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Elements for a sociological analysis of the impact of the main conflicts on belgian political life

by A. VAN DEN BRANDE*

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> « *Un sage roi estant comme un habile apothicaire qui, des plus meschans poisons compose d'excellens antidotes, et des vipères en fait de la thériaque.* »
>
> Henri IV.

The intention of this paper is to present the analytical tools — concepts and hypotheses — for a sociological study of the effects from the outstanding Belgian conflicts on political life and vice versa. We shall try to show that the chosen instruments are plausibly suited for the aimed analysis.

Our frame of reference is a structural-functional one, equilibrated by a conflictual starting point, chosen in function of our object-matter and with the intention to find out finally the dynamics of the system (1).

This is one aspect of the neo-dialectical attitude adopted, which consists-when studying one conceptual reality-in a systematic attention for the presence of the opposite, in the search for the consensus *after* the conflict, for the assimilation *after* the emancipation, etc. (2).

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* Born 1930 in Bondo (Congo) of Flemish parents. Studied Law and the Social Sciences at the State-University in Ghent (1949-1956). In 1957 librarian and since 1966 conservator at the Central Library of this University.

(1) For a discussion in connection with this methodological approach, see: Ralf DAHRENDORF, *Toward a theory of social conflict.* In: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 2 (1958), pp. 170-183.

(2) See: Ll. GROSS, *Preface to a metatheoretical framework for sociology.* In: *American Journal of Sociology,* 67 (1961), p. 128 and R. BENDIX and B. BERGER, *Images of society and problems of concept formation in sociology.* In: Ll. GROSS (Ed.), *Symposium on sociological theory.* Evanston, 1959, p. 92.

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I. LIMITATIONS

Some description will be needed, but has to be limited here to the main lines of the structures, just enough — as I hope — to make the theory understandable and to show its plausibility in relation to the reality studied (3). Yet we think that by this exposition, the reader will get after all from this reality, some rough image built up in sociological terms. Not any more than full description, can we give results from a systematic testing of the proposed hypotheses. Here too some facts and directions for research will be indicated just as illustrations for the argumentation.

This contribution is further limited in three other ways : First, as to the kind of processes studied, the field is narrowed to the internal political system, with abstraction from foreign policy (4). And — on account of the conflictual starting point — even in this field much more attention goes to the problem of the legitimacy of the system, than to his efficiency (5).

Secondly there is a limitation in time, as only the postwar structures and developments were taken into consideration.

Thirdly — as to the level of analysis — we shall confine ourselves to the macro-level of Belgian political life i.e. to the processes relevant for the exercise of formally institutionalized power by the state.

So, we better could say that we shall try to approach the facts *from* the macro-level, taking into consideration the developments on other levels, as far as they are important to the former. We shall use here the term micro-level for processes in and between individuals and the term meso-level for (almost secundary) groups and their interrelations forming a web between the individual and his primary groups on one side, and the state on the other side (6).

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(3) For a fuller description, see — besides the other contributions in this number —: *La décision politique en Belgique*. Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques (CRISP, Bruxelles), Paris, 1965.

Val. R. LORWIN, *Belgium: Religion, Class and Language in National Politics*, pp. 146-187, in Robert A. DAHL, *Political oppositions in Western democracies*. New Haven, 1966.

A more detailed analysis of the structures of Belgium's main conflicts is given in: A. VAN DEN BRANDE, *Mogelijkheden van een sociologie der Belgische conflicten na de tweede wereldoorlog (1944-1961). Een verkenning der basisstructuren*. In: *Sociologische Gids, 10* (1963), nr 1, pp. 2-29.

(4) On the foreign conditioning of Belgian politics, see: *La décision politique en Belgique. Op. cit.*, pp. 17-19.

(5) See about this dual tendency: S.M. LIPSET, *Political man*. London, 1960, pp. 24-30, 77-83; and: P.J.A. ter HOEVEN, *Bedreigde democratie*. Utrecht, 1965, p. 8.

(6) This is about the distinction applied with other labels in: BRAIBANTI R.J. and SPENGLER J.J., *Tradition, values and socio-economic development*. Durham, Duke Univ. Press, 1961. Concerning the different uses and the methodological impli-

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On the political macro-level we could distinguish a formal aspect, consisting of the legal institutions and their working, a semi-formal aspect, formed almost by the political parties, and an informal one, there where influences, not foreseen by law, intervene *directly* in the formation of the authoritative state-outputs (7).

II. BASIC STRUCTURES

Some years ago we made a study of the structures underlying the main Belgian conflicts, taking the line that it could be relevant to see them as one system (8). As it is wise to start a structural-functional analysis by the structures, we shall start here with a short outline of the results of this research (9). We came to the following conclusions :

1. These conflicts are enacted in three series of socio-cultural features, important on the national level, viz. in the socio-economic, the ideological and the ethnic-cultural dimensions (10). Each dimension consists of cultural components, i.e. attitudes, values, interests, opinions, norms, etc. as well as of patterns of interactions, groups and institutions.

So there are progressive ideas, intending changes in the socio-economic relations, almost expressing labour-interests, and supported by the organisations of the employed, as against the more conservative strivings of groups of more or less capital owning employers. There exist catholic (other religions are unimportant on the macro-level) versus free-thinking values, both defended by their own institutions. And last — but not least — we know a Flemish culture beside a « Francophone » one, living each in different groups of the population. The distribution of these features is, to some extent, bimodal in each dimension (11).

Yet, we should make a distinction here, according to the three levels and the two components we distinguished before. For the moment, this bimodal distribution is very pronounced even on the

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cations of the micro-macro distinction, see: J.A.A. VAN LEENT, *De macro-micro verhouding, bij de sociologie, de psychologie en de sociale psychologie*. 's-Gravenhage, 1962.

(7) David EASTON, *A systems analysis of political life*. New York, 1965, p. 354.

(8) A. VAN DE BRANDE. *Op. cit.*

(9) See foot-note 3.

(10) In the same sense, see: *La décision politique en Belgique*, pp. 22-40, and Val. R. LORWIN. *Op. cit.*, pp. 147-148.

(11) Concerning the effects of a bimodal distribution of opinions: Robert A. DAHL. *Op. cit.*, pp. 372-380.

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macro-level for the cultural aspects of the Flemish-Francophone dimension. Structurally this is true too here for the micro- and meso-levels. This antithesis is not so clear-cut in the institutions of the political macro-level.

For the catholic-free-thinking features (12), on the contrary the cleavage structures on the macro- and meso-levels are very explicit, the antithesis in the opinions on these levels being somewhat decreased (13) but still present. The major gap exists here between the former and the micro-level. Here the distribution of the individual and primary-group motivations as well as of the different forms and degrees of participation based on this motivation, can no longer be said to be plainly bimodal. One could rather think of a set of irregularly filled, less or more parallel, continua (14).

In the socio-economic dimension too the bimodal distribution is the clearest on the macro- and meso-levels. But this distribution is mitigated by the existence of large middle-classes (15), with their own organisations and pronounced middle-class ideology (16), by a rather small, but existing social mobility (17) and by a general increase of wealth. Polarization occurs by conflicts on socio-economic issues, in

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(12) Some literature on this subject:

L. APOSTEL and M. BOTS, *Pluralisme en verdraagzaamheid*. Antwerpen, 1966.

K. DOBBELAERE, *Sociologische analyse van de katholiciteit*, Leuven, 1966.

J. KERKHOFS en J. VAN HOUTTE, ed., *De Kerk in Vlaanderen*. Tielt, 1962.

J. KRUITHOF, *Clericalisme en anti-clericalisme in België*. In: *De nieuwe stem* (1961), p. 417.

Structures catholiques belges. *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 9 (6 mars 1959).

Structures et évolution du « monde catholique » en Belgique. *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nºs 352, 353, 354 (10 février 1967).

J. VAN HOUTTE, *Verzuiling versus openheid*. Verslagboek Vlaamse Sociale Studiedagen, 1966.

Werkgroep PASCO, *Tussen atheïst en gelovige*. Tielt, 1965.

(13) « Les idéologies reculent; les piliers restent » says Val. R. LORWIN, in his « Conflicts et compromis dans la politique belge ». *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 323 (10 juin 1966).

(14) We use the plural in order to indicate that one could draw distinctions and in the individual motivations (for instance between moral and religious as against group- and institutional incentives — the latter being direct influences from the meso-and macro-level on the micro-level) and in the individual participations (for instance between participation in moral, religious, cultural, socio-economic or political interactions, groups or institutions). See for example the diagram on participation on catholic institutions, published in « Structures et évolution du monde catholique...». *Op. cit.*

(15) See: R. CREMER, *Les classes moyennes en Belgique*. Bruxelles, 1955.

