A Short History of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg

Foreword

The official name of Holland is the Netherlands. North and South Holland are two of its provinces, covering the western coastal regions. This is the wealthiest part of the country, has the great commercial cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and the capital, The Hague, and the term “Holland” is in general used to denote the whole of the modern Netherlands. In this history it is often so used, for clarity, because Belgium for a long time was part of the Netherlands.

Belgium did not have a separate existence as Belgium until 1830. For the sake of clarity, again, the term “Belgium” has often been used before that - meaning the land which is now Belgium.

Where the whole area is referred to, in the earlier part of the history, the term “Low Countries” has normally been used.

To avoid a number of digressions in the text on the history of Luxembourg, this has been written, separately as an Appendix.

This short history has been compiled from the study of a number of works, including W.L.Langer's “Encyclopedia of World History", the Encyclopedia Britannica, H.A.L.Fisher's “History of Europe", "Belgium" by Margot Lyon, “The Dutch” by Ann Hoffman.

Chapter 1. The Low Countries until A.D.200 : Celts, Batavians, Frisians, Romans, Franks.

When Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in the 6th decade B.C. northern Gaul was inhabited by a Celtic tribe to whom Caesar gave the name Belgae. They were subdued by Caesar in 57 B.C., (Many Belgae had crossed to Britain and formed kingdoms in conjunction with their kindred Celts there - one of Caesar's reasons for invading Britain in 55 and 54 B.C.)

To the north of Gaul the Low Countries were occupied by two Germanic tribes - the Batavians and the Frisians. The Batavians inhabited the southern part of what is now the Netherlands, and the Frisians stretched along the northern coastal region from the mouth of the Rhine to the Ems. Towards the end of the first century B.C. these tribes became allies or tributaries of Rome. The Batavians provided some of the most renowned fighters for the Roman armies.

In the first half of the first century A.D. there were two Frisian revolts; and about A.D.50 Roman troops were withdrawn behind a line of forts built along the southern bank of the Rhine, which became the boundary of the Empire. In about A.D. 70 a formidable Batavian revolt was crushed.

For several centuries after this the Low Countries, except for Frisia, remained part of the Roman Empire. Roman civilisation and Roman roads stimulated commerce and industry – iron, mining, stone quarying, pottery glazing, metal work - and cities developed from Roman camps at Utrecht, Nijmegen, Maastricht, Tournai.

From about A.D.300 onwards further Germanic migrations started to penetrate into the western Roman provinces, chief of the new invaders being the Franks. For another century and a half, until the final Roman withdrawal in 445, the Low Countries were still officially part of the Roman Empire; but from the beginning of the 5th century the Franks were firmly established there, and were given by the Romans the job of defending the border regions. The Franks, like the Romans, failed to conquer the Frisians in the north.

Following the Roman withdrawal the Franks advanced southwards. Clovis, King of the Franks 481-511, moved south from the Frankish capital Tournai and established an empire covering the whole of France, with Paris as his new capital. Clovis adopted the Roman Catholic faith in 496, but in his dominions Christianity remained a superficial veneer over the old pagan religious.

From these early movements of peoples the main linguistic mad racial divisions of present-day Holland and Belgium are derived. In the north the tall, blond Frisians remained outside the Frankish domains - and still consider themselves a race apart*. The Batavians, strongly built, and also fair-skinned, did not remain a separate entity, but were absorbed, partly by the Frisians and partly by the Franks of the southern Netherlands. And in the north-eastern Netherlands the smaller, darker inhabitants are largely of Saxon descent.

Northern Belgium - which in the 8th century came to be called Flanders - had only been lightly occupied by the Romans, and had been peopled and developed by the

Franks. The people - later known as Flemings - spoke, and still do speak, a Germanic language (Flemish) akin to Dutch. But the pre-Roman Celtic inhabitants of southern Belgium had been more thoroughly Romanised, and the Franks who moved south into this area adopted the Latinised language of Roman Gaul - which became French. This linguistic division in Belgium remains to-day. The Flemings of the north speak Flemish, and the southerners, known as Walloons, speak French.

*The Frisian language is spoken in present-day Friesland, and is recognised as an official language as well as Dutch.

Chapter 2. The Empire of the Franks.

The descendants of Clovis (the Merovingian kings) held the throne of the Frankish Empire until the middle of the 8th century; but after Clovis they were undistinguished. Due to their weakness the empire virtually split into two in the middle of the 6th century the West Franks of Neustria, the forerunner of France, and the East Franks of Austrasia, which included the Low Countries apart from Frisia.

With the decay of the Merovingian line, power in Austrasia gradually passed into the hands of a court official, the Mayor of the Palace, a function which in the 7th century became hereditary. Pippin I, of Landen in eastern Brabant, became Mayor of the Palace and the real ruler of Austrasia in 622, and founded the Carolingian line. His grand-son Pippin II, of Herstal (near Liege in the Meuse valley), conquered Neustria in 687 and reunited the empire.

Pippin's son, Charles Martel (Mayor 714-741), further enhanced the military prestige of the Franks. His greatest victory was over an invading Arab army at Tours; but of more local interest to the Low Countries was his defeat of the Frisians, who had penetrated into the Rhine delta. They were driven back across the Rhine, and Utrecht was incorporated in the empire. Their defeat also completed, by force, the conversion of the Frisians to Christianity, a work which had been continuing peacefully during the first half of the 8th century under two Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Willibrod and Boniface, assisted by the Frankish kings. Willibrod was rewarded by being created Bishop of Utrecht, which office he was succeeded by Boniface. (Boniface, whose main life's work was the evangelisation of Germany, eventually met a martyr's death at the hands of recalcitrant Frisians.)

During the Merovingian period life in the Low Countries was mainly agricultural, though there were some industries - metal-work and pottery - and the towns of the Roman period survived.

Charles Martell’s son, Pippin the Short, with the approval of the Pope deposed the last Merovingian king, and bequeathed to his son Charles (later to be known as Charlemagne) the legal as well as the actual throne of the Kingdom of the Franks.

Charlemagne, in the course of 53 campaigns against enemies of the Christian world, extended his empire to include all Germans, and firmly established the Roman faith in western and central Europe. In 800 he was crowned Emperor by the Pope, thus reviving the western Roman Empire. As well as his military achievements he restored an intellectual life to western Europe, which had been eclipsed with the Roman collapse.

In the Low Countries Charlemagne's influence was felt in many ways. He finally subjected the Frisians and the Saxons, and the whole area was pacified. He developed a rudimentary administrative organisation, and laid the foundation of a feudal system. He also contributed to economic development with the beginning of the Flanders wool industry. Though his capital was at Aachen in Germany he often lived at Herstal (the home of his great grand-father Pippin II) and other places in the southern Low Countries, and also at Nijmigen in Holland where he built a palace.

It was unlikely that Charlemagne's vast empire could survive as an entity without his dominating personality to control it; and the process of disintegration was accelerated on the death of his only son and successor, Louis the Pious, by the Frankish custom for a ruler to divide his possessions between his sons. Louis had three sons, who engaged in civil war over the partition. The settlement - the Treaty of Verdun in 843 - gave Charles the Bold what was substantially to become mediaeval France, and Louis the German that part of the Carolingian Empire (except for Frisia) which lay east of the Rhine. Between the two, a long thin "Middle Kingdom" stretching from Italy to the mouth of the Rhine went to Lothair. The Low Countries, except for Flanders, were part of this Middle Kingdom, or Lotharingia. Flanders was included in the western (French) Kingdom of Charles the Bald.

Lotharingia was soon further divided; and after many vicissitudes the Low Countries (excluding Flanders) eventually, in 925, became part of the German Kingdom, now ruled by the Saxon Henry the Fowler. (His son, Otto the Great, was crowned Roman Emperor by the Pope, thus founding the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which survived until abolished by Napoleon.)

These dynastic changes were probably of no great interest to the bulk of the inhabitants of the Low Countries, who struggled to earn a living from the land, handicapped by the encroachment of the sea and, - during the 8th and 9th centuries - by the devastating raids of the Vikings. Resistance to the Vikings was provided by the great landowners, such as Baldwin Iron-Arm who built the fortified castle of Ghent and established himself as the first Count of Flanders in 862.

Chapter 3. The Feudal Period (10th to 14th Centuries): The Flanders Cloth Industry.

During the 10th and 11th centuries the whole of the Low Countries, except for Frisia where no hereditary ruler was acknowledged, became divided into virtually independent principalities. The Count of Flanders was a powerful vassal of the French king. The various other counts and dukes owed allegiance to the (German) Emperor. Two of the strongest were the Count of Holland and the Bishop of Utrecht.

This "feudal period" lasted for some 500 years; but during this time the feudal system was weakened by a great expansion of trade and industry, and consequent increase in the power of the merchant guilds of the cities. This change was most marked in Flanders and (Flemish) Brabant. By the 13th-14th centuries the cloth industry had made Flanders one of the main commercial centres of Europe, with Bruges - then a port - the chief clearing house for trade. It is estimated that half the population of Flanders then worked in industry, a remarkable circumstance in the Middle Ages. Brussels grew up with the wool industry, and became capital of Brabant. Further cast, Walloon Liege prospered with its iron-works.

In the north (Holland) this growth of the trading and industrial cities came later than in the south (Belgium), but by the 13th and 14th centuries there also cities such as Haarlem were asserting their independence.

From the middle of the 13th century this industrial expansion was accompanied by strikes and revolts of the poorly paid crafts-men against their repressive masters. In 1280 the aristocracy of Flanders had to appeal to the French King for help in suppressing a near-revolution - which left a legacy of Flemish hatred of France. In 1302 at Courtrai the craft workers defeated a French army in the "Battle of the Golden Spurs" and killed every Frenchman who could not speak Flemish. But this triumph was short-lived.

The cloth industry also involved Flanders in the rivalry between France and England. The quality of Flemish cloth had caused such a demand for it that, from the 11th century onwards, wool was imported from England - which further improved the texture of the-cloth - and England and Flanders became economically inter-dependent. This aroused the envy of France, and exacerbated the hostility between her and England. In fact the action of a Flemish brewer who, in 1336, fearing ruin in feudal subjection to France, got Edward III of England to claim the French throne, sparked off the Hundred Years Far between the two countries. In the war Flanders was an ally of England.

In the 14th century industrial unrest, the Hundred Years War - and the Black Death, which ravaged Europe in the middle of the century - caused a decline in trade and generally unsettled conditions in the Low Countries. Then, starting in 1384, the whole area. Except for the northern provinces of Holland, was gradually brought under one rule by the steady acquisition of one after another of the duchies and counties by the Duke of Burgundy, themselves ever increasingly powerful vassals of the French king. This process began when Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, married the daughter of the Count of Flanders – and in 1384 succeeded his father—

in-law as Count. The process was continued throughout the following hundred years by a series of marriages, bequests and cessions resulting from diplomatic pressure.

