Introduction to the original manuscript *Alien Policy in Belgium (1840-1940). The creation of refugees, guestworkers and illegal aliens.* Published in 2000 by Berghahn Books, Oxford Providence.

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This document is the original manuscript of a Ph.D. thesis defended at the European University Institute in Florence. The Ph.D. has been published in a slightly abridged version by Berghahn Books in 2000 under the title *Alien Policy in Belgium (1840-1940). The creation of refugees, guestworkers and illegal aliens.* This book refers to the literature, as well as the archival sources used applying the Harvard system. For the professional historian, these succinct references to the archival sources in the book (archive, collection, number of file) can be unsatisfying. Therefore, I put the scholarly apparatus at the disposal of the professional historians through the web. A scholarly apparatus which, following European traditions, refers in footnotes to original documents and even quotes sources that are considered important for understanding historical developments literally and in the original language. Unpublished manuscripts, which have been used for this research, are also referred to. You find the complete reference to these manuscripts in the appendices where they are listed in a short bibliography, which supplements the one of the book.

The structure of the book is the same as this manuscript. However chapter 6 of the book, which deals with the period 1929-1932 is split in two chapters, i.e. 6A which deals with labor migration and 6B which deals with state policy in that same period. The manuscript you find here is also an older version of this study. The analysis of the policy you find here may differ slightly to that in the book due to new insights, and the English used in the manuscript had not yet been corrected by a native speaker. These files contain no conclusions, introductions or graphs, as this manuscript is only meant to give additional information about the original findings of the book.

Since 1994 I have worked extensively on improving the insights I had gained at that time, see in particular:

-The transformation of Nineteenth-Century West European Expulsion Policy, 1880-1914 in Fahrmeier A., Faron O. and P. Weil (Ed.), *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World. The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2003, pp.120-137.

-The edited volume with Bob Moore (2009), *Refugees from Nazi-Germany and the liberal states in Europe, 1933-1939.* Oxford-New York: Berghahn Books,

We hope that, with some patience, you will be able to find the information the book does not provide. I am interested in any comment on this manuscript and my work.

Frank Caestecker

Introduction: 19th Century alien policy

The Belgian Constitution of 1831 had declared, in principle, equality in the eyes of the law of aliens and nationals.[[1]](#footnote-2) This was in accordance with the liberal spirit of the new regime. The only discrimination of aliens was that, on the base of article 7 of the Belgian Constitution Belgian nationality was required for performing a public function (going from holding public office to being member of a jury). The number of jobs for officials was limited as it was. Throughout the 19th century the public service developed only rudimentarily. Moreover aliens were admitted to administrative government functions, only the top-level officials had to be Belgians.[[2]](#footnote-3)

However aliens were quickly distinctly treated. They became a target of special interest for the state. The central authorities had to be notified of the presence of any alien sojourning in Belgium. The Sûreté Publique in Brussels would subsequently decide if those aliens would be allowed to remain in the country. This was legitimized by referring to the different interests which aliens were supposed to have as opposed to the Belgians, hence the state had to protect itself against them.

"l'hospitalité...est soumise à des restrictions imposées par le devoir de l'Etat de se préserver contre les entreprises de ceux qui, par leur origine étrangère, ne sont pas naturellement en communauté d'affections et d'intérêts avec les habitants du pays."[[3]](#footnote-4)

It is not an easy task to assess the importance of immigration to 19th century Belgium. Based on the number of files created by the Department of Aliens upon every registration of a new immigrant of foreign nationality (graph 27), we can deduce that the extent of migration to Belgium was extremely limited until 1880. Only after 1880 registered the Department of Aliens a yearly increase of more than 15,000 new immigrants, from 1900 on the number of files clearly ballooned. This indication gives, however no information about the length of residence of the immigrants. One has to consider too that these figures are also function of the degree of administrative centralization. Clear quantitative figures for the extent of the foreign community in Belgium are only available after 1890, when nationality was requested for the first time in the population census. The previous censuses do not give data on nationality, but only on place of birth. We can, therefor only draw serious conclusions for the evolution in immigration for the turn of the century. As we have no comparable records for earlier times we cannot generalize for the previous decades. It seems, however, that the immigration increased in the second half of the 19th century.[[4]](#footnote-5) Most of the aliens at the end of the 19th century were nationals of the neighboring countries, but during the first decades of the 20th century the share of nationals from countries farther away rose.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Not only the number, but also the economic position of aliens in 19th century Belgium is difficult to be established. The problem is that we have available only a few scattered data. The first overview of the occupational position of foreigners in Belgium is to be found in the population census of 1910. According to this picture the distribution of the aliens and the Belgians among the three main occupational sectors was the following:[[6]](#footnote-7)

Table 2: distribution of Aliens and Belgians among the three economic sectors in 1910

|  | Alien | Belgian |
| --- | --- | --- |
| primary sector | 6 | 22 |
| secondary sector | 41 | 47 |
| tertiary sector | 53 | 31 |

We see that foreigners were hardly represented in the first sector to the advantage of the tertiary sector. A closer look to the secondary and third sectors gives us the more salient features of the occupational structure of aliens. The foreigners were active all over the tertiary sector, it is therefore difficult to discern a distinct economic profile. Aliens were even represented among public officials, military personnel and liberal professions. The only concentration of foreigners in the tertiary sector is to be found in the sector of domestic servants.

Within the sample of the aliens active in the tertiary sector, domestic servants took a share of 22%. Domestic service was the most important category of employment for female migrants in the 19th century. This was also the case for international migrants. De Schaepdrijver points out that foreign servants in Brussels in the period 1842-1856 constituted an important share of the small upper stratum of specialized domestic-service positions (nannies, chamber maids, ladies' companions, etc.). It is difficult to assess if foreigners maintained a specific place within domestic service. This was probably still the case in 1910 for the English servants, while for the servants of other nationalities we cannot establish such a clear pattern.[[7]](#footnote-8)

This scattered presence of foreigners is also true for the secondary sector, but here we can point out some occupational groups. Heavy industry employed about 20 % of the foreigners active in the secondary sector, mostly in the mines. 14 % of the foreigners in the secondary sector made their livelihood in the production of clothing, in the making of hats, 4% , and in the fur and leather industry, another 4 %.

This absence of a distinct occupational profile of aliens in Belgium in 1910 is independent of nationality.[[8]](#footnote-9) The picture which emerges from the few additional data on the economic position of foreigners in 19th century Belgium is that of a migration of qualified manual and non-manual labor, of artists, intellectuals, white-collar workers and skilled journeymen. The international migration to cities such as Charleroi, Antwerp, Brussels and Liège was a result of the new opportunities which those expanding cities offered.[[9]](#footnote-10) These immigrants were not the underprivileged; most of them were qualified urban-based people who hoped for increased opportunities in the growing Belgian cities. Businessmen found new markets in Belgium. German merchants and bankers in particular had been setting up businesses in Antwerp and Brussels. These banking-houses and commercial firms created a demand for white collar workers. German clerks found jobs in the growing number of Antwerp and Brussels-based German businesses.[[10]](#footnote-11) Artisans also saw opportunities in the Belgian cities and at times even succeeded in conquering specific branches of production.[[11]](#footnote-12)

The population census of December 1910 ignores the seasonal migrations among whom there were also highly skilled labor. Thus, the largely foreign personnel of the Palace Hotels at the seaside is, among others, not included in this statistic. These luxurious hotels were only open during the summer, hence the foreign cooks, receptionists and waiters had already left by the time the census took place. Ostend, but also some other resorts at the Belgian seaside and in the Ardennes (Spa), were the places where the cosmopolitan high society spent its holidays during the summer.[[12]](#footnote-13) The personnel which was in contact with the clientele not only had to speak the three main European languages (German, French and English) fluently, but also had to be able to serve the exclusive tastes of these clientele. A maximum of comfort was provided in those *Palaces* and also the service was at the highest level. Local labor was only used for menial tasks where contact with the clientele was minimal: chambermaids, coachmen, dishwashers, etc.[[13]](#footnote-14) The *directeur d'hôtel*, the *chef de cuisine*, the *maitres d'hôtel* and the *chefs de rang* were all of foreign nationality and moved along with the wealthy. By the end of the summer, they left the Belgian seaside for other exclusive meeting places of the international haute bourgeoisie of the Belle Epoque (San Remo, Menton, Nice..).

This picture of skilled labor migration does not cover the international migration to Belgium in its totality. Not all migrants were drawn by the high quality of the opportunities offered in Belgium. International migration to the Belgian cities resulted in a minor degree also out of the pull of a regional center whose range of attraction broadened to include regions beyond the national borders. This "incidental" crossing of the borders was especially the case for the Southern Dutch migrants in Antwerp and Brussels. They occupied those positions in which also the migrants from the Belgian countryside were to be found.[[14]](#footnote-15) They worked in low qualified trades and in household services. Also in the industrial basins international migration corresponded to this pattern of migration. The large number of German nationals who were employed in the mines and metallurgic firms at the East of the Liège basin are a case in point.[[15]](#footnote-16) By the turn of the century an immigration from the East and the South of Europe to Belgium occurred which had no longer the characteristics of a long-distance migration in search of better opportunities. Most of these newcomers were satisfied with low paid menial work. The mining sector, because of its chronic shortage of labor was one of main attractions. This long-distance migration seemed rather to be a mere survival strategy to satisfy minimal needs, the characteristic of the regional migration of the 19th century.[[16]](#footnote-17) It was the prelude of the massive 20th century international migration, which would span ever longer distances.

 1 .A Brutal Alien Policy, 1840-1861

**1.Immigration Policy as Border Control, 1840-1860**

Shortly after the Revolution, the central authorities acquired control over immigration. All immigrants were required to carry a valid passport on them with a Belgian visa.[[17]](#footnote-18) They also had to have sufficient means at their disposal.[[18]](#footnote-19) Initially, the local authorities in the border towns granted the immigrants access to the country on the basis of their passports. Only in doubtful cases did they ask for the advice of the central authorities. During the 1830s statists who wanted to increase the power of the central state attacked local autonomy. This campaign for a strong state was successful in the issue of border control. By 1839 the admission of immigrants had already become the exclusive competence of the central authorities. Fixed border posts were established and special personnel, on the pay list of the central authorities, were in charge of the border control.[[19]](#footnote-20) The control of the borders meant that each year several hundred aliens were refused access to Belgium (see graph 1).

Among those aliens who were refused access to Belgium were quiet a number of “refugees”. These “refugees” of the first half of the 19th century -political activists fleeing persecution- were a socially exclusive lot. They were mostly from the upper class and although they found it difficult to make both ends meet in exile, their lifestyle remained bourgeois. Their cause, overthrowing their repressive governments, seemed sympathetic to Belgian liberals.They were ideologically and socially close to the national elite. But even though the Belgian authorities were quite sympathetic to them and their cause, the policy towards them was restrictive.

The Belgian authorities wanted to keep “refugees” out of the country. Embassies were ordered not to grant them visas. The border guards received instructions not to let these political activists enter Belgian territory.[[20]](#footnote-21) “Refugees” as the political actors par excellence could jeopardize the precarious diplomatic balance by which the new state could exist. “Refugees” who succeeded in entering the country were, however, not sent back to their country of origin. The authorities first looked into each case to see if a genuine “refugee” was being dealt with. If the authorities considered it to be so, those who had the means for their upkeep were granted temporary sojourn while their less affluent colleagues had to leave the country. For those destitute "refugees" who agreed to leave Belgium the Belgian authorities financed their voyage to Great Britain. Not only destitute "refugees", but also "refugees" whose convictions were considered as being subversive (republicans, socialists etc.) or where diplomatic pressure was exerted for their expulsion, were escorted to the port of Ostend.[[21]](#footnote-22)

In the beginning of the 1840s the aim of the immigration policy was not only of a political, but also of a social nature. The collapse of the Flemish flax and linen industry had caused great distress. The authorities considered that local labor had to receive a minimal protection by not increasing the competition on the already extremely slack labor market. They therefore declared a strict freeze on immigration in 1840. In subsequent years the authorities only tried to enforce an immigration freeze during the winter, as the Minister of Justice considered that labor was then in greatest needs and that the governement had to give them a hand by stopping the immigration of foreign labor.[[22]](#footnote-23) This restriction in labor mobility was, however, not applied very rigidly. It was clearly stated that the regulation on the mobility of alien laborers was not to thwart the labor needs of the Belgian industry in any way. Exceptions had already been made for those aliens whom the industrialists had called upon for specific tasks.[[23]](#footnote-24)

Economic interests caused the stringent administrative control of passports at the borders soon to be cancelled (see graph 1). It was not so much the interests of the employers in hiring immigrants that caused this control to slacken. Employers were always able to apply for immigrants. State policy never aimed at jeopardizing their interest. It was due to other economic interests, however, that strict passport control at the borders was cancelled by 1842.

As the international railway connections increased, the Belgian border guards were no longer able to check all the passports of the train passengers in due time. The railway companies complained that the border guards delayed their trains. The government decided to shift the control of passports and means of aliens to the interior of the country. Thus, local authorities became again responsible for the implementation of immigration policy. At least initially local authorities of the border towns took the main brunt. They had to check the passports and means of livelihood of those aliens who had entered Belgian territory by other means of transport than the train. If the means of livelihood of these aliens, who had mostly arrived on foot, were insufficient, they had to be refused access to the country. For all the others and also for those who had arrived in the interior of the country by train or by slipping through the border the Sûreté had to be consulted. If they had regular papers and means of livelihood they were, in principle, granted sojourn.[[24]](#footnote-25) By 1850 most immigrants passed the borders without being noticed by the local authorities of the border towns (see table 3). Local authorities in the interior of Belgium became largely responsible for the implementation of the immigration policy.

Table 3: The implementation of the immigration policy, 1848-1850[[25]](#footnote-26) see book

This change in immigration control was preceded by the introduction in 1846 of the obligatory registration of all inhabitants i the population registers. It implied control over all inhabitants. It is likely that control over immigrants in the interior of the country became more effective. Unregistered sojourn of immigrants was easier to check. All persons arriving in a community from abroad -whether they were Belgians or not- had to present their passport to the municipal authorities in order to be inscribed in the population register. The arrival of aliens had to be notified to the Sûreté as final consent to their sojourn remained the competence of this central office. Pending the decision of Sûreté, the undocumented or destitute aliens were to be put in custody. While the alien who had the necessary papers and a means of livelihood recieved in general permission to remain in Belgium, the other aliens, in particular those without means of livelihood were mostly expelled.[[26]](#footnote-27)

The expenses which the arrest of destitute or undocumented aliens pending decision of the Sûreté caused were rising sharply. Since the central authorities decided mostly to expel them anyway, the Sûreté ordered the local authorities in 1850 to expel alien vagrants without prior notification.[[27]](#footnote-28) As graph 1 indicates the number of people removed from Belgian territory because they were either destitute or lacked papers oscillated around 800 in the 1850s.

One may not conclude, however, that there was a stringent control over immigration in the period 1840-1860. The ambition of the immigration policy to control human mobility was, without fingerprints or photographic identification, largely illusionary.[[28]](#footnote-29) Migrants could cross frontiers with little difficulty and reside virtually without problems once they had arrived. The lack of an efficient central administrative apparatus -the Sûreté was totally dependent on the cooperation of the local authorities as it was badly staffed- made the grip of the central authorities on migration also weak. Also economic interests impeded a stringent control of immigration, so was its effectiveness deliberately limited in order to foster the development of the port of Antwerp. In the first half of the 19th century the port became an important transit place for emigration overseas and there was strong pressure to make it easier for the mostly German emigrants to pass through Belgium. [[29]](#footnote-30) A strict implementation of the alien legislation had thus little chance of success.

Only a sudden upsurge of the politically sensitive refugee migration after 1848 caused the central authorities to try to restore strict border control and implement a restrictive policy. The failed liberal revolutions of 1848 created a stream of refugees. In 1850 about eighty foreigners (Poles, French, Italians, Germans and Hungarians) in Belgium were considered to be refugees. The number of "refugees" rose spectacularly in the following years. In total 2,400 aliens obtained asylum between 1848 and 1853. The number of asylum seekers increased sharply after the French coup d'état of Louis Napoleon in December, 1851; not less than 1,572 French refugees obtained asylum. Although the number of asylum seekers in these years was probably greater, the large number of expulsions immediately after the coup as indicated by graph 1 is a testimony of the refusal to accept more refugees. All refugees without valid papers were either sent over to Great Britain or were returned to the French-Belgian border.[[30]](#footnote-31)

That notwithstanding this restrictive policy so many Frenchmen were granted asylum was probably linked to the deliberate policy of the new French regime to expel the notorious members of the opposition with a passport valid for Belgium.[[31]](#footnote-32) Their immigration into Belgium therefore was not illegal. All the refugees of December 1851 who had immigrated legally had to hand over their passports and papers on arrival in Belgium and to declare their means of livelihood. Very soon afterwards, depending on their financial means and their political activities, orders of either internment or expulsion followed. Those who were allowed to remain in Belgium were interned, mostly in small towns under the strict supervision of the local police.[[32]](#footnote-33)

The Belgian authorities quickly took additional measures to prevent a further influx. Not only a passport, but also a valid visa was required. Those refugees who succeeded to immigrate illegally were refused asylum. They were immediately expelled, even if they had just left the French prisons.[[33]](#footnote-34)

This intervention was short-lived and as no more massive political induced migration turned up at the Belgian border was, in this era of economic liberalism to prohibit aliens from entering Belgium soon considered outdated. Protection of the labor market had been considered as acceptable only at the beginning of the 1840s. Later this was judged to be no longer appropriate, free migration was an obvious corollary of free trade and its benefits could not be doubted. Supply and demand had to be given full liberty. Free trade treaties were signed with numerous countries in which the free mobility of citizens of the contracting partners was also stated. In 1861 all passport regulations were annulled. As graph 1 indicates, in the period after 1861 no more immigrants were refused access due to lack of appropriate identity papers.[[34]](#footnote-35)

2.Immigrant Policy in a Hardly Nationalized Society, 1840-1875

In the 1830s the central authorities had far-reaching ambitions to control immigration into Belgium. Not only was movement into Belgium to be controlled, but also every alien -independent of his length of sojourn in Belgium- had to register at the central authorities. The knowledge of their whereabouts would enable the authorities to order any alien who was no longer desirable to leave the country.

In 1832 a special administration, the Sûreté was founded which would dedicate itself to this task. This administration was formally dependent on the Ministry of Justice, but in practice was largely autonomous. The danger from the East since the Dutch King Willem I had not yet recognized the new kingdom was especially to be followed up. This intelligence service had to inform the authorities about any danger which threatened the young kingdom. This central police agency survived the stabilization of the new kingdom with the peace agreement with the Netherlands in 1839. The Belgian authorities considered in particular the increasing number of political refugees a threat to the diplomatic position of Belgium. The Sûreté was to see that aliens -be they refugees or not- did not undertake any undesirable political activities. The Sûreté took this task to heart and summoned all local administration, as well as the judiciairy and the army to provide them with any information concerning aliens residing in Belgium. The biography of every alien residing in Belgium was in this way constantly updated. The data, together with information on the political activities by spying on them were used to decide upon expulsions.[[35]](#footnote-36)

This central control over aliens turned out not to be so easy to establish. The tiny central bureaucracy got hardly any support from the local authorities who stood firm on their autonomy. The municipal authorities did not consider it worthwhile to call to the attention of the Sûreté those aliens who had been living in their community for years. The central authorities were even not always notified of new immigrants.[[36]](#footnote-37)

When the central authorities were notified of the presence of aliens in a municipality not only did they decide if they could remain in the country, they also wanted to decide which status was to be attributed to them. Three different types of alien status emerged out of the Alien Law of 1835 which was prolonged approximately every three years: Aliens without residency status, those with and the *domiciliés*.[[37]](#footnote-38)

The first category of aliens, those without residency status was only tolerated in Belgium. Their sojourn in Belgium depended on the Sûreté which could decide arbitrarily to expel them (*renvoyer*).

A second category of aliens was aliens with residency status.[[38]](#footnote-39) No legal provisions were provided concerning the granting of this status, it was totally dependant on administrative practice. The Sûreté made the granting of residency status contingent on formally approved domicile. Sojourn as such did not grant residency status, only if an alien was registered by the Sûreté and this central administration agreed upon his sojourn in Belgium could an alien acquire residency status.

It seems that in the 1830s and the 1840s a considerable number of immigrants never obtained residency status. In particular foreign labor was refused the advantage of this status. The authorities wanted to retain their hold on them, granting them residency status would prevent the authorities from taking any action against them in the future. Thus only temporary residence permits were granted.[[39]](#footnote-40) Also for “refugees” this was considered the most appropriate strategy. Those “refugees" who were tolerated in Belgium not only had to be able to support themselves, but were also called on to abandon politics. Strict police control over these "refugees" was to guarantee that they adhered to this condition of sojourn. If it was discovered that a refugee was politically active, expulsion followed. In order to enable the administration to expel "refugees" whenever they did not respect the conditions on which they were accepted, hardly any "refugees" were granted residency status, but only temporary residence permits.[[40]](#footnote-41)

Aliens with residency status could only be expelled if they disturbed public order or had been convicted of criminal offences. Among the latter were included destitute aliens who had been convicted of vagrancy. The poor law of April 3, 1848 even stipulated explicitly -the verdict in the Jones afffaire (see further) had just been given- that the authorities had to expel aliens with residency status after being convicted of vagrancy. A Royal Decree (*expulsion*) was necessary for the expulsion of aliens with residency status to legally take effect. An alien who afterhaving been *expulsé* returned to Belgium could be brought before the court and be punished with a prison term from 15 days to six months because of *rupture de ban d'expulsion.*

The famous Jones affaire put the administrative power which the Sûreté exerted over aliens into a dubious legality. Jones, an English women who had been expelled (*renvoyée*) in 1845 because of lack of means contested this administrative decision. She claimed that her expulsion was illegal since she had been living in Antwerp since September 1840 and that no Royal Decree of Expulsion was promulgated. The Sûreté in line with its administrative practice contested that she had acquired residency status since they had never formally approved of her sojourn. The judiciairy put Jones in the right as it stated that the Aliens Law of 1835 did not qualify the type of domicile needed for residency status and that thus de facto domicile had to be taken into consideration.[[41]](#footnote-42) This reasoning put most power which the Sûreté had been excerting over aliens into jeopardy and was unacceptable for this administration. According to the Sûreté this verdict implied that it would be to the aliens’advantage to elude the police. By sojourning some months in Belgium without declaring oneself with the authorities one would acquire legal protection, this could not have been the aim of the legislator. But even declaring ones presence with the local authorities did not sufficed for the Sûreté; their sojourn had to have the approval of the central authorities. Without fundamentally changing its practice the Sûreté became more cautious. Temporary residency permits continued to be issued, but only in exceptional cases. In particular “refugees” were granted this precarious legal status.[[42]](#footnote-43) Grudgingly the Sûreté had to consider de facto domicile in some cases and to limit its administrative power over these aliens.[[43]](#footnote-44) But as a rule aliens who declared their arrival with the municipal authorities and could prove their identity acquired residency status after that the Sûreté checked their antecedents. Of course if the alien’s antecedents turned out to be negative, in particular if he had a criminial record he had to leave the country.

Several times, on the occasion of the triennial prolongation of the alien law of 1835 the administrator of the Sûreté proposed the revision of the alien law and the institutionalization of the administrative practice to the Minister of Justice. The main improvement proposed was the insertion unambiguously that de facto domicile would not provide any protection and that only after an officially approved sojourn residency status and thus protection against arbitrarily expulsion could be acquired. The Sûreté was even ready to submit its power to a strict time-schedule. The administrator of the Sûreté proposed in 1876 that only one month after the alien declared his arrival at a commune, he was to be registered in the population register through which he acquired residency status. He deemed that one month was necessary for his office to check their antecedents.[[44]](#footnote-45)

Notwithstanding these proposals the administrative practice of the Sûreté was never legally consecrated. The alien law of 1835, which was vague concerning the granting of residency status continued to be prolonged without any significant changes and the central authorities used in an arbitarily manner the competence that was granted to them.[[45]](#footnote-46)

The status of *domicilié,* based on article 13 of the civil code, permitted aliens to remain indefinitely in Belgium. These *domiciliés* were authorized by the King, after a request, on their own initiative to establish their main residence in Belgium. It entailed complete emancipation, they were legally equal to the nationals, except in political rights. The status of *domicilié*, a denizen status implied that these aliens could not be expelled.[[46]](#footnote-47) The status of *domicilié* enabled aliens to occupy certain functions reserved for nationals. It also entailed some obligations which only nationals were subjected to, i.e. to serve in the militia (*garde civic)*.[[47]](#footnote-48) Access to this category was limited to those who had already acquired residency status. To become a *domicilié* was an exceptional favor granted to very few aliens, mostly from the bourgeoisie. In the first two decades after the foundation of the Belgian state only 338 aliens were attributed this status (see graph 24).[[48]](#footnote-49) Although we do not have any figures for the next decades, it seems the status of *domicilié* remained an exceptional favor, but for an increasing number of well to do aliens.[[49]](#footnote-50)

Those few aliens who had been granted the status of *domicilié* were the only aliens not to be excluded from municipal welfare as stipulated in the welfare law of 1845. The status of *domicilié* together with a sojourn of eight years in one municipality was required for an alien to obtain *un domicile de secours* and hence to be eligible for social assistance. All other aliens were dependent on the central state for social assistance. Before 1845, aliens had been eligible for locally organized social assistance after a sojourn of 6 years in a municipality.

After describing the administrative and legal framework of alien policy we can now address the issue how (and in whose interests) the authorities wielded their vast power over aliens residing in Belgium.

The interests of national labor were, except for the crisis years of the beginning of the 1840s not taken into consideration by the authorities. If an alien had the means to assure his subsistence -even if this meant replacing national labor- he was granted sojourn. That the presence of aliens was not to be dependent on the (subjective) interests of the popular classes was illustrated by the events of 1848. The political revolution of 1848 in France led, under pressure of local labor, to dismissals en masse among the Belgians in France and their subsequent departure for Belgium. This discriminatory policy created a strong popular outcry in Belgium among the working classes to retaliate against the French workers in Belgium. Given the economic downturn, the dismissed re-emigrants and the unemployed local workers wanted to profit from the eventual dismissal of French immigrants in Belgium. This popular pressure had very little perceptible influence on the authorities. The traditional policy was maintained. As graph 1 indicates, there was in that year simply an increase in the number of people not permitted to enter Belgium, but no increase in the number of aliens expelled. The former had little to do with social considerations, but rather with the authorities conceiving of dangerous political immigration.[[50]](#footnote-51)

The dynamic of alien policy had however a link with the business cycle. Unemployed, destitute aliens were a target for state-action, but immigrants who already had a livelihood in Belgium were not disturbed. The main determinant of the restrictive alien policy was to prevent aliens from becoming a burden on the local and national welfare budget. The state interests to keep out or remove economically undesirable aliens is clearly discernable in the extremely restricted access to welfare for aliens.

The exclusion of most aliens, except the *domiciliés* from locally organized social assistance was introduced in 1845, at least officially in order to reach bilateral agreements with other states to arrange for the reciprocal reimbursement of the costs of social assistance to destitute emigrants. Such treaties had been concluded with the Netherlands (6.11.1841 and 24.8.1849) and Luxembourg (1843), but because of the limited results and the administrative complications both these treaties were cancelled by May 31, 1849.[[51]](#footnote-52)

In absence of bilateral agreements concerning social assistance all aliens were totally dependent on the goodwill of the Belgian central authorities. Even if aliens had acquired residency status, they could, because of destitution still be expelled. Indeed, in order to prevent destitute aliens from being entitled to remain in Belgium, the poor law of April 3, 1848 stipulated that the authorities had to expel - after a conviction for vagrancy- even aliens with residency status.

The administration of social assistance has yet to be further investigated, but to expel destitute aliens, without consideration of their links with Belgium as the law provided for does not seem to have been executed in practice.[[52]](#footnote-53) Certainly some destitute aliens received financial support from the Belgian central authorities because of the length of their stay in Belgium and because of the lack of possibilities of returning to their country of origin. This was due to humanitarian considerations as well as to considerations of efficiency, i.e. these aliens would return to Belgium anyway.[[53]](#footnote-54) The granting of social assitance to aliens was even based on a principle which challenged legal provisions. In 1853, the Minister of Justice, Ch. Faider , categorically stated that it was not only the explicit legal bond as was expressed by nationality, but also birth in Belgium which decided whether a person came under the responsibility of the Belgian government. Aliens born in Belgium, could, even if they remained of foreign nationality count on the benevolent attitude of the authorities. Notwithstanding legal provisions they were granted welfare.[[54]](#footnote-55) Due to these pragmatic and principled considerations the costs of social assistance to aliens charged to the central authorities soared, the aliens started to become a burden on the state treasury.[[55]](#footnote-56)

Another state-interest, besides that of preventing aliens from becoming a burden on public welfare, which alien policy had to serve was preserving public order. This implied the removal of those aliens who disturbed public order, i.e. criminals or political activists. The number of expulsions of aliens with residency status for political reasons remained minimal. Between 1833 and 1860 offically only 74 aliens were expelled for this reason, mostly ”refugees”.[[56]](#footnote-57) The Belgian refugee policy in this period was largely determined by diplomatic considerations. Notwithstanding the liberal persuasion of most of the refugees -a political conviction which was shared by a large part of the Belgian elite- the practice of the Belgian liberal state in granting asylum was restrictive. Its neighboring countries, for the most part conservative regimes, accepted the independence of Belgium on the condition that it remained neutral. The international vulnerability of Belgium meant that requests for asylum were not accepted very eagerly. If refugees were tolerated, they had to refrain from being politically active. Diplomatic pressure from Prussia, Russia, Austria and later also from France assured that exceptions to this rule were hardly ever made.[[57]](#footnote-58) Even Great Britain pressurised the Belgian government to expel "refugees" to Britain as this would pacify the conservative powers.[[58]](#footnote-59)

The experience of Switzerland -which had been threatened during the middle of the 19th century with an military invasion by its neighbors because of its too liberal refugee policy- was a clear warning for the Belgian authorities. Belgium did not want to provoke its neighbors in any way.[[59]](#footnote-60) French pressure turned out to be especially effective and not only led to a legal restriction in asylum, the "attentat clause" of 1856, but even to the restriction of press freedom.[[60]](#footnote-61) As Reiter in his study on the German refugees in the 1840s concluded, the Belgian authorities remained loyal to their asylum tradition within the principles that they had laid down for the "refugees". Requests by foreign powers to expel "refugees" who respected the Belgian conditions of asylum were mostly denied. This adherence to a restricted asylum tradition was largely a result of the pressure of the liberal fraction within the national elite.[[61]](#footnote-62)

One can qualify the Belgian alien policy during the period envisaged here (1840-1875) in its legal and administrative provisions, by refusing immigrants, independent of their length of sojourn in Belgium access to welfare provisions and expelling destitute, political active or any other unwanted aliens at will as brutal. This assessment has to be nuanced, we have mentioned already that the authorities did not exhaust the arbitrary power over aliens they wielded. Asylum remained to be granted, some aliens recieved welfare and also the expulsion policy was pragmatic. Even more important for the assessment of the alien policy between 1840 and 1875 is the contemporary ambiguity of the distinction between Belgian and alien. A public official, Jules de Soignie, even found it necessary to publish in 1858 a study entitled “Distinction des Belges et des Etrangers”. He legitimized his booklet by referring to aliens who posed as Belgians and Belgians who were sometimes considered aliens. De Soignie considered that the distinction between Belgians and aliens was for most people too blurry to make it a clear-cut distinction, with his study on nationality legislation he wanted to rectify that.[[62]](#footnote-63) It was however not the absence of knowledge on the principles of nationality law as De Soignie claimed, but the lack of societal interest for the national category which explains that alien was a nebulous category. Also for the authorities the national category had little relevance. This is illustrated by the absence of data on the category nationality in the 19th century statistics. Only the place of birth was deemed important for classification, the authorities did not consider it opportune to collide information on the nationality of the inhabitants of Belgium.

The administrative practice in the field of nationality law points also out that the nationality of a person had very little relevance in 19th century society. Belgian nationality legislation was based on the Napoleonic codification of state-membership and combined the principles of birthplace, descent and domicile and would, after 1835 not be altered in the period envisaged here. The basic principle of Belgian nationality law was *jus sanguinis*, the Belgian nationality was transmitted by descent, from a father to his children, regardless of birthplace. This principle of descent was complemented with the possibility of choosing Belgian nationality for those who had been born in Belgium from foreign parents. The children born in Belgium of foreign parents were not attributed Belgian nationality, but were able to claim Belgian citizenship at majority. These aspiring Belgians were able to do so in the year following their reaching the age of majority (21) with a simple certificate of native birth.

An alien was also able to obtain Belgian nationality via naturalization. Ordinary naturalization gave the aliens the same rights as Belgians with the exception of the right to take part in national political life. To be able to file a request the candidate had to have reached the age of majority (21) and have lived in Belgium for a minimum of five years. A request for naturalization had to go through a rather long procedure, one part of which involved the House as well as the Senate passing a judgement on this petition. A naturalization request was also quite expensive, the registration alone costed 500 francs. Ordinary naturalization produced only politically incompetent citizenship. Complete political rights were only able to be awarded through *la grande naturalisation*. Foreigners could only receive the latter on initiative of the Belgian executive or legislative power and this because of special services foreigners rendered to Belgium. Granting of nationality was, in contrast with the aquisition of nationality not a right, but a favor. The state retained total discretionary powers in this field. When all formal conditions for ordinary naturalization were fulfilled Parliament could still judge whether or not to grant citizenship.[[63]](#footnote-64)

Most of the aliens who qualified for the claiming or granting of Belgian nationality, i.e. either they had been born in Belgium or had been residing in Belgium a minimum of five years, showed little interest in becoming Belgian. In the period 1810-1872, out of 1,569 adjudgements of nationality were 870, thus 55% granted to aliens for whom the Belgian nationality was necessary for their professional career. These servicemen, civil servants, shipping captains, teachers and teachers had every reason to become Belgian.[[64]](#footnote-65) The performed a public function and had to become Belgian. But professionally most immigrants, be they workers, entrepreneurs or traders had little or no reason to become Belgian. Another advantage of becoming Belgian was that one could enjoy political rights. Political rights were however not only contingent on Belgian nationality, but until far into the 19th century, also on the paying of taxes, on the possession of a certain amount of capital.Seen the limited advantages it is of no surprise that only a select group of immigrants aspired to membership of the Belgian nation. In particular labor who had immigrated into Belgium hardly claimed Belgian nationality, let alone applied for Belgian nationality. It was of little or no importance to them as being an alien in 19th century Belgium brought hardly any disadvantages.[[65]](#footnote-66) Certainly for the aliens born in Belgium there was hardly any difference in treatment of those who claimd Belgian nationality and those who retained their original nationality. Although the legislation on Belgian nationality did not honor a radical *jus soli,* within administrative pratice this was the central principle with which Belgian subjects were demarcated. The absence of statistics concerning those aliens who claimed Belgian nationality before 1871 is exemplary for the lack of interest for the formal bond which nationality is. These declarations of indigenousness were not conscientiously on file by the local authorities as being born in Belgium entitled them, at least in practice a treatment as a Belgian subject. The local authorities also glossed over their duty to inform the Sûreté of every claiming of Belgian nationality. The registration of the Department of Aliens was therefor imperfect.[[66]](#footnote-67) This administrative neglect is a clear indication that 19th century Belgium was at all nationalistic in its social reality.The brutality of its alien policy has to be put in this perspective.

**Chapter2: Alien Policy in the Heyday of Liberalism, 1861-1914**

**1.Towards a Firm Internal Immigration Control , 1860-1914**

After 1861 free mobility was reinstated by totally abandoning border control and passport regulations. This did not at all mean that control over aliens arriving in the country had been abolished. From 1846 onwards, all newcomers to a municipality, whether they were Belgians or aliens had to be registered in the population registers by the local authorities. For aliens who arrived at their first municipality in Belgium a specific procedure was introduced.

Local authorities could decide to expel immigrants if they came to their attention due to their arrest because of vagrancy or begging. The Sûreté did not have to be notified prior to their expulsion. This procedure had already been introduced in 1850 and continued to be valid. For all other aliens who had a means of livelihood the Sûreté had to be notified of their arrival by a form which had to give full information about the alien:their civil data, their last address abroad, their date of arrival in Belgium, their means of livelihood, their occupation...If the alien had any kind of identity document he could be recorded shortly afterwards in the population registers, at least if the Sûreté had no negative information on his antecedants. If no documents were submitted the alien got time to prove his identity.[[67]](#footnote-68) Being undocumented became much less of a problem, the lack of a livelihood became the main reason for removing aliens.

The liberalization of immigration to Belgium meant that aliens did not have to ask for permission to immigrate into Belgium. The offence of illegal immigration could no longer be used against the political activists by excellence, the refugees. There was also much less need for it, since the refugee problem had become much less of a priority in international relations. The crushing and lasting defeat of the revolutions of 1848 caused the conservative regimes to regain confidence. Stability returned to Europe and hardly any new dissidents were forced to leave their countries of origin. The fate of the older "refugees" was eased as one government after another offered amnesties to the former rebels forced to live abroad.

Until 1860, the pressure of foreign powers explained the restrictive asylum practice to a large degree. After 1860, the Belgian authorities considered the emerging Socialist movement a serious threat to the Belgian regime. Any strengthening of Socialism, if it were by activists who were forced to flee their country of origin, had to be prevented. These revolutionaries were not considered "refugees". This was obvious in the reception of the refugees who fled Paris in 1871, after the defeat of the Commune. They were considered to be criminals, no refugees.[[68]](#footnote-69) To hinder their immigration, passport requirements for French citizens were re-introduced. Not only a passport, but also from May 1871 onwards was a valid visa obligatory. As the fear for the refugees of the Commune diminished and as the closing of the border was unsuccessful anyway, the regulations were relaxed in November 1871. These immigrants, although not considered as refugees, could remain legally in Belgium if they registered, kept away from politics and found a way of supporting themselves.[[69]](#footnote-70)

Besides this momentarily political intervention which had anyway little effect the fluctuations in the number of expellees were largely a result of the business cycle. Destitute immigrants could, when there was a large labor demand, easily be absorbed by industry and agriculture. An oversupply of labor was, however, considered to be a danger to public order.[[70]](#footnote-71) Particularly after 1877 -during the recession of the last quarter of the 19th century- there was an increasing oversupply of labor. This recession, throughout the whole of Europe, forced more and more people to find a new livelihood. These, mostly uprooted peasants -the recession was primarily an agrarian depression- caused the number of wandering poor to increase. Belgian immigration regulations could not stop them from looking for a livelihood by crossing the Belgian border. The immediate response of the authorities was to expel thousands of destitute immigrants.[[71]](#footnote-72) Graph 2 illustrates the dramatic increase in the number of expulsions at the end of the 19th century. The continuous expulsion of alien vagrants did not seem to stop the flood, on the contrary the number of undesirable immigrants seemed to rise each year.

Continuous immigration, without clear economic need for additional manpower, caused harsher repression to be called for. The Sureté proposed that the Minister of Justice provide sanctions to prevent unauthorized return of unwanted aliens. If an alien who had residency status was removed from Belgian territory he risked a prison sentence of 15 days to six months upon his return for *rupture de ban d'expulsion*, while the alien without residency status ran no risk of punishment by a prison sentence. The Sureté considered that this had to be changed, also the latter’s return should be punished by a prison sentence.[[72]](#footnote-73) This provision did not become law, but an alternative with the same outcome was found.

In the 1880s aliens who did not have residency status in Belgium were expelled by Royal Decree for the first time. These migrants had been *renvoyé* numerous times, but each time they had returned to Belgium. Since they were now being expelled by Royal Decree a subsequent return would be punished. While in the 1880s, dozens of immigrants had been *expulsé* in this manner, at the turn of the decade this rose to more than hundred annually. The threat of imprisonment in Belgium did not necessarily stop these migrants from returning and most were subsequently condemned several times for returning to Belgium. In a random sample of 23 aliens who never acquired residency status but were expelled by Royal Decree anyway only six never returned to Belgium after the promulgation of the Royal Decree. The 17 others returned to Belgium and were expelled several times, if the Sûreté could catch them in time they were brought before court. On average these aliens were condemned four times for *rupture de ban d’expulsion*, one succeeded in the decade after his *expulsion* to be brought twelve times before court for this offence. Only then he did decide that returning to Belgium was too perilious to his liberty.

The judiciairy did not follow the repressive logic of the executive. Mostly the minimum sentence of 15 days imprisonment was meted out. In a sample of 61 judgements only twelve times were aliens punished with a prison sentence above one month and only once did a magistrate mete out the maximum sentence of 6 months imprisonment.[[73]](#footnote-74)

At the beginning of the 1890s the Administrator of the Sûreté judged the experiment not very positively. Repression seemed hardly to have any effect on the vagrants.[[74]](#footnote-75)

In 1892 the repressive strategy towards the wandering poor was re-oriented. As mentioned previously, the poor law of 1891 made a sharp distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Those who were destitute through no "fault" of their own were taken care of in so-called *maisons de refuge*. The undeserving poor were to be arrested and put to hard labor in the penal colony of Merksplas. While Belgian vagrants were arrested and possibly sentenced to forced labor, the policy towards the alien poor hardly changed with the new poor law of 1891. The vagrants and beggars of foreign nationality did not have to appear before the police court: they were "only" forced to leave the country. The re-education of these “asocial” persons was not the duty of the Belgian government. As a consequence was in 1891 questioning over nationality inserted in the interrogation protocol of the police and the gendarmerie. While earlier only place of birth had been requested, now nationality became suddenly of importance.[[75]](#footnote-76)

The Governor of Limburg criticized what he called the lax policy towards alien vagrants. He considered that the mere expulsion of these vagrants was discriminating against Belgians. Belgian vagrants were convicted, while aliens did not have to serve a sentence. In addition, and more importantly for the Governor, this expulsion policy was totally ineffective. It certainly did not stop aliens from coming to Belgium, even those immigrants who had been expelled returned the same day and the authorities were powerless to stop them. They could only take them back to the border. The governor of Limburg called for harsher repressive measures. He deemed the detention of these alien vagrants to be necessary, as a way of detering their return. He also considered a few exemplary convictions to be sufficient in order to keep poor migrants away from Belgium.[[76]](#footnote-77)

The head of the Sûreté was opposed to such a repressive policy. According to him, experience had shown that a more repressive policy would not yield any positive results, on the contrary, the effects of imprisonment would only be those of a bureaucratic burden and rising expenses for the Belgian treasury. The dissuading influence of the example would, according to the Administrator of the Sûreté, be minimal as the migrants were a highly mobile and amorphous group of people. The detention of a few alien migrants would hence not be known to the others and the alien poor, totally ignorant of the dangers waiting for him, would still immigrate to Belgium. Only the closing of the border -an illusory ambition- could stop immigration into Belgium.[[77]](#footnote-78)

Graph 2: Number of Aliens expelled, 1860-1900[[78]](#footnote-79) see book

 The Minister of Justice Lejeune tried to find a compromise. He accepted the point of view of the Administrator of the Sûreté that convicting all poor immigrants was not feasible, but he considered however that for the "recidivists" action had to be taken. It was unacceptable that aliens who had already been expelled simply returned. In January 1892 he ordered the immediate expulsion of the alien immigrants to continue, but he followed the Governor of Limburg by adding that all those aliens who had already been expelled once should also be convicted. If a poor alien dared to come back to Belgium for the third time -after a first condemnation and subsequent second expulsion- an imprisonment of two years would follow.[[79]](#footnote-80)

Already in April 1892 this strategy was modified. The Belgian vagrants realized very quickly that their non-Belgian companions in misfortunes were not brought before court and thus pretending to be alien could save also Belgian vagrants from a long-term imprisonment. Due to the large number of Belgian vagrants who posed as aliens in order to avoid a conviction the repression of alien vagrants was exacerbated. A first condemnation for vagrancy led, regardless of nationality to a minimum term of four month prison. During these four months the aliens were to be expelled. The authorities hoped to have filtered out in the meantime the pseudo-aliens, those vagrants -just as the other Belgians in Merksplas- had to serve longer prison sentences. Those aliens who were residing in Belgium were also not set free after four months. Their expulsion would be to no avail as they would return anyway, thus they were treated in the same manner as Belgians. If an expelled alien vagrant after a four month sojourn in the penal colony dared to return to Belgium he was to be sentenced to an eight month term. The alien inmates of the penal colonies turned out to be a troublesome lot. In contrast to the Belgians they used every opportunity to escape. Most of the aliens were thus confined in security barracks with a tight regime. When, in July 1892, 400 aliens started a hungerstrike to protest against overpopulation of their barracks and bad treatment the authorities curtailed the prison terms for aliens by half. A first condemnation implied two months penal colony and a second one four months etc...[[80]](#footnote-81)

In 1892 1,010 aliens were convicted and sent to a vagrant colony and subsequently, after serving their sentence expelled. The number of *renvoi* dropped in 1892 from about 8,000 to less than 3,000.[[81]](#footnote-82) The forces of law and order called the new strategy towards the wandering poor an unexpectingly great succes. Migration was being mastered: “Les vagabonds deviennent de plus en plus rares et d’ici peu les communes en seront complétement purgées.”[[82]](#footnote-83) The provincial authorities were less enthusiasticly. They had to take the brunt of the costs of the new policy. Two thirds of the expenses due to the imprisonnement of vagrants without a *domicile de secours* were charged to the provincial authorities on whose territory the vagrants were arrested. The central authorities remained adamant and did not succumb to this pressure. They evaluated the tough policy positively. According to the Minister of Justice Lejeune it was the only way to stop the rising “incursions du rebut de la population des pays voisins”.[[83]](#footnote-84) During the following years immigrants continued to be convicted and locked up in the vagrant colonies. In 1893 641 aliens entered the penal colonies, this rose to 857 in 1894 and 960 in 1895.[[84]](#footnote-85) As also the provincial authorities saw the advantage of the new policy and as anyway their protests were to no avail their protests subdued. Only the provinces of West Flanders continued to pledge for the return to the old policy of expelling all alien vagrants.[[85]](#footnote-86)

Also in the first half of the 1890s the authorities tried to exercise a greater control over the migrants who passed through Belgium on their way to the New World. An increasing number of migrants were turned down at the American shore, those among them who had departed from the port of Antwerp were repatriated to Belgium. Those stranded migrants were left in Belgium penniless and became a burden on public welfare. In August 1893 restrictions were set upon the entry of Russian emigrants. Russians heading for America had to prove sufficient funds to cover their passage to their homeland. Due to the difficulty in distinguishing at the border emigrants from other Russian travellers this policy had little effect.[[86]](#footnote-87)

Graph 3: Number of aliens convicted for begging and vagrancy and interned in a vagrant colony, 1893-1897[[87]](#footnote-88). he winter of 1895 witnessed a spectacular rise in aliens convicted of vagrancy or begging. Only very few of them were sent to the *maison de refuge*. The penal colony knew a sharp rise in foreign inmates. The worrying element for the authorities was that a hard core of vagrants had been convicted to ever longer prison terms in the penal colony. Graph 3 illustrates this repressive experiment. The repression had seemingly hardly any effect on these old offenders. The penal colony became overcrowded. As the Administrator of the Sûreté had predicted, the bureaucratic burden rose and the costs for the Belgian treasury jumped steeply and the return in the sense of controlling migration seemed to be limited.

In March 1896, the Minister of Justice returned to the old policy of expelling destitute aliens, if necessary several times. The vagrant colonies could liberate all their inmates of foreign nationality.[[88]](#footnote-89) The Gendarmerie received instructions to no longer bring foreign vagrants to the police courts to convict them, but instead to transport them immediately to the border without even informing the Sûreté. That Belgian vagrants would again pretend so as to be of foreign nationality not to be interned was a side-effect the authorities could hardly master. The Gendarmerie was called upon to be extremely vigilant in that respect.[[89]](#footnote-90)

The experiment of imprisoning the alien vagrants was short-lived. Notwithstanding the surplus in the supply of labor until the First World War, it was not repeated again. The whole procedure was considered too expensive and too burdensome. After this experiment, expulsion once again remained -as illustrated by graph 3- the main sanction against undesirable immigrants. The expulsion of alien vagrants by Royal Decree remained exceptional, it was still agreed upon that the experiences of the 1880s had shown that this had no effect whatsoever on the so-called *vagabonds d’habitude*.[[90]](#footnote-91) By the turn of the century it seems the memory of the lesson of the 1880s began to fade away. As illustrated by graph 4 a number of vagrants were, on demand of the Sûreté, again expelled by Royal Decree.[[91]](#footnote-92)

In the meantime, a new strategy had been implemented towards the wandering poor. Belgium had signed international agreements with most of its neighboring countries in the later decades of the 19th century as a solution to the humanitarian most pressing issues of the expulsion procedures. As Minister of Justice Lejeune declared in Parliament the expulsion of minor-aged, sick or invalid migrants was from a humanitarian point of view unacceptable.[[92]](#footnote-93) The authorities wanted by bilateral agreements to humanize their expulsion-policy. Initially these agreements were only meant to repatriate the insane. The agreement with Bavaria (21.2.1868) provided for the repatriation of its insane citizens in Belgium. With France there was also an agreement to redirect its insane citizens to French asylums close to the border. The agreement with Prussia (3.12.1868) provided not only for repatriation of the insane, but also for Prussians orphans in Belgium.[[93]](#footnote-94)

The provisions of these agreements extended considerably by the end of the 19th century. The treaty concluded with the German Empire in 1877 provided for the organized repatriation of destitute Germans who because of poor health or old age were no longer able to provide for their own livelihood. While previously at most the very young and the insane aliens had been repatriated now a larger group profited from this less cruel treatment. Instead of dumping elderly or invalid aliens at the border, Belgium and Germany now officially agreed to receive their unfortunate subjects and to provide for some (minimal) facilities when they returned.

These bilateral agreements curtailed the states’ expulsion powers since the nationality of the destitute person had to be decided upon unambiguously before one can proceed to expel. During the sometimes long diplomatic negotiations preceding the expulsion the person remained in charge of the state who wanted to expel him.[[94]](#footnote-95) This was clearly an humanization of the expulsion procedure, but only for a small minority of the expellees. It offered aslo the advntage of a less likely return of those people.[[95]](#footnote-96)

All other undesirable aliens were still dumped at the borders. By 1885 from which border was, however, no longer a matter of choice by the expellee. The expulsion procedure was in this sense radically modified in the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1885, the Sûreté abolished free choice for undesirable aliens as to which border they would be transported to. The undesirable aliens had to be sent back to their country of origin. If they were not originating from an adjacent country, they had to be expelled in the direction of that country.[[96]](#footnote-97) This radical rupture with the traditional practice of free choice was the result of a new, national logic in expulsion practice of the states of Continental Europe. For most of the 19th century the Belgian state had expelled the poor or otherwise undesirable immigrants at will. It was expedient for the Belgian authorities, but could impose considerable costs on the neighboring states. States sought to coordinate their expulsion practices. This effort at rationalizing the removal of undesirable aliens was sealed with diplomatic agreements. In 1877 a bilateral agreement with the German Empire had already been reached. As a consequence only German nationals were still to be expelled at the German border. A similar agreement with Luxemburg in 1882 restricted the nationalities which Belgium could dispose of at that border. Only Luxemburgers, Swiss and Italians could be removed at the Luxemburg border. In the 1880s the Dutch authorities started to bring any Spanish, French or Italian migrants which the Belgian authorities had brought to the Dutch border immediately to the Belgian border town of Visé. The Belgian authorities realized it was senseless to let the migrants of these nationalities decide themselves to be brought to the Dutch border. In this way Belgium would never get rid of them. From 1885 onwards they were expelled at the French border. The French retaliated quickly by sending all expellees from Belgium, except Frenchmen back to Belgium. In April 1886 the Sûreté ordered that only French citizens be brought to the French border.[[97]](#footnote-98) The removal of undesirable aliens from Belgium reached a stalemate.

Intense diplomatic efforts led to a bilateral agreement with the Netherlands in 1888. The Dutch authorities agreed upon the transit through their territory of Scandinavians and North Germans, but only if they were expelled at the Limburg border. A similar French-Belgian agreement was reached in 1896. The German Empire also concluded an agreement with Belgium in 1896 which tolerated the expulsion of those migrants who had to pass through Germany in order to reach "their" country. Treaties which stipulated that every country had to accept its own poor nationals who had emigrated or give free passage to those who had to be repatriated through their territory were concluded with all neighboring countries. Expulsions were no longer an unilateral affair. Constraints were imposed by the neighbouring countries.

When from 1885 onwards most undesirable aliens were no longer randomly expelled, but were send back to their country of origin special provisions were provided for refugees. Returning refugees back to their country of origin meant usually to extradite them to their country of persecution. The authorities considered that unacceptable, a special status for refugees was instaured. All destitute aliens who were to be expelled had to be questioned if they were searched for because of political reasons. If so the Sûreté had to be informed of these paupers who claimed to be refugees. Their allegations had to be verified and genuine refugees were to be granted sojourn.[[98]](#footnote-99)

The rational solution to expulsion practice on the base of state membership left however two groups of undesirable immigrants in limbo. Firstly, undesirable aliens from overseas (in particular British subjects, but also those from the Americas) could not be expelled in direction of "their" country without considerable costs. The Sûreté ordered their arrest so that the authorities could decide if they would deport them.[[99]](#footnote-100) The second group was considered much more disturbing. Travelling groups -people practicing ambulatory professions and travelling in family groups- were collectively considered as undesirable, but they were not easy to be disposed of.[[100]](#footnote-101) These travelling groups mostly had no clear nationality or were not willing to reveal it. Anyway, when the authorities did find out their nationalities, it turned out these groups were composed of members of diverse nationality and mostly originated from non-neighboring countries, thus their expulsion posed a problem. Certainly in the last decades of the 19th century when neighbouring countries refused entry to expellees from Belgium except for their own nationals Belgium was stuck with these unwanted immigrants. The old practice of bringing aliens secretly to the border without notifying foreign officials was still the official policy for these travelling groups. Irrespective of nationality they had to be dumped at the border they came from.[[101]](#footnote-102) Expulsion procedures were still not that rational, anarchy still existed at the borders.

**4.Immigrant Policy Meant to Integrate Settled Aliens, 1875-1914**

The alien law of 1835 had numerous successors, in which the original provisions had only been slightly modified. Finally in 1897 the alien law became a statute law. Aliens were still classified according to the three types of alien status which the alien law of 1835 had instaured: aliens without residency status, those with and the *domiciliés*.

Those without residency status could easily be disposed of. The Minister of Justice could decide arbitarily who was granted sojourn and who was refused permission to stay in Belgium (*renvoi*). As mentioned before immigrants who had no means of livelihood were deported. All the others had to declare their arrival with the municipal authorities and prove their identity, after which the Sûreté checked their antecedents. If the alien’s antecedents turned out to be negative, in particular if he had a criminial record or if the alien was considered a threat to the public order he had to leave the country.[[102]](#footnote-103)

Aliens who had declared their arrival with the municipal authorities and about whom the Sûreté did not have any negative information acquired, at least in the interpretation of the Sûreté, residency status, by this they were protected against arbitrairy expulsion. This administrative practice continued to be based on a vague article in the alien law which the Sûreté interpretated in an arbitrary manner. The interpretation of the Sûreté, an interpretation which granted them considerable power over the aliens, was that aliens only after their office approved of their sojourn could acquire residency status. Until 1897 the Administrator of the Sûreté continued to propose that the Minister of Justice revise the alien law and institutionalize the administrative practice, i.e. to insert unambiguously that de facto domicile did not grant any protection, that only after an officially approved stay could residency status be acquired.[[103]](#footnote-104) This insistence was to no avail, the alien law of 1897 copied the formulation of the law of 1835 and remained vague on the conditions of acquiring residency status The then Minister of Justice Begerem refused to clarify the vague wording of the conditions by which residency status was acquired as this would pin him down to a clear procedure. A procedure which by a liberal intervention of Parliament could even put all immigrants, even if they were undesirable under the rule of law. Then administrative power over aliens would be abolished and immigration policy would be much more difficult to implement.[[104]](#footnote-105) Anyway very few aliens who did not acquire residency status -mostly poor and illiterate migrants- had recourse to the judiciairy, so the conflicts between the judiciairy and the executive branch of the state were limited..[[105]](#footnote-106)

The status of *domicilié* remained an exceptional favor, but only for well to do aliens. In the 1880s, 370 aliens recieved this status, in the next two decades their number declined considerably; 200 in the 1890s and only 160 in the decade thereafter (see graph 24).[[106]](#footnote-107) The status of *domicilié* lost some of its prerogatives, so was this status no longer necessary to be eligible for public welfare (see further). The aliens who had this status remained legally equal to the nationals.

Aliens married to Belgian women who had recognized a child born during their sojourn in Belgium were added as another category of denizens in the alien law from 1865 onwards. From 1880 onwards this category was extended since foreign husbands of Belgian women who had sojourned at least five years in Belgium were also equated to Belgians. In 1874 the legislature inserted a third category of denizens in the alien law: aliens born in Belgium until the period had passed in which they could claim Belgian nationality (the latest at age 23).[[107]](#footnote-108)

The Administrator of the Sûreté did not appreciate that there were already three denizens categories. He considered it a nuisance since it limited the power his office wielded over aliens.[[108]](#footnote-109) The legislative power did not take his objections into account and when the law of 1897 made the alien law finally a statute law those three categories of denizens were enumerated in the law.[[109]](#footnote-110)

The power which the Sûreté wielded over aliens was used in a similar manner as in the previous period. The expulsion of political activists among the immigrants was still an important task to which the Sûreté had dedicated itself. This was no longer to deflect any external threat, but to safeguard the regime. The authorities considered that the country was now endangered by social radicalism linked to an international revolutionary movement. Immigrants of “revolutionary” persuasion, whether they were refugees or not had to be thwarted in their attempts to undermine the regime. About 250 aliens were expelled by Royal Decree between 1890 and the outbreak of the First World War because of political reasons.[[110]](#footnote-111) These expulsions had to be decided by the Council of Ministers, but many more activists were expelled after committing an offence, in particular aliens who were convicted because of restricting freedom of labor (article 310 of the penal code) were as a rule expelled.[[111]](#footnote-112) Other political activitists were expelled by the Minister of Justice (*renvoyer*) before they even were granted residency status.

The Sûreté still did not take into account the interest of the popular classes when implementing alien policy. For the authorities the hiring of labor, even if they were immigrants was considered a private affair of the employers. The state had no business in this. Only economic factors had to be taken into consideration.[[112]](#footnote-113) This implied that employers could freely use even foreign labor as strike breakers. Employers called on Germans during a port strike in 1907 in Antwerp, on Italians during a strike in the quarries of Ecaussines in 1899... When special skills were required to replace the strikers, the recruitment of foreigners was sometimes the only solution for employers who did not want to yield to the demands of labor.[[113]](#footnote-114) This feature declined in importance just before the First World War, as the intervention of the government in social conflicts forced employers to be more accommodating to the demands of labor.