(16) About the organisations of the middle classes: R. THIJS, *De organisatie van de middenstand in België*. Antwerpen, 1960. About their ideology: W. DUMON, *De middenstand als sociologische categorie*. Leuven, 1963.

(17) See: M. VERSICHELEN, *Sociale mobiliteit. Een studie over differentiële levenskansen*. Gent, 1959. Some studies on educational sociology give a partial image of the upward social mobility too. See:

J.L. WIEERS, *Onderzoek naar de sociale stratificatie der Vlaamse Studenten*. Leuven, 1958.

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which the independant middle-classes choose almost the conservative side. Nevertheless on some issues there are coalitions of the industrial interests (holdings and labour-unions) as against the middle-class commercial and agricultural interests. This counteracts again polarization.

The fact that in general the features in the three dimensions are ascribed, continued as they are by family conditions and tradition (18) strengthens their bimodal distribution.

2. This « rule of descent » is on his turn enhanced by the fact that these three dimensions can be considered (at least in their origins) as minority-majority relations (19). So we have a Flemish (Dutch-speaking) minority versus a Francophone (French-speaking) majority, a minority of labourers against a majority of employers, whilst the catholic structures till the end of the last century were dominant in many areas on the free-thinking ones.

The general characteristics of these relations are, that a relevant difference in culture (due to historical circumstances) and/or a difference in interests (due to different social positions) of people living together in a joint social context, give rise to a separated and antithetical group-consciousness and group-formation, one group disposing hereby of more power and/or prestige than the other (20).

In a given socio-cultural situation, the difference at issue sometimes may really be the cause of the unequal relations, anyhow it is used as a criterion and a means for a different and differentiating treatment, resulting in subordination and arrearage of the minority. The supposed superiority of the majority-features, serves as legitimation for this situation (21).

The members of the minority can react in different ways : they can resign to their fate, which doesn't necessarily mean that they agree, or they can try to escape their minority position. This latter type of

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E. VAN DER STRAETEN, *Sociographie van de studenten ingeschreven aan de Rijksuniversiteit te Gent*. Gent, 1959.

L. COETSIER en E. VANSTEENKISTE, *Sociaal-economische achtergronden van de democratisering van het Universitair onderwijs*. Gent, 1961.

L. COETSIER en A. BONTE, *Doorstroming naar de Universiteit, aansporing tot socio-culturele mobiliteit*. Antwerpen, 1963.

(18) This is very good demonstrated for the participation in catholic structures, in K. DOBBELAERE. *Op. cit.*, pp. 315-346.

(19) See: J.S. ROUCEK, *The power and ideological aspects of the majority-minority relationships*. In: *Sociologia Internationalis, 3* (1965), p. 106, with reference to Ch. WAGLEY and M. HARRIS, *Minorities in the new world*. New York, 1958.

(20) For a discussion of this aspect, see R. DAHRENDORF, *Op. cit.*, and J. THURLINGS, *Strijd om nieuwe orde. Sociologische Gids, 12* (1965), pp. 89-105.

(21) See: J.S. ROUCEK, *Op. cit.*, pp. 97-120, and: F. VAN MECHELEN, *De minderheid als sociologische kategorie*. In: *Sociologische Gids, 9* (1962), pp. 58-80.

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reaction seems to be influenced by many, intense interactions with the majority and by a high degree of discrimination.

3. There are two ways to escape a minority position, the one, in general more personal, is assimilation, when this is possible, the other is emancipation (22). Assimilation occurred in the Belgian situation almost by social mobility of the labourers and the take-over of French culture by some Flemish. Yet there were some factors that favoured the different struggles for emancipation. First, some cultural factors enhanced in the past century the growth of consciousness by the minorities, as did the ideas of the French Revolution, the — mainly Marxist — ideology of the international labour-movements, romantic nationalism and the spread of general education. Secondly, there were structural factors : the growth of democratic institutions and the fact — important in connection with democracy — that the three Belgian sociological minorities could reckon on a demographic majority (23). So three emancipation movements pushed on from the 19th century : a freethinking first, a labourers afterwards, and a Flemish at last.

The result now is, that the first obtained about fifty-fifty positions, while the other two are still proceeding on a quite advanced, irreversible emancipation. These developments led to counter-movements and organisations of the majorities and to a real institutionalization of the antitheses. The defense mechanisms of the majorities and the wish of the minorities to consolidate the conquered positions gave rise to a form of vertical institutional pluralism (« verzuiling » in Dutch what means « pillar-formation ») (24) i.e. a tendency towards organisation of all life-activities into the circle of one's own opinions. This tendency had most effects in the ideological dimension, but

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(22) See: M.M. GORDON, Assimilation in American Life. New York, 1964:

D. M., *De verkiezingen van het individualisme. Van verbroken pakten naar nieuwe solidariteitsvormen. In: De Maand, 8* (1965), p. 327. With references to Max SCHELER, *Vom Umsturz der Werte;* H. DE MAN, *De psychologie van het socialisme;* Irwin L. CHILD, *The second generation in conflict.*

J.S. ROUCEK, *Op. cit.,* pp. 111-115.

F. VAN MECHELEN, *Op. cit.,* pp. 64-70.

J. THURLINGS, *Op. cit.*

R. DAHRENDORF, *Op. cit.*

(23) For the Flemish-Francophone relations see on this point: R. CLIQUET, *On the differential population development of the Flemings and the Walloons and its influence on the Flemish-Walloon relations.* In: *Homo, 11* (1960), pp. 67-88.

(24) See: J.M.G. THURLINGS, *Vertical pluralism in the Netherlands.* Lecture held at the Sociological Institute of the University of Lund, which in an interesting way pays attention to minority-majority relationships and institutional pluralism.

For Belgium, see on this matter:

L. APOSTEL and M. BOTS, *Op. cit.,*

J. KRUITHOF, *Op. cit.,* J. VAN HOUTTE, *Op. cit.,* and Val. R. LORWIN, « Conflits et compromis... », *Op. cit.*

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works in the two other dimensions too. But the Belgian situation is very complex, as we will see. By the criss-crossing of the three dimensions, notwithstanding the constant strivings of the six conflict-groups to make their own network of organisations as closed, as exclusive for other influences and as complete as possible, the six « pillars » never reach a closed achievement, so that — in the Belgian situation — one could better speak of poles than of pillars or columns.

Perhaps, one gets the most fixed image of column-formation when looking at their partial crystallization around the three major political parties (25), but here too continuously, the basic conflicts create cleavages and the conflict-groups cause withdrawal of support.

4. We have to continue on this theme by underlining that the most important fact revealed by our analysis of the Belgian conflict-structures is that they cross-cut completely one another (26). They mark the whole social field, so that nearly every individual and primary group is defined by a combination of three features : one out of each conflict-dimension. If one takes the bimodal distributions for granted and doesn't take into account the order of value-intensity of each feature, there exist eight combinations (27), so that — to take the example of Robert A. Dahl — individual A, B, C, D, etc. might be :

A : pro-labor, anticlerical, Walloon (for Francophone)
B : pro-labor, catholic, Walloon
C : pro-property, anticlerical, Walloon
D : pro-labor, catholic, Flemish, etc.

The effects of the emancipation-movements partly contributed to the low coincidence between the different minorities, respectively majorities (28).

As to the secondary groups on the meso- and macro-level, most of them are characterized or divided by some of these features. A lot of them are really built on one, two or three of these characteristics and belong to one or more of the conflict-poles, we spoke about. It is important however to note that the three dimensions have not the same importance for every individual or group nor on every moment. Although the three conflicts were all of first importance for political

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(25) See: Val.R. LORWIN, *Conflits et compromis..., Op. cit.*

(26) What means in the terminology of R. Dahl, that they have a low coincidence. See: R. DAHL, *Op. cit.*, pp. 376-377.

(27) R. DAHL, *Op. cit.*, p. 377.

(28) See: J.M.G. THURLINGS, *Vertical pluralism... Op. cit.*, with reference to DAVIS, GARDNER and GARDNER's, *Deep South*, for the relations between horizontal and vertical pluralism.

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life in the period considered, they were seldom focal at the same rate on the same moment and never for all individuals and groups together (29).

The nuclei of the poles are formed by people, for whom the feature in question has a pronounced priority, and they try to actualize this priority in their domain of recruitment of the social field. The groups and individuals belonging to a pole can be ranged, starting from the nucleus, according to the importance given to his values. One could use here the image of expanding, concentric circles of diminishing intensity. Mostly the impact of the other conflict dimensions grows as a person or group is more removed from the centre. Yet as everybody in the field is marked by three features, the whole pole and to some extent even the nucleus, are always divided by the two other conflict lines, with the consequence that there are four subdivisions in each pole, which are the same on the opposite side, as one can see in table I.