Chapter 4. The Burgundian Period (1384-1477): Belgium's "Golden Age".

Acquisition by the Duke of Burgundy might have been expected to bring Flanders into the orbit of France; but the opposite happened. The wealth of Flanders - compared with Burgundy - attracted the Dukes. They made their capital at Brussels instead of their native Dijon; and as time went on they became more Flemish and less French.

This situation affected the course e the Hundred Years War, still intermittently in progress. The Burgundians became rivals of the Orleanists for the French throne, and in the war were friendly to England - whose fortunes varied with the degree of that friendship. The martyrdom of Joan of Arc in 1431 inspired and unified the French nation; and the last stage of the war (1435-1453), victorious for the French, followed the transference of Burgundian support to France.

Meanwhile in the Low Countries, and particularly in Belgium, Burgundian rule brought in a "golden age". Under Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy 1419 to 1467, the court at Brussels became one of the most brilliant in Europe. Under his patronage the arts flourished. For a time the Flemings were second only to the Italian cities in painting (led by the Van Eyck brothers), sculpture, architecture, music and literature.

At the same time the economy prospered. Philip made a trade agreement with England, and established Antwerp as a terminus for the Atlantic trade. (Antwerp gradually replaced Bruges as a port as the sea entrance to the latter silted up.)

Philip also coordinated and centralised the political system of all the provinces and cities under his control by superimposing an Estates General - consisting of nobles, clergy and city representatives - on the old provincial "Estates'. This centralisation incurred the displeasure of the great cities, jealous of their traditional privileges; and their hostility increased under Philip's successor, the rash and impatient Charles the Bold. These troubles led to the sacking of Dinant and the total destruction of Liege by, the Burgundians. But Charles, who had designs on Alsace in furtherance of a dream to revive under Burgundian rule the old Lotharingia as a great nation between France and Germany, was defeated in this aim by the Swiss - and in the war with them was killed, in 1477.

His heiress was his 19 year old daughter Mary, and the Estates General took advantage of the situation presented by the accession of an inexperienced girl. In return for their help they forced Mary to sign the "Great Privilege" restoring all the ancient rights of the provinces, cities and guilds. They also insisted that Mary should marry a husband of their choice - and they chose the Habsburg Maximilian of Austria, son of the Emperor. This choice was fateful for the Low Countries, involving them in the European dynastic struggles of the next three centuries.

Chapter 5. The Habsburgs: The Empire of Charles V: The Reformation : Calvinism.

On Mary's accidental death in 1482 Maximilian became Regent, and their son Philip took over the Burgundian inheritance when Maximilian was elected Emperor in 1493. Maximilian was unsympathetic to the concessions in the Great Privilege, and Philip disregarded them. And the provinces' add cities' resentment was increased by their realisation that they were now only a minor concern of their Habsburg rulers.

The Habsburg possessions were further greatly expanded when Philip's Spanish wife inherited all the Spanish dominions. Their son Charles thus succeeded to the Netherlands, Austria (which he handed over to his brother), Spain, Southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Milan, and the whole of America west of Brazil. And on his grandfather Maximilian's death in 1519 Charles became the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, adding Germany to his domains.

Charles V was a Fleming by birth, and spoke Flemish and French. He was brought up in Flanders by his Aunt Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands. But the Low Countries were only a tiny fraction of his vast possessions; and, though always sympathetic to the people of his homeland, the centre of his power was in Spain, and he gradually became more Spanish in outlook. In his fifty year reign he returned to the Low Countries for only five short periods. For much of his reign he was engaged in wars with Francis of France – wars for which the Low Countries provided a lot of the finance.

Charles added Friesland (Frisia), Utrecht and the other northern Dutch provinces to his empire, thus bringing the whole of the Low Countries under one rule for the first time since the days of Charlemagne. They continued to be well ruled on Charles's behalf by Margaret, and later by Charles's sister Mary. Under them economic prosperity accelerated, and Antwerp became one of the leading cities of Europe, in cultural life and science as well as material well-being. (Mercator, inventor of "Mercator's Projection", was a Flemish geographer of Antwerp of the 16th century.)

Apart from wars Charles had another, and greater, problem to deal with - the Reformation. One of the forerunners of religious criticism and revival was Erasmus, Dutch scholar and humanist, born at Rotterdam in 1466. His writings attained enormous influence throughout Europe. His aim was to introduce a more rational conception of Christian doctrine. Though intensely critical of the abuses in the Church, he remained a Catholic and hoped to reform the Church from within. He did not go along with the teachings of Luther when the latter launched the Protestant Reformation in Germany in 1517. Indeed, he criticised Lutherism just as much as he did the Catholic Church.

Lutheranism appealed strongly to the individualistic Dutch and Flemings, and the Low Countries as a whole resented involvement in and paying for - wars in which they had no interest. In 1538 the city of Ghent refused to pay more subsidies for these wars, and the revolt spread throughout Flanders. Charles suppressed the Revolt, and revoked Ghent's city privileges.

Before this, as upholder of the Catholic faith in his empire, Charles introduced the Inquisition into the Low Countries – though he would probably have preferred Erasmus' doctrine of peaceful reform of the Church. Tens of thousands were executed for heresy; but the stubborn people of the Netherlands continued passive resistance. From about 1540 onwards they adopted the teaching of John Calvin, an intellectual and ascetic Frenchman who started in Geneva a new type of religious society, based on a democratic church and universal theological education. His teaching – that bishops and priests were unnecessary, and that virtue should be practised for its own sake without regard to future rewards – was more stoical and more austere than Luther's; and he added the doctrine of predestination, that some are predestined to salvation while others are doomed to eternal damnation.

Calvinism, as well as taking deep root in the Netherlands, where it formed the basis of the Dutch Reformed Church, spread through the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, founded the Huguenot Church in France, captured some of the German Protestants, became the national religion of Scotland, and later spread to the New England states of America.

Chapter 6. The Rise of the Dutch Republic.

In 1556 Charles V, tired of his imperial labours abdicated. He handed over Spain and the Netherlands (including Belgium) to his son Philip (who was married to the Catholic Queen Mary of England and who now became Philip II of Spain). Philip had little in common with his subjects in the Netherlands, but he appreciated them as a source of revenue. Antwerp was now one of the richest trading cities in the world, and Amsterdam in Holland was fast rising in wealth and importance.

Philip reigned until 1598, but after 1559 he never set foot in the Netherlands, where he delegated the government to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, the daughter of Charles V by a Flemish mistress. As champion of the Catholic Church Philip was determined to eradicate heresy, and on his instructions Margaret and her chief adviser Cardinal Granvelle pursued his policy of religious persecution.

To the people of the Netherlands, proud of their ancient provincial and city privileges, Spanish rule became increasingly abhorrent. To the iniquities of the Inquisition were added the presence of hated Spanish troops and the severe financial drain. And the nobles, who had willingly served Charles V, were now excluded from any participation in the government.

The two most prominent leaders of the nobility were the (Flemish) Count of Egmont and William of Nassau, Prince of Orange. The German-born William had inherited large estates in the Netherlands and also the small principality of Orange in southern France. Brought up as a Lutheran, he had been allowed to take possession of his Dutch estates only on the condition that he became a Catholic and took part in the Habsburg court in Brussels - which he did. Known as William the Silent, through his ability to keep his mouth discreetly shut, he became a favourite of the Emperor Charles V; and in 1559 he was made Governor of the province of Holland by Philip. Egmont, likewise, was appointed Governor of Flanders and Artois.

In 1564 pressure from Egmont and Orange induced Philip to remove Granvelle; but a petition of grievances presented in 1565 by Egmont to the King had little effect, and it was clear that religious persecution would continues The younger nobles, led by the Calvinist Marnix, drew up a document known as the Compromise of Breda, an uncompromising condemnation of the Inquisition. At the same time there was a wild outbreak of Calvinist iconoclasm among the poorer classes, in which statues and paintings all over the country were destroyed. Orange and Egmont tried to moderate this orgy of protest, and helped to restore order. For fear of reprisals many thousands left the country; and Orange himself, an advocate of religious freedom, wisely withdrew to his German estates in Nassau to bide his time. Egmont remained in the Netherlands, and remained loyal to King Philip.

Philip's reaction to these troubles was to send to the Netherlands (in 1567) the ruthless Duke of Alva with a large Spanish army to crush the heretics. In six years of terror (until Alva's recall in 1573) thousands were executed, two of the earliest victims being Egmont and another leading nobleman Count Hoorn, neither of whom were heretics or rebels, but who had tried to mitigate the evils of the Inquisition. Their martyr's death became a national legend in the cause of freedom.

Meanwhile William of Orange, outlawed by King Philip, raised armies with which he hoped to evict the Spaniards from the Netherlands, thus starting the "Eighty Years War" of Independence (1568- 1648). William was no general, and his campaigns against Alva's experienced soldiers were a failure. But Alva needed to raise more money to pay his troops, and to do so imposed a 10% tax on all sales. This blow to the commercial community united them, whatever their creed, against Spain; and although the rebels could not match the Spanish armies in open warfare on land, Dutch ships known as the "Sea Beggars" - harassed the Spaniards with raids and interfered with supplies.

In 1572 Dutch privateers captured the small town of Brill, at the mouth of the Meuse. This success inspired Dutch resistance, under the leadership of William of Orange, who joined the Protestant Church and was recognised by the Dutch as hereditary "Stadholder" or Governor. William's army was defeated at Mookerheide in 1574, but a series of heroic defences of Dutch towns, helped when necessary by the opening of the dykes to flood the land, kept their cause alive. Haarlem and other towns were taker and sacked, but Alkmaar and Leyden held out.

The destruction of Antwerp in 1575 by mutinous Spanish troops, still unpaid, united under William the Catholic south and the Calvinist north in a pact to drive out the Spaniards (the "Pacification" of Ghent 1576). But the Catholic nobles could not stomach the Calvinist extremists, and the country was far from united when the Duke of Parma* arrived with fresh troops from Spain to assist the Governor, Don John of Austria. Parma was a brilliant general and an astute diplomatist. He won adherents in the Walloon provinces and the Catholic nobility; and in 1578 the Spaniards won a crushing victory at Gemblaux, near Brussels.

After Gembloux resistance in the Catholic south gradually petered out, ceasing with Parma's capture of Antwerp in 1584. The southern provinces (Belgium) remained under Spanish rule as the Spanish Netherlands. But in the north the Dutch fought on. In 1579 the seven northern provinces - Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Groningen, Friesland and Overyssell - concluded the "Union of Utrecht", followed in 1581 by a proclamation of independence from Spain. From this time on Holland (The United Provinces) and Belgium (The Spanish Netherlands until 1713) have separate histories. William of Orange abandoned his dream of a united independent Netherlands and continued the struggle as leader of the Protestant north.