Besides political activists, aliens residing in Belgium who had become unemployed and destitute were another target for expulsion. The extremely restricted attitude, at least formally in the period 1845-1875 was, however strongly mitigated. The poor law of 14.3.1876 stipulated that the status of *domicilié* was no longer necessary to obtain a *domicile de secours* by which one could recieve locally organized public welfare. Aliens who had lived for at least five years in one municipality became eligible for local welfare. While up until 1876 the central authorities had assumed financial responsibility for the support of destitute aliens, part of this responsibility was transferred to the local authorities. All the other immigrants continued to be dependent on the central state-authorities for welfare, their falling into poverty could imply an expulsion.

The stable, long-term resident alien was now treated just like any Belgian claiming welfare. The basic aim of this reform was to institutionalize this practice and at the same time to alleviate the state treasury. The law had, however, a loophole. If aliens became dependent on municipal welfare the municipality could ask the central authorities to expel them.[[114]](#footnote-115) The Minister of Justice warned the communes however that this was not a backdoor by which they could shirk their new responsibility. De facto had the reform of the poor law to improve the lot of the settled aliens who fell into poverty, the provison that enabled the central authorities to expel settled aliens who became destitute had as far as the spirit of the law was concerned not to be used. The Minister of Justice motivated the provision written in the law enabling their expulsion by referring to the treatment of Belgians abroad. In order to be able to protect Belgian emigrants, the Belgian state had to be able to retaliate if injustice was done to them. In the period envisaged there was no need for retaliation and long-term residents aliens ran no risk of expulsion when applying for public welfare.[[115]](#footnote-116) Even those aliens who resided in Belgium, but did not acquire a *domicile de secours* were not necessarily expelled when destitute. The state spend annualy about 350.000 francs to alleviate the needs of these alien poor. The changing of the poor law in 1891 limited even more the possibility of expelling long-term residents because of destitution. It reduced the requirement for obtaining a *domicile de secours* by two years. Residing three years in a commune granted any inhabitant, be they Belgian or alien, a *domicile de secours*.

The principle was laid down clearly: settled aliens were to be treated in the same manner as the Belgians, but the central authorities remained free to make exceptions.[[116]](#footnote-117) Even vagrants or beggars of foreign nationality, who had been living in Belgium for a while were treated as Belgians vagrants and after 1891 were also to be interned. To prevent aliens from becoming a burden on the local and national welfare budget was still an issue, but only for the recently arrived immigrants.

As mentioned before the leeway the state retained to make exceptions and to expel settled aliens who became destitute was to induce other states to reach bilateral agreements with Belgium to provide for social assistance to Belgians residing abroad. Starting in the 1880s and especially in the second half of the 1890s international cooperation became succesful. While already in 1848 the Belgian authorities had inserted a provision in the poor law to support destitute immigrants if Belgians were treated in the same manner by the alien’s country of origin this had hardly resulted in international cooperation. It took some time for similar provisions in the poor law of 1876 to have some effect. In the last quarter of the 19th century Belgium concluded agreements with Germany, Italy and Switzerland which provided for social assistance for their emigrants in Belgium under the condition of reciprocity and provided if necessary also for their eventual repatriation.[[117]](#footnote-118) With France no such agreement was concluded as the French authorities refused any binding agreement in this field.[[118]](#footnote-119)

The state policy to integrate settled aliens was even more articulated in the legislation governing nationality.[[119]](#footnote-120)

In 1874 the liberal-left MP Guillery submitted to Parliament an amendment of the Alien Act. He proposed to equate all aliens born in and residing in Belgium with the priviledged aliens who could not be expulsed. The Minister of Justice, de Lantsheere, wanted only partially to comply with this proposal, he proposed that aliens born in Belgium only be protected against expulsion up to age 23, until the period in which they could submit their request for Belgian nationality had elapsed. If they did not make use of this opportunity offered to them to become Belgian then no other protection should be offered to them. They had then chosen to remain aliens for the rest of their lives. Of the 68 Members of Parliament present during the vote on this amendment , 33 supported Guillery’s generous proposal, while 35 backed that of de Lantsheere.[[120]](#footnote-121) In the following years a number of changes in the law would be implemented that presented opportunities for Belgian born aliens to protect themselves against expulsion. Again and again, this was, however, dependent on becoming Belgian. The abstract, legal tie became essential to be able to enjoy the protection of the Belgian state. These changes in the law had a noncontroversial character, they obtained approval by concensus in Parliament.It was considered that an alien born in Belgium was, in fact, a Belgian.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the legislator provided three times an opportunity for amnesty for those Belgian born aliens who had neglected to claim Belgian nationality by a declaration at age of majority of indigenousness.[[121]](#footnote-122) This openness towards aliens was also expressed by the Law of August 8,1881 which declared children born in Belguim, whose parents were unknown, Belgian.[[122]](#footnote-123) The law of 1888, which lowered the age in which one was entitled to claim Belgian nationality to 18 was another indication that the policy makers wanted to facilitate the integration of settled aliens in the national community. These de facto Belgians were actually harmed by the procedure of claiming nationality by a declaration of indigenousness at age of majority. They had to wait until they were 21 to be able to take on a function in the government administration, to begin officer training in the military academy or to file a request for a scholarship for higher education. Moreover many of them were drafted for military service in their country of origin. By accelerating accesibility to Belgian nationality these de facto Belgians avoided from being obliged to fulfill their military obligations elsewhere. This law evolved from the conviction that the discrimination between Belgians and the de facto Belgians had to be kept to a minimum. Not only was access to Belgian nationality more readily available to aliens born in Belgium, this was also the case for immigrants born abroad. The Law of August 6,1881 drastically liberalized the procedure of the *grande naturalization*.It was considered that the antagonism between the material and political interests of these aliens had to be suspended, it was contrary to the country’s interests.[[123]](#footnote-124) Aliens who had settled in Belgium were to be integrated politically. In analogy with the right to vote then in effect, a distinction was made between married and unmarried persons. A married alien of at least 25 years of age who had already been residing in Belgium for 10 years could request *la grande naturalisation*. The others had to have reached the age of 50 and a residence of a minimum of 15 years was demanded. The criteria for requesting ordinary naturalization had not been changed, but the price of a request for any of the two types of naturalization had been halved.[[124]](#footnote-125) This amendment led to an important increase in the number of naturalizations, in particular of the *grande naturalisation* (see graph 25).[[125]](#footnote-126)

This liberalisation of nationality legislation was paired with a growing importance of possessing the Belgian nationality in societal life. This breakthrough of the principle of nationality is illustrated by the sudden appearance of data on the category nationality at the end of the 19th century. Only in 1880 did the local authorities have to ask for the nationality of an alien arriving in their municipality.[[126]](#footnote-127) It was not until 1890 that a column was reserved in the population register for nationality, it was also in that year that the population census counted the population of Belgium by nationality for the first time. Before, only the place of birth was deemed important for classification. The change of classification of the population, now on the base of nationality is the crystallization point of the state putting a new, national order into society.

This was most spectacular expressed in the political realm- all male Belgians got the franchise-, but possessing Belgian nationality in the social domain also had important repercussions, as illustrated in 1891 by the greatly differentiated treatment of Belgian and foreign vagrants.

The political democratization at the end of the 19th century caused the status of Belgian to gain importance. The government correctly stated in the explanatory memorandum of the ballot act of March 25, 1894 which introduced plural voting for all male Belgians that “for many citizens the importance of having Belgian nationality is only just coming into being.”[[127]](#footnote-128) The democratization of the political system made clear that the local authorities did not apply the determination of nationality in a very conscious manner. Disputes over the status of Belgian rose sharply with the democratization of the right to vote. The municipal authorities in the district of Antwerp in 1900, 1901 and 1902 mistakenly registered 378 people on the electoral lists because they thought that they were Belgian. At the order of the Court of Appeals in Brussels they were struck from the registers since they were actually aliens.[[128]](#footnote-129) Many people who thought that they were Belgian had to ascertain to their amazement that they were in fact aliens. Many aliens who had been born in Belgium had neglected to acquire Belgian nationality on reaching the age of majority. They thought, erroneously, that given their long period of residence in Belgium -a sojourn that sometimes encompassed generations- that they were Belgian. Not only they themselves but also everyone in their immediate surroundings took these aliens for Belgians.

The state machinery increasingly had to monitor the nationality of inhabitants of Belgium, but this turned out to be extremely difficult due to administrative inadequacies. Concretely to be Belgian, proof had to be given that a predecessor who had been born in Belgium had claimed Belgian nationality upon reaching the age of majority or was granted Belgian nationality by naturalization.[[129]](#footnote-130) Whereas Belgians of foreign origin whose predecessors had been granted the Belgian nationality had no problem establishing this as all granting of nationality by naturalization was conscientiously publicized in the Belgian statute book, those whose predecessors had claimed Belgian nationality could have quite a bit of difficulty obtaining proof of their being Belgian. This claiming of Belgian nationality was less meticulously documented. Many municipal officials did not understand the importance of careful accounts of these declarations of indigenousness. They also had to inform the central authorities of these declarations but apparently this was glossed over. The central registration at the Department of Aliens was therefor not perfect at all.[[130]](#footnote-131) From 1882 on, the clerk of the local court’s office also had to be sent a copy of the aquisition of nationality, but this also was rarely observed.[[131]](#footnote-132)

The changes in the nationality legislation of the 1880s were not able to clear away the ambiguity concerning the verification of Belgian nationality. A sojourn in Belgium -even if it stretched over generations- was no guarantee of Belgian nationality. Parliament hoped to circumvent disputes over the nationality of newly enfrancised inhabitants through inserting the clause in the electoral law of August 22,1885 and also in the law of April 4, 1894 that every person born in Belgium to a father born in Belgium was to be considered Belgian. Only if a proof could be provided that a person was an alien were the municipal authorities entitled to refuse the franchise.[[132]](#footnote-133) This clause preceded an amendment to the Civil Code announced by the government. Belgian nationality would automatically be granted to aliens born in Belgium who had been residing in Belgium five years preceding their reaching the age of majority.[[133]](#footnote-134) The alteration to the modalities of acquisition of nationality would, however, linger on for years. Only in 1909 would this, slightly modified be voted by the legislator: all persons born in Belgium and who, in 1909, had been residing in Belgium at least six years and whose father was also born in Belgium, were declared Belgians. The Belgian nation was now defined unambiguously.

The Law of 1909 modified in this manner the acquisition of Belgian nationality by aliens born in Belgium from a declaration of indigenousness to an automatic bestowing of the nationality. Aliens born in Belgium of whom one of the parents also was born in Belgium became automatically Belgian upon reaching the age of majority. The liberalization of the acquisition of nationality went much farther than the double *jus soli*. Aliens born in Belgium whose father had resided at least ten years in Belgium or who had lived there themselves at least six years also acquired Belgian nationality upon reaching the age of majority.[[134]](#footnote-135) The legislator viewed in particular passing the school years in Belgium as a deciding factor in becoming Belgian.[[135]](#footnote-136)

The old procedure of nationality acquisition: a simple declaration of native birth upon reaching the age of majority remained valid for all aliens born in Belgium. An amnesty analogous with those of 1879, 1881, and 1894 allowed those aliens born in Belgium, who had exceeded the age of majority, to still be able to acquire Belgian nationality.

The large number of aliens that made use of the opportunity for amnesty is a clear sign of the increasing importance of nationality: 2,768 in 1897, 847 in 1881 847, 4,862 in 1894 and 3.476 between 1909 and 1911.[[136]](#footnote-137) Another indication of the importance of the status of Belgian is the increasing number of aliens that claimed Belgian nationality by a declaration of indigenousness and in particular those who already claimed Belgian nationality before coming of age as illustrated in graph 26.[[137]](#footnote-138)

Notwithstanding the growing impact of the national category in social life, the mere presence of aliens was still hardly a matter for public preoccupation. When the Central Commission for Statistics in 1902 proposed to compose a distinct table concerning the aliens in Belgium within their publication of the population census of 1900 this was refuted. It was considered inopportune.[[138]](#footnote-139)

The aliens sojourning in Belgium were not considered a problem and, in order to prevent that the nationalization of Belgian society would exclude them from the advantages which they as settled aliens were considered eligible for the authorities implemented the above mentioned measures to include these aliens in Belgian society. The Belgian state promoted the inclusion of the settled aliens in the national community.

At the same time some powerful industries advocated an organized recruitment of foreign labor. In contrast to the public authorities these employers did not want to integrate these immigrants. They aimed at segregating these aliens from the Belgian society. The goal of the recruitment of immigrants was to make subservient workers out of them.

The mining industry, especially in the Centre basin was confronted with a labor shortage after 1910 looked for ways to increase its intake of unqualified migrants. The Belgian labor supply was not sufficient, even the Flemish workers could make use of the tight labor market by making their employment in the lowest rug of the occupational ladder dependent on a quick transfer to the category of better paid, qualified miners. In order to have enough ancillary workers (haulers etc.) throughout the whole year, the mining industry searched for a new source of labor.

In 1911 two mining companies in the Centre basin, the mine of Ressaix in Péronnes-lez-Binche and Bascoup-Mariemont in Morlanwelz, recruited 127 Galician workers through the Krakow-based emigration organization *Polskie Towarzystwo Emigracyjne*.[[139]](#footnote-140) Management judged the experience positively and advocated more recruitment abroad.[[140]](#footnote-141) In all the other mine basins, just before the First World War management started to think about systematic recruitment of aliens as a solution to their labor shortage. Galicia, but also Italy, were considered as sources of manpower.In the basin of Charleroi, the mine of Marcinelle Nord recruited Polish workers.[[141]](#footnote-142) Some mines in the basin of Liège looked for manpower in Italy, but the recruitment from the neighboring countries, Germany and the Netherlands, also increased in those years.[[142]](#footnote-143) The number of aliens employed in the mines remained small, at most 5% of the miners were non-Belgians. It was , however, a novelty that heralded the growing dependence of the Belgian mines on foreign labor.[[143]](#footnote-144) The future exploitation of the newly discovered coal deposits of Limburg (Flanders) would especially necessitate an intake of foreign labor. It would be impossible to fulfill the expected need for 20 to 30,000 miners in this basin by only Belgians, and the mining companies counted on the future recruitment of about 5,000 foreigners, probably Italians or Poles.[[144]](#footnote-145)

The miners' union, however, opposed the recruitment of aliens. The solution to the shortage of labor for the mines they advocated was the improvement of the working conditions and the increase of wages. Also technological investment, which would increase the miners' productivity, was part of their solution. The Socialist miners' union did realize, however, that at least for the exploitation of the new Limburg coal basin immigrants would be necessary. Organizing these immigrants in the unions would be necessary, but the union realized that this would be a difficult task.[[145]](#footnote-146)

This official position of the miners' union should not make us think that the recruitment of foreign labor was merely imposed on local labor. On the contrary, in the few mines where aliens were recruited, it seemed rather to be a corporate solution than a employers' strategy to divide and weaken labor. Although corporatism was only a genuine feature of Belgian political economy after the Second World War, there were already at the end of the 19th century some isolated attempts to accommodate labor. In Mariemont-Bascoup, a large mine of the Centre basin, management invited labor to discuss most aspects of the policy of the mine related to labor. Raoul Warocqué, the "enlightened" director of this mine had, after a general strike of "his" miners in 1875-76, reflected about the possibilities for preventing further conflicts with his labor force. He introduced shortly afterwards *Chambres d'explication* and in 1888 a *Conseil de conciliation*. In this harbinger of modern industrial relations, the question was put to the labor representatives in 1911 what they thought about the prospect of recruitment of foreign labor. Raoul Warocqué proposed recruiting aliens, Chinese or Polish for the ancillary tasks, “aliens who one could consider of lower order, who would never be skilled workers (*des ouvriers*).”[[146]](#footnote-147) Management proposed to limit the occupational mobility of these aliens so that they never could become competitors with local labor. This proposition was endorsed by the workers. The shortage of menial laborers in the mines also caused discontent among the local miners. They were forced to do the menial tasks so that their wages fell. The recruitment of aliens would enable them to stick to their better paid work and the fact that in the long run no competition by those immigrants was to be feared pleased them in particular. There had already been some conflicts between local labor as Flemish migrants were promoted to qualified labor; this had been resented by local labor. The recruitment of these aliens would at least prevent such disputes.

**3.Inchaote regulation of immigration into Belgium, 1919-1924**

In this chapter we analyze the dynamic in labor migration into Belgium during the first half of the 1920s. We will first look to see if the Belgian state dropped its laissez-faire attitude in immigration matters. The democratization of the electorate and the participation of Socialists (and Christian Democrats) in the government, concomitant with recognizing a role for the trade unions in industrial relations and an expansion of social legisation changed the nature of the Belgian state. By 1922 -the upsurge of immigration into Belgium- the trade unions and one of their political allies, the Socialist Party had already lost most of their political clout. The Cabinet Theunis had no more Socialist Ministers.

Although the acceleration of immigration provoked the reaction of the trade unions, no direct influence on the state-policy can be discerned. The traditional immigration policy, however, underwent an important, but only short-lived, change. The hallmarks of the new immigration policy were priority for Belgian labor and the funneling of foreign workers into labor-short sectors. This innovation, albeit without many consequences for migration into Belgium will be highlighted as it can be considered a prelude to the state-policies to come.

In this chapter we will also look into the role of the authorities of emigration countries. We will see that some countries facilitated and even organized emigration of their citizens, while others curtailed the possibilities of their citizens to find a livelihood abroad. The very different motivations of these policies will be analyzed.

The employers and especially the mining companies are another group which will be focused on. Just before the First World War the mining industry, due to labor shortages had organized labor migration of Belgium. These labor shortages increased considerably in the beginning of the 1920s and extended even beyond the mining industry. To what extent did the employers influence migration to Belgium? Did labor migrants, arriving spontaneously fill those jobs or was manpower attracted through recruitment schemes. Finally, we will touch upon the role of the migrants themselves in setting up the dynamic of labor migration to Belgium.

**1.A Blacklash of the War, Restritions in Nationality Legislation**

After the German occupation of Belgium Belgians of German extraction who had een disloy to their new nation were singled out for the most severe puishment a state could inflict upon a national: the banishment from the nation. Originally the government had provided for the possiblility of punishing Belgian collaborators, regardless of the origin of their nationality, by revoking their nationality. In the final version of the law, only Belgians who had acquired their nationality on the basis of the law of 1881 and 1909 were targeted. For the first time a fundamental difference was made between Belgians by birth or naturalization and Belgians by descent.[[147]](#footnote-148) Not all Belgians were equal before the law, the punishment for collaboration by “new” Belgians was much more severe. The shaken faith in the Belgians of foreign origin caused the liberal nationality legislation of 1909 to be revised substantially. The so-called ‘s naive trust of the legislator in 1909 had to be remedied.

The Royal Decree of May 15, 1922 did away with the automatic bestowing of Belgian nationality on Belgium-born aliens. One did no longer become Belgian just by residing in Belgium, being Belgian became more subjectively shaded. The candidate-Belgian had to show an affective bond with Belgium. He had to publically declare this by choosing Belgian nationality upon reaching the age of majority. It had to be a conscious descision.

The criteria for being able to choose Belgian nationality were also was tightened. As opposed to the law of 1909, the place of birth or residence in Belgium by the parents was no longer seen as relevant by the legislator. As opposed to the law of 1909 the law of 1922 further qualified the six-year period of residence necessary for Belgian born aliens to become Belgium as it stipulated that, in any case, the candidate had to reside in Belgium between the age of 14 and 18. This period was presented as crucial for the forging of an affective bond with Belgium. After all, during these years, young people were intellectually and morally formed, it was the period “où l’ambiance et l’éducation marquent leur empreint de la façon la plus décisive sur les jeunes gens.”[[148]](#footnote-149) A period of residence in Belgium of a minimum nine years before reaching the age of majority was added by Parliament as sufficient for being able to choose the Belgian nationality. According to the members of Parliament, the stay in Belgium during the childhood years created an emotional bond with Belgium as well.

Every candidat for Belgian nationality also had to give up his former nationality. This disclaiming of nationality made dual citizenship impossible. The legislator intended that one was not able to take on the obligations of two states, these obligations, after all, could run in conflict with eachother. The war had clearly shown this.

The required length of residence, the requirement that one give up one’s former nationality and birth in Belgium were still not seen as sufficient for granting Belgium-born aliens Belgian nationality. It was still possible that these aspiring Belgians were not true Belgians. The judicial powers received a discretionary authority over the acquistion of nationality. They had to check into whether the candidate for Belgian nationality could be counted on by the Belgian nation. The court, as sentinel to the entryway to Belgian nationality, was to have access to all relevant information about these candidates.[[149]](#footnote-150) The proper publicity also had to be given to their claiming of Belgian nationality: it had to be posted in the newspaper, on the wall of the city hall, and outside the residence of the candidate for Belgian nationality. Anyone who thought that this Belgium-born alien who aspired to become Belgian could be imputed of a lack of loyalty with regard to his future home could inform the court.

As a result of these amendments the number of aquistions of Belgian nationality fell (see graph 26). Upon evaluation of this decrease one naturally has to bear in mind the increase in the number of aliens in Belgium from the beginning of the 20th century onwards.

The naturalization procedure was also amended by the law of 1922. In spite of the introduction of the universal single vote system, the *grande naturalisation* was not abolished. The elitist 19th century political system continued to be valid for naturalized Belgians, those who had received only an ordinary naturalization remained politically impotent. But the criteria for the *grande naturalisation* did become more lax. Full citizenship could now be applied for after a ten-year period of residence in Belgium from the age of 25 onwards. As opposed to the law of 1881 the criteria were independant of marital status. All aliens now fell under the conditions required for the *grande naturalisation* that the Law of 1881 had provided for married aliens. The number of *grande naturalisation*skyrocketed (see graph 25). The criteria for application for ordinary naturalization had hardly been changed. The number of ordinary naturalizations also increased to a limited degree.

**2.The State Attempts at Immigration Control**

After the liberation of Belgium regulation of immigration was immediately instaured. The Belgian authorities introduced visa-requirements, in particular subjects of enemy-countries had to have a passport with a Belgian visa in order to enter Belgium.

All immigrants, once in Belgium, had to apply for an identity card. The identity card was introduced in 1919 for all inhabitants of Belgium, Belgians and aliens alike. Any inhabitant of Belgium who was registered in the population register recieved an identity card. While for Belgians this was a mere administrative formality, for aliens the granting of an identity card following the inscription in the population register was depend on the decision of the central authorities. First of all the exact identity of the alien had to be established. This depended on having a passport, if applicable with a visa. On the base of this information the judicial antecedents of the aliens were checked to keep out those with a criminal record. Minister of Foreign Affairs Delacroix considered that the need for a passport and the application for an identity card would enable the authorities to keep all undesirable aliens out of the country. Delacroix assured that the granting of an identity card would b preceded by a detailed investigation.[[150]](#footnote-151)

The main aim of instauring the control over immigration in 1919 was to keep Germans and aliens with a criminal record out of the country.[[151]](#footnote-152) The interests of labor not to increase the competion on the slack labor market were only slowly taken into consideration. Although the Department responsible for visa-policy stated that it guaranteed that no immigrant who was granted a visa came to Belgium to supplant local labor, the Minister of Foreign Affairs only explicitly ordered the embassies in January 1921 to take social considerations into accountwhenever a blue or white collar worker applied for a visa.[[152]](#footnote-153) Immigration control remained largely fictitious, as most immigrants had not to carry a visa upon entry, but even the visa-requirement for the citizens of enemy-countries, except Germans was not strictly adhered to. Illegal immigration as such -thus without passport and eventually visa- was not considered a reason to deny sojourn.[[153]](#footnote-154)

In 1922 there was an unprecedented upsurge in immigration into Belgium. The immigrants did not settle anymore as in the 19th century in the cosmopolitan cities Antwerp and Brussels, but also in the industrial basins. These newcomers were resented by the local population in these industrial regions as an intrusion. Their arrival was portrayed as an invasion of foreign proletarians over whom there was no control whatsoever. Strangers which brought along numerous dangers: social radicalism, exotic diseases, amoral behaviour, crime etc.[[154]](#footnote-155) Typical in this respect was the psychosis around syphilis. A Limburgian Catholic newspaper asserted that most newcomers were infected by syphilis.

"Now, about the Italians one gave us the illustrative and horrifying detail that 50% of these incoming guests are contaminated by the filthy venereal disease, syphilis. That is horrible, especially when one considers that those men infected will be mixed with our people, will sleep in the same beds as our men and will mix their blood with blood of our sane Limburgian people"[[155]](#footnote-156)

The Socialist trade unionist and the authorities alike took this rumor for granted.[[156]](#footnote-157) The Red Cross and the *Ligue Nationale contre le Péril Vénérien* discussed urgent measures to be implemented.[[157]](#footnote-158) The Minister of Public Health ordered an investigation and it turned out that there was no reason for panic. The assertments of the press were completely false. Infection among the immigrants was not higher than among the Belgians.[[158]](#footnote-159)

In any case, the panic had triggered off an awareness within government circles that immigrants could pose serious health risks. The governments' main objective at that time (the cabinet Theunis) was to reduce the budget-deficit. Immigrants had to be prevented from increasing expenses in the field of public health. The public authorities pressured the mining companies to pay attention to the medical condition of their foreign labor.[[159]](#footnote-160)

Especially the above mentioned psychosis around syphilis in 1923 meant that the mining companies made a considerable effort to detect the immigrants infected and eventually to treat them medically.[[160]](#footnote-161) This specific interest in the health condition of these immigrants grew only out of the fear for restriction in immigration.[[161]](#footnote-162) There was also a preoccupation in this whole endeavor with the condition of the qualified part of their labor force. Some mining companies provided medical treatment and eventually covered medical expenses of the immigrants, but the companies did it only for those immigrants whom they considered not replacable manpower. Unqualified hands were of course not considered so.[[162]](#footnote-163)

Immigrants were not only percieved as a health risk, but also as a political danger. Especially the Catholic Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar saw these migrants as a dangerous lot. His virulent anti-communism meant that he saw most of those migrants as bolsheviks. In addition, his Germanophobia meant that he considered all emigrants from Central Europe as Germanophiles, even Northern Italians were, according to him not exempt from esteem for the former enemy.[[163]](#footnote-164)

Certainly as important, but not uncontested was the perception of this immigration as a social danger. Most of these immigrants, argued Jaspar responded to labor market shortages which were only of a temporary nature. Belgian labor was attracted by the higher salaries paid in the reconstruction projects of the North of France and after reconstruction those workers would return to Belgium. The presence of a considerable number of foreign laborers would ultimately cause unemployment. This would on its turn increase government expenses (unemployment benefits) and could even create social disorder. Immigrant labor should be channeled to those segments of the labor market where there was a temporary labor shortage, but as soon as the Belgians returned the aliens should be removed. H.Jaspar argued that the state should acquire a new role, the protection of the national labor market.[[164]](#footnote-165)

This consideration was not shared by the also Catholic Minister of Agriculture A.Ruzette, who saw no need for a new role of the state. He argued that the state should not intervene in the labor market. An increase in the labor supply was only advantageous. Ruzette's opposition resulted in the exemption of the agrarian labor market from the newly to be developed state policy. The demarcation line which was drawn between the agrarian and industrial labor market was partly the result of the exceptional tense conditions on the agrarian labor market. More important was the absence of organizations of agrarian workers. The adherence to the 19th century liberalism for which agrarian interests strongly lobbied was not challenged.[[165]](#footnote-166)

The three above mentioned considerations (public order, safeguarding for nationals of the industrial labor market and curtailing public expenditure) led to the introduction of a restrictive immigration policy for industrial labor from April 1923 onwards.

The modalities of this policy were the following: every immigrant who wanted to work in Belgian industry had to apply for a residence permit, either at the embassy if he needed a visa to immigrate, or at the provincial authorities if he was already in the country. Also migrants who had not to carry a visa upon immigration were to receive this residence permit at the provincial authorities. The immigrant had to submit a certificate of nationality, a labor contract, a medical certificate and a certificate of good conduct. If the Sûreté, by a routine search of the criminal record determined that the immigrants posed no danger to public order and if the Ministry of Labor concluded that the immigrant responded to a labor market need, then the immigrant was granted a short term residence permit (duration of 3 or 6 months). Every extension of this residence permit depended on the above mentioned considerations. It would enable the authorities to react quickly to changes in the labor market and in particular to prevent aliens to enter segments of the labor market where there were no labor shortages. Largely due to diplomatic reasons this probation period was limited to two years, then acquired immigrants residency status.[[166]](#footnote-167)

Only labor contracts with a repatriation clause were considered valid for the granting of a temporary residence permit. This would guarantee that the immigrants would leave as soon as the state of the labor market deteriorated. The certificate of nationality had to make sure that the country to which the migrant had to return was clearly established.

This new immigration policy was short-lived. 4,037 migrants who worked or wanted to work in Belgian industry asked between March 22, 1923 and February 3, 1924 for a temporary residence permit. At the advice of the labor-exchange offices and the Sûreté 80% of the applicants were granted such a residence permit.[[167]](#footnote-168) The number of applicants fell sharply by the middle of 1923 and in March 1924 the regulation of industrial migrant labor was revoked.

The revocation of this new immigration policy was the result of the strong opposition it encountered. First of all, heavy industry was strongly opposed to this new regulation of immigration. Although the employers agreed on the need for a state control over immigration, this regulation, they argued should only aim at eliminating politically dangerous elements. They disapproved of any consideration of protection of the labor market. Immigration was necessary for a smooth functioning of the economy. In addition, regulation based on the state of the labor market would only increase the power of the trade-unions, as they controlled the public labor exchange-offices which had to evaluate the needs of the labor market.[[168]](#footnote-169) The mining companies especially criticized the obligation to guarantee the repatriation of the immigrants they called upon. The mining industry hired a large number of migrants, who considered the mines only as a stepping stone to other occupations. The mining companies could not finance the repatriation of all these temporary miners. They argued that this spill-over to other industrial sectors was no problem, as the industries where these migrants ultimately found their livelihood also had a shortage of labor. The crux of the argument of the mining industry was that their recruitment campaigns were beneficial to the global Belgian economy as the attraction of migrant workers alleviated the tensions on the overall labormarket.[[169]](#footnote-170)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar tried to rebut these criticisms by pointing out that the mining companies could make the immigrants pay for their repatriation. A regular deduction from the immigrants' salary would soon yield the sum of money necessary for a return ticket. And if immigrants left for other industries, the new employer became responsible for their repatriation. The new state policy was however designed to limit this spill-over, by promoting a selective recruitment of labor abroad. Only labor which was apt (and willing) to do the specific jobs which the Belgians had deserted was to be called upon. Jaspar promised the full support of the public authorities for any such selective recruitment. The quality of labor recruited in this way would, according to Jaspar outweigh the limited liability the new state policy imposed on the employers.[[170]](#footnote-171) The mining companies did not share his opinion, they sometimes overtly refused to submit to the new regulations.[[171]](#footnote-172)

Of equal importance is the fact that Jaspar could not count on the diligent cooperation of the communes. The municipal authorities had to order the alien workers residing in their commune to apply for a residence permit at the provincial authorities. Initially some communes ordered their foreign inhabitants to do so, but soon it turned out that the procedure to obtain a residence permit was a time-consuming one. It took weeks, even months before the Sûreté, the labor-exchange offices and the Ministry of Labor had processed the demands. By the time the decision was made a large number of applicants - migrants were a extremely mobile group- had already left the commune. Some moved even on purpose to avoid a refusal.[[172]](#footnote-173) By the beginning of 1924 most communes no longer bothered to require residence permits. It seemed to be a waste of time, certainly as those aliens whose application for a residence permit was refused were not bothered. While in the middle of 1923 migrants still spontaneously left the country when they were refused a residence permit, this was not the case anymore when it became clear that the threat of forced expulsion was not carried out.[[173]](#footnote-174)

This absence of the ultimate sanction, expulsion, was the death-blow to the new immigration policy. Although, according to H.Jaspar, the Minister of Justice had the discretionary power to expel any alien who had not yet obtained residency status, the Sûreté declared itself unable to do so.[[174]](#footnote-175) The Sûreté adhered strictly to its traditional interpretation of the alien law of 1897 whereby immigrants acquired residency status after four months of registered sojourn in Belgium.[[175]](#footnote-176) The refusal of the Sûreté to cooperate in the execution of the regulation of April 1923 was not only based on a legal argument, it was also grounded in its denial of any need of protection for the national labor market.

The "sabotage" of Jaspar's policy by the Sûreté led to the bizarre situation whereby only those who before their emigration asked for a visa in a Belgian embassy fell still under the strict application of the regulation of April 1923, while those immigrants who immigrated illegally or did not need a visa were not affected. Already by the summer of 1923 the Catholic Minister of Labor R.Moyersoen who was, together with Jaspar, the architect of the new immigration policy was alarmed about the unfavourable turn their policy took. He underscored the need of foreign labor for industry and pointed out that the actual implementation of their policy discriminated in favor of illegal immigration. The labor recruitment by industry in the emigration countries -a recruitment which could bring into the country a selected manpower, adapted to the specific needs of the labor market- was hindered by the measures of April 1923. Moyersoen insisted more and more on the need for foreign labor and minimalized the dangers resulting from the intake of immigrant labor. In his plea for a return to a liberal immigration policy the insight that the labor needs of the industry were perhaps structural shined through.[[176]](#footnote-177)

In addition to internal opposition, diplomates of allied countries put pressure on Jaspar to exempt their citizens from this new policy. Especially the Dutch authorities were concerned about the restrictions on the mobility of their citizens towards Belgium. They insisted that the Dutch migrants should be a privileged category.[[177]](#footnote-178) At the same time, the Governor of Antwerp petitioned for a restrictive alien policy. He argued that not only unemployment, but also housing shortage and crime was aggravated by the growing immigration.[[178]](#footnote-179) His demand was endorsed by the labor organizations in Flanders who because of the increasing unemployment in this region insisted upon an effective restrictive immigration policy.[[179]](#footnote-180)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar wanted, probably, due to the representations received from the Dutch authorities, to accord the Dutch immigrants a more favourable treatment. The Minister of Labor R.Moyerson was strongly opposed, the Dutch were the main group of immigrants in unemployment stricken Flanders and the complaints of the Governor of Antwerp and the local labor organizations could not be totally ignored. Jaspar could not satisfy the contradictory pressures put on his immigration policy and he decided to withdraw the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from any involvement in immigration policy. The Minister of Justice obtained total jurisdiction over immigration policy; even the decision to grant visa was handed over to this Ministry. The Liberal Minister of Justice F.Masson, immediately revoked the regulations of April 1923 and returned to the traditional liberal policy.[[180]](#footnote-181)

3.Non Regulated Immigration

In 1923-1924 we observe a massive intake of foreign labor. A sprinkling of nationalities, dominated by Dutchmen, Italians and North Africans immigrated into Belgium.

In particular the mines took in a large number of foreign workers. In 1923, a large number of foreigners were recruited. While in September 1922 only 3 % of the miners were of foreign nationality, their share increased to 10 % in November 1923. 17,020 aliens were then working in the mining sector. In the spring of 1924 their number decreased slowly and in May of that year only 15,543 foreigners were left.

The national composition of the foreign labor force in the mines underwent considerable change in that period. In September 1922, 24% of the foreigners were of North African origin and 40% of French nationality, only 16% were Italians and, respectively 5% and 4% were of Polish and Dutch nationality. In November 1923, 33 % of the foreigners in the mining profession were of Italian nationality, 22% were from North Africa and 16% were Poles. The French dropped to 12% of the foreigners in the Belgian mines, while the Dutch rose to 7%. Not only the mines, but many other industries and even agriculture made use of aliens.

This migration was largely a spontaneous process, a process whereby supply and demand of the international labor market found itself. In fact the most interested industrial group, mining was not satisfied with this spontaneous migration process. They wanted to have larger control over migration. A powerful representative of the mining companies Habets, looked upon the French employers as the best example of how to proceed.[[181]](#footnote-182) He argued that a central immigration organization of all the employers, not limited only to the mining industry, should organize the intake of foreign labor. This organization should regulate all aspects of labor immigration. Not only their recruitment, but also their wages, housing and even pastoral care and the schooling of their children had to be planned by this organization. This employers' organization was to become the immigration office for the whole of Belgium.[[182]](#footnote-183) This ambitious plan materialized very little during these years. In this chapter we will see that the employers had much less control over the immigrants than Habets would have liked. We will analyze what the other forces were which shaped this labor movement.

The Spontaneous Immigration of North-Africans, 1922-1923[[183]](#footnote-184)

A few thousand North-Africans offered their services spontaneously to Belgian industry at the beginning of the twenties. This mostly Algerian emigration was a response to the destructuration of the rural society by French colonization.[[184]](#footnote-185) In the protectorates Morocco and Tunisia society was still very traditional. In addition, one should take into account the forcible deportation during the war. About one third of the labor force of Algeria had been forcibly brought over, either as civilian workers, or as soldiers to France, to help in the French war effort. After the war, when they were ordered to return to Algeria, some of them "deserted" for Belgium.[[185]](#footnote-186)

The acute need for unskilled laborers in heavy industry meant that they easily found a job. They were mostly hired in the basin of Charleroi, but in other Walloon basins they also found jobs. In the Limburg basin, however, none of them were hired. The need for skilled miners in this basin could not be met by these North-Africans.

Thousands of North Africans left in the very beginning of the 1920s for a second time for France. There were no legal impediments, since no emigration law existed in Algeria until 1924. The Belgian labor market also offered opportunities and they continued to arrive in Belgium in large numbers until 1924. Some mining companies even sent agents to recruit North Africans, but it seems that their employment was in fact not a deliberate choice. The acute need for labor meant that any labor offer, North African or other, was eagerly accepted.[[186]](#footnote-187) The spontaneous offer of North African labor was not only taken up by the mining industry; the metallurgic and chemical industries also used them to alleviate their labor shortage.[[187]](#footnote-188)

When the employers developed in the following years a conscious recruitment strategy to alleviate their labor shortage, the number of North African labor declined considerable. Some of them considered they had earned enough and left for North African, others were fired and decided also to leave. These dismissals can be explained by the fact that the North Africans were all unqualified workers.[[188]](#footnote-189) Racism was without any doubt an additional factor to exclude the North Africans once they were no longer essential. The hiring of North African labor had already in 1923 provoked a backlash from local labor against the increasing employment of immigrants, including a four day strike in which 2,000 Belgian miners in several mines participated. The employers now had the possibility to comply with the local demand to remove these most resented immigrants.[[189]](#footnote-190)

Hardly any North Africans immigrated to Belgium in the following years. The French colonial authorities, under pressure from the large agrarian estates in Algeria who were anxious not to lose their agrarian manpower, introduced emigration restrictions in the summer of 1924.[[190]](#footnote-191) The Algerians who left Belgium could not be replaced by newcomers from Algeria.

The employers had by then developed a more conscious recruitment strategy to alleviate their labor shortage. Within this strategy the large number of unemployed in the Netherlands formed one target.

A Short Lived Experiment to Recruit Dutch Labor

During 1919 and 1920, 19,000 Dutch laborers immigrated into Belgium to help with rebuilding those parts of Belgium which were ravaged by the war.[[191]](#footnote-192) In the following years there was considerable interest to continue this immigration, not only from the Belgian employers, but also from the Dutch Ministry of Labor. The Dutch authorities were alarmed about the large number of their citizens who became unemployed due to the economic downturn after 1920. These constituted a considerable burden on the national budget. Because of the specific political conditions of those years, the Dutch state was obliged to take the interests of labor into account. The deprivation of those who were unemployed was alleviated by providing dole or public work. An increased supply of emigrants to Belgium would diminish these public expenditures.

The Dutch Ministry of Labor wanted to promote this emigration through a labor exchange program with Belgium. The lack of a central labor office in Belgium, however, impeded such a coordination at the central level. By 1922, the Brussels labor office, however, had become the semi-official partner of the Dutch central labor office. The public labor exchange office in Brussels mediated for vacancies, initially only for Brussels but, by the end of 1922, its services had extended beyond, especially to the industrial basin of Charleroi.[[192]](#footnote-193) The public labor office in Hasselt also cooperated in this endeavour.

The central authorities in Brussels did not appreciate these initiatives. In 1923 the director of the labor office in Hasselt was fired because he went -by making an arrangement with the Dutch authorities- beyond his field of competence.[[193]](#footnote-194) The labor office in Brussels was also told that it had to limit its mediation to Brussels. Although the regulation of April 1923 meant that the Ministry of Labor disposed of the channels by which to centrally organize the immigration of Dutch labor, no agreement was reached with the Dutch authorities. The absence of such an agreement is striking, given the evident advantages which Dutch labor offered for the implementation of the new immigration regulations of April 1923.[[194]](#footnote-195)

The lack of an institutional frame to coordinate this labor exchange at a central level meant that the Dutch authorities had very little leeway for pressuring their local labor offices to send their clients to Belgium. In 1923, when such a semi-official infrastructure existed, other barriers arose to a large scale labor migration to Belgium.

The crucial problem was that very few unemployed Dutchmen were eager to respond to the needs of the Belgian labor market. Among the Dutch unemployed, hardly any had professional experience in mining or the iron and steel industry. As most Dutchmen could only be employed as unskilled labor in these sectors, the material incentives to emigrate to Belgium were limited. Although these emigrants were guaranteed the same wages as the Belgians these salaries were insufficient (because of the exchange rate, the Belgian frank stood very low) to support their families who remained in the Netherlands.[[195]](#footnote-196) Taking the family was not easy as there was a severe house shortage in Belgium. The Dutch authorities soon concluded that emigration to Belgium was only feasible for unemployed single men.[[196]](#footnote-197)

In the Netherlands several municipal labor exchange offices -stimulated by the central authorities- tried to force some of their unemployed to accept work in Belgium. The unemployed did not succumb to these pressures that easily. Protest by the unemployed, sometimes backed up by the trade unions or the Social-Democratic party meant that in the end only very few Dutchmen were in this way forced to leave for Belgium.[[197]](#footnote-198) The threat of being disqualified from unemployment aid was soon revoked as the unemployed Dutchmen could in the immediate post-war period mobilize enough political power to legitimize their claim for labor within the national realm. Although there was a surplus of labor, Dutch labor was -just as Belgian labor- no longer that tractable to make them respond quickly to labor market needs.[[198]](#footnote-199)

During 1922-1923 a few thousand Dutchmen went to work in Belgium.[[199]](#footnote-200) Some of them worked as qualified miners in Limburg, as they had learned the job in the pits in the Ruhr. The rationalization in the Ruhr mining industry meant that they had to look for a livelihood elsewhere.[[200]](#footnote-201) More than half of the Dutchmen worked as unskilled labor in the Limburg mines, but there was also a considerable number of unqualified Dutch migrants employed in the mines and the iron and steel industry in the basin of Charleroi.

After 1923, the employment of Dutchmen decreased considerably. The employers did not consider them very diligent, and they even felt that they were rebellious. In particular, the urban laborers who were sent out by the Dutch labor offices were not considered to be very docile.[[201]](#footnote-202)

It was probably not so much this change of attitude among employers, but rather the decrease in unemployment in the Netherlands and the weakening of the Belgian franc which caused the number of Dutchmen in Belgian heavy industry to decline. The opportunities which the expanding Dutch Limburgian mine industry offered meant that even the qualifed Dutch miners remigrated.[[202]](#footnote-203)

Dutch migrant labor remained, however, active in the building trade. Already in 1922 a few hundred Dutch builders were working in Belgium. This remained so for the next few years. Even when in 1924 unemployment rose in Flanders, the Dutch builders kept their jobs. The Flemish trade unions protested, but to no avail. The Belgian authorities did not want to intervene and the employers appreciated the diligence of the Dutchmen. That most Dutchmen were not unionized was also considered an advantage by the employers.[[203]](#footnote-204)

 By 1924 the verdict was clear: Dutch labor would not be able to meet the structural needs of the Belgian labor market. The economic situation of the Netherlands, together with the political power of Dutch labor, meant that few Dutchmen, even unemployed, were desperate enough to take the jobs the Belgians shunned. The Dutchmen who remained willing to work in Belgium were mostly qualified workers who had come on account of the better opportunities. Unskilled Dutchmen also tried their luck in Belgium, mostly in construction. These seasonal jobs were worth pursuing for Dutchmen, given the geographic proximity. They had, however, no intention of staying in Belgium. They only came for a short stint of work, to return home a few months later with their savings. For linguistic and geographical reasons both these groups worked mostly in Flanders and competed, due to the economic dualism of Belgium directly with local labor.

Undisciplined Italian Migrants

Shortly after the war hundreds of Italian builders and navvies were employed in Belgium to help reconstruct the country which had been heavily damaged by the War. This labor emigration from Italy seemed to reach a peak in the spring of 1922.[[204]](#footnote-205) Demand for foreign workers fell sharply by the summer of 1922 as the reconstruction of the devastated regions was largely completed, also because the program of public works was cut of as the Belgian state had to reduce its spending deficit. Quite a few Italian builders and navvies then left Belgium for France or back to Italy.[[205]](#footnote-206)

Only when the greatest demand for Italian labor was already over was a semi-official bilateral structure set up in the spring of 1922 to channel Italian migrants into the Belgian labor market. The Brussels labor exchange office signed an agreement with the Italian *Uffici di collocamento* to send masons and other skilled construction workers to Belgium. Following this agreement, 630 Italian skilled builders were recruited between May 22 and December 1924 to work in construction. These Italians did not work together with local labor. They came mostly in working teams and were allotted a specific task.[[206]](#footnote-207) These sub-contracting schemes offered the advantage for the Italian authorities that these workers would, having a job finished, return to Italy with their savings. The Italian central authorities, who had a long tradition in managing their surplus of labor, did not want their unemployed citizens to settle in foreign countries. The Italian state was interested in improving the Italian balance of payments through remittances and wage repatriation.[[207]](#footnote-208)

The Italian authorities also offered the Belgian mining companies Italian working-teams. These teams could only be used to do the preparatory work in the mines (tunnelling), since hardly any Italians had experience in underground mining.[[208]](#footnote-209) Only a few mines responded to this offer and subcontracted mine work to Italian working-teams.[[209]](#footnote-210) The specific labor shortages in the Belgian mines meant that teams of immigrants were not appropriate. Immigrants should be individually integrated in the working process, mostly as unskilled helpers, hauliers and other support workers.

The Italian authorities designed a new recruitment system. As the demand for labor was high and alternatives for recruiting labor were few, the Italians felt that they were in a strong bargaining position. Strict conditions for the recruitment of Italian labor could be set. All the costs linked to the administrative procedure (including passports) were at the expense of the employer.[[210]](#footnote-211) The employer also had to offer a full year's contract. If the migrant was dismissed before the end of the contract because of lack of work or sickness, the employer had to repatriate this employee.[[211]](#footnote-212) Another disadvantage of this scheme -at least for the employers- was that the employers had very little say in who was to be recruited.[[212]](#footnote-213) The CGE ensured, through their discretionary powers, that only surplus labor was recruited. The Italian authorities also kept an eye on the working and living conditions offered. The CGE forced a model work contract upon the employers. This contract compelled employers to specify wages and to guarantee decent housing and food prior to any recruitment in Italy. Employers which tried to abuse the Italian migrants were blacklisted and could no longer apply for Italian labor.

From 1923 onwards, the Italian authorities demanded that the Belgian authorities gave their consent to the recruitment too. The labor office of Brussels erronously obtained a number of unqualified migrants through its arrangement (for skilled builders) with the Italian labor offices. The labor office made contact with the mine companies in Charleroi who were very eager to receive these Italians. This spontaneously established pattern of recruitment was endorsed by the Italian authorities, as the mediation of an official institution offered more guaranties, especially in avoiding the recruitment of Italians by industries where the labor force was on strike.[[213]](#footnote-214) The labor office of Brussels had to give advice on all the demands for Italian labor. The office's guideline was that national labor had absolute priority, but the recruitment of aliens was necessary due to the shortage of manpower in certain segments of the labor market.[[214]](#footnote-215)

Some employers tried to circumvent these expensive conditions and the slow bureaucratic procedure by recruiting Italian labor autonomously.[[215]](#footnote-216) Especially the mining sector, which badly needed the labor tried to bypass the CGE. The number of Italians who offered themselves spontaneously at the gates of the mines was by no means sufficient to meet the labor shortage. A number of Italians, some of whom were even qualified miners, were recruited in Germany and especially in the Ruhr district.[[216]](#footnote-217) The mining companies of the Charleroi basin themselves set up a recruitment scheme in Italy. These prospective employers had to deal, however, with an Italian state which considered recruitement in Italy as coming under its competence. The Belgian mines could in this endeavour not bypass the Italian state.[[217]](#footnote-218)

By 1924 the recruitment scheme which the Italian authorities had set up was considered the best available solution to the labor shortage problem in the mining sector.[[218]](#footnote-219) The employers considered that it at least gave some guarantees concerning the morality of these migrants. The employers became aware of the potentially politicised nature of Italian migrant labor, because of the large number of political refugees who fled Italy after Mussolini took over power. Those refugees who offered their services spontaneously were not considered useful labor, while those recruited directly in Italy were felt to be more valuable.[[219]](#footnote-220) By 1923, Italian immigration into Belgium was largely destined for the mines. On the 31st of August 1923, there were already 3,824 Italians working in the mines, this increased to 5,611 on November 1st, and to 6,150 by the end of 1923. In total nearly 6,000 Italians were recruited for the mines through this official scheme between 1922 and 1924.[[220]](#footnote-221) As is shown in graph 5 this recruitment scheme largely benefited the mining sector.[[221]](#footnote-222) Also some qualified stone-cutters for the quarries were called for from Italy.[[222]](#footnote-223)

Also construction and the metallurgic industry attracted Italian labor. The mines took however the brunt of Italian labor. The mining industry was the only one still to call upon Italian labor during the economic downturn of 1925. Notwithstanding that the shortage of labor had shifted by then to an oversupply of labor in the Belgian labor market the mines still needed manpower.

The disadvantage of this recruitment scheme was that only very few qualified miners were to be found among the Italian migrants.[[223]](#footnote-224) Another weakness of this scheme was that the employers had no hold over the migrants. Although the recruitment of a migrant was an investment in time and in money, the return from this was not at all sure. Many of the Italians used the Belgium scheme only to get permission to leave Italy and to enter France.[[224]](#footnote-225)

Even if the Italians arrived at the mine, they mostly did not intend to stay there. A great deal of these Italians had no idea about underground mine laboring, since they were only familiar with open air mining. Once they realized that mining in Belgium was very different from what they had expected, quite a few of them looked for another livelihood. As soon as they found a chance, they left the mines.[[225]](#footnote-226) The iron and steel industry was particularly eager to recruit the Italian mine deserters. Several thousand Italians were working in this industry by 1924, although these companies had rarely applied to the Italian authorities for labor.[[226]](#footnote-227) Construction was another important outlet for the Italian migrants who preferred not to stay in the mines. They worked mostly as unskilled labor on the building sites.[[227]](#footnote-228) The quarries also hired a number of mine "deserters".[[228]](#footnote-229) In addition, there were a small number of Italian migrants employed in the chemical industry.[[229]](#footnote-230) The spill-over of Italian migrants recruited for the mining industry to other industrial sectors was considerable.[[230]](#footnote-231)

The mining companies felt defenceless. They considered it was impossible to reach an agreement with other industries, especially with the iron and steel industry, to prevent them from poaching the Italians the mining industry had called for. The interests of both industries in this field were too different to find any entente.[[231]](#footnote-232)

The Italian hold over the recruitment of the much needed manpower and the absence of any power of the Belgian mining companies over the Italians they recruited was ressented not only by those employers, but also by the Belgian authorities. The Belgian authorities took the interest of the recruiting employers to their heart. It was felt that the Italian authorities should offer more guarantees to Belgian industry which was in need of manpower so that the recruitment of Italian labor would solve their labor shortage.

"Quelle garantie les autorités italiennes, qui formulent toutes ces exigences, offrent-elles en retour à l'industriel qui recourt à leur intermédiaire? Littéralement aucune: l'engagement souscrit par l'employeur ne lie que lui seul. Il dépendra de chaque ouvrier individuellement de lever l'option à lui consentie, de répondre à l'appel qui lui est fait ou de s'arrêter en route, si, comme il arrive fréquemment des racoleurs marrons le happent au passage. Même arrivé à l'usine ou à la mine qui l'attendait, il l'abandonnera au bout de quelques jours s'il découvre ailleurs une occupation ou un milieu plus attrayants...Son embaucheur primitif aura ...perdu son temps, sa peine et son argent"[[232]](#footnote-233)

The Belgian authorities also wanted to promote their own interests. In particular, the Catholic Minister of Labor R.Moyersoen wanted to protect the national labor market. Italian migrants should not take jobs for which Belgians were available. Already in April 1922 the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar, who was especially anxious about the political danger of the "invasion" of migrant labor, threatened to reintroduce the visa requirement for Italians, the only feasible way to control this migration movement.[[233]](#footnote-234) Things never reached this point. The Belgian authorities negotiated with the Italians to also have an official say in the recruitment of Italians for Belgian industry. The strengthening of the position of the employers vis-à-vis the migrants was one aim.[[234]](#footnote-235)

Not so much the interests of the employers, but rather the proper interests of the Belgian state prevailed in the arrangement finally concluded with the Italian authorities. The Italian authorities would consult the Ministry of Labor about the state of the labor market. In principle, only when there was an officially sanctioned need on the Belgian side to recruit Italian labor would the Italian authorities proceed to action. The protection of the national labor market was ensured.[[235]](#footnote-236)

Hence, in October 1923 the centralized control over the Italian recruitments by the labor office of Brussels was taken over by the Ministry of Labor. The previous ad hoc arrangment was replaced by an official agreement between the two states.[[236]](#footnote-237) This meant that in 1925 -a year of growing unemployment- 48 demands of employers to recruit Italian laborers were refused by the Italian authorities after negative advice of the Belgian authorities.[[237]](#footnote-238)

The main problem for the mining companies was not so much to recruit Italians, but rather to retain them. Although only the mining industry made efforts to recruit Italians in Italy itself, other sectors also employed a considerable number of Italian migrants. In August 1925 the Italian authorities inserted a material incentive in the labor contracts to make the Italian migrants respect these. From then onwards, the return trip was to be reimbursed by the companies, but only if the immigrant stayed in the mine for the term of his contract.[[238]](#footnote-239)

Another tactic to reduce the desertion of the Italian migrants was to adjust them slowly to mine labor. The immediate putting to work of the Italians underground had disastrous results. Most of those Italians were totally ignorant about underground mining. They had, at most, experience with open air-mining. When the migrants found out by arriving at their new job that they had to work miles underground, many of them looked for a job elsewhere.[[239]](#footnote-240) The mining companies decided to find first an occupation for the new miners on the surface and only after a while they were set to work underground.[[240]](#footnote-241) Lodging was also improved, as well as the food offered to the immigrants. In mines with a large concentration of Italians, an Italian menu was offered.[[241]](#footnote-242)

In order to retain some of these Italians, a number of mining companies were prepared to make more sacrifices. These mines were eager to offer some more facilities to stabilize their "new" laborforce. They realized that the labor shortage would last and that at least some Italians should settle to assure the coal extraction. These companies wanted the Italians not only to remain in the mines, they also wanted them to accept the working conditions without protest. A docile and loyal labor force was the aim of the employers.

The Italian authorities offered the mining companies a program which would stabilize the Italian migrant communities on the basis of a far-reaching ethnic segregation. The Italian authorities were interested in a segregation of the Italian migrants as they wanted the Italian migrants to stay abroad only temporarily; they should return to Italy with capital and skills. The Fascist coup in October 1922 meant that an ideological interest was also at stake. Upon their return they should not be contaminated with "alien" Socialist or even Communist ideas. The stamp of Fascism on the Italian emigration policy went beyond a concern to keep the Italian migrants away from hostile ideologies. Each Italian migrant was considered a representative of the new state abroad and had to fullfill this role with dignity.

The scheme, proposed by the Italian authorities had a clearly Fascist stamp. Ex-army officers would organize the Italian communities and cater to all their needs. They would watch over the workers and create a homelike atmosphere of cultural cohesiveness. Also, material advantages would be offered such as supplementary accident insurance, repatriation, libraries and cinemas, and the lending of travel costs for family reunion. The Italian authorities argued that this program would not only stabilize the Italian migrants, but also increase their productivity and remove all reasons for the migrants to protest or to join the trade unions. The costs were high, it would increase the total wage costs of Italian labor by 2,5%.[[242]](#footnote-243)

Winterslag, the only mine in Limburg which was already extracting coal and in great need of labor, was positive about this proposal. The mine signed a contract with the Italian authorities to recruit 1,000 miners, 10 % of which would be joined by their family. A program to stabilize them would be implemented.[[243]](#footnote-244) Also, several mines in the Centre and some in Charleroi were extremely pleased with this proposal of the Italian authorities and agreed to finance this stabilizing effort.[[244]](#footnote-245) The mines in the Liège basin, notwithstanding their high number of Italian migrants, abstained completely from this experiment.[[245]](#footnote-246)

In 1925 this experiment seems to have been put aside.[[246]](#footnote-247) None of the mines considered it anylonger worth their while subcontracting the organization of their Italian labor from the Italian authorities. In all likelihood financial reasons (the economic downturn) and the decrease in the number of Italiens employed meant that this campaign for ethnic segregation with a Fascist stamp was abandoned.[[247]](#footnote-248) Some employers hoped that pastoral care by an Italian priest would contribute to stabilize their Italian migrants and were ready to co-finance their mission.[[248]](#footnote-249) In the first half of the 1920s there were considerable pressures, also from employers on the Italian Church to send some priests over to Belgium. In 1923 two Italian Fransiscans provided pastoral care among Italian migrants.This attempt was short-lived. These Italian priests worked, in agreement with the Italian authorities, the employers -some of them co-financed the missions of these priests- and the Belgian episcopacy among the Italian migrants in Belgium.

 In general, most employers believed that it was not necessary to tempt their migrants to make them stay. They hoped that a less aggressive effort would have stabilizing effects, too.