TABLE I

Subdivisions in the Belgian conflictual poles

Catholic	*Free-thinking*
Catholic. — Progress. — Flemish.	*Free-thinking.* — Progress. — Flemish.
Catholic. — Progress. — Francoph.	*Free-thinking.* — Progress. — Francoph.
Catholic. — Conserv. — Flemish.	*Free-thinking.* — Conserv. — Flemish.
Catholic. — Conserv. — Francoph.	*Free-thinking.* — Conserv. — Francoph.
Progressive	*Conservative*
Cath. — *Progressive.* — Flemish.	Cath. — *Conservative.* — Flemish.
Cath. — *Progressive.* — Francoph.	Cath. — *Conservative.* — Francophone.
Free-think. — *Progressive.* — Flem.	Free-think. — *Conservative.* — Flem.
Free-think. — *Progressive.* — Fr.	Free-think. — *Conservative.* — Franc.
Flemish	*Francophone*
Cath. — Progressive. — *Flemish.*	Cath. — Progressive. — *Francophone.*
Cath. — Conservative. — *Flemish.*	Cath. — Conservative. — *Francophone.*
Free-think. — Progress. — *Flemish.*	Free-think. — Progress. — *Francoph.*
Free-think. — Conserv. — *Flemish.*	Free-think. — Cons. — *Francophone.*

No wonder that there are remarkable parallelisms between the structures of the opposite poles, as they are split up by the same cleavages.

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(29) See: R. DAHL, *Op. cit.*, pp. 378-379 on salience or intensity, and D. EASTON, *Op. cit.*, p. 117, on the restrictions one actualized issue puts on the range of attention in the political system.

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Nevertheless important differences are induced by the fact that the respective weights of each subdivision are seldom identic on both sides.

A result of this situation is that only one time out of four, a political enemy is this on every important matter. Twice he is an ally in one area, and once even in the two other conflicts.

Between the poles of the different dimensions exist strong ties too, as always two subdivisions are identic, abstraction made of the priorities of the values.

Many groups are built on different poles and create bridges between them, by which they gear into each other. These « bridges » are on the same time object of competition between the poles.

Before we can speak about the political institutionalization of this system, we should first look at the main hypotheses that can throw some light on this situation.

III. MAIN HYPOTHESES

1. The first hypothesis coming to the mind here is that cross-cutting cleavages and affiliations keep the conflicts in check. The idea stems from Simmel, but was formulated very sharply by Ross as follows : « A society, therefore, which is riven by a dozen oppositions along lines running in every direction, may actually be in less danger of being torn with violence or falling to pieces, than one split just along one line. For each new cleavage contributes to narrow the cross clefts, so that one might say that society is sewn together by its inner conflicts » (30).

Forgotten for years, this hypothesis was rediscovered by the American political scientists, who thought of it as of « overlapping memberships », « conflicting identifications » and « cross-pressures » (31). That is to say that they have seen it mainly on and from the micro-level (32). From their point of view however, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between cross-pressures, impelling for a different choice of the alternatives in a single conflict-dimension, and the pressures resulting from a competition of cross-cutting conflicts.

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(30) Edward A. ROSS, *The principles of sociology*. New York, 1920, p. 164.

(31) R.A. DAHL, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

(32) Robert E. LANE, *Political life*. New York, 1965, pp. 197-203. S.M. LIPSET, *Political man*. London, 1960, pp. 203-216.

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The matter is formulated again in more general terms by L.A. Coser : « One safeguard against the conflict disrupting the consensual basis of the relationship, is contained in the social structure itself : it is provided by the institutionalization and tolerance of conflict... ».

« In groups comprising individuals who participate only segmentally, conflict is less likely to be disruptive. Such groups are likely to experience a multiplicity of conflicts. This in itself tends to constitute a check against the breakdown of consensus : the energies of group members are mobilized in many directions and hence will not concentrate on one conflict cutting through the group. Moreover, where occasions for hostility are not permitted to accumulate and conflict is allowed to occur wherever a resolution of tension seems to be indicated, such a conflict is likely to remain focused primarily on the condition which led to its outbreak and not to revive blocked hostility ; in this way, the conflict is limited to the facts of the case... »

« The multiple group affiliations of individuals makes them participate in various group conflicts so that their total personalities are not involved in any single one of them. Thus segmental participation in a multiplicity of conflicts constitutes a balancing mechanism within the structure (33).»

The anthropologist Max Gluckman too stressed the checking effects on conflicts from affiliations in cross-cutting structures. He paid much attention to the interceding role of the partners of the dimension not involved in the conflict (34).

Finally an entirely structural approach of this hypothesis was made by Peter Blau (35) : he is mainly interested here in the effects that the dynamics in the substructures have on the large social structure (36). He sees very clear as to the consequences : « The cross pressures of multigroup affiliations and the cross currents of conflicts that reduce the intensity and violence of opposition forces protect democratic institutions against destruction by heated partisanship, but they simultaneously protect other institutions and the existing power structure from being fundamentally transformed by a radical opposition movement with a firmly committed membership. Overlapping oppositions that deter a major opposition force from gathering strength serve important functions for stable democracy. They do so, however,

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(33) Lewis COSER, *The functions of social conflict*. Glencoe, 1956, pp. 152-154.
(34) Max GLUCKMAN, *Custom and conflict in Africa*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1960.
(35) Peter M. BLAU, *Exchange and power in social life*. New York, 1964, pp. 306-309.
(36) Translated in our terms: the effects of the dynamics on the meso-level for the macro-level.

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at a social cost that is paid by the most oppressed social classes who would benefit from radical changes in the status quo ».

2. *a)* A second hypothesis is that in this situation — as seen from the points of view explained before — intercursive power will be prevalent on integral power. Intercursive power being the one *between* persons and groups, while the integral type supposes power *over* them. This distinction was made by Geiger, while Parsons developed a similar pair of concepts, speaking on « economic » respectively « political » power (37). Bendix used, as analytical dual tendencies, universally applicable on political life, a parallel, though not identical, typology namely « formally instated authority » versus the « customarily or voluntarily established associations typically involving relations based on affinities of ideas and interests ». He refers this to M. Weber : «...Weber wishes to distinguish between social relations (such as the supply-and-demand relations on a market) that are maintained by the reciprocity of expectations, and others that are maintained through orientation toward an exercise of authority. The latter orientation typically involves a belief in the existence of a legitimate order... (and) a legitimate order depends on an organizational structure...» (38).

So, state authority seems to be just one kind of integral power, namely formally institutionalized and legitimate integral power on this level.

The dynamics in an intercursive power situation are — as far as the conflicts in it are institutionalized — characterized by *specific* exchange relations, hence by bargaining, giving rise to a market-like model of interrelations. Integral power on the contrary is marked by more diffuse, more inclusive exchange relations, with hierarchically organised strivings « to control the relational system as a system » (39), what makes that the type of the structures here is more organisation-like (40).

Consequently, to say that in the Belgian meso- and macrosituation discursive power is prevalent, is to say that on the Belgian macro-

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(37) J.A.A. VAN DOORN, *Sociology and the problem of power*. In: *Sociologia Neerlandica, 1* (1963), pp. 16-17. With references to: Theodor GEIGER, *Vorstudien zu einer Soziologie des Rechts*. In: *Acta Jutlandica. Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet,* XIX, 2 (1947), pp. 280-281; and to Talcott PARSONS, *The social system,* Glencoe, 1959, pp. 121-127.

(38) R. BENDIX, *Nation-building and citizenship*. New York, 1964, p. 16.

(39) T. PARSONS, *Op. cit.,* p. 126.

(40) J.A.A. VAN DOORN, *Op. cit., loc. cit.*

T. PARSONS, *Op. cit.,* pp. 121-127.

J.A.A. VAN DOORN and C.J. LAMMERS, *Moderne sociologie*. Utrecht, 1959, pp. 160-167.

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level, political life — turning everywhere on the institutionalization of power and of conflicts — will be marked more, as far as this institutionalization reaches, by specific exchange relations and bargaining. This doesn't mean that hierarchical organisation wouldn't be present. On the contrary, the two types always are interrelated, suppose each other and feed each other. This is certainly true in the Western European democracies, where the interrelation and tension between a plebiscitarian state and group-representation based on subsisting or emerging inequalities, maintains the system of representative institutions, as Bendix argues. (41). The turning point between intercursive and integral power seems to be indicated by the specificity of the exchange relations. Indeed, when a group or a coalition obtains the control over power-resources, so important, that they can no more be paid by the other parties with specific exchange, these will have to pay with more diffuse compliance and come under the control of the dominant group.