In 1584 William was assassinated by a Catholic fanatic, for a reward offered by Spain for William's removal. Dutch fortunes were at a low ebb, and the constitution of the United Provinces, giving sovereign power to each province, was not suited to the conduct of war. But they still commanded the coastal seas, they found in John van Oldenbarnweldt a statesman who for over thirty years guided then with wisdom and tolerance, and the young Maurice of Nassau, who succeeded his father William of Orange as Stadholder, turned out to be a fine soldier. And also some help came from Protestant England.

The English people had always been sympathetic with the Protestants of the Netherlands, many of whom had taken refuge in England. And Queen Elizabeth, hitherto cautious not to provoke war with powerful Spain, was persuaded by the fall of Antwerp to give active assistance to the Dutch. A small army under Earl of Leicester was sent to Holland in 1585. Leicester achieved little, either militarily or diplomatically, and the force withdrew in 1587; but it had taken some of the

pressure off the Dutch. Then came Philip of Spain's decision to invade England. Parma, ordered to join forces with the Armada, had to postpone his campaign in the Netherlands to prepare for this venture. In the event, the Dutch fleet prevented Parma's army from sailing, and the defeat of the Armada (1588) showed that Spain was not invincible.

In the following years Maurice of Nassau also showed that the Spanish armies could be beaten in the open field, and with a series of brilliant victories he drove the Spaniards from all the territories of the United Provinces. This, combined with a great Dutch naval victory over Spain at Gibraltar in 1607, convinced the Spaniards that the Dutch could not be subdued. Unwilling to admit this formally, Spain agreed in 1609 to a twelve year truce. This virtually established the independence of the United Provinces; and though war was resumed in 1621** the Dutch, who by then were all-powerful at sea, were well able to hold their own. Eventually, in 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia (which concluded the Thirty Years War in Europe) recognised the independent Republic of the United Provinces.

* Son of Margaret, Duchess of Parma - who had ceased to be Governor of the Netherlands on Alva's arrival in 1567

** Before and during the truce, groups of English Puritans, in search of freedom to worship as they chose, moved to Holland. One such group settled at Leyden; but after some years, wishing to preserve their English identity, and apprehensive of the result of renewed hostilities between Holland and Spain at the end of the truce, sailed for America in 1620 - the Pilgrim Fathers who founded the New England colonies.

Chapter 7. Holland's "Golden Age"

Long before the Treaty of Westphalia, in the closing years of the 16th century, the Dutch entered a 'golden age". Adventurous Dutchmen sailed-far and wide, usually in search of trade; and the people as a whole took to the sea - Maurice of Nassau's liberating armies consisted largely of Germans, English and Scots.

In the 15th and early 16th centuries the leading nation in overseas exploration, trade, and colonisation was Portugal. In the 16th century Portuguese supremacy was beginning to decline when, in 1580, their royal line died out, and Portugal was united - forcibly - with Spain under Philip II. Philip closed Lisbon, then the chief port for Eastern trade, to the Dutch. This led to a vast expansion of Dutch shipping, which now had to go to the East Indies for the spices which had previously been picked up at Lisbon. The Dutch East India Company was established in 1601 and soon displaced the Portuguese as the dominant power in the East. They founded Batavia in Java, expelled the Portuguese from the Moluccas (the Spice Islands) and Ceylon, and later in the century established themselves in Sumatra.

On their way to the east the Dutch ships called at the Cape of Good Hope, bartering with the native Hottentots for provisions, And in 1652, under Jan van Riebeeck, they formed a permanent garrison there, followed in 1657 by some settlers to farm the land - the first white settlement in South Africa and the nucleus of the Dutch colony there. The Dutch East India Company governed the colony until 1795.

Dutch exploration add colonisation was not confined to the east. Willem Barents made several expeditions in 1594-7 in search of an eastern passage round the north of Asia. He explored Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya, and laid the foundation of Dutch whale and seal fisheries. The Barents Sea is named after him. In 1616 Willem Schouten reached the southernmost point of South America, which he named Cape Horn after his birthplace, Hoorn, in Holland. In 1642-3 Abel Tasman discovered Tasmania, which he named Van Diemen's Land after the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, and reached New Zealand. (Van Diemen's Land was re-named Tasmania by the British in 1856.)

In 1621 the Dutch West India Company was founded. In 1626 it bought Manhattan Island from the native Indians, and founded there the settlement of New Amsterdam. (Staten Island is named after the States General in the Netherlands.) The colony spread into the surrounding districts of what are now New York state, Connecticut, New Jersey and Delaware. In Delaware the Dutch came into conflict with and absorbed a Swedish settlement. By 1655 the whole of this area was controlled by the Dutch.

In South America the Dutch seized Pernambuco in 1623, and made great inroads into Portuguese Brazil; but they were evicted by the Brazilians in the 1650-s.*

With this vast colonial empire, Holland in the middle of the 17th century was the commercial centre of Europe, with Amsterdam pre-eminent in the financial world. Amsterdam had the world's first stock exchange, founded in 1602. Its commercial development was greatly enhanced by the Dutch closure of the Scheldt estuary

(which was in Dutch territory) to foreign shipping, thus killing any competition from Antwerp. This closure was agreed by international treaty.

With a population of little over a million, the Dutch were not only the most prosperous trading nation, but also their craftsmen were among the best in many branches of industry weaving, pottery, diamond cutting, paper making, printing, horticulture.

Simultaneously with this burst of prosperity there was a tremendous flowering of cultural life. The University of Leyden (founded by William the Silent in 1575) led the way in a revival of learning, and many Dutchmen made notable contributions to original thought and science. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) was the founder of the study of international law, and the originator of ideas on justice as between nations and rules for the conduct of war.** Christian Huygens (1629-95) propounded the wave theory of light, discovered the rings of Saturn, and invented the pendulum clock. The anatomist Anthony van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) was the first to study microscopic organisms. The works of the philosopher Spinoza (1632-77), son of a Portuguese Jew who settled in Holland, had a lasting influence on religious thought. (He was a follower of Descartes, the great French philosopher who settled in Holland in order to be free of ecclesiastical interference.)

And also this golden age was the period of the great painters for whom Holland was famous. Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Steen, Hobbema, Ruisdael, and other artists of world renown, all lived during the 17th century.

*The Dutch also colonised Surinam (Dutch Guiana) and some West Indian islands. In Guiana they were followed by the British and the French, and the colonies changed hands several times.

** Grotius supported the views of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (the Latinised form of Jakob Harmensen), who opposed the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Arminianism versus Calvinism grew into a national dispute, and Grotius was imprisoned by Maurice of Nassau. He escaped and settled in France, where he wrote his great work "De Jure Pacis et Belli".

Chapter 8. A Period of Wars: 1650 to 1713.

To go back to the internal political history of Holland in the early part of the 17th century - Maurice of Nassau died in 1625 and was succeeded as Stadholder by his brother Frederick Henry, who ably carried on the war of liberation against Spain. His son and successor, William II, died young in 1650, leaving a void - his son, later William III, was born after his father's death.

Ever since the creation of the United Provinces, the individual provinces - particularly Holland, the most important - had remained jealous of their rights, and they were only loosely politically connected. The hiatus in the Stadholdership on the death of William II gave the opponents of centralization the opportunity to take charge. The States General assumed control, appointing their leader Johan de Witt "Grand Pensionary" and abolishing the Stadholdership. For the next twenty years de Witt, an able statesman and diplomat, guided Dutch policy.

During this twenty years the Dutch fought two naval wars with England. In 1650 it seemed that Holland and Cromwell's England, two leading Protestant nations and both republics, might form a political union - for which there was some negotiation; but rivalry on the sea and in trade was too great a stumbling block. Then, in furtherance of her own carrying trade, England decreed that all goods coming to England must come in English ships or ships of the producing country (the Navigation Act of 1651). This blow at the Dutch near monopoly of the carrying trade led to war in 1652. The two fleets were evenly matched, and the English Admiral Blake had a worthy opponent in Holland's van Tromp (whose victories over Spanish fleets in 1639 had largely contributed to the successful conclusion of the Dutch War of Independence and to the decline of Spain as am imperial power). Most of the sea engagements were indecisive, but England inflicted huge losses on the Dutch merchant fleet; and by a peace treaty in 1654 the Dutch accepted the provisions of the Navigation Act.

Friction between Holland and England, however, went on. There were continual clashes between Dutch and English ships in the East and along the African coast; and by their energy and thrift the Dutch still led in the commercial world and in the colonial field. There was plenty of room for both England and Holland to prosper, but this was not how it appeared to the restoration government of Charles II of England. In 1664 Charles granted the Dutch colony in North America to his brother, the Duke of York. An English fleet sailed into New Amsterdam harbour, and with the assistance of the English colonists defeated the Dutch. New Amsterdam became the English colony of New York. And in the next year England declared war on Holland in Europe.

In this second Anglo-Dutch war the Dutch, under de Ruyter, held the upper hand at sea, culminating in 1667 with the destruction of an English fleet in the Medway and the blockade of the port of London for several days. But England succeeded in negotiating a peace which, while relaxing the terms of the Navigation Act in favour of Holland and ceding Surinam (Dutch Guiana) to her, confirmed the transfer of the Dutch North American colonies to England.

Of more pressing interest to both countries at this time was the rising power of France under Louis XIV, who in 1667 decided that the possession of the Spanish

Netherlands (Belgium) was necessary to French security, and on a flimsy pretext invaded them.

As we have seen, these provinces remained under Spanish rule, as the Spanish Netherlands, when the Dutch declared their independence of Spain in 1581. In the following eighty years or so, while the Dutch were becoming a world power, the Spanish Netherlands remained quiescent. Philip II of Spain, in return for their obedience, restored to the towns and guilds many of their former privileges. This, combined with their loyalty to the Catholic faith kept the hitherto turbulent people docile. In the world of art the Flemish painters Bruegels, Rubers, Van Dyck, Jordaens and Teniers rivalled their Dutch contempories; but apart from this the history of the Spanish Netherlands in this period is uninspiring. In commerce and banking Antwerp's supremacy had passed to Amsterdam.

The French invasion in 1667 started with some easy successes. They quickly captured a string of border towns, including Lille and Douai. England, Holland and Sweden then formed an alliance to check French aggression; but at the same time Charles II made a treaty with Louis XIV (the iniquitous Treaty of Dover 1670) to destroy Holland, split the Netherlands between them, and (a secret provision) to restore Catholicism in England. In pursuance of this treaty Charles, for no ostensible reason, declared war on the Dutch; and the French army overran the Spanish Netherlands and penetrated far into Holland.

