belgian population.

In the Flemish areas people traditionally have lived hard for a meagre livelihood in small-farm agriculture or in the depression-prone textile regions.

Great Battleground

It was mainly from the Flemish districts that Belgians emigrated to the United States, especially after World War I, in which Flanders, one of the great battlegrounds of history, was devastated.

The Battle of Waterloo also was fought in Belgium.

Some people regard Brussels, with its population of about 1,000,000, as a distinct unit in itself. But the overwhelming majority of its people are "immigrants" from either the Flemish or Walloon sections and there are very few "pure" Bruxellois left.

Generally in Brussels the Walloons are engaged in administration and are employed in the headquarters of the big enterprises. The Flemish moved in at first as butchers and bakers, as craftsmen and industrial workers.

No Dividing Line

There is no firm dividing line, however, and with the passing of the years the types of jobs have tended to merge.

Brussels itself is undergoing great structural changes. Up to World War II, the population lived as densely packed around the center of town as possible. Now there is a flight to the suburbs. Residential areas in the town are being replaced by glass and concrete office buildings.

The Belgian school system offers ample opportunity in both state-run or denominational schools. Schooling till the age of 15 is compulsory and there is no illiteracy.

Flemish leaders complain, however, that although 60 per cent of the school-youth is Flemish it provides only 40 per cent of the university students.

The Belgian government is appointed by King Baudouin. Legislative power rests with the two houses of Parliament—the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate.

Strong Political Parties

The strongest political parties are the Social Christians and the Socialists with a smaller liberal center group. There is a small Flemish party on the right wing and a Communist group on the left.

Although there is chronic friction between the two language groups, Belgians are united in their desire for an integrated Western Europe or close political and economic unity—the Common Market.

The Belgian worker has a higher standard of living than his colleagues in many other European countries although prices are comparatively high.

A skilled worker earns an average of 70 cents (American) an hour.

The maximum working week is 45 hours. There is

state aid for illness and on-job accidents, unemployment benefits and state provision for family allowances and old age pensions.

Sense of Freedom

An industrious people with a strong sense of freedom, Belgians are famous for "making the best of any situation."

They are wedded to free enterprise and like to credit it with most of their prosperity. Belgian shops display one of the widest ranges of foreign products to be found in Western European countries.

They have one million television sets and 1,100,000 private automobiles. The Belgians like to eat well—it is almost a national sport. Their love for good food is surpassed only by their appreciation of a good pint of beer.

They hold the world record for per capita beer consumption with more than 100 liters (176 pints) a year.

As there are more than 80,000 pubs or cafes in the country—five per square mile—the Belgians need not travel far to sate this national thirst.

Typical Belgian

A typical Belgian is Edmond Tielmans, a 38-year-old skilled stucco worker who lives with his wife, Emma, 36, and their three children in a third floor apartment in a Brussels suburb.

Mrs. Tielmans works two or three times a week as a seamstress. This brings the total family income, including family allowance to between \$210 and \$220 a month.

Mary, who is 16, helps her mother. Peter, 11, is in primary school. Jan, who is three years old, is taken to a kindergarten on the days his mother works.

The Tielmans apartment, in a 25-year-old building, cannot be considered quite modern, but Tielmans manages to improve it in his spare time. The biggest of the two bedrooms is partitioned off to make one bedroom for the girl and one for the boys.

There is no bath but Tielmans installed a shower. The apartment itself is simple but well-furnished. There is no central heating—heat comes from stoves in the living room and in the kitchen. They have television.

Recently Tielmans acquired a second-hand car and this is often used on Sundays for family outings. He thinks Belgium is a fine country to live in.

Mrs. Green Proposes Major Surgery

By ROBERT BUCKHORN
United Press International
Washington—UPI—In Congress, Caesar's wife is a much-discussed lady.

The 535 lawmakers in House and Senate are agreed that they, too, should be above suspicion. But they can't agree on what sometimes makes a congressman suspect.

Should a legislator hire his brother-in-law to work in his office? Is it ethical to spend the taxpayers' money in a Paris nightclub?

Some legislators would answer "no" to both questions. Others might say "yes." Still others would answer "yes and no."

Hardly a week passes that a member of Congress doesn't make a decision connected in some way with ethics. If the decision is made public, the lawmaker can expect to be praised or damned, depending on how a voter gauges ethics.