Here we broach the more recent « power and exchanges » discussions, (42) of which we only will retain the hypotheses that are most promising for our situation. These seem to us to be the ones advanced by Dahlström on the possibility of exchange of power resources between successive games :

1° « The greater the number of issues under consideration, the more the exchange of power resources. »

2° « The more the interest of each participant varies, the more exchange of power resources. »

3° « The smaller the extent to which constituent parts of participants' interests coincide in the different issues, the more exchange of power resources. »

4° « The smaller the extent to which clearly victorious coalitions arise, the more exchange of power resources (43). »

b) A correlate of the first part of this hypothesis will be, that the consensus and legitimacy of the system will be marked by the dominance of intercursive power. Parsons made the point here, as follows : «...extension (of the « economic » power-type) is possible only under relatively rigidly defined conditions which include on the nega-

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(41) R. BENDIX, *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-104.

(42) See: P.M. BLAU, *Op. cit.*

Edmund DAHLSTRÖM, *Exchange, influence and power*. In: *Acta sociologica, 9* (1966), pp. 237-284. Alfred KUHN, *The study of society*. London, 1966, pp. 317-389.

(43) E. DAHLSTRÖM, *Op. cit.*, pp. 258-259.

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tive side primilary the « emancipation » of the exchange context from diffuse and particular involvements so that critera of instrumental efficiency may have primacy, and on the positive side the institutionalization of restrictions on resort to means of gaining advantage which would be disruptive of the operation of such an exchange system, notably fraud and force, and the abuse (defined in the requisite functional terms) of the control of organization » (44).

This means that it will be very important here to have a set of formal, juridical rules and institutions, that firstly create a field where the contending groups can meet and formally can make abstraction of « particular involvements » and that secondly, set out the borders and channels for the continueing conflicts. But, as to the types of responses through which political good will may be nurtured (45), the identification with the political community and the significance of common « national » symbols, rituals and holidays (46) will be low, except for the groups that participate the most in the exercise or profits of the integral power. A sense of common interest, the second of Easton's good-will responses, will be the real base of political consensus ; the legitimacy of the regime and of the authorities, Easton's third type, being conditioned by their efficiency to perform a double task (47): First to make room for an optimal gratification of the particular conflicting desires, i.e. to maintain the formal market, we mentioned above. This market will be a first common interest, dictated by living together with all this cross-cutting conflicts : For the minorities it opens a way to emancipation, for the majorities a possibility to make use of their positions and to delay emancipation. Moreover, we should remember that many groups and persons belong to a minority in one respect and to a majority in an other one (48).

A second task will bear upon a second group of interests : these shared by the greatest part of the population. Evidently this is connected with the dominant features of the culture and i.e. — in first instance, as in most Western European countries — a common interest in a further increase of wealth and hence in economic, technical and educational growth. This doesn't mean that there shouldn't be deeplying contests in these domains ; but there may be found a con-

(44) T. PARSONS, *Op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

(45) D. EASTON, *Op. cit.*, p. 276.

(46) S.M. LIPSET, *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

(47) Idem, pp. 77-83.

(48) See: Robert A. DAHL, *A preface to democratic theory*. Chicago, 1956, pp. 104-105.

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sensus to maintain and fortifie what is seen as the bases of wealth. We may look for a political expression of this consensus too.

There will certainly be relations between the two kinds of agreement : first, because economic development fosters political stability (49), protects the power market and rounds off some sharp sides of the conflicts. A second connection is that the prominent pecuniary aspect of the economic solicitudes fits very well with the « economic » type of power distribution (50).

The two interrelated kinds of consensus, but mainly this on the bases of wealth, will afford some opportunities for integral power : To hold the conflicts in their borders supposes some integral power as institutionalized in the use of force by the state ; and as to the economic consensus, it is clear that the exchange positions of a sociological majority in a feature that has priority in the culture, will give this majority some possibilities for the control of the others.

3. As, nevertheless the situation contains to some extent, a separation between political and economic elites, it makes sense to examine — mutatis mutandis — some hypotheses Rossi proposed for communal politics. He « hypothesizes that the three basic strategies used by economic elites in countering the effects of this growth of electoral power will be these :

a) The promotion of nonpartisan electoral systems and of technically neutral administrative agencies ;

b) The intensified proliferation of privately controlled institutions and voluntary civic associations serving as instruments of influence and pressure in conflicts over policies ;

c) The development of (international) interest organizations to influence policies beyond the control of the (national) political elite (51) ».

Yet, we think that such developments, should partly be considered not just as strategies of economic elites, but as features and dynamics of a situation where minorities are allowed on a political power-market.

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(49) S.M. LIPSET, *Op. cit., loc. cit.*, pp. 45-76.

(50) T. PARSONS, *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

(51) Stein ROKKAN, *The comparative study of political participation*. In: Austin RANNEY (Ed.), *Essays on the behavioral study of politics*. Urbana, 1962, p. 87. With reference to: P. ROSSI, « Theory and method in the study of power in the local community ». Paper delivered at the Conference on Metropolitan Leadership, Northwestern University, April 1960.

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IV. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The theoretical considerations above help us to understand that the political institutionalization of conflicts in Belgium has good opportunities : First in the social substructures, because in the given situation the cleavages will institutionalize themselves and balance each other. Secondly in the political superstructures, « a moderate state of conflict (being) in fact another way of defining a legitimate democracy » (52).

1. Some formal features.

By universal equal suffrage and proportional representation the Belgian sociological minorities have the possibility to build political strength, since they can recruit in demographic majorities (53). By this institutions the complicated conflictual relations are reflected in the political structures and to a large extent converted into a power-market. Political parties take a central place in this process of conversion, just as in the general political life (54). This is possible because Parlement has in fact legislative power and the control over the executive (55), so that governments mainly are made and broken by the political parties and in first instance by the directions of these parties (56). The King can be seen as a formal arbiter of the legal institutionalizations and as a symbol of the part of integral state power resulting from political struggle and bargaining.

2. Parties built on conflict poles.

Every Belgian political party is, at least partly, built on one or two of the basic conflicts and divided by the other or others. Two, out of the five parties that play a constant role in Belgian political life, just exist as an extreme political expression of a struggle for emancipation. These are the « Volksunie » (Flemish nationalists) (57) and the

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(52) S.M. LIPSET, *Political man*, p. 83.

(53) The proportions were in 1961-1962 about 55 % Flemish against 45 % Francophones; ± 50 % for structural non-catholics, and 68 % blue and white collar workers.

(54) See: La décision politique... *Op. cit.*, p. 368.

(55) See: H. DE CROO, *Contrôle du gouvernement et pouvoir législatif par les groupes politiques*. In this number.

(56) François PERIN, *Qui a fait et défait les gouvernements (1918-1958)*. In: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 4, 30 janvier 1959; and M. BOEYNAEMS, *The formation of the cabinet*. In this number.

(57) See: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nºs 148, 169, 336 and 345. La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

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communists (58). Their limited positions reduce their scope and the number of their adherents, and as they are in a « structural » opposition (59) — i.e. as they accept neither the actual form of the power market nor the integral power behind it — they are not suited for government. This doesn't mean that they have no functions (in the neutral sense of the term) in the system : the «Volksunie » serves as an efficient electoral pressure group on the Flemish wing of the Catholic party, while the communists represent a part of socialist « Gesinnungsethik » (60). This means that each constantly forces a great party to take their underlying conflictual realities into account.

3. The great parties : two kinds of concerns.

But the three remaining parties — Catholics, Liberals and Socialists — have to take the responsabilities. They seem to know two kinds of usually intermixed concerns, that can be deduced as well from their communications — programs, ideological expositions, propaganda, press, etc. (61) as from their interactions — relations with groups, polls, voting behavior in the Parlement, coalitions and participation in government and so on (62). The first kind are general, consensual concerns, in a different degree common to the three parties : care for the increase of wealth and for the maintenance of the political system. Of course, each party looks at these problems through its own spec-

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(58) See: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nos 197, 198, 228, 206 and 351. *La décision politique..., Op. cit.,* p. 47.

(59) See: M. CLAEYS-VAN HAEGENDOREN, *The opposition in Belgium.* In this number. With reference to R.A. DAHL: *Political oppositions..., Op. cit.*

(60) P.J.A. ter HOEVEN, *Op. cit.,* pp. 10-11. Idem., *Hoofdtrekken van het politieke proces.* In: *Mens en maatschappij* (1959), p. 278; and J. NIEZING, *Inleiding tot de politieke sociologie.* Assen, 1966, p. 111, with reference to Max WEBER, « Politik als Beruf » in: *Politische Schriften,* 1958, p. 396.

(61) See for instance: Comparaison des programmes électoraux du PSC, du PSB et du PLP. *Série documentaire* (du) Centre de Recherche et d'Information socio-politique (CRISP), nos 3 et 4. Bruxelles, 1965. Statuts des parties. *Série documentaire* (du) CRISP, no 6, Bruxelles, 1966.