" C'est une main d'oeuvre qui nous est nécessaire, que nous sommes heureux de conserver, inquiets de perdre quant un mouvement de départ se produit -les salaires en or à l'étranger, parfois les maladresses de porions xénophobes!- mais les registres nous prouveront que les ouvriers italiens nous restent fidèles en général, nous amènent des travailleurs de chez eux, font venir leur famille, font souche chez nous et tant mieux"[[249]](#footnote-250)

Polish Labor: an enormous reservoir .[[250]](#footnote-251)

As mentioned before, already before the First World War Polish labor had been recruited. That experience was evaluated positively. The mines which had recruited Poles from Galicia in the 1910s viewed the newly established Poland as a potential source of labor. Like other mining companies, they were not satisfied with the other migrants, including the Italians, they were hiring and hoped that recruitment in Poland would yield better workers.[[251]](#footnote-252)

Their plans were, however, premature. Recruitment in Poland itself would not be possible over the next few years. This did not mean that no Poles were immigrating into Belgium. On the contrary, by 1925 the Poles were already competing with the Italians to become the most important group of foreigners in Belgian's heavy industry. In 1925 about five thousands Polish workers were making a living in Belgium. Most of them worked in the mines. There was also a considerable number of Polish workers in the iron and steel industry. About 400 Poles were occupied, probably on a seasonal basis, as agricultural labor. Also the zinc, the glass and the chemical industries in Wallonia employed some Polish migrants for unskilled work.[[252]](#footnote-253)

Spontaneous Immigration, 1922

About a thousand Poles were working in Belgium by 1923.[[253]](#footnote-254) Hardly any of them came directly from Poland. Either they came from the Ruhr, the German mining region, which had a numerous Polish community or they came from France. Immediately after the war France had recruited thousands of Polish workers for reconstruction and later also for its mining industry and agriculture. These were recruited either in Germany or in Poland itself.[[254]](#footnote-255) Many Poles were dissatisfied with the labor conditions in France. Additionally, the Ruhr Poles particularly resented the hostile climate towards them, since the French considered them as "Germans". The apparently higher wages in Belgium also attracted the Polish migrants. Some of these Poles were forced to leave France because of an active involvement in the mine strikes of February, 1923. Those who came from France, as well as those who came from Germany generally had no passports, let alone Belgian visas.[[255]](#footnote-256) Notwithstanding their illegal arrival the Polish workers were, just like most other aliens, tolerated by the Belgian authorities.[[256]](#footnote-257)

The Belgian employers were not so eager to employ those Polish migrants who offered their services spontaneously.[[257]](#footnote-258) Polish workers were considered as politically unreliable, i.e. as bolsheviks. The mining companies could, however, not be very selective and the increasing labor shortage forced them to accept anyone.[[258]](#footnote-259) Hence the number of Polish miners increased in the following years.

The plans for immigration organized by the employers were laregly unsuccesful. In 1922 the Polish embassy in Brussels received demands for about a thousand workers. The mine of Winterslag -the first mine in the Limburg basin to start extracting coal- asked for several hundred workers. The mine Ressaix in the Centre basin also asked for Polish labor. These employers did not want to invest in Polish manpower. Thus, only single men were requested and the travel costs would be at the expense of the immigrants.[[259]](#footnote-260) The Polish authorities demanded however that the employers pay not only the voyage to Belgium, but also -if Polish labor completed their work contracts- their trip back.[[260]](#footnote-261)

The Polish authorities had another precondition for any recruitment in Poland. An official labor treaty, similar to that with France, had to be signed.[[261]](#footnote-262) It would stipulate the equality of treatment with Polish and Belgian labor, an equality which extended to social security (pensions, health insurance and unemployment benefits).[[262]](#footnote-263) The Polish authorities argued that it would ensure the Belgian authorities and employers suitable immigrants, given that they would be politically and technically selected by the Polish authorities. The Belgian employers would even have the right to exercise a control over these recruitments.[[263]](#footnote-264) There would therefore be no more need to employ illegal Polish immigrants who were not well qualified and among whom there were quite some undesirable individuals.[[264]](#footnote-265)

However, the Belgian authorities were not prepared to sign a labor treaty. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.Jaspar, was clearly -given his already-described perception of the immigration issue- not eager to encourage any migration into Belgium.[[265]](#footnote-266) A labor treaty with Poland was also strongly rejected for numerous other reasons. It would first of all cause unilateral expenses for the Belgian treasury, as equal rights to social security would -as no Belgians worked in Poland- be advantageous only for the Poles.[[266]](#footnote-267) Even the illegal Polish immigration would profit from this arrangement. When the Belgian autorities spoke about illegal immigration, they refered not so much to the Poles coming from France and Germany; but rather to those coming directly from Poland -mostly Jewish immigrants- who the Belgian authorities considered undesirable. These Polish Jews found a livelihood not in the heavy industry or agriculture, but in sectors such as the leather and garment industries where there was no shortage of labor. On the contrary, unemployment among Belgian labor in these sectors was not uncommon and the Polish Jews only aggravated this surplus of labor. A labor treaty with Poland would mean that those Polish Jews, whom Belgian industry did not need at all, would be even more attracted towards Belgium.[[267]](#footnote-268)

The very principle of a treaty between states in the field of immigration was rejected by Jaspar. He argued that the recruitment of labor and especially the conditions of its employment were a private affair between employers and employees and was not the affair of the state.[[268]](#footnote-269) The role of the state should be limited, Jaspar claimed, to a moral and medical control of immigration.[[269]](#footnote-270)

This marginal role of the state was endorsed by the employers. Initially, in 1923, heavy industry had pressed the authorities to start negotiations with the Polish authorities to assure labor from Poland for them.[[270]](#footnote-271) Agrarian interests also were in favor of a Polish-Belgian labor treaty. The Minister of Agriculture A.Ruzette continued throughout 1924 to insist strongly on such a treaty in order to secure the necessary Polish farmhands. The Poles were, according to some agrarian interest groups, the only manpower available to alleviate the shortage of agrarian manpower.[[271]](#footnote-272) The Ministry of Industry and Labor was however opposed to such a labor treaty. Only after a new alien law had established the rights and duties of immigrant labor could a labor treaty with Poland be envisaged.[[272]](#footnote-273) As the mining companies succeeded by 1924 in supplementing their labor demands with qualified Ruhr miners and with other less qualified migrants, especially Italians, their pressure to yield to the Polish authorities lessened.[[273]](#footnote-274) The employers in heavy industry preferred anyway a direct recruitment without any state involvement. They considered labor recruiting a prerogative of management and resented any state intervention in this field.[[274]](#footnote-275)

Notwithstanding the refusal of the Belgian state to sign a labor treaty, the mines of the Centre basin were able to recruit 400 workers in Poland by the summer of 1924.[[275]](#footnote-276) Already at the beginning of 1923, when the Polish authorities insisted on negotiations with the Belgian authorites to reach a labor treaty, the Association Charbonnière du Centre obtained an agreement to recruit workers in Poland. The terms of recruitment were the same as for the French mining companies: the recruitment and travel costs were at the expense of the mines and the migrants were assured a job for one year.[[276]](#footnote-277) Recruitment and transport would be taken care of by the French recruitment agency.

The difference with France was that the Poles were not covered by an official labor treaty which assured them an equality of treatment with the local workers. The Polish authorities hoped by this experiment to increase the pressure on the Belgian authorities. A carefully selected group of Polish workers should improve the rather negative opinion the Belgian employers had of the Polish migrants. The Polish authorities reasoned that the Belgian employers, after receiving a batch of outstanding workers would be eager to recruit more hard-working Poles. They would therefor put pressure on the Belgian authorities to yield to the Polish demand for a labor treaty. The Poles would only agree to more recruitment in Poland after reaching an agreement on a labor treaty. The need for a labor treaty was pressing. An increasing number of Poles came from Germany and France to work in Belgium and they were totally unprotected.[[277]](#footnote-278)

The recruitment was planned for the summer of 1923 but it was at least partly postponed -because of the impossibility to pass through Germany after the Belgian-French occupation of the Ruhr- to the summer of 1924.[[278]](#footnote-279) Recruitment in 1924 was carried out by the French Société Générale d'Immigration (SGI), a commercial immigration company controlled by French farm and coal interests.[[279]](#footnote-280) The Polish authorites only gave their agreement reluctantly, they resented this new powerful consortium. This arrangement with the ACC was considered to be a provisional arrangement, in the near future a labor treaty would be signed and a purely Belgian recruitment system would then be set up.[[280]](#footnote-281) The SGI not only recruited Polish labor for the Centre basin, the *Fédération Nationale Belge des Unions Professionelles Agricoles* had also succeeded in obtaining some Polish farm workers this way. Already in 1922 Polish migrants were being used in Hainaut, in particular for the harvest of sugar beets in the fall. These Poles were recruited by French farmers and subcontracted to Belgian firms.[[281]](#footnote-282) In 1924 these Belgian farmers recruited their own Polish farmhands.[[282]](#footnote-283)

The Belgian employers thought that this first recruitment was a breakthrough and now hoped to recruit more Polish workers. They considered that the vast Polish labor market was now accessible for all Belgian industry.[[283]](#footnote-284) They did not find it necessary to bypass the SGI, since it was convenient to make use of this French organization for recruitment and transport.[[284]](#footnote-285) As we mentioned before, this was an unique agreement for recruitment in Poland, given in order to hasten the negotiations with the Belgian authorities as the need for a labor treaty was pressing. A labor treaty which had to assure protection of the Poles who had already migrated to Belgium, and also for the hoped for organized immigration of the future. Political reasons prompted the Polish authorities to increase pressure on the Belgian authorities. An alternative had to be found for those Poles who had worked in the German Ruhr for generations, as they were then threathened with expulsion.[[285]](#footnote-286)

Poles in the Ruhr,1924

The coal mines of the Ruhr region began to recruit Polish labor from the eastern provinces of Prussia in the 1870s. Especially in the 1890s this Polish migration increased considerably. By 1914 Polish-speaking miners formed about a third of the labor force in the Ruhr mining region. The assimilation of this ethnic minority -part of the solution to the Polish question in the German Reich- was aggressively pursued by the German authorities. The self-organization of the Polish migrants in the Ruhr was immediately interpreted as part of the Polish separatist movement. Those Polish organizations in fact merely fulfilled social needs and provided conviviality, the German authorities continued to perceive them as a political threat. This attitude of the authorities meant that the Poles paid much more attention to the preservation of their Polishness.

A truly Polish subculture was created in the Ruhr. When, in 1918 the Poles, obtained their own independent state, this did not mean that all those living within this subculture left for their "fatherland". The dim social-economic prospects in the new Polish state, as well as a continuing struggle with regard to its external boundaries meant that most of the Ruhr Poles remained in Germany. When the process of opting for German or Polish nationality that was provided for in the Treaty of Versailles came into operation in 1921-1922, many Ruhr Poles decided to adopt German nationality. Only a small number opted in favor of Poland. This expression of a strong Polish national loyalty was a risky choice for those who remained in the Ruhr. Job prospects in Poland were slim and the choice of Poland was strongly resented in Germany.[[286]](#footnote-287)

Many Ruhr Poles left the Ruhr for France, while some thought Belgium was a better alternative. Some wrote to mining companies for an official invitation to Belgium to be able to immigrate legally into Belgium.[[287]](#footnote-288) Of course, there was considerable interest in recruiting these qualified miners. The FEDECHAR even tried to set up a recruitment office in Bochum.[[288]](#footnote-289) The Belgian authorities however, opposed, their immigration. Those who had taken German nationality were not welcome in Belgium and for those who had opted for Polish nationality, they first had to go through the whole procedure so that their nationality was firmly settled. The Belgian authorities wanted to ensure the possibility to repatriate these immigrants if they became destitute.[[289]](#footnote-290) The large pool of labor in the Ruhr could hence not be tapped by the Belgian mine industry. Only a spontaneous and illegal immigration of Ruhr Poles to Belgium was possible. They found a job easily and could soon regularize their sojourn.

A completely new situation emerged from the Belgian-French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. The anti-Polish resentment in the Ruhr strengthened during those months. The Poles were seen as collaborators because of the friendly diplomatic relations between France and Poland. This poisoned the climate between Ruhr Poles and Germans in the Ruhr district and meant that certainly those Ruhr Poles who had opted for Poland realized that it would be better for them to depart for other destinations.[[290]](#footnote-291)

The French mining companies already set up in 1922 a recruitment office in Duisburg in agreement with the Polish authorities. 50,000 Ruhr Poles left in this way for France.[[291]](#footnote-292) The economic downturn that erupted with the stabilization of the German mark meant that the Ruhr mines cut manpower drastically. Many Ruhr Poles who had been hesitant to leave Germany were now forced to find a livelihood elsewhere.

The Belgian mines could not make use of this labor supply. The regulation of April 1923 demanded that the employers of immigrant labor would guarantee the eventual repatriation of these workers. Under no other conditions would a visa be granted. This implied that the nationality of these Ruhr Poles had to be settled definitively. As it was only in August 1924 that a definitive agreement was signed between Poland and Germany, this condition was an insurmountable barrier for recruiting these qualified miners. Neither the Polish nor the German authorities were eager to help the Belgians in this endeavour by granting the Ruhr Poles, who wanted to emigrate to Belgium, their unconditional state protection. The Germans refused to cooperate with the occupiers and the Polish authorities would only give full support for emigration to Belgium if a Polish-Belgian labor treaty was signed. In addition, the spouses and children of Ruhr Poles could not immigrate to Belgium, since the Belgian authorities granted only immigration permissions to single men.[[292]](#footnote-293)

As the Ruhr Poles who had opted for Poland found themselves in a desperate situation by the end of 1923 the Polish authorities pleaded with the Belgian government to open their borders for them. France could not take them all and a return to Poland was not a realistic option. The Polish authorities revoked the demand for a labor treaty, because of the emergency situation. They were disposed to give their full support to the transplanting of Ruhr Poles to Belgium.

Jaspar maintained, however, his position. The immigration of families was not appropriate. The house shortage meant that it was impossible to lodge even small numbers of Polish families. But most importantly it didnot fit into his vision, i.e. that immigrant labor was only a temporary solution to short-term needs of specific segments of the labor market. The political creed of the Ruhr Poles was according to Jaspar, also dangerous.[[293]](#footnote-294) In order to safeguard public order, Jaspar was only in favor of recruiting some qualified, preferably single miners whose Polish citizenship was clearly established.[[294]](#footnote-295)

The Ministers of Labor and Justice were less intransigent. Rather than employing North Africans, the recruitment of these Poles would be a preferable solution to the structural shortage of labor in the mining industry. [[295]](#footnote-296) These Ruhr Poles were fully integrated into industrial society, they were even qualified miners, so they offered, argued both Ministers, a definite advantage in terms of stability and productivity. Even the Italian immigrants did not score that high. The advice of the head of the Sûreté Gonne was, according to the Polish embassador decisive in the whole issue.[[296]](#footnote-297)

Gonne pointed out to the needs of the industry and put forward the linguistic affinity (German speakers) and even cultural closeness as reasons for opposing the over-precautious Minister of Foreign Affairs. Gonne stated clearly that he did not consider the immigration of those Ruhr Poles as posing any danger to public order. Jaspar's fear for this Polish immigration was, according to him, not justified, since the Ruhr Poles were qualified miners and had nothing to do with the Jewish artisans who pretended to be industrial workers, but in fact were tailors, hatmakers or leatherworkers and were indeed undesirable. [[297]](#footnote-298)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jaspar was clearly isolated in his opposition to the immigration of the Ruhr Poles. His decision to oppose any immigration of the Ruhr Poles was overturned in the Council of Ministers of December 12, 1923. His colleagues considered the need for foreign labor in the mines as structural. The recruitment of Ruhr Poles would enable the employers a positive selection of the manpower being used. Jaspar's judgement on their turbulent character was refuted by the positive experience with Polish migrants in agriculture. The Council of Ministers also considered the families of these Ruhr Poles as welcome. The Sûreté considered single men a potential danger for public order.[[298]](#footnote-299) The housing shortage caused that family-immigration depended on the housing facilities the employers provided.[[299]](#footnote-300) Jaspar tried in vain to limit the damage to his restrictive immigration policy by ordering the Belgian Consulate in Duisburg to grant visas only to applicants who had a labor contract, a clearly established Polish nationality and a certificate of good conduct, and to demand a declaration in which the applicants stated their qualification as a miner and in which they agreed to bring over their family only when the mining companies provided housing. The eventual repatriation of these workers had still to be assured by the employers.[[300]](#footnote-301) All of these requirements were dropped in the course of the next year, even a clearly established nationality was no longer necessary.[[301]](#footnote-302)

Although we do not have accurate figures on the number of Ruhr Poles legally immigrating into Belgium in 1924, we can on the basis of the considerable increase of Poles in the Belgian mining industry evaluate this to a few thousand workers.[[302]](#footnote-303) A number of them arrived only in Belgium, after a disappointing sojourn in France. The animosity in France towards these "Germans" and the monopolization by French labor of the qualified jobs meant that they finally settled in Belgium.[[303]](#footnote-304) It seems that by the end of 1924 the situation of the Ruhr Poles was settled, no more large recruitments of these qualified miners took place.

It was not only Poles who came from the Ruhr to Belgium. We have already mentioned that Italians working in the mines of the Ruhr also came to Belgium. In addition Hungarian, Yugoslavian and Czechoslovakian citizens who had been working in the Ruhr, came illegally in 1922-1923, either on their own initiative or brought by a "smuggler" to Belgium.[[304]](#footnote-305) A large concentration of these Ruhr migrants -mostly qualified miners- were to be found in the Limburgean mines.[[305]](#footnote-306) When Jaspar's unconditional opposition towards the immigration of Ruhr Poles was overtly criticized by the Sûreté, and the Belgian Government decided to tolerate labor immigration, other nationalities also living in the Ruhr could immigrate into Belgium without problems.[[306]](#footnote-307) They obtained, like the Ruhr Poles a visa to immigrate into Belgium.

By 1925 about five thousand Polish workers were making a living in Belgium. At most 20% of these Poles were working in other sectors than mining. Only a limited number of Ruhr Poles recruited by the mining companies left for other industries, this was due to the large number of professional miners among these Polish migrants. The employers were eager to retain them. Not only the qualifications of these immigrants, but the hope among the employers that they would be "a-political" meant that the mining companies were planning to make an additional effort to retain them.[[307]](#footnote-308) The Winterslag mine in the Limburg basin was the most outspoken in its intention to create facilities for all its Polish miners. The mine director wanted to attract several thousand Poles and the company would pursue a multi-cultural strategy to make these workers feel at home.The company was ready to strongly supported their cultural heritage. A Polish school, a Polish priest and ethnic organizations, all strongly subsidized by the mine, would cater to all the needs of the Polish mine community.[[308]](#footnote-309)

By 1925, very little was materialized of the objective of creating a Polish subculture. The constraints on a multicultural strategy would turn out to be multiple.

Only the Catholic Church took some steps before 1925 to implement one dimension of this multicultural strategy, that of Polish pastoral care. The motivation of the Church was of course different from the employers' goal of stabilizing the Polish mine community. The Church aimed at preserving the Catholic faith within the Polish migrant communities. The threat of Socialist propaganda in the heavily secularized Walloon mine communities had to be countered.[[309]](#footnote-310) In order to have any success it was considered essential, because of language difficulties, to call upon Polish priests. A permanent Polish Mission was necessary.[[310]](#footnote-311)

The calling for Polish priests was not only a matter of clerical facilities, it also brought more secular concerns. Where would the newly arrived priests be lodged and on what financial means would they live? The Archbishopric contacted the employers of the Polish workers. Some of them had already voiced their concern that their Polish workers were without pastoral care.[[311]](#footnote-312) The responses of the mining companies in every basin which employed Polish workers were generous. Even mine directors who were known for their non-religious convictions were eager to support the Polish priests financially. Housing would be made available and also a financial subsidy for those Polish priests was promptly promised.[[312]](#footnote-313)

Belgium was prepared to receive the Polish priests. The Polish Archbishop was officially requested by the Belgian Church to provide some priests.[[313]](#footnote-314) The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the Belgian request. The Ministry insisted that the immigrants were themselves asking for Polish priests. They added that the presence of a permanent Polish Mission would prevent the "denationalization" of the Polish migrant community in Belgium.[[314]](#footnote-315) All these pressures were to no avail, since no Polish priests were made available for Belgium. The Polish Archbishop considered that he needed all his priests in Poland itself, the vocations in Poland were too few to permit any of them to leave for a Mission among the small Polish community in Belgium.[[315]](#footnote-316)

The multicultural strategy of employers and the Church alike remained in the first half of the 1920s largely limited to intentions. Only later, in the second half of the 1920s would the efforts of the Catholic Church yield results. Some mining companies would also then invest heavily in the multicultural endeavour.

Russian Refugees, a Politically Safe Miner

The Russian refugees -about one million people- were subjects of the former Russian empire and fled abroad in the years immediately after the Russian Civil War. They were the first group of refugees for which the international community catered.

In June 1921, a High Commissioner for Russian refugees was appointed, the Norwegian polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen. All the members of the League of Nations saw repatriation as the solution for this refugee problem. The Soviet authorities were not at all eager to permit a massive, unrestricted return. The Soviet decrees of November and December 1921, reinforced in 1924 deprived anti-Bolshevik Russians of their Russian citizenship. Now the refugees were officially stateless and had no country to which to return.

The High Commissioner had to change his strategy and now advocated the resettlement of Russian refugees outside the Soviet Union.[[316]](#footnote-317) The Belgian authorities were also asked to take their share of refugees. They considered that the unemployment of 1921 made any deliberate intake of immigrants, be they refugees, inappropriate.[[317]](#footnote-318) Political considerations however -the international sympathy for these refugees and the expected role these refugees would play once "legality" was restored in Russia-meant that by the middle of the 1920s a few thousand refugees had obtained visas for Belgium.[[318]](#footnote-319) They were able to leave the precarious asylum they had found in the countries bordering the Soviet Union for a more secure sojourn in Belgium.[[319]](#footnote-320)

By 1924 the number of Russian refugees in Belgium had increased considerably. They came mostly from Bulgaria. About 30,000 Russian fugitives were, shortly after the end of the civil war, given asylum in Bulgaria, many of them occupied as ancillary workers in the mines near Pernik. The economic backwardness of Bulgaria, together with political developments (the recognition of Soviet Union and rising nationalism) meant that most Russian refugees were looking for another asylum country.

Belgium was one of these alternatives. Crucial in their immigration was the role of a charity organization -with sympathies for the political cause of these refugees- which provided housing and jobs.[[320]](#footnote-321) The Belgian authorities were willing to grant visas as they knew this charity organization would assure the reception of these refugees. As this organization had branches only in Belgium urban centers (Antwerp and Brussels), refugees were all settled in these cities and mostly employed as domestic labor (governesses, cooks, gardeners, maids..).[[321]](#footnote-322) Domestic servants were in short supply in these years and the urban bourgeoisie was very willing to take in some of these refugees. In 1924 the charity organizations contacted some mining companies as they saw considerable job-opportunities in this industry for their protégés. Some mining companies were eager to recruit what they considered to be political safe labor.[[322]](#footnote-323) As these potential immigrants had worked in the Bulgarian mines, they hoped to recruit not only an order-loving, but also a qualified labor force. Only in 1925, about 700 visas were asked for by the mining industry to recruit Russian refugees. The Belgian authorities granted them willingly. Probably only half of the requested refugees arrived in Belgium.[[323]](#footnote-324) The competition with French recruitment among those refugees in Bulgaria and the possibilities for Russian refugees to settle in linguistically and culturally closer communities meant that the enthusiasm for emigration to Belgium turned out to be rather limited.[[324]](#footnote-325) In particular, the unattractive job offer, mining and the fact that the refugees had to pay their voyage at least partly themselves meant that the number of candidates for the Belgian mines remained limited.[[325]](#footnote-326)

In order to maintain discipline among the refugees, the mines were asked by the charity organization which had organized their immigration to engage a Russian officer to lead the refugee labor and also collective accommodation had to be provided. These facilities would also assure their loyalty to the political ideals of Old Russia.[[326]](#footnote-327) Because of the limited number of Russian miners and their dispersement this facility was probably never accorded. As we will see in the next chapter the interest in Russian refugee labor diminished considerably in the following years.

**3.Liberal Alien Policy under Severe Strains, 1925-1928**

The economic downturn of 1925-1927, largely due to monetary difficulties, caused there to be less need for migrant labor than in the previous period. We will see that foreign labor, however, still offered its services to Belgian industry. An oversupply of immigrants was the result. Not all newcomers were superfluous. Qualified miners were still needed, in Limburg as well as in Wallonia. The long lasting miners' strike in Britain in 1926 caused that the Belgian mines were even able to expand their production for a few months. Certainly then, qualified manpower was in short supply.

In this chapter we will not only look at how the public authorities, but also the employers and to a lesser extent the trade unions reacted to the new phenomena of an oversupply of labor. The different interest groups were confronted simultaneously with a continuous specific labor shortage which varied strongly in intensity throughout these years. We will look in how far the different interest groups succeeded in formulating a strategy which took into account these contradictionary realities.

The changing political leverage of the labor organizations in the three governments of these years (the cabinet Theunis, Poullet-Vandervelde and the government of national union) can shed light on the agendas put forward by the different political groups in this domain. In the previous period, (1922-1924) the political representation of labor in the national government was much more marginal. The direct influence of the trade unions by its presence in the entreprises and the joint commissions remained marginal to the actual alien policy. We will only point out some tentatives by the unions to get a grip on the presence of foreign labor in the labor market. In the political realm, the influence of labor in this period was much more important. The unique combination of Christian Democrats and Socialists in the "democratic" government Poullet-Vandervelde (June 1925-May 1926), in particular, can illustrate what role the labor parties attributed to the state and the unions in their alien policy.

First of all we will look what was seen as the general critique on the concept of the liberal alien policy and what kind of alternatives were proposed. Secondly, we will analyze the alien policy as it was being implemented in daily practice. Traditionally, immigration was totally free. The role of the state was limited to a post factum selection. Destitute aliens were to be expelled, while all other immigrants could remain in the country. In how far this model was still applied will be the focus of the second part. The third part looks into the dynamic of recruitment with the same set of questions as in the previous chapter. In particular, the role of the state(s) in the immigration of these workers will be analyzed.

The Liberal Policy Unmodified

In March 1924 the liberal alien policy was again in force. Upon arrival immigrants had to notify their presence to the communal authorities. Four months after their arrival, these aliens were registered in the population register. This registration was only refused to those with a criminal record.

A registration in the population register was only possible after the payment of a residence tax at the provincial authorities. After this payment the immigrant received an identity card analogous to the identity card for Belgians. This identity card implied residency status. Even those immigrants who had no valid passport or a required visa were inscribed in the population register and obtained residency status four months after their arrival.[[327]](#footnote-328) The Sûreté was confident that they would quickly put order in the by then chaotic alien administration. All immigrants would be registered and those who were deemed undesirable by this administration would, if necessary be forcibly removed.[[328]](#footnote-329) It turned out, however, that an efficient alien administration was not so easy to establish.

A lot of immigrants shirked the obligation to register because of the residence tax and the rather complicated administrative formalities. The Sûreté estimated that at least a quarter of all aliens in Belgium were unknown to its administration.[[329]](#footnote-330) The necessity to know the whereabouts of all aliens in Belgium -a necessity made especially acute when an increasing number of crimes were committed by aliens- led the Sûreté to propose the creation of a distinct administration for aliens. A special identity card for aliens renewable every two years would guarantee a more strict observance of the regulations.[[330]](#footnote-331) Although in October 1925 the Council of Ministers agreed to the proposal of the Sûreté to introduce a special identity card for aliens, this reform was not implemented.[[331]](#footnote-332) In fact this limited reform proposal triggered a discussion on a more sweeping reform of the alien policy. The Sûreté had succeeded until then in opposing any in depth discussion of the alien policy. In June 1924 the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor P.Tschoffen had proposed -shortly after the revocation of the regulation of April 1923- setting up a commission to discuss immigration policy. The Sûreté had just obtained exclusive responsibility for alien administration and strongly opposed this proposition. The Sûreté was convinced that they could carry out this new commission with great competence. A well-directed alien policy along traditional lines would be perfectly able to put an end to all complaints.[[332]](#footnote-333) The situation had already improved considerably, so why should any other department prevent them from finishing this job. If, however, alien policy had to take up a radical new aim -the protection of the national labor market- then new legislation would have to be introduced. According to the Sûreté, the law of 1897 did not create a mandate for expelling aliens who merely competed with national labor. One could not consider those aliens undesirable just for that fact. The Minister of Justice could not take sole responsibility for a new orientation in alien policy. Only after a thorough discussion among the legislators could such a radical change be implemented. The Sûreté considered such a change however not necessary:

"Le Gouvernement Belge a-t-il l'intention d'adopter une politique de protectionnisme ouvrier, qui tendrait à empêcher des travailleurs étrangers -qui ne seraient pas des indésirables- à venir s'employer en Belgique? Si oui...une loi serait nécessaire, parce qu'il serait inadmissible à mon avis, que le Ministre de la Justice, qui porte actuellement devant le Parlement et l'opinion publique la responsabilité de l'application des dispositions légales concernant les étrangers, soit réduit au rôle d'un simple agent d'exécution, chargé de faire remettre à la frontière certaines catégories de travailleurs étrangers, uniquement parce qu'un autre Département estime que leur presence est de nature à constituer une concurrence à la main d'oeuvre nationale. La loi nouvelle ne serait pas une loi de police, mais une loi sociale."[[333]](#footnote-334)

The suggestion of Minister of Labor P.Tschoffen was rebuffed. When nearly a year later the French authorities asked if they could pass over to Belgium their redundant North African labor, the absence of any possibility to stop such a flood of colonial labor from France was the occasion for the Minister of Labor P.Tschoffen to press through his idea of an interdepartmental commission to discuss Belgian's immigration policy. The commission met only once, in February 1925.[[334]](#footnote-335) The Ministry of Labor had to wait for a new cabinet to call the commission again. Only in October 1925, when the Council of Ministers had approved the proposition of the Sûreté to change the alien administration -the introduction of a special identity card for aliens- the commission was reactivated. The new government -the "democratic" Cabinet Poullet-Vandervelde- seemed to be more interested in implementing fundamental changes in alien policy and the interdepartmental commission met regularly until it submitted a bill to the Council of Ministers in February 1926. This commission, composed of senior civil servants of the different relevant departments (Labor, Foreign Affairs and Justice) had no clear-cut political mandate. It considered itself more a meeting of technical experts. The legitimacy of an intervention of the state on the labor market - politically the most controversial issue- was taken for granted by most of the officials. Only the modalities of this state intervention was at stake in their debates.[[335]](#footnote-336)

In February 1925 the Director General of the Ministry of Labor Vercruysse had proposed a bill which would revolutionize the Belgian alien policy.[[336]](#footnote-337) Upon arrival in Belgium every immigrant had to apply for a residence permit. That residence permit would be linked to a specific occupation. Hence an alien who wanted to change his occupational status had to re-apply for a new authorization. As the new policy would introduce a dual criteria -public order and social considerations- for granting sojourn, not only the Minister of Justice, but also the Minister of Labor would become responsible for these decisions. In order to perpetuate control over occupational status, it would become impossible for aliens to achieve residency status. The diplomatic reasons evoked in April 1923 to limit the control over labor migrants to a period of two years seemed no longer to be valid. Until their naturalization, aliens would remain under the arbitrary jurisdiction of the authorities. Whenever the presence of an immigrant was no longer economically justified, the authorities would be able to expel him.

This bill aimed at guaranteeing not only the "economic desirability" of immigrants, but also at attracting the manpower needed for structural and temporary shortages in specific segments of the labor market.[[337]](#footnote-338) This recruitment would of course depend on an authorization by the Minister of Labor. Attracting migrant labor from abroad would be assured through signing labor treaties with emigration countries. These treaties would open up the vast labor markets of emigration countries. A carefully selected lot of migrants would assure the necessary manpower for industries with labor shortages. The Belgian state could offer the emigration countries a guarantee of equal treatment for local and migrant labor in those segments of the labor market for which they were recruited. The guarantee was strengthened by control over the labor conditions of those recruited immigrants by the Belgian authorities as well as the consular authorities of the countries of emigration. Even a harmonization of social security legislation between Belgium and the emigration countries was envisaged.

This qualitative and quantitative selection of immigrant labor, combined with continuous control over those aliens, would keep migrants in those segments of the labor market where there was a shortage. According to Vercruysse, this legislation had to encompass all aliens since migrant labor could otherwise circumvent the restrictions by making use of a professional status other than wage labor. All aliens, independent of professional status, should be subject to the law.[[338]](#footnote-339) This would enable the total control of alien labor in order to ensure that they would never endanger the "national" interest. In the final draft occupational confinement was limited to labor. A flexible definition of employee would enable the authorities to track down all migrant labor independent of the professional status they took up.[[339]](#footnote-340) That "genuine" foreign businessmen would have to register each change of economic activity -an undesirable side effect of the original bill- hence became obsolete.

The new policy would demand a refurbishing of the state with instruments to evaluate adequately the state of the labor market. A national labor-exchange office had to be created together with a committee composed of representatives of employers' and labor organizations to advise the Minister of Labor.

Vercruysse argued that he had developed this proposal to cope with the new social and political reality of migration. To introduce a strict state-control over the aliens was necessary first of all to curtail the power of the emigration countries. He especially resented the tight control of the Italian authorities over the emigration of their citizens to Belgium. Only an enlargement of the power of the Belgian state would enable Belgian industry to recruit migrant labor without having to concede to all conditions the authorities of the emigration countries arbitrarily imposed.[[340]](#footnote-341) Secondly, he insisted, new legislation was necessary to protect the country against uninvited immigrants. The danger of undesirable immigration had increased considerably as in most other European immigration countries (France, Germany, Great Britain) the state had obtained farreaching rights for removal of aliens. An overall economic downturn would increase the number of immigrants in Belgium as the neighboring countries would expel them. Without any legislation, Belgium would be left unarmed.

A third reason for intervention was more controversial. Vercruysse and his advisers asserted that unregulated immigration had a devastating influence on unemployment and hence also on public finance. This, they argued had already been proven during the slight economic downturn of the mid-twenties. The presence of Italian and Dutch builders had increased the unemployment among Belgians in construction. Polish leather workers also threatened the livelihood of their Belgian colleagues. Even in the mine-basin of the Borinage Belgian miners had been laid off while foreigners remained on the job.[[341]](#footnote-342)

The bill remained largely an intellectual exercise for senior civil servants. It was heavily criticized. Especially Gonne, *Administrateur* of the Sûreté, considered it a highly unrealistic proposal because of its radical scope. To abolish residency status would, he argued, definitely encounter severe opposition within both legislative bodies. Liberal elements within the Parliament would certainly try to prevent passage of the bill, because it would put all aliens under the discretionary powers of the Administration.[[342]](#footnote-343) The MPs did not have a chance to voice their opposition to this bill; it was not put before them. However, the bill was presented to the representatives of heavy industry and their criticism was probably an important element in the silent death of this bill. They contested strongly this bill, because of the power it would give the executive. Their vehement opposition aimed at killing the potential for political arbitrariness in the bud. Heavy industry feared that the extensive state-power to regulate immigration would potentially be used against their interests.[[343]](#footnote-344)

Vercruysse did his utmost best to show industry that the new legislation would yield important advantages for them in terms of a stronger bargaining power with the emigration countries.[[344]](#footnote-345) He insisted that there was no danger that the new legislation would infringe on their right to recruit migrant labor to alleviate shortages in the labor market. The Director General of the Ministry of Labor did not want to alienate the powerful employers of heavy industry. For this reason Vercruysse refuted an even tighter control over migrant labor by imposing on industry a government authorization for every alien they wanted to employ. Expanding the aliens' administration to the employers of migrant labor was not envisaged, Vercruysse said, because it would charge the state with too much responsibility. The following extract of the conversation in the interdepartmental commission illustrates the even more radical nature of such an all-encompassing control over foreign labor. However, given the objectives of the officials the integration of a control over the employers would definitely rationalize the control over foreign workers.

Vercruysse:"Le moyen le plus radical, on en a essayé en Yougo-Slavie en des temps derniers: tout employeur devait, pour employer des étrangers, y être autorisé par le Gouvernement."

De Roover, director of Minister of Foreign Affairs:"C'est de la xénophobie."

Vercruysse:"Cela dégénère -en effet- facilement en xénophobie, quand on l'applique avec quelque rigueur. Aussi a-t-on vu un concert de protestations s'élever des légations étrangères et des cercles des employeurs eux-mêmes. Le système n'est donc pas sans inconvénient, bien que pratiquement ce soit celui qui présente le maximum de garanties."

Costermans: "Le système yougo-slave donne toute garantie, mais il charge le Gouvernement d'une grande responsablilité. C'est un autre inconvénient à éviter".[[345]](#footnote-346)

The task of the state in the new alien policy would be two-folded. Firstly the state, in collaboration with representatives of labor and employers' organizations, would streamline the access to the national labor market by deciding how many immigrants were necessary to alleviate specific shortages in the labor market and by facilitating the recruitment of this manpower. The actual role of the state in the national labor market would expand to prevent immigrants to work beyond the segments attributed to them. Immigrants had only to be tolerated for those segments of the labor market which suffered labor shortages. State control should not infringe on the basic mechanism of these segments of the labor market where migrants were necessary. Only if aliens went beyond those segments and hence competed directly with national labor, they would be expelled.

The pragmatic approach of Vercruysse did not convince heavy industry. In fact Vercruysse received a stern rebuke from them. Industry did not want any intervention of the state in the labor market. Industry could decide for itself how many immigrants had to be recruited. Having to pass through the labor exchange offices and the central authorities would only add up to more bureaucratic hurdles. The whole endeavor would limit the freedom which industry needed. The labor market should work along the mechanism of the free market in order to produce the best results. State intervention would only hinder the smooth functioning of the labor market. Trasenster, a strong man of heavy industry, explains clearly his aversion to any state action in this field in the following statements:

"Laissez nous faire nos affaires nous-mêmes et ne nous livrez pas à l'arbitraire...La grande industrie a tout intérêt à s'occuper des garanties que doivent présenter les ouvriers qu'elle embauche.....La main d'oeuvre doit se plier aux lois économiques...Les étrangers acceptent de travailler là où les Belges ne veulent pas le faire. L'ouvrier belge ne se déplace pas facilement..Quand la besogne se fait rare, l'élément étranger se liquide le plus facilement..En temps de crise..personne ne demandera de main d'oeuvre."[[346]](#footnote-347)

The employers disapproved -just as in 1923- of any protection of the national labor market. The state-control over immigration should only be to eliminate politically and medically undesirable aliens.[[347]](#footnote-348) It turned out that the basic assumptions of the discussions of the interdepartmental commission were still very controversial. That the state should intervene in the labor market was still largely contested. The bill was shelved for the next few years, only to return in the wake of the rising unemployment of the 1930s.[[348]](#footnote-349) The Vercruysse bill got strong support from the trade unions. In particular, the Socialist union espoused Vercruysse's ideas and especially his proposal for the corporate regulation of immigration.[[349]](#footnote-350)

This support was not sufficient to bring about the sweeping reform in alien legislation that the passing of the Vercruysse bill would have caused. The alien policy remained essentially a 19th century laissez faire policy for the next couple of years. Even a limited modification such as the introduction of a special identity card for aliens was not implemented.

The Controversial Fortunes of Immigration

The shortage in the labor market had by 1925 diminished and the shrinking job opportunities made that more and more migrants left Belgium for their home country or went to France or Germany. Also the diminishing value of the Belgian frank meant that working in Belgium became less rewarding.[[350]](#footnote-351) While emigration increased, immigration continued but at a much lower level. Especially the mining sector continued to absorb newcomers. The alien policy did not change. The economically useful immigrants, even if they crossed the border illegally and had no valid identity papers were still tolerated.[[351]](#footnote-352)

Large-scale recruitment of manpower was no longer deemed that necessary. The mining companies could recruit again enough Belgian manpower as the massive post war exodus to France was over. The Belgian mining industry slipped also, because of increased international competition in a downturn.

This shifting of power in the labor market, also in the mining industry was especially acute in the Borinage where it led to wage cuts, unemployment among Belgian miners and a two month strike. The basin of the Borinage because of its geological conditions (only fat industrial coals in very uneven seams which inhibited mechanization) was very vulnerable to international competition. The crisis caused the closing of some of its most unproductive pits.

The unemployed Belgian miners in this basin were enraged when they saw that a number of foreign miners, albeit very small were kept on the job. Although the employers promised not to recruit new foreigners, they refused to give the Belgians a principal priority to foreigners. They declared that the selection of their personnel was based on professional and not on national criteria.[[352]](#footnote-353) The miners union, Socialist and Christian Democratic alike voiced the anger of the local miners into a call for an immediate dismissal of all foreigners in the basin.[[353]](#footnote-354) Even more, the trade unions pled for the dismissal of all foreign miners in Belgium, as this would enable a redistribution of the national manpower to eradicate unemployment. The Flemish miners in Charleroi should go to the Limburg basin and the unemployed miners of the Borinage could take the vacant places in the other basins of Hainaut, caused by the departure of their foreign and Flemish colleagues.[[354]](#footnote-355)

The Minister of Labor, J.Wauters supported this trade union proposal and urged the employers to fire the immigrants.[[355]](#footnote-356) Although there was a decline, even relatively in foreign manpower being used the employers refused to yield to the demand of the trade unions. The specific tasks which the foreigners performed in the industry, together with the lack of flexibility of the Belgian miners made the proposed solution, according to them illusory.[[356]](#footnote-357)

This dispute was reflecting a profound dissatisfaction within the trade unions about the alien policy because it ignored largely the social-economic dimension of migration. The Christian-Democrat and Socialist unions alike favored an alien policy which would take into account the implications of international migrations on the labor market. For them, immigrants could only be a supplemental labor force for those segments of the labor market where manpower shortages were being felt. The appreciation of these shortages should be left to a joint employer-trade union commission.[[357]](#footnote-358)

Although the conflict over foreign labor in the mining industry remained largely of a local nature (the Borinage), it made the authorities reluctant to still grant permissions for recruitment to the mining industry. In any case, there was no urgent need for manpower. Production slowed down and local labor and informal migration could fulfill the need of manpower. However, especially the new basin of Limburg considered that they needed more foreign labor and prepared for new recruitment in Italy and Poland.[[358]](#footnote-359)

The economic downturn caused that there was even an oversupply of immigrants. More and more migrants found no means to make a living. Those destitute aliens were forcibly removed from Belgian territory.[[359]](#footnote-360) After German protest an agreement was concluded between Germany and Belgium that prohibited the random expulsion of undesirable aliens to Germany. Only German nationals could from November the first, 1926 on still be expelled. Other Central and Eastern Europeans could only be forced over the Belgian-German boarder if they had the necessary documents (a German visa) to enter Germany. For those migrants who were arrested, because of vagrancy but had no clearly established nationality or for whom a repatriation depended on a German transit visa the Sûreté was forced to detain them in the vagrant *colonies* of Hoogstraten, Wortel and Sint-Andries. They had to stay there until their papers were in order and that they had some money at their disposal.[[360]](#footnote-361)

The result were immediately to be felt. In January 1927 nearly two hundred foreigners were detained in the vagrant *colonies*. Most of them were Poles, also a dozen Czechoslovakian citizens were kept in the *colonies*. As is illustrated by graph 15 about the same number of foreigners was detained during the next two years.[[361]](#footnote-362) In 1929 only very few aliens were kept in the Belgian vagrant *colonies*.

The managers of these *colonies* were not satisfied at all with these newcomers. These migrants were different from the habitual clientele of these institutions. While the Belgian vagrants were social outcasts, the foreigners were ambitious people. They were eager to work. They had left their country with the intention to look for a well paid job and then to return with their savings to their country of origin. The economic downturn had undermined these plans, they even did not succeed to save money to pay their trip back. They had come to Belgium on their way home, whereby they hoped to find in Belgium opportunities to work.

Management of the *colonie* in Wortel realized immediately that these people would not accomodated themself easily to the regime of the *colonie*. Forced labor in the vagrant *colonies* for a miserable pay was not their piece of cake. The director also pointed out that the accomodation of these foreigners meant an important expenditure for the Belgian treasury. The director proposed to negotiate their repatriation and to grant the migrants a small subsidy for their trip back home. The repatriation procedure was a cumbersome and expensive affair. It depended on the collaboration of the German authorities and also the consulate of the countries of emigration had to cooperate. This meant that an organized repatriation was not considered feasible. The Minister of Justice decided to retain these vagrants in the *colonie* until they had earned 25 francs -about four months labor- and then to release them. If in the meantime the papers necessary for a return to their country of origin could be arranged fine, if not they still had to leave Belgium.

The frustration of the migrants about their forced internment and labor quickly exploded. In January 1927 a strike broke out, about 50 Poles in Wortel refused to continue working. They demanded their immediate release from the *colonie*. In agreement with the consuls of Czechoslovakia and Poland a solution was found in the transfer of these vagrants to the Limburg mine-basin.[[362]](#footnote-363) This solution would be repeated in the following months, but there remained always a group of foreigners in the vagrant *colonies*. Either no work was found for them, or the Sûreté considered them unwanted (subversive and criminal migrants). These migrants had to stay in the *colonie* until they had earned 25 francs and were then brought to the border, where they were told to leave Belgium. If they did not do so, they risked a second imprisonnement. As most of them had not the necessary documents, they were "forced" to cross the German or French border illegally. The Sûreté hoped that the threat with a second imprisonnement would persuade these unwanted immigrants to leave Belgium.[[363]](#footnote-364)

In the meantime labor immigration had knew a short-lived upsurge. During a strike in the iron- and steel industry of Charleroi in the winter of 1925/1926 the employers planned to recruit qualified metalworkers in Germany. This old use of immigrants as strikebreakers was, however, thwarted by the decision of the Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs E.Vandervelde not to grant any visa to these metalworkers.[[364]](#footnote-365) The "democratic" cabinet did not oppose recruiting immigrants to supplement more economically determined shortages in the labor market.

In 1926, when because of the miners'strike in Britain the Belgian mining industry revived, management looked again beyond the borders to find the necessary manpower. Italians, Poles and North-Africans and also Russian refugees were again called by the mining companies to supplement the labor force. For the last three groups the authorities could regulate their immigration through the visa-requirement.

The Ministry of Justice asked each visa-applicant to submit a medical certificate and a certificate of good conduct.[[365]](#footnote-366) That only medical and moral guarantees were asked for was resented by the Socialist Ministers both in the "left" Cabinet Poullet-Vandervelde and the Cabinet of National Unity. They pressed hard for professional guarantees in order to make sure that the immigrants would work in the mines. They wanted also that a labor contract which assured equality of treatment with Belgian labor would be asked for in order to prevent undercutting of local wages.[[366]](#footnote-367) The Socialist Ministers went even further. They insisted to develop means to assure that this migrant labor once entered in Belgium would stick to mining and would not compete local labor in other industries.

"Ceux qu'on demande aujourd'hui à titre de remplaçants ne vont-ils pas suivre demain l'exemple des remplacés, si bien que leur destination officielle (les charbonnages) ne serait qu'une apparence fugitive, un trompe-l'oeil...Il faudrait obvier à cet inconvénient en subordonnant le séjour des nouveaux arrivés à leur travail effectif dans les charbonnages. Ou bien, nouvelles Danaïdes; les agents recruteurs nous déverseront toujours de nouveaux afflux de main-d'oeuvre étrangère, soi-disant pour les mines, mais des mines elle fuira dans d'autres professions déjà engorgées, au grand mécontentement des travailleurs ainsi concurrencés avec le concours direct du Gouvernement, auxiliaire des recruteurs professionnels."[[367]](#footnote-368)

Vercruysse even considered that no legal innovations were necessary to obtain that migrants recruited for the mines, would also stick to mining. The alien law of 1897 gave the authorities the right to expel those aliens who did not respect the law. That these migrants did not respect their original engagement to work in the mines, was reason enough to expel them.[[368]](#footnote-369)

The Liberal Minister of Justice P.Hymans contested that he could expel these immigrants. As soon as they had residency status, their removal from the country was very difficult. More important the Minister considered the susceptibilities of the Socialists exaggerated. The Sûreté considered it even not necessary to consult the Ministry of Labor when employers applied for visa for labor migrants. The Minister of Justice argued that industry would not call upon migrant labor if the need was not clearly established. Anyway there were no problems with migrant labor in Belgium.[[369]](#footnote-370)

When a few months later, by the fall of 1926 the British miners resumed working the Belgian mining industry slackened again. Britain succeeded to conquer its old markets without any problem.

The Socialist Minister of Labor, J.Wauters reacted immediately and decided in October 1926 -when there was still a slight shortage of labor- to oppose granting visa to labor migrants for the mining industry.[[370]](#footnote-371) Wauters motivated this refusal by pointing out to the one year contracts under which these migrants were recruited. He predicted that the mining industry would find itself with hugh stocks again, as the cause which made the mining industry revive was an artificial one. The employers would have to reduce their workforce soon, but they would not be able to fire the newly recruited migrants until their contract expired. This would make that the Belgian miners would be the first to be dismissed.

The decision of Wauters to put a halt to immigration was viciously attacked by the employers' friendly press. That mining companies could not call anymore on migrants, notwithstanding the shortage of labor would cause increasing unemployment in other industrial sectors because of a lack of coal. Coal shortages would even make the winter for all Belgian citizens a very cold one.[[371]](#footnote-372) This violent press campaign was only directed against the Socialist Ministers. It was however not only a party struggle, what was at stake was the right of the state to regulate autonomously the labor market.

"Le ministre de l'industrie et du travail revendique pour le gouvernement le droit de réglementer le marché du travail..De grâce, que chacun fasse son métier! Nos directeurs de charbonnages connaissent le leur. Quand ils engagent du personnel étranger sous leur responsabilité, ils savent bien ce qu'ils font. Il est inadmissible que l'Etat vienne dire à telle industrie:"Vous avez trop d'ouvriers" et à telle autre" Vous n'en avez pas assez" Qu'en sait-il? Quel est le fonctionnaire ou le ministre assez outrecuidant pour venir faire la leçon à nos chefs d'industrie!"[[372]](#footnote-373)

It seems likely that the Minister of Justice did grant no longer visas to foreign workers after October 1926, but the official guideline of the Sûreté prohibiting the consulates to grant visa to labor migrants was only dispatched to the embassies in February 1927.[[373]](#footnote-374) By then unemployment even in the mining sector was on the rise again and no mine called anymore on new immigrants. Only more than a year later, in April 1928 agreed the then Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman to lift the ban on visa for migrant labor.[[374]](#footnote-375)

In the short downturn between October 1926 and April 1928 the dismissal of migrant labor to save national labor from unemployment was again been discussed.[[375]](#footnote-376) State officials, supported by the miners' trade unions proposed the replacement of the unqualified foreigners by local unemployed labor.[[376]](#footnote-377) If it would be necessary to find a job for qualified miners who were unemployed, than also the few qualified migrant workers had to be fired. Their dismissal would only mean a transfer to Limburg, as this new basin could still absorb skilled miners. When data were collected to analyze the results of the eventual dismissal of the foreigners, it turned out that about 50% of the migrant labor in the Walloon basins was qualified labor, while there were hardly Belgian skilled miners unemployed.[[377]](#footnote-378) The government officials realized that pushing for the dismissal of the foreigners was no longer possible as also the Walloon basin turned out to be depended on the skills of these immigrants. Unemployment outside the mining sector could hardly be solved by intervening in the labor market of the mining industry.

This strategy would anyway have encountered strong resistance by the mining industry. FEDECHAR had already, when the removal of foreign labor was first formulated defined its strategy. No outside intervention, be it from the state or the trade unions could be accepted. All of its foreign labor was essential. Political and economic reasons intertwined in their radical opposition to outside intervention. They refused even to dismiss unqualified foreigners as they doubted whether they would find unemployed Belgians willing to replace the immigrants. In addition unqualified migrant labor was cheaper than local labor. Not so much that the wages being paid to foreigners were lower, but immigrants were mostly single and the mines had to provide a minimum of benefits to them. The final argument was more political, the migrants could be used as a way to break the monopoly of the trade unions in the labor market.[[378]](#footnote-379)

The Employers Decide about the Profile of "their" Immigrants

As mentioned before the presence of alien labor in Belgium had increased spectacularly in 1923. In particular the mining industry attracted large number of aliens. There was a slight decline in the number of aliens working in the mines in the spring of 1924 (15,543 aliens). This was according to the mining companies, only a temporary decrease. They expected to employ in the near future 23,000 alien miners.[[379]](#footnote-380) However, one year later -by May 1925- the number of alien miners declined even further. At this point, only 13,909 aliens were still employed in the mining industry.[[380]](#footnote-381) Because of a long mine-strike in Britain in 1926, the demand for Belgian coal rose and the number of alien migrants jumped up. By the end of 1926 this artificial revival of the mining industry was brought to a halt. On November 15, 1927 there were 16,633 foreign miners in the Belgian mine industry, 9% of the total labor force of this industry.[[381]](#footnote-382) By 1928, there was again a greater demand for coal and the local supply of manpower was again supplemented with labor from abroad.

This fluctuating number of alien miners closely linked to the economic development of the mining industry hides the political dimension within this immigration to the mining industry and globally to the Belgian labor market. The changing national composition of the alien workforce in the mines is an indication of the role of politics in this process. While in the first half of the 1920s three quarters of the aliens in the mining were from Italy, North Africa or the neighboring countries their share diminished to half by 1927. 35% of the foreigners were then Poles.[[382]](#footnote-383) In this chapter we will analyze the dynamic of this process.

Italian immigration into Belgium decreased considerably in 1925. This was the result of the economic downturn and the resulting diminishing job-opportunities. The mining sector was the only sector which continued to apply for Italian migrants. Very few unqualified laborers were still asked for as more and more unemployed Belgians offered their services as unskilled workers. The mining industry still needed qualified miners. Especially the expansion of the production in Limburg could not be met by the available qualified Belgian personnel, but also Italy was not able to meet this demand.[[383]](#footnote-384) Also the quarries asked for some qualified labor in Italy, a demand Italy was also hardly able to respond to.[[384]](#footnote-385)

During the years 1925-1928 only some Italian stonemen for the mines and stone cutters for the quarries were recruited. Quantitatively more important was the departure of a large number of Italian migrant labor.[[385]](#footnote-386) Italian labor in Belgium remained scattered in different sectors. The bulk of Italians migrants were during those years of course employed in heavy industry. Mining was however not so dominant as among other nationalities such as Poles and North Africans. Between three and four thousand Italians were working in the mines, mostly as unqualified labor. At most a quarter of them were qualified miners, mostly stonemen. The iron and steel industry employed a few thousand Italians. Nearly all of them were working as ancillary workers particular in the blast furnaces. About 500 Italians found a livelihood in the quarries. Among those Italians, a large number were qualified stone cutters.[[386]](#footnote-387) Construction remained the domain par excellence of the Italian migrants. Their number is however difficult to establish, but probably ran in the thousands.[[387]](#footnote-388)

Dutch labor was still recruited. As the Dutch mines were also in need of qualified manpower, nearly only unqualified labor was available for the Belgian mining industry. The number of Dutchmen emigrating to Belgium was relatively small and most Dutch labor did the unskilled jobs in different industries on a seasonal or one-time basis.[[388]](#footnote-389)

North African labor was no longer recruited in these years. First of all North African emigration was now subject of restrictions. Secondly and more importantly was the reluctance of the Belgian administration to grant visa. When in the summer of 1926 some mines wanted to recruit labor in Tunisia, this was strongly discouraged by the Sûreté. Out of a racist conviction the administration refused to grant visa. North African labor was seen as provoking racial prejudice and thus likely to cause problems of law and order.[[389]](#footnote-390) The mining companies did not insist. North Africa could only provide unqualified mine labor and similar to all other migrants without experience in the mining sector was their occupational loyalty limited.[[390]](#footnote-391)

Not only were North Africans no longer recruited, their number was even diminishing. The trend which had started already by the end of 1924 was strenghtened, the number of North African miners dropped in this period nearly by half. North African migrant labor did not only decline in the mining sector, it was also to a large degree pushed out of other industrial sectors.[[391]](#footnote-392) It seems hardly any other outlets were found by the North Africans and this led probably to an emigration of the North Africans, to France or back to North Africa. The few thousand North Africans who remained in Belgium were concentrated in the mines of the basin of Charleroi and were mostly of Algerian origin.[[392]](#footnote-393)

The Italian and North Africans which were the two main groups which alleviated the labor shortages in the first half of the 1920s were hardly called upon between 1925 and 1928. Poles became the favorites of the mining industry. However the Polish authorities refused in 1925 the request of Belgian mining companies to recruit 1,000 qualified miners in Poland. This decision was motivated by the reluctance of the Belgian authorities to enter into negotiations for a labor treaty. Also the intention of the Belgian mines to subcontract the recruitment to the ever more powerful SGI made that the reception of this demand in Poland

as cool. That the Belgian mines refused moreover to cover the transport costs caused that the Polish authorities indignantly refused the request.[[393]](#footnote-394) The Polish authorities retorted that only with a labor treaty in which the full equality of Polish with Belgian labor was assured Polish labor would be available for the Belgian industry and agriculture.[[394]](#footnote-395)

Polish immigrants continued however to arrive in Belgium, mostly illegally from the North of France and from the Ruhr. That the Belgian labor market continued to absorb unemployed and dissatisfied Polish migrants from France and Germany was welcomed by the Polish consular authorities. The professional and political quality of the Poles in Belgium was however, according to the Polish authorities negatively influenced by this intake. They feared that this could jeopardize the future of Belgium as an immigration country for Poles.[[395]](#footnote-396) This anxiety turned out to be unjustified.

When the British miners' strike of 1926 caused a sudden revival of the Belgian mining industry, mine management turned to the Polish authorities for additional manpower. Recruitment in Poland remained out of the question. An agreement with the Polish consulates in Cologne and Brussels was however made whereby the mining companies forwarded the travel costs for Poles sojourning in Germany willing to work in Belgium. The agreement was sanctioned by the Belgian authorities. A monthly quota of 175 visa for Polish miners was granted by May 1926.[[396]](#footnote-397) By August 1926 the number of mining companies who wanted to recruit Poles in Germany declined considerably as a new source of manpower became available.[[397]](#footnote-398) Recruitment in Poland itself was then agreed to.

This agreement of the Polish authorities to recruitment in Poland itself was the consequence of important political and economic changes. The first change was the Belgian attitude towards the Polish demand for a labor treaty. The Belgian authorities were in 1925 much more indulgent to the Polish demand for a labor treaty than in 1923 when Jaspar blocked all rapprochement. The overall improved diplomatic relations with Poland, the precedent of a Belgian-French labor treaty on the miners' pensions and a Cabinet Poullet-Vandervelde which was more interested in labor affairs meant that the Polish request was open for discussion.[[398]](#footnote-399)

A platform was proposed along the lines of the bilateral agreement with France.[[399]](#footnote-400) The Polish authorities however wanted a more general treaty which would put not only Polish miners, but all migrant labor from Poland on an equal footing with their Belgian colleagues, not only for old age, but also for invalidity, sickness and unemployment[[400]](#footnote-401). The Belgian authorities resisted strongly an agreement that would cover all Polish migrant labor.

"An agreement should not encompass all Polish labor as this would imply a burden for the Belgian treasury without compensation by Poland. Also an agreement limited to the mines would be a burden for the Belgian treasury, but the government is willing to make a sacrifice for the miners. The benefit conferred should not be expanded upon a vague, in quantity as well as in quality defined group of people who are the Polish citizens in Belgium.[[401]](#footnote-402)"

The Belgian authorities considered a general agreement not at all appropriate as the alien legislation did not permit any selection of immigrants. If a new alien legislation would come in effect and immigrants could be selected according to their economic utility then only a more general labor treaty could be envisaged[[402]](#footnote-403).