In this hour of peril the Dutch States General rejected the policies of the Grand Pensionary de Witt (who was murdered by a mob) and appointed the young William III of Orange to be Stadholder and Commander-in-Chief. Holland, with a population of some 2 ½ million, appeared to have little chance against the naval strength of England and the armies of France, the two nations together having a population of some 25 million. But William halted the French advance by flooding the country, and then, helped by the Empire (Germany) and by Spain, forced the French to retire. Meanwhile on the sea the Dutch fleets held their own against the English, and Protestant sentiment in England forced Charles to abandon the war in 1674. As a further sop to this sentiment Charles consented in 1677 to the marriage of his niece Mary (daughter of the Duke of York, afterwards James II) to William of Orange, who was eager for closer relations with England. Peace between Holland and France was signed in 1678, the Dutch suffering no territorial losses.

The power of France was, however, still in the ascendant; and William of Orange became the main architect of a league of continental Protestant powers (the League of Augsburg) to thwart Louis XIV’s schemes for further French aggrandisement - schemes which still included the acquisition of the Spanish Netherlands. Then, in 1688, the Protestants of England appealed to William to rid them of the Catholic James II. Seizing this opportunity to add England to the League, William accepted, landed with a small army in England, and with virtually no opposition (except in Ireland) the "glorious revolution" succeeded. William and Mary (the legitimate heiress to the English throne after James's deposition and exile in France) became joint sovereigns of England.

This was soon followed by the War of the League of Augsburg (1689-1697) against France, with the Dutch and English, united by William, at last on the same side. William commanded Dutch, English and Scottish troops in a series of battles in the Spanish Netherlands. No great general, he usually lost; but he kept his forces in the field and had some successes, including the storming of the great fortress of Namur

in 1695. Though the French armies bad also had the better of the exchanges in the other theatres of war, the Treaty of Ryswick, which concluded the war in 1697, left things much as they were before, and was a check to French expansion. The main losers were the unfortunate countries in which the war was fought. The inhabitants of the Spanish Netherlands, who took no part in the war, endured the devastation of their land and their cities (Brussels was sacked by the French in 1695) and patiently set about the work of reconstruction. To their sufferings was added the humiliation of having Dutch troops stationed on Belgian, soil; by the "Barrier Treaties" the Dutch were given the right to garrison the chief fortresses in the Span- ish Netherlands as a barrier between France and Holland.

After the Treaty of Ryswick there was an uneasy peace in Europe for four years. Then war broke out again over French claims to the Spanish throne, which would be a disaster from the Dutch point of view as it would give France control of the Spanish Netherlands. The "War of the Spanish Succession" was fought by a "grand alliance" of the maritime nations against France and Spain. The main campaigns were in Germany, Italy and - as usual - the Spanish Netherlands, once more invaded by France.

The foundations of the grand alliance were laid by William III, the English Duke of Marlborough, and the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Heinsius. One of the objects of the alliance was to transfer the rule of the Spanish Netherlands to Austria - which was neither a naval nor commercial danger to Holland and England, and whose interest in the Netherlands would commit the Emperor (the Austrian Habsburg Leopold I) to their defence against France. William died, childless, in 1702, but Dutch participation in the alliance continued under the Grand Pensionary and the States General.

The allies' campaign in the Netherlands was successfully fought under the Duke of Marlborough. In 1706 the Battle of Ramillies (north of Namur) gave them control of most of the Spanish Netherlands. Victories in 1708 at Oudenarde (south of Ghent) And in 1709 at Malplaquet (near the French border) completed the conquest, and after long drawn out negotiations the war closed with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The Spanish Netherlands duly became the Austrian Netherlands (the inhabitants' wishes in the matter not being consulted), and Dutch occupation of the barrier fortresses was confirmed.

The security of Holland against French aggression was thus reinforced. But this long series of wars had taken their toll. The cost had crippled Holland financially. The necessity to concentrate on land operations in the Wars of the League in Augsburg and the Spanish succession had caused the fleet to be neglected, and the English naval supremacy was now unquestioned. The East India Company still prospered, and the South African colony steadily expanded, but the West India Company had been liquidated (in 1674) and Holland's commercial power had passed its peak. The Dutch golden age was over.

Chapter 9. The 18th Century.

The Austrian Netherlands (Belgium).

For nearly eighty years after the Treaty of Utrecht there was peace in the Netherlands, except for one interlude during the War of the Austrian Succession - a war which started in 1740 on the death of the Emperor Charles VI with no male heir. Charles had got agreement from all the leading nations that his daughter Maria Theresa should succeed him; but on his death the temptation to dismember the Austrian Empire while an inexperienced young woman was on the throne was too great. Frederick the Great of Prussia started the onslaught (taking Silesia), and France again invaded the Netherlands.

The Dutch in the barrier fortresses put up no resistance, and an allied, largely English, army was defeated at Fontenoy (near Tournai) in 1745 - after which the English withdrew to deal with the Jacobite rebellion. For three years the Austrian Netherlands were occupied by French troops. But in 1748, neither side in the wider European conflict having gained any decisive advantage, peace was made. France withdrew from the Austrian Netherlands, and Maria Theresa remained on the Austrian throne. (Eight years later a greater European conflict broke out - the Seven Years War between Britain and Prussia on the one hand and France, Austria and Russia on the other, but for once the Netherlands were not involved.)

Apart from this interlude Belgium was reasonably prosperous under Austrian rule. Charles VI respected the traditional rights of his subjects. He also attempted to encourage their trade with the East Indies by the creation of an Ostend Company. However, he had to abandon it through pressure from the other trading nations, including Holland.

For 36 years after the War of the Austrian Succession the Austrian Netherlands were presided over by the easy-going Charles of Lorraine on behalf of the Empress Maria Theresa, his sister-in-law. Maria Theresa, an enlightened despot, succeeded in bringing in some reforms without antagonising Belgian conservatism. She also tried to raise the Austrian Netherlands from intellectual apathy - to the outside world the people appeared ignorant and dull, and the vast majority were illiterate.

Maria Theresa was succeeded in 1780 by Joseph II, who lacked his mother's skill in dealing with the Belgians. Impatient with the ancient system of local privileges, he swept away the traditional and inefficient administrative and judicial arrangements. These efforts at modernisation merely offended the entire population - even though he did also succeed in removing Dutch troops from the barrier forts. Opposition to his measures was not always united; but, led by a Brussels lawyer, Van der Noot, a "Patriotic Committee"* was formed, a volunteer regiment defeated Austrian troops at Turnhout (near Antwerp), and some concessions were won from Joseph. Inspired by the revolution in France (1789), the rebels proclaimed a republic, but this was quickly overthrown by Joseph's successor, the Emperor Leopold II, in 1790, and the revolutionaries were exiled.

The United Provinces (Holland).

Meanwhile Holland in the 18th century, no longer a world power, was still strong commercially, though during the century this strength fell behind that of Britain and France. The bankers were largely in control and a small oligarchy wielded political power, using it to increase their own wealth.

After a lapse of 45 years in the Stadholdership since the death of William III in 1702, William IV of Orange-Nassau, a grand-son of William III's cousin, was proclaimed Stadholder in 1747. He died in 1751 and was succeeded by his three year old son, William V, whose mother (Anne, daughter of George II of England) acted as regent until 1766.

William V was a weak and incompetent ruler, and incurred the growing hostility of the States General, in which there emerged a "Patriot Party", sympathetic to France and opposed to the Anglophile House of Orange - and to the banking fraternity. In 1787 William had to bring in Prussian troops to maintain his authority. This internal struggle in Holland was still unresolved when the armies of revolutionary France took the field.

The "Patriots' had also drawn inspiration from the "Declaration of Independence" by Britain's American colonies; and in 1780, after France and Spain had gone to war with Britain in support of the American Revolution. Holland welcomed Britain's declaration of war on her as well – the immediate cause being Dutch trade with the American Rebels and the Dutch refusal to concede to Britain's right to search ships at sea. The result of her entry into the war was a British blockade of her coast which further weakened the Dutch economy, and the loss of some of the Dutch possessions in the East and West Indies to Britain.

The Dutch South African colony was also vulnerable to British attack, but the French forestalled this possibility by sending a large garrison to help the Dutch defend it if necessary. The Dutch East India Company still governed the colony, but in the early 1790s the Company was on the verge of financial collapse, partly through British and French commercial competition in the East and partly through corruption and inefficiency in South Africa. And the independent farmers (non-Company employees) were becoming increasingly discontent with Company rule.

*Its colours were those of the present-day Belgian flag - black for Brabant, yellow for Flanders, red for Hainaut.

Chapter 10. The Napoleonic Interlude: The Union of Holland and Belgium.

In 1792 Revolutionary France declared war on Imperial Austria. Urged on by the Belgian revolutionaries who had been exiled in 1790 the French armies quickly conquered the Austrian Netherlands. France then declared the Scheldt open to commerce (see earlier regarding its closure), and declared war on Holland - and Britain and Spain - thus adding these countries to the coalition of Austria and Prussia against her. In 1793 the Austrians recaptured Brussels, -but at the end of the year a British-Austrian army was driven back, and in 1794 the Battle of Fleurus (near Charleroi) gave France complete control of the Austrian Netherlands. She kept them for the next twenty years.

In 1795 a French army under General Pichegru overran Holland, and captured the Dutch fleet while it was frozen in the ice. William V fled to England, and the French re-named the United Provinces “Batavian Republic”, modelled on revolutionary France and governed by the “Patriots” under French influence. In 1806 Napoleon abolished the Batavian Republic and made it the Kingdom of Holland, with his brother Louis as king. Louis tried to rule for the benefit of his Dutch subjects. But their commercial life was ruined by Napoleon's "Continental System" (barring British ships from continental ports under his control) and Britain's counter-blockage of Europe. In 1810 Louis abdicated, whereupon the vassal state was incorporated in the French Empire.

For nearly twenty years from 1795 Holland was necessarily an ally of France in her wars against the various European coalitions. For Holland this was unfortunate. Her fleet was virtually destroyed by the British at the Battle of Camperdown (off the Dutch coast) in 1797; and Britain seized the Dutch colonies. At the end of the wars, by the peace settlements of the Congress of Vienna (1815) Britain returned most of these colonies to Holland, but kept Ceylon and also the South African Cape Colony for which she paid the Dutch six million pounds in compensation. (In 1795 Britain, fearing that the French would take over Cape Colony and so menace her sea route to India,, had taken it from the Dutch, nominally on behalf of William V. She had returned it to the Batavian Republic in 1802 when peace was temporarily made with France. She had re-occupied the Cape in 1806 on the resumption of war against Napoleon.)

Meanwhile in Belgium the French occupation had at first been welcomed in the Walloon provinces. But the welcome turned to resentment as the French suppressed ancient privileges and conscripted Belgians for service in the French armies. Napoleon appeased them with the restoration of Catholicism as the state religion, and his centralising reforms were passively accepted; and the re-opening of the Scheldt, and access to French markets for their goods, brought about a revival in Belgian industry. But Napoleon offended all Catholics by his treatment of the Pope, whom he deported and imprisoned in 1809; and hostility to the police regime in Belgium increased, particularly in the Flemish provinces where their language was barred for official purposes. By the time of the dissolution of Napoleon's empire, in Belgium only Liege* remained loyal to France; and though there was no national rising some Belgians fought with the allies at the final battle, Waterloo (near Brussels) in 1815. So did the Dutch, who had been inspired to revolt by Napoleon's

defeat at Leipzig in 1813. They recalled William V's son from exile and proclaimed him William I, Sovereign Prince of the Netherlands.