Reaches Plateau

Congress, says Rep. Edith Green (D-Ore), has reached the plateau where it needs a policeman to tell it right from wrong. To back up her opinion, she dropped a legislative reform package into the hopper, including a proposal to set up a 15-member commission on congressional ethics. The commission would study conflicts of interest and outside income of House and Senate members.

Mrs. Green said bluntly that "major surgery" is needed to keep Congress honest.

A focal point for much of the recent uproar over congressional honesty is Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (D-N.Y.). The Negro legislator triggered a barrage of criticism when he left in the midst of a congressional session for a month-long tour of five European nations. Powell is chairman of the important House Education and Labor committee. He said the purpose of the trip was to gather facts on the European Common Market.

Mixing His Responsibilities

However, while most of his fellow lawmakers were trying to get Congress adjourned, Powell was reported mixing his information-gathering with night club visits and sunbathing. Along the way he spent \$1,543. Two female aides who accompanied him spent \$2,428. Neither figure included transportation costs, according to congressional records.

Answering his critics, Powell said they were using a pot-calling-kettle-black type of logic. "I will always do what every other congressman has done, is doing, and will do," he said. And as far as junketing goes, Powell had a lot of congressional bedfellows.

In 1962, 101 lawmakers and nearly as many aides toured the world. They reported to the House Administration committee that they spent a total of \$257,514.

Nepotism Controversial

If junketing is controversial, nepotism is none the less so. In the current 88th Congress, payroll records show wives, daughters, sons, brothers, and in-laws all working for congressmen.

There is no secret about the practice. The House payroll records are open to public view. Some congressmen even go out of their way to tell their constituents they have a relative on the payroll. But not all think the practice is ethical and have moved to curtail it.

As part of this drive, the House Administrative com-



MRS. EDITH GREEN
Proposes Commission

mittee recently approved a proposal to prohibit use of federal funds to pay any member of a congressman's staff who doesn't work in Washington, or in the representative's home state.

If the proposal becomes law, it would affect congressmen like Powell, whose wife earns \$13,308 a year as his aide, but lives in Puerto Rico. Rep. George Meader (R-Mich.), would have to stop paying his daughter \$187.54 a month to mail out letters while she attends college in Florida.

Not a New Problem

Ethics is not a new problem for Congress. The lawmakers have been wrestling with it almost since the gavel sounded to bring the first session to order in 1789.

Thomas Jefferson laid down one of the first codes for lawmakers. Said Jefferson: "Where the private interests of a member are concerned in a bill or question, he is to withdraw." But a generation later no less a historical personage than Daniel Webster felt free to ask a bank in Philadelphia for his "usual

retainer" while the bank was involved in a controversy in the Senate over the renewal of its charter.

In recent years, a few congressmen have ended up in jail when they twisted the code of ethics too far. In 1947, Rep. Andrew J. May (D-Ky.), was indicted on bribery charges and later sentenced to prison. In 1949, Rep. Par-nell Thomas (R-N.J.), was convicted of payroll padding.

Last year, lame-duck Rep. Frank Boykin (D-Ala.), was indicted on charges of trying to influence the Justice department to drop prosecution of a central figure in a savings and loan scandal. Boykin has denied the charge and went on trial in late March along with former Rep. Thomas J. Johnson (D-Md.), who faced the same accusation.

Last month, in a copyrighted article published by Parade magazine, an "anonymous congressman" accused one of his colleagues of turning a \$4,000 profit on the sale of land for the new House office building.

The author said the con-

gressman "boasted" that he slipped out of a committee hearing as soon as he learned what the government wanted and telephoned his broker to buy a house in the area.

The use or misuse of congressional influence is one of the most complex and controversial phases of the ethics question. No one has come up with an answer to these questions: how far can a congressman go in obtaining a government contract for his state? Or what type of outside employment is compatible with a committee assignment? And when does a speaker's fee reach the point where it could be considered an unreported campaign contribution?

Little Can Be Done

Lawmakers say there is very little a congressman can do to influence a contract decision by the Defense department. But critics point out that some go a long way to create the impression they can do something.

One case in point, critics say, is the practice of getting

advance notice on contract decisions and then notifying constituents that the award has been made, leaving the impression the congressman had something to do with the decision.

Good politics, say the supporters of this policy. Unethical say the critics.



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