Although by 1926 no results were yet obtained, there definitely were less gloomy prospects for some kind of labor treaty. Even more importantly for the Polish authorities was that some Belgian mines agreed to reimburse the travel costs of the Poles they wanted to recruit and even to co-finance Polish schools for the children of their workers. The willingness of some Belgian mining companies was the result of economic and political considerations. Crucial hereby was the availability of qualified miners in Poland. As we mentioned earlier the nature of the labor shortages of the mining industry changed between 1923 and 1925. As only qualified manpower was needed became the Polish surplus of miners more attractive. In addition the rather negative evaluation of the intake of Italian and North African labor meant that the mining companies were looking for more promising aliens. The Polish authorities promised clear guarantees that the investment in Polish labor would not be a loss. They gave a medical and professional guarantee that the recruited migrants were apt for mine work. Although some costs were involved in the recruitment of Poles (mainly transport costs), they only had to be paid if the migrants effectively worked for the company which recruited them. In any case also the Italian authorities demanded the payment of the transport costs since August 1925[[403]](#footnote-404). About 500 miners were recruited in Poland in the summer of 1926, most of them for the new mines in Limburg[[404]](#footnote-405).

It seems highly likely that the mining companies were quite satisfied with the Poles. The spill-over of Polish migrants recruited for the mining industry was relatively limited. As in the first half of the 1920s a small number of Polish immigrants worked in other industries, but their number only slightly increased and this notwithstanding the spectacular rise in the number of Poles in the mining industry[[405]](#footnote-406).

Not only Polish, but also Russian manpower was called upon in 1926. These easily available refugees were -albeit in less numbers- still recruited, now not only in Bulgaria but also in the Baltic republics and in Germany. The ILO tried to find a permanent solution for refugees whose livelihood in the first asylum country was not yet assured. The ILO representative in Belgium, Max Gottschalk tried to make the Russian refugees more attractive, by offering not only moral guaranties, but also assurances on their qualification and physical condition[[406]](#footnote-407). Belgian mines applied for about 200 visa in 1926[[407]](#footnote-408). The Ministry of Justice considered it no problem to grant them visa.

The Socialist Ministers considered this a far too liberal policy. They criticized vehemently these authorizations as examples of the policy of the Ministry of Justice to grant automatically visa whenever companies asked for it. J.Wauters, the Socialist Minister of Labor argued that the Russian refugees who still had not succeeded to be settled could not be very useful manpower[[408]](#footnote-409). He also pointed out that one had to be especially prudent with the Russians, as their refugee status meant that they came to stay[[409]](#footnote-410).

The Sûreté still granted visa to mining companies which wanted to recruit Russian refugees. To refuse the mines the necessary manpower or to force them to select "better" nationalities was not considered. The pressure from the Socialists Ministers meant that a gesture had to be made. The embassies got the order to state clearly to the refugees that the authorization to immigrate in Belgium was only granted on the condition that they would work in the mines[[410]](#footnote-411). The Sûreté was however conscious that they had no legal means whatsoever to enforce this. When the ILO asked for more details, they had to acknowledge that the refugees had to respect only the terms of their one year contract, after that year they were free to look for another occupation[[411]](#footnote-412).

Notwithstanding the attitude of the Sûreté was the enthusiasm of the mining companies for the Russian refugees beginning to wane. An important contention bone was the travel costs. In the beginning of 1926 the mining companies were proposed to advance half of the travel costs, this sum could be deducted for the refugees' salary during the first six months of mine-labor[[412]](#footnote-413). If the mine wanted to recover the costs, the refugee had to stay at least six months in the mine. This risky arrangement was not very popular among mining companies. Already in the second half of 1926 could the mining companies recruit Russian refugees without any financial risk. The terms were even better that in 1924, the mines did not have to invest a penny in the recruitment. The ILO paid all travel-costs and the refugees had to reimburse this sum directly to the ILO in six months time. Only about 100 Russian refugees were recruited through this scheme. When a group of Russian refugees recruited in Germany did not even work one day in the mines, the ILO retreated totally from any involvement in the financing of the travel costs[[413]](#footnote-414). The companies had, when they were interested to recruit refugee-labor, to pay the whole trip themselves. As a result hardly any Russian refugee was recruited for Belgian mines after 1926[[414]](#footnote-415).

The advantage of a political safe migrant did not outweigh the costs. Crucial in the decision not to pay the travel costs was that by 1926 the occupational loyalty of refugee-labor was strongly distrusted. One was not sure at all that the refugees who one would recruit with high costs would stay in the mines. Gorissen, the representative of the Charleroi mines wrote in an angry mood just after the departure of 25 just recruited Russian refugees that this refugee-labor was not at all that interesting: "les Russes sont paresseux, peu enclins au travail et..aucun n'a jamais travaillés dans une mine de charbon.[[415]](#footnote-416)"

The loyalty of the Russian refugees to the mining sector was indeed rather weak. Other industrial sectors seemed to have more attraction for them[[416]](#footnote-417). Probably even more important is their move towards the cities. The urban background of most of the Russian refugees meant that they looked in the cities, especially Brussels for an alternative livelihood[[417]](#footnote-418). Russian taxi-drivers, white collar workers ..became a common phenomena in the capital[[418]](#footnote-419).

**5.Migrant Entrepreneurs in Belgium during the 1920s**

In this chapter we look into the immigrants who earned a living outside heavy industry. We will focus on self-employed migrants, and also on the immigrants who worked as outworkers or employees in businesses set up by their countrymen. We will analyze in which sectors immigrants set up businesses and why those sectors attracted immigrant entrepreneurs. We will argue that what was decisive in those endeavours was not so much an ethnic bend for entrepreneurship, but rather the opportunity structures of the local economy.

The first immigrant businesses we will focus upon are the ethnic businesses catering to the distinct needs of their co-ethnics. Two immigrant groups -the Italians and especially the Jews- succeeded, however, to establish businesses which reached a clientel beyond their ethnic group.[[419]](#footnote-420)

Ethnic entreprises[[420]](#footnote-421)

Immigrant butchers and bakers responded to the consumers' demand for culinary products of the immigrants' homeland. Also immigrants who ran retail shops knew of the tastes of their co-ethnics and found a niche in the immigrant community. More general ethnic products such as newspapers and movies were also offered by ethnic entrepreneurs.[[421]](#footnote-422) Little local competition was to be expected, as it demanded a profound knowledge of the immigrants' country of origin.

These businesses were very small for the most part. Most of them employed only the immediate family members.[[422]](#footnote-423) The ethnic entreprises were very much a collective endeavour of a immigrant family. Immigrants who entered business had always made their wife and children join them. There were hardly any self employed single immigrant. Here also it seems that the ultimate goal was to collect enough savings to return to the country of origin.[[423]](#footnote-424)

A lot of these ethnic businesses were the source of a second income. In quite a few case -especially in the retail trade- the husband worked in the mines, while their spouses ran the business.[[424]](#footnote-425)

These ethnic entreprises could function viably within a large residential concentration of co-ethnics. Ethnic business opportunities were plentiful, especially in Limburg. The development of the mining industry brought an enormous increase in population along with it. Thousands were pulled in the direction of Beringen, Waterschei, Winterslag and Eisden, not only from the surrounding areas, but also from Poland, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. Everything had to be built up from nothing, including a commercial infrastructure. At the beginning of the twenties mine management took the distribution of goods upon itself (the *Economaten*), but once thousands of consumers were dwelling in the mine basin a local middle class developped. Immigrants also saw opportunites and set up businesses. These ethnic businesses were to be found close to the mines of Winterslag and Eisden, the mines with the largest number of Polish, Italian and Czech immigrant workers. There were Slavic butchers and bakers and every nationality had its own hostels, restaurants and bars...[[425]](#footnote-426)

In the 1920s, the Limburg mine basin was fertile ground for ethnic entrepreneurs. Two examples can testify to this. The Pole Bissiorek came from a well-off rural family, but had to flee from Poland as he had been implicated in a horse smuggling affair. Starting in the mines, first in France and then in Belgium, he quickly turned to business. By 1929, he was running a bakery in Waterschei employing two bakers -he did not know how to bake himself- and four drivers in 1929. He had one car and four carts. He had a virtually monopoly in providing Polish bread to the Limburg mine region. An Italian entrepreneur Ivan Misle had four employees - of different ethnic origin- in his butcher's shop in Eisden, he had also a branch in Waterschei. He built a picture theater in Eisden and also ran a retail shop and a winebar. By the end of the 1920s he had four cars.[[426]](#footnote-427)

Their success did not last. The main problem for these entrepreneurs was their lack of capital. Bissiorek went bankrupt in 1932 when wages of the miners dropped and the number of immigrants declined. He had to return to the mine.[[427]](#footnote-428) Ivan Misle had even borrowed half a million to expand his business at the end of the 1920s when prospects were bright, but the depression came too soon for him. The failure of his picture theater -he had used cheap building materials and the rain ruined his roof- caused his whole "business-empire" to fall apart.[[428]](#footnote-429)

In Limburg no other immigrants would expand their businesses as had been done in the 1920s. Butchers and bakers would mostly serve only one mine community and employ no-one else except kin and some apprentices. There is no clear pattern in the fortune of these ethnic businesses. A few lasted throughout the 1930s. Bankruptcies remained high, being self-employed remained a risky choice. Failed would-be businessmen returned to the mine. Others, the more succesful ones, sold their businesses after a few years and decided to return to their home-country. Along with retail shops, bakeries and butchers'shops, an important number of restaurants and hostels were run by immigrants. The cost barriers were limited. The hostels were, in general, property of the mines and managers of different origins were chosen by mine management. Breweries were ready to co-finance the establishment of a bar by an immigrant, in exchange for the monopoly of their brand in that bar.[[429]](#footnote-430)

Ethnic businesses served the needs of their co-ethnics also in Wallonia. Here a Polish entrepreneur, Felix Hetman -he was a pharmacist by profession- succeeded in building up a business which monopolized the demand for Polish bread and meat among the scattered Central European communities in Wallonia. He started out as a translator for Hasard in Cheratte, a mine with a large concentration of Polish labor. He won the confidence of the Polish miners and set up a savings bank with their money. This money enabled him to set up his own business. By 1930 he ran a retail shop for an exclusively Polish clientele. During the 1930s he expanded his business to become the Polish baker and butcher for Wallonia. By 1938, when he had to close down his business because of sickness he employed at least four bakers and two butchers and had several apprentices. The bread and meat was distributed daily all over Wallonia with five trucks.[[430]](#footnote-431)

The hostel sector was an important domain for ethnic entrepreneurs in Wallonia. While in Limburg private initiative in this field was limited, this was not the case in Wallonia. Mines and factories provided many fewer hostels and, especially in the basin of Liège, there were great opportunities for private initiatives in this field.[[431]](#footnote-432) These immigrant businessmen, just as the managers of the hostels, run by the companies, provided not only lodging, but also necessary social services for newcomers. They wrote and translated letters, gave advice, held money, brokered jobs and arranged the necessary documents for their inexperienced fellow countrymen. We have, however, hardly any information on the social composition and the fortunes of these entrepreneurs.

In general, on the basis of the limited information we have at our disposal we can state that the composition of this middle-class stratum among the migrant population remained highly fluid. There was a constant flow of immigrants between entrepreneurship and industrial labor.[[432]](#footnote-433) Most, but not all ethnic entrepreneurs had either worked in industry before they started their business or they did so after an unsuccessful enterpreneurial undertaking. Very few of these immigrants who tried their hands at these small businesses directed at their ethnic community had, however, a worker or peasant background. The necessary skills (at least for the most popular undertakings, bakery and butcher's shops) and the potential prosperity of the business, strictly linked to the fortunes of their countrymen, caused the appeal of self-employment to be limited. Self-employment in these sectors was no protection against a radically declining living-standard during the Depression. The number of potential customers declined considerably in the less prosperous years -the immigrants were used as a shock absorber- as the number of returnees increased. In any case the need for capital and for a large residental concentration of co-ethnics meant that the opportunities were limited.

Italian Entreprises Serve Wider Markets

The Italians also had entreprises which served the ethnic niche. Italian retail shops sold pasta almost exclusively to their co-ethnics. Italian construction entreprises served, however, a wider market. This was possible by the strong position which the Italians occupied in a rapidly changing industry. An Italian speciality, mosaic flooring became increasingly popular in the interwar period. This gave these Italian workers a strong position to set up their own firms.[[433]](#footnote-434) Another Italian speciality, the making of cement increased the chances of the Italians in the building trade.[[434]](#footnote-435)

Another branch where Italian entrepreneurs were active was in ice-cream making and vending. By 1890 some Italians had arrived directly from Southern Italy to Liège, all of them came from the village Atina in the province of Caserte. They sold ice-cream during the summer and during winter they earned their living by playing music or by vending roasted chestnuts. Some of these *gelatieri* went back to Italy in winter, only to return to Liège the following summer. Thirty years later, by the end of the 1920s, the people of this village were still in Liège selling their ice-cream, the number of Italians had increased and some had already established a real ice-cream parlor.[[435]](#footnote-436) In Ghent, in 1923 an ice-cream parlor was set up by natives of Cadore in the province of Belluno. Very soon more people for Cadore departed for Ghent. By 1930 about thirty Italians were working as icecream venders in that town.[[436]](#footnote-437)

The case of the Italian ice-cream vendors is a good example of a distinct path of migration, very different from that of the immigrants on whom we have focused in the previous chapters. Immigrants who did not answer to any specific demand on the Belgian labor market, but who used the opportunities created by the unfolding buying power of the urban working class. These immigrants used the first openings towards a mass consumer market to offer their own products. The success of this product lead to a chain migration, a self-sustaining process whereby successful emigrants attracted kith and kin to join them. This explains the remarkable degree of local confinement of the sending area, excluding the other immigrants called upon to fill the voids of the Belgian labor market. The Italian entreprises in the construction industry had probably similar characteristics, which made them a category on their own, set apart from the large flow of migrant labor.[[437]](#footnote-438)

This migration pattern, where immigrants did not respond to specific shortages on the labor market, but took the opportunity of an expanding market, is outspoken in the case of the Jewish migrants.

The "Jewish" Economy

We have mentioned earlier that Polish migrants of Jewish persuasion worked in the steel industry and to a lesser extent also in the mines. These industrial workers were however a minority within the global Jewish migration to Belgium. Geographical Jewish migrants lived mainly in Antwerp and Brussels. Both cities were economic attraction poles for Jewish migrants, Antwerp for its diamond industry and Brussels for its leather industry. The dynamic of the migration to both cities was different, but by the late 1920s and certainly in the 1930s we can discern an increasing convergence of the lot of Jewish immigrants in both cities.

Let us first focus on Antwerp. Immediately after the First World War the number of Polish and Russian Jews who emigrated through the port of Antwerp to the United States increased spectacularly. In 1920 and 1921 this emigration proceeded easily. In 1922, further emigration was blocked by American protectionist regulations.[[438]](#footnote-439) More and more Jews were forced to make of their temporary stopover their final destination. The booming diamond industry, concentrated in Antwerp in which Jewish immigrants had already by 1910 a considerable influence formed an interesting outlet for these stranded migrants. The Dutch diamond industry was after the war transplanted to Antwerp. The Dutch entrepreneurs of Jewish persuasion brought also their skilled diamantworkers along. There were about 2,000 to 2,500 Dutchmen, also of Jewish persuasion working as highly skilled cleavers in 1923. They gave a first working of the diamond stones. Since the end of the 19th century they were only doing the small stones, as the larger stones were sawed by machines. The sawers were mostly Belgians who worked in large workshops. There was however a shortage of diamond cutters. This final operation was the least interesting skill within the diamond industry. As the introduction of machine-cutting around 1890 made an apprenticeship of several years in this branch of the diamond industry no longer necessary, the skills were easy to learn. The stranded Jewish migrants were among those enrolled in special schools set up to prepare personnel for diamantcutting.[[439]](#footnote-440) There were in 1923 about 13,500 diamond workers in Belgium. In 1926 their number had increased to 20,000, of which about 2,000 were Polish diamondcutters. This core of Polish labor in the diamond industry called upon their kinship to join them. Upon arrival they were initiated in diamond cutting.[[440]](#footnote-441) In 1928-1929 the total number of diamond workers rose to 25,000.[[441]](#footnote-442) Also the share of Poles within the labor force of this expanding industry increased.[[442]](#footnote-443)

In Brussels it was the leather industry which formed the pole of attraction for Jewish migration from Eastern Europe. The immigrants stood at the very source of a new branch in the leather industry, the production of womens' handbags. Throughout the interwar period it would remain an exclusively Jewish branch of production.[[443]](#footnote-444) It was started up by Jewish migrants from Warsaw. An important leather industry was situated there which immediately after the First World War was troubled by serious economic difficulties. Many artisans searched for the possiblity of exercising their craft elsewhere. They settled in particularly in Paris and Brussels, where they detected quickly the gap in the local leather industry and tried their luck at this new branch.[[444]](#footnote-445)

As well as their craftmanship, these qualified artisans from Poland brought experience in business with them. They were soon able to make a niche for themselves in the Belgian economy. In order to open up a new market for their handbags, they were initially forced to be satisfied with low profit margins. The small family businesses played hereby a key role. The leather workers usually brought their families along with them and everyone was put to work to make the initiative succeed. Sometimes not only the immediate nuclear family, but also kith and kin worked in those entreprises. Chain migration meant that young impoverished or unqualified Jews found their way to these small leather employers. The distribution of these handbags was also monopolized by the Jewish immigrants. Jewish peddlers and market vendors could offer these products for low prices, thanks to the sacrifices of the entire Jewish migrant community in this sector. These low prices enabled also less affluent women to follow the fashion in leather handbags.

This sector was never able to take control of an established share of the market; such a stability, which would make higher profit margins possible, was thwarted by a demand strongly linked to the state of the economy. Already in 1922-1923, this young industrial branch was confronted by a recession which laid bare a structural weakness of this sector. The demand for luxury products, such as leather handbags was an elastic demand which could taper off spectacularly with the slightest decline of the business cycle. This industry was not only heavily dependent on the state of the economy, it had also to follow the whims of fashion. The yearly refurbishing of the production line in order to answer to the demands of quickly changing fashion made the production of fashionable handbags subject to enormous pressures. Fashion itself made peaceful long-term planning impossible. Flexibility was an absolute necessity in order to survive in this sector. Heavy investments scarcely made sense, since in order to respond to the market a continuous renovation of production was necessary. Large units of production could not survive in this sector. Small enterprises, eventually supplemented by outworkers were the pre-eminent units of production.[[445]](#footnote-446) Moreover, the continual renovation of the goods offered demanded a creative and high level of craftmanship from the leather workers.

By 1927 a thousand Jewish immigrants were already working in this sector.[[446]](#footnote-447) Ten large morocco leather businesses in Brussels formed the core of the production.[[447]](#footnote-448) However in addition to this, several hundred small family businesses pressed, sewed and gilded moroccan leather for these firms in Brussels, as well as for businesses in Paris.[[448]](#footnote-449) In 1928-29 the moroccan industry provided -the peak of this industry during the interwar period- a livelihood for approximately 1,500 immigrants in 170 small and medium-sized firms.

The initial economic insertion of Jewish immigrants in Belgium took place in those two sectors. It was a successful endeavour and engendered a spectacular expansion of the Jewish immigration into Belgium in the second half of the 1920s. The great majority of these immigrants came from Poland. Thousands of Jewish Poles Jews emigrated directly from Poland to Belgium

in the period 1926-1931, but certainly as many Jews went first to Germany or France only to settle later in Belgium.[[449]](#footnote-450) Also smaller groups of Czechoslovakian, Rumanian, Hungarian and Russian Jews joined them. As the following graph on the direct emigration of Jews from Poland and Czechoslovkia clearly illustrates were the peak years, at least for the legal emigration between 1928 and 1930.[[450]](#footnote-451)

The still prosperous and expanding diamond and moroccan leather industries were not able to absorb all Jewish migrants. The boom of some half industrial luxuory industries in Brussels in the second half of the 1920s offered some more opportunities. In Brussels the fur industry saw a sharp rise in sales in the second half of the twenties. The local furriers could barely cater for the demand and skilled workers managed to get steep wage increases. Quite a few Jewish immigrants made use of this boom to offer their services as outworkers.[[451]](#footnote-452) In view of the escalating demand, these offers were thankfully accepted. The hat and leather glove industry were also in short supply of manpower and called upon Italian qualified workers. Also Jewish immigrants were hired in this sector. Jewish entrepreneurs started businesses in all these sectors, especially in the production of women's hats they were very active.[[452]](#footnote-453) Jewish immigrants were also able to integrate in the garment industry. Technological innovations were such that a large part of the garment sector began to be mechanized as early as the 1910s. Ready-to-wear clothing was produced which heralded the democratization of this market. It implied a deskilling and also feminization of the labor force, a tendency which was strenghtened during the crisis of thirties. In women's clothing on the contrary, the mechanization was carried out much more slowly since this sector lent itself much less easily to uniformity. The seasonal nature of a part of this market was such that only small enterprises with flexible manpower could survive. The setting up of a workshop and a couple of sewing machines demanded only low investment costs. Jewish tailors established themselves first in Brussels, later also in Antwerp.[[453]](#footnote-454) Jewish immigrants ran also some small furniture workshops, where the use of lower quality wood for fashionable furniture guaranteed relatively lower prices.[[454]](#footnote-455)

Jewish manufacturers supplied goods for as broad a market as possible, with emphasis on relatively inexpensive goods which demanded a limited purchasing power.[[455]](#footnote-456) As well as a high number of Jewish immigrants in production, there was also a notable number of Jewish immigrants active in the distribution of these goods. Apart from offering goods for their own internal Jewish consumption (bakers, kosher foodstuffs etc...), Jewish shopkeepers limited their supply to products from the Jewish artisanal sector. This was the case in Antwerp and Brussels as well in Liège and Charleroi.

Even in the new industrial region of Limburg did the Jewish shopkeepers offer these articles. They did not supply ethnic foodstuffs, they left this for others to do. The Jews carried linen, bed-clothes, buttons, clothing, furniture etc. They offered their wares mainly in small overpacked shops.

Their largest trumpcards were their language skills and the fact that they offered the possibility to purchase on credit. In the region where incomes were guaranteed this was a service not to be despised.

" The Poles who came ... had nothing, they went to the Jew and he gave them clothing, they only had to sign. Every week they received their wages then I had to ride around the cité on Saturday afternoon to get the money. If they didn't want to pay they were summoned before the court by Wolf's lawyer and then part of their wages was attached right there at the mine. Flemings form Vucht and Stokken also came to Wolf since he gave credit and was also cheaper."[[456]](#footnote-457)

The great majority of the Jewish immigrants who were active in the distribution sector did not have their own shops, but established themselves in the marginal part of trade, the vending trade. These Jewish peddlers introduced new range of products onto the market. On the public markets leather, wool, cotton, knitwear, fur etc. appeared, all of them worked up by the Jewish firms.[[457]](#footnote-458) In order to conquer a place in the distribution those immigrants were forced to be satisfied with low profit marge.[[458]](#footnote-459)

This offer was to be placed in a process of democratization of the market. The interaction of various economic functions within the Jewish community -this vertical integration- made it possible to exploit to an optimal extent the increase in purchasing power of the "lower" social classes. Despite the fact that the Jewish artisans worked for low wages and Jewish shopkeepers and vendors had small profits, the effect of vertical integration was the creation of employment and allowed for increase of the revenues within the Jewish migrant community.

In analyzing our findings on the economic integration of Jewish immigrants in Belgium we have to point out the structural weakness of the half-industrialized sectors in which Jewish immigrants worked. The demand for these products fluctuated sharply and was strongly dependent on the state of the economy. What was decisive for the presence in these sectors of these Jewish immigrants was not so much their being Jewish (and their craftsmanship) but the potential that they, as immigrants offered these sectors. Migrants were the predominant manpower for these unstable half-industrial activities. As Nancy Green points out: "Migrants could save a doomed industry through their higher flexibility and their lower costs. This salvation was not a conjunctural phenomenon, it was not the last gasp of a dying sector, but a structural characteristic of an industry with production methods that could not be standardized in a phase of economic development where mechanization and rationalization molded the dynamics of the economy."[[459]](#footnote-460) These traditional production methods demanded a limited fixed capital, but a rather large labor input and -most important- flexibility of the labor force. Smaller firms which could function without many fixed costs were the optimal production units for these sectors.[[460]](#footnote-461)

The structurally determined economic location of these immigrants also partly answered a number of cultural needs (not to work on Saturday, to express oneself in one's own language etc.). These linguistic and cultural affinities, together with the recruitment network within the migrants community, carried with them an ethnic segmentation of the labor market, the specific location of this segment was however determined by structural factors.

In the garment industry Jewish immigrants established themselves not only in the flexible market of women's clothing but they also made a name for themselves in manufacturing characterized by intense mechanization and concentration of manpower. Ready-made pants were the biggest branch of these industries.[[461]](#footnote-462) The production of the Gabardine -the water resistant raincoat- became also a Jewish speciality.[[462]](#footnote-463) Here the Jewish immigrants were present in the mechanized production technique charaterized by a profound specialization of the units of production.[[463]](#footnote-464) This was also the case in the knitting industry. This industry took off strongly during the interwar period and specialized in luxury items, the so called "bonneterie anglaise". Because of a continuous export could those entreprises hold firm.[[464]](#footnote-465)

In the above mentioned sectors the Jewish enterprises incorporated the most modern forces of capitalism. Those sectors were much less ethnic sectors, as the labor force did not have to be by necessity immigrants given the flexibility which was the most attractive charateristic of immigrant labor was not necessary here. This is especially clear in the knitting industry which employed, notwithstanding a considerable number of Jewish entrepreneurs, very few immigrants.[[465]](#footnote-466)

By 1930 was the "Jewish" economy considerably expanded. While until the middle of the 1920s Jewish immigrants were concentrated in the diamond and leather industry, five years later their economic pursuits were expanded to a large number of industries.

**6A sudden upsurge in labor migration, 1928-1930**

In this chapter we will look into the intake of migrant labor during the economic boom of 1929. The labor shortage was huge. During this period a true immigration, en masse, occurred which was still mainly directed at the mining industry. Although Italy had lost its dominant position among foreign labor by 1928, the direct Italian immigration was still the most important. In 1929, direct migration from Italy was surpassed by that from Poland, but direct migration from Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia also exploded in that year.

Given the absence of unemployment in these years, as well as the political exclusion of the Socialists, the Government was not likely to oppose any employers' demand for foreign labor. The labor organization had, however, a representative in the figure of the Christian-Democrat, H.Heyman, who held the post of Minister of Labor.

In this chapter we will elaborate on the kind of alternative alien policy the Christian Democratic and Socialist labor organizations stood for. We have mentioned briefly in previous chapters the trade unions as a pressure group insisting on the removal of immigrants in periods of economic downturns (1924, 1927) the strategy of the trade unions was however more refined than mere protectionism. Did the attacks by those representing the interests of labor on the traditional alien policycontinue in these years? How effective was their opposition in influencing the alien policy?

The employers had tried to control immigration to their entreprises since 1923. This effort had been thwarted by the opposition of the authorities of the emigration countries and to a much lesser extent by a restrictive attitude of the Belgian authorities in this matter. In this chapter we will investigate whether the employers had a greater hand in this sudden upsurge in immigration.

We will not only deal with the intake of migrant labor, but also with their insertion on the job. Recruiting or hiring spontaneous immigrants was only one element of the solution to the labor shortage. Given the structural need for labor in the mining industry, the immigrants also had to be convinced to stay. In this chapter we will see if the employers developed specific disciplinization strategies targeted at migrant labor. We will find that employers were not very satisfied with their foreign labor. We will look into the causes of the "defects" of migrant labor and analyze them as specific survival strategies of different groups of migrant labor and point out where these strategies conflicted with the employers' interest. Subsequently, we will deal with concrete initiatives taken by the mining companies in the second half of the 1920s to "remedy" these defects in order to stabilize their foreign manpower.

The Employers and the State Set their Agenda

By the middle of 1928 the situation in the labor market had changed. The mining companies in particular, but also construction firms wanted to recruit additional labor beyond the borders. The Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman no longer opposed the recourse to migrant labor and visas were granted again to labor migrants.[[466]](#footnote-467)

Notwithstanding the evident labor shortages, H.Heyman wanted to retain control over immigration. He pointed out that he had a certain output in Italian immigration through the agreement with the Italian authorities. A similar mechanism had to be inserted in the visa policy of the Ministry of Justice. Granting a visa to labor migrants would be dependent on a labor contract bearing the assent of the Ministry of Labor. Migrants who immigrated illegally would be expelled. For those immigrants for whom no visa-requirement existed, granting a residency permit would be dependent on a labor contract assented by his department.[[467]](#footnote-468) He defended the necessity for strict control over immigration to prevent the unemployment of national labor. A flood of immigrants could otherwise take over the jobs of the nationals.[[468]](#footnote-469) In default of a new alien law, only an administrative regulation could safeguard the "national" interests.

The Liberal Minister of Justice P.E.Janson refused to follow all the suggestions of his colleague. Residency status was still granted four months following registration in Belgium. If the Sûreté had no disfavorable information on the immigrant, he automatically received an identity card. There was some innovation in the visa policy. The output of the Ministry of Labor became institutionalized; visas could only be granted to migrant labor if they had a labor contract assented by this department.[[469]](#footnote-470)

Immigration increased considerably from 1928 onwards.[[470]](#footnote-471) Minister H.Heyman's demand to hold down immigration to Belgium by expelling illegal immigrants was disregarded. Illegal immigrants could still regularize their sojourn without much problem. This is illustrated by the expulsion figures. The number of immigrants expelled, both at the border and in the country itself, dropped sharply.[[471]](#footnote-472) Given the labor shortages, all intake of foreign labor was considered beneficial to the Belgian economy. It is likely that the Minister of Labor assented to most of the labor contracts that the Minister of Justice transmitted.[[472]](#footnote-473)

The Belgian alien policy remained shaped along a traditional pattern which facilitated an appeal on the international labor market. In the alien policy concerns of a social nature were still largely subordinated to concerns of public order. While those with a criminal record -no matter how small the offence and how old the conviction- were merciless expelled, the influence of immigrants on the national labor market was hardly an element in policy making.[[473]](#footnote-474) As the economy was in need of labor, immigrants could easily be absorbed.

Informal immigration to Belgium continued in this period. Organized immigration became however quatitatively more important than ever before. The employers and in particular the mining companies were eager to find a solution to the general labor shortage which was caused by the economic boom. This labor shortage meant that the needed production could not be realized. It also gave labor too much power on the labor market. As the labor demand could not be met, the employers were forced to offer wage rises to attract workers. The employers believed that only by injecting labor the balance on the labor market could be restored.[[474]](#footnote-475) Recruitment of labor abroad became a top priority. The vast supply of labor in Poland and Italy remained the hope for labor hungry industries. The mining industry looked in particular to the east for additional manpower, while construction firms looked southwards.

A concerted employers' recruitment campaign, 1928-1930

As mentioned in the previous chapter, on November 15, 1927 there were 16,633 foreign miners in the Belgian mine industry, 9% of the total labor force of this industry.[[475]](#footnote-476) By 1928, the demand for coal increased and the local supply of manpower was again supplemented with labor from abroad. This time, the boom period lasted longer; only by the second half of 1930 was the labor market in the mining industry to become less tight.[[476]](#footnote-477) By January 1931, 30,506 of the miners were foreigners (=17%). The foreign labor force had doubled in three years.[[477]](#footnote-478) Other industrial sectors, such as construction, the quarries and the metallurgic industry also had recourse to immigrants to supplement their labor force.

These aliens were hardly coming from neighboring countries. They left Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia to work in Belgium. The figures of the mining industry are especially illuminating. On November 15, 1927, 35% of the foreigners were Poles, 20 % Italians, and only 15% North Africans. The Dutch made up only 4%, while the percentage of French was at 10%.[[478]](#footnote-479) The percentage from the neighboring countries diminished in the following years. Between November 1928 and January 1931 the foreign labor force had doubled. This rise was due to the increased share of non-neighboring countries. In September 1930, the French and the Dutch had a share within the migrant population of respectively only 4% and 2%. The Poles, with 40%, remained the most numerous nationality in the mines. The Czechoslovakians overtook the Italians with respectively 17 and 16%. The percentage of North Africans continued to decline. Now only 4 % of the foreign labor force still came from that region. A new nationality, the Yugoslavians, appeared, and by September 1930 they constituted 7% of the foreign miners. This changing pattern of immigration was also to be found in other industries. The share of neighboring countries within the non-Belgian labor force declined sharply and immigrants originating from South and Central Europe grew in number.

The Organized Labor Recruitment in Central Europe

In the second half of 1928 a few hundred migrants were recruited in Poland.[[479]](#footnote-480) These migrants were probably recruited by the SGI. The mining companies concerned did not evaluate this experience very favorably. They were especially worried about the large number of immigrants who left the mines shortly after arrival. The mining companies attributed this large number of deserters to a defective selection procedure by the SGI. They proposed that the selection of migrant labor be undertaken by their own representatives. They believed that a strict selection procedure which only retained candidates with experience in mining would diminish the number of deserters. Recruiting Poles who went down a pit for the first time when they arrived in Belgium -the very people SGI had recruited for the Belgian mines- was inefficient. The whole infrastructure of the SGI, including its transport facilities, was still deemed useful. The Polish authorities were eager to concede recruitment facilities to the Belgian employers. It would insert some competition in the recruitment of Polish labor and infringe on the monopoly of the SGI.[[480]](#footnote-481)

The regional employers' organization of the Charleroi basin, the ACCBS, which by 1922 had developed a remarkable, but abortive recruitment initiative in Italy, was more ambitious. They ignored the SGI and set up their own recruitment scheme. They hoped that the other mine basins would also be interested in joining this endeavour and the FEDECHAR was asked to investigate the prospect for collaboration in the field of recruiting foreign labor.[[481]](#footnote-482)

The ACCBS realized that for the large number of Poles they intended to recruit the cooperation of the Polish authorities was necessary. An agreement between the ACCBS and the Polish authorities was easily concluded. The terms were advantageous for Poland. Not only was the SGI no partner in this agreement, but the financial arrangement was profitable for the Poles. The mines in the Charleroi basin still agreed to pay all recruitment costs including transport and in addition each mine would give a bonus -the value of a return ticket, about 300 francs- to all immigrants who remained for the period of one year in their service. If a Pole broke his contract and did not work 300 days he had to reimburse the full costs of transport and recruitment (400 francs).[[482]](#footnote-483) The mining companies inserted these provisions to induce the migrants to loyally execute their contracts.

The Polish authorities were delighted with their advantageous bargaining position. They considered that the financial sacrifices which these mines were ready to make had to be rewarded. The request of the ACCBS in January 1929 for 240 qualified and 460 unqualified miners became top priority. Everything necessary had to be done to recruit first choice labor. By rewarding the advantageous recruitment conditions in Charleroi the Polish authorities hoped to conquer along similar lines the whole labor market available for migrant labor in Belgium. The superiority of Polish labor had to be underlined by this first batch of migrant workers.[[483]](#footnote-484)

The principal demand of the recruitment officer of the ACCBS, Gorissen, was to recruit labor with mining experience. Hence the Polish authorities designated Upper Silesia -the mining region of Poland- as the area where the recruitment would take place. The local authorities were summoned to do all that was possible to recruit a large number of candidates with experience in mining for emigration to Belgium. All unemployed miners up to age 50 were encouraged to apply.[[484]](#footnote-485)

Gorissen failed however to recruit the 700 Poles during his stay in Poland in March 1929. Notwithstanding the repeated appeals of the central authorities only 550 candidates could be presented to Gorissen in March. He selected -probably mostly on medical grounds- 382 of them.[[485]](#footnote-486) The basic impediment to the recruitment campaign was its demand that candidates should have some mining experience. This resulted in a regional concentration of the recruitment in Upper Silesia. Due to the limited unemployment among this occupational group only a few hundred men were disposed to leave Poland.

A labor exchange officer from the rural district of Kielce criticized the central authorities for failing to foresee such an outcome. His district had a large oversupply of labor and could easily meet the needs of the Belgian mines. He could not provide qualified mine labor, and he doubted whether the few qualified miners who were unemployed in Upper Silesia would constitute an exemplary batch of Polish migrant workers.

"The unemployed in Upper Silesia are of such a quality that they are in no means fitted for emigration and certainly not for a first exemplary transport. They are mostly people excluded because of health reasons or because of moral reasons. People who at best would not be able to cope easily with the working rhythm in Belgian and French mines, a rhythm which is very different from the local conditions."[[486]](#footnote-487)

There were also other reasons for the failure of Gorissen to recruit the necessary manpower. It was stated from the very beginning that the mines of Charleroi were not able to provide adequate housing facilities to receive spouses and children of the recruited migrant labor. France, which was competing with Belgium in the Polish labor market, did provide such facilities. In addition, France and Germany had already established a migration-tradition and thus the Poles leaving for those countries did not leave for unknown territory. Belgium on the other hand had still to establish a reputation as an attractive emigration country.[[487]](#footnote-488)

Gorissen was soon able to supplement the first batch with several hundred carefully selected migrants. The Polish labor exchange offices succeeded in assembling 960 people for the second recruitment session in April. By June 1,200 persons were present for the third recruitment. Gorissen selected 636 and 844 workers respectively for these recruitments to the Belgian mines.[[488]](#footnote-489) The increasing success was linked to the regional expansion of the recruitment. While initially Gorissen wanted Upper Silesia to provide most of the manpower, he revoked that decision due to the lack of candidates and instead recruited migrants from the countryside.[[489]](#footnote-490) Although these people lacked mining experience, they were eager to leave Poland for the Belgian mines as their prospects on the Polish countryside were slim.[[490]](#footnote-491)

Gorissen's recruitment was considered highly successful by the employers. Although it had taken some time to recruit them, the first group of Poles were indeed an exemplary batch. Of the 367 Poles who arrived in the basin of Charleroi in the course of April 1929 less than 10% left the mines within one month. Pie chart 1 illustrates the "reliable" attitude of those 367 Poles, in sharp contrast to pie chart 2 which illustrated the flight of most of the 86 Italian migrants recruited by the mining companies in the basin of Charleroi in the first half of 1929.[[491]](#footnote-492)

Those Polish migrants generally knew what working in the mine entailed and upon arrival they easily adjusted to the Belgian working conditions. The Italians, like most former peasants, had no idea what awaited them in the mines. For a lot of the Italians mine work turned out to be so repulsive that they fled the mine shortly after arrival.[[492]](#footnote-493) Nearly 75 % of the Italians who had been recruited for the basin of Charleroi between February and July 1929 left the mines which had recruited them within one month. By two months only 10 % of those 86 Italians were still working in the Charleroi mines. Even after five months more than 50% of the Poles who had been recruited in April were still in the very same mine that had recruited them.

The euphoria about the Polish recruitment was tempered a bit by the end of the summer of 1929. Pie chart 3 illustrates the reason why. The transport of June 1929, with its larger share of rurally-based migrants meant that the number of migrants who had no experience with mine-work increased. During their first month 20% of those 769 Poles who had arrived in July left the mine that recruited them, but by the end of July the situation resembled the first transport. The mass-exodus was over. Most of the Poles seemed to be satisfied with their lot. The employers were probably reassured; Poles remained their favorite migrant labor. Given the "loyalty" of the Polish migrants the mining companies urged Gorissen to continue his recruitment efforts. Poles seemed to be the migrant labor par excellence.

There were, however, annoying signs. The loyalty of the Poles seemed weaker than the employers had first believed. The employers noticed an incremental increase in the number of departures, although not in alarming proportions. The employers of the other mine basins had in the meantime agreed to set up a common office for recruitment in Poland.[[493]](#footnote-494) Although still maintaining a tie to the SGI because of its transport facilities, those mines had their own recruitment agent in Poland and also agreed with the Polish authorities on establishing their own work contracts.

These new contracts were more advantageous for the employers than the ones to which the basin of Charleroi had agreed. Paying a bonus -the price of a return ticket- after one year service, was abolished. However, the Polish emigrants still received their return ticket after one year service in these mines. This bonus, in contrast to the one in Charleroi hardly costed anything to the recruiting mines. A part of the wages of the Polish immigrants was pledged until the transport costs (300 francs) were covered. This sum of money was reimbursed only after one year of service.

This concession was only possible because a precedent was established by the Winterslag mine.[[494]](#footnote-495) About the same time as the Brussels Consulate was negotiating with the representatives of the ACCBS, the Antwerp Consul was dealing with the director of Winterslag Vandertorf about the recruitment of 300 unqualified miners. The Polish demand for a bonus after one year's service met an intransigent no from the mine director. The Polish Consulate in Antwerp had received instructions from Warsaw that this bonus could only be dropped if the negotiations were at a complete impasse. What was important for the Consul was that the director of Winterslag was an ally in his efforts to sever the ties with the Polish labor migrants and their families. Vandertorf was the most indulgent mine director concerning the demand of the Polish authorities to create facilities to counter the "denationalization" of their citizens. The mine of Winterslag financed two entirely Polish primary schools, one for boys and one for girls. The director of Winterslag had also agreed to financially support a Polish priest who would work among the Poles in the area and the Polish organizations could always knock at his door for support.

In order not to alienate Vandertorf, the bonus demand was dropped. Vandertorf agreed to pay his new workers a return ticket, but only if the money could be deducted from their wages. For Vandertorf it had the advantage that these workers would be motivated to serve out their one year contract.[[495]](#footnote-496)

Seeing the advantageous conditions which the Polish Consulate in Brussels could obtain in its negotiations with Charleroi, the emigration authorities in Warsaw deemed the Winterslag contract totally unsatisfactory. Warsaw ordered the Consulate in Antwerp to start the negotiations all over again. On those terms the recruitment for Winterslag could not take place. The emigration authorities in Warsaw decided that the labor demands of Charleroi had definite priority.[[496]](#footnote-497)

The Consulate in Brussels pointed out that this concession to Winterslag was not only disadvantageous for the Charleroi mines but also put the Polish worker in a worse position. Not only did it mean a loss of income -the bonus- for the migrants, it also weakened the bargaining power of Polish migrant labor.

 "As we have observed a lot of mines tend to exploit the unexperienced Poles during the first months...If the worker notices that the mine does not respect the terms of the labor contract, he can each moment leave the job and look for another one. By accepting the deduction of the travel costs from the wages, the worker will be much more bound to a mine."[[497]](#footnote-498)

The Consul in Antwerp was not eager to reopen the negotiations. He retorted that to declare the agreement with Vandertorf nulle and void would undermine the credibility of the Consulate. The Polish Consulate enjoyed the entire confidence of the management of Winterslag to the obvious advantage of the Polish migrant community living in Limburg. To revoke the contract could lead to a reversal of the Polonophile policy of Winterslag with disastrous results for its Polish community and also for the future prospects of recruitment.[[498]](#footnote-499) Vandertorf was indeed quite annoyed when he was informed that some clauses in the contracts had to be renegotiated.[[499]](#footnote-500)

In the meantime the FEDECHAR undertook an effort to centralize the whole recruitment procedure. All regional mine associations had already realized the disadvantages of the decentralized recruitment efforts. The mines were outbidding each other and a front of the mining companies would force the emigration authorities to grant them beter recruitment conditions.[[500]](#footnote-501)

As has been mentioned earlier this centralizing effort was quite successful. The mining companies of Centre, Limburg and Liège combined their efforts to recruit Polish labor. Thus their position was stronger and they could increase pressure on the Polish authorities to give them more guarantees that recruited labor would respect the terms of the contract. This pressure together with the precedent of Winterslag meant that the Polish authorities had to accept much less generous conditions of recruitment than the first contract had established with the regional mine association of the basin of Charleroi. The bonus was partly exchanged for a deduction from the Poles' wages until all recruitment costs had been covered, a sum of money which could only be restituted after finishing the one-year contract.[[501]](#footnote-502) Warsaw agreed to this because the negotiations on a labor treaty with the Belgian authorities were about to begin and the whole recruitment procedure for Belgium would then be renegotiated.[[502]](#footnote-503) The association of mining companies of the basin of Charleroi protested loudly when they found out about the concessions done to the other basins. They took advantage of the new contracts and recruited another 588 Poles on more favorable terms who arrived in August 1929 in the basin of Charleroi.[[503]](#footnote-504)

The concerted efforts of the three basins were fruitful and soon all basins agreed to centralize their recruitment of foreign labor. An Immigration Committee was constituted within the FEDECHAR in September 1929. It coordinated all aspects of labor recruitment abroad.[[504]](#footnote-505) One of the first things it did was to stop using the transport service of the SGI, considered too expensive.[[505]](#footnote-506) Not only the SGI, but also the Polish authorities soon realized that the position of the Belgian mining companies was severely strengthened by this centralization.[[506]](#footnote-507)

Notwithstanding the rupture with the SGI recruitment proceeded. In August 1929 500 Poles were recruited for mines in the Centre, Limburg and Liège basins. In October another 500 Poles were recruited for the Charleroi basin.[[507]](#footnote-508) Nearly all this recruitment took place in rural areas.[[508]](#footnote-509) By December 1929 it was even illegal to recruit in the mining regions. The Polish mining industry also had a shortage of manpower. Emigration passports were no longer granted to Poles who lived in those mining districts and had experience in mining.[[509]](#footnote-510)

Transports to Belgium continued in 1930, but now recruitment only took place in rural areas. In the first half of 1930 another 1,000 Polish workers were transported to the Belgian mines.[[510]](#footnote-511) The support of the employers for recruitment in Poland was by that time already considerably weakened. The employers realized that the Poles were not the hoped for immigrants. The transport of 588 Poles for Charleroi in August 1929 had shown that Polish labor also had major defects. In fact this transport, as illustrated by pie chart 4, looked very much like the arrival of Italian migrants. After one month more than 40 % of the recruited Poles had "deserted". That this transport was a nearly exclusive rural transport explains the striking difference -in contrast to the previous transports- in adaptation to mine-work. With this transport came mostly Poles who had never seen a mine before and as with other peasants who had to go down into the mine for the first time, it turned out to be a horrible experience.[[511]](#footnote-512)

Poland was no longer considered the "Land of Promise" by the mining companies. Czechoslovakia now became the favorite country from which to recruit additional manpower by the Belgian mining companies. The employers still kept an eye on Poland for qualified manpower. By the summer of 1930, unskilled workers were offering their service in ample quantities but the need for manpower in Belgian industry was no longer that great. A more selective recruitment abroad was still envisaged. Belgian mines wanted to recruit another few hundred Poles, but they insisted on receiving only qualified miners.[[512]](#footnote-513)

Although the mining industry took the bulk of Polish labor recruitment at the turn of the decade, other industries also applied for manpower in Poland. Since the global work force of the metallurgic industry increased dramatically in this period, is it likely that the number of Polish workers in the metallurgic industry also increased.[[513]](#footnote-514) It seems that Jewish migrants in particular left Poland to work as hands in the metallurgic industry.[[514]](#footnote-515) Some metallurgic industries recruited labor in Poland, but the numbers involved were small. Metallurgic firms also asked for skilled labor, mostly rollers, as well as unqualified labor. The unskilled labor was easy to provide, but in Poland there was hardly an abundant supply of qualified metal workers. Hence although a few rollers left Poland, their number was limited in relation to the needs of Belgian industry.[[515]](#footnote-516) The glass industry recruited some unskilled workers in Poland.[[516]](#footnote-517) That the mining industry was the dynamic force behind the mass recruitment at the end of the twenties was also true for the Czechoslovakian recruitment.

Belgian industry did not look only towards Poland to find a solution to its labor shortage. The very slow opening of the Polish labor market and the subsequent awareness that the Polish rurally-based migrants had the very same defects as most other migrants led employers to search for other sources of labor. In the first half of 1929 the mine association of the Centre basin had already recruited about 1,000 Czechoslovakians.[[517]](#footnote-518) The basin of Charleroi, Limburg and also the Borinage followed suit in the summer of 1929.[[518]](#footnote-519) They all used the facilities of the SGI which had been operating for several years in this country. Very quickly however the Belgian mining companies negotiated with the authorities in Prague to set up an independent Belgian recruitment mission. Although it was largely used to recruit for the mining industry, some other industries also obtained manpower from Czechoslovakia by these means.[[519]](#footnote-520) By the end of 1929 about 3,000 workers were imported from Czechoslovakia.[[520]](#footnote-521) In 1930 another 2,000 migrants were recruited by the FEDECHAR.[[521]](#footnote-522) The fact that Czechoslovakia had obtained priority in the recruitment of FEDECHAR by 1930 was not the result of the inherent quality of this migrant labor, but because they were cheaper to recruit.

A definite drawback of this Czechoslovakian manpower was the absence of migrants who had at least minimal experience in mining.[[522]](#footnote-523) Most of the immigrants came from the poorest region of Czechoslovakia, the province of Carpatho-Ruthenia. These Carpatho-Rusyn emigrants had been mostly farm-hands.[[523]](#footnote-524) Three advantages outweighed this defect. First, no visa was required. This diminished costs and no intervention of the Belgian authorities was necessary to import them.[[524]](#footnote-525) Secondly the Czechoslovakian passport was only valid for Belgium; this meant that the immigrants could not easily leave for France or the Netherlands to look for another job.[[525]](#footnote-526) Thirdly and most importantly the Czechoslovakian emigrants had to pay for their voyage to Belgium, even when it was advanced by the recruiting company. The companies only had to pay the recruitment expenses (passport and medical examination) and a bonus of 200 francs (return ticket), but the latter only after the Czechoslovakian emigrant completed his one-year contract.[[526]](#footnote-527)

The Czechoslovakian migrants were mostly employed in the mines, but they could be found elsewhere. Czechoslovakian glass workers who had immigrated in the beginning of the 1920s were still being used as qualified personnel. In the chemical industry unqualified Czechoslovakian migrants were supplementing the workforce. Their tasks were those shunned by the local workers. A Czech observer characterized the work these immigrants performed as "mostly very hard work. It can be more easy, but then it is harmful for your health."[[527]](#footnote-528)

Italy remained an important source of manpower.

When from 1928 onwards the mines were again looking to Italy to supplement their manpower, the Italian recruitment structure served its goal.[[528]](#footnote-529) The mining companies had relatively less recourse to the Italian authorities then in previous years.[[529]](#footnote-530) According to De Voghel, chief of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Labor it was out of sheer need, because of the restrictive policy of the Italian authorities, that the employers recruited in other countries in 1929.[[530]](#footnote-531) The picture was more complicated than that. Given the expanded choice of migrant labor now available the mining companies could be more selective than in the first half of the 1920s. The availability of qualified labor in the international labor market meant that Italy became a rather second rate recruitment area.[[531]](#footnote-532) The main drawback of Italian migrants was their lack of mining experience. Poland offered better opportunities in this respect. Italians were not very cheap. Firms which recruited Italian labor had to reimburse in quarterly installments the costs of the voyage which these workers had paid themselves. It meant that recruitment in Italy was no longer much cheaper than calling manpower from Poland. Employing Czechoslovakian immigrants could be cheaper as those immgrants received only the money for the return trip after they finished their one year contact. The restrictive emigration policy in Italy also played a role. Some mining companies were irritated that the Italian authorities increased their grip on the emigration of its citizens. The emigration of spouses and children became increasingly difficult; thus those companies that wanted the Italians to settle for the long term encountered considerable difficulties. It was part of the Italian policy to promote temporary emigration.[[532]](#footnote-533)

Belgian industry applied in 1929 for 8,849 workers from the Italian authorities, as much in that one year as in the previous recruitment drive of 1922-1924.[[533]](#footnote-534) For construction Italy was still the source par excellence of manpower. In 1929 construction firms recruited several thousand Italian builders. A considerable number of these Italians worked as navvies on the public works all over Belgium. Few Belgians were willing to live in makeshift barracks, located in remote areas away from their family.[[534]](#footnote-535) The quarries recruited some Italian stone cutters in 1929.[[535]](#footnote-536) Also the number of Italians in the iron and steel industry increased considerably at the end of the 1920s.[[536]](#footnote-537) It seem to be the Italians who succeeded best amoung all the immigrants to make use of the diverse needs of the labor market. They had already conquered occupational backheads in several industries in the first half of the 1920s. The Italians succeeded in retaining those positions and even expanding their presence in those industries. It is unclear how far this was due to organized immigration, spontaneous arrivals or occupational shifts within the Italian migrant population.

When in 1930 the mining industry had centralized its recruitment policy in Poland and Czechoslovakia it planned to do the same with the recruitment of Italian migrants. A new labor contract was drafted by the FEDECHAR and presented to the Italian Embassy for discussion. However due to the developing economic downturn this proposition became obsolete.[[537]](#footnote-538)

Other Sources of Industrial Manpower are Available

In those years other countries also provided additional manpower. North Africa was no longer among the regions where Belgian industry looked for manpower.[[538]](#footnote-539) There was a short experiment with Spanish labor. In June 1929 about 50 Spaniards were recruited by the mining companies of Charleroi but it does not seem that this experiment was repeated.[[539]](#footnote-540) The mining companies also looked into the possibility of recruiting labor in Denmark, Austria, Britain and Germany.[[540]](#footnote-541) Except for the latter they did not retain any of those options.[[541]](#footnote-542) The other countries were not considered as valuable for the specific manpower needs of Belgian mining industry. It was not only a matter of skills, but also of mentality. In this respect Habets' argument against the offer of qualified English miners is especially illuminating:

 "les ouvriers anglais ne paraissent pas pouvoir s'adapter au mode de travail et de vie des mineurs de nos charbonnages et forment donc une population ouvrière dont l'introduction chez nous n'est pas souhaitable."[[542]](#footnote-543)

Only one new country was added to the list of areas of recruitment: Yugoslavia.[[543]](#footnote-544) Between 1928 and 1930 a few thousand mostly Slovenian migrants left for Belgium. As no state-organized emigration existed, the procedure was informal, but not necessary illegal. Belgian mining companies also sent labor contracts so that those who wanted to emigrate legally could obtain a passport and a visa for Belgium.[[544]](#footnote-545)

This procedure was also used for Polish labor. Some mining companies preferred not to use the anonymous manpower delivered by the masse recruitment which only examined their physical fitness. They wanted to recruit the kith and kin of those Polish workers who had been in their service for a while. They considered these personal bonds a greater assurance against "desertion" than a mere medical and professional selection. The Polish authorities agreed on an individual recruitment under its control, with labor contracts similar to those used for the collective recruitment.[[545]](#footnote-546) In 1929 there were a hundred workers a month who came to Belgium in this way.[[546]](#footnote-547) After the defects of collective recruitment in Poland became clear and an increasing number of Polish migrants in Belgium were eager to let kith and kin join them, more mining companies applied for manpower following this procedure. In the first half of 1930 about a thousand Polish workers were individually recruited.[[547]](#footnote-548) While certainly after June 1930 no more collective recruitment took place in Poland, the mining companies continued to hand in demands for individually recruited Polish workers (albeit in declining numbers) until the end of 1930.[[548]](#footnote-549)

Poles were also recruited individually from Germany where the Polish consulates continued the procedure initiated in 1926. With the Polish consulates acting as mediators, the mining companies sent labor contracts for Poles in Germany. Those Poles obtained a Belgian visa when presenting this contract and could then legally immigrate into Belgium.[[549]](#footnote-550) This individual procedure of recruitment met with no opposition from the Belgian authorities-Poles as well as Yugoslavians had to ask for a visa. This meant that quite some time went by before the candidate-workers could leave for Belgium. The mining companies pleaded to insert more flexibility into the system by limiting to a bare minimum the requirements to obtain a visa.[[550]](#footnote-551)

Informal Immigration to Belgium

The most flexible system was, of course, the spontaneous immigration. Organized migration had become an important avenue for the increase of foreign labor in Belgium by the end of the 1920s, but this older form of immigration remained important.

In particular, Polish migrants arriving spontaneously in Belgium added to the work force.[[551]](#footnote-552) Poles working in France continued to leave, either voluntarily or by forcible expulsion for Belgium. More important were the Poles that Germany had recruited for agricultural labor. Those Poles were forced to return to Poland in winter, but by moving on to Belgium they could assure an income for the whole year.[[552]](#footnote-553) A certain number of Poles left Poland directly without a passport.[[553]](#footnote-554) Industry especially in the basin of Liège made extensive use of this pool of labor.[[554]](#footnote-555)

in particular Poles that Germany had recruited for agricultural labor arriving spontaneously in Belgium added to the work force. Weimar Germany had reformulated the innovative feature of Prussian alien policy to target aliens as economic actors. After the First World War the German state only tolerated workers of foreign nationality if the public exchange offices agreed that there was no national labor available for the job. Foreign labor was subject to a dual control by the public authorities: not only the immigrant worker, but also his employer had to apply for an authorization to be granted either admission or permission, respectively and numerous enforcement agencies had to guarantee that this regulation was respected. This Weimar design - a harbinger of immigration regulation after the Second World War in all of Europe- meant that immigration to Germany was subject to a very strict state control. The Poles that the German farmers recruited in the spring in agreement with the German authorities were forced to return to Poland in winter. The Polish authorities agreed only to accept their citizens who were forcibly removed after finishing their seasonal work after the Polish-German treaty on this issue was signed in November 1927. Before, although those Polish immigrants had *de jure* to leave by 15 December they were tolerated the whole year round (Dohse 1981: 97). From 1927 onwards remaining in Germany in the winter was a risky choice, employers were also less enclined to offer them a job. Belgium offered an alternative for these Polish agricultural laborers from Germany during the winter, in this way they were assured of an income throughout the year without much risk. Informal immigration was also supplemented from Poland directly.

Not all of this immigration was that spontaneous. Some companies used advertisements or sent out agents to emigration countries to recruit manpower illegally.[[555]](#footnote-556) Those agents were sometimes immigrants, employees of the firm who returned to the country of origin for a holiday.[[556]](#footnote-557) It could be a lucrative affaire as a bonus per recruited worker was sometimes offered.[[557]](#footnote-558) Some professional smugglers were attracted by this offer.[[558]](#footnote-559) Hostel managers were particularly active in this field, either acting on their own behalf or with consent of the mining companies. They urged their guests to call their kith and kin to join them and arranged for a smuggler to transport them across the borders. This informal immigration assured them of new guests in their hostels and eventually a bonus from the company.[[559]](#footnote-560) The Polish consul in Cologne realized that illegal immigrants offered additional advantages to employers and hostel managers.