André PHILIPPART, *Programmes électoraux.* In: *Res Publica, 3* (1961), p. 354.

Roger CLAUSSE, *Presse, radio et télévision belges dans la campagne électorale de mars 1961.* In: *Res Publica, 3* (1961), p. 369.

Victor CRABBE, *La propagande électorale.* In: *Res Publica, 8* (1966), pp. 12-23.

Roger CLAUSSE, *Presse, radio et télévision belges dans la campagne électorale de mai 1965.* In: *Res Publica, 8* (1966), pp. 24-66.

G. VAN DE PUT, *Verkiezingsprogramma's.* In: *Res Publica, 8* (1696), pp. 67-105.

Wilfried DEWACHTER, *De propaganda vertaalt de verkiezingsgestalte van 23 mei 1965.* In: *Res Publica, 8* (1966), pp. 106-127.

(62) See for instance: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nos 14, 83, 98, 110, 125, 160, 202, 205, 217, 223, 235, 236, 237, 248, 250, 280, 281, 288, 308, 312, 313.

Yvo NUYENS, *Pressiegroepen in aktie.* In: *Res Publica, 8,* 1966, p. 336.

Jean LADRIERE, *Introduction à une étude des groupes de pression en Belgique.* In: *Res Publica, 4* (1962), p. 172.

Marcel LALOIRE, *Les partis belges.* In: *Res Publica, 3* (1961), p. 342.

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tacles, and has to spare here too, as much as possible, the sensibilities if not the interests of its voters and each tries to take advantage of this matters, so that there is room for « politics ». Fundamentally, however, the three parties — or at least their directions — agree on these points : They accept, to a different extent to be sure, in a Keynesian optic, but with very few references to a (more organisational) welfare-state ideology, the joint private and public interferences for economic growth and they are anxious for the unitary parlementary regime where they hold such good positions. This can be deduced from their programs (63), as well as from cases like the establishment of a great steel plant near the sea (64), the vote of a law on the preservation of public order (65), the propositions and negotiations for institutional and constitutional changes (66) and others. The other kind of concerns are particular to each party. These are firstly the care for inner organisation, unity and functioning, the tactics of the party and the preparation or keeping up of coalitions, the latter forming still a border-case with the first kind of concerns. Secondly then, there is the representation of the conflictual interests for which the party stands, either by its general orientation and ideology, or by its composition. Table II can help to illustrate the latter.

Yet, the great traditional parties are not to be situated on the very extremes of their conflict-poles. Most of the time they hold positions that allow compromise so that they can bring the conflictual strivings on the political market.

The Christian Social Party (Catholics PSC/CVP) is the only one to be established on one conflictual feature, and so to be divided by the two other conflictual dimensions. Consequently, we find again in this party the four subdivisions we mentioned for the catholic pole (see table I). The basis of its unity is therefore at the same time, the reason of its heterogeneity. Its electorate is for 70 % Flemish, and here the progressive have the majority, so that this subgroup is the largest of the four. The weight of these votes, and of the support of the Christian Labour Union (CSC/ACV) that has 75 % of its mem-

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(63) See footnote 61.

(64) See: La création d'un complexe sidérurgique à Zelzate. Sidemar. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nº 124, 1961. Le projet de complexe sidérurgique à Zelzate: réactions d'opinion et de groupes. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nº 127, 1961.
La décision politique... *Op. cit.,* pp. 287-317.

(65) See: Les projets gouvernementaux sur le « maintien de l'ordre ». *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nos 171 et 177. La situation actuelle dans le PSB et le problème de sa discipline interne. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nos 202 et 205, 1963.
Theo LUYKX, *Politieke geschiedenis van België.* Brussel, 1964, p. 480.
La décision politique..., pp. 120-127.

(66) See: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP,* nos 135, 207, 217, 223, 235, 236, 280, 281.

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TABLE II

Distribution of the electorate of the great parties by linguistic region (67)

	Election 1961	Election 1965
PSB/BSP (Socialists)		
Flemish districts (%)	44.08	48.26
Walloon districts (%)	41.28	39.63
Brussels (%)	14.39	11.79
German districts (%)	0.25	0.32
	100.00	100.00
PSC/CVP (Catholics)		
Flemish districts (%)	66.89	70.30
Walloon districts (%)	23.38	21.21
Brussels (%)	8.57	7.23
German districts (%)	1.16	1.26
	100.00	100.00
PLP/PVV (Liberals)		
Flemish districts (%)	51.16	42.31
Walloon districts (%)	30.70	37.44
Brussels (%)	17.52	19.64
German districts (%)	0.62	0.61
	100.00	100.00

bers in the Flemish region (68), made from the old conservative, Francophone catholic party by a still continuing inner struggle (69) a more Flemish oriented party of the centre. The Francophone votes are recruited for the greatest part in more conservative circles. Yet the coincidence is not complete ; the fourfold division remains : there exists a catholic Francophone minority of pronounced progressives, related to the Walloon sections of the Christian Labour Union, and there are Flemish conservatives, to be found in the « Verbond voor Christelijke Werkgevers » (League of the Christian Employers) and the « Nationaal Christelijk Middenstandsverbond » (National Christian League of the Middle-Classes).

The Belgian Socialist Party (PSB/BSP) defends the interests of the employed and of the anticlerical, free-thinking movement. So it is built on two conflict-poles, sharing the former with the progressive

(67) From: Les élections législatives du 23 mai 1965. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 288 (1965), p. 23.

(68) Structures et évolution du « monde catholique », *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
Marcel LALOIRE, *Les partis...*, *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

(69) See for instance: Jean LADRIERE, *Introduction...*, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.
Les polls préparatoires aux élections législatives du 26 mars 1961. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 109 (1961).

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catholics, the latter with the Liberals. It is divided by the Flemish-Francophone antithesis, coinciding partly with a right-left cleavage; as the left, anti-unitary, hence « structural » (70) opposition in the party finds its main support in some Walloon federations of the general socialist labour union (FGTB/ABVV). This union has an outstanding influence on the party, but both are dominated by a moderate and unitary coalition of (Francophone) Brussels, Flemish and some Walloon members. In this situation less attention goes to Flemish grievances than to the Walloon threat for the unity.

The Liberal Party — conservative and anticlerical — changed in 1961 its name into « Party of Liberty and Progress » (PLP/PVV) and opened its ranks for catholics. This was a conclusion from the lessening importance of the clerical-anticlerical antithesis after the « school pact » (1958) and the growing impact of the socio-economic and ethnic-cultural conflicts as demonstrated in the great strike (1960-1961). It was a conclusion that proved to be very right. The PLP/PVV, recruiting, and in the old dominant « bourgeoisie », almost French-speaking, even in the Flanders, and in the lower middle-classes, Flemish to some extent, and with strong positions in Francophone Brussels, is divided by the ethnic cleavage, but with priority for the « Francophone » strivings. This party forsters of course a strong unitary ideology.

4. Relations between parties and groups and their effects on the former.

There is some evidence that the three « great » parties structurally are built on organisations and groups of the meso-level pertaining to the conflictual poles, and that they possess in these poles what they consider as their « own domain » (71). But, just as « horizontally » on the meso-level, there don't exist formal relations between the different groups in the conflict poles and action is coordinated informally or by organisms « ad hoc » (72), so this formal independance exists even « vertically » between the parties and their conflictual background (73). The reason is the same for the two cases : both parties

(70) See footnote 59.

(71) See footnote 62 and: J. GERARD-LIBOIS, *Les organisations sociales et les élections*. In: *Res Publica, 3* (1961), p. 350.

(72) Good examples of coordination on this level are given by Y. NUYENS, *op. cit.*, p. 345. See also: *Le Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nos 278 (Le Vlaams Aktie Komitee) and 319 (La coordination entre les mouvements wallons).

(73) See: La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, pp. 58 et 376.

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and groups are bound and attracted in many directions (74). Moreover this gives them a margin for bargaining. Of course, some coordination is necessary. For the Catholics, where the heterogeneity is the greatest and coordination the most necessary but most difficult too, this coordination seems — for the general politics — to be the task of an informal but powerful group of directors of different organisms (75). The coordination of the political action of the different socialist organisations is more overtly institutionalized on different levels, but seems to be less constant. It is carried on by the « Action commune » (76).