At the Congress of Vienna the victorious powers, aiming to create a strong buffer state against any further French aggression, agreed to Britain's proposal for a Kingdom of the Netherlands under William I of Orange, uniting Holland and Belgium and part of Luxembourg.**

Neither the Dutch nor the Belgians were very keen on this union. The Dutch rather despised the subservient attitude of their neighbours in the last two centuries, while Catholic Belgium was unhappy at being joined to Calvinist Holland. However, William undertook to give full civil and religious freedom to all his subjects, and the union made economic sense. William in fact did much to foster Belgian industry, and for a time it seemed that the forced alliance of the two countries might work.

*Liege for many centuries was an independent ecclesiastical principality. In the 1790s its citizens took a prominent part in welcoming the French revolutionaries, and evicted the last Prince- Bishop. In 1795 it was amalgamated to Belgium by the French.

** For the history of Luxembourg see Appendix 1.

Chapter 11. Belgium Becomes Independent

William I, for all his good intentions, was an autocratic ruler, and Belgian grievances accumulated. Though they outnumbered the Dutch by over a million, they only had equal representation is the States General Assembly; Dutch was made the official language in all except the Walloon districts of Belgium; and Dutchmen were predominant in the administration, in the banks, and in the schools.

In 1828 the two Belgian parties, the Catholics (or Clericals) and the Liberals, united after William had offended them both - the Catholics by excluding a concordat with the Pope giving him the right to veto the election of bishops, and the Liberals by a law restricting the freedom of the press. Together they petitioned William for redress of their grievances.

William played for time, but is 1830 action by the discontented Belgians was precipitated by events is France. Here, the Bourbon royal lime had been restored after Napoleon's downfall, and Charles X, coming to the throne in 1824, attempted to restore also the old autocratic position of the monarchy. The result was that he was deposed in 1830 by the French liberals in a "bloodless revolution", and Louis Philippe put ox the throne as a constitutional king. This - and French agents - fomented unrest in Belgium. The Liberals were willing to accept administrative separation from Holland under the Dutch crown; but rioting started in Brussels, and the rebels (young bourgeois, industrial workers and peasants) held out against Dutch troops in three days of street fighting. The Dutch withdrew, and the rebels quickly got control of the whole country except Antwerp. A provisional government proclaimed the independence of Belgium, and a National Congress set about the writing of a constitution.

William then appealed to the five great European powers (Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and France) to uphold the settlement of the Congress of Vienna - a united Holland and Belgium. Russia, Austria and Prussia were not sympathetic to Belgium independence, but their interests and energies were soon diverted by a rebellion in Poland, and the Belgian crisis was virtually left to Britain and France to resolve. The negotiations whish followed were conducted mainly by Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, and Talleyrand, French ambassador in London. Palmerston, a lover of liberty, saw no reason why the terms of the Congress of Vienna should be upheld indefinitely, and favoured Belgian independence. France would have liked to obtain territorial acquisitions at the expense of Belgium, but Louis Philippe and Talleyrand did not wish to quarrel with England, and followed Palmerston's lead. In December 1830 the five powers acknowledged Belgium's independence – and bound themselves to honour her perpetual neutrality.

This was far from being the end of the matter. The Belgians rejected the proposed frontiers - and then offered their throne to a son of Louis Philippe. Under pressure from Palmerston, Louis Philippe refused the offer; and, after internal wrangling in Belgium between Orangists (supporters of some sort of link with Holland) and the pro-French party, a "neutral" candidate was put forward - Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Leopold, a well known international figure, had for long lived in England*, and had Palmerston's backing. In June 1831 he was elected King by the Belgian Congress.

Leopold, a liberal-minded, sagacious and able man, worked out a settlement for the separation of Belgium from Holland. This, however, was not accepted by King William of Holland. He sent a Dutch army into Belgium, whereupon the French also invaded the country and forced the Dutch to retire - and them were themselves persuaded to withdraw only after a threat from Britain, Prussia add Russia. King William still refused to evacuate Antwerp, but the Dutch were finally expelled by Anglo-French co-operation (1833). It took another six years before a settlement agreeable to all interested nations was reached. In 1839 the Treaty of London finally established Belgian independence, including the guarantee of perpetual neutrality.

By the treaty Belgium was gives part of Luxembourg (the present-day province of Luxembourg in Belgium), and Limburg was divided between Holland and Belgium.

The newly worked out Constitution was regarded as a model of Liberal ideals, guaranteeing all civil liberties, including freedom of worship, of speech and of the press. Legislation was the prerogative of Parliament (consisting of a Senate and a Chamber of Representatives – the latter elected on a suffrage restricted by property qualifications): but the (hereditary) monarch had some powers of veto and delay, and also he was the commander of the armed forces and had the right to make treaties and declare war. Leopold made full use of his constitutional rights, and seta precedent of royal authority. This precedent was followed by his successors, who played a more active part in the nation’s affairs than other constitutional sovereigns. Leopold also pleased France by marrying Louis Philippe’s daughter.

*Leopold had married in 1816 Princess Charlotte, at that time heiress to the English throne, and he had become a British subject. He had continued to live in England after Charlotte’s early death in 1817. His sister married the Duke of Kent, and was Queen Victoria’s mother.

Chapter 12. Domestic Affairs in 19th Century

Holland

The Belgian revolution roused the Dutch from a condition of, perhaps, self-satisfied apathy; and William I became unpopular because of his opposition to reforms pressed upon him by the Liberals. As a result he abdicated in 1840.

His successor, William II, influenced by the revolutionary wave which passed through Europe in 1848, accepted a revision of the constitution reducing the power of the king and increasing that of parliament. He died in 1849, and under his successor William III, a benevolent ruler who reigned until 1890, this movement towards parliamentary democracy continued. Liberal governments gradually extended the franchise (which became universal is 1917) and in the 1870s social legislation started. The first Socialist was elected to parliament in 1887.

Apart from this democratic progress, polities were dominated by religious issues, particularly in education. The Liberals, representing mainly the commercial classes, established free secular schools, while the Churches wished to retain religious control. When in power, a Calvinist/Catholic political coalition provided financial assistance for denominational schools.

But while united on this subject, there was a sharp division between Protestants and Catholics, who in everyday matters lived lives apart. Two hundred years earlier, when Holland gained her independence from Catholic Spain, the Catholics of Holland (nearly all in the southern provinces) were barrel from government service - even though they formed a majority of the population. And this sort of discrimination persisted into quite recent times. (In the middle of the 19th century Roman Catholics formed about a third of take population; but since then, with their greater birth rate, they have increased again to about 40%. With the gradual disappearance of religious discrimination, many Catholics have moved to the northern provinces, while the south still remains a Catholic stronghold .

Within the Protestant Church - the Dutch Reformed Church - some orthodox Calvinists in 1834 seceded from the main body, whose views were influenced by the new liberalism. These separatists now form some 7% of the Dutch population, while some 23% are members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

On the economic front, there was great progress from the middle of the 19th century onwards is agriculture, industry and development of communications.

Belgium.

Leopold I reigned from 1631 to 1865. During the early part of his reign he and the Liberal/Catholic coalition devoted their energies to the consolidation of the new kingdom. By his wisdom and fair-mindedness Leopold, overcame the difficulty of being the Protestant king of a Catholic nation, and ably held the balance between the Liberals and the Catholic Party. The successful outcome of Leopold’s and the coalition's efforts was shown in 1848, when Belgium was one of the few European Nations to be unaffected by the wave of revolutions is thst year.

At about that time the coalition gave way to a two-party system. Until 1844 the Liberals were generally is control of the government. After that the Catholic Party was continuously in power until the outbreak of the First World War. As in Holland one of the main points at issue between the two parties was education - Church (Catholic) schools versus non-Church.

Leopold I was succeeded in 1865 by his son Leopold II. Unlike his father he had the advantage of being brought up a Belgian and a Catholic. Like his father he was an able and strong-willed ruler, and a man of vision. He reigned until 1909, and gave a lead to rapid industrial expansion.

This expansion, centred on Liege and facilitated by extensive coal production, brought Belgium to one of the leading positions in European manufacturing countries but it also brought with it social problems. In the closing decades of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th labour unrest and major strikes were frequent. The Labour Party was founded is 1885, and soon superseded the Liberals as the main opposition party to the Catholics. One of their demands was for universal male suffrage - which was conceded by the Catholic government in 1893, but with a system of extra votes based on age, income and education. (The system of one man one vote was eventually adopted in 1913, though delayed by the First World War from being put into effect until 1919.) During Leopold II's reign the living conditions of the poor were greatly improved by numerous Catholic and Socialist activities - co-operative and benefit societies which provided, amongst other things, milk for babies and seaside holidays for children.

The late 19th century was also a period of cultural revival. Many Belgians gained international repute, including the composer Cesar Franek (1822-1890), the writer Charles de Coster (1827-79). the poet Emile Verhaehen (1855-.1916), and the dramatist and philosopher (and Nobel Prize winner) Maurice Maeterlink (1862-1949).

Many of the leading writers in French were Flemings, and at the same time there was a remarkable revival is the Flemish language. When the Dutch at the end of the 16th century went on fighting for their independence, while Belgium submitted to continued Spanish rule, the Flemings were cut off from their Dutch co-linguists. They continued to speak Flemish, but it was not taught in the schools, Flemish literature died out, and the language degenerated into a number of local dialects. For over two centuries the rural people of Flanders, poor and ignorant, had no intellectual or political life.

The first signs of revival were under King William I of the Netherlands when he ruled the short-lived union of Holland and Belgium in 1815-1830. Flemish was then introduced into the schools. But when Belgium gained her independence from Holland here was a natural reaction against all things Dutch – and also the educated Flemings preferred to speak French, which had been the language of the administration and the court for centuries.

However, in 1837, Hendrik Conscience of Antwerp (1812-83) started to publish historical novels in Flemish, and inspired by him a powerful movement arose, led by the philologist Jan-Frans Willens, for the recognition of the Flemish language in all aspects of life. The Liberals did not like this idea, thinking that it would pose a Catholic threat to the unity of the country; but the Catholic Party accepted the justice of the Fleming’s claims, and during the last quarter of the century successive

Catholic ministries passed a series of measures on the teaching of Flemish and its use in Flanders in the law courts and the administration. In 1898 Flemish became a second official language in Belgium.

These measures were not welcomed by many French-speaking Walloons, who had for a long time dominated the administration: and the language question became all-pervading and divisive aspect of Belgian politics in the 20th century.