"the employers want a greater number of impoverished workers, as they have -at least for a certain time- a greater control over them. They know that the illegal workers are already squeezed out by the smugglers. In addition the companies do not have to pay the cost nor carry responsibility of the transport..Also the mediating hostel managers want a large number of always new workers. In particular those who are illegal are of interest for him, he has a better hold over them...The more settled worker who can make himself understood leaves the hostel and rents a room where he can feed himself more cheaply."[[560]](#footnote-561)

These undocumented immigrants had little problem in regularizing their sojourn in Belgium. Even the administrative fine of 150 francs which they had to pay to regularize their sojourn was generally excused. They obtained an inscription in the foreigners register and after four months residency status.[[561]](#footnote-562)

The Need for Women in Domestic Service

Belgium not only had a shortage of manpower, but also of womenpower. Hence women were also recruited. In the 1920s most women were recruited abroad for domestic service. During most of the 1920s informal recruitment had supplemented the supply of servants.[[562]](#footnote-563) A first recruitment scheme was set up by the Polish authorities. In 1928 and 1929 1,100 women were recruited in Poland to work as domestic servants.[[563]](#footnote-564) In 1929 a second recruitment scheme was set up by the *Ligue des Familles Nombreuses* in collaboration with the Hungarian authorities for the recruitment of Hungarian servants. This *Service du Placement des Servantes Hongroises* mediated for large families looking for a maid in Hungary.[[564]](#footnote-565) Already in 1931 more than 300 Hungarian maids were employed in such households.[[565]](#footnote-566)

The Insertion of Migrant labor in the Belgian labor market

As mentioned earlier, the people who immigrated to Belgium in the 1920s were a very heterogeneous group. Even if we limit our analysis to those migrants who entered heavy industry, we can discern numerous cleavages among the alien labor force. The different nationalities are but one aspect of the diversity of this labor force- there were religious and racial cleavages. There were refugees and migrants; immigrants with a tradition of industrial work extending across generations and others for whom the immigration into Belgium meant the first contact with an industrial work environment. Among them there were migrants who had a history of migration behind them, other left their village or town for the first time. There were single and married migrants, within the latter group some brought their families, some did not.

Overall the employers were not very satisfied with their foreign labor. For the purpose of analyzing the reasons for the employers' dissatisfaction with migrant labor, we have to investigate the employers' main complaint: the reluctance of the migrants to settle at certain locations and then loyally work in one mine. The mining companies definitely had reasons to complain. Notwithstanding the large scale recruitment in Poland for the mines in the basin of Limburg between 1928 and 1930, the number of Poles in that basin was still oscillating around 2,000, just as at the end of 1927.[[566]](#footnote-567) In 1929, the Personnel Department of Marcinelle-Nord complained that it had called upon 450 Serbs, Italians, Poles and Russians to work in their mine. This had entailed an administrative bother as housing had also been ready for the newcomers. In the end only 15 of the 250 who had turned up remained with the company after one month.[[567]](#footnote-568)

This "unreliability" of the migrant workers covers two partially overlapping realities: occupational and geographical mobility. Occupational mobility implied "desertion" from the mines. Mere geographical mobility refers to the departure of those miners to other mines where the working or living conditions were considered better. The characteristics of migrants' labor market behavior depended on their world views.[[568]](#footnote-569) The main division within migrant labor was the separation between peasant workers and industrial workers.

The peasant worker, for the most part a first generation industrial worker, was a target earner whose primary motivation was to maximize temporary earnings and then return "home". Their lack of industrial skills and the need to earn on a short term as much as possible meant that they were willing to work long hours at menial jobs. Most of these peasant workers came to Belgium for a short stint of work to accumulate a nest egg and then returned home. They had no intention of settling permanently in the country of emigration. Their final goal was to return to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy...Many were sending remittances to support relatives who stayed in the country of origin. Their savings were meant to buy a cow or land, to build a house or to pay off debts. Upon return their material conditions would be much better. During their stay in the emigration they wanted to spend the least possible. For example for lodging they preferred the cheapest solution- they did not mind living in overpopulated, makeshift barracks. Their stay in emigration was to enable them to save the most possible, although a lot of them did not try to bargain for a better wage. They measured their income according to standards of the country of origin. Given the wage-differentials between Poland, Italy etc. and Belgium they were mostly satisfied with the low wages of the ancillary workers. They believed themselves to be making good money.[[569]](#footnote-570) These peasant workers were the most readily available migrants. Even when the mining industry wanted to recruit industrial workers in Poland, they were forced to draw upon the large supply of peasants to supplement their labor force.

Their transient orientation caused them to have an instrumental relationship to industrial work. This work was seen as a temporary cross to bear in order to obtain rewards in what they consider "their" world. The prospect of returning home made one's privations more bearable. Their high turnover rates which extended the borders of one industry illustrates their interest in short-term employment and the absence of attachment to a specific kind of work. With their lack of skills remunerations for the work they could do, whether in the mines or in other industries was not that different. Earning a "good" wage was one thing, but working conditions sometimes turned out to be unbearable. The danger and discomfort of the underground environment was especially taxing for quite a number of peasants.[[570]](#footnote-571) A considerable number of peasant workers recruited for the mining sector were traumatized by what they considered the appalling working conditions in the mines. It was not the Polish miners from Upper Silesia, but the emigrants from the rural districts of Poland who escaped the mines in the first weeks after their arrival. The Polish Consular authorities in Brussels confirmed this:

"A certain number of workers who arrived with a labor contract can not adapt to the mine labor. Especially as the mine galleries here in Belgium are so small. The workers who had never worked in a mine before (those form the districts of Kielce, Czestochowa en Wadowic) are the most inclined to leave the mines".[[571]](#footnote-572)

These rurally based workers preferred to work on a farm, but work as agricultural laborers was scarce in Belgium. There were some large farms in Wallonia which needed farm hands on a seasonal basis. Since the turn of the century Flemish small farmers had established a pattern of group emigration to do these jobs and there were not many vacancies for the immigrants. The wages in this sector were also very low. Sometimes the peasant workers were ready to acquiesce to these lower wages in order to escape from the mines.[[572]](#footnote-573) The large public works, especially the building of the canal Antwerp-Liège offered more employment opportunities which were appealing to those peasant workers. The wages were better than in agriculture. Additionally, the long working hours and cheap living conditions meant that savings could be accumulated. The work was not that different from what they were used to at home. So several hundred immigrants, mostly Italians, with a scattering of Yugoslavian, Czechoslovakian and Polish mine deserters were working in 1930 on the canal Antwerp-Liège.[[573]](#footnote-574) Factory work was another alternative for the mine "deserters".[[574]](#footnote-575)

Not all unskilled migrant workers should be considered peasant workers who judged their work in Belgium according to "old World" standards. Some of the unskilled migrant workers were aware of their market value. They knew the shortage of manpower in the mining industry increased their bargaining power and they demanded higher wages. Their lack of attachment in Belgium and in any industry enabled them to be highly mobile, not a mobility merely to "improve" the nature of work, but to maximize profits. These workers understood the principles underlying the functioning of the labor market and with the information they gathered from colleagues and in the ethnic press they moved in the international labor market and tried to get the most out of it.[[575]](#footnote-576)

These workers shared their insight into the functioning of the labor market with the industrial workers among the migrants. The industrial workers had another worldview. They had learned a skill, they were hewers, bratticemen or stonemen, which implied also a higher loyalty to the mining industry. They considered mining a secure and profitable occupation given their qualifications. Not only the Ruhr miners, but also the Polish and the few Czechoslovakian miners who had only left their countries in 1929 were distinct from their peasant countrymen who left for Belgium that same year. The former did not flee the mining industry. If they were dissatisfied, it was not with mine work as such, but mostly with the pay they received or because of maltraitement by the *porions* or management. Sometimes they remained, but then they did not tolerate these "injustices". They did not refrain from striking in order to get justice.[[576]](#footnote-577) Sometimes they left the mining company that had recruited them, but they remained mostly in the mining sector. They left for another mine, a mine in which they hoped working and living conditions would be better.[[577]](#footnote-578) The differences between industrial workers and peasant workers were not only reflected in a different attitude towards work, but also towards leisure and even eating habits.[[578]](#footnote-579)

The state of mind with which migrants left their country of origin depended on a variety of factors. The initial perception of the goal of emigration, however, did not determine the whole migration experience. The very condition of resettlement was a crucial factor eventually causing immigrants' perception of their sojourn in the country of emigration to change. Some employers who needed those hands were conscious of that possibility and their manpower strategy was not limited to selecting migrants, but also aimed at the development of a specific policy to retain the immigrants they had recruited. As we have already noted for the Belgian workforce not all employers were interested in retaining the labor they employed in the long term. The absence of a lasting labor commitment sometimes fit specific labor needs of those sectors of the economy which depended on a strongly fluctuating demand. For example the metallurgic industry needed only a strong and healthy workforce and for those firms loyalty was not important. A constantly rejuvenated workforce was the most adequante solution to the strongly fluctuating labor needs of such firms.

**Trade Unions between Labor and National Interests**

 In 1926, on instigation of the Socialist miners' union a congress was held to devise the union strategy towards these newcomers on the Belgian labor market. This national congress of the Socialist unions pleaded for the creation of a national immigration council. A council in which trade unions and employers' associations together with the public authorities would decide the number of migrants to be admitted to alleviate shortages on the labor market. The basic assumption of this council should be that immigrants were a supplementary source of labor, only to be tapped when local labor could not meet the demand. These immigrants should be employed on equal terms to those of local labor. Regional branches of the immigration council should supervise their working conditions. The organization of the migrants by the unions should also assure that they did not endanger the working conditions of Belgian labor. This strategy was repeated over and over until the onset of the Depression.

The Christian Democratic union paid much less attention to this issue. The need for a well developed strategy was much less pressing, as Flanders -the main base of support for this union- was largely free of immigrants. Only in 1930 did the Christian Democratic union lay out its principles. A resolution of its Congres stated that the immigration of foreign labor had to be organized in such a way that it served the needs of the industry without harming national labor, endangering public order, public health and the safety of the citizens. Although the Christian Democrats presented immigration as a global threat, they proposed an economic regulation of immigration identical to the one the Socialists had already proposed in 1926. A national immigration council with representatives of the labor organizations had to regulate immigration in order to protect national labor. Also the unionization of the migrants was considered essential to prevent any negative influence on the working conditions of the Belgians.

During the 1920s only few immigrants were unionized. Only in the basin of Limburg basin enjoyed the Socialist miners' union, especially among the Italians, Hungarians and to a lesser extent the Poles, considerable support. In fact the membership of the Socialist union became dominated by immigrants in this basin. The unions explained the low unionization rate by referring to the so-called backwardness of the migrants. The large number of first generation industrial workers among the migrants who arrived at the end of the 1920s were indeed not inclined to join an union. They were only interested in gaining money and then returning to their country. This was however not the whole picture. A restrictive strategy towards immigration alienated immigrant labor from the trade unions. The relation between the two parts of the trade unions' strategy -the restrictive policy towards immigration on the one hand and the need to organize immigrant workers once they were in the country on the other hand- was not an easy one. The attitude of the Belgian unions during the slight economic downturns, in 1925 and 1927 alienated the immigrants. It was however not only this tension within the trade union strategy which undermined the unionization of migrant labor. Notwithstanding a verbal commitment to the unionization of immigrants was the attitude towards foreign labor not at all fraternal. The official policy of the trade union was to unite the native and immigrant workers. At the grassroots however anti-foreign sentiments were powerful and thwarted the union policy to organize immigrants. The unions did little or nothing to mold the opinion of Belgian labor towards a more fraternal attitude, on the contrary they even exacerbated the alleged dangers which were attributed to the immigrants. The unions did also little to promote their strategy of an united front. The trade unions were unwilling to launch an unionization campaign among the immigrants, the propaganda needed to organize immigrant labor was never financed adequately.

The unions did not defend the interests proper to the immigrants that strongly. The unions were a driven force behind social legislation, but as aliens immigrant labor was as a rule not covered by social legislation. One has however to remark that the trade unions pressured the Belgian authorities to reach bilateral agreements on social security legislation to include also immigrant labor. The voluntary insurance against unemployment was a case of this point. An unemployed immigrant could only obtain the same benefits as a Belgian if there was a bilateral agreement with his country of origin. Such bilateral agreements were reached by 1932 with Luxemburg, France, Great Britain, Denmark, The Netherlands, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The trade unions were in favor of reaching bilateral agreements with all countries where immigrants came from to deflect unemployed migrants from accepting too poor working conditions. As the union was the main agent in the unemployment insurance it was also a powerful incentive to unionization among migrants.[[579]](#footnote-580) The direct influence of the trade unions on the signing of these bilateral agreements was obvious for the treaties with Czechoslovakia and Poland, two countries where the "Belgian" interests were clearly minimal.[[580]](#footnote-581)

The Socialists and Christian Democratic Ministers of Labor were eager to reach also agreements on miners' pensions. A general pension agreement was not deemed of interest. An extension of the legislation was only envisaged for the miners.[[581]](#footnote-582) This limitation corresponds to the principle of immigrant workers as supplemental labor. Only the labor shortage in the mining sector was considered a structural shortage. Also the unions considered immigrant labor in the mines a necessity and promoted strongly a Polish-Belgian miners’ pension agreement.[[582]](#footnote-583) A Polish-Belgian agreement on miners' pension was reached on November 7, 1931. The pressure of the Belgian miners' unions had been decisive in reaching an accord with the Poles .[[583]](#footnote-584) The Christian Democratic miners’ union even published the not yet ratified agreement in its journal.[[584]](#footnote-585) The agreement was however never put before the Belgian Parliament. The restrictive line of reasoning -the agreement was disadvantageous for "Belgian" interests- had the upperhand within the government. The government argued that this agreement would imply an annual expenditure for the Belgian government of two million francs, only with serious compensations in other fields could such an agreement be accepted.[[585]](#footnote-586)

 The last reason and not the least important for this low rate of unionization among immigrants was the dominance of the Communist current within the politicized migration in Belgium. The Belgian Communist party was a marginal political grouping founded in 1922 which throughout the 1920s remained isolated and did not succeed in attracting a following of any importance among Belgian labor. Within the migrant communities the appeal of communism was however much greater. Ideological purity played a role. The Communist professed an integral internationalism, no distinction between workers on the basis of nationality were to be made. The Communists' attitude towards immigration was -in opposition to the Socialists- not discriminatory, any limitation on immigration to defend the Belgian working class was refuted. This unrestricted internationalism meant that political work among the migrants was not compromised by a priority for national labor. The appeal of communism was however largely the result of the fact that some migrants came from countries (Italy, France) where the Communists organized an significant portion of labor. Also Communist refugees fleeing persecution in their home country or being expelled from France, mostly their first country of asylum were important in organizing the immigrants. If the Belgian trade unions wanted to attract a large following from the ranks of the immigrants they had to come to terms with the very different ideological composition of this labor force.

Initially the Communists of foreign nationality had realized that in order to reach out to the largely unpoliticized labor migrants from their country the use of the Socialist facilities could be extremely helpful. Communists launched campaigns to organize the immigrants in the Socialist unions. The Communists concealed for strategic reasons the ideological differences. In 1928 were all the ties with the Socialists unions broken as the Communist international laid out a new strategy. The pre-revolutionary situation -capitalism would soon collapse and the appeal to fascism was a sign of its weakness- demanded the Communists to conquer the working class for the final struggle. The Socialists had to be denounced as much an ally of a doomed regime as the Fascists. Socialists were even qualified as social-fascists. This Communist class versus class tactic meant that the Communists had to organize independently or that work within the reformist unions only made sense if it led to separate groups splitting away from the social fascists. Any genuine cooperation with the Socialists was considered betrayal of the revolutionary cause. The Communists called upon the migrants to shun the Socialists unions, only the small *Chevaliers du Travail*, later the *Central Révolutionaire des Mineurs* were considered genuine labor unions.

The radicalization in Communist strategy after 1928 was not limited to an attack on the Socialists. A close front of the Communists meant that the Communist migrants also had to be integrated fully within the PCB, until 1927 the Communist refugees and migrants were only responsible to their party of origin and they had a very loose relation to the PCB. As a consequence of the new strategy the Communist immigrants were now considered an integral part of the PCB. This injection of immigrant militants was crucial for the PCB -in 1930 comprised the party 800 members, of which half were immigrants- and the party wanted to make full use of them. The immigrants had to compensate for the lack of local militants.[[586]](#footnote-587) The Italians were the strongest represented among the Communist migrants, there were also important sections among the Jewish and Polish migrants. In particular the migrants’ communities in the Liège basin were by the end of the 1920s Communist stronghold.[[587]](#footnote-588)

The radicalization of the Communist strategy in 1928 and the subsequent integration of the immigrant Communists into Belgian partywork was spectacularly illustrated by the participation of migrants in independent Communist demonstrations.[[588]](#footnote-589) This strategy also led to the splitting, largely due to Jewish Communist migrants of the Brussels branch of the Socialist clothing union and the founding of an independent Communist union in that sector.[[589]](#footnote-590) A similar tentative to set up a Communist miners'union in Limburg failed.[[590]](#footnote-591) Some strikes were even called by the foreign Communists, such as by Poles in the zinc factory in La Brouck and by mostly Dutch Communists in the Limburg mine Zwartberg.[[591]](#footnote-592)

**Employers' strategies to retain new workers.**

The "desertion" of the traditional Walloon miners' families and the avoidance by more and more Flemish workers of the collieries forced most mining companies to realize that they no longer had a loyal Belgian workforce. Some employers hoped that the immigrants and their families could be turned into a new "race" of miners. This ambitious desire had to tackle a basic problem. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, a large number of mostly rural immigrants left the mines before completing their recruitment contract. Retaining the migrants for a year was no easy task. The employers had to confront these emigrants' fear and disgust of mining as well as their homesickness. If one sought to retain them in the long run the issue of their attachment to the return project had to be tackled. In order to convince even the industrial migrant workers to stay in the Belgian mines the employers had to develop another strategy. Carrots and sticks were used to attain the short term objective -to keep the immigrants in the mines during the term of the recruitment contract- but for the long term goal the employers oscilatted between incentives and repression.

The Creation of Loyalty and Contention within the Migrant Communities

Flexibility in the work place was the first response of the mining companies to the desertion of their recruited manpower. They tried to make the adaptation process of the peasants to mine labor less abrupt. Instead of forcing them to the coalfaces and to the harsh discipline of industrial labor the first day after their arrival they were sometimes first employed on the surface for a while. There was often a more lenient application of the work rules.[[592]](#footnote-593) The supervisory personnel were advised to be more sensitive towards these foreigners.[[593]](#footnote-594) To relieve the migrants'feeling that they were trapped in a mine, mining companies sometimes even agreed to their demands to be relocated to another mine.[[594]](#footnote-595)

The migrants were also better treated in the hostels where they were lodged. Newspapers or books in their native tongue were put at their disposal. Ethnic food was provided for them. It was mostly the spouses of immigrants who prepared food for the colleagues of their husbands living in the hostels. Some mines stimulated family migration since these families were considered a crucial key to the adaptation of the single migrant workers. By linking the rent of the company housing to the number of boarders a family took in and by providing the beds and the blankets, migrant families were induced to alleviate the need for separate housing facilities for single miners. What was as important in this strategy was stabilizing the single migrants by recreating a sense of home. Those families made ethnic food for their boarders who were sometimes considered part of the family.[[595]](#footnote-596)

Family migration was a strategy with a much broader scope. Mining companies provided housing and financial support (loans) to encourage migrants to have their families join them.[[596]](#footnote-597) The assumption was that workers would be less inclined to move once their family had joined them. Thus, not only the head of the family was to be stabilized in the local mine community; the boys of these migrant families were also targeted by the employers' strategy.[[597]](#footnote-598) These boys would become the manpower of the future. The employers thereby hoped to obtain a lasting solution to their labor shortage.

This strategy was quiete successful. We mentioned before that the Ruhr miners, because of their specific history were mostly accompagnied by their family but also the migrants who were recruited in Poland and Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1920s decided to send for their family to join them. The number of women and children within the migrants miners' colonies increased in 1930-1931.[[598]](#footnote-599)

The main problem with providing family housing for the migrants was the high costs involved. The housing facilities accorded to immigrants varied greatly according to basin. While the mines in the Centre basin provided housing for the bulk of its new laborers by the middle of the 1920s, the mines in the basin of Liège did not provide housing for even half of the newcomers. In the Borinage, where the foreigners were concentrated in a few mines, about 2/3 of the foreign miners were housed in company-housing. About half of the immigrants were housed by the companies in the basin of Charleroi.[[599]](#footnote-600) Most of the immigrants in the Limburg basin were housed by the companies.

These regionally dependent initiatives were the result of a number of factors. As in the 19th century it was a function of the labor market and the nature of the labor shortage. Those mines which needed short term immigrant labor for peaks in demand only had to provide minimal facilities. However, a structural need for labor could only be solved by providing more housing. A crucial aspect of the nature of the labor shortage concerned whether there was a need for qualified miners or if unexperienced workers were sufficient. While the basins of Liège and Charleroi mostly needed hands (hauliers), qualified miners such as hewers and timberers were needed in the basin of Limburg. New or expanding mines on the outskirts of the old industrial basins such as Hensies-Pommeroeul and de Hainaut at the West of the Borinage also had to recruit experienced miners. For these mines the recruitment of foreign immigrants was not just a solution to a temporary labor shortage. The companies clearly hoped that these foreign miners would stay and become part of the permanent labor force. The attempt of these companies to retain a core of immigrant miners in their mines was demonstrated not only in their effort to provide decent housing for single men -the hostels- but also in the construction of housing for immigrant families. These mines with an outspoken labor shortage revealed the main determinants of the employers'strategies. The more limited housing provisions of other mining companies in the basin of Charleroi and Liège also responded to the same stimulus. The scarce family housing provided by these companies was usually available only for the qualified miners.[[600]](#footnote-601)

Although the nature of the labor shortage was the main determinant other explanatory factors can be added. The absence of initiatives in most of the mines of Liège was also due to the industrial and urban density of this region, where the occupational opportunities were high. These mines were not that isolated; hence a large -maybe rudimentary- private housing market was present. This probably also explains the relatively low score of the basin of Charleroi.[[601]](#footnote-602) Another factor which had an influence on these initiatives in the 19th century -the size of the mining companies and their financial possibilities- is also explains the exceptional position of Liège.[[602]](#footnote-603)

The increase in company housing was not only a result of economic factors- an important political factor should also be taken into account. The minimal intervention of the 19th century Belgian state was replaced by a much more demanding action on the part of the public authorities.[[603]](#footnote-604) The intervention of the consular authorities who kept an eye on the living conditions of their citizens working in Belgium was also crucial. The consular authorities in some cases outlawed any recruitment in their country by firms which did not fullfill the minimal conditions, posed on the housing of their citizens. This certainly had a positive effect on the housing of immigrants.

Notwithstanding these pressures the situation on the housing market was bad in the industrial basins at the end of the 1920s. Even in the basin of Limburg the companies could not provide enough housing for all the families they wanted to attract.[[604]](#footnote-605)

The personnel policy of some mines went far beyond just providing housing. To stabilize migrant families in their local mine community, some companies were willing to make a more considerable effort. The employers hoped to obtain a lasting solution to their labor shortage in this way. To fulfill this wish two very different strategies were implemented which both revolved around the notion ethnicity.

Two distinct company policies towards ethnicity can be discerned.[[605]](#footnote-606) The first and most widespread one was the assimilationist strategy. Its power to make migrants decide to stay in Belgium was widely acclaimed among employers.[[606]](#footnote-607) Waterschei was the prototype of this strategy.[[607]](#footnote-608) From the outset, when Waterschei initiated production in 1924 it aimed at a "flemishification" of the labor force. This mine's provision for education was limited to a Flemish school. Migrant ethnic organizations could hardly count on support from the company.[[608]](#footnote-609) Assimilation of the migrants into the local Flemish culture was the endgoal, which aimed not only at stabilizing the migrants, but also keeping them away from the Socialist movement. The Catholic Flemish culture was considered a bulwark against Socialism. As we analyzed in part I this mining company had a more modern view of industrial relations than the other mines in the Limburg basin. Waterschei wanted from the very beginning a close cooperation not only with the clergy but also with the Christian-Democratic organizations.

Winterslag, the first mine to start production in the basin of Limburg in 1923, had already designed a totally different multicultural strategy for building up a loyal and stable labor force. As mentioned earlier, this mine did not make illusions about the possibility of attracting large number of Flemish miners. Aliens would be an integral part of its labor force and the company especially looked for Poles as a valuable source of manpower. They hoped to establish a Polish *colonie* , an ethnic community under full control of the mine. The concept was simple. The mine would support pastoral care, education and ethnic associations for those workers and their families and in exchange the workers and its leadership (priests, teachers, presidents of the associations) would be loyal to the company.[[609]](#footnote-610) The cooperation of the Belgian secular and religious authorities, as well as those of the emigration countries, was indispensable for this strategy to succeed but the company did not doubt their willingness to do so.

Given Belgian's state-structure such an ambitious design for creating an ethnic community under company control was feasible. The particular Belgian educational system in which the state subcontracted schooling was a special asset in the realization of the design for company-controlled ethnic communities. These autonomous initiatives directed to the various new ethnic communities faced no opposition either form the Belgian state, or from the Belgian Church.

In 1923 the Belgian clergy was already heavily involved in setting up a distinct religious structure for the Polish migrants. Due to a shortage of Polish priests this had not yet materialized. In 1926, a Polish Catholic Mission was created by the Polish Primate Hond in agreement with the Belgian Primate Mercier.[[610]](#footnote-611) Mine management of Winterslag considered the mission a promising starting position. The Polish and Czechoslovakian consular authorities were also strong supporters of this multicultural endeavour.[[611]](#footnote-612)

This meant that in 1926 two Polish schools were set up in Winterslag, one for girls and one for boys.[[612]](#footnote-613) In 1929 a Czechoslovakian school was also founded.[[613]](#footnote-614)

Another example of the multicultural strategy of Winterslag is the composition of the labor representatives for the joint board of this mine. The choice of labor representatives for the joint committees was not only decided by election, but also by mine management. Management decided that since the Belgian unions- the Socialists and the Christian Democratics- had their representatives then the non-Belgian ethnic groups (Poles, Czechs...) should have one representative each. The mining company legitimized this by referring to the ethnic composition of the workforce in the new basin. Mine management argued that it was the only way to give migrant labor a voice.[[614]](#footnote-615) At any rate this committee had no influence on the policy of mine management. Meetings were hardly ever called and complaints had to be presented individually by the labor representatives to the personnel department. Another indication of their willingness to separate the different ethnic communities was the promotion of some immigrants to supervisory positions.[[615]](#footnote-616) The different realizations of the multicultural strategy in Winterslag should not hide the constraints under which they were implemented. The failure of Winterslag to add one more dimension -and not the least important- to its Polish *colonie*, pastoral care, is a telling example.

A Polish Mission was established in 1926. A Polish priest set up his office in Brussels and with exceptional dynamism started to promote a Catholic organization for the entire Polish community in Belgium. He edited a bulletin and obtained the collaboration of the consular authorities and the Polish elite in Brussels, along with the Belgian clergy. His main problem was in reaching the Polish migrants in the province. He urged the Polish Primate to staff his Mission with more Polish priests. Limburg especially needed a priest. The livelihood and housing of the priest would be provided for by the "generous" company of Winterslag. Priests, however, were in short supply in Poland and the Polish Church was not eager to provide Winterslag with one.[[616]](#footnote-617) The Belgian clergy got impatient and decided itself to provide pastoral care for the Polish migrants in Limburg. Some Flemish priests who knew Polish were sent temporarily to Limburg and two Flemish friars who were to get a permanent mission among the Poles in Limburg were sent to Poland for an intensive language course.[[617]](#footnote-618)

This decision was not only motivated by a concern over the religious integrity of the Polish migrants, it had also an assimilationist objective. The new bishop of Liège Kerkhofs was backing the Flemish Christian Democratic movement in Limburg which aimed at preserving the Catholic character of the new industrial basin by taking into account Flemish workers' material and cultural interest in the new social order. The Flemish Christian Democratic movement was concerned about other ethnic communities in the mining basin which were not in its reach. This concern was exacerbated by the arrival of Polish migrants from France who became the backbone of the Socialist trade union of Limburg. The objective of the Flemish Christian Democratic movement was that Limburg remain Catholic and Flemish. A Polish priest would only inhibit quick assimilation. Flemish priests who were in sympathy with the Christian Democratic cause and knew Polish were much more instrumental to their strategy.[[618]](#footnote-619)

Although the mine management of Winterslag insisted that the Polish authorities and the Polish Mission obtain a Polish priest and promised to offer him a house and a financial subsidy no Polish priest was made available.[[619]](#footnote-620) The opposition of the Flemish community and especially the local clergy together with the refusal of the Polish Church to send more Polish priests caused Winterslag to effective control over the religious dimension of its program. Thus, the Winterslag mines' plan for an insular Polish community totally reliant on the company turned out to be difficult to implement.

The elaborate strategy towards the ethnic groups of Winterslag was exceptional. Most of the other mines also realized that they would have to provide more than just work to obtain a loyal and lasting work performance of their migrant labor. In Wallonia all the mining companies considered the minimal necessary ethnic provision to be spiritual and moral support by a co-ethnic priest. By 1924, the mining companies were already prepared to provide financial support for Polish priests. A new preoccupation -Communist agitation- increased their efforts to pressure the Polish Church to send priests.

In 1928, the rector of the Polish Mission in Belgium finally received an assistant. This Polish priest was sent to the Liège basin where Communist propaganda was considered most virulent.[[620]](#footnote-621) The Polish Mission in Belgium -now two priests- insisted that more priests were necessary; some Polish sisters would also be welcome. The rector argued that the rapid growth of the Polish community made it difficult for he and his colleague to handle it on their own.[[621]](#footnote-622) In 1929, the Polish Mission submitted its request to increase its staff support from the mining companies in *Hainaut*. These companies had just started their massive recruitment in Poland. The more visible Communist influence among the migrant communities, including the Polish, caused these companies to strongly insist that Polish pastoral care be provided to their new labor force.[[622]](#footnote-623) Their strong pressure supported by Belgian and Polish authorities alike meant that the request was met in the end. Two more priests were sent to Belgium, one for the Borinage and one for the basin of Charleroi. At the same time the rector of the Polish mission moved to the Centre basin. By 1930 each basin in Wallonia had a Polish priest whose livelihood was mostly provided by the mining companies.[[623]](#footnote-624) In Flanders, Flemish friars who had learned Polish were engaged to take care of the religious needs of the Poles.

In 1928, Italian priests were sent to the industrial basins of Wallonia. They also received financial aid from the mining companies.[[624]](#footnote-625) For the Hungarians in the Limburg basin two nuns arrived from Hungary to "protect the Hungarians against bad influences and also because their presence could be beneficial for the mines"[[625]](#footnote-626)

The influence of the collieries on these institutions designed to preserve migrants' ethnic or religious identity are not to be exaggerated. These institutions (the schools, the Mission and the ethnic organizations) pursued their own objectives. To conserve the national identity and to retain the faith was not what the mines necessarily had in mind when they supported these institutions financially. Control over their labor force, as well as stabilizing them and assuring future workers, was their main goal. In some instances the interests converged, docility -respect for (ecclesiastic) authority- was what some priests and mine management expected from the migrants. The Polish priests were also important allies in the struggle against what they considered a most dangerous atheism- Communism and Socialism.[[626]](#footnote-627)

We have to realize too that the migrants were not mere objects. They themselves, largely because of their expected return to Poland had asked for Polish schools, for Polish priests.. . However, the economic dependence of the priests on the mining companies was resented by the migrants. The migrants believed that the Polish priests'wages were deducted from their own wages.[[627]](#footnote-628) The rector of the Mission realized from the very beginning that this undermined the authority of the clergy but he considered it a necessary evil. He hoped that in the future the Mission would become financially independent.[[628]](#footnote-629)

These ethnic-based institutions also served a purpose for the migrants. They drew on their cultural cohesiveness to defend themselves. It gave them self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Drawing on the principle of mutual aid they joined in fraternal benevolent societies. In Wallonia in 1931 600 Poles were organized in Polish mutual aid organizations which were recognized and subsidized by the Belgian authorities.[[629]](#footnote-630) Ethnicity was a force of strength for the migrants even if mine management sometimes tried to use it to control their labor force. It meant that Winterslag was saddled with a culturally close knitted Polish community, but also a syndicalistically minded one. Ethnic pride -a part of a divide and conquer strategy of the mine company -did not succeed in detering workers from uniting in the Socialist miners union.[[630]](#footnote-631)

Looking for Repressive Management of Migrant labor

By the middle of 1929 there was a growing awareness among the employers in the mining sector that a refined recruitment strategy combined with providing facilities for these newcomers was not sufficient to make the migrant workers into loyal employees. The "defects" of first generation workers and the limited pool of industrial workers available for emigration -a group not responding to the ideal type, albeit more dependable- necessitated that new strategies be developed to make migrant labor into a more stable work force.

Some mines had recourse to traditional means to assure the respect of labor contracts. Migrants who left the mines before their contract was over were summoned before labor courts.[[631]](#footnote-632) The mining companies not only asked the courts to make the migrants reimburse the travel costs, they also demanded compensation for the losses they had suffered. These indemnities could reach 1,000 francs.[[632]](#footnote-633) Such exorbitant demands were intended to convince the "deserter" to return to the mine which had recruited him. The main problem was that it was extremely difficult to locate these absent migrants. As the number of cases increased, the migrants became much more prudent and probably looked for another job far away from their first employer.[[633]](#footnote-634)

Another strategy was to cut down the alternatives at the migrants disposal. The mines which had organized the immigration of labor were eager to retain those migrants, at least for the duration of their contracts. They considered it unjust that other mines could poach the newly introduced workers from them. The recruiting mines were entitled to receive some return on their investment. They had not only organized the recruitment operation, but they had also paid the transportation costs. The regional mine association of the basin of Centre, which shortly after recruiting Czechoslovakian migrants saw most of them leave its mines, proposed a nation-wide gentlemen's agreement for the mining industry to respect the prerogatives of the recruiting mines. Their proposal stipulated that during the first year after the recruitment of working abroad by a particular mine-the term of the working contracts- no other mine could hire those workers. This proposal aimed not only at rendering justice to the mines which invested in organizing recruitment, but had strong "educational" overtones. Only by enforcing a respect for the clauses of the working contract could a disciplined workforce be created.[[634]](#footnote-635) The industrial competition for workers was thwarting any effort to stabilize these migrants. The aim of the recruitment of the mining industry should not only be to increase the labor supply, but also to assure that these workers would be loyal workers. The management wanted workers who would not only be loyal to the mining industry, but also to the employers. Roisin, a powerful employer, defended this proposal in the committee of the FEDECHAR in January 1929. He pointed out that to discipline migrant labor was a very complex task and that a necessary precondition was strong solidarity within the federation.[[635]](#footnote-636) Only by the summer of 1929 when all basins were recruiting labor abroad and when all of them were confronted with an increasing number of "deserters" was a common agreement to seek an entente possible between the regional associations.

By then an experiment had already been attempted. The first mine to accept the gentlemen's agreement proposed by the employers' association of the Centre basin was Waterschei in Limburg. The mine's adherence to this proposal had already lead to the dismissal of a certain number of Czechoslovakian migrants who were still under contract in the basin of Centre in the spring of 1929. These migrants, however, refused to return to the mine which had recruited them and even decided to return to Czechoslovakia. The consternation about this unexpected turn of events caused the proposal to be much more closely scrutinized.[[636]](#footnote-637) The proposed gentlemen's agreement turned out to have major defects. The binding of the migrants to one mine was considered detrimental to the mining industry. Not only could it encourage the "deserters" to return to their country of origin, it was even more likely that they would offer their services outside the mining industry. In addition forcing "deserters" to return to the mine they had fled would not ameliorate the satisfaction within the labor force and instead give those seeking to stir industrial ferment easy allies.[[637]](#footnote-638)

This criticism caused the FEDECHAR to rewrite the proposal of the regional mine association of the Centre basin. The new proposal sanctioned the hiring of a migrant who was still under contract of the recruitment mine, but it demanded that this mine defray (a part of) the recruitment costs. The proposal hence had a mere commercial aim and lost all of its disciplinary effect. The proposal was diluted from a moralizing agreement to an economic accord.[[638]](#footnote-639) By September 1929 all regional associations within the FEDECHAR had agreed to this proposal.[[639]](#footnote-640)

The modalities for the execution of the agreement were quite complex. All passports of migrants who had been recruited were marked by a number on the picture. If such a person turned up at the personnel department of a mine, it had to be verified whether he was still under contract. This information could be found in the lists which each regional association had made up with the names of the migrants they had recruited or in the monthly (or sometimes even weekly) lists with the names of the "deserters". On the basis of those lists the amount of recruitment costs that was still to be reimbursed to the recruiting mine could be calculated.[[640]](#footnote-641)

The mining industry wanted to broaden the scope of such an agreement to other industries. The mining industry's problem of retaining their recruited migrants was largely the result of the alternatives which industrial sectors, such as the iron and steel factories, the chemical plants and construction, offered to "their" labor. Mining hoped to satisfy the labor needs of those industries by offering them the services of their recruitment commissions in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Those industries would no longer be "induced" to poach migrants from the mines. Instead, they would be interested in concluding an agreement with the mining industry to prevent it from walking-away with their labor.In the spring of 1929 an agreement was reached by the different industries in the Liège basin.[[641]](#footnote-642) Extra-sectorial agreements were even promoted at the level of the CCI, the national employers' organization.[[642]](#footnote-643) It does not seem, however, that this call had any effect. It is highly likely that only in the mining sector was there a serious effort made to insure an effective gentlemen's agreement.[[643]](#footnote-644)

Since these gentlemen's agreements were only accountable for checking the mobility within the mine industry the desertion from this industry continued unabated. The employers looked for a means to stop this. Some employers retained the passports of "their" migrant labor to make them respect their labor contract. It deprived them of any mobility. Opposition to this was, however, extremely strong. Migrant labor considered it humiliating- it lowered them to the position of mine slaves. They considered it an intolerable infringement on their dignity, an attack on their basic human rights. The protests were loud; strikes were even called.[[644]](#footnote-645)

Most immigrant labor could count on the unconditional support of their consular authorities in these protests. A lot of Czechoslovakians and Poles appealed to their embassies to force the mines to hand back their passports. These embassies stated it unambiguously- retaining their citizens' passports was illegal. This was an elementary principle of civil liberty, endorsed by the Belgian authorities.[[645]](#footnote-646) The mining company had no authority whatsoever to confiscate the passports of the migrants.

In August 1929 the Italian authorities decided to retain the passports of the Italian emigrants in Belgium. It is likely that they decided to do so because of the declining popularity of their migrant labor for the Belgian mines. The Italians previously recruited for the mines were the "deserters" par excellence. This measure assured that the Italian emigrants would respect the year contract they had signed upon departure. The employers were enthusiastic as a legal way had been found to assure that immigrants completed their contracts. The consular authorities were entitled to seize the passports of their citizenry abroad. The Italian authorities' decision was, however, strongly opposed by the Belgian authorities. The Liberal Minister of Justice Paul-Emile Janson stated clearly that although it was not illegal, he disapproved of this measure and contended that the Belgian authorities must grant the Italians full civil liberties even without their passports.[[646]](#footnote-647) The opposition of the Belgian authorities meant that the Italian authorities refrained from implementing the decision.[[647]](#footnote-648)

The Czechoslovakian authorities, although affirming that the passport was the inalienable property of their citizens, made an important concession to the Belgian mining companies, at least according to the FEDECHAR. In July 1929 a new article was inserted in the labor contracts which stated that "the workers have the right to ask that their personnel documents be returned and the mines have to give them back immediately". The ambiguity of this article was interpreted by the mines in a sense that was favorable to their efforts to enforce discipline. They inferred that they had obtained the authorization to keep the passports of their Czechoslovakian labor until their intended departure.[[648]](#footnote-649) This was not the intention of the Czechoslovakian authorities. They had only meant that the mines could retain the passports for a short while in order to handle administrative matters and that the passport then had to be given back to its owner. Of course, this ambiguity led to numerous disputes between the mines, the migrants and the Czechoslovakian authorities.[[649]](#footnote-650)

By October 1929, the relatively high number of "deserters" among the migrants recruited in Czechoslovakia, together with the constant disputes about retaining passports, made the Czechoslovakian authorities more willing to yield some minimal control over the migrants to the Belgian mines. The mines, upon arrival of an officially recruited group of migrant labor, were able to insert a stamp in their passports which stated the regional mine association that had recruited them, their date of entry and their work contracts' completion date.[[650]](#footnote-651) The occupational mobility of these immigrants was not limited by this formal designation on their passports. It all depended on whether the employer felt bound by this contractual obligation. Also, it was unnecessary for a Czechoslovakian migrant to show his passport when he applied for a job. In fact it only enabled the employers to check efficiently if they -according to the gentlement's agreement- would eventually have to reimburse some of the recruitment costs of these migrants. Very shortly afterwards the Polish authorities also conceded to this demand made by the FEDECHAR. This caused that less than a year after the adoption of the gentlemen's agreement in the mining sector the modalities of its implementation changed fundamentally. The numerous "deserters" lists were a bureaucratic headache to such an extent that it became too cumbersome to consult them.[[651]](#footnote-652) By 1930 all recruited labor -recruitment still took place in Poland and Czechoslovakia- received upon arrival in Belgium a stamp on their passport. This procedure made the process of checking if they were still bound to a recruitment contract much more efficient.[[652]](#footnote-653)

The mines tried to exercise their own control over migrant labor, but soon they were forced to the realization that they needed outside agencies. The mines felt they were fighting a losing battle. The gentlemen's agreements with the other industries were not that successful. When it turned out that the newly recruited mine workers not only left for other industries but were even recruited by firms abroad, namely for the Dutch mines, the FEDECHAR had had enough. According to FEDECHAR this movement had been instigated by Dutch mines' agents and the government would have to protect the recruitment efforts of the national industry.[[653]](#footnote-654) The Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans stated that they were not able to do anything. The mine industry felt utterly helpless. The state was called upon to step in to assure that the migrants kept to their side of the engagement. The mine industry was not able to prohibit the other industries from poaching "their" migrants. Recruiting manpower, an investment which the mining industry was ready to make, was only able to yield the necessary return within a legal framework which gave the employers extensive state-backed powers to deal with their migrant labor. It was essential to the well-being of the mining industry that the occupational mobility of migrants be severely curtailed at least for the term of the work contract. The influential director of the Centre-based mine Marcinelle Nord clearly stated this in a letter to the Minister of Labor. The manpower of the mining industry had to be "protected". Otherwise the shortage in the labor market would cause serious disturbances not only to the mining industry in the near future, but also to the global economy. Just as in neighboring France, the authorities had to step in to safeguard the mines against the desertion of the recruited migrants.

"Bien que les contrats d'engagement soient établis pour une durée d'un an et que l'entrée en Belgique de ces ouvriers soit conditionnées à ces engagements, nous nous trouvons désarmés pour faire respecter cette condition et nous arrivons à cette situation que tous nos efforts n'ont pour résultat que de procurer de la main-d'oeuvre aux autres industries. Alors qu'en France les ouvriers étrangers sont tenus de respecter leurs engagements avant d'être occupés par un autre patron, il n'est pas rare dans notre région de voir les rabatteurs venir recruter ces ouvriers étrangers jusque dans nos phalanstères. Nous estimons, quant à nous, que la main-d'oeuvre des charbonnages doit être absolutement protégée, si l'on ne veut assister dans quelques années à une accentuation très prononcée de la crise de main-d'oeuvre."[[654]](#footnote-655)

The response of the Minister of Labor was positive. Since 1923, his Ministry had tried to obtain power over the conditions of access to the labor market for migrants. Now the powerful mining lobby, which until then had opposed any government intervention on the labor market was actually requesting state-action. **6B.Traditional Alien Policy under Increased Pressure, 1929-1932**

A Gradual Implementation of a Restrictive Immigration Policy

The Crackdown on "Subversive" Aliens

By the middle of 1929 the laissez-faire attitude of the Belgian authorities in immigration matters changed. The Minister of Justice issued a new administrative regulation to combat clandestine immigration. Undocumented immigrants had now to pay the fine of 150 francs and they had to go to the Belgian consulates in the neighboring countries (Maastricht, Luxemburg, Valenciennes) for a visa. In order to obtain a visa, they had to present a labor contract approved by the Department of Labor.[[655]](#footnote-656)

The immigrants who had regularized their sojourn by immigrating with a visa granted by one of the consulates in the neighbouring countries or in their country of origin had to register upon arrival at the municipal authorities. These local authorities had then to wait for the autorisation of the Sûreté before giving the immigrants an identity card. In the mean time the immigrant's sojourn was covered by his visa.

The authorities of the emigration countries pressumed that the Belgian authorities wanted to obtain a stricter hold over labor immigration since immigrants increasingly arrived without demanding their permission. The Polish consul in Cologne stated that this regulation would not be able to combat the illegal immigration into Belgium. He argued that an effective struggle against this immigration was only possible by providing for more flexible recruitment possibilities for employers.[[656]](#footnote-657)

That the Belgian labor market needed additional hands was certainly not contested by the Belgian authorities. The new rules for granting visa were not even designed to restrict labor migration. The new procedure caused only some expenses for the migrants, granting visa was still a mere formality. Some consuls were very lenient and the requirement to present a labor contract approved by the Ministry of Labor was hardly ever enforced. The Ministry of Justice did not oppose this practice seen that the Ministry of Labor assented anyway most of the contracts because of the evident labor shortages in Belgium.

In fact the new regulation was only introduced by the Sûreté to combat the immigration of what they called undesirable elements. Only politically "extremists" or those migrants with a criminal record were considered so and singled out by the Sûreté. The procedure to force the undocumented immigrants to leave Belgium and apply for a visa at a consulate abroad meant that objections to their sojourn in Belgium would have more chance to be followed up. The refusal to grant "undesirable" migrants a visa would be more likely to rid Belgium of these aliens than by the old procedure which ordered these unwanted migrants who had registered at a commune to leave the country. In particular migrants who were considered undesirable in France and left for Belgium were no longer tolerated. The French police authorities informed their Belgian colleagues on the antecedents of those migrants and immediate action -an expulsion or the refusal of a visa- was taken.[[657]](#footnote-658)

The establishment supported strongly this decision to crack down on the "undesirable" immigrants. The Communist penetration within the migrant communities made visible by the change in the Communist strategy from 1928 onwards led to a public outcry against the alien Communists. A virulent press campaign was waged demanding severe control over all the aliens and the immediate expulsion of all those "undesirable" aliens.[[658]](#footnote-659) This new concern, the large number of politically "undesirable" immigrants began to dominate the public debate on immigration. The Communist influence among immigrants was grossly exaggerated and the authorities were strongly pressed to take action:

 "Il faut absolument...mettre un frein à cette invasion incessante d'éléments douteux, fanatiques conspirateurs à la solde de Moscou dont la principale occupation est de travailler contre l'ordre établi et pour lesquels tous les moyens sont bons"[[659]](#footnote-660)

The Sûreté did not wait long before stepping in with repression. Not only newcomers, but also migrants who had already acquired residency status were targeted. The higher visibility of the Communists within the immigrant communities meant that the Sûreté had a much easier time identifying the Communists. Although expulsion of Communist activists had occurred since 1925, mass expulsions now decimated the Communist organizations.[[660]](#footnote-661) The Polish Communist section broke up completely, only within the Italian and Jewish immigration could an organized Communist influence be retained.[[661]](#footnote-662) At the same time, the new immigration regulation had to assure that the Communists could not count on new activists to continue the party work among the migrant communities.

This new regulation was not that efficient. Some nationalities did not have to apply for a visa to immigrate into Belgium, thus they could not be forced to leave the country to apply for a visa at one of the consulates of the neighboring countries. In particular, the Italian immigration was exempted from the new regulation and this notwithstanding that the Italian Communists were the best organized group of the PCB. The only recourse here was expelling them before they acquired residency status or else to make use of the complicated procedure of *expulsion*.

Undocumented aliens remained also part of the reality. Aside from these illegal immigrants who circumvented the new legislation recreated the slow functioning of the alien administration illegal immigrants. After the immigrants who were subject to the new regulation immigrated legally with a visa, their sojourn was covered by this visa until the Sûreté gave its approval for an identity card. It could last, however, months before the Sûreté gave its approval. Sometimes the validity of the visa expired and the immigrants were then again illegally sojourning in Belgium.[[662]](#footnote-663) It caused a watertight control over the aliens very difficult to implement. Notwithstanding its deficiencies the new regulation succeeded to exert some control over the immigrants.

Refugees Receive No More Asylum

Refugees were since 1885 attributed a special status within the alien legislation. This was part of the more "rational" alien policy which developed in the last quarter of the 19th century. Undesirable immigrants were for then on sent "back" to their country of origin. As this repatriation could imply extradition of political opposants, were the "refugees" to be protected. All foreigners had to declare upon arrival in Belgium if they were political refugees. These claims were subsequently checked by the Sûreté and a confirmation of their refugee condition protected them from expulsion to their country of origin.[[663]](#footnote-664)

The unrestricted immigration to Belgium during most of the 1920s -even visa requirements were not strictly adhered to- meant that those emigrants who were forced to flee their country could without too much difficulty find a safe heaven in Belgium. About 8,000 Russian "refugees" were living in Belgium by 1930. Also 800 Armenian "refugees" who had fled Turkey in the very beginning of the 1920s after their cruel treatment at the hands of the Turkish authorities started a new live in Belgium.[[664]](#footnote-665) Both these groups had obtained an international recognition as Nansen refugees. All other refugees in Belgium were not internationally protected. Especially Italians fleeing fascism found a refuge in Belgium. A trickle of Hungarians, Spaniards, Poles... added to the Belgian refugee population.[[665]](#footnote-666) These refugees, mostly of distinct leftist signature were not especially welcome in Belgium, but a lot of them succeeded to regularize their sojourn. From the spring of 1929 onwards refugees had increasing difficulties to meet the new formal requirement to regularize their sojourn. Just like a lot of other immigrants they had immigrated without any identity papers. While most undocumented emigrants could obtain a declaration of good conduct or a passport from their consulate was this not the case for these adversaries of their country's regime. A lot of refugees had also been convicted for their political activities and a criminal record, independent of the reasons for the convictions was enough to refuse them sojourn in Belgium. Also information on their political activities in France was reason to expel them. From 1929 onwards not only were numerous refugees denied access to Belgium, also among those who were sojourning legally in Belgium and had acquired residency status a few hundred were expelled each year because of their political activities.[[666]](#footnote-667) The change in the alien policy in the second half of 1929 meant that a lot of refugees were denied asylum in Belgium.

This biased policy towards refugees, just at the moment when the mines recruited thousands of workers in Poland and Czechoslovakia was heavily criticized by the Socialist refugee organization:

"Faudrait-il en déduire que l'étranger ouvrier indépendant, cherchant asile chez nous est constamment inquiété et menacé alors que celui qui est entré dans le pays enchainé par un fallacieux contrat de travail, n'éprouve pas ces difficultés parce que le patronat retient de lui une main-d'oeuvre qu'il exploite d'une façon scandaleuse"[[667]](#footnote-668)

Although the Socialists advocated a restrictive immigration policy, they opposed the restrictions put in place in May 1929. These restrictions were rightly seen as only being targetted against the political active minority among the immigrants. Also any action against the undocumented aliens in Belgium was only ambiguously supported by the Socialists as the first victims of such an action would be the leftist refugees who could not regularize their sojourn.[[668]](#footnote-669) The Socialists advocated the extension of the definition of "refugee" to include those leftist immigrants, but the government was certainly not willing to do so. On the contrary these "subversive" refugees were treated as crimimals and as soon as the Sûreté could get hold of them, they were expelled

 A New Initiative to Renovate Alien Legislation, the Holvoet Bill

The large Communist influx, which as we mentioned earlier was mainly but not exclusively confined to the Italian immigrants acted as a catalyst to set off the new discussion on the Belgian alien policy. The authorities were very much concerned about the political activities of these Italian Communists, their skirmishes with their countrymen organized in the fascist organizations had even caused diplomatic protests. The lack of means within traditional alien policy -the Italians did not even have to carry a visa- meant that a reform of the alien legislation was deemed necessary.[[669]](#footnote-670)

 The Commission Holvoet

A new commission was set up under the presidency of the Governor of Antwerp Holvoet. Similar to the interdepartmental commission which discussed the Vercruysse bill during the Cabinet Poullet-Vandervelde, it consisted of representatives of three departments (Labor, Justice and Foreign Affairs), but now they were joined by a representative of the Antwerp judiciary police. This commission discussed what changes should be brought about in the alien law to tackle the challenges caused by the increasing immigration.[[670]](#footnote-671) It was obvious that the government considered the alien administration in Antwerp an example.[[671]](#footnote-672) Not so much the upgrading of the efficiency of the alien administration, but rather the extension of powers of the executive in dealing with aliens was on the agenda.

By the end of 1928 a bill was drafted. Although new concerns had given shape to the bill, it was in fact an elaboration of the Vercruysse bill.[[672]](#footnote-673) The Sûreté had a considerably larger input in the Holvoet Commission's bill, than in any previous attempt to change the legislation.

The Sûreté had especially been targeted in the press campaign against the "agitators". The Sûreté felt powerless. The limited powers which the law of 1897 granted the alien administration and its many loopholes were by then considered wholly inadequate to crack down on "subversive" activities of aliens. The limited powers given to the authorities in the alien law of 1897 even inhibited action against the outright criminal activities committed by foreigners, let alone political activities.[[673]](#footnote-674) The Sûreté had already proposed at the end of 1925 to change the alien administration by introducing a special identity card for aliens. It was meant to be a mere administrative innovation to increase the efficiency of the alien administration. By 1928 the Sûreté considered not only an increased efficiency of the alien administration, but also an enlargement of its powers necessary to keep a hold over the foreign population. Also members of the Judiciary, who were confronted in their daily practice with what they considered the inadequacies of the alien legislation expressed similar concerns.[[674]](#footnote-675)

Adequate registration of all aliens in Belgium was still considered the first step.[[675]](#footnote-676) The provisions of the Vercruysse bill to assure the implementation of the new alien legislation were reinforced by the new bill. Fines and prison terms were strengthened to make Belgians and foreigners comply with the new regulations.

The second step was to be assigned the power to remove all "undesirable" aliens. The paramount interest of the Sûreté and the Judiciary was to arm the state against these aliens. The Sûreté considered some special provisions of the alien law of 1897 to be loopholes in the law which had to be removed. They targeted in particular the law's prohibition against expelling aliens who were married to Belgians. This liberal provision weakened the power of the Sûreté as some "subversive" foreigners who were to be expelled intentionally married single mothers to prevent their expulsion and the authorities were then totally disarmed.[[676]](#footnote-677) A second loophole was the provision that only expelled aliens who returned to Belgium could be convicted. Those who never left the country could not be punished.[[677]](#footnote-678) According to the Sûreté and the Judiciary, the power to expel any alien -independent of lenght of sojourn in Belgium- and also the ability to intern the aliens who did not obey an expulsion order was central to the necessary repressive arsenal.

The Holvoet bill enlarged considerably the powers of the Minister of Justice to remove aliens.[[678]](#footnote-679) It proposed removing the protection residency status provided the aliens. The Sûreté now endorsed the dispositions concerning the alien policy which the Vercruysse-bill had proposed (the abolishment of the residency status and the introduction of an alien card valid for only two years) as it would give their office more leeway in dealing with aliens. In addition the bill proposed to make it much easier to convict an expelled alien who remained in the country. The new bill proposed to give full powers to administrative courts, without possibility of appeal, to convict those aliens who remained in the country illegally to prisons term of one to twelve months.[[679]](#footnote-680)

Not only aspects of public order, but also the social-economic dimension of the increasing immigration were under discussion. The representatives of the Minister of Labor repeated the concerns expressed by Vercruysse in 1926. Firstly, ending the unregulated employment of foreign labor was necessary in order to protect national labor and to prevent government spending on unemployment benefits. Secondly, the Belgian state had to be armed against the dictates of the authorities of the countries where industry wanted to recruit labor.[[680]](#footnote-681)

To obtain state control over migrant labor the Holvoet bill went beyond the Vercruysse bill as it also obliged employers to apply for a government authorization to hire alien labor. Foreign labor would hence be subject to a dual control by the public authorities. This dual control, permission and admission, would be established to ensure an watertight implementation of the new legislation.

As the Vercruysse bill had already stipulated, migrants had to apply upon immigration for an authorization of the Ministry of Labor in order to exercise a certain profession. If the Ministry gave its approval, this occupation was mentioned on their alien card. Each change of occupation and the bi-annual renewal of the card implied a new authorization from the Ministry of Labor. These provisions of the Vercruysse bill were kept intact, but in addition control was extended to the employers of migrant labor. Prior to engaging an alien, the employer had to ask for government permission. The state would have at its disposal the means to permanently regulate not only the access of migrant labor to, but also every mobility within the national labor market.

The Holvoet bill was also drafted with the idea that the state would regulate migrant labor in a corporate spirit. The alien policy should serve the interests of labor and employers alike. This would be achieved by integrating two institutions in the functioning of the new legislation: firstly a still to be created joint committee at the national level with representatives of employers and labor in parity which would advice the Minister on the implementation of the law, and secondly the public labor exchange offices which would prepare reports on the labor market situation.[[681]](#footnote-682)

In 1926 Vercruysse had refrained from extending state control over the employers of migrant labor as it would have been considered an act of hostility towards industry. Yet only two years later the Holvoet Commission decided that the hiring practices of the employers should be regulated by the state. It was even considered one of the linchpins of the whole proposition. This control over industry was even couched in an industry-friendly discourse. According to De Voghel, head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Labor, the change in the recruitment practices of the mining industry, a more systematic and costly strategy to combat labor shortages, fueled the need for a more rigid state-control. A strict state-control over the labor market position of the foreigners would ensure that efforts to recruit labor abroad by those industries suffering manpower shortages, in casus mining, would not be lost. Other industries would no longer be able to poach these workers. De Voghel argued that only when the state wielded far-reaching powers over migrant labor could the occupational loyalty of the migrants to those sectors which had recruited them be enforced.[[682]](#footnote-683)

 The Attitude of Heavy Industry: the Need for Control

That this argument was not mere rhetoric was obvious in the reception of this bill by the mining industry. The mining companies now acknowledged, in contrast to previous outright refusals of any state intervention in this domain, that this bill could serve their interests, especially as a support in their efforts to stabilize their foreign manpower. The mining industry still resented state intervention in the recruitment of their manpower, but they advocated restricting the rights of other industries to employ the manpower that they had recruited abroad.[[683]](#footnote-684)

This change in strategy led to a constructive, but ambiguous criticism of the Holvoet bill. The mining-industry was opposed to the provision that an employer had to apply for an authorization for each individual alien whom he wanted to hire. They advocated a quota system, whereby the central authorities granted a whole industry or a company a certain number of authorizations to employ aliens. These quotas would limit the bureaucratic bother and enable the industries more leeway in recruitment. Their quota concept entailed also that a very broad definition of the occupation (miner, metalworker..) for which a migrant would be accepted were to be used. The mining industry argued that this was necessary in order not to alienate the authorities of the countries of emigration. A too strict control over migrant labor would be resented by those authorities as it would put their emigrants in a definite inferior position to the Belgian workers. This could even lead to diplomatic difficulties and endanger recruitment.[[684]](#footnote-685) Of course the proper interests of the mining-industry itself were served by such a broad definition of the occupation of migrant labor as it would restrict the state-intervention in their industry. Migrants should not be tied to a specific employer, but "only" confined to a certain industrial sector. The FEDECHAR considered that only for the term of the initial recruitment contract a link to the employer was appropriate.[[685]](#footnote-686)

Central to the propositions of the mining industry was the need to retain flexibility in the recruitment of aliens. Such a flexibility was needed in order to hire alien labor not only directly by recruitment in the countries of origin, but also by making use of the services of the immigrants who arrived spontaneously at the pits. The mining companies wanted to assure informal immigration as a source of manpower. This informal immigration was in principle already partly -for those who needed visa- outlawed under the actual legislation, but as we have seen in practice the regularization of their sojourn hardly posed a problem. The mining industry wanted to legalize temporarily the lodging of illegal immigrants by hostels dependent on industries who were covered by the quota system. This brief tolerance of illegal immigrants would enable the Sûreté to check their antecedents. The undesirable elements (criminals and subversives) could then be weeded out, but the honest worker would be safeguarded for the industry. They should not be punished merely for immigrating illegally in search of a job.[[686]](#footnote-687)

The regional mine-association of Liège in particular, the basin which relied to the largest extent upon undocumented immigrants, advocated a simplification of the formalities for unorganized immigration in order to reduce illegal immigration. They stated, however, that illegal immigrants would always be a part of reality. Instead of forcing those people into illegality, a regularization of their sojourn was much more appropriate.[[687]](#footnote-688)

The mining industry refused however blatantly to incorporate unions in the management of alien labor. Trade unions and "their" labor exchange offices did not come into their scheme of things. In exchange for a state support in the stabilization of the alien labor force the mining industry was ready to politicize the national labor market. The mining industry hoped that the authorities would base their decision exclusively on economic criteria and would eschew any union influence.[[688]](#footnote-689)

This criticism of the Holvoet bill by the FEDECHAR was shared by the umbrella-organization of industry, the CCI. Although the initial reaction of the CCI was one of outright refusal of any state-regulation of the labor market, this changed under strong pressure of the FEDECHAR. The employers' organization of the mining-industry argued that only if legislation stopped other industries from poaching migrant labor from the mines could the mines reap benefits for its recruitment abroad. The other industries, probably in particular the iron and steel industry, were warned that they would soon also be confronted with important labor shortages which would necessitate organized recruitment abroad. The low birthrate during the war would soon be felt.[[689]](#footnote-690) Sectors such as the building sector and the chemical industry were probably more aware of the problems involved in stabilizing this migrant labor as they too had called upon migrant labor in 1929. The other industries were warned that legislation was also necessary to prevent industries in neighboring countries from pirating migrant labor from Belgian industry. By appealing not only to its own interests, but also to the interests of any industry who called upon migrant labor, the FEDECHAR could press its point.[[690]](#footnote-691) In the end, the CCI supported the principle of regulating the labor market. The amendments of the FEDECHAR to the Holvoet bill were endorsed and especially the obstruction of any union influence in the decision making process was wholeheartedly supported by the CCI.