Clearly there is a current « vertical » exchange of support against favourable decisions, protection, positions and grants between the conflictual groups and institutions and the traditional parties. As far as it should be possible to make these problems operational, more research on this matter would be very interesting, especially to look for points where imbalances and diffuseness of the exchange indicate the forming of integral power. But, by the relative independance and mobility of the groups there are not just vertical exchanges, but there is even vertical competition, when two groups ask priority in a party for different conflicts, as for instance for the social and the anticlerical strivings in the socialist party. There exist conflicts along these lines too : A first type are the struggles for influence or dominance between opposite groups in a party, as between the Flemish and Francophone wings, or between the conservatives and the progressives in the PSC/CVP. A second type of inner conflict, with a very pronounced « vertical » aspect, is caused by the fact that the borderline between the universal, consensual concerns and the particular conflictual ones, runs through the three « great » parties. This fact — that these two kinds of orientation meet in each of the three parties — is one of the keys of the institutionalization. Concretely it means that the direction of each party will spend a good deal of its time, partly to find compromises between competing and conflicting aims, partly to reconcile these strivings with the requirements for the functioning of the political and economical systems. They have to do so in order to save respectively the unity of their party and its actual or possible participation in government. The directions of the three traditional parties together, bear indeed to a large extent the responsibility for the functioning of the political and even the governmental system, and so indirectly for the part of integral power of the state. A

(74) In the same sense: Y. NUYENS, *Op. cit.*, p. 344.
(75) Jean LADRIERE, *Op. cit.*, p. 184. La décision politique. *Op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.
(76) Idem, and: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 248.

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good example of such a type of inner conflict, is the one between the direction of the socialist party and some leftist, federalist Walloon sections of the party and especially of the labour union. On some moments, as for instance by the preparation of a law on the preservation of public order (77), it seems to have caused very strong tensions on the whole hierarchical line : Tensions between the socialist ministers and the direction of the party, between the latter and the representatives concerned and so down to the base, with growing universal concerns upward and growing particular concerns downward.

All these vertical pressures result partly in a kind of internal « horizontal » exchange and compromise in each party, dictated by the need for inner unity. By his heterogeneous composition the Catholic Party develops a more constant activity in this direction (78) and it is possible here to exchange concessions related to different lines of interest, for instance : the Flemish progressives can pay support for a Flemish issue by some concessions to the conservative side. That each « national » party has to make inner compromises under the pressure of the social reality however, is illustrated by the resolutions almost simultaneously proclaimed by the three parties in 1963 on Flemish-Francophone relations and institutional reforms (79). Here, and still more on the — again simultaneous — congresses two years later on, where the three parties tried to resolve their inner problems (80), it became obvious to what extent the inner unity of the traditional parties and the unity of the country are interrelated.

5. Relations between the great parties.

As to the general « horizontal » exchange on the political macro-level, the most important feature of the constellation is that normally not any party has an absolute majority, (see table III) so that coalitions are the usual way of government (81).

This has the effect that governments are always split by one cleavage more than their constituting parties separately, what brings the conflicts and their balance-mechanisms to some extent upon this level and

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(77) See footnote 65.

(78) See: La décision politique..., p. 29.

(79) Idem., pp. 122-126, *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nos 212, 217, 223, 235-237, 280-281.

(80) Idem., nos 308, 312, 313.

(81) There is one exception: the Catholic party got once, in exceptional circumstances in the midst of the « royal affair », the majority of the seats in both Chambers, by a polarization in the ideological dimension, and the support of some non-catholic royalists together with a Flemish solidarity with his politics in the question.

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TABLE III

Percentages of votes for the House of Representatives, 1958, 1961, 1965

Linguistic region :	Flemish			Walloon			Brussels			Belgium		
Parties	1958	1961	1965	1958	1961	1965	1958	1961	1965	1958	1961	1965
Communists	0.11	0.99	1.73	4.55	6.47	10.59	2.73	3.55	5.65	1.89	3.08	5.02
Socialists (without cartel in 1958)	27.76	29.72	24.70	46.84	47.10	35.70	42.90	41.62	26.25	35.79	36.72	28.28
Socialist-Liberal cartel	2.27	—	—	2.67	—	—	—	—	—	2.10	—	—
Liberals (without cartel in 1958)	9.78	11.58	16.56	10.46	11.73	25.79	18.20	17.02	33.44	11.05	12.33	21.62
Catholics	56.55	50.92	43.84	34.22	30.12	23.28	33.51	28.01	19.63	46.50	41.47	34.44
Flemish nationalists	3.40	6.03	11.56	—	—	—	1.07	1.64	2.38	1.98	3.46	6.70
Others (mainly Walloon and Francophone parties)	0.13	0.78	1.60	1.26	4.51	4.60	1.59	8.14	12.68	0.69	2.94	3.92
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP, nº 288 (1965).

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certainly increases the exchange possibilities to which their institutionalization leads. However the main point of compromise and exchange lays between the three national parties on a parlementary and even more on a sub-parlementary level (82). Nearly every great issue, as there were for instance the royal affair, the school issue, the Congo crisis, the problem of the preservation of public order and the revision of the constitution, is treated by special conferences or « round tables » of the three parties. For some matters — for example for the ethnic-cultural relations and for the « school pact » — there are more or less permanent tripartite commissions, while a good deal of meetings, traditional or otherwise, from the regular commissions of the Chambers to purely informal contacts, seem to play a constant role here (83). Their common feature is that they have always some margin for bargaining, even for the oppositional party. Some compromises on opposite matters, however, may be inspired — more than by pure exchange — by a common interest in the maintenance of the system. (Or of the government, if a coalition is in question). One could call this an exchange of « negative » concessions.

On the other hand, there are, in an expanding economy, when state revenue increases, for some matters possibilities for a general compromise on the distribution of new grants and positions, i.e. for an exchange of positive concessions. But for other issues these advantages have less importance. For instance, as Val Lorwin quotes : « More money has made the school pact acceptable to Catholic and public institutions. Money helps to meet regional economic demands. But it can do little to solve the linguistic demands and counter-demands » (84).

Most current « horizontal » exchange occurs between the partners of a governmental coalition, always doubled by a part of negative bargaining by the opposition party (85). As there are in the postwar period no clearly victorious coalitions (86), and as to some extent there exist divergent interests, that always have a different weight for the three parties, it seems plausible to look here, along the hypothesis of Dahlström (see above), for some amount of specific exchange. Yet

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(82) La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, p. 368.

(83) See especially: H. DE CROO, *Contrôle..., Op. cit.* (In this number).

(84) Val. R. LORWIN, *Belgium..., Op. cit.*, p. 176.

(85) Idem., p. 181.

(86) From September 1944 till June 1967 Belgium got following types of government for the indicated total number of months: Catholics + Socialists: 85; Socialists + Liberals: 68,5 (19,5 + communists); Liberals + Catholics: 53; Catholics: 51; tripartite: 10 months (7 + communists).

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the possibilities of this exchange will change with the type of coalition. We shall specify this a little for the two-party coalitions, that are the « normal » ones :

As to the Catholics and the Socialists there is not a single issue on which the two parties can agree with the general consent of their important subgroups, and besides their priorities are very different. So a high degree of exchange can be expected. We can think here of the alternation of « Flemish » and « social » decisions during the first period (1961-1963) of the government Lefèvre-Spaak, but theoretically we could look also for an exchange of catholic against progressive, free-thinking against Flemish or moderately conservative, Francophone (Walloon) against catholic or against moderately conservative advantages.

There is agreement on more points between Liberals and Socialists, they just are divided on the important socio-economic issue. There is not a great amount of exchange to be expected here. The possibility exists that concessions in a progressive direction will be paid on some moments by the socialists with a disproportional part of positions and grants for the liberals (87), in order to avoid debts and hence compliance.

Between the Liberals and the Catholics the situation is about the same as between the latter and the socialists : 2×3 combinations of exchange are theoretically possible. However, as the anticlerical aspect lost some interest for the liberals, since 1961, there remain four main types of exchange to be looked for : catholic-Francophone, catholic-conservative, Francophone-moderately progressive and conservative-Flemish. Besides exist of course — as in every coalition — the possibilities of an exchange of positive and negative concessions. It is to be remarked that the Liberals may have results as well in positive as in negative bargaining, that exceed their voting strength (see table III) not only by the influence of their supporting groups but by their « position power » (88) as the necessary third.

An interesting indicator for this coalition exchange, as well for its content as for the impact and control the parties have on it, is the « governmental declaration », each new government presents to the

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(87) A little indication in this direction could be the fact that in the period considered, liberals got 47 % of the minister- portfolios from these that they had to share with the socialists, as against only 40 % in coalitions with the catholics.

(88) See: E. DAHLSTRÖM, *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

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Chambers, as a kind of contract giving the main overt stipulations of the transaction.