Chapter 13. Foreign Affairs 1839-19

Holland.

For a hundred years after the separation from Beigium, Holland preserved her neutrality in international affairs. The only change was that in 1867 Luxembourg became independent of Holland (see Appendix I - History of Luxembourg), with the King of Holland remaining Grand Duke of Luxembourg; but this link was broken in 1890 when Queen Wilhemina came to the throne, as a woman was barred by Luxembourg law from ruling the Grand Duchy.

Overseas, the Dutch East Indies continued to contribute substantially to Dutch commercial prosperity; but there were several colonial revolts, notably in Java in 1825-30 and 1894-96. In the western hemisphere Dutch rule continued in Surinam (Dutch Guiana) and the Netherlands Antilles (islands in the West Indies, including Curacao).

In South Africa there had been sponsored emigration from Holland after the beginning of the 18th century, and following the loss of the colony to Britain during the Napoleonic Wars Holland took no further political interest there. The surviving links were - and still are - the Afrikaans language, based-on Dutch, spoken by the Afrikaners (South Africans of Dutch descent), and their adherence to the Dutch Reformed Church. In the Anglo-Boer War at the end of the 19th century Holland, like many European countries, was hostile to Britain - but Britain's sea power prevented intervention by any of then. The Boer leader, Kruger who escaped to Europe in an unsuccessful quest for help, settled as an exile in Holland.

In the First World War Holland's neutrality was respected by both sides. Though she took so part in the war she suffered through interference with her trade. After the war the ex-German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, lived in exile in Holland.

Belgium.

Belgium's great adventure overseas in the 19th century was the acquisition of the African Congo. But it was not a national venture; it was a personal one by King Leopold II. This enterprising monarch, whose energies and ambition were restricted in Europe by the boundaries of his little country and by its permanent neutrality, saw the possibilities of central Africa opened up by the explorations of Livingstone, Stanley and others. In 1876 he held an international conference in Brussels to co-ordinate European exploration and suppress the slave trade. An international association was formed, but its activities were largely Belgian; and in 1878 Leopold engaged Stanley to establish trading posts in the Congo area and make treaties with the local African chiefs. Soon the international aspect of the operations evaporated, and Leopold financed the enterprise from his private fortune.

Stanley's activities in the Congo went on for five years; but after European nations, notably France and Portugal, were also interested in this region, and in 1885 a

conference of the powers was held in Berlin to settle their rivalries. This was the one the first moves in the “Scramble for Africa” which in the course of a few years partitioned nearly the whole continent between the European nations. The conference recognised the “Congo Free State” as the personal possession of King Leopold a diplomatic victory for Leopold achieved largely because the great powers considered the king of a small neutral country to be of little consequence.

For some years the colony produced no financial return, and Leopold’s fortune dwindled; but from about 1895 onwards production of ivory and rubber brought in vast profits. Leopold's ways of disciplining the natives were not squeamish, and in 1903 there was an outcry in Britain and the United States against their ill-treatment. The result was that in 1908 the Belgian Government took over the colony, which became the Belgian Congo - a territory about eighty times the size of Belgium. The Government was determined to rule well, and the worst of the abuses were quickly removed.

Leopold died in 1909, and was succeeded by his nephew Albert I, who was to achieve lasting fame as the heroic soldier-king who defied the Germans in the First World War. Belgium's guaranteed neutrality had been threatened during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, but Britain's firmness with both belligerents had prevented that neutrality from being violated. In 1914, however, Germany demanded the right for her armies to cross Belgium into France, and Belgium refusal had no scruples in "tearing up the scrap of paper" guaranteeing Belgian neutrality and invading Belgium, thus bringing Britain into the war against her.

After a valiant defence of Liege the small Belgian army was thrown back, and soon the whole of Belgium was in German hands except for a marrow strip of western Flanders. This narrow strip was held by the Belgian and British armies throughout the next four years of trench warfare - the name of Ypres is forever ingrained in the annals of British, as well an Belgian, military history.

A Belgian government in exile was established in France, while King Albert remained in command of the army. which he led in the final Allied offensive in 1918.

Belgian war casualties, compared with those of other nations, were relatively small; but the battlefield area was devastated and enormous damage was inflicted by the Germans in their last retreat. During their occupation of the country, early German efforts to subdue Belgium morale by terrorism failed in their object and were soon abandoned; but Belgian resistance to German exploitation of her heavy industries led to the removal of plant and some 160,000 workmen to Germany. To undermine this resistance the Germans fostered the grievances of the Flemings against the Walloons. Many Flemings were in fact thinking in terms of separation of the Flemish provinces from the rest of Belgium, or even having links with Holland or Germany; and some of these helped the Germans. But the great majority of Flemings resented German intrusion into Belgian affairs, and preferred to wait till after the war to resume their quarrel with the Walloons.

At the peace conference Belgium tried unsuccessfully to enlarge her territory at the expense of Holland and Luxembourg, but she was given a small German area east of Liege. She was also given a League of Nations mandate over Ruanda and Urundi, part of the old German East Africa adjacent to the Congo. And Belgium’s guaranteed neutrality, which had proved useless in 1914, was abandoned, leaving her free to make military alliances in defence of her security.

Chapter 14. Between the Two World Wars.

After the war Belgium faced the huge task of reconstruction, which was successfully undertaken in spite of financial crises. In Holland there was a great expansion in industry, based on the coal fields of southern Limburg, and in agriculture; and in 1923 the massive operation for the reclamation of tee Zuider Zee was started. (It in expected that it will be completed in about 1980, when the land area of Holland will have been increased by about 7%, and the arable land by 10%.)*

On the political front, both countries were governed by coalitions: Holland usually by the Liberals, Catholics and Calvinists, with the rising Socialists in opposition; Belgium by a Socialist-Catholic coalition. The first Socialist prime minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, headed a coalition in Belgium in 1938. Both countries in the 1930s had trouble with extremists of the right and of the left, particularly is Holland where the National Socialists gained in influence until an electoral setback in 1937.

In Holland the long-standing quarrel between the Liberals and the Churches on education was settled by an agreement on equal status, so far as public expenditure was concerned, for public (state) un-denominational and private denominational schools. (About 70% of Dutch children now - 1970s - go to private schools, about 30% to state schools.)

In Belgium an attempt was made in 1932 to settle finally the language controversy. The country was divided into two by an official language frontier. North of this line were practically the whole of the four Flemish-speaking provinces (West and East Flanders, Antwerp and Limburg) and more than half of Brabant. To the south were the rest of Brabant and the four French-speaking provinces (Hainaut, Namur, Liege and Luxembourg). In the north Flemish was to be used for all administrative purposes (including the army and the law courts) and in the schools. Similarly French in the south. Brussels, the capital, (is Flemish Brabant), was to be bi-lingual. In all schools the first extra language to be taught was to be that of the other region. The settlement, however, failed to eliminate the strained relations between the Flemings and Walloons.

Throughout the period between the two world wars Queen Wilhemina, who was held in great affection and esteem by her people, continued on the Dutch throne. In Belgium, King Albert was unfortunately killed in a mountaineering accident in 1934. He was succeeded by is son Leopold III.

In foreign affairs Holland and Belgium both joined the League of Nations. Holland re-affirmed her neutrality, which made the location there of the Permaanent Court of International Justice acceptable to all nations. It was established at The Hague in 1921. Belgium at first took advantage of her new freedom to form military alliances by signing a pact with France, and then the Locarno Pact with France, Germany, Britain and Italy, guaranteeing existing frontiers. But when Germany denounced this pact in 1936 and re-occupied the Rhineland, Belgium, hoping not to become embroiled in any further conflict between France and Germany, withdrew from her treaty obligations in favour of passive neutrality.

Accordingly both Holland and Belgium remained neutral on the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. But their neutrality was to no avail when Hitler unleashed his western "blitz" on 10th May 1940. Germany this time invaded both Belgium and Holland – the first time that Germans and Dutch opposed each other since the Frankish invasions of the 4th century.

*For centuries the battle with the sea has been am offensive as well as a defensive campaign. As well as preventing farther encroachment, reclamation of land by the draining of lakes started the 16th century.

Chapter 15. The Second World War.

The Dutch army fought valiantly; but confusion and disorganisation was caused by heavy air raids and attacks by airborne forces - Rotterdam was particularly hard hit - and on 14th May Holland capitulated. Queen Wilhemina and the Government escaped to London.

In Belgium the frontier defences were quickly pierced by armoured and airborne forces; and the rapid German advance dislocated the attempts of British and French armies to co-operate with the Belgians. By 26th May most of Belgium had been overrun, the French were out off from the Belgians and the British, and the latter were falling back to the sea at Dunkirk. On 28th May, after eighteen days of gallant fighting, the Belgian army, exhausted and short of supplies, was ordered by King Leopold to surrender. (After this came the British evacuation from Dunkirk and a few weeks later the collapse of France.) The Belgian Government had already left the country; but Leopold decided to ,stay with his people, gave himself up to the Germans, and was interned for the rest of the war, withdrawing completely from public life.

Leopold's actions came in for severe criticism, particularly from the French. However, the charge that he ordered the Belgian surrender without consulting his allies seems to have been unjustified. And his decision to stay in Belgium as a prisoner of the Germans, rather than accompany his ministers to exile, as they tried to persuade him to do, is controversial - and indeed led to a bitter controversy in Belgian after the war.

During the years of German occupation the Belgians and the Dutch suffered severe hardships - forced labour, importation, near starvation. But in both countries widespread and efficient resistance movements were organized. Their activities hindered the German war effort, provided information to the Allies about German defences, and assisted Allied agents in their work and, when necessary, their escape.

Dutchmen and Belgians abroad swelled the Allied forces, and colonial troops from the Belgian Congo took part in the campaigns in East Africa. The Belgian Government in exile also put the considerable material resources of the Congo - metals, rubber, coffee - at the disposal of the Allies. For Holland, however, the entry of Japan into the war on Germany's site in December 1941 was a disaster. The Japanese rapidly overran southeast Asia, taking the Netherlands East Indies in January-March 1942.

The German occupation of Belgium lasted ever four years. In the Allied advance after the Normandy landings is June 19th their armies drove the Germans from Belgium in early September. Holland had to wait longer. A British attempt in September to outflank the German northern defences by an airborne operation to seize the Rhine bridges at Arnhem failed; and fighting continued in Holland until the final German surrender in May 1945.

After the war both countries faced the task of reconstruction, the more so in Holland, which had suffered heavily from flooding of the land and from the dismantling of industry. Apart from this each country had a major problem as a result of the war. Opinion in Belgium was split on the question of King Leopold's return (he

had been removed by the Germans before the Allies liberated Belgium); and the Dutch were faced with the re-conquest of the East Indies from the Indonesian Nationalists, who had co-operated with the Japanese during the war.