 The Commission Meyers: Liberalism Prevails

The government had decided in the meantime to call a commission composed of high ranking members of the Judiciary to give their advice on the Holvoet bill.[[691]](#footnote-692) This Commission Meyers endorsed most of the provisions of the Holvoet bill, but disapproved of the whole section on the regulation of the labor market. The commission considered that the new alien law should be limited to a police law. The economic provisions should be left out of it.

The position of the state in a corporate structure was, according to these high ranking members of the Judiciary, dangerously delicate.[[692]](#footnote-693) They repeated the arguments against state intervention on the labor market articulated until very recently by heavy industry. The labor market should not be regulated, but be left to its natural forces. To intervene on the labor market would inhibit the smooth functioning of the economy.[[693]](#footnote-694) The opinion of the Commission Meyers was not an isolated one. The senior civil servants within the Sûreté agreed totally with the Commission Meyers.[[694]](#footnote-695) The liberal ideology also had an enduring vitality in academic circles and in most of the press. State intervention on the labor market was to be avoided.[[695]](#footnote-696)

The Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman, but also the Liberal Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans strongly insisted that the provisions concerning foreign labor should be maintained.[[696]](#footnote-697) Their pressure was to no avail; the Cabinet of Prime Minister H.Jaspar decided in September 1929 to remove the whole section on the regulation of foreign labor from the bill.[[697]](#footnote-698) The discussion on the reform of the alien bill was not yet over. In the meantime the economy began to show signs of a declin.

A Selective Policy towards "Superfluous" Labor Migrants, 1930-1931.

By the end of 1929 the changing economic fortunes began to influence immigration policy. The Ministry of Labor in particular insisted to curb immigration.[[698]](#footnote-699) While this Ministry had been largely ignored by the Sûreté in its visa policy during 1929, this changed in 1930. Only labor contracts approved by the Minister of Labor were still accepted by the Consulates, this implied that migrants were only tolerated in those segments of the labor market in which there was a lack of Belgian labor.

The Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman wanted more influence. He strongly resented the decision of H.Jaspar, the Prime Minister not to insert any provisions concerning foreign labor in the alien bill. He succeeded to put the Holvoet bill again on the agenda of the Council of Ministers. On December 12, 1929 the amputated bill was discussed at the Council of Ministers. The strong insistence of the Minister of Labor H.Heyman, supported by H.Hymans, the Minister of Foreign Affairs probably caused the reopening of the discussion on the articles concerning the labor migrants.[[699]](#footnote-700)

The Sûreté stated that there was no need for special provisions to regulate foreign labor within the new alien law. The Minister of Justice would wield powers large enough to assure that the sojourn of foreign labor was economically justified.[[700]](#footnote-701) The Council of Ministers followed this advice, no permanent control over the immigrants in the labor market was installed. One article referred, however, to labor migration; organized migration would depend on the authorization of the authorities, in casus the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Labor.[[701]](#footnote-702)

The Minister of Labor H.Heyman considered this an important change in the alien legislation. He was convinced that he would be granted the power to regulate organized immigration according to the needs of the labor market. He advocated a corporate procedure, an advisory joint commission would be installed to decide about the organized intake of immigrants.[[702]](#footnote-703) This was certainly not the idea of heavy industry, for them the unions had to left out of the whole procedure.[[703]](#footnote-704)

Heavy industry was disappointed about the little reform the bill proposed, they hoped, however, to be able to exert more influence once the executive measures of the new law had to be drafted. The CCI hoped to insert the provision that migrant labor had to stay with the industry which had recruited them.[[704]](#footnote-705)

On July 11, 1930 the alien bill was deposed in Parliament. In the introduction to the bill it was clearly stated that only aspects of public order inspired the change in the alien law.[[705]](#footnote-706) The bill would never become law. When the government stepped down in May 1931, the bill had not yet been brought to a vote.[[706]](#footnote-707)

In the meantime H.Heyman revendicated to have more output in the alien policy. He did not want to wait till the alien legislation was reformed to demand his share in the control over migrant labor. As mentioned earlier the Ministry of Justice had obstructed the insertion of provisions to restrict the occupational liberty of migrant labor in the alien bill proposed to Parliament by stating that a regulation of foreign labor could be obtained by the powers the Ministry of Justice would wield in the new legislation. Heyman wanted the Ministry of Justice to share already its powers with his Ministry. He insisted to have a voice not only in granting of visa, but also in the control over migrants sojourning in the country. He demanded that the complete alien policy should be the responsibility of both Ministers. The spill-over from these sectors in which a labor shortage justified an appeal to immigrants to jobs in which the migrants would cause unemployment for Belgians had to be prevented. In this endeavour the Minister of Labor even targeted the aliens who were not required to carry a visa upon immigration. An inscription in the population register -residency status- should only be granted if these immigrants were working under a contract which was approved by the Ministry of Labor. A temporary residence permit would enable the authorities to easily dispose of immigrants if the situation in the labor market continued to deteriorate.

The Sûreté -consistent with its attitude in the past- opposed this interference of the Ministry of Labor in their domain. The Sûreté repeated that on the basis of the actual legislation they had no legal ground for refusing an inscription in the population register to legally immigrated aliens, who were neither a political risk nor indigent.

"Le système du département de l'Industrie et du Travail heurte profondément le principe de liberté qui est à la base de nos lois. ..Certes notre main d'oeuvre nationale doit recevoir protection, au même titre que notre industrie, mais il n'est pas possible que la Sûreté Publique abandonne ses pouvoirs au département de l'Industrie et du Travail...Je ne puis dans l'état actuel de la législation, proposer l'expulsion de ceux qui, non munis de l'autorisation du Ministère de l'Industrie et du Travail troubleraient éventuellement la tranquillité publique, par le seul manque de cette autorisation...je ne puis considérer comme ne justifiant pas de ressources celui qui n'a pas le contrat de travail visé, mais peut trouver du travail chez un patron qui n'a pas fait viser le contrat de travail."[[707]](#footnote-708)

This interdepartmental quibbling should not mask the changing nature of the immigration policy in 1930. The increasing unemployment in that year also affected the alien policy. Immigration was restricted and regularizing the sojourn of undocumented immigrants became increasing difficult. More and more recently immigrated workers were expelled.[[708]](#footnote-709) The undocumented immigrants faced enormous problems in obtaining approval of their labor contract by the Ministry of Labor. Also the Belgian Consulates had strict orders to grant visa only to those aliens who had the necessary documents.[[709]](#footnote-710)

Immigration policy had, however, an extremely dual character. While migrants who were not subject to the visa-requirement could still try their luck in Belgium, their colleagues of other, less fortunate nationalities had to bear the brunt of the approaching depression. While Poles, Yugoslavians and Hungarians found it increasingly difficult to get admission to Belgium, there was no impediment whatsoever for Czechoslovakians and Italians.[[710]](#footnote-711)

The mining sector became the main refuge for undocumented aliens.[[711]](#footnote-712) Labor shortages were still persistent in this sector. The Ministry of Labor agreed with the mining companies that the undiscriminative expulsion of undocumented immigrants would cause serious disturbances in this sector. The labor contracts for the mines were all approved as no Belgian miners were unemployed. Also the few Belgians who, because of their dismissal in another sector offered their services at the mine gates were immediately hired.[[712]](#footnote-713) Undocumented aliens went en masse to apply for visas at the Belgian consulates in the neighboring countries. By the end of 1930 about 1,000 Poles had obtained sojourn in this way, notwithstanding their illegal immigration.[[713]](#footnote-714) Illegal immigration, mostly migrants who had worked before in France, continued in the following months, but the Ministry of Labor considered that even those who went to work in the mines should no longer be exempted from expulsion.[[714]](#footnote-715) FEDECHAR insisted and won the day, the regularization of the sojourn of undocumented aliens in the mines was extended for another few months.[[715]](#footnote-716)

Due to increasing unemployment among Belgian labor the issue of migrant labor reached the Council of Ministers. Prime Minister H.Jaspar stated it bluntly: "Des mesures s'imposent contre les étrangers qui enlèvent à nos ouvriers une partie de la main-d'oeuvre" The Minister of Labor H.Heyman answered that they were unarmed, there were no legal grounds to take action against the immigrants.[[716]](#footnote-717) The Sûreté took however action to safeguard its leeway in the future. From November 1930 onwards was residency status refused to all immigrants who had to carry a visa upon entering Belgium. Their visa could be prolonged, but the Minister of Justice could autonomously decide that they had to leave the country (*renvoi*). For those nationalities whose immigration was not restricted remained the traditional policy valid, after 4 months they obtained residency status.[[717]](#footnote-718)

A few weeks later the issue of foreign labor came up again in the Council of Ministers. Prime Minister H.Jaspar insisted that measures be taken against the unemployed Italians who were wandering the country looking for a job. Jaspar ordered the Minister of Justice P.E. Janson "de chercher le moyen de les expulser sans tarder".[[718]](#footnote-719) Less than one month later was a bill accepted by the Council of Ministers and on December 15, 1930 a new immigration law was passed by Parliament. It was published in the Statute-Book a month later and it took effect on March the 14th 1931.[[719]](#footnote-720) The new immigration-law abolished the dual nature of Belgian policy for labor migrants. All migrants who came to Belgium to engage in wage-labor had to obtain the authorization of the Ministry of Justice. An authorization depended on a labor contract approved by the Ministry of Labor, a medical certificate and a extract from the criminal record of the applicant.

For Poles, Hungarians and Yugoslavians nothing changed, the labor migrants from countries which until then did not have to carry a visa upon immigration were now also subject to the restrictive rules.[[720]](#footnote-721) Two exceptions were made: for French and Luxembourg citizens immigration remained unrestricted. Restrictions on the large number of Belgians working in both countries in retaliation against the treatment inflicted on their citizens, had to be prevented. For the Dutch immigration into Belgium such arguments were not valid. The number of Dutchmen working in Belgium -about 25,000- was about fivefold the number of Belgian labor in the Netherlands.[[721]](#footnote-722) The Dutch authorities hoped to restore free immigration into Belgium by concluding a labor treaty with Belgium. The Belgian authorities were, for obvious reasons opposed to a general treaty. Only a labor treaty limited to the commuters was acceptable for Brussels.[[722]](#footnote-723) Although perspectives for a limited labor treaty were not too dim, unrestricted immigration into Belgium was a lost cause for Dutchmen for the moment and after March 14, 1931 also Dutch labor could be expelled because of illegal immigration.

The overall restrictive immigration policy heralded by the law of December 15, 1930 did not mean that the legal immigration was halted completely. First of all immigration as such was not curtailed by this law. The entry of businessmen, tourists... from countries which did not have to carry a visa remained unrestricted.[[723]](#footnote-724) Secondly not all labor immigration was prohibited. As we mentioned earlier, the regime for the miners was still exceptional. Between January and November 15, 1931 the Ministry of Labor approved still 544 more contracts for undocumented immigrants who were working already in the mines.[[724]](#footnote-725)

The mining companies did not appreciate the state-intervention on the labor market.[[725]](#footnote-726) Certainly in the first half of 1931 they considered the situation in their segment of the labor market to be still tight.[[726]](#footnote-727) Belgian labor who got fired in other industries were not willing to work in the mine industry. Migrants who lost their jobs in other industries were on the contrary eager to accept a job in the mines. This intake assured the needs for unqualified labor.[[727]](#footnote-728)

Especially in the basin of Limburg a shortage of qualified labor persisted. The new legislation made it much more difficult to attract new foreign labor.[[728]](#footnote-729) The regional mine association realized that they would only be able to recruit more labor abroad if they could convince the public authorities that no manpower was available for their mines. All the labor exchange offices were summoned to send labor to the mines in Limburg and in principle all candidates would be accepted.[[729]](#footnote-730) Belgian labor could alleviate the shortage of unskilled labor, but the shortage of qualified miners could certainly not be met. A quota of 500 skilled miners was asked for, preferably accompanied by their families. There was housing available for them in the *cité*.[[730]](#footnote-731) The regional mine association was convinced that the authorities would give in.[[731]](#footnote-732)

A New Partner in the Alien Policy, the Trade Unions

Expulsions and the Halt to the Organization of the Migrants by the Socialist Unions

The crackdown on the Communists meant that the little progres which the Socialist union had made at the end of the 1920s in unionizing migrants was destroyed. Especially in Limburg were the expulsions numerous. The PCB dissuaded its non-Belgian militants from agitating in that basin as an expulsion was sure to follow.[[732]](#footnote-733) The example of active members of the union being expulsed terrorized the migrants' communities. This was enough to diminish the number of migrants in the Socialist union. The union intervened - mostly in vain- to stop the expulsion of what they considered bona fide trade unionists.[[733]](#footnote-734) In 1931 had this union lost most of the gain it had made between 1926 and 1929.[[734]](#footnote-735)

In order to stop, what they called the arbitrary expulsion of immigrants deposed the Socialist MPs in 1929 a bill in Parliament to give the immigrants a possibility of appealing an expulsion decision.[[735]](#footnote-736) The bill was strongly opposed by the Government. Even the Christian Democrats found no reason to restrict the Sûreté from dealing radically with the "subversive" aliens. The powers of the Sûreté were hence not curtailed.[[736]](#footnote-737)

By 1931 the Socialist miners' union was still disorientated by the arrival of thousands of immigrants in the industry. The radical reshaping of the ethnic composition of labor in the mining industry made the Socialist union realize that they were at a turning point. The survival of their miners' union would depend on severing the links with the shrinking numbers of Belgian miners, who were increasingly being concentrated in the supervisory positions. These Belgians should remain the backbone of support for the union. Unionizing the immigrants remained a task for the union. How to address the immigrants in their own language, how to stop the arbitrary expulsions and how to obtain the same benefits of social legislation for them were all questions raised. However no solutions were offered. The need to unionize the immigrants seemed to be agreed on but, just as in 1926, the means of obtaining it did not materialize.[[737]](#footnote-738) It was safer to count on the Belgian miners. As one unionist predicted, to keep the Belgians in the union would not be easy, but it would be probably simpler than to unionize the immigrants:

 "Les ouvriers belges, de plus en plus formeront les cadres de la main-d'oeuvre minière, s'ils sont bien unis, leur force sera très grande; constituant ensemble les bases de la production, on devra compter avec eux. Mais ces cadres pourront avoir des titres de chefs, de dirigeants et la personnel de surveillance a une tendance à suivre le patron dans ses oeuvres de combat. Il se croit obligé d'entrer dans les organisations tendancieuses que crée le patronat. Méfions-nous. Si un jour la majorité des ouvriers mineurs était composée d'étrangers indifférents à l'organisation et l'autre partie de gradés ou prétendus tels soumis au patronat et embrigadés par lui, la situation serait bien grave pour notre corporation...Nous devons penser au danger que nous signalons et tout en essayant de faire l'éducation des ouvriers étrangers qui nous arriveront de plus en plus nombreux, nous devons renforcer chez les mineurs de nationalité belge, l'esprit d'union et d'indépendance."[[738]](#footnote-739)

Also in other industrial sectors were the unions discouraged. The unionization of immigrants was considered impossible:

"Le syndicalisme belge traîne comme un boulet une armée de rebelles à toutes organisations. Les manoeuvres de toutes nationalités: Polonais, Italiens, Sidis, Tchouc-Tchouc constituent les hôtes d'une espèce de tour de Babel industrielle. Cette macédoine humaine n'est guère syndicable."[[739]](#footnote-740)

With the rise of unemployment in most industrial sectors except for mining, the attitude of most of the unions changed towards the immigrants. They did not try to unionize them anymore; rather they urged the employers to dismiss all of the foreigners before they touched Belgian labor.[[740]](#footnote-741)

The Trade Unions and Immigration Policy, 1930-1931

Throughout 1930 the Socialist union insisted to stop any further immigration. This union realized that restrictive measures taken against the immigrants were two-edged. On the one hand it protected national labor against the dangers of "excessive" immigration. On the other hand it made the protection of migrants already in Belgium more difficult. The union had to maneuver between those two interests. Although the interests of national labor were clearly its priority, were they wary not to alienate migrant labor. Only a halt to immigration was demanded.[[741]](#footnote-742)

By the end of 1930 the Christian Democratic union radicalized its policy towards the migrants. This union deemed the interests of migrant labor secondary to those of national labor. A national immigration council composed of representatives of the labor unions, the employers' associations and of the relevent Departments should decide not only about immigration, but also about the hiring of foreigners already residing in Belgium. Labor permits, strictly limited to one profession which would be only valid for six months should be introduced. Every prolongation of the contracts by the Minister of Labor should depend on the consent of the national immigration council.[[742]](#footnote-743)

The response of the trade unions to the Royal Decree of 15 December 1930 was ambiguous. The unions considered that enacting a law that regulated access to the national labor market was an important breakthrough. They criticized, however, the modalities of its implementation. To abolish the unrestricted liberty of employers to recruit labor abroad was only one step, it was necessary that the trade unions also had a voice in the decision-making process:

 "Nous pensons à l'égard de l'immigration que tous ceux qui ont des intérêts dans l'industrie minière doivent pouvoir y dire leur mot, donc non pas seulement l'Etat, ni même l'Etat et les patrons, mais l'Etat, les patrons et les ouvriers...doivent pouvoir y dire leur mot"[[743]](#footnote-744)

When the mining companies in Limburg asked for an authorization to recruit skilled miners from abroad, the miners' trade unions demanded that a government authorization for recruitment be preceded by a discussion in the regional joint mining commission. The Minister of Labor could then make a decision on the base of the advice of this commission. De Voghel, chief of the Cabinet of the Minister of Labor accepted this proposition.[[744]](#footnote-745) The mining companies were furious, the intrusion of the trade unions in this affair was unacceptable.[[745]](#footnote-746)

Although the mining companies had larger plans -they even prepared recruitment in Poland and Czechoslovakia- only at most hundred Hungarian qualified miners were recruited in the summer of 1931.[[746]](#footnote-747) Following this autorization the congres of the Christian Democratic miners' union decided to oppose all immigration until a national immigration council with representatives of the labor organizations regulated immigration.[[747]](#footnote-748) There was no need to uphold this radical stance as the authorities granted few immigration authorizations in the next years.[[748]](#footnote-749)

Unemployment among Belgians Allies the Trade Unions with the State

While most employers had no problem complying with the trade union demand to fire immigrants before dismissing the Belgians, the trade unions complained in the first half of 1932 that in the quarries and the mining industry the employers retained and even hired foreigners while dismissing their Belgian labor.[[749]](#footnote-750) In the mines it became an issue of great contention.

Only in 1932 did the depression cause a serious blow to employment in the mines. In 1931 the problem was limited to the Borinage, but by 1932 the miners in all Walloon basins were strongly affected by the Depression. Although the share of foreigners within the total labor had declined considerably since 1931, Belgian miners were also fired. In any case, full unemployment was limited. Dismissals were only the tip of the iceberg, partial unemployment was widespread among the miners. Belgian and foreign miners were forced to be idle half of the week. That foreigners were thus also kept on the job was strongly resented by the miners.

The unions had to react. The Christian Democratic miners' union demanded the immediate dismissal of all single immigrants. To combat the unemployment in Wallonia this union even proposed that all foreigners be dismissed, even the Flemish in the Walloon basins should be fired. The unemployed Flemish miners could then start working in the basin of Limburg.[[750]](#footnote-751) This radical solution to the unemployment problem in the mining sector - ethnic cleansing in the Walloon mine basins- was supported by the Socialist miners' union in the Borinage. The dismissal of Flemish and foreign miners would create enough vacancies to solve the unemployment problem among the locals.[[751]](#footnote-752) The leadership of the Socialist miners' union rejected efforts to enforce this radical solution to the unemployment of the Belgian miners as it would be a problem to replace the dismissed foreigners. They considered this proposal, even for the Borinage unrealistic. They had serious doubt if the unemployed Walloon miners would agree to do the jobs the immigrants had done. They thought that even the local miners of the Borinage would not be eager to go working in a mine other than the one they were used to, especially as the foreigners in the Borinage worked in the most dangerous mines. They feared that the unemployed Walloon miners would prefer to remain on the dole.[[752]](#footnote-753)

The Socialist miners' union professed also the principled priority of Belgian labor. They were also in favor of a gradual removal of the immigrants all over Belgium and replacing them with unemployed Belgian miners. However, this replacement process had to take into account the willingness and ability of Belgians to replace the immigrants.[[753]](#footnote-754) The employers, in their discussions with the unions, reasoned along similar line. However in pratice they refused to give absolute priority to Belgian labor, as they wanted to retain the "valuable" foreign miners.[[754]](#footnote-755) This hardened the attitude of the Christian Democrats and among the Socialists an anti-foreigner position became more popular as well.[[755]](#footnote-756) Within the Socialists' ranks migrants were increasingly depicted as easy-to-manipulate tools of the employers. These workers who accepted everything that the employers imposed were a danger for the Belgian working class.[[756]](#footnote-757)

The unions got an important ally in their insistence that priority be given for Belgian labor. In order to alleviate the unemployment problem and the expenses it caused for the Belgian treasury De Voghel of the Ministry of Labor urged the employers to fire the immigrants first. He ressented that the public autorities, like the unions, depended on the good-will of the employers. As the alien law had not been changed immigrants who had been in Belgium for 4 months could not be expelled. Even if the employers agreed to dismiss the foreigners the authorities could not enforce their removal from Belgium. De Voghel, however, was confident that the unemployed immigrants would return to their country of origin.[[757]](#footnote-758)

By the summer of 1932 all parties had adapted their position to the realities of the Depression. Both the trade unions and the Ministry of Labor were dedicated to use the immigrants as a first bumper in order to protect Belgian labor against unemployment, but both were powerless. The employers retained complete autonomy in their personnel policy. For them the nationality of a worker was less important and dismissal followed a different pattern. The dismissed manpower was not always of foreign nationality.

The Effects of the Economic and Political Changes on the Migrants in Belgium, 1929-1931

Hotel Personnel; a Category Apart

A first group of migrants to whom we want to pay attention are those highly qualified foreigners who worked in first class hotels. The dynamics of their migration was different from other migratory movements, but the unions also wanted the employment of these foreigners to be subject to state-regulation.

As mentioned earlier, Italy, Germany and France had provided highly qualified manpower to the exclusive Belgian hotels at the seaside during the 19th century. These hotels had partly kept their elitarian character of the Belle Epoque. During the interwar period these first class hotels, the so-called *Palaces,* were only open for about 110 days a year. They had a largely foreign and very wealthy clientele and business was still thriving. They had already started using more qualified Belgian personnel. Germans were no longer desirable, but Italian and French personneltrained in the hotel schools of their countries remained essential for the well functioning of these hotels.

Each summer this personnel left the exclusive hotels in Italy, Switzerland or the French coast to head for the Belgian hotels, just as they had done at the end of the 19th century. The boom in Belgian elitarian tourism in the 1920s meant that this employment pattern served its purposes well. Tentatives to make the Belgian seaside a winter season resort as well failed, hence, there was no need for personnel year round. The managers of the *Palaces* did not deem changes in their personnel policy necessary. The setting up of a hotel school to train Belgian personnel was considered superfluous as the *Palaces* could only provide this personnel seasonal employment.[[758]](#footnote-759)

Foreigners were working in Belgian hotels not only during the summer. The exclusive hotels in Antwerp and Brussels also hired immigrants, their number probably even rose in 1930. The exclusive hotel sector was in crisis all over Europe in that year. With the downward trend in the economy the clientele of these hotels stayed away. The personnel of these hotels, traditionally a highly mobile group, looked for other opportunities. Some qualified hotel personnel was attracted to Antwerp and Brussels from abroad, as they hoped that the festivities to commemorate Belgium's independence a century ago would attract a lot of tourists.

The unions complained about an invasion which threatened the livelihood of their members and undermined the wage levels. There were not only complaints about the competition of immigrants in Brussels and Antwerp; in the summer of 1930, the presence of the traditional seasonal workers in the first class hotels at the seaside was also the focus of complaints. The qualified Belgian hotel personnel had hoped that they would be able to supplement their diminishing incomes with jobs at the seaside. Not only was seaside tourism also slackening off, but the opportunites for Belgians were also very limited because the foreigners who traditionally had worked in those hotels could retain their jobs.[[759]](#footnote-760) While in the 1920s these migrants had attracted no public attention at all, this changed in 1930. In the following years their lot will get an ever increasing amount of attention.

The Occupational Confinement of the Migrants

The increasing unemployment in Belgium created a change in the occupational profile of the migrants. We mentioned above that industrial employment was contracted to the mining sector. This can already be noticed in 1930 when the heterogenous occupational profile of some ethnic groups had to give way to a more one dimensional profile; mining.[[760]](#footnote-761) In the iron and steel industry immigrants were dismissed en masse.[[761]](#footnote-762) In the large public works sector the number of immigrants diminished considerably. Unemployed Belgians replaced them. Only a small number of immigrants were retained. Their flexibility -an asset for the entrepreneurs who had projects all over the country- resulted in their being kept on the job.[[762]](#footnote-763)

Within the mining sector there was also a movement among the immigrants from the Walloon basins towards the still expanding Limburg basin. This movement was due both to the better housing facilities in the basin of Limburg and the creeping unemployment in the Walloon basins at the end of 1930, especially in the vulnerable basin of the Borinage. There were very few dismissals in the Walloon basins until 1932, but a system of partial unemployment was introduced which meant that the wages of labor fell considerably.[[763]](#footnote-764) Few other sectors still attracted immigrants.

The economic downturn caused that agriculture, previously a marginal sector of the labor market, notorious for its long working hours and low wages, could attract migrants. With the onset of the Depression Polish migrants were increasingly occupied in this sector. Domestic service also became an alternative way to earn a living for migrants who were dismissed in the industry.[[764]](#footnote-765)

 Immigration Diminishes, but Re-emigration rises, 1931-1932

In 1930-1931 mining was not the only refuge for undocumented immigrants. These immigrants, whether they had newly immigrated or were immigrants who had not yet regularized their sojourn, could still make a living as farm hands or servants. They could even regularize their sojourn in this way. Between January the first and November 15, 1931 permissions to work were granted not only to migrants working in the mines. In total 3,124 labor contracts were approved by the Ministry of Labor in those 10 months: 544 for the mines and 2,480 contracts for domestic personnel, agrarian labor, fitters and some other specialists. Some of those permissions to work were granted to hotel personnel.[[765]](#footnote-766)

Just as any other labor migrant, in 1931, the Italian *maîtres d'hôtel* or *chefs de rang* needed authorization by the authorities for the first time to do their habitual summer work. The hotels warned their Italian personnel who were working in the winter in Italy, France and Switzerland that they had to apply for permission to work. When the Italians arrived in Belgium in May-June 1931 for the season, not all had done so. Some of them were considered illegal immigrants. The local police ordered them to leave the country. The managers of the Palaces protested, they could not do without these Italians. In the end the Sûreté tolerated all the foreigners working in these hotels for that season. The Sûreté warned that for the season of 1932 all the Italian migrants had to apply before their arrival for autorisation to work.[[766]](#footnote-767) In 1932 the Sûreté permitted a few hundred Italians for the season at the Belgian seaside, notwithstanding the opposition of the unions. The Ministry of Justice considered the skills of these Italians essential for the hotels.

By 1932 unemployment also affected the mines, this meant that mining could no longer be used as a safety net. While living off unemployment benefits was, for Belgians, an alternative to accepting any kind of jobs, only some migrants considered this a viable alternative. The low level of unionization among migrants meant that dismissal in most cases resulted in the loss of any income. Even some of the unemployed unionized migrants were reluctant to sit idly by, waiting for better times to come.[[767]](#footnote-768) They had another alternative, to return to their country of origin.

As stated above, for many migrants, returning to the fatherland was an intrinsic part of the choice to emigrate. Their work abroad would enable them to continue their traditional way of life with a bit more financial leeway, thanks to their savings, when they finally returned to Poland, North Africa or Italy. Now that economic changes made it difficult to find a job -a difficulty reinforced by more restrictive immigration legislation, together with declining wages that made saving illusory- a lot of migrants decided to go back. Recent immigrants who had problems regularizing their sojourn in Belgium and Polish Jews who found it increasing difficult to make a living in the "Jewish economy" were the first to leave.[[768]](#footnote-769) By the end of 1930, and in the course of 1931, the number of returnees increased considerably, especially among those who had left their families in the country of origin.[[769]](#footnote-770) In the first half of 1932 the rise in the number of returnees was spectacular; thousand of migrants -even families- left

Belgium.[[770]](#footnote-771) The lot of the migrants who lacked the financial means to pay for their return trip was especially dramatic. For some, the Consulates stepped in to pay the trip back home, but the Polish consulate in particular, already in 1931, could no longer handle the applications for repatriation.[[771]](#footnote-772) Some tried to return on foot and to earn some money for food on the way back by doing casual work or by begging. In the German border regions they were mostly arrested and sent back to Belgium, where they were put in the vagrant colonies.[[772]](#footnote-773)

The number of foreigners in these colonies increased considerably. Two hundred foreign vagrants were interned in Wortel in February 1931. After a few months -when they had earned 50 francs- they were brought to the border and set free. As few of them had the necessary papers to cross Germany, they mostly remained in Belgium and tried to find a job. As the Belgian authorities wanted to force them to leave the country, they decided to make vagrancy more risky for foreigners. Foreign vagrants were to stay three times longer in the colonies, not 50 but 150 francs had to be earned before they could be released. This money would enable them also to reach more easily another country. The Belgian authorities considered the return to the country of origin as the best solution, hence those migrants with a passport were released as soon as the paper work necessary for a return was concluded.[[773]](#footnote-774) Immigrants who could not prove their nationality because of a lack of papers had great difficulties in obtaining a passport, let alone the necessary transit visa. They mostly had to stay until they had earned 150 francs, in July 1932 this was diminished to 125 francs. This implied, given the regular wage rates at the colonies, nearly a years working.[[774]](#footnote-775) Only then, could these immigrants undertake the risky voyage back home. As they didn't have the necessary papers the return was quite often interrupted by imprisonment and expulsion. Some of these people tried to remain in Belgium. For refugees and stateless persons return was not even an option. For them, the alternative to remaining illegally in Belgium was to live illegally in another country. Hence, a lot of them remained in Belgium to become the clientele par excellence of the Belgian vagrant colonies.

**7.The Repercussions of the Depression on the Immigrants, 1932-1935**

**The Freeze on Immigration, a Failure**

A Selective Lot of Labor Migrants Still Immigrates

The Royal Decree of December 15, 1930 had imposed strict conditions for entry into Belgium on labor immigration, all other immigration (business, tourism, family reunion...) remained unaffected.[[775]](#footnote-776) The labor market took in hardly any legal immigrants after 1930. In 1931, only a few hundred immigrants were granted immigration permits to work in the mines. By 1932 even this possibility ceased.

The recruitment of female labor to work as domestic servants in private houses remained, however, legally possible throughout the following years. For example the Catholic organization *Ligue des Familles nombreuses* recruited about thousand girls in Hungary from 1930 to 1934, while in 1935 another 114 Hungarian girls still managed to obtain an immigration permission.[[776]](#footnote-777) The admission of domestic servants was from August 1932 also depended on an authorization of the Ministry of Labor. These female immigrants were only from then onwards subject to a strict application of the legislation on labor migration (Royal Decree of 15.12.1930). The benevolent attitude of the Belgian authorities towards those female immigrants changed due to rising unemployment.[[777]](#footnote-778)

Also the seasonal immigration of qualified personnel for the first class hotels continued throughout the whole period. In 1933 and 1934 the managers of the coastel hotels were given permission to recruit respectively 215 and 312 aliens, mostly Italians for the summer.[[778]](#footnote-779)

At its inception the law of December 15, 1930 made an exception for citizens of France and Luxemburg. The Dutch, however, fell under the provisions of the law. Just as any other immigrant worker, the Dutch workers who wanted to work in Belgium had to ask for an permission from the Belgian Ministry of Labor before immigrating. Thus Dutch labor could be expelled for illegal immigration. The Belgian-Dutch agreement of February 20, 1933 stipulated in a secret provision that Dutch migrant labor would obtain the authorization to enter Belgium without any problem. Dutchmen still had to apply for the agreement of the Ministry of Labor, but this became a mere formality. Labor migration from the Netherlands was no longer to be restricted.[[779]](#footnote-780) As all other immigrants remained under a strict application of the law, this liberalization was an exceptional measure. This did, however, not last. The liberalization introduced for the Dutch labor migrants was suspended in April 1935. That in 1933 and 1934 about a thousand Dutch workers had immigrated to Belgium was strongly resented by the Belgian authorities. These Dutchmen had only aggravated unemployment in Belgium. A more restrictive attitude was necessary in view of the worsening economic situation. The Dutch were from April 1935 onwards also subject to a restrictive immigration policy.[[780]](#footnote-781) No nationality was any longer exempted from a restrictive immigration policy, except for the citizens of Luxemburg and France.

During the Depression, except for the nationals of some neighboring countries legal immigration to Belgium in search for a job was virtually impossible. In 1932 Belgian border guards refused entrance into Belgium to three times as many aliens (from 2,457 to 7,030) as in 1929. During the following crisis years the border guards refused annually still a few thousands aliens access to Belgium, although the number of individuals denied access never attained the heights of 1932.[[781]](#footnote-782)

Refugees in Search for a Save Haven

In the spring and summer of 1933, immediately after Hitler's ascendance to power, a few thousand Jews as well as an important number of leftist activists fled to Belgium. The arrival of these refugees from Nazi Germany did not pose an immediate challenge to the immigration policy. The authorities were not prepared to make any allowances for them as refugees, treating them purely as any other immigrant.[[782]](#footnote-783) Immediately after the First World War the Germans had been obliged to request a visa before entering Belgium. The selection among those who wanted to leave Germany when Hitler took over power had to be carried out in the Belgian consulates in Germany. The consulates were only allowed to grant when visa when the central authorities felt that "Belgian" interests were being met. The Germans who had immigrated without the proper authorization were to be removed. Only in this way could the flow of refugees be converted into an immigration that would be valuable for Belgium. Orders to leave the country were handed out to these uninvited refugees from Nazi Germany.[[783]](#footnote-784)

The refugees refused to return to Germany. The authorities did not enforce this manu militari. To leave Belgium was however hard pressed for. Many refugees left Belgium moving on to neighboring countries such as France and the Netherlands.[[784]](#footnote-785) This policy of urging the refugees on to other countries soured diplomatic relations. France protested. Already by the end of 1933 Belgium revised its policy, and formulated a refugee policy.

The refugee policy consisted of a two track policy that differentiated between two categories of refugees: the so-called refugees *stricto sensu* and the refugees *sensu lato*. The first category were the political refugees and the second the Jewish refugees. The refugees *stricto sensu*, a limited group of political refugees, were granted semi-official asylum.[[785]](#footnote-786) The Minister of Justice decided upon recommendation from refugee committees which immigrants were refugees *stricto sensu*. The definition of "refugee" was restrictive: only those asylum seekers whose life or freedom was endangered because of their political activities could claim asylum.[[786]](#footnote-787) Communists were excluded from this goodwill measure.[[787]](#footnote-788) The Jewish refugees did not come under consideration for refugee status. The auhtorities considered thtat racist practice and legislation in Nazi Germany "only" undermined their socio-economic position, but their freedom was not endangered. A solution was found in the organized emigration of these Jewish refugees and this with the financial and organizational co-operation of the Belgian Jewish community. The Belgian authorities tolerated temporarily the German Jews in order to enable them to prepare their emigration.[[788]](#footnote-789) They were strictly forbidden to engage in any economic activity.

The Jewish refugees with considerable financial means and/or entrepreneurial assets had received their visa in the summer of 1933. These "useful" immigrants were able to immigrate on the basis of the immigration policy in force. No new facilities had to be created for them. Most of those Jewish refugees were forced to live on their means as their visa-status forbade any economic activity. Those whose entrepreneurial assets were considered valuable to Belgium's economic recovery were of course granted a temporary permission to work as long as they continued to live up to the government's expectations. In this way, the authorities wanted to maintain control of the situation.[[789]](#footnote-790) A change in the alien law was, however, necessary to do so. After four months of legal sojourn in Belgium the alien law in force would grant these legally immigrated aliens full-fledged residency status and controlling them would be then no longer feasible.

The State Arms Itself to Control Immigrants

In June 1933 the Council of Ministers realized that they were unable to expel destitute immigrants who had acquired residency status. The Ministers were struck by the limits placed on the powers of the public authorities in dealing with foreigners by the alien law of 1897. The government was highly irritated that they were unable to remove those "undesirable" aliens. The arrival of thousand of refugees from Nazi Germany added to the awareness among the authorities that a revision of the alien legislation was necessary to retain a minimal hold over the aliens in Belgium.

All immigrants who legally entered Belgium could in principle still apply for a Belgian identity card. These immigrants obtained after four months residency status, unless the Sûreté raised objections to the applicant's sojourn in the country. As mentioned before the Sûreté had already in 1930 implemented a more restricted policy. The immigrants who had to carry a visa were since November 1930 no longer granted an identity card (=residency status) . The administrative practice was only to prolong their visa. As soon as these aliens lost their job, they were ordered to leave the country. The dual nature of the immigration law which was abolished, at least for labor migrants, with the Royal Decree of December 15, 1930 had survived partly in the administrative practice. In the summer of 1932 -the strike in he Borinage only just had started- the Sûreté proposed to refuse all immigrants an identity card, also those who did not have to carry a visa upon immigration.[[790]](#footnote-791)

It is unclear what the result was of this proposition, but the political pressure to develop a more restrictive alien policy due to rising unemployment and amplified by the flood of refugees from Nazi Germany in the spring of 1933 resulted in legislative action. In August 1933 the authorities took a clear-cut decision by introducing a new procedure to acquire residency status.

The Sûreté drafted a bill to remedy the authorities' impotence in dealing with aliens. The bill did not have to pass Parliament since the government presented it as a change in the alien law only aiming at improving the collection of duties from the aliens. By-passing Parliament was possible as the government had full powers to redress the state budget. After the king's approval the bill thus became law on August 13, 1933.[[791]](#footnote-792)

The introduction to this Royal Decree only mentioned that the duties which the aliens had to pay for sojourning in Belgium would be altered. They would no longer be levied at the arrondissement level, but at the municipal level. The municipal authorities would not only register the immigrants, but also handle their application for an identity card, a competence which until then had belonged to the provincial authorities. In order to ensure the cooperation of the municipal authorities one quarter of the duties would be kept by these local authorities. The duties would not only be levied once, at the moment of the delivery of the identity card, but also every two years for the renewal of the card. As the identity card for the Belgian citizens had an infinite validity, this innovation implied the introduction of a new identity card for aliens with limited validity. The Sûreté had proposed already in 1925 the setting up of an distinct administrative procedure for aliens to make their registration more efficient. The Council of Ministers had even accepted this proposal in November 1925, but it took another eight years to implement it. This change in the administration of the Belgian alien population would, according to the government yield an additional income to the national treasury of 10 million francs and enable some personnel cuts at the provincial level.[[792]](#footnote-793)

This law, however, went largely beyond the intentions ascribed to it by its authors. The new law not only altered the administration of the alien population, it also revolutionized the procedure to acquire residency status. Until 1933 immigrants who entered Belgium legally acquired in principle residency status after four months. This was now lengthened indefinitely until the Minister of Justice agreed to issue an identity card for aliens. There was even a special document introduced to cover the period in which the alien waited to obtain his identity card. When an alien entered the country legally and settled in a municipality, he had to register in the aliens' register and obtained a temporary residence permit which covered his sojourn for six months. After three months the alien could also apply for an identity card, the document which granted the alien residency status. The temporary residence permit could be extended number of times and each extension lasted six months. If the Minister of Justice decided that the sojourn of this immigrant was no longer desirable, he had to leave the country.[[793]](#footnote-794)

The Sûreté had tried to obtain these powers since 1928, when the removal of "undesirable" aliens (i.e.Communists) turned out to be difficult to realize. Although the alien bill of June 1930 would have given the Sûreté considerably more powers by denying residency status to most aliens, the Royal Decree of August 13, 1933 “only” postponed the acquisition of residency status by introducing temporary residence permits. This law enlarged, however, considerably the leeway at the disposal of the Minister of Justice in dealing with immigrants. The law did not inflict with the status of the aliens already in Belgium, for them the law only meant an important financial expense every two years.[[794]](#footnote-795) For the aliens who had immigrated after 1930 and had not yet acquired residency status their lot depended on the Ministry of Justice.[[795]](#footnote-796) For in particular the few aliens, especially wealthy German refugees, who immigrated legally after 1932, this law meant that the authorities could order them to leave Belgium at any moment. They were placed on a very long probation.[[796]](#footnote-797)

Continuous Illegal Immigration

The Jewish refugees who had arrived in the spring and summer of 1933 moved on to a definite destination in 1934 and 1935. Most of these refugees were precluded from staying in Belgium. Through the granting of a precarious residence permit and by denying them the possibility to work, the authorities forced them to move on. Very few returned to Germany.[[797]](#footnote-798) Some Jewish refugees who had fled Nazi Germany but were of Polish origin, the Ostjuden, went "back" to a country they hardly knew. Most of the Jewish refugees found a safe haven overseas, in Palestine or in South America.

The authorities tried to discourage further immigration by Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. It was clearly stated that any refugee who after the summer of 1933 immigrated into Belgium with only a tourist visa or illegally would not be tolerated even the time necessary to organize their ultimate emigration.[[798]](#footnote-799) This policy of discouragement did not succeed in checking the flow of refugees. The pressure on Jewish refugees to leave Nazi Germany was too strong and more appealing alternatives were non-existant. In December 1934, by which point another few thousand refugees had immigrated illegally, the Belgian authorities tried again to solve the refugee problem in a repressive way. Police raids tracked the undocumented immigrants and they were ordered to leave the country.[[799]](#footnote-800) They had, however, nowhere to go. The refugee committees insisted on granting the fleeing Jews a temporary sanctuary to enable them to organize their emigration. The lack of an alternative for those refugees meant that these Jews were temporarily tolerated, just as in the autumn of 1933.

Not only refugees tried still to immigrate into Belgium. In particular Polish and Czechoslovakian migrants continued to arrive from France.[[800]](#footnote-801) Most were simply sent back across the border. The few migrants who managed to find their way into Belgium without the necessary authorization were arrested as soon as they became in touch with the authorities and urged to leave the country.[[801]](#footnote-802) Some of them were temporarily retained

in prison after a convicton of *rupture de ban* (see further) or in a vagrant colony because of conviction by a police court because of vagrancy.

Within the Ministry of Justice, the law of August 13, 1933 was soon found to be unsatisfactory. Aliens who entered Belgium illegally according to that law could only be punished with administrative sanctions. This was deemed totally insufficient. The new Administrator of the Sûreté R.de Foy argued that in order to have an efficient control over aliens, prison sentences for aliens who immigrate illegally would be necessary. Only harsh repression was considered to be the solution to the problem of undocumented aliens. Illegal immigration should become a criminally triable offence. Only by making illegal stays in Belgium much more perilous could these aliens be convinced to leave. Most of those undocumented aliens were, according to de Foy, not willing to return to their country of origin. The living conditions in Belgium, even of undocumented aliens were still favorable in comparison to what awaited them in their country of origin.[[802]](#footnote-803)

As mentioned before in some exceptional cases the authorities had recourse to criminal sanctions. The procedure used for the first time in 1878 to expel by Royal Decree undesirable immigrants who had never acquired residency status but who after several administrative decisions of expulsion still returned was still in use. Their subsequent return could be punished by a prison sentence because of *délit de rupture de ban d’expulsion*.[[803]](#footnote-804) Other undocumented aliens, due to their extremely difficult living conditions were prone to any kind of law violations. A lof of them were convicted for minor offences (petty crime, unauthorized working, vagrancy, not paying of fines, ...). After serving their prison sentence, they received an order to leave the country and mostly were brought to the border. However, even these undocumented immigrants who had spent some time in jail, mostly remained in Belgium.[[804]](#footnote-805) Most of those immigrants were of Central European origin and following the Belgian-German agreement of 1926, they could not be forced over the Belgian-German border without prior consent of the German authorities. As most of these immigrants had not the means to pay the trainfare back to their country of origin, the cumbersome procedure to obtain a transit visa was not even considered. These Central Europeans were brought to the train station of Verviers and ordered to leave the country. Even if they wanted to return to their country of origin, most were not able to do so. The German authorities sent back to Belgium all Central Europeans lacking a passport and a transit visum. Most of the expelled immigrants thus remained illegally in Belgium.[[805]](#footnote-806) As soon as the immigrants were again involved with the Belgian authorities, they were arrested. This implied a new detention or at least a forced sojourn in a vagrant colony, with another expulsion order after serving out their term.[[806]](#footnote-807) The carousel could start all over.

Even if these undocumented immigrants remained at large, their lot was unenviable. There were in 1935, according to Kopel Liberman -the most knowledgeable contemporary observer of the Jewish migrant community- a few hundred Jewish migrants living illegally in Belgium. These undocumented aliens were employed in the most marginal sections of the labor market which, because of their unhealthy, repulsive and exhausting working conditions and even lower pay did not appeal even to other immigrant labor, let alone local labor.[[807]](#footnote-808) Others were employed in more mainstream sectors, but all of them were mercilessly exploited by their employers.[[808]](#footnote-809) De Foy was right in his assessment that these undocumented immigrants "preferred" to stay in Belgium rather than return to their country of origin. This statement must, however, be qualified. Among those undocumented immigrants were refugees and stateless persons for whom no return was possible. Others had left their country of origin so long ago that they had no longer any attachment to those lands.[[809]](#footnote-810) Others had not the means to go back. All of them endured their hard lot as undocumented aliens in hope of better times.

**The Immigrants of the 1920s in Trouble**

Actions against Criminal and “Subversive” Aliens

The repression against politically active immigrants reached its pinnacle during the Depression years. The Sûreté resented the fact that the alien bill of June 1930 was never voted on by Parliament. This bill would have definitely done away with the alien law of 1897 which restricted the leeway the public authorities had at their disposal in dealing with "undesirable" aliens.[[810]](#footnote-811) Now the Sûreté still had to work with the restrictive powers which the law of 1897 granted the public authorities. Those restrictive powers were used in these years to their full extent. The number of migrants with residency status expelled for political reasons continued to be high until 1934.[[811]](#footnote-812)

During the general strike of 1932 hundreds of immigrants were expelled. As we will see further the Communist organizations among the immigrants in the basins of Wallonia were dismantled. A few months later, in January 1933 there was a raid on a meeting of the International Red Aid organized by the Jewish Communists in Brussels. This resulted in the collective expulsion of 98 Jewish immigrants, Communists and their sympathizers.[[812]](#footnote-813) These were only the most spectacular events; the expulsion of aliens because of political reasons continued on a regular basis throughout these years.

Due to the fierce repression the Communists organized only very few immigrants during these years.[[813]](#footnote-814) This does not imply that Communism had no influence in the immigrants' communities, the Communist internationalist and radical program of these years must have been potentially appealing to the immigrants. The Communist party professed an integral internationalism. No distinctions were to be made between workers on the basis of nationality. Just like their Belgian colleagues were immigrants workers and both had to struggle for their rights.[[814]](#footnote-815) The fact that the Communists called the Socialists social-fascists was probably a more than acceptable label for the immigrants. Indeed, during those years it were the unions who asked for the immigrants' removal. Only in 1935 it will turn out that the Communists had kept a following within the migrants' communities.

In 1934, notwithstanding that repression had strongly subdued the political activities of migrants, the number of aliens expelled because of political reasons remained at a high level. When after the expulsion of 52 Croatian nationalists in October 1934 diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia improved considerably the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar urged the Sûreté to be even more severe. Jaspar insisted that any alien who was a member of a political organization, even if the alien did not commit any precise subversive act, should be expelled.[[815]](#footnote-816)

Not only aliens who disturbed public order or exacerbated the diplomatic relations with friendly countries, but all aliens who committed a crime -however minor - were ordered to leave the country. Independent of their length of sojourn in Belgium or whether they had a place to return to ( even Russian "refugees" were expelled) at least a thousand aliens residing legally in Belgium were ordered every year to leave the country.[[816]](#footnote-817)

Given the commitment of the whole government to accord the Sûreté all the leeway it needed to expel "undesirable" aliens, the authorities were hindered by the liberal alien law of 1897. The most irritating impediment to an efficient expulsion policy was that no legal action could be taken against those expelled aliens who stayed in the country. Only if an alien who had been expelled by Royal Decree returned to the country, it was considered an infraction of the law. The prosecutor then had the power to demand a prison sentence up to six months for *rupture de ban d’expulsion*. A specific group of undocumented immigrants, expelled immigrants who had never left the country, could not be imprisoned for the mere fact of illegal sojourn.[[817]](#footnote-818)

In 1933 the Minister of Justice P.E. Janson introduced a bill to change the alien law of 1897, enabling the authorities to proceed against all expelled aliens who were still in the country.[[818]](#footnote-819) The Communist, as well as the Socialist MPs, refused this bill on the grounds that the Sûreté should be subject to some kind of control.[[819]](#footnote-820) The bill was defeated in Parliament.[[820]](#footnote-821) This defeat was strongly resented by the government since it considered an extension of its powers to be necessary to deal with "undesirable" aliens.[[821]](#footnote-822)

The promoters of an offensive against subversive aliens could not implement any legislative changes in alien legislation , but in nationality law they were more succesful. The fact that a number of foreign Communists were able to protect themselves against expulsion by acquiring Belgian nationality or the status of priviledged alien stirred up bad feelings among the authorities. The authorites alleged that the Communists used the acquisition of Belgian nationality as part of a deliberate strategy to protect themselves against expulsion. During the strike of the summer of 1932 this theme came very strong to o the fore. The conservative press fulminated against the Communists of foreign origin who had acquired Belgian nationality and against whom the Surêté stood powerless. The articles insisted that an amendment to the law was becoming urgent in order to make an end of these abuses. To revoke nationality and to put an end to the safeguards built into the alien law of 1897 were praised as solutions.[[822]](#footnote-823) This appeal was not without conseqences. The legislative, but also the judiciairy branch of the state took initiatives against the so-called Communist threat to the national unity.

While the courts in the 20's apparently had scarcely exercised their veto power over option applicants, in the 30's they made steady use of their right to turn down options for Belgian nationality. Communism had to be stopped. In 1931 the *Tribunal de première instance* in Antwerp turned down the option application of Israël Akkerman, a Pole born in Belgium and a militant Communist “because he had provided insufficient evidence of his attachment to the country and the Belgian people.” The option application of the Italian Communist, Jacques Grippa, was also turned down by the *Tribunal de première instance*in Liège for analogous reasons. Jaques Grippa appealed against this ruling and received settlement in court. He became Belgian. Israël Akkerman’s appeal was less sucsessful. On July 9, 1934 the Brussels Court of Appeals aggreed with the *Tribunal de première instance* that membership of the PCB was seen as a shortcoming in the duties of the Belgian citizen.[[823]](#footnote-824)

The legislative power was in sync with the judicial power, being Communist and Belgian was seen as incompatible. The government introduced a bill in 1934 to revoke the Belgian nationality from Belgians of foreign origin who were seriouslyremissin their duties as Belgian citizens. In the explanatory memorandum the government pointed to Nazi activists - Belgians in the Eastern cantons - and to the Communists - Belgians of Russian origin who had acquired Belgian nationality by marrying a Belgian woman - as candidates for denationalization. The government stated that the bill was inspired by the law of January 13, 1920 which made the revoking of nationality due to collaboration with the occupying forces from persons who had become Belgian either by option or naturalization possible. Now, in peacetime national unity was also being threatened by agents from foreign powers. In analogy with the law of 1920, the judicial power was to pass judgement on these cases and this on the initiative of the Public Prosecutor. This meant that to revoke nationality did not take place via the normal legal procedure. After all a descision had to be made quickly. In order to keep the procedure short the ruling would be made by the Court of Appeals directly.[[824]](#footnote-825)

The immediate cause for this bill was incidents with Nazi activists in Eupen-Malmédy. Minister of Justice Bovesse also referred to these agitators when he justified his bill: “ Il nous faut une action rapide, car ces gens nous narguent et nous menacent, tandis que le pays court des risques...Notre respect total et jalous de liberté d’opinion, qui permet en Belgique et, par conséquent, dans des cantons rédimés, de dire n’importe quoi est considéré là-bas, par certains, comme une signe de faiblesse.” In fact “Left Extremism” was also an important target of the government, if not the main one. This impression was strengthened by the judgement of the Court of Appeals - the court that was to revoke nationality - in the case of Israël Akkerman precisely at the moment that Parliament was deliberating upon this bill. The Socialists and Communists opposed this regulation. They thought that there should not be any special rules for “new” Belgians, the normal arsenal of repressive laws was sufficient for punishing impermissable acts. The principles of the Constitutional State had to be respected. The introduction of a category of second class Belgians should be prevented. All Belgians should be equal before the law. In spite of left opposition this bill did become law.[[825]](#footnote-826) Belgians by option or by naturalization could have this status invalidated if they were found seriously remiss in their duties as Belgian citizens. [[826]](#footnote-827)

The call for extended discretionary powers over the aliens, because of political reasons, disappeared when the Government Van Zeeland took office. The new Minister of Justice, the Socialist E.Soudan, made much less use of the possibility of expelling "subversive" aliens. Aliens committing offenses -however minor- were still expelled. In his dealing with "subversive" immigrants Soudan returned to the policy of the early 1920s: membership of political organizations was not forbidden; immigrants could even attend political meetings but political propaganda remained strictly forbidden. If the immigrant did not respect the conditions of Belgian hospitality he would be expelled.[[827]](#footnote-828) Expulsion of "subversives" continued, but the numbers involved declined considerably and only some Communist militants were targeted.[[828]](#footnote-829)

The number of immigrants organized by the Communist party increased quickly.[[829]](#footnote-830) A few months after the abatting of the repression against foreign Communists, in August 1935, the popular front policy was adopted by the international Communist movement. This was a radical change in strategy. The Socialists were again considered partners in the struggle.[[830]](#footnote-831) A few months later the Communist union, the *Central Révolutionaire des Mineurs* disbanded and all Communist immigrants had to join the Socialist unions. In the fall of 1936 Polish propaganda sections within the Socialist unions were set up in Charleroi and Brussels and one miners' section in Cheratte.[[831]](#footnote-832) Italian union sections were founded in the same months in La Louvière, Anderlecht and Thieu.[[832]](#footnote-833)

The Socialist Minister of Justice E.Soudan also investigated the possibility of installing an appeal procedure for expelled immigrants. Since the Socialists had been forced into the opposition they had asked for a procedure to check the discretionary powers of the Sûreté. Now the time had come to make sure that only aliens who were a real threat to public order would be expelled. The Administrator of the Sûreté R.de Foy was strongly opposed to such a measure. He argued that the Sûreté would no longer be able to work with informers. These informers were especially necessary for information on politically dangerous aliens. An appeal procedure would force the Sûreté to divulge its sources of information. Also this procedure would make it impossible to take the brisk actions that were needed to safeguard public order.[[833]](#footnote-834) These arguments seemed to convince the Minister of Justice, E.Soudan. He did not install an appeal procedure for expelled aliens.

 A Political Offensive against the Immigrants, 1932-1935

The economic downturn caused real hardship among the immigrants of the 1920s. It brought about a considerable change in the occupational pattern of foreign labor. The trend towards the impoverishment of the socio-professional structure which we analyzed in the period 1930-1931 was intensified in the following years. Mining retained an ever larger share of the foreign manpower, while domestic services nearly monopolized foreign womenpower. There were however some exceptions. In the hotel sector aliens remained among the most qualified and best paid personnel. This was certainly the case in the summer, but even outside the tourist season some of these aliens were employed in the hotels.[[834]](#footnote-835)

Agriculture still employed a small number of foreign farm hands.[[835]](#footnote-836) In some industrial sectors immigrants retained their jobs. In the stone industry Italians retained a strong presence- the number of Italian stone cutters decreased by about a third between 1930 and 1934. While most of the unqualified workers was fired, qualified foreign personnel kept their jobs in this industry.[[836]](#footnote-837)

In the other industrial sectors immigrants were mostly the first to be fired. The chemical and glass industry noted a spectacular fall in foreign labor: two thirds of the foreign labor were dismissed. A lot of Slavs and Italians lost their jobs.[[837]](#footnote-838) The iron and steel industry fired their foreign labor en masse. The chemical industry, the iron and steel industry retained only a few thousand immigrants on their payrolls.[[838]](#footnote-839) In contrast to the 1920s, most of the immigrants working in heavy industry had been joined by their spouses and children. In construction this was not the case. Construction retained only very few of the immigrants who had been recruited at the end of the 1920s. The contractors of large public works in particular continued to use a number of migrants. These immigrants were mostly single and of Italian or (to a much lesser extent) of Yugoslavian nationality.[[839]](#footnote-840)

Another group of migrants who had found a livelihood outside mining in the 1920s, the Jewish immigrants, were hard hit by the Depression. During the Depression the fortune of all the industries in Antwerp and Brussels where thousand of Jewish migrants had been making a living in the 1920s was very similar. arket for the moroccan leather industry collapsed like a souffle. The larger businesses were the principal victims of the crisis.[[840]](#footnote-841) The few Jewish businesses which managed to hold their own in this sector sold their work out to leather workers who were prepared to work at home on a commission basis.[[841]](#footnote-842) The bulk of the Jewish migrants who had worked in this industry in the twenties became either outworkers or had to search for a new livelihood during the Depression. The diamond sector which by 1930 was already in decline, was extremely hard hit by the Depression.[[842]](#footnote-843) The Depression meant here the demise of all large production units, whereby the number of outworkers grew. Also the demand in the fur industry declined sharply in these years. This meant that the Jewish migrants were no longer necessary, since the traditional furriers could answer the demand in the workshops without difficulty.