6. Plausibility of the hypothesis 2 and 3.

As we say that there are indications that the Public Service is marked by this situation, i.e. that there exists a distribution of the important positions between the three « national » parties, but that the administration has no leading but mainly a technical function in the system (89), and as we look on the other hand to the development of the Euro-market, where the economic powers escape from the national political and labour-union pressures, then we can conclude that our second and third hypothesis (see above) fits enough into the general political institutionalization of Belgium, to make probable the fertility of a systematic empirical research along these lines.

7. Effects of the balance of conflicts.

What remains is only to look how political institutionalization is in general influenced by and influences itself the balance mechanisms of the cross-cutting conflicts, i.e. we have to view the effects of the dynamics, proposed by our first hypothesis on and from this level.

We indicated above as the gist of the institutionalization, the fact that the six conflict poles and the eight categories to which they give rise, are represented in a moderate way by three parties, that are thrown, by the play of the coalitions, on each other's power resources, and have a common interest in the maintenance of the system. They represent each a combination of majority's and minority's movements, what allows, by exchange, a gradual emancipation of the minorities. The oldest conflicts (90) seem to be most institutionalized : The ideological antithesis marked deeply the three political parties, and dominated Belgian political life in the first part (i.e. till 1958) of the period considered, notwithstanding the fact that on a national level the free-thinking emancipation secured about its ends. The socio-economic conflict too helped to shape the Belgian political parties, but by the unity of the Catholic party an entire political polarization on this issue is impossible. The Flemish-Francophone cleavage is the least institutionalized : none of the great parties are built on it, it divides them all. The catholic and the socialist party look after the Flemish,

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(89) See: La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, p. 370.

(90) See: M. CLAEYS-VAN HAEGENDOREN, *Op. cit.* (In this number).

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respectively Walloon, interests, because they are obliged to do so by the weight of their adherents in this regions (See tables II and III). Inner institutionalization of this antithesis is at the expense of the unity of the party, hence is reduced to a minimum. By the recognition of a Flemish and a Francophone wing, the Catholic Party formally had to make most concessions here, while the Socialists did this to a still lesser degree and the Liberals not at all. This lack of institutionalization is one of the reasons why conflicts in this dimension now and then tend to become violent, searching for other channels where the political ones fail. Obviously there were moments that the traditional parties had hardly any control on these movements, as was the case for the Walloon part in the great strike of 1960-1961, for the Flemish marches on Brussels and Antwerp (1961, 1962, 1963) and the petition organised in 1963 by the « Collège exécutif de Wallonie » (1963) (91).

In general the « national » parties try however to keep the different conflicts within certain limits by legal arrangements, defining directly or indirectly the allowed domains and weapons for the struggles, and as well the protections and means for emancipation of the minorities, as — almost impliedly — the remaining possibilities for the majorities.

The balancing mechanisms developed by the cross-cutting of the conflicts come here to the aid of the parties. These dynamics are to be found mainly on the meso-level, just as the conflicts are. Their slackening effects are due mainly to the concurrence between the different dimensions : As many groups are built on two or three poles, when an increased tension polarizes a dimension, the first movement of these groups is in the direction of the polarization. However, the poles from the other conflict dimensions to which they belong will consider this as a loss of strength and will react to enhance their impact on these groups, in order that they would give priority to their problems. A good example of such voluntary associations, bound and attracted in different directions, are the three great Flemish cultural foundations : Davidsfonds, Willemsfonds and Vermeylenfonds (92) with, respectively a Catholic, Liberal and Socialist tendency, indebted as well to their parties and the poles on which these are based, as to the Flemish interests, and constantly moving between these different attractions.

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(91) La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-108 and 136-142. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nos 91, 113, 212, 278, 319.

(92) See: Les fondations culturelles flamandes: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no 342 (1966).

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So, whole net-works of these « braking bridges » can be indicated between the poles (93), and the better the latter gear into each other, the better the conflict balance functions. Some of these groups are very important as for instance the two great trade unions (94), internally divided between their common progressive concerns and their different ideological commitments, and besides closely related, the one to the Catholic, the other to the Socialist party. One sees that the three traditional parties play an outstanding role in these dynamics, as a kind of superbridges assuring the close interlocking of the poles on the political macro-level and influencing the balance mechanisms by pressures on the meso-level. Beside these braking mechanisms work even on the political level self : the lesser a conflict is institutionalized (see above), the more it is bound up here with other interests. So Walloon claims in the PSB are countered with appeals on Socialist unity, Flemish demands in the CVP with references to Catholic solidarity, while progressives and conservatives to some extent neutralize each other, as well in the Catholic party as in every possible coalition.

If the three parties contribute in this way to a constant reduction of the polarizations (95) they also contribute to the lasting of the conflicts : They institutionalize the cleavages by the « vertical exchange » we mentioned above, each party trying, for good reasons, to procure legal recognition, positions and grants for the groups and structures on which it is founded. A good deal of Belgian private, particularistic associations, structures for education and social welfare, are in this way State-aided and have their direct entries in diverse State-organisms. At some moments the « national » parties foster even the conflicts self, sometimes unintentionally, but sometimes deliberately. This may be as well by calculated self-interest, for instance to win votes, as under the pressure of the situation, for instance, when the dynamics on the meso-level threaten to pass them by. The maintenance of the system asks this enduring tension between the care for unity and the stimulation of conflict : On the one side the parties are concerned in a certain degree of tension if not conflict, because they gather support from discontents and desires crystallized in diverse groups, that are able by their a-political nature or to obtain a broad participation or to afford some special — for instance economic or

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(93) See: A. VAN DEN BRANDE, *Op. cit.*

(94) See: Le taux de syndicalisation. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 244 (1964).

(95) See: La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, p. 383.

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financial — aid (96). On the other side, conflicts can not go beyond a critical range without endangering the positions of the traditional parties.

The way, the parties will influence the conflicts, depends on the situation : Of course, the party in the opposition will have some interest in a conflict under its control by which it may win support and usually can divide the governing coalition, as normally the conflict line will cross the coalition, to some extent. There is one exception to this latter rule : i.e. for the conflicts in the ideological dimension under a Socialist-Liberal government or when the Catholic party governs alone. Tensions on the meso-level in this dimension will be easily taken over and even intensified on the political level, because they are so pronouncedly institutionalized here and can be polarized entirely. So, this antithesis was very persistent in Belgian political life, and dominated the latter after the last worldwar until 1958, pushing aside the socio-economic and ethnic-cultural conflicts. However, by the cross-cutting structures, the equilibrium of forces and the necessity of further living together, each struggle ends in a compromise. The frustrations, resulting from the latter, sometimes tend to start conflicts in an other dimension. The identification — mainly by the largest subgroup in a pole — of the different conflict features by which it is marked, contributes to these developments.

So when the royal affair terminated, the undeceived Flemish catholics, identified largely their being catholics with their being Flemish. This furthered a revival of the Flemish movement, braked again by the ideological school-issue. When the ideological antithesis loses interest on the meso- and micro-level however, as was the case after the « school pact » (1958) — a compromise dictated by a political stalemate situation — then the two other conflicts have free scope. So, immediately after the school pact, the catholic-liberal government had to settle with social troubles and the Flemish resistance to the language census (97). But these conflicts cannot lead to an entire polarization on the political level. Hence they will be more pronounced on the meso-level and tend more to violence because they don't always find an adequate expression in politics. A good example is the great strike (1960-1961) against the catholic-liberal package-deal, called

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(96) Idem, p. 371-374.

(97) See: Theo LUYKX, *Op. cit.*, pp. 470-472.
La décision politique..., *Op. cit.*, p. 99.
P.M.G. LEVY, *La querelle du recencement*, Bruxelles, 1966.

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« Loi unique/Eenheidswet », « an omnibus economic retrenchment bill after the loss of the Congo » (98).

This struggle showed clearly in a short time the working of the balance of conflicts : The political opposition of the Socialist Party to the « Loi unique » was used by some Walloon federations of the socialist labour-union to start a general strike, against the will of the national leaders of party and union. So it showed from the very outset identifications between the progressive and the Walloon and free-thinking features, reinforced by the refusal of the Catholic union to go on strike, an by the lack of enthusiasm of the Flemish socialists. The Socialist Party tried to get political advantage from the movement but meanwhile to bring it on legal ways. Growing isolation and identifications encited the strikers to threaten the bases of the Belgian consensus : the structures of state and economy, the public order and even the industrial potential. This on its turn enhanced the negative reactions, and the strike petered out. This frustration made that the conflict turned entirely over into the Walloon-Flemish dimension, what led to the foundatioin of the « Mouvement Populaire Wallon » (99). This very progressive and federalist movement is the main support of the minority group in the Socialist Party, believing in structural opposition.