The crisis over the Belgian monarchy took six years to settle, during most of which time Leopold was in exile in Switzerland. Of the political parties the Catholics were in favour of his return, and the Liberals less enthusiastically so, while the Socialists and the Communists demanded his abdication. The split was also largely racial, the majority of the Flemings being pro-Leopold and most of the Walloons against him. A referendum in 1950 was indecisive, the Liberals considering the 57% vote for Leopold to be too small. However, a Catholic ministry soon afterwards invited him to return. He did so, but opposition continued - to the point where civil war seemed a possibility; and in 1951 he abdicated, his son Baudouin coming to the throne. Though settled at last, the long dispute had further embittered the perennial feud between Flemings and Walloons.

In the East Indies the Dutch had had trouble before the war. In 1926 Communist revolts in Java and Sumatra were suppressed. After that a movement for independence grew with the formation in 1927 of the Indonesian Nationalist Party led by Dr. Sukarno – who was imprisoned or exiled by the Dutch for most of the time until the Japanese invasion. On the Japanese withdrawal at the end of the war, Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence, and the Dutch were faced with the prospect of having to re-conquer the East Indies by force. After several years of fighting they abandoned the effort, and in 1949 they conceded independence, thus losing their eastern empire which had enriched them for three and a half centuries.

Chapter 16. Since the Second World War: European Co-operation: Flemish-Walloon Rivalry in Belgium.

In 1948 Queen Wilhemina, after 58 years on the Dutchg throne (the first eight as a minor with her mother as Regent), persuaded a reluctant Government to agree to her abdication on the grounds of failing health. She was succeeded by her daughter Juliana, who carried on the modern tradition of a very democratic monarchy, with a minimum of ceremonial. The monarchy has immense popular support, and survived in 1976 a crisis when Prince Bernhard, the Queen's German-born husband, was involved in a financial scandal. (Prince Bernhard played an active role in the war in support of the Allies, helping to organise the Dutch resistance movement. Since the war he had devoted himself, amongst other interests, to the promotion of Holland's trade, and it was these activities which led to the crisis.) The Dutch economy, in fact, expanded fast in the post-war years, in spite of the loss of the East Indies.

The remaining Dutch overseas possessions - Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles - became in 1954 part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with autonomy in their domestic affairs.

In the Congo, Belgium soon encountered difficulties, due to the spread of Black nationalism in Africa. In 1959 an independence movement led by Patrice Lumumba caused general unrest and rioting in the capital - to the dismay of the Belgians, who thought that all was well in the colony. The Belgians had indeed vastly improved the health and standard of living of the Congolese - but had done little towards preparing them to take part in the administration. They now announced that their aim was to lead the Congolese towards independence but they were persuaded by continuing riots, tribal warfare, and near financial collapse to grant independence virtually immediately - in June 1960. A few days after independence the Congolese army mutinied against its white officers. The whole colony was in danger of disintegration, and thousands of Belgians fled from the country. The withdrawal of Belgian civil servants, teachers, doctors etc, brought administrative and social collapse.

For the next eight years conditions in the Congo were chaotic, with strife between rival tribes and factions, including for a time the break-away of the rich copper-producing province of Katanga. United Nations forces tried to restore and maintain order, and the Belgians tried to keep their commercial interests going. Eventually the Congo settled down, and a treaty of friendship was signed with Belgium in 1970. In 1971 the Congo became the Republic of Zaire.

Meanwhile in Europe Belgium and Holland were among the first countries to move towards closer economic and political co-operation. The "Benelux" customs union of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, agreed to by the exiled governments during the war, began to some into force in 1948. All three countries joined the “Council of Europe”, set up in 1949 to achieve “a greater measure of unity between the European nations”; and all three were founder members of the European Economic Community (the “Common Market”) when it was formed in 1957 and on the world scene all were founder members of the United Nations. Belgium was prominent in the negotiations setting up these organisations; and Paul-Henri Spaak (who was in nearly every Belgian government for over thirty years from 1935 onwards) was the first president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 and

the first president of the European Consultative Assembly (organ of the Council of Europe) in 1949. Brussels became the "Common Market" headquarters.

On the defence front, the Soviet Union's post-war policy and the subjugation of eastern Europe to Communist rule led to the formation in 1948 of the "Western Union", consisting of Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg; and this was expanded in 1949 into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (N.A.T.O.). Brussels, again, became the N.A.T.O. headquarters - and M. Spaak its secretary-general from 1957 to 1961.

In internal polities both Holland and Belgium continued to be governed by coalitions. In Holland there are over a hundred registered political parties, 28 of which put up candidates in the most recent election (1972), and 14 of which obtained some seats. The Labour Party, one of whose main aims is to break down religious differences in politics, had the largest representation, but only 43 out of a total of 150 seats. The Catholics ha 27, the Liberals 22, the Anti-Revolutionary (Calvinist) Party 14, the Christian Historical Union (Dutch Reformed Church) 7, the Communists 7. The Government was formed from a five-party right-of-centre coalition, with a prime minister from the Anti-Revolutionary Party. In spite of the proliferation of parties and the necessity for coalitions, Holland since the Second World War has enjoyed, as well as substantial economic progress, stability and a non-contentious foreign policy.

In Belgium all coalitions have been based on an alliance of two of the three main parties - the Christian Social Party (based on the old Catholic Party), the Socialists and the Liberals; and King Bauduoin takes an active part in the selection of prime minister and the formation of coalitions. In the 1974 election the Christian Social Party secured 72 seats, the Socialists 59, and the Liberals 39. Other parties were the Volksunie (Flemish separatists) 22 seats, the Democratic Front (representing French language interests) 22, and the Communists 4. The Christian Social Party draws its main support from the Flemings, the Socialists from the Walloon centres of heavy industry. The Liberals - a middle class party - emphasizes the joint interests of Flemings and Walloons, and stands for unity between them. On controversial issues between Flemings and Walloons, both the main parties split into Flemish and Walloon wings.

Socially, as well as politically, Fleming-Walloon rivalry continues to split the country. The Flemings resent having for long been treated as second-class citizens, with an inferior culture. The Walloons resent having to learn Flemish - a language of little use outside Belgium - and fear that they will become a permanent minority, outvoted by the more numerous Flemings. The population is already (mid 1970s) about 55% Flemish to 44% Walloon, and the Flemings have a vastly greater birth rate.

The position in Brussels in particularly difficult. Situated in Flemish Brabant, and historically a Flemish city, it is officially bilingual, but some 80% of the population is now French speaking, and the influx of foreigners to the Common Market and N.A.T.O. organisations has further increased the use of French. Also in Flemish Brabant is Louvain with its 550 year old university, where all the teaching in the 19th century was in French. Under the 1932 language laws Flemish was given equal rights with French in university teaching, and Louvain University split into two parts, which grew up to be roughly numerically equal. Friction between the two wings led to riots, fights and strikes which went on for years and in 1968 caused the Government to fall by breaking up the Socialist-Christian Social coalition.

As a result of this, measures were brought in by another coalition in 1970, trying to solve the general problem by giving more regional autonomy, particularly in cultural matters - even to the extent of having two ministers of education, two ministers of culture, and an economic counsellor each for Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. This was clearly a step towards a federal organisation for the country, a solution advocated by many. Apart from the cultural and language differences, the economic argument for unity is not as strong as it used to be. In the past industrial Wallonia and (mainly) agricultural Flanders were economically complementary; but now Flanders is becoming more industrialised.

There are two other possibilities – the continuation of a unitary state, hoping that relations between Flemings and Walloons will improve; or the complete break-up of Belgium, with Wallonia going to France and Flanders to Holland. Though culturally a neat solution, this seems an unlikely one. The independent spirit common to all Belgians would not relish it – and the Protestants of Holland would probably not appreciate the addition of 5 million Catholics to their population, which is already 40% Catholic.

One unifying influence is the King, on spite of – or perhaps because of – the fact that he is not of Belgian descent.

Appendix 1. The History of Luxembourg.

The early history of Luxembourg is similar to that of the neighbouring provinces of Belgium: Celtic tribes who, like the Belgae, were conquered by the Rouens in the first century B.C; part of the Roman Empire for fire centuries; then part of the Frankish Empire. Luxembourg became firmly Frankish - and the language in normal use to-day is of German origin.

On the break-up of Charlemagne's empire after his death, Luxembourg was included in Lotharingia, and later became part of the Saxon Empire of Otto the Great. When this empire divided into a number of principalities in the 10th century, Luxembourg started to have a separate existence.

In 963 Siegfried, the German Count of the Ardennes, acquired lands which included the ruins of an old Roman fort, on the site of which he built the fortress of Luxembourg. This was the nucleus of a principality - part of the Holy Roman Empire - whose fortunes varied in the following centuries. The first ruler to be officially designated Count of Luxembourg was William (1096-1128). He and his successors extended their domains by marriages and by force of arms.

Many of the House of Luxembourg became famous in the Crusades - but their absence and extravagance left their estates at home in a parlous condition. From this Luxembourg was rescued, and her prestige restored, by a woman, Countess Ermesinde (1196-1247). Under her the country became a strong and united nation, with an efficient administration and a progressive social system.

In the 14th century the House of Luxembourg played a leading part in the affairs of Europe. In 1308 Henry of Luxembourg, a valiant and enlightened prince and an able administrator, was elected Holy Roman Emperor (Henry VII). His son John married the heiress to the Bohemian throne, and became King of Bohemia. The embodiment of the knightly ideal, John fought in campaigns and adventures all over Europe for thirty years, until he lost his sight. Though blind, he fought for France against the English at the Battle of Crecy (1346), where he was killed.* He is still a national hero of Luxembourg.

John's son, who was elected Emperor Charles IV, was very different from his father. Prudent and realistic, he concentrated on making his hereditary knights of Bohemia the strongest state in central Europe. In this he succeeded.

Charles IV was Emperor from 1346 to 1378, and two of his Sons were subsequent Emperors - Wenceslas (King of Bohemia) 1378-1400, and Sigismund 1410-1437. Under Wenceslas the House of Luxembourg reached the peak of its glory. Luxembourg itself, which had been made a Duchy by Charles IV in 1354, was at its greatest extent about four times its present size.

In Sigismund’s time the influence of the House of Luxembourg waned. He was the last of the House to be Holy Roman Emperor. For Luxembourg this was no bad thing, for during this imperial period its rulers lived abroad and regarded their home country very much as a source of troops for their armies and revenue for their widespread activities.

In 1443, six years after Sigismund's death, Luxembourg was acquired (by purchase) by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. For nearly four centuries Luxembourg then suffered the same fate as Belgium: ruled by the Habsburgs after they had inherited the Netherlands from the Burgundians, then by Spain after the division of the empire of Charles V, then by Austria when the Spanish Netherland became the Austrian Netherlands by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), and then by France after being overrun by the French Revolutionary armies in 1792-94.