Many Jewish immigrants found themselves in an uneviable situation during the Depression. While they had been able to integrate themselves into the market during the twenties, by their conquest of or grafting into these half-industrial sectors, we see that in the Depression these sectors received a heavy blow. The mercurial character of the demand for morocco leather bags, fur products, women hats and diamonds became obvious in a dramatic way. Some Jewish immigrants in these sectors in search for a solution to the increasing difficulty to earn a living succeeded in conquering new markets. The Jewish entrepreneurs made a name for themselves in lower quality furs. They specialized in working with inexpensive rabbit fur.[[843]](#footnote-844) Until the end of the twenties rabbit skins received only a first treatment in Belgium, after which they were exported to Great Britain for the finishing work whereby they were made into felt hats.[[844]](#footnote-845) During the thirties the Jewish entrepreneurs performed finishing work in Belgium.[[845]](#footnote-846)

Survival for the immigrants in all these sectors was only possible by means of widespread self-exploitation in small, extremely flexible production units. The independent outworker, with all that this implied for the worsening of labor conditions, played an increasingly central role in this sector during the depression years.

For the few thousand of those Jewish immigrants who became unemployed but were unionized the dole offered an alternative to outwork. The unemployment rate among these unionized migrants ran high.[[846]](#footnote-847) In general only a minority of foreign labor was unionized. Once dismissed these foreign union members received unemployment benefits.[[847]](#footnote-848) For some of them the benefits equalled those paid to the Belgians. Some unlucky nationalities (the Italians, the Russian refugees..) received much lower unemployment relief because there was no reciprocity agreement with their country of origin. Those immigrants who were not unionized received nothing at all. They were dependent on charity, welfare and occasional jobs.[[848]](#footnote-849)

Thousands of immigrants had already returned -mostly voluntary, some forced- to their country of origin by 1933. In 1932 the number of returnees had increased considerably. By 1933 most aliens still in the country had decided to stay despite the continuing economic downturn. The number of returnees dropped from 1933 onwards.[[849]](#footnote-850) Given the persistent high rate of unemployment among Belgian workers the aliens' lasting presence became a focal point of attention during the years 1932-1935. In this following section we will look into the general situation. Later we will focus on the particular situation in the mine industry.

The Government Excludes Immigrants from Unemployment Insurance

The Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman was in favor of the expulsion of immigrants in order to replace them with Belgian labor. He argued that it would not only assure work for Belgians, but also diminish unemployment expenditures.[[850]](#footnote-851) His opinion was however an isolated one within the government.

In 1933 the authorities refrained from any intervention in the personnel policy of the employers. Curtailing the employers' autonomy in deciding who to hire was not deemed necessary. Foreign labor was of little concern to the Government. Their number was limited and in addition they were considered essential for the economy as they did those jobs in heavy industry which local labor shunned. Intervening on the labor market to remove foreign labor was not considered appropriate. It would not reduce the unemployment of the Belgians. In addition protectionist measures on the labor market could have negative repercussions for Belgian labor working abroad. The government argued that it was too delicate to try to diminish unemployment in this manner.[[851]](#footnote-852) It was not a matter of legal possibilities, even the immigrants who had not yet acquired residency status were not threatened. As long as they had a job they could stay in Belgium.[[852]](#footnote-853)

While the government had no intention of curtailing the right of immigrants to work, the fact that these immigrants were entitled to receive unemployment benefits was considered unnecessarily generous. Indeed, aliens could join an unemployment fund without any restriction. Benefits equal to the Belgians depended on a reciprocity agreement. Belgium had reached bilateral agreements with most emigration countries. As a result most immigrants could receive full-fledged unemployment benefits.

The Minister of Finance H.Jaspar considered that immigrants should not be entitled for full-fledged unemployment benefits. This "generosity" was contrary to "Belgian interests". It entailed a considerable expense for the Belgian treasury which, according to Jaspar, in no way matched the expenses of those emigration countries for Belgian citizens. Although these agreements were reached on the basis of reciprocity, there was, he argued, no question of reciprocity either in the number or importance of the beneficiaries or in the level of the unemployment benefits. Minister of Finance H.Jaspar insisted on breaking radically with this practice and the Council of Ministers put up no resistance to his proposal to deny aliens unemployment benefits.[[853]](#footnote-854) The Royal Decree of May 31, 1933 denied aliens the right to join an unemployment fund.[[854]](#footnote-855) The Polish embassy alleged that this law violated article 3 of the international agreement on unemployment insurance of 28.11.1919 which stated that citizens of the participating states residing abroad would receive the same unemployment benefits as the citizens of the country in which they lived. Both Belgium and Poland had ratified this agreement. The Belgian authorities conceded that the law had to be adapted. The Convention of 1919 had to be respected. The Belgian authorities looked for means, within the framework of the Convention of 1919 to limit the unemployment benefits for Polish immigrants. The rights of the Polish workers in Belgium may be only platonic, as long as the international obligations were respected. Finally all countries which signed the convention of 1919 were invited to sign an bilateral agreement which would enable their citizens to become member of the Belgian unemployment funds and to receive the insurance premium of their own contributions, they were however exluded from any state subsidy which by then repersented the bulk of the unemployment benefits. Only Switzerland deemed it interesting to reach such an agreement. In addition exemptions were made for the French (including Algerians), Dutch and Luxemburgers. They retained the right to insure themselves against unemployment and obtained the same benefits as the Belgians.[[855]](#footnote-856)

The exclusion of immigrant labor from unemployment insurance was contested by the trade unions. The Socialist union strongly opposed the measure. Numerous immigrants, the Socialists argued, had lived in Belgium a long time and had contributed to the unemployment funds so they should be eligible for unemployment benefits too. Refusing them those benefits was not only unjust, it would also negatively influence the working conditions of Belgian labor as immigrants would be forced to accept any work conditions in order to earn a subsistence income. The Garment Workers' Union predicted that if the immigrants had no defence at all against the dictates of the employers the result would be that "the employers will throw themselves as hyenas on the hungry aliens who they will play off even more shamelessly against the benign Belgian workers."[[856]](#footnote-857)

The Christian Democratic Union also voiced opposition to the measure.[[857]](#footnote-858) Its miners' union in particular demanded to protest strongly. J.Van Buggenhout, the president of this union, argued that excluding immigrants from unemployment insurance was for this union "a matter of life and death. The immigrants are so numerous in the mine industry and we can not accept that the recruitment (for the union=F.C.) in Limburg has been virtually stopped...As long as they are in Belgium it is reasonable that they should be able to live, even if they do not have a job. We do not want the employers to use them as machines to press on the wages."[[858]](#footnote-859) The protest of the Christian Democratic union was to no avail. The government did not take seriously the protest of the CSC even though its political allies were in the government. The exclusion of aliens was considered the easiest way to diminish unemployment expenditures.[[859]](#footnote-860)

The miners' union, Socialist and Christian Democratic alike felt the backlash of this measure quickly. Most of the aliens left the unions.[[860]](#footnote-861) In other industries such as the garment and leather industry where a large number of immigrants worked, most of them also left the unions.[[861]](#footnote-862)

Nationality legislation raised the threshold

The agitation against the presence of aliens on the labor market and in trade caused immany migrants to find it advisable to apply for Belgian nationality. This would make them able to put their livelihood in a secure position.[[862]](#footnote-863) Others hoped in this manner to enjoy the full advantages of the Belgian social state. It was the only possibility of obtaining a pension of any worth. Unemployment benefits for immigrants, certainly after 1933, were only obtainable in this way. Towards the end of 1931 more than two thousand requests for naturalization had to be processed, 1,669 requests for ordinary naturalization and 533 for the *grande naturalization*.[[863]](#footnote-864)

The Minister of Justice, P.E. Janson, spoke of a flood of applications. A multitude of applicants who, in his opinion, hardly “ had shown evidence of assimilation”. They had only applied for naturalization “ with the wholly personal intention of enjoying the advantages of the welfare state which were reserved for Belgians.” The criticism that the conditions for applying for naturalization were too lax was motivated by the desire to continue to exclude immigrants from certain provisions of the social state. The authorities, by a tightening of the naturalization procedure would be able to bring about lasting savings.[[864]](#footnote-865) In May 1931, Minister of Justice, P.E. Janson, brought forward a bill to enforce a “strict selection procedure” among aspiring Belgians. His bill called for a twenty-year period of residence for the *grande naturalization* and a period of fifteen years for ordinary naturalization. The bill was somewhat toned down in Parliament, a ten or fifteen-year period of residence was required, respectively, for ordinary or *grande naturalization*. The Socialist (and the Communist) MPS were the only ones to vote against this bill.[[865]](#footnote-866) This tightening of the criteria for naturalization made it impossible for thousands of immigrants who had settled in Belgium in the twenties to apply for Belgian nationality. The old obstacles, moreover, continued to characterize the procedure: an application remained expensive and review of an application dragged on extremely long and decisions remained arbitrary.

The Lot of Immigrants Deteriorates, 1934-1935

The deterioration of the living conditions of the aliens after that they were cut off the dole in 1933 did not increase the departure of immigrants to their countries of origin. The alien population stabilized by 1933. The massive return movement in 1931 and 1932 was halted. Only a few hundred immigrants decided to return home in 1934 and 1935. [[866]](#footnote-867)

The few thousand immigrants, especially Poles and Czechoslovakians, who had still obtained unemployment relief in 1933and remained in the country were forced to find another source of income in 1934. [[867]](#footnote-868) Of the migrants who had arrived en masse in the 1920s only the Algerians could still count on unemployment benefits when they were dismissed.[[868]](#footnote-869) All the other nationalities were excluded. Applying for welfare was a possibility. Municipal discretion and the very low benefits meant that this was not an easy solution. The Jewish migrants who had earned a living as diamond workers, leather workers or industrial laborers in the 1920s were a case apart. Once dismissed or without outwork, they were now also excluded from unemployment insurance, but they could find a new source of income for themselves.These migrants living in Brussels and Antwerp flocked to the distribution part of the "Jewish" economy for an alternative livelihood. The "Jewish" economy offered, through kinship and ethnic contacts, a means of survival for these migrants.[[869]](#footnote-870) It was the vending trade, along with the household industry, that offered an opening for Jewish migrants during the economic depression. In 1935, at the nadir of the crisis, at least 2,500 Jewish migrant were peddlers.[[870]](#footnote-871) The bulk concerned were Polish Jews. Nearly 2,000 Polish migrants were peddling during the Depression. Along with these Poles a few hundred Russian Jews, together with tens of Czechoslovakian Jews, found a livelihood in this trade sector. The great majority of these Jewish peddlers had arrived in Belgium after 1926, of whom more than half entered after 1928.[[871]](#footnote-872) It was precisely those recent migrants who had been hit extremely hard by the depression. The vending trade was their last resort. Outwork and peddling offered the Jewish migrant a means of survival during those years. The Jewish migrants did not get rich, on the contrary, most could hardly make ends meet. Kopel Liberman, the most knowledgeable contemporary observer of the Jewish migrant community, wrote during those years: "La situation économique des Juifs est mauvaise. Un grand nombre d'entre-eux ne peuvent nouer les deux bouts. La misère règne en maître souverain dans les quartiers juifs."[[872]](#footnote-873)

Non-Jewish migrants who became unemployed were not able to make use of the economic structures of the "Jewish" economy. If no Belgian employers wanted to engage them there was nothing left for them to do, but go back to their country of origin. Most employers had no need to hire foreign labor. The situation in heavy industry stabilized. The quarries kept several hundred Italian stonecutters. The chemical, glass and metallurgic industry had already made drastic cuts in their foreign personnel and the livelihood of the few who had been kept on the job seemed not to be threatened.[[873]](#footnote-874) Belgium offered other options, albeit not very attractive. Only the very lowest rung of the occupational ladder was still accessible for migrants. Women could still find jobs as domestic servants. The wives and daughters of fired immigrant workers, as well as female refugees from Nazi-Germany could earn an income, albeit minimal, in this way.[[874]](#footnote-875) Also the mines continued to offer some job-opportunities.[[875]](#footnote-876)

The Trade Unions Change to a Xenophobic Course

Until 1933 the Socialist trade union insisted that the employers fired first all their foreign labor before they touched Belgian workers. In particular in the few sectors where unqualified aliens were retained on the job, the unions insisted to remove them all. The union argued that these immigrants could be easily replaced with unemployed Belgians. It was however not the official policy of this union to demand the dismissal of all immigrants to give unemployed Belgians a job. The Socialist union did point out the negative influence which the immigrants exercised on working conditions, however not so much their removal but their unionization was considered the solution.[[876]](#footnote-877) The Christian Democratic union was very much on the same wavelength, although its attacks against the immigrants seem to be more virulent.[[877]](#footnote-878) In any case the number of immigrants was diminishing considerably, either by dismissal or by voluntary departure.

In 1934 the unions' policy seem to radicalize. The deeping depression, but also the exclusion of immigrants from unemployment insurance and the resulting departure of the immigrants from the unions meant that the unions more and more complained about the very bad working conditions and the low wages that the immigrants accepted. The Socialist and Christian Democratic unions alike denounced increasingly the use of immigrants as strikebreakers.[[878]](#footnote-879) The unions called for government intervention. The hiring of immigrants had to be regulated, the autonomy of the employers had to be curtailed.[[879]](#footnote-880) Another means proposed by the union to halt the negative influence of immigrants on working conditions was to expel destitute immigrants.[[880]](#footnote-881) By the end of 1934 both unions advocated a gradual removal of migrant labor in order to alleviate unemployment among Belgian labor.[[881]](#footnote-882)

By 1934 the unions totally neglected the interests of the migrants. Lazzarelli, the secretary of the Italian socialists in exile in Belgium in private expressed his *"disgusto per l'attitudine dei compagni belgi"* and wrote that in the campaign against the immigrants "*i massimi responsabili* (were) *il POB e la CS*".[[882]](#footnote-883) If the opinion of Lazzarelli, political close to the Belgian Socialists, about Belgian Socialism was already that negative, it is no wonder that the labor migrants were completely alienated from the trade union.

However, the miners' unions still organized some immigrants. After 1933, few aliens had material advantages to cause them to adhere to the union, since only some nationalities (the Dutch and the French, including the Algerians) were still eligible to receive unemployment benefits. In 1934 1,602 foreigners -8% of the foreign miners- were member of the Socialist miners' union.[[883]](#footnote-884)

A.Delattre, the president of the Socialist miners' union saw in the long run the danger of this low unionization among the immigrants. He realized that immigrants responded to a structural need of the mining industry because Belgians were no longer interested in working in the mines. Aliens would remain a part of the labor force of the mining industry and upon the revival of the economy their numbers would again increase. The fact that they were not organized by the Socialist miners' union was an important mortgage for the future of this union.[[884]](#footnote-885)

The xenophobic discourse of the unions doomed any campaign to unionize the immigrants to certain failure. The contradiction between the union's protectionist policy and their rarely proclaimed solidarity with the migrants was too manifest.

In the hotel sector the unions' xenophobia was especially virulent. Both unions proposed to remove all aliens who were less than 5 years in Belgium. So all the immigrants who had immigrated after May 1929 should be fired.[[885]](#footnote-886) The Christian Democratic union was in this sector especially virulent in its attacks on foreign hotel personnel. Even the highly qualified aliens who still were called every summer to the first class coastel hotels were strongly criticized:

 "Cette nuée périodique d'employés migrateurs qui viennent s'abattre aux beaux jours sur les bons emplois comme les sauturelles sur un champ de maïs mûr et qui s'en vont, la poche garnie avec les derniers rayons d'un soleil pâlissant."[[886]](#footnote-887)

The exceptional virulent attack by the unions in the hotel sector was probably not due to the increase of immigrants in this sector during the Depression.[[887]](#footnote-888) What was more important were the organizations of Belgian hotel personnel independent of the union. The agitation of these small single issued professional groups such as the *Association Nationale des Employés de l'Industrie Hôtelière*, the *Centrale des Fédérations des Ouvriers de l'Industrie Hôtelière* and *L'Union professionele belge des garçons, restaurateurs...le Prévoyante* was directed mainly, so not exclusively against the aliens who took the best jobs in the hotel sector. Qualified Belgian hotel personnel demanded in this way priority for themselves.[[888]](#footnote-889) They formulated this demand in a nationalistic discourse; it was a national schame that the hotels employed for the top functions only aliens. Belgians were certainly qualified enough to replace them.[[889]](#footnote-890)

The reaction of the authorities to these complaints about the abusive employment of foreign labor was limited. The Sûreté investigated some of them, whereby they first looked in the legal status of those immigrants, if the foreigner had already acquired residency status no further action was taken. The situation of the few immigrants with only a temporary residence permit was further investigated and it is likely that sometimes they were ordered to leave the country.[[890]](#footnote-891)

Belgian Commerce Considers the "Jewish" Economy a Threat[[891]](#footnote-892)

In the nationalistic plea of the first crisis years all aliens were treated alike and the presence of Polish miners, leather workers or merchants were all seen as excessive in a time of economic difficulties. The fact that some migrants happened to be Jews was not relevant, the agitation was directed at the general category of aliens.[[892]](#footnote-893) This agitation was, however, much more virulent when the presence of aliens outside heavy industry came up for discussion. The presence of migrants in artisanal sectors, in which many Jewish migrants were outworkers or were employers, was the target of strong criticism. The hostility against this foreign intrusion was argued in the following manner: These migrants took work away not only from the Belgian workers but, as employers, they also decided over the fate of these sectors, with disastrous results. From 1930 onwards, the sectors in which aliens had influence declined steadily. The Jewish migrants were blamed for this deterioration. They had disrupted the market with the introduction of inexpensive goods of lesser quality. In this way they strangled these sectors.[[893]](#footnote-894) Not only did the migrants push the Belgian competition off the market by small profit margins and starvation wages, but they also did not refrain from dishonest business practices (such as tax evasion, selling of stolen goods, disregard for social legislation).[[894]](#footnote-895) The aliens monopolized not only production, but also distribution. These sectors were conquered systematically by an actual foreign Mafia.[[895]](#footnote-896) The accusations against the migrants active in the distribution of these goods were similar as those mentioned before.

Also in trade Belgians were cheated out of their daily living by dishonest practices of these immigrants. These foreign merchants distinguished themselves by dubious trade practices against which the local merchants had no protection. The aliens sold their goods mostly at the markets or by selling door-to-door, a trade sector in which it was very easy to cheat.[[896]](#footnote-897) The authorities were notified in order to call this crushing competition to a halt.

 "Ces ouvriers marrons et les marchands étrangers sans scrupule ont développé leurs affaires en ces derniéres années et se sont multipliés étonnament en nombre ..ils effectuent leurs operations partout, sur tous les marchés, au grand jour et sans aucune entrave. ..ils font la concurrence (to the Belgian commerce)...jusque sur leurs trottoirs, jusque devant leur portes. D'autres plus audacieux et plus néfastes encore ne se bornent pas à écumer les marchés: ils viennent aussi sonner de maison en maison pour obliger en quelque sorte vos habitants à acheter leur camelote...Le commerce locale, jadis si florissante...est dans le marasme: il s'est déplacé au profit de détrousseurs."[[897]](#footnote-898)

The agitation against "the foreign Mafia" was limited to that of a number of professional groups, which sought protection against the severe blows that they had to bear during the crisis years. The Belgian market vendors and peddlers were irritated by the presence of aliens on "their markets" and demanded that they leave.[[898]](#footnote-899) Established merchants in particular stated obstinately that they were powerless against the ruthless competition of the Jewish market vendors and peddlers. The agitation that these Belgian circles provoked was linked with the weak structure of Belgian small trade. The market vendors and peddlers who tried to enlarge their share of the market by lower prices affected the already feeble position of the Belgian retailers.

The criticism of the established merchants on the foreign salesmen fell within the framework of an old campaign against hawking. Since the 19th century the shopkeepers had strongly criticized this type of trade. While the peddler, who worked in the markets, had to pay only a limited market fee and avoided any other costs, the established merchant paid heavy fiscal and rental costs. According to the established merchants, peddlers could ask much lower prices in particular because they evaded taxes. After 1930, when consumption received a severe blow, many shopkeepers saw their revenues decrease. In search of a solution they pointed to the increasing number of peddlers. That there were many aliens among these privileged market vendors and peddlers went, according to the Belgian merchants a bit too far.[[899]](#footnote-900) That these aliens sold mostly goods which the established merchants considered to be their monopoly, caused the criticism to be even more severe. In this case it even involved products which were produced by migrants. Their profit margins were so low, not only for the market vendors and peddlers, but also for those who produced the goods that the established Belgian merchant was not able to respond to it. This ethnic circuit meant that the protest by the Belgian merchants coincided with that of the Belgian manufacturers and even the unions. Together they petitioned for a frontal attack on the distribution channel of the Jewish economy, in order to clean up the whole sector.[[900]](#footnote-901)

The agitation against the foreign peddlers was fuelled in the early years of emigration from Nazi Germany by the myth of massive invasion of German refugees.[[901]](#footnote-902) The arrival of a few thousand political militants and Jews, who looked for refuge in Belgium after Hitler came to power, was not looked upon with much serenity. This stream of refugees was, immediately, exaggerated to grotesque proportions. The motivation of many of these immigrants for leaving Germany was, in addition, presented in a bad light. Many failed merchants, criminals and paupers left Nazi Germany in order to settle in Belgium. The authorities were notified to be on their guard; there were quite a few profiteers among the "refugees" from Germany.[[902]](#footnote-903)

These warnings to the authorities continued in spite of the strict refugee policy. As we mentioned earlier most Jewish refugees from Germany stayed only in Belgium for a few months, the time needed to organize their emigration. The small number of refugees who received residence permits were mostly denied participation in Belgian socio‑economic life. Notwithstanding this, the Jewish refugees were perceived, already by the first half of the thirties, as a symbol in this economically motivated anti‑foreigner discourse.

As we mentioned above the economic crisis and the decision to exclude immigrants from unemployment insurance forced many Jewish migrants into trade, for the most part as market vendors or peddlers. This was not only clearly discernible in Antwerp and Brussels, but Jewish merchants attempted to build up a Belgian cliental also outside these urban agglomerations. This crisis phenomenon had obviously already begun somewhat earlier than the summer of 1933, but the exclusion from unemployment insurance in May 1933 accelerated this process. In any case the link between the two phenomena -the arrival of Jewish refugees and the increase in Jewish peddlers- was very quickly made. The huge amount of media attention for the refugee question meant that the increase of Jewish peddlers or market vendors was immediately associated with the stream of refugees from Nazi‑Germany.[[903]](#footnote-904) This confusion between the refugees and migrants meant that the professional shifts of the Jewish migrants were seen as a new development with important consequences. This myth of economic threat not only from already established migrants, but also from a continuous immigration of Jews from Germany meant that the established merchants demanded protective regulations with more insistance.

Few ”Facilities” for Immigrants:

 Growing Awareness about the Exceptional Lot of the "Refugee"

The League of Nations took in 1933 the initiative to convene a conference to establish an International Status for Refugees. The Nansen Office, a branch of the League, argued that the Russian "refugees" had to be exempted from the increasing restrictive alien legislation to which migrants were subject all over Europe. The "refugees" should be granted the same privileges as the immigrants of the most favored nationalities in order to facilitate the insertion of "refugees" in their host country. Also no "refugee" who was granted sojourn should ever be expelled. Given the absence of a country of origin which was willing to receive him, to expel a "refugee" would only result in his illegal entrance of another country. This would disturb international relations and offered no durable solution to the refugee-problem. An international Convention with binding recommendations would persuade the different countries of asylum to follow a policy favorable for their Russian "refugees".

The Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans was on the same wavelength as the Nansen office. He agreed that something had to be done to alleviate the tragic lot of the "refugees". The increasing discrimination which aliens were subject to in Belgium was applied to them without any relaxation. The lot of Russian "refugees" was even worse than most other immigrants. The impossibility to establish a bilateral agreement with their country of origin meant that they were excluded from the advantages that reciprocity granted aliens in Belgium (for example full benefits of pensions and unemployment insurance). Dozens of "refugees" were just like any other immigrant expelled each year and this mostly for minor offenses.[[904]](#footnote-905) "Refugees" who had, however, nowhere to return to.

Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans favored a generous attitude towards these "refugees". There were only a few thousand Russian "refugees" in Belgium and as they were here to stay we had, he argued, to strive for their successful integration in Belgian society. The basis of granting equal rights to aliens, reciprocity with the country of origin, was not attainable. P.Hymans argued that the Russian "refugees" were a case apart -unprecedented conditions had caused their flight- and totally new measures inspired by humanitarian considerations should be designed to reach out to them.[[905]](#footnote-906) P.Hymans proposed to adhere unconditionally to the international convention proposed by the Nansen office.

This generous appeal was not very much appreciated by the other Ministers. Even within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was a lot of skepticism about the generosity of their Minister. The arguments of this opposition were of a pragmatic nature. The convention could jeopardize the endeavor of the government to cut expenses.[[906]](#footnote-907) State expenditures had to remain under severe restrictions seen the deflatory policy. Reaching a binding international agreement was hence not advisable. For certain, equating the Russian "refugees" to the most favored nationality was too generous. There were special circumstances why the citizens of the neighboring countries were granted exceptional facilities and these reasons were not valid for the "refugees".[[907]](#footnote-908) The Sûreté was also not eager to grant "refugees" an exceptional treatment, they insisted on retaining the possibility to expel any alien, even "refugees". They argued that anyway only exceptionally -when a "refugee" endangered the public order- such a radical decision was taken. To deprive the authorities of this ultimate sanction could endanger the stability of the regime.[[908]](#footnote-909) The most important criticism was that signing this Convention would only increase unwanted immigration, Russian refugees now sojourning in other countries would flood into Belgium. The Minister of Foreign Affairs retorted that the convention would only apply to "refugees" legally sojourning in Belgium and anyway Belgium was armed by its immigration legislation to refuse new "refugees" access.[[909]](#footnote-910)

Although the Convention was indeed only applicable to "refugees" sojourning legally in the country, Minister P.Hymans had to give in to the opposition against adhering unconditionally to the Convention. The Belgian delegation for the Geneva conference got the instructions not to jeopardize the leeway of the Belgian authorities to dispose of the Russian "refugees".[[910]](#footnote-911) Belgian signed the Convention, but with an important proviso. The "refugees" could not benefit from the advantages consented to the Dutch, French and Luxembourg immigrants. The reciprocity rule was also kept intact for "refugees". Expulsion of "refugees" still had to be possible.[[911]](#footnote-912) The Belgian delegation to the Geneva Conference was satisfied that it had fulfilled its mandate dutifully and that the "Belgian" interests were in no way harmed by this Convention:

 "Nous avons eu le souci de ne négliger, de quelque façon (et d'y avoir été très attentif), rien qui pût contrarier un empêchement dérivant des exigences de la Sûreté Publique, qui sont impérieuses des situations budgétaires, qui réclament le plus strictement d'éviter de nouvelles dépenses publiques, enfin de la crise économique, qui est un obstacle à une application extensive des règlements et des mesures d'ordre social."[[912]](#footnote-913)

Although there were no tangible benefits of the Convention of 1933 for the Russian "refugees", it did cause an increasing awareness among policy makers that "refugees" were an exceptional category of immigrants. This change of mentality is to be observed in particular within the Christian Democratic trade union. This union which sought adamantly throughout the Depression to replace foreign labor with Belgian labor, pleaded from 1934 onwards to spare the Russian "refugees".[[913]](#footnote-914) A consensus was growing that the "refugees" were to stay and that restrictive measures imposed on immigrants to make them return to their country of origin could not have the desired effect with "refugees".

The Repatriation of Superfluous Immigrants

The government wanted to prevent unemployed immigrants who were cut off the dole in May 1933 from living on welfare. The Minister of Justice asked the Minister of Labor the names of the unemployed immigrants whose right to receive unemployment benefits had been revoked. Rather than putting those indigent aliens on relief they ought to be expelled.[[914]](#footnote-915) The Minister of Labor passed 300 names to the Sûreté Publique. Fifty of those immigrants had not yet acquired residency status and were sent an order to leave the country . For the 250 who had acquired residency status it was legally impossible to do so. As long as these unemployed immigrants did not commit any infraction or could not be arrested because of vagrancy their expulsion was legally not justified. A investigation was ordered to look into the means of livelihood of these 250 aliens, those who did not have a real home or were begging in order to live were brought before a police court and sent to a penal colony. After serving their sentence they were expelled by Royal Decree.

For most of the unemployed immigrants it was impossible to make them leave by force. De Foy stated clearly that it was ”contraire à notre système juridique d’envisager l’expulsion à titre préventif. Pareille procédure lèserait d’ailleurs les lois de l’hospitalité et de l’humanité.” In addition would such an expulsion be ineffective as the majority of these unemployed aliens were not citizens of neighbouring countries. These countries would refuse to accept destitute these aliens and send them back to Belgium.[[915]](#footnote-916) Only their voluntary departure was possible. To stimulate these immigrants to return to their country of origin, the Sûreté proposed to finance the repatriation of immigrants who wanted to return. An additional credit of 200,000 francs was asked to Parliament by the Council of Ministers on 16.3.1934 and included in the Ministry of Justice's budget for that year.[[916]](#footnote-917) This limited budget enabled the repatriation of a few hundred aliens, in particular Poles. Altough it did not cause a great change in the return movement it was a clear and decisive change of cours.

Although the return was officially voluntarily some pressure was exercited by the communal authorities as the return of destitute immigrants alleviated their welfare budgets. Some municipalities even contributed voluntarily a third of the costs of the repatriation for these clients of their welfare department. It was financially more interesting to co-finance their repatriation than to be forced to continue supporting financially the upkeep of these poor inhabitants of their commune.[[917]](#footnote-918) The employers were also asked to contribute in the financing of this repatriation, but they refused to do so. Only in march 1935 when the authorities strongly pressured the mining industry to fire more of their foreign labor, these employers were willing to do so. One third of the costs of the repatriation of their former employees were at their charge.[[918]](#footnote-919)In 1935 the repatriation budget of the Ministry of Justice remained the same (225,000 frank), but radical changes in the alien policy would necessitate that additional credits had to be asked. .[[919]](#footnote-920)

 The Struggle for the Migrants in the Mining Sector, 1932-1935

The Diminishing Need for Employers' Hegemonic Institutions

In the 1920s a few mines had embarked on a farreaching multi-cultural strategy (in particular de Hainaut and Winterslag) to turn their foreign personnel into loyal and hard-working workers. Already in the first years of the economic downturn these companies which wanted to pursue their multi-cultural endeavour saw new constraints arise. Crucial in this respect were changes in the emigration policy of the countries of origin. In Poland was the financial leeway of the policy to counteract the socalled "denationalization" of the emigrants curtailed because of budgetary constraints. The state subsidy for the Polish Mission in Belgium was deleted in 1932.[[920]](#footnote-921) In the same year the three Polish schools in Hainaut were shut down. These schools were considered too expensive by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A new discourse accompanied the tapering off of this educational network. epression caused the return of the Polish emigrants to be postponed. They had to acquiesce to a lasting sojourn abroad. The children of the emigrants should invest in their future in Belgium. Secondary education would open more interesting occupational opportunities for them than just mining. Upon their return to Poland experience as qualified workers would be of great value for the country.[[921]](#footnote-922) The provision of Polish courses, a few hours a week, together with a Polish youth movement, was considered sufficient to retain the Polishness of the children. Some Polish schools in Limburg were closed down in 1933. The director of Winterslag forestalled this by increasing his financial support. The mine took on its expense the salary of one of the teachers. This financial engagement was only able to postpone the total downfall of the Polish schools by one year. The director of Winterslag was furious when, in 1934 the decision was made to close down "their" Polish school. The "Polish" house with its 25 rooms which up to that point had housed the Polish school and was also the meeting point for Polish social life was shut down. From then on the Polish organizations were no longer granted facilities from the mine.[[922]](#footnote-923) The Czechoslovakian authorities did not disappoint the Direction of Winterslag. Their school remained open til the outbreak of the Second World War. The Direction of Winterslag financied it generously.[[923]](#footnote-924)

In the 1920s managers of most mining companies considered already the implementation of an ambitious multicultural strategy unnecessary. They believed more in the power of assimilation to make immigrants decide to stay. The need to convince them to stay was also less acute, at least for "recent" immigrants as their alternatives were few, due to the new alien legislation. However all managers of mine companies considered pastoral care for the immigrants an essential ethnic facility. In the 1930s pastoral care was still provided by Italian and Polish priests. The economic downturn however caused most mining companies to diminish their subsidies to the Missions considerably. The regional mine association of Charleroi ceased its payments to the Polish Mission altogether in May 1932.[[924]](#footnote-925) The material situation of the Polish and Italian clergy worsened considerably. A vicar's salary became the main source of income for the Polish priests. The lack of financial support from the mines forced the Polish priest for the basin of Charleroi to leave. The general refusal of the employers to continue their generous subsidies was not only the consequence of the economic downturn and the diminishing number of foreign workers, it also reflected the assimilationist strategy of most of the mining companies in Wallonia. A permanently present Polish priest was considered a hindrance to the assimilation of the Polish children.[[925]](#footnote-926)

 The General Strike of 1932

Rising unemployment in the mining sector together with a decline in real wages caused serious discontent among the miners. By May 1932 sporadic strikes broke out in the Borinage.[[926]](#footnote-927) The dismissal of some strikers and the news about another 500 redundancies in the basin caused tensions to rise. The regional miners' union called a strike on the platform; stabilization of wages and sharing of the available work among local labor. The strike was a great success. All the miners walked off the job. The walkout quickly spread beyond the Borinage; all the other basins, including briefly the Limburg basin, joined the strike. Not only miners but also metal and glassworkers...struck. Carried away by its grass-roots the Socialist union, in agreement with some Walloon Christian Democrats, called a general strike. For a few days the strike even had even insurrectional aspects, especially in the basin of Charleroi where the castle of E.Coppee was burned down. By the middle of July the unions regained control over the movement. Concessions by the employers in several industries induced by government along with royal intervention led to the strike being called off by July 18.[[927]](#footnote-928)

Only the miners continued, because of the insistence of the rank and file, to obtain serious guarantees against further wage reductions. In September when this strike was also called off, the miners had obtained only a 1 per cent wage rise. The employers had agreed to redistribute work among labor by firing miners beyond the age of retirement, generalizing partial unemployment and looking into the possibility of replacing the foreign miners with Belgians. The employers had also agreed that no sanctions would be taken against the strikers once they returned to work.

The replacement of foreign miners with Belgians had been a demand of the unions since the onset of the strike.[[928]](#footnote-929) The leadership of the Socialist miners' union which in April 1932 had still considered the replacement of the foreign labor as an irrealistic demand, dropped all its reservations during the strike and immediately joined in with the Christian Democratic Union to demand the removal of the foreign miners. Throughout the strike the employers had agreed to look into this problem, without making any tangible concessions.[[929]](#footnote-930) The government, which had by its reconciliation proposals an important influence on all the settlements during this strike, did not support this trade union demand.[[930]](#footnote-931) The government proposal accepted by employers and unions foresaw only a commission which would look into the redistribution of work.

At least at that point the unions had hoped that they could walk away with a concession. That this was an important issue was clear at the very start of the strike. On July 4 the Socialist MP for the Borinage Louis Piérard had clarified this demand in an open letter to the king in the Socialist newspaper Le Peuple:

"A Quaregnon, sur une population totale de 18.000 habitants, il y a 1.047 étrangers. Cela donne une idée de la proportion de main-d'oeuvre étrangère encore employée dans nos mines.

Certes, nous comprenons qu'on ait pitié des étrangers qui ont fait souche chez nous, attachés à notre sol par des liens familiaux. Nous ne demandons pas non plus qu'on renvoie à la frontière de malheureux Italiens qui sont ici des réfugiés politiques. Mais quant aux autres! Si internationalistes que nous soyons, nous demandons qu'on songe d'abord aux nôtres, sans travail et sans pain."[[931]](#footnote-932)

In fact the strike had started in the Borinage with the slogan: "répartition du travail entre les ouvriers de la région." This was directed against the foreign as well as the Flemish immigrants. The platform of the miners'unions referred only to the removal of the aliens. This xenophobic demand was well received among the rank and file of the unions. During the first weeks of the strike the slogan "Down with the aliens, down with the immigrants in the mines" was frequently heard.[[932]](#footnote-933)

Piérard's article aroused considerable controversy. The Communists denounced the Socialists; this nationalist demand was a striking example of social-fascism.[[933]](#footnote-934) Also strong opposition was voiced within the international Socialist movement. The political and syndical organizations of the Italian Socialists protested strongly. They intervened to prevent any further article in the Socialist press against foreign labor.[[934]](#footnote-935) Also the leaders of the Polish Socialist Trade Union (KCZZ), Zulawski en Kwapinski asked for clarifications. Heronimek, the representative of the KCZZ for the Polish migrants in France left for Brussels to investigate the case.[[935]](#footnote-936)

Most Belgian Socialists considered Piérard's letter a grave error. Although no rectification in Le Peuple followed numerous Socialists privately expressed their disagreement with this letter.[[936]](#footnote-937) The letter was hushed up, nobody wanted to discuss it in public.[[937]](#footnote-938) The demand of the miners' union, however, was defended. The president of the Socialist trade union C. Mertens explained that the Belgian employers used the immigrants to put pressure on wages and working conditions. The employers had, he argued, hired in the last months a lot of miners of different nationalities who were expelled from France. These immigrants accepted wages lower than the ones which were traditionally agreed upon. This worsened the working conditions, but also aggravated unemployment among the Belgians. The union had demanded that the employers no longer replace Belgians with immigrants. Mertens claimed that the demand of the miners'union was not directed against the migrants who lived since long in Belgium. Only single migrants, especially those who were hired recently, should leave in order to make room for unemployed Belgians.[[938]](#footnote-939) Mertens considered that the demand to fire in the first place the single foreign miners was justified.

"these demands are just..they do not violate the principle of international solidarity...as they are only directed against the aliens who are being used by the companies to worsen the lot of our proletariat"[[939]](#footnote-940)

Due to the international attention given to the xenophobic article of L.Piérard, such articles no longer appeared. The tone of the articles in the Socialist press changed from the second half of July onwards. Aliens were no longer singled out. Although it was still contended that the manipulation of the immigrants by the employers constituted a danger for the Belgian working class, it was the solidarity of these immigrants who were striking with their Belgian comrades that was highlighted. Several meetings were called to discuss the problems of striking immigrants. Trade unionists underscored their position that migrants should enjoy the same rights as the Belgians.[[940]](#footnote-941)

During the more than two months long strike the legal and economically vulnerable position of the immigrants was evident.[[941]](#footnote-942) The migrants who were mostly non-unionized received no strike pay. Aliens who had residency status could apply for welfare just like the Belgians. This depended, however, on the discretion of the municipal authorities who were reluctant to grant aliens any financial support.[[942]](#footnote-943) As most aliens lived in company houses they were much more vulnerable to direct employer pressure. In the basin of Charleroi the rent of some Italian strikers quintupled. Some strikers were even evicted from their houses.[[943]](#footnote-944) Also the Sûreté continued their crackdown on the politically undesirable aliens. Hundreds of immigrants were expelled. During the strike about 250 members of the PCB were expelled. The expulsions went far beyond these politically organized immigrants. Any immigrant who was a bit too active in the strike was liable to be expelled.[[944]](#footnote-945) Eviction and expulsion, but even more so the pauperizing effect of the lasting strike, led several thousand migrants to return to their country of origin.[[945]](#footnote-946)

Polarized industrial relations with the immigrants at stake, the Borinage (9.1932-12.1933)

After the strike there was again nearly full employment in the mine industry as the long period of inactivity had diminished the stocks. Only the basin of the Borinage with its expensive industrial coal could not re-engage all of the miners. Demand for industrial coal was slackening and the strong competition in that market, also from the Limburg basin, meant that the vulnerable Borinage could not produce at full strength. A regional joint commission was established to see how the mining industry could distribute the work among the local miners. Belgian miners beyond the age of retirement and single aliens would be fired. An important condition, however, was set by the employers: the single immigrants were only fired if the necessary manpower could be found among the unemployed Belgians.[[946]](#footnote-947) Some mine directors did not even feel bound by this promise; they admitted privately that they refused to fire any of their immigrant labor.[[947]](#footnote-948) The main argument against replacing the aliens with unemployed Belgian miners was that the Belgians would leave those mines for the mines in which they preferred to work as soon as the economic situation improved. Some would even leave the mining industry altogether.[[948]](#footnote-949)

The rehiring practice in the Borinage was the touchstone as to how far the mining companies would accommodate the demands of organized labor. Despite a promise not to retaliate, the Belgians against whom a legal case was opened during a strike as well as all single aliens who had not worked during the strike were not re-engaged. The local trade unions were furious and a one day strike was called. The mining companies gave in; all Belgians were rehired. The sanction against single immigrants who had refused to be strike breakers remained valid.[[949]](#footnote-950) The unions were in an awkward situation as they had demanded that preference should be given to Belgian labor by firing the single aliens. Hence they could not really protest the decision of the mining companies not to rehire them. The mining companies accommodated this union demand however only partially. Only those single aliens who had participated in the strike were fired, those who had worked during the strike were kept on the job.[[950]](#footnote-951) According to the mine directors, the good services of those immigrants, but also the protests of the consular authorities had to be taken into account. Those countries could retaliate by expelling Belgians who were working abroad. More importantly, after the depression those countries could refuse employers the right to recruit in their country.[[951]](#footnote-952) The result of the new personnel policy was that in December 1932 79% of the foreign miners who were working before the strike in the Borinage remained in their jobs.[[952]](#footnote-953)

The main problem with replacing the remaining foreign miners in this basin with unemployed Belgian miners was that two thirds of the aliens were employed in the new mines at the very west of the basin.[[953]](#footnote-954) Bad communications and the unwillingness of the employers to invest in any way in the replacement of aliens with Belgians resulted in very few unemployed Belgian miners being eager to go to those mines. The Walloon miners would probably have to commute weekly to those mines and stay there six days in a hostel only to return to their family for one day a week. Also the working conditions and the wages in those mines were considered worse than in the mines in the center of the basin.[[954]](#footnote-955) The unemployed Belgian miners who would replace those aliens would have to accept the wages which those immigrants had agreed upon. These wages were considerably lower than those generally accepted by Belgian miners in the basin. The tension between the trade unions and the mine directors arose in particular around the issue of acceptable wage levels.[[955]](#footnote-956)

The Socialist regional miners' union was pushing the mining companies to fire their foreign labor, however, local laborers were reluctant to replace them. Mester, the president of this union, proposed removing unemployed Belgians from the dole who refused to go to those mines when a place had been made for them by firing aliens. The employers were reluctant to put this promise to a test.[[956]](#footnote-957) They probably realized that this concession by the union would also entail concessions from their side on the payment of their labor.

By the end of 1932 the employers realized that an internal solution to unemployment in the Borinage would be very difficult. The employers proposed an alternative: the transfer of unemployed miners from the Borinage to the other basins. Vacancies could be made by dismissing foreign miners in the basin of Charleroi and to a lesser degree in the Centre basin. The employers in these basins wanted to be sure that the dismissed aliens would be replaced.[[957]](#footnote-958) They even proposed that these miners move into the company houses which the aliens had left.

The miners'unions demanded that first all aliens be fired in the Borinage so that it would be understood by the local miners that no internal solution was possible. Only then would the unions consider the transfer proposal.

graph 18: Dismissals of Belgian and foreign miners, 1931-1936 for the whole of the Belgian mining industry and for the basin of the Borinage

The Replacement of Immigrants with Belgian Unemployed Miners

The rise in unemployment in the winter of 1933 in the Walloon basins resulted in the transfer-proposal within Hainaut being revoked. The Socialist miners' union of the Borinage proposed that the Limburg basin (the Borinage's main competitor) should drastically reduce its production. That this reduction would cause dismissals in Limburg was less a problem, as the large number of aliens in this basin could be repatriated.[[958]](#footnote-959) Limiting production in the Limburg basin in favor of the less productive Borinage was economic madness and the discussion within the trade union shifted to the second part of the proposal - dismissal of the aliens in Limburg in order to make possible a transfer of unemployed Belgians in the Borinage to the Limburg basin.[[959]](#footnote-960)

The unions realized that such a transfer -even more than in the intra-Hainaut transfer- would be very difficult to realize. The Socialist union especially criticized the paternalist personnel policy in Limburg which made such a transfer impossible. The miners of the Borinage stood on their independence and would never accept an all-encompassing influence over their life by the mining companies.[[960]](#footnote-961)

The Socialist Deladrier proposed as the solution a population transfer from the Borinage to Limburg under supervision of the authorities:

 "Il faut leur permettre de retrouver dans le Limbourg leur fosse, leur village, leurs habitudes; que le gouvernement licencie et repartie la plupart des éléments étrangers du Limbourg: polonais, tunisiens, espagnols qui encombrent les faits-divers de nos journaux...Que l'on crée de toutes pièces des centres borains dans les coins choisis du Limbourg que l'on constitue autour d'une mine déterminée des districts borains avec majeur, famille, drapeau fanfare, cabaretiers, curé, maisons du peuple, jeu de crosse! A une fosse boraine fermée, substituer une fosse limbourgeoise?"[[961]](#footnote-962)

This fantastic proposal had very little relevance for the unemployed in the Borinage. It was agreed that most of the unemployed local miners in this basin were unwilling to leave the Borinage, if only for the fact that most of the miners in the Borinage lived in their own houses.[[962]](#footnote-963)

A solution was sought in the transfer of Flemish miners working in the Borinage to Limburg. Providing a service of fast trains from the Flemish regions bordering the Borinage to Limburg was envisaged, but it never materialized.[[963]](#footnote-964) Beside the costs involved, it probably would have been very difficult to replace the Flemish miners with unemployed Walloon miners, as the Flemish miners were concentrated in the same mines as the aliens, at the very west end of the basin. The miners' unions in the Borinage continued to insist on the removal of the aliens in their basin. They even claimed erroneously that some mines had fired more Belgians than aliens.[[964]](#footnote-965)

Unemployment rose in the other Walloon basins. Here too the dismissal of single miners was demanded by the Socialist as well as the Christian Democratic miners' union.[[965]](#footnote-966) From the middle of 1933 the miners' unions got strong support from the Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker. He believed that the dismissal of foreign miners was essential for solving the unemployment problem in the mining industry.[[966]](#footnote-967) He even envisaged a state subsidy covering the transport costs of unemployed Belgians who went to work far from their hometown.[[967]](#footnote-968)

The motivation for Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker's support was twofold. The dismissal of foreign labor would diminish the unemployment of Belgians and at the same time alleviate the expenses of his department in this domain.[[968]](#footnote-969) The Christian Democratic Minister P.van Isacker was under very strong pressure within the government to diminish his expenditures in unemployment insurance. To shift the burden of unemployment to the aliens was the easiest way to save some money without touching the benefits of his constituencies. He even took up the old proposal to transfer the unemployed miners in the Borinage to the other basins of Hainaut.

Van Isacker's support for the replacement of foreign miners with unemployed Belgians meant that the mining companies became more willing to replace the aliens with Belgian unemployed miners. The mining companies had obtained considerable economic advantages from the government and they did not want to alienate the authorities.[[969]](#footnote-970) They also realized that their cooperation was necessary to prevent more drastic measures against their foreign personnel. Van Isacker had already threatened legal measures in order to remove all of the aliens.[[970]](#footnote-971)

A controversial issue remained the wages at which the Belgian miners would be re-engaged. The opposing views of trade unions and employers on this issue were not bridged. Equally crucial was the fact that the employers believed the need for immigrants to be structural. The employers asked guarantees that Belgians would effectively replace the dismissed aliens. The mining companies also demanded from the government the assurance that they would be authorized to recruit foreign labor when the economic situation improved.[[971]](#footnote-972) Especially the mining companies in the Limburg basin were anxious to retain their foreign labor as they responded to a structural need for qualified manpower. When the Sûreté considered repatriating the immigrants that were dismissed, the Limburg mining companies insisted that only those unemployed immigrants whom they considered unqualified should be repatriated. Qualified foreign miners -even if they were unemployed- were to be kept in Belgium.[[972]](#footnote-973)

The continuous pressure of the trade unions, now supported by the Minister of Labor, made a second considerable dent in the foreign labor in the Borinage. As graph 9 illustrates between March 1933 and May 1934 another 20% of the aliens in the Borinage were dismissed. The amount of foreign labor also declined in the other Hainaut basins. In the basin of Charleroi and Centre, in the same period, respectively 20% and 5% of the aliens were dismissed. In the Liège basin 15% of the aliens were dismissed, while in the Limburg basin the number of aliens increased with 4%.[[973]](#footnote-974)

In the second half of 1934 the mining companies were no longer willing to fire their foreign labor. They insisted that the percentage of qualified miners among foreign labor was very high. A further reduction of foreign labor would aggravate unemployment among Belgians in the mining industry. The Belgian ancillary personnel would have to be reduced as there would be a lack of qualified miners. Their replacement with qualified Belgian miners from the Borinage was impossible given the reluctance of those miners to leave the Borinage and the high unemployment benefits they continued to receive.[[974]](#footnote-975) The main reason the employers no longer wanted to grant Belgians preferential treatment was that they wanted to secure manpower for the future. The Belgians who replaced foreign laborers would leave the mines at the first opportunity. Foreign labor was much more loyal to the mine. When the economy recovered, the immigrants would remain in the mines. mining companies not only counted on the immigrants in the short run, they also hoped to use the children of the migrants as future manpower for the mines.[[975]](#footnote-976)

The trade unions were furious. They believed that further replacement of the aliens was possible. It was the easiest way to alleviate the unemployment among Belgian miners. Public authorities, it was argued, should step in to force the mining companies to fire more foreign labor.[[976]](#footnote-977) Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker agreed with the unions that the results of the replacement of aliens with unemployed Belgian miners was insufficient.[[977]](#footnote-978) The Catholic Minister of Economic Affairs F.Van Cauwelaert was more understanding of the mining industry's reluctance to fire indiscriminately their immigrant labor. He agreed that the interests of industry also had to be taken into account. Minister F.Van Cauwelaert insisted, however too that the progressive and selective dismissal of the aliens had to continue.[[978]](#footnote-979)

Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker ordered an investigation into the feasibility of replacing the single foreign miners by unemployed Belgians in Hainaut. The result of this report stimulated the government to pursue this option. There were about 6,000 unemployed Belgian miners and a similar number of single aliens. The replacement of the aliens could be hindered by several considerations. Some mines had long-term contracts with these aliens. More importantly, in order to assure the replacement, the transport facilities had to be improved (especially between the Borinage and the basin of Charleroi) and the Belgian miners who refused to take the jobs of discharged immigrants had to be denied dole. The report also pointed out that not only should the aliens be dismissed, but the authorities should also prevent them from receiving welfare. The expulsion of those aliens should hence follow their dismissal. This meant that only certain nationalities would be eligible for such measures. Retaliation against Belgians abroad had to be prevented and international agreements had to be respected.[[979]](#footnote-980)

State Intervention in the Market (1935)

The Government Theunis followed a strict deflation policy which aimed at strengthening the competitive position of Belgian industry. To the margins of this policy, a number of regulations were decreed to remedy to some extent the social consequences of the economic crisis. Only the effects on the Belgian population were taken into consideration. The presence of immigrants in the Belgian economy was from that perspective considered a easy target for a public policy to alleviate the misery of the Belgians. To push immigrants out of the economy was considered an easy and above all cheap manner to give the Belgians more changes to find a decent livelihood. The first Government Van Zeeland, with an important Socialist participation, who took over power on March 23, 1935 pursued this policy. Although this Cabinet broke open new domains in state policy, it did not innovate in the alien policy. The design of the Theunis Cabinet to forcibly -by state intervention- exclude immigrants from economic life was not altered.

 undermining the "Jewish" economy, the peddlars' law[[980]](#footnote-981)

Since the onset of the Depression Belgian commerce asked with increasing insistance for protective regulations against the threat to which their businesses were exposed by the peddlers. The government yielded in 1935 to their demands. With the Royal Decree of January 13, 1935 was a control introduced over the "marginals" of trade: the peddlers and market vendors. The state took over what had up to that point been an almost exclusively municipal competence. Every market vendor or peddler had to apply at the central authorities for a vendors' license. This regulation sought to guarantee a greater control over the vending trade. The authorities would be able to punish the accumulation of unemployment aid and peddling more easily. Vendors who did not fulfill their fiscal obligation would be also easier to identity. The Treasury had in any case an acute need for new revenues given the rising social subsidies as a result of unemployment benefits and the refusal of the conservative cabinet to tax industry any further.

Hawking was seen not only "as an unhealthy branch of unemployment", but also as the result of "undesired immigration" and was therefore to be kept under control. Foreign peddlers were especially targeted. According to the law, aliens could only obtain a permit if they had a legal sojourn of at least one year in Belgium and if Belgian peddlers enjoyed in their country of origin the same privileges (the reciprocity-rule). The authorities maintained their complete jurisdiction over these peddlers and the vendors' license could always be revoked "for a foreign merchant who damaged the country's economic interests."[[981]](#footnote-982)

In order not to place "national interests" in any danger, the Belgian authorities tried to establish agreements with those countries where Belgians engaged in peddling. In 1935 arrangements were made with France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.[[982]](#footnote-983) It became clear that the authorities were serious about the restriction of foreign peddlers when barely 10% of the 5,000 foreign peddlers who by December 1,1935 had applied for a license received a positive reply.[[983]](#footnote-984) The Sûreté asked for a larger repatriation budget as about 4,000 aliens would be forced, because of the refusal of their peddlers' permit, to return to their country of origin.[[984]](#footnote-985)

The Union of the Jewish Merchants protested against the discriminating manner by which the peddlers' permits were granted. They pushed for a review of the massive rejection.[[985]](#footnote-986) The protest by a number of embassies, which saw the livelihood of their citizens in Belgium endangered, was not much more effective. The Czechoslovakian authorities pointed out that peddling in their country was not restricted in any way, thus reciprocity for the Belgians was no problem. Belgium had not meant reciprocity in that respect, it was not posed as an abstract principal, but as a weighing of "national" interests. Since there were no Belgians on the Czechoslovakian markets, the Czechoslovakian peddlers in Belgium had to look for another livelihood.[[986]](#footnote-987)

The Polish consular authorities also tried to protect the livelihood of their citizens. Since in Poland peddling was forbidden, the Polish authorities did not propose a reciprocity agreement; it would in any case have stirred up very little enthusiasm. The Poles proposed economic compensation in exchange for a vendors' licence for its immigrants in Belgium. Poland had always had an important surplus on the trade balance with Belgium. Negotiations on a high diplomatic level sought to remove precisely these surpluses. On April 2, 1936 a Belgian‑Polish agreement was concluded to give a drive to Belgian imports into Poland. Belgium had approved in exchange the allocation of 500 peddlers' licences to Polish citizens.[[987]](#footnote-988) Of the 1,922 applications by Polish peddlers, not 500 but 977 were as a result responded to positively.[[988]](#footnote-989)

To enable the authorities to watch over the ratification of the new law, the peddlers and market vendors were obliged to display a badge. The Belgian merchants had to display a blue token and the foreign merchants a red one. Although quite a few aliens were refused the vendors' license and were thus denied admittance to the marketplaces, the agitation against the foreign peddlers did not die down. The Belgian peddlers protested, along the lines that more and more red badges appeared on the marketplace, even more vociferously that their profession was inundated by aliens.[[989]](#footnote-990) The law on peddling not only brought a number of diplomatic repercussions with it, but it had also not diminished the displeasure of the Belgian peddlers over the so-called take-over of the marketplaces by the foreign peddlers.

The State Regulates the Labor Market

The Modalities of Government Intervention

In the first half of 1933 the authorities had decided not to intervene in the labor market. Industry could decide for itself if they needed immigrants and those immigrants who, despite a large pool of unemployed Belgian labor, were retained in their jobs responded anyway to structural needs.

This position was partly revoked by 1934. Since the onset of the Depression the Christian Democratic Ministers of Labor H.Heyman and even more so P.Van Isacker had been receptive for the demands of the unions to replace foreign labor -even outside mining- by Belgian unemployed workers.[[990]](#footnote-991) The rising unemployment and the increasing state-expenditures it entailed together with the pressure of the labor unions and the Christian Democratic Ministers of Labor led the government to re-examine state-intervention in the employment of aliens.

Legal constraints, the fact that most foreign labor had acquired residency status and was thus protected against the discretion of the Administration over their sojourn forced the Minister of Labor propose a direct intervention in the labor market to impose on the employers a more restrictive hiring of aliens.

Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker developed the idea of taxing employers who employed aliens above a certain quota. This money would be used in a "fund for the unemployed". This call for a labor tariff, a tax on employers who hired foreign labor never materialized. A few months later, in December 1934 a more radical version of this protectionist principle was being discussed by the Cabinet. According to this proposal the state should not merely dissuade employers from hiring aliens by financial stimulance, but rather impose a ceiling to the number of aliens being employed. The aim of the law was to stimulate the replacement of aliens with Belgian unemployed workers.[[991]](#footnote-992)

The Sûreté as well as the Liberal Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans strongly opposed this proposal. Both considered it totally inadequate as this law allowed only to dismiss immigrants, without enabling the authorities to expel those unemployed immigrants. They both insisted that the quota law would only create destitute immigrants who would be a burden on local welfare. In order to be sure that these dismissed immigrants would not remain in Belgium they should be expelled.[[992]](#footnote-993)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans added to this criticism of the quota law that the implementation of this law would be economically counterproductive as the employers would be forced to retain those aliens (French, Dutch..) who because of bilateral conventions were diplomatically protected rather than keeping their best labor. In general he was opposed to a quota procedure because it lacked the necessary flexibility needed for such a delicate operation.[[993]](#footnote-994)

CCI, the representative of heavy industry, was strongly opposed to a quota-law. They argued that foreign labor was essential to the well-functioning of Belgian industry. This organization underscored the structural need for immigrant labor. Foreign labor did mostly menial work which the Belgians did not want to do. The Belgians who were unemployed preferred to live on the dole rather than do this strenuous work which was, because of its unskilled nature, also poorly paid. Some foreign labor was also essential for industry because of its specialization and skills which could not be found among Belgian labor. The CCI argued that using such a coercive measure against industry would not diminish, but on the contrary only create more unemployment.[[994]](#footnote-995) The CCI rejected any intervention of the state in the personnel policy of industry.