During the socialist-catholic government Lefèvre-Spaak (1961-1965) the liberal opposition stimulated the conservative and Francophone (mainly Brussels) conflict poles. This government tried to solve the different problems at the same time in a moderate way. So doing, it polarized simultaneously the two conflict dimensions in the four directions. This diminished to some extent the intensity of each conflict separately, but reduced also the moderate base on which the government was founded. The elections of 1965 (See table III) confirmed this and especially the Catholic Party, exposed to a loss of votes in the four (or in this case : three of the four) polarized directions, fell off. This was also partly due to a long-term reason : the lessening importance self of ideological matters and the fact that in this way the liberal party took over a part of the catholic electorate.

The negative effects of cross-pressures on individual participation are known. So, obligatory voting is not an accident in Belgium. An index for fluctuations in political participation is mainly to be found in blanco votes and party affiliations. There seem to be two causes of

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(98) Val. R. LORWIN, *Belgium..., Op. cit.*, p. 171.

(99) See: La décision politique... *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-108.
V. FÉAUX, *Cinq semaines de lutte sociale*. Bruxelles, 1963.

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non-participation in the Belgian conflict balance : The first are the frustrations by the compromises, but these effects seem to be for the greater part obviated by the identifications of different features and the shifting of interest into other conflict-dimensions. Much more important seem to be the incertitudes, caused by role-conflicts, due to a simultaneous polarization of different dimensions (100).

The general effects of the balance of conflicts seem to be — as Blau stated — to «... protect democratic institutions... but... simultaneously... other institutions and the existing power structure.. at a social cost that is paid by the most oppressed social classes...». The many frustrations of these slackened dynamics, especially for the poorest and for the most extreme groups, together with some disequilibrium in the political institutionalization — either by a total polarization on this level, or by a lack of representation of the conflict - cause at times an excessive flare-up of the struggle, as was the case for the royal affair, the school issue, the great strike and the fixation of the Language Frontier.

8. The integral power behind the market.

We shall conclude this chapter by saying a few words of integral power. Minorities as well as majorities participate indirectly in the first, the formal kind of integral power, i.e. they take part via the three great parties in the excercise of state authority. Though there are some common interests and activities for the leading circles of the great parties and pressure-groups, there always stay the cleavages on which they rely. The second kind, the informal integral power, influences the first and is to be found mainly in the two remaining, and partly overlapping, majority-groups : the capital-owning employers and the Francophones. Yet the three converge in Brussels : Brussels is at the same time the capital of a unitary, moderately centralized state, the capital of Belgian economic life, mainly tertiary, with the highest level of wealth (101) and education (102) of the country, housing the seats of the greatest part of the important Belgian com-

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(100) The percentage of blanco votes augmented from 4,96 % in 1958 to 7,12 % in 1965.

(101) See: Bijdragen tot de studie van de ruimtelijke welvaartsverschillen in België. Leuven, 1963.

(102) See: L. COETSIER, *Problemen gesteld door de bevolking van universitair en middelbaar onderwijs*. Gent, 1959.

Idem: *De actuele deelname van beide taalgroepen aan het Belgisch opleidingswezen en de maatschappelijke gevolgen ervan*. Gent, 1951.

L. COETSIER en E. VAN STEENKISTE, *Derde raming betreffende hoger univertair en niet-universitair, secundair algemeen vormend en technisch onderwijs*. Gent, 1964.

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panies ; and the capital of Francophone Belgium, although it is historically a Flemish town and still to some extent bilingual (103). So, Brussels became the natural basis of integral power. The kind of consensus prevailing here, typically is a patriotic unitary we-feeling, nowhere else to be found in the country in this degree.

So we obtain an other phenomenon : a growing cleavage between discursive and integral power, what increases the vertical tensions in the « national » parties, responsible for both (See above). Characteristic for this situation are the Walloon and Flemish strivings for federalism (104) and the reinforcement of unitary Brussels Liberalism (See table III). Both have some real bases : The federalists can point to a growing consciousness in this direction and to some degree of factual federalization on diverse levels (105) up to a kind of ashamed admission by the governments of the dual character of the country even in economic matters. A good example of the latter, is the equilibrium pursued in the regional repartition of public works and aids for economic development (106). And the identification of the Brussels Francophone conservatives with unitary integral power has good reasons too, as we showed above. For the Walloons this is a very annoying situation : Where the Flanders got a well-integrated self-consciousness by their minority position, this was never, to the same extent, the case for the Walloons (107) : As long as Belgium was officially a French-speaking country (instead of a bilingual one, as it is now) and Wallonia was prosperous, there was little problem, but with Flemish emancipation, Walloon relative decrease of economic growth and the threat with political minorization, the problems arose : A complete identification — especially in the social, economic and political domains — with the indeed mainly Francophone but unitary and « integral » Brussels was no more possible. This is very poignant, Brussels being the greatest Francophone city of Belgium.

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(103) See: H. FAYAT, *Het Brusselse vraagstuk*. Brussel, 1966.
M.P. HERREMANS, *Le fait bruxellois. Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 224, 226-227 (1963-1964).
L. LINDEMANS, *Het vraagstuk Brussel uit Vlaams oogpunt*. Brussel, s.d.
G. KINT, *Het Nederlanstalig onderwijs in de Brusselse agglomeratie*, Brussel, 1966.
(104) See: W. HOUTMAN, *Vlaamse en Waalse documenten over Federalisme*. Schepdaal, 1963.
Tableau synthétique des projets de fédéralisme de 1931, à nos jours. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nº 129 (1961).
M.P. HERREMANS, *Bref historique des tentatives de réforme du régime unitaire en Belgique*. Idem, nº 135 (1962).
(105) See: L. CLAES, *The process of federalization in Belgium*. In: *Delta*, (1963-1964), pp. 43-52.
(106) See: *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, nºs 317, 324, 327, 329-330, 356.
(107) See: Val. R. LORWIN, *Belgium..., Op. cit.*, p. 174.

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V. CONCLUSION

In general we can say that the proposed hypotheses are suited to the Belgian political situation and may be expected to be good tools for a systematic analysis.

Moreover some refinements of these hypotheses could be drawn from the reconnaissance done. Especially the distinction of the effects of the balance of conflicts on three levels seems to be useful. So we could hypothesize :

1. When tension and conflict increase in one direction, it will decrease in the others, because :

a) On the meso-level, where the conflict as well as the balance dynamics will be relatively greater as the institutionalization on the political macro-level is lesser, many groups dividing their interest between different poles, will shift attention in one direction, withdrawing support from the other conflict poles.

b) On the micro-level, the energy and the attention of the individuals in the social field will be mobilised in this direction.

c) The political superstructures will spend time and power in the actual conflict, at the expense of the others. The national party in the opposition will try — within the allowed range — to stimulate conflicts, the government will normally try to appease them by exchanges and compromises. Exception is made for the case where an entire institutional polarization on this level is possible and even the government may be obliged to participate to some extent in the conflict. Where the conflicts cross-cut on this level, they will give rise to a more constant reduction of the tensions.

1 *bis*. (Inversion) When the consensus increases in one dimension, conflict and tension will increase in the others.

2. The developments described under 1, will give rise to reactions :

a) On the meso-level the conflict poles, that are not involved in the conflict, will try again to take control of their groups in order to restore their strenght. They will ask priority for their own interests by these groups, by the political parties and by the individuals in the social field. They will propose compromises — as seen from their own optics — to settle the actual conflict.

b) These compromises will result in frustrations on the micro-level, that will be the greater as the individuals would be more involved in

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the conflict. The appeals of the different poles will cause role-conflicts, resulting in non-participation, that will increase with the number and the intensity of the diverse polarizations.

c) The political parties will be obliged, and for their unity and for the maintenance of the political system, and by the reactions on the other levels, to make search for resolutions, and to give again attention to other matters. The latter may be the motive for a conflict in an other dimension.

3. The more a homogeneous subgroup is important in a conflict-pole, the more it will tend — when there is a confliict in this dimension — to appeal also to the other feature(s) by which it is characterized, urging its members to identify these features This identification may enhance for a time the energies of the subgroup, but soon will meet resistance in the own pole as well as in other concerned poles. This will lead to new frustrations that may cause a swing-over of priority to an other conflict dimension.

Finally, we should hypothesize as follows, a relation between the balance of conflicts and consensus :

When there is a conflict in a dimension, the rejection in this dimension of the general consensus of the society will be greater, the more the individuals and groups considered take extreme positions, the more they are isolated and/or in the minority, and the more the dimension is polarized. On the contrary in the other dimensions, with the growth of this polarization, the consensus will be stressed more, as the individuals or groups have a more dominant position in their own dimension and/or participate to a larger extent in the integral power of the total system.

We hope that by all this, we were able to demonstrate, on the one side, that the Belgian political reality is a very interesting one in connection with some important sociological themes, and on the other side that these themes may be powerful instruments for a better understanding of this reality.

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