In 1815 the Congress of Vienna gave the eastern part of Luxembourg to Prussia, and the rest became a Grand Duchy with the King of the Netherlands (united Holland and Belgium) as Grand Duke - as compensation for his lost estates in Nassau, which became Prussian. Luxembourg also became part of the new German Confederation, with representation in the German Diet and with a Prussian garrison in the fortress capital, Luxembourg city. (This Confederation lasted until 1866, when it was dissolved and replaced by a new political structure in Bismarck's unified Germany, which did not include Luxembourg.)

In the Belgian revolt against Dutch rule (Chapter 11) most of Luxembourg sided with the Belgians; and by the Treaty of London in 1839 which confirmed Belgian independence more than half of Luxembourg went to Belgium. The rest, remained a Grand Duchy with the King of Holland as Grand Duke.

In 1867 Napoleon III of France negotiated with William III of Holland for the purchase of Luxembourg. This caused an international crisis, which was settled by a conference in London. Napoleon III abandoned his efforts to acquire Luxembourg, which by another Treaty of London became an independent state, with its sovereignty vested in the House of Nassau (the Dutch royal line). Its neutrality was guaranteed by the powers, the fortress of Luxembourg city was dismantled, and the Prussian garrison was withdrawn.

When William III died in 1890 and Queen Wilhemina came to the Dutch throne, the title of Grand Duke passed to the Duke of Nassau, of the German Nassau family, (female succession being barred by Luxembourg law).

During the hundred years after gaining independence Luxembourg was transformed from an agricultural feudal province to a thriving modern state taking an active part in European economic and diplomatic affairs. In the 19th and early 20th centuries the basis of this advance was the steel industry - Luxembourg became the seventh largest producer of steel in the world.

This progress was interrupted by the First World War, when the country was overrun and occupied by the Germans - thus violating her guaranteed neutrality, as in the case of Belgium. Over 3000 Luxembourgers died fighting for the Allies - a very high sacrifice for so small a nation.

At the end of the war the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide**, whose sympathies had been with the Germans, abdicated, and a plebiscite was held to decide whether to become a republic or to resume as a Grand Duchy with Marie Adelaide's sister Charlotte on the throne. The result was overwhelmingly in favour of the latter, and the Grand Duchess Charlotte enjoyed great popularity during a reign which lasted for the next 45 years.

Between the two world wars Luxembourg resumed her increasing prosperity, and established close economic ties with Belgium. Advances were also made in social welfare. On the international scene, Luxembourg was a member of the League of Nations.

Then came the second interruption. In May 1940 the Nazi invaders overran the country in a few hours, and for five years Luxembourg suffered under another German occupation. The royal family and government escaped and continued to govern in exile; and many Luxembourgers escaped to join the Allied forces, while the people at home, determined to retain their national identity, resisted the Germans by any means within their power. The country was devastated in the battles towards the end of the war, but by hard work the former prosperity was soon regained.

Since the Second World War Luxembourg has played a notable part in the furtherance of European co-operation. As already mentioned (see Chapter 16) she became a member of Benelux, the Council of Europe and the Common Market – and of the United Nations and N.A.T.O. And Several European organisations have their headquarters in Luxembourg – the European Coal and Steel Community, the Court of European Communities, the Secretariat of the European Parliament, the European Investment Bank and the European Monetary Co-operation Fund.

In 1964 the Grand Duchess Charlotte, after her long reign, abdicated in favour of her son Jean. During the Second World War he had studied in England, the United States and Canada, and served with the British army from 1942 (when he was 21). He was with the British troops when the Allied armies liberated Luxembourg.

*The victorious Black Prince of England took the three ostrich feathers of John's helmet and adopted his maxim “Ich dien” (I serve). The feathers and motto still figure on the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales.

**The law barring female succession had been changed in 1912.

Appendix 2. Chronological Summary - Holland and Belgium.

Period		**Holland**	**Belgium**
1st century B.C. – 5th century A.D.		Roman Empire	
5th century – 9th century A.D.		Empire of the Franks	
10th – 14th centuries		Feudal Period Allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor except for Flanders (to the French King)	
1384-1477		Burgundian Rule except for the northern provinces of Holland	
1482-1566		Habsburg Rule	
1566-1648		War of Independence against Spain	Spanish Rule
1648-1713		Independent – the United Provinces	Spanish Rule
1713-1795		Independent – the United Provinces	Austrian Rule
1795-1815 (Napoleonic Period)	1795-1808	Batavian Republic	French Rule
	1806-1810	Kingdom of Holland (under Napoleon's brother)	
	1810-1815	In the French Empire	
1815-1830		Kingdom of the Netherlands	
1831-		Kingdom of the Netherlands	Kingdom of Belgium

Appendix 3. Rulers since Independence.

Holland

Stadholders

1584	William I (the Silent)
1587-1625	Maurice of Nassau
1625-1647	Frederick Henry
1647-1650	William II

Grand Pensionary - Johann de Witt
1672-1702 William III (King of England 1688-1702)

Grand Pensionary -(Anthony Heinsius until 1720)

1747-1751	William IV
1751-1802	William V

Kings / Queens

1815-1840	William I
1840-1849	William II
1849-1890	William III
1890-1948	Wilhemina
1948-	Juliana

Belgium

1831-1865	Leopold I
1865-1909	Leopold II
1909-1934	Albert I
1931-1951	Leopold III
1951-	Baudouin

Luxembourg

1867-1890	William III of Holland
1890-1905	Grand Duke Adolphus (of Nassau)
1905-1912	Grand Duke William
1912-1919	Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide
1919-1964	Grand Duchess Charlotte
1961+	Grand Duke Jean

Appendix 4. Some Population Statistics.

(Populations refer to 1971/1972)

Holland.

Population - about 13,250,000.

Density - about 980 per square mile - the highest in Europe.

Religion - Protestant and Roman Catholic (40%) about equal.

Chief Towns

Amsterdam	1,040,000 - Capital.
Rotterdam	9,060,000 - Largest seaport in the world.
The Hague	725,000 - Seat of Government.
Utrecht	450,000 - Ancient University (1636).Site of Modern industrial fairs.
Eindhoven	330,000 - Site of Philips Electrical Company.
Haarlem	240,000 – Tulip-growing centre

Belgium.

Population – about 9,700,000 (Flemings about 55%, Walloons 44%)

Density – about 820 per square mile – the third highest in Europe after Holland and England.

Religion – 85% Roman Catholic

Chief Towns

Brussels	1,800,000 – Capital. E.E.C. Headquarters. Bi-lingual
Antwerp	670,000 – Commercial centre. Flemish
Liege	440,000 – Ancient Bishopric-Principality. Centre of iron industry Wallooon
Ghent	230,000 – Textile and horticulture industries. Flemish
Charlerio	215,000 – Coal mining centre. Walloon

Luxembourg

Population – 340,000

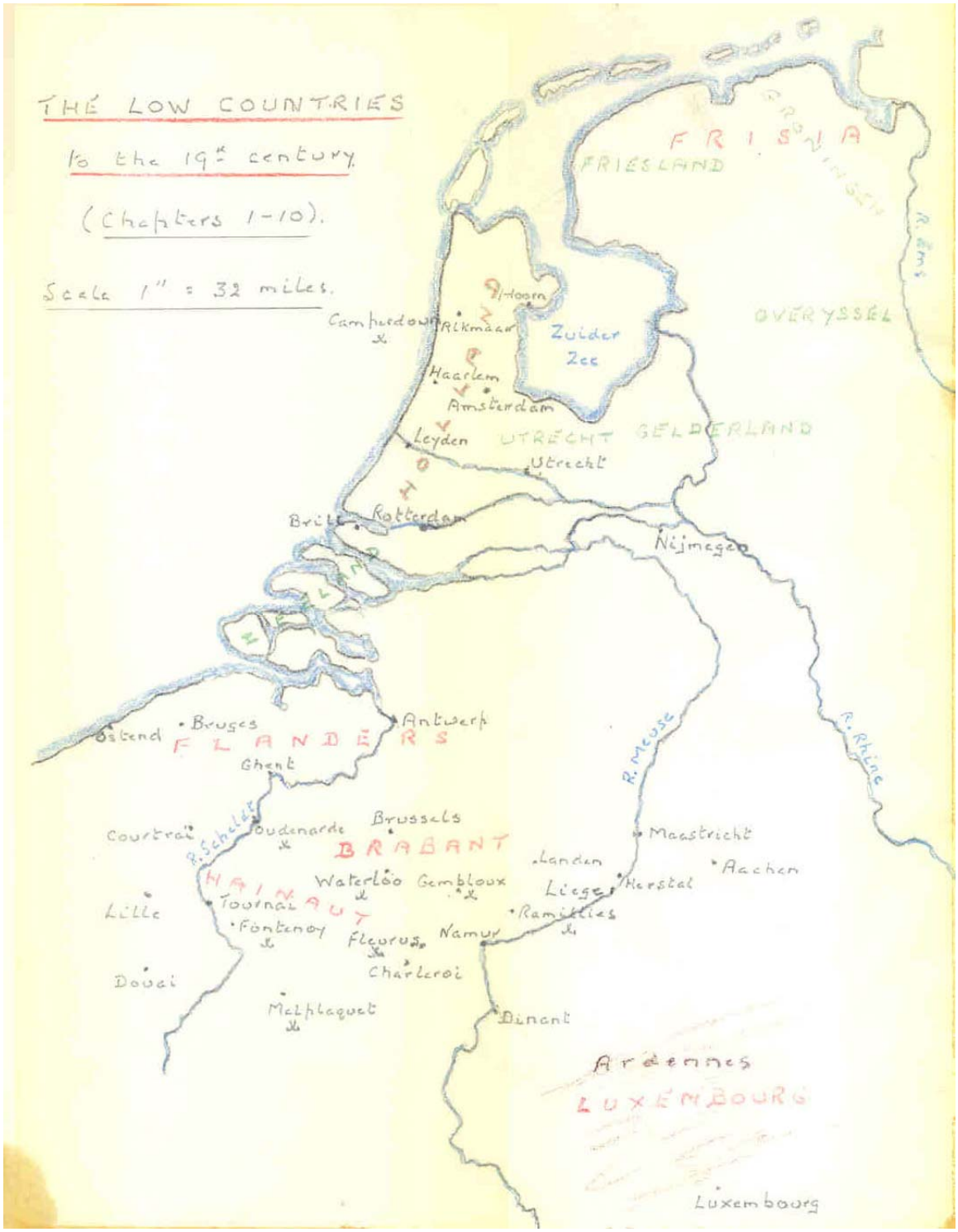
Density – 340 per square mile

Religion – 97% Roman Catholic

Languages – French, German, Luxembourgish (of German origin)

Capital – Luxembourg 77,000

Map: The Low Countries to the 19th Century



Map: Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg (1970s)