This radical stance was not shared by the opposants within the government of the quota law. The Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans as well as F.Bovesse, the Minister of Justice agreed that the state should acquire a control over the labor market position of the immigrants, just to diminish public expenditures was such a control already justified. Hiring of alien labor should not be left to the discretion of the employers. Both Ministers proposed to develop alternative modalities of state intervention, modalities which should be bereft of the defects of a quota law. First of all it should provide for the expulsion of immigrants who were to be replaced by Belgian unemployed labor. The main problem was that most immigrants had already acquired residency status and expulsion because of displacing a Belgian, joblessness or destitution was not feasible. Hymans and Bovesse deemed a total control over all immigrants necessary. Also the sojourn of those who had already acquired residency status should be brought under the discretion of the public authorities. The mainstay of their proposal was a sweeping reform of the alien legislation to curtail residency status.[[995]](#footnote-996)

Secondly the state intervention should be more refined and hence not provocate diplomatic protests or have economically adverse effects. Two slightly different proposals to develop a more refined state-action were on the table.

The Liberal Minister of Justice F.Bovesse drew up a proposal by which an immigrant who had a temporary residence permit could only engage in wage-labor if the Ministry of Labor gave his authorization. Also if he wanted to change employers or the nature of his work, the consent of the Ministry of Labor was necessary. The permission to work was a dual one, a permission and an admission. The immigrant had to apply for an authorization to be employed and at the same time the employer had to receive the permission of the Ministry of Labor to hire him.[[996]](#footnote-997)

The Liberal Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans proposed a slightly different scheme. A dual system was proposed whereby aliens were divided between wage laborers and other aliens, obtaining either a labor permit or a residence permit.[[997]](#footnote-998) The labor permit would be granted by the Ministry of Labor to all immigrants engaged in wage labor. The Ministry of Labor decided upon the term of validity of this permission to stay and work in Belgium. For these immigrants the right to live in Belgium would be completely dependent on the right to work. The residence permit granted by the Minister of Justice to all other immigrants would not be directly related to economic criteria.[[998]](#footnote-999) In contrast to the proposition of the Minister of Justice immigrants who came in as labor migrants, if they did not work or refused to do so, would have no possibility to stay in the country. In the proposition of the Minister of Justice the right of sojourn of labor migrants was, at least formally independent from their right to work, but their right to work depended on the right to sojourn.

It was the last proposal which won the day.[[999]](#footnote-1000) It is highly likely that the impossibility to dispose of immigrants who had acquired residency status caused the Council of Ministers to favor the proposal of the Minister of Justice. This proposal in which the Minister of Justice continued to play a key role enabled a more smooth shift to the status of resident alien. The Royal Decree of February 15, 1935 stated that the immigrants who had not yet obtained a permanent residency (the identity card for aliens) had to apply for a labor permit. From then on every immigrant who wanted to work in Belgium had to have either an identity card for aliens or a temporary residence permit and a labor permit.[[1000]](#footnote-1001) The right to work and the right to live in Belgium were considered two distinct elements for which separate authorizations were necessary, at least in the initial period of immigration. Although the length of this initial period of immigration was not yet explicitly defined was in the negotiations with the Dutch and Swiss authorities a sojourn of five years been set to acquire residency status. Also in the diplomatic negotiations on the international convention for refugees had the Belgian representatives set a similar time period.[[1001]](#footnote-1002)

This change in the alien legislation did not increase the control of the state over foreign labor. By this law the authorities continued to wield only power over those immigrants who had not yet acquired residence status. A more refined control of the "recent" immigrants was now possible. An important innovation was that the Ministry of Labor became by this law institutionally integrated in the alien policy. The Minister of Justice did take no longer sole responsibility for the control over the aliens sojourning in Belgium. The Minister of Labor was attributed as an equal partner in alien policy responsibility for the control of the labor market position of the "recent" immigrants. Seen the few number of immigrants who had immigrated legally after November 1930 when for the first time some nationalities did not receive residency status after four months of sojourn remained the leeway of the authorities to manipulate the sojourn and now also the access in the labor market to "protect" Belgian labor small.[[1002]](#footnote-1003) All the immigrants of the 1920s remained out of reach of this potential for a more refined state-intervention in the labor market.

In the meantime, notwithstanding the very diverse opposition it encountered was the quota law enacted in December 1934. Parliament was by-passed as the Cabinet Theunis had obtained full powers to achieve financial and economic recovery. The Council of Ministers had agreed to enact this law under the condition that an eventual implementation would take into account any diplomatic repercussions.[[1003]](#footnote-1004) The law gave the Minister of Labor power to restrict the employment of foreign labor in a certain region or industry.[[1004]](#footnote-1005)

It increased strongly the authorities' power to intervene in the labor market. No immediate use of these powers was envisaged. The authorities realized that, notwithstanding the quota law, there were severe constraints on a state intervention. The problem of the expulsion of the dismissed aliens, at least those with residency status was still actual. In addition, bilateral labor treaties prevented the Belgian authorities from taking any action against nationals of France and the Netherlands legally sojourning in Belgium. Of course Luxemburg citizen were exempted from any nationality based state action. On March 30, 1935 a labor treaty with Switzerland was signed, another nationality was exempted from negative discrimination by the Belgian state.

The Sûreté pointed out that only by negotiating with the above mentioned countries the repatriation of aliens sojourning in Belgium and dismissed as a result of the quota law would be possible. Agreements should be reached with the countries of origin in order to enable forced repatriation of these immigrants. [[1005]](#footnote-1006) The Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans was rather critical of the willingness of the countries of origin to negotiate the return of their destitute emigrants.[[1006]](#footnote-1007) More importantly, he considered that the jobs of Swiss, Dutch, French and Luxembourg immigrants had not to be affected by the implementation of the quota law. The labor treaties excluded any discriminative state action against them.

It is likely that the quota law was rather considered a pallative. It was meant rather to placate anti-immigrant sentiments than to displace immigrants. It was also likely that the authorities counted on its dissuading power. The Minister of Labor could use his newly achieved powers as a threat against the employers to stimulate them to dismiss on a voluntary basis their foreign labor.

The labor unions, Socialists and Christian Democrats alike, were supportive of the quota law.[[1007]](#footnote-1008) Now that its Minister of Labor had achieved the power to restrict the use of foreign labor, the Christian Democratic union became much more moderate in its demands to replace foreign labor. The leadership of this union insisted that the implementation of the quota law be well prepared. Humanitarian, diplomatic and also economic considerations meant that only a partial and gradual removal of migrant labor was feasible. The union argued that a flexible approach to the issue of migrant labor was necessary, but the replacement of immigrants with unemployed Belgian laborers was still the final aim and with the new powers their Minister of Labor had at its disposal also easier to realize.[[1008]](#footnote-1009) That the Christian Democratic union started to doubt whether dismissing a large number of immigrants was an easy solution to the unemployment of the Belgians was especially obvious in the hotel sector. The Christian Democratic union of hotel personnel which in 1934 had demanded aggressively -with an outspoken xenofobic discours- the dismissal of all aliens moderated in 1935 its position by only opposing any further immigration. The Socialist union stood on its position and still insisted to remove all aliens who had arrived in Belgium after March 1929.[[1009]](#footnote-1010)

No immediate use was made of the quota law. After an investigation in the hotel sector, one of the sectors were agitation against the immigrants had been fiercest, the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor E.Rubbens considered it not at all appropriate for an intervention as only very few aliens were being employed in this sector.[[1010]](#footnote-1011) The employers' annual demand for an autorisation to call upon qualified labor in France, Switzerland and Italy for the summer season was even partly agreed to. The luxurious hotels at the seaside and at the Ardennes obtained permission to call upon probably about hundred aliens for the season, but only for the most specialized jobs (*maître d'hôtel, chef de cuisine, chef de réception, chef de rang* and *garçon de rang*). Not only the lack of qualified Belgian personnel but also the World Exposition in Brussels in that year which would attract a lot of tourists to Belgium caused the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor E.Rubbens, notwithstanding the opposition of the unions, to tolerate the seasonal immigration.[[1011]](#footnote-1012)

Only half a year after the enactment of the quota law would this procedure be tried out. Probably in deference of the concerns of heavy industry the conservative Cabinet Theunis had not proceeded to enforce dismissal of aliens in heavy industry. A change of Cabinet radicalized the alien policy of the state. The first government Van Zeeland which contained an important Socialist participation was less willing to blindly follow the advice of the employers. Measures to force the dismissal of foreign labor in heavy industry were now envisaged. An external factor, the tightening of the net of regulation and control around the immigrants in France caused a radicalisation in anti-immigrant sentiments in Belgium and thus also the call for a more stringent alien policy won in force.

In February 1935, the French government prohibited immigrants from leaving the department where they had obtained their identity card without the approval of the prefect. Even more stringent was the introduction of the rule which required that immigrants obtained work permits for each change of occupation. Formerly this was necessary only when renewing the identity card (valid for up to three years). On top of this, the requirement for continuous residence in France was increased from five to ten years, this implied that an immigrant could only be granted an automatic renewal of his work permit after these ten years.[[1012]](#footnote-1013) These regulations affected also the Belgian migrants in France and the treatment of these Belgians at the hand of a neighbouring state was strongly ressented by the authorities and the public in Belgium. For the Belgian migrants, the necessary period of sojourn was reduced to five years by September 1935. The exact reasons for this return to the old principle are not known to us, but the radicalization in the alien policy in Belgium, aside general diplomatic concerns can probably explain this liberalization. As we will see in the next chapter caused this radicalization in the French alien legislation an impetus for similar change in Belgium in 1936.

The Ministerial decree of August 1935, a Failure

The passing of the quota law of December, 1934 gave impetus for the mining companies to continue dismissing their foreign labor. The authorities now had a stick with which to force the mining companies to dismiss more immigrants. The employers repeated their old arguments: the unemployed Belgian miners were either politically undesirable or unwilling to replace the immigrants.[[1013]](#footnote-1014) The miners' unions, especially the Christian Democratic union, refuted these arguments and pushed hard to obtain further replacement of immigrants with unemployed Belgian labor.[[1014]](#footnote-1015)

The nomination of A.Delattre as Minister of Labor in May 1935 meant that the Socialist miners' union was now confident that the Minister of Labor -its former president- would clear up the situation. The replacement of foreign labor with unemployed Belgian miners would take only a matter of days.[[1015]](#footnote-1016) The new Minister of Labor undertook investigations to see if the aliens could be replaced in the quarries and the mines. Delattre hoped to be able to dismiss 8,000 immigrants, of whom 7,000 miners. A draft proposal for the Council of Ministers asked for a repatriation budget of one million francs in 1935 and three million in 1936. It was argued that the savings in unemployment benefits would largely compensate for these expenditures.[[1016]](#footnote-1017)In the stone industry an intervention was aborted as only a limited number of immigrants were working in the quarries and their skills were considered indispensable, also by the public authorities.[[1017]](#footnote-1018) Delattre realized, however, soon that even in the mining industry, the replacement of immigrants with Belgian unemployed labor was not that easy.[[1018]](#footnote-1019)

As unemployment among the Belgian miners continued to rise the trade unions more vigorously demanded the replacement of single immigrants with unemployed Belgians.[[1019]](#footnote-1020) The employers, however, dismissed proportionally as many Belgians as aliens and among rehired labor there were even some immigrants, mostly qualified miners.[[1020]](#footnote-1021) The miners' unions protested strongly against this hiring, although it accounted for only a small number of aliens. In their view it was further proof of the arrogance of the employers.[[1021]](#footnote-1022) The miners' unions insisted that the only way to achieve further replacement of aliens was to implement the quota law.[[1022]](#footnote-1023) The Christian Democratic miners' union insisted on removing the single immigrants not only in Hainaut, but also in Limburg. Although there was little registered unemployment among miners in Limburg this union argued that the vast reservoir of local labor, which was not unionized and hence not registered as unemployed, could offer enough manpower to replace the immigrants. In other Flemish provinces unemployed workers were also to work in the Limburg basin. That the number of immigrants in the Limburg basin in fact rose in the last months was not acceptable and action had to be taken.[[1023]](#footnote-1024)

A strike in the basin of Charleroi in May 1935 which threatened to spread led Prime Minister P.Van Zeeland to insist that the mining companies replace the immigrant miners with unemployed Belgians. This could, according to Van Zeeland, calm down the very tense atmosphere in the mining industry.[[1024]](#footnote-1025) With the backing of the whole government the Socialist Minister of Labor A.Delattre decided to enforce a quota system on the employers in which immigrants were replaced with unemployed Belgian labor.[[1025]](#footnote-1026) The unemployment among Belgian miners could be solved by firing about ten thousand immigrants. Quotas were designated for each basin. The Borinage could only have 4% aliens, the basins of Centre and Charleroi only 6% and the Limburg basin only 17%.[[1026]](#footnote-1027) This plan, however, was considered unexecutable: certain immigrant groups were protected by international agreements, others immigrants had been living with their family in the country for years and some were even married to Belgian women. As a result, after two months a more moderate plan was designed. Only 6,362 single immigrants not protected by international agreements would have to be fired; this implied that the quotas would be as follows: 5% for the Borinage and 10% for the basins of Charleroi and Centre. Those three basins would have to fire all their single, non-protected immigrants. For the basin of Liège the quota was set at 12 %, so 90% of its 2,648 single non-protected miners would have to be dismissed. For the Limburg basin the ceiling was set at 22%. This meant that half of its 1,548 single non-protected immigrants had to be dismissed.[[1027]](#footnote-1028) The FEDECHAR tried to prevent this drastic measure by arguing that the mining companies were willing to dismiss those foreign miners, but only if they had guarantees that the immigrants would be replaced with Belgians qualified to do the same jobs. An enforced and unselective dismissal of aliens would only disrupt the industry. In order to find Belgians who could replace immigrants a list had to be drawn up of all unemployed Belgian miners with their qualifications, civil status and where they had last worked. The FEDECHAR got their way; for the moment at least Delattre took no coercive measures.[[1028]](#footnote-1029)

A list was drawn up by the Ministry of Labor, but FEDECHAR was not satisfied. It had to be more detailed. The Ministry of Labor sent a letter to the FEDECHAR at the end of June with a list of mines which had a too high percentage of foreign labor. The message was clear- those mines had to reduce without delay the percentage of aliens among their labor force. The FEDECHAR refused to concede to this demand and insisted that those aliens were hardly replaceable. A eventual replacement was only possible if the authorities would compile a detailed list of unemployed Belgians with whom they could replace some of the aliens.[[1029]](#footnote-1030) It was also pointed out that numerous unemployed miners refused under divers pretexts to do the jobs the immigrants did.[[1030]](#footnote-1031) The unions retorted that the transport facilities should be improved to facilitate the replacement of the immigrants with unemployed miners.[[1031]](#footnote-1032) The unions also responded that the professional categories had to be respected. One could not expect a skilled miner -father of a family- to be satisfied with the wage of an haulier.[[1032]](#footnote-1033)

The Socialist Minister of Labor A.Delattre felt that the FEDECHAR was stringing him along. He decided to take the issue into his own hands and on August 23, 1935 enacted a Decree which declared ceilings on the employment of aliens in the Hainaut. The Borinage could only have a maximum of 4,5% aliens among its labor force; the basins of Centre and Charleroi each could have 10%. More than three thousand foreign miners had to be fired, 2,112 in Charleroi, 849 in the Centre basin and 336 in the Borinage.[[1033]](#footnote-1034) The Trotskists and the numerically more important Communists protested; solidarity with foreign labor was hardly an element in the resistance to the Ministerial Decree.[[1034]](#footnote-1035) More important was the attitude of the mining companies. The FEDECHAR protested strongly- they felt cheated. Their voluntary cooperation to a gradual replacement of the immigrant miners depending on the availability of Belgians was now rewarded with this coercive measure.[[1035]](#footnote-1036) This protest was to no avail. The mining companies had to fire their foreign labor. A few hundred North Africans who had been working in the basin of Charleroi for more than 10 years were fired, also about 200 Poles were dismissed.[[1036]](#footnote-1037) In the Borinage probably few if any aliens were dismissed as the mining companies were reluctant to yield to government pressure and waited to see what the authorities would do.[[1037]](#footnote-1038) Two months after the Ministerial Decree was enacted in Hainaut only 417 of the 3,297 immigrants scheduled to be dismissed had been fired.[[1038]](#footnote-1039)

Attempts to replace these few hundred immigrants with unemployed Belgian miners turned out to be very difficult. Most of the aliens dismissed were unskilled miners (especially hauliers) and Belgian unemployed miners of any other category refused to do that work.[[1039]](#footnote-1040) The difficulty in finding labor to replace the immigrants even led to the outbidding of Belgian miners.[[1040]](#footnote-1041)

A second element that hindered the implementation of the Ministerial Decree was that dismissed immigrants could stay in Belgium and become a burden on public welfare. According to article 5 of the Ministerial decree the dismissed aliens could be repatriated by the Belgian authorities. The Polish as well as the French embassy (Poles and Algerians were the victims par excellence of the dismissals) thus refused to pay for the return trip.[[1041]](#footnote-1042) The Sûreté applied to the mines to co-finance the repatriation of these dismissed immigrants, but the mines refused any cooperation in this field.[[1042]](#footnote-1043) Several hundred of the dismissed North Africans and Slavs applied to be repatriated. It seems that the Sûreté had insufficient financial means of assuring the repatriation of all the applicants.[[1043]](#footnote-1044) However, by the time the authorities realized that they would not be able to process all the applicants and that some destitute dismissed miners willing to return to their country of origin would remain in Belgium the Ministerial Decree had already been revoked.

The main reason for the revocation of the Ministerial Decree was of a diplomatic nature. In order to show their disapproval of the measure some mines stated on the immigrants' discharge certificate that they were fired because of the Ministerial Decree of August 23. Thus, on September 15, 1935 the mines received instructions from the authorities that the Russians, Italians, Swiss, Dutch and Luxemburgers were not to be fired. The French (including the Algerians) were also added to this list by a circular letter of 20 September.[[1044]](#footnote-1045) The exemption of the citizens of the neighboring countries is not a surprise. It was important that diplomatic relations with France, Luxemburg. Switzerland and the Netherlands not be jeopardized by this measure and in particular labor treaties prohibited any discriminative practices. The Italians were also exempted by the Belgian-Italian trade agreement of 27 June 1935. This treaty had a secret clause in which the Belgian authorities agreed not to intervene in the right to work of 4,700 Italians who were working in the Belgians mines. This Belgian concession was given in exchange for the export to Italy of the production of those miners- 1 million tons of coal every year.[[1045]](#footnote-1046) The Russian immigrants were exempted because they were protected by the international Convention of 1933. Anyway they could not be repatriated as they had no place to go. They had come to stay so their dismissal would imply that they would become a burden on public welfare.[[1046]](#footnote-1047)

On October the second Delattre semi-officially suspended the Decree.[[1047]](#footnote-1048) He even advised the mines, after diplomatic pressure from the French embassy in favor of the Algerians, to re-engage the North Africans who had been fired.[[1048]](#footnote-1049) The FEDECHAR was asked to continue replacing the immigrants with Belgians just as before the publication of the Ministerial Decree.[[1049]](#footnote-1050) The official character of the dismissals, however, had to be masked. The discharge certificate was not to refer to the decree; one could simply enter, for example, "reduction of personnel". FEDECHAR refused to do so and said that the mining companies would continue to mention the actual reason for the dismissal- namely the decree.[[1050]](#footnote-1051) This veto by the FEDECHAR resulted in Delattre officially revoking the decree by the end of the month.[[1051]](#footnote-1052)

**8.The "Rationalization ionalization" of the Radical Alien Policy, 1936-1937**

1. **A Liberal Immigration Policy**

By 1933 the state had the arms to implement a strict immigration policy. The authorities did make extensive use of this possibility to restrict immigration. Political change in 1935 -the Government P.Van Zeeland- did not alter the halt to immigration. By 1936 allowances were made for a few categories of immi­grants. The restriction on Dutch immigra­tion which had been introduced in April 1935 because of growing unemployment was lifted in 1936. The Dutch-Belgian protocol of April 1936 guaranteed the Dutch immigrants an immediate labor permit.[[1052]](#footnote-1053) As a result of the Belgian-Swiss agreement of March 30, 1935 the immigration of the Swiss was no longer restricted.[[1053]](#footnote-1054) Due to the economic recovery not only Dutch, Swiss and Luxemburg citizens, but other groups of immi­grants could immigrate into Belgium as well.

Labor Immigration Explodes, Legally and Illegally

The decline in the number of expellees from 1932 onwards continued. In these years the border guards continued to refuse "only" a few thousand aliens entrance into Belgium per year. In particular, the number of immi­grants who were removed from Belgium declined considerably between 1935 and 1937.[[1054]](#footnote-1055) This low number of expellees did not imply a decline in immigration, but rather a more lenient attitude of the Sûreté. This more lenient attitude of the Sûreté was in spite of itself. The Sûreté was forced to yield to the pressure of powerful economic interests to regularize the sojourn of all undocu­mented immigrants who were willing to work in the mines or agriculture. The Sûreté gave in very reluctantly. They argued that it would be the beginning of the end of the newly established control over immigration.[[1055]](#footnote-1056) The num­ber of immigrants who crossed the border illegally grew spectaculary in 1937.

The Sûreté insisted in June on stopping the flood. Immigra­tion got totally out of control. The Minister of Justice, the Liberal de Laveleye agreed that control over immigration should be reaffirmed. Even those illegal immigrants who had obtained a work permit from the Ministry of Labor should be removed and the Labor Minister should refuse any application for a work permit by undocumented immigrants. No more illegal crossings of the border could be tolerated. These expulsions would make clear to the immigrants and the employers alike that the regula­tion of immigration was being strictly attended to by the authori­ties.[[1056]](#footnote-1057) These firm intentions hardly materialized. Powerful economic interests again and again pressed to postpone the implementation of a strict immigration policy. The mining compa­nies in particular insisted that the undocumented immigrants were a valuable source of miners.

In 1937 some categories of labor obtained permis­sion to immigrate into Belgium. Hotel personnel, miners, quarry workers, farm hands and domestic servants were all officially being recruited. How it came about that these people were again welcome will be analyzed further on. The Sûreté however took precautions for the future. Strict instructions were given to the municipalities to no longer grant an identity card to labor migrants. The administrative transfer of immigrants from the foreigner register to the population register had to be kept to a minimum.[[1057]](#footnote-1058) If immigrants did not acquire residency status, it would be easier to dispose of them in the future.

An innovation in the immigration policy in this period was that the illegal immigration of "refugees" was pardoned. This breach of the law was over­looked due to the involuntary nature of their escape. Refugees were entitled to appeal for asylum even if they had come into the country illegally. This liberalization was part of a new refugee policy which established firmly the category "refugee" in Belgium's alien policy.

Refugees Become a Legal Category

The entrance of the Socialists into the government led to a reformula­tion of the refugee policy. Until 1936 political refugees of non-Commu­nist signa­ture had been eligible for a semi-official refugee status. By the Royal Decree of February 20, 1936 the Socialist Minister of Justice E. Soudan gave the refugee procedure an official character.[[1058]](#footnote-1059) An adviso­ry commission was set up which would investigate whether asylum seekers were "genuine" refugees. This commission advised the Minister of Justice if asylum seekers should be granted refugee status. By this provision the refugee policy lost much of its arbitrary nature. The legal recognition of the status of refugee was coupled with an enlargement of the group of those entitled to this status. The "subver­sive" refugees -the Communists- who had until then been excluded from the refugee procedure could now be granted refugee status.[[1059]](#footnote-1060) The definition of refugee did not change. Only political activists whose life or freedom was endangered were eligible for asylum.

The few thousand Jews who fled Germany because of Nazi-antisemi­tism were excluded from the liberalization of the refugee policy. The Socialist Minister of Justice E.Soudan tolerated -just as his predeces­sors- those German Jews temporarily to enable them to organize their emigration. The institu­tional­ization of anti­semitism in Nazi-Germany (the Nuremberg laws) and also from 1935 onwards the persecu­tion in Germany of those who re-emigrated brought no change in the refugee policy. The growing difficulties in finding a definite immigration country meant that the stream of Jewish refugees no longer flowed through so quickly. The Jewish committees found it increasingly difficult to carry the financial burden of sheltering these Jewish tran­sit-refugees. This, together with the temporary softening in Hitler's Jewish policy caused the Jewish community in Belgium to show less solidarity with the refugees from Nazi-Germany. Even organized Belgian Jewry called the motives of their flight suspicious; a consid­erable number of Jewish refugees were so-called economic refugees. The deliberate exclusion of the Jews from German economic live was considered no reason to flee Germany. Also all German refu­gees who had first obtained asylum - even if only temporary- in another country were not helped.[[1060]](#footnote-1061) All those refugees who did not have the support of the Jewish relief organizations - the majority of the arrivals in Belgium- were ordered to leave the country. The remaining Jewish refugees were only considered refugees *sensu lato* and obtained tempo­rary sojourn to organize their emigration.

The conservative Catholic C. du Bus de Warneffe who became Minister of Justice in November 1937 reversed this policy. He immediately tightened the policy towards the Jewish refugees and ordered all new immi­grants, except the refugees *stricto sensu* (the political refugees) to leave Belgium.[[1061]](#footnote-1062)

1. **The Revolution in the Alien Legislation, the Temporary Suppression of Residency Status**

 The Law on the Work Permits

From 1933 onwards a strict immigration policy could be implemented. The advocates of a more generous attitude towards the immigrants residing in Belgium hoped as for an improvement of the legal status of the foreign­ers residing in Belgium. These improvements would no longer cause an increase in immigration as the authorities possessed e­nough power to keep unwanted immigrants out. These reformers who took the lot of the immi­grants in Belgium to heart argued that the demise of the inferior position of aliens legally residing in Belgium would facilitate the integration of these aliens­ into the Belgian population.

These aliens should be considered equal to Belgian citizens in terms of civil and social rights. They should be entitled to all benefits of the social legislation. Thus the reciprocity rule should be abondonned. Also expulsion should be subjected to an ade­quate legal proce­dure; an appeal had to be possible.[[1062]](#footnote-1063) This humanitari­an point of view had to confront powerful interests. The advantages of conserving and even strenghtening a precarious status for aliens residin­g in Belgium were numer­ous.

Within the Ministry of Justice a further reform of the alien legislation was also deemed necessary but their preoccupations were quiet differ­ent. The administration consid­ered an improvement of the legal status inappropriate. It would only increase the illegal immigration.[[1063]](#footnote-1064) The Sûreté also insisted that the "minimal" control over the aliens who were residing in Belgium had to remain intact. An expulsion should not be subject to an appeal procedure.[[1064]](#footnote-1065) On the contrary the administration advocated an enlargement of their powers to dispose of "undesirable" aliens residing in Belgium in order to make expulsions more efficient. H. Bekaert, Director of the Sûreté was the main proponent of a tougher expulsion policy. He advocated the forced repatriation of all aliens who were considered undesirable. Not only those who disturbed the public order -criminals and subversives- , but also businessmen who went bankrupt should be forcibly repatriated. The "offender's" family should also be repatriated. That the family of the expelled alien could remain in the country was, according to Bekaert, one of the crucial factors which caused the expulsion policy to be totally ineffec­tive. Bekaert insisted that an order to leave the country should apply immediately to the whole family.[[1065]](#footnote-1066)

These contradictionary options to reform the alien legislation will be decided by a very different set of concerns. It was not the wish to integrate these immigrants in the national community which was the impetus for a reform of the alien legislation, also the concern with public order had little to do with the reforms of that year. The protec­tion of national labor was the main factor which decided about the changes which will be brought about in the alien legislation. Thus, the labor market position of the immigrants became the central focus of the reform.

The Control Over All Labor Migrants

The Socialist Minister of Labor A.Delattre advocated an enlarge­ment of the powers of the authorities to dispose of "undesirable" aliens residin­g in Belgium. He argued that a lot of immigrants were settled in Belgium without the Ministry of Labor having ever given his opinion about their economic desirabil­ity. Even those aliens who in 1930-1931 on the base of a labor contract had obtained the consent of the Ministry of Labor to their immigra­tion were no exception. In most cases the agreement was no longer valid. These immigrants had unilaterally extended their sojourn beyond the term of this initial work contract and had sometimes even changed profession. Legisla­tion to enable the authorities to keep hold of those intruders in order to remove all aliens who were economically superfluous was, according to Delattre highly desirable. Unemployed Belgians could replace those aliens.

Delattre referred initially -in October 1935, immediately after the failure of the quota law in the mining industry- to the high number of aliens in the mining industry and the hotel sector. In these two sectors, according to Delattre, there were a high number of unemployed Bel­gians available to replace the numer­ous immi­grants. The Minister of Labor estimated that in total about 10,000 aliens could be removed from the labor market. In order to "eliminate" them, the state should finance the voyage to their country of origin. The savings in the unemployment expens­es would outweigh the costs of repatria­tion.[[1066]](#footnote-1067)

Delattre changed dis­course very shortly afterwards; unemployment dimin­ished consider­ably in the following months, certainly in the mine and hotel sector. There was no more need in both sectors to remove foreign labor, on the contrary there was even a shortage of labor in mining. Delattre now accused the immigrants of deteriorating the work conditions; immi­grant labor did even not respect the work condi­tions set by law. They worked longer, in unheal­thy conditions and for a lower pay than the Belgian workers. He argued that this was particu­larly true of immigrants who were employed by co-ethnic entrepren­eurs. Thus, immigrant entrepreneurs competed with Belgian busi­nesses in a disloyal manner. Especially in the "Jewish" economy the abuses were plenty.[[1067]](#footnote-1068) Drastic measures had to be taken.

The Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs P.H.Spaak was also in favor of expanding the power of the authorities over all aliens in Belgium. It would enable the Belgian authorities to retaliate against those coun­tries which expelled or dismissed Belgian migrant workers. A reform of the alien legislation in the sense of an all encompassing control over all foreigners in Belgium would convince the authorities of those countries where Belgians worked not to take any action against Belgian emi­grants or commu­ters. In particular the bold decision in February 1935 of the French government to double the years of sojourn necessary for an automatic renewal of an identity card -from five to ten years- had convinced Spaak that the Belgian authorities had to wield more power over the aliens.

The Government Van Zeeland deemed a further reform of the alien legislation necessary not only because of those specific interests. There was a general sentiment among the Ministers that keeping a grip over immigration into Belgium was not enough, the authorities should also be able to control the sojourn of foreigners who were already residing in Belgium. This would not only curtail their political activities as was already foreseen by the alien law of 1897, but also restrict their economic activities. Foreign labor should not displace national labor, if only for the sole raison that it increased expenditure for the state. The authorities should also be able to expel destitute foreigners, independent of their length of stay in Belgium. The experience of the Depression, when destitute foreigners who had obtained residency status could not be expelled and could even live on welfare, caused a strong majority within the Government to support a farreaching reform of the alien legislation. Beyond controlling the immediate immigration, the state should be able to ensure that migrants continued to serve the "national" interests.

A bill was proposed by Minister of Labor A. Delattre to the Council of Minis­ters on December 7, 1935.[[1068]](#footnote-1069) This bill was an extension of the law of February 15, 1935. Not only foreign laborers who had a temporary residence permit were to apply for a labor permit, but every migrant who worked in wage labor would have to do so, independent of their length of stay in Belgium. Another crucial innova­tion was that not the alien himself, but his future employer would have to apply at the Ministry of Labor for an authorization to employ him.[[1069]](#footnote-1070) This request would be at the same time a demand of the immigrant for a work permit. The application would have to state clearly that the immigrant would receive the same wages as their Belgian colleagues. In addition the employer would have to assure the repatriation of immigrants he recruited abroad. As soon as they were no longer in his service, the employer would be liable for paying their return trip. Permission to the employer and admission of the foreigner would be one and the same formality. The request for permission to employ an alien would have to be preliminary to the employment. The Minister could however exempt urgent cases whereby the application for a work permit had to follow within 24 hours after employment.

The Labor Minister could refuse permission to any demand for the employ­ment of an immigrant who had been residing less than 10 years in Belgium. It is highly likely that the proposal to extend the probationary period of "recent" immigrants from five to ten years was due to the French decision to do so in February 1935. The validity of the work permit of those "recent" immigrants would be limited with respect to the nature and the place of employment and would also be limited in time: a work permit for a "recent" immigrant, a so-called work permit B, could not extend over two years. A refusal of an application for a work permit or for its renewal could be contested at an administrative commission whose decisions were definitive.

A definitive refusal of a work permit would go along with an invitation to leave the country. That this was applicable even to immigrants with an identity card -the administrativeconfirmation of residency status estab­lished by the Royal Decree of August 13, 1933- was **the** crucial innova­tion of the bill. Until then aliens who had acquired an identity card could only because of a threat to public order be expelled (*expulser*). The bill would enable to remove immigrants with an identity card after refusal of a work permit, either because of illegal employment -without a work permit- or be­cause of not possess­ing enough means to assure one's livelihood. In addition if an alien was invited to leave the country, because of the refusal of a work permit would not do so, he could be ordered to do so by royal decree. This possibility was mentioned in the bill to make a penal sanction because of *délit de rupture de ban* possible. Only if an immi­grant who was refused a work permit could guarantee that he could live on his means would he be granted a residency permit. The alien who would be invited to leave the country who had come directly to Belgium from his country of origin could apply to be repatriated.

For those foreigners who had been living for at least ten years in Belgium the employer's demand for a work permit was called a mere administrative formality. However, the application for this socalled labor permit A which was to be repeated with each change of employer or nature of employment had to be preliminary to employment, but would receive always a positive response. Although Delattre stated that a privileged alien should not be restricted in this occupational opportunities, the preliminary permission also necessary to hire a privileged alien and the biannuel renewal would certainly exert a dissuading influence on employers' hiring policy.[[1070]](#footnote-1071)

Hendrik De Man, the Socialist Minister of Public Works was probably the only Minister in the government strongly opposed to this radical reform of the alien legislation. He called the whole scheme, which curtailed the possibilities for the immigrant to look for a better paid job and left the immigrants at the mercy of the administration a *"formida­ble mécanisme oppressif"*. He argued that such legislation was not only unjust, but also economically inefficient and even inapplicable.[[1071]](#footnote-1072) Due to the bureaucratic burden which this legislation intro­duced it would either lead to a prohibition against attracting new immigrant labor or the law would have to be ignored. He argued that the need for addi­tional manpow­er in the labor market is not something an employer can predict in the long run and by the time the whole bureaucratic proce­dure is run through the need for additional manpower may have ceased to exist.

De Man already opposed the very principle which was shared by the propo­nents of the bill, namely that the authorities had to discourage the use of foreign labor. He argued that some industries needed foreign labor. Was the diamond industry not the perfect example of the positive influence of foreign labor on the Belgian economy? New legislation to prevent any action against Belgian labor abroad, argued De Man, was not neces­sary. The quota law could still be used in case a radical action was neces­sary.[[1072]](#footnote-1073) The arguments evoked by Minister of Labor A.De­lattre -a Socialist too- did not convince De Man. De Man argued that in order to make foreign labor respect our social legislation - a problem which was limited to a small number of sectors (in particular ethnic businesses and the garment industry)- a few dozen labor inspectors would be sufficient, along with an expul­sion of the most infamous employers. De Man was clearly out of tune with the protection­ism which held sway within the govern­ment and also beyond it. He ignored the fact that this bill was only a step, albeit an important one in a protectionist reform of the alien legislation.

The bill was hardly changed when it was put before Parliament.[[1073]](#footnote-1074) The first Government P.Van Zeeland had obtained full powers to redress the state budget. The decrees on financial affairs only had to be ratified by Parliament. This new alien bill was joined to a collection of finan­cially related decrees. The reports of the Commission of Finance of both Chambers did not mention in their brief introduction that a radical change of the alien legisla­tion was also included. Three weeks after the government introduced the bill, Parliament voted favorably without any discussion. Parliament voted this law seemingly ignorant of the radical implications. The voting of this law expanded the powers of the Belgian execu­tive over aliens. The Royal Decree of March 31, 1936 legalized the expulsion, because of economic reasons of migrants with residency status.[[1074]](#footnote-1075) The Ministry of Justice started immediately to tune its policy in granting identity-cards to the new legisation. The Ministry limited the registration in the population register of migrants to a bare minimum.[[1075]](#footnote-1076) The confusion which could be created by the expulsion of migrants with an identity card because of the refusal of a work permit or a peddlers' license had to be prevented, thus the identity card had only to be granted after ten years of sojourn.[[1076]](#footnote-1077)

The executive measures of the law of March 31, 1936 weakened only slightly the provisions of the bill in relation to the privileged aliens. The hiring of these aliens was from August 1937 no longer dependent on a preliminary authorization of the Minister of Labor. Although these aliens still had to apply for a work permit A it impeded much less their occupational opportuni­ties.[[1077]](#footnote-1078)

Within the Ministry of Labor one hoped to keep the category of privi­leged aliens as small as possible. Bolle, the Director of the Minis­try of Labor proposed defining the ten years of sojourn for the calcula­tion of privileged alien status as ten years in the Belgian labor market. He proposed that for foreign students only the years of sojourn after the end of their studies should count. For children of immigrants the years before 15 should not be calcu­lated for the 10 years necessary to obtain the status of privileged alien.[[1078]](#footnote-1079) Both restrictions aimed at the exten­sion of the inferior status of the immigrants. The Ministry of Justice could not accept this. The sojourn in Belgium of immigrants, even in the case of students and children had to be calcu­lated from the moment that it was legal.[[1079]](#footnote-1080) Notwithstanding this reprimand it seems that the Ministry of Labor arbitrarily extended its power beyond the legal limits, by refusing to grant labor permits to privileged immigrants.[[1080]](#footnote-1081)

The Reaction of the Employers and the Trade Unions

We have no data concerning the attitude of the employers towards the new alien legislation, but given the provisions of this law radical opposition to this legislation was not expected from industry. There had been a precedent: at the end of the 1920s the CCI and particularly the FEDECHAR had endorsed the Holvoet bill which would have regulated the access of immigrants to the labor market in a similar fashion.[[1081]](#footnote-1082) The employers had then believed that state control over migrant labor could serve their interests by enforcing the stabilization of their foreign manpower. The employers' endorsement of the Holvoet bill has to be considered in the context of 1929 with its very tight labor market and pro-business government. Although during the Depression the employ­ers were not a demanding partner in the reform of the alien legislation, they at least verbally did not oppose a state control over foreign la­bor.[[1082]](#footnote-1083)

The situation in the beginning of 1936 was different. The labor market was still slack, although in some segments shortages started to be noted. Also the political situation was different. The Cabinet P. Van Zeeland had an important Socialist participation and the whole govern­ment aimed at a more autonomous state action. The absence of the employers' position in the discussions on the law of March 31, 1936 is an indication of the different way in which this government functioned.

Although we lack any positive proof -the absence of protest by the mining companies is however an indication- we assume that the employers still considered state regulation of immigrant labor in their inter­ests. The employers were without doubt pleased that the participa­tion of the unions was not institutionalized in the new policy. In 1929 and 1930 they had strongly insisted that the unions be excluded from decision making in this field. That the employers had to demand work permits for their immi­grant workers was probably also considered a positive element.

The trade unions seemed to be much less satisfied with the new legislation. However, since the beginning of the 1920s they had sought a regulation of migrant labor in Belgium. Especially during the eco­nomic downturn their call for state-control over the foreigners on the labor market was amplified. The impo­tence of the unions to check the power of the employers meant that state control over migrant labor was deemed necessary by all trade unionists. The modalities of the regulation of March 1936, however, were strongly criticized by the Socialist union.[[1083]](#footnote-1084) The main criticism emanating from this union was that foreign labor was at the mercy of the employers. It was the employers who had to ask for a labor permit, which made the immi­grants totally dependent on them. The Socialist MP M.Somer­hausen formulated it eloquently in his virulent attack on the law:

"L'ouvrier étranger est enchainé à son patron. Le pa­tron en demandant le permis de travail le sauve de l'expulsion. Pour l'obtenir, le patron doit faire d'in­nombrables démarches, écrire au Ministère, remplir des formulaires, faire légaliser sa signature, solliciter l'audi­ence, faire an­tichambre, etc..etc.. Pour obtenir du pa­tron de tels services, quelle ne doit pas être la docilité du travailleur étranger. Il fera des heures supplémen­taires, il trava­il­­lera à salaire réduit, il rampera litéral­ent pour obtenir la "carte bleue" et l'ay­ant obtenue, pour la conserver."[[1084]](#footnote-1085)

M.Somerhausen and others opposed to the new legislation pointed out that respect for the social legislation by immigrant labor -the ultimate goal of the law of March 31, 1936- could only be obtained if the immigrants felt save in Belgium. Only if they were sure that their membership in a trade union or their participation in a strike would not jeopardize their job or even their sojourn in Belgium would they be ready to fight for decent work conditio­ns. The new law only deteriorated the position of the immigrants and thus would only worsen the work conditions in those segments of the labor market where immigrants were employed.[[1085]](#footnote-1086)

The criticism was vehementely articulated by the groups on the left of the Socialist trade union movement. The Federation of trade unions of Brussels, strongly supported by the locals with a strong presence of immigrants (leather and fur, garment and hats) organized a meeting in April 1937 to denounce the new law.[[1086]](#footnote-1087) The Belgian Communists strongly insisted for changes in the law.[[1087]](#footnote-1088) This sharp criticism was not at all appreciated by the architect of the new law, the Socialist Minister of Labor A.Delattre. He retorted that now when the long demanded policy on foreign labor had finally taken effect, it was only being criticized.[[1088]](#footnote-1089) The CS, the leadership of the Socialist Trade Union, did not seek to abolish the law; the union considered a permanent control over all foreign labor essential. This union asked for two important amendments to the law. The immigrant worker had to ask himself for a work permit. He should not be dependent on the employer for his sojourn in Belgium. The most crucial amendment of the CS was that not only the employers and the state should regulate the immigration, but the unions should be consulted as well. That the expansion of the state's role on the labor market occurred without the union's participation was unacceptable to the unions.[[1089]](#footnote-1090) The trade union's amendments were to no avail. Despite numerous visits and letters to the former president of the Socialist miners' union, the then Labor Minister A.Delattre, the unions' demands were never met. Employers remained responsible for demand­ing the work permit and the unions had no say in the decision making process.[[1090]](#footnote-1091)

The New Alien Legislation also to be Applied to Immigrant Hawkers

The first Cabinet P.Van Zeeland not only changed the legislation of foreign labor, but also altered the legislation applicable to immigrant hawkers. By the Royal Decree of March 30, 1936 this Cabinet enacted a liberalization of the law of January 13, 1935.[[1091]](#footnote-1092) In 1935 the law had aimed at the removal of all immi­grants from peddling. The "national­ization" of the peddlers' world had not turned out to be very easy. The law of March 30, 1936 revoked the resolute refusal to grant the ven­dors' license to subjects of countries where Belgium had no analogous interests, the so-called reciprocity-rule.[[1092]](#footnote-1093) A ten year period of resi­dence was taken up as the criteria for automatic approval of a license. In the absence of reciprocity, all other applications of foreigners were not approved. In addition the peddlers' rights were strengthened by the introduc­tion of an appeal procedure for the merchants whose peddler's card had been revoked because of its being " detrimental to Belgium's economic interests." Finally, the difference in the color of the badges for foreign and Belgian peddlers was done away with. As a result of this liberalization, not 10% but 50% of the applications of aliens received a positive response.[[1093]](#footnote-1094)

The sharpest edges of the pre-eminently nationalistic law on peddling of January 1935 had been filed down. The new Minister of Justice, the Socialist E. Soudan, attempted to give the law concerning peddling a social dimension as well. He said that only foreign peddlers and market vendors who brought the work conditions of their Belgian colleagues into danger would be refused a peddler's license. For Soudan, the objective of his policy was not the "national­ization" of the peddler's world, but the improvement of the lot of the ped­dlers.[[1094]](#footnote-1095) This reasoning was already difficult to apply to the labor market, but to transpose it to the trade world was much more complicat­ed, because here the mecha­nism of competition was much more complex. The incapacity to evaluate the intake of new traders led to an immigration halt in the vending trade. This new restrictionist vision took as state interest the private inter­ests of the commercial class whereby every new trader was a rival. The final outcome of the administration's policy became the exclusion of the most recent immigrants. Certain nationalities, such as the Ger­mans, the Czechoslova­kians and also the Stateless, in the case that they had not established themselves before 1927, remained banned from peddling. For many Poles the decision had been made only temporarily. 1,145 market vendors of Polish nationality had obtained a peddling license by May 1936. 645 of them had probably been in Belgium for 10 years and acquired their permit on the basis of the law of March 31, 1936. 500 of these Poles had been in Belgium for less that 10 years but obtained (in the framework of the Belgian-Polish trade relations) a temporary peddler's license.[[1095]](#footnote-1096)

The permits which were granted in April 1936 to 500 Polish peddlers who had been in Belgium less than 10 years were dependent on Polish compensation. This condition remained a constant threat for these Polish traders.[[1096]](#footnote-1097) Not­with­standing the trade agreement of April 2 1936, Belgian export to Poland increased very little. The shortages in Pola­nd's global trade balance meant that the Polish authorities insti­tuted a strict control of every import, whereby quite a few products -by means of a regime of quota restriction- were no longer allowed to be imported. Between December 7, 1936 and January 7,1937 Polish and Belgian authorities negotiated once again. Belgium walked away with a number of exclusive import concessions, through which Belgian export into Poland sharply increased. The Belgian deficit in the trade balance went down.[[1097]](#footnote-1098) When the Polish Minister of Trade, Roman, was visiting Belgium in April 1937, nevertheless, complaints rained down about Polish protec­tionism. The agree­ment of January 1937 was clearly not carried out to the letter. Belgium gave the Polish authorities a five month extension before taking retaliation on the Polish peddlers. At the end of September 1937 peddlers' licenses were revoked for 327 Polish peddlers.[[1098]](#footnote-1099) These Poles had been in Belgium for less than 10 years and were issued a peddler's license in 1936 only because of the extra advantages which the Polish government had promised. The exact reason for the negative closing of this file is unknown to us.[[1099]](#footnote-1100)

The Royal Decree of March 30, 1936, which opened the peddling trade to foreigners who had been in Belgium for 10 years, could find no favor in the eyes of the Belgian merchants. The Belgian trade world had initially reacted positively to the regulation of peddling; finally the authorities had owned up to their responsibilities. The "disastrous" competition by foreign market vendors and peddlers could now be weeded out. The relaxation of the legislation was severely criticized. Hawking was for them synony­mous with dishonesty and fraudulence. The authorities had to weed out this evil by the root. They could not approve of the fact that the foreigners were still allowed to peddle.[[1100]](#footnote-1101) This demand for a total prohibition on hawking by foreign­ers was repeated until the end of the thirties. This insistance was in vain, the authorities did not want to diverge from the principle that a ten year residence granted certain social rights to immigrants.

An Exceptional Status for the Refugees

During the Depression became generally accepted that refugees were a case apart. The Royal Decree of February 20, 1936 created the official category "refugee" within the immigration practice of the Belgian authorities. In these years this category found also an applica­tion in the social domain.

There was some domestic pressure to grant "refugees" unconditional occupational opportunities. Their right to work should not be subordinate to the priority of national labor. As refugees they had nowhere to return to, they should be granted the possibility to earn a living in Belgium.[[1101]](#footnote-1102) This was a minority position. Even most Socialists argued that also refugees'access to the labor market should be depended on the vacancies in the labor market. Only when no Belgian was available could immigrants, refugees and economic immigrants alike, take these jobs.[[1102]](#footnote-1103)

That "refugees" became a privileged group of immigrants resulted largely out of the international refugee regime. Belgium had adhered to the Convention on the Russian "refugees" with reservations. Belgium had postponed the ratification until the French authorities agreed to sign it. In December 1936 the convention on the Russian "refugees" of 1933 was ratified by the French.[[1103]](#footnote-1104) The Belgian government in turn put the Convention before Parliament. The Socialist MP Rolin strongly criticized the Belgian proviso. That Belgium adhered to the Convention, but wanted to retain the right to expel "refugees" and to refuse them benefits of social legislation because of a lack of reciproci­ty Rolin called "a bad example of national egoism". With the law of July, 29 1937 the Convention in its full force of law was extended to Belgium.[[1104]](#footnote-1105) A Russian refugee whose quality of refugee was acknowledged by the Belgian authorities and who had acquired residency status in Belgium could now profit from a more favourable regime.[[1105]](#footnote-1106)

Not only the regime of the Russian "refugees" in Belgium was influenced by international agreements; the refugees from Nazi-Germany also acquired some international protection. An international conference was convened in July 1936 to establish legal protection for German refugees similar to that existing for Nansen refugees. The representatives of the different frontline states (the states bordering Nazi-Germany) adamantly refused to yield to even a minimal extent the power of their states to control the immigration of German refugees. In contrast to the definite conclusion of the Russian refugees crisis the exodus of refugees from Nazi-Germany was still going on. To yield some of their national sovereignty to a binding international agreement could have unforseen repercussions. The authorities would otherwise be defenceless if the immigration suddenly intensified as receiving refugees would be an obligation resulting from international law.[[1106]](#footnote-1107) In the final agreement the frontline states retained complete sovereignty to decide who was a refugee protected by the agreement. The definition of a refugee from Germany adopted by the conference was not a universal definition. Not objective criteria -the loss of protection by the German authorities- decided who was a refugee. It were the authorities of the receiving country who decided if a refugee was eligible for refugee status.[[1107]](#footnote-1108) In February 1938 a new conference was convened to conclude an international convention on the status of refugees from Germany. The Convention of February 10, 1938 repeated the terms of the arrangement of July 4, 1936, but added some social provisions. The "refugees" were to be exempted after three years of legal sojourn in exil from the legislation protecting the national labor market. Belgium adhered to this convention, but stated that "refugees" from Germany would only be exempted from the legislation protecting the national labor market after three years of residency in Belgium. Residency was understood as acquiring residency status, thus an inscription in the population register. Thus the "refu­gees" from Germany would be granted the status of privileged foreigner (labor permit A) only after five years of sojourn in Belgium. This restriction was introduced under pressure from the Ministry of Labor who did not want the "refugees" to be treated more favourably than the nationals of those state with whom Belgium had reached a bilateral labor agreement.[[1108]](#footnote-1109)

The Belgian authorities made provisions in their alien legislation which spared the "refugees". Russian "refugees" obtained a special status in the peddlers' law of March 30, 1936. Thus, Russian "refugees" obtained a vendors' license if they had sojourned less than 10 year in Belgium.[[1109]](#footnote-1110) However, applications for a vendors' license of the German "refugees" were rejected in 1936. The refusal to grant the German "refugees" a vendors' licence was probably motivated by the large number of Communists among them.[[1110]](#footnote-1111) All "refugees" were also exempted from a strict application of the law of March 31, 1936 requiring work permits.[[1111]](#footnote-1112) Just as any foreign worker, every "refugee" working in some­body's service had to apply for a work permit. Most Russian "refugees" residing legally in Belgium received a work permit A. The German "refugees" had not yet acquired the status of privileged foreign­er. A work permit A depended for them on a sojourn of five years. Although the "refu­gees" from Germany with less than five years sojourn -just as any "recent" immi­grant- were only tolerated in the labor market to supplement local labor some allowances were made for them.[[1112]](#footnote-1113)

1. The Uneasy Implementation of the New Policy

By March 1936 the Labor Minister A. Delattre had abated his ambitions with the new alien legislation. He no longer aimed for the removal of 10,000 immi­grants. He foresaw refusing "only" work permits to 5% of the 80,000 foreign work­ers. Their replacement would imply a reduction of unem­ployment among the Belgians with 4,000 units.[[1113]](#footnote-1114) The peddlers' legislation also aimed at the removal of a few thousand immigrants: 1,700 peddlers were refused their peddlers' licenses in 1936.

Hence about 6,000 immigrants who had immigrated into Belgium after 1926 were to leave the country. For those immigrants who had come directly from their country of origin one million francs had been provided within the budget of the Ministry of Justice of 1936 to repatriate them; in 1937 probably even half a million more was provided.[[1114]](#footnote-1115) Although we have no precise figures on the repatriation of these immigrants, there were certainly a number of immigrants deprived by the authorities of their means of livelihood who returned to their country of origin at the expense of the Belgian authorities.[[1115]](#footnote-1116)

Delattre intended to refuse 4,000 immigrants their work permits and expel them. The outworkers were the first category of immigrant workers to regularise their situation. They were the target par excellence of Delattre's policy of eliminating "unwanted" immigrants. These outworkers had to apply for a work permit before September 15, 1936.

In the diamond industry no victims were made among the immigrants. The Polish, Czech, Dutch... diamond workers all obtained a work permit. The diamond sector was in a boom. All available qualified manpower -be they immigrants or not- had to be used.[[1116]](#footnote-1117) Between April 1936 and March 23, 1938 2,300 work permits were granted to foreign diamond workers who had already been in Belgium for more than 10 years. Half of this number were highly qualified Dutch diamond workers. Moreover, another 885 work permits B were granted to migrants who had only arrived in Belgium after 1927.[[1117]](#footnote-1118) Most of the immigrant outworkers in other sectors were less lucky. Very soon after their application for a work permit in the fall of 1936 came the verdict. Probably hundreds of outworkers; garmet workers, hatmak­ers, leather workers.... received no work permit, but an order to leave the country. All of them had been living in Belgium less than ten years, thus the great wave of immigration in 1928-1929 was not exempted. Immigrants who had already sojourned in Belgium for eight or nine years were ordered to leave the country.[[1118]](#footnote-1119) Some of them appealed to the administrative commission against the decision, but mostly to no avail.[[1119]](#footnote-1120) The Ministry of Justice then ordered the police to revoke the identity cards of these aliens with residency status.[[1120]](#footnote-1121) It seems that in particular the gar­ment workers were the victims of this drastic measure. This elimination policy put important economic interests into jeopardy. Large department stores and fashion houses insisted that some of these outworkers were of crucial impor­tance for their businesses.[[1121]](#footnote-1122) As a result in March 1937 some so-called final decisions of the adminis­tra­tive commission were revoked. The situation of the outworkers had to be re-evaluated.[[1122]](#footnote-1123) It seems that the re-evaluation of the situation of the outworkers led to a much more positive judgment of their influence on the Belgian economy as Delattre put off the elimination of the "unwanted" immigrants at the end of June 1937. He decided to grant all immigrants who had sojourned more than 2 years in Belgium a labor permit.[[1123]](#footnote-1124) Delattre justified this reversal by referring to the economic recovery which had set in by the second half of 1935. Unemployment in the metallurgic industry was low and by 1936 there was a labor shortage in the mining sector. The decline in unemployment among Belgian workers, however, was not general. While the export industries recovered, those sectors which were producing for the domestic market remained in trouble.[[1124]](#footnote-1125)

The economic recovery can only be a partial explanation for Delattre's decision not to "eliminate" some "unwanted" immigrants. Three explanations can be put forward for Delattre's leniency. First of all it turned out that the "unwanted" immigrants, for example the Jewish migrants in the garment industry, were not that unwanted. They played a crucial role in certain sectors of the Belgian economy, because of their flexibility and qualifications. Two additional factors were an administrative incapacity to deal with the thousands of applications and new survival strategies of the immigrants.A New Survival Strategy, the Rush to Self-employment Certain immigrants circumvented the legislation by changing their professional status. Some labor immigrants established themselves as self-employed artisans or shopkeepers, hence they no longer had to apply for a work permit. Also some peddlers did so. This was not always a conscious strategy. Unemployment among migrants rose in 1936 due to the mere fact that a lot of employers were not eager to demand a work permit for their foreign laborers. A lot of employers fired all their alien employees as they ignored the exact terms of the law and did not want to run the risk of being forced to pay for the repatriation of their foreign labor.[[1125]](#footnote-1126)

Be it enforced upon the immigrant or a conscious decision not to be refused a work permit and thus to be expelled the consequence was that the number of small one-man-businesses run by immigrants rapidly increased, in commerce as well as in industry. This did not always mean that these migrants were effectively independent. Just as in the twen­ties, and certainly during the Depression, quite a bit of work in half-industrial sectors was sub-contracted to outworkers. The number of outworkers among the migrants rose sharply in the period 1936-1939.[[1126]](#footnote-1127) Graph 8 gives an overview of the businesses which were run by Polish Jews in the city of Brussels in May 1939 and the dates of their establish­ment. Here we are dealing with commercial as well as industrial busi­nesses; the sudden appearance of Polish businesses, as the only survival strategy for these migrants after 1935, is clearly illustrated in this way.[[1127]](#footnote-1128)

The rather successful introduction of Jewish immigrants into the Belgian economic structure in the twenties by the creation of small ethnic niches was much more difficult now. In the first place the economic climate was not such that a new market could be tapped; second, a joint effort by the Jewish migrants in small and medium-sized businesses was not simple since the employment of non-immediate family members was dependent on the authorities' approval. The distribution of their products also became more difficult because of the vendors' licenses. The "Jewish" economy responded to the attack on their distri­bution network by means of sales representatives who sold the merchandise of the "Jewish" economy on order.s alternatives were limited, given the restrictive attitude of the Belgian authorities, these "Jewish" sectors became so overpopulated that there was no longer any possibility for economic growth in these businesses. When the German military authorities forced the Jewish businesses into liquidation in 1941, it became clear that the "Jewish" economy mostly consisted of extremely small half-industrial businesses that were only able to survive by hard work and low profits.[[1128]](#footnote-1129)

These Jewish businesses were able to find a market thanks to their democratic prices, made possible by the extreme sacrifice of the Jewish migrant communi­ty and the lower quality that was supplied. A network of sales representa­tives, market vendors and established shopkeepers took care of the sale of these products. The use of modern sales techniques (selling on order) guaranteed that a broad cliental could be addressed.

The Administrative Incapacity

The implementation of the legislation was hindered considerably by the lack of personnel in the Service of Foreign Labor of the Ministry of Labor. Certainly until the summer of 1937 the new service had no control whatsoever over the labor market positions of the foreigners.[[1129]](#footnote-1130) After the "amnesty" of June 1937 when all immigrants who had sojourned more than two years in Belgium received a work permit the situation improved slightly. Even then the Department could not process all the demands they received, let alone establish a documentation service to evaluate the demands or control the implemen­tation of the law. Other authori­ties which were authorized to sanction infractions of the legislation concern­ing the employment of aliens could not fulfill their task. The Judiciary insisted in December 1936 on starting proceedings against the immigrants who had not yet regularized their employment. The Ministry of Labor agreed in principle that a strict control over the implementation of the law was neces­sary, but because of its inability to process all the applications legal enforce­ment was not yet appropriate. This administrative incapacity, but also as we will see later the labor shortage in mining, meant that a strict alien policy was impossible to implement and would be economically damaging.[[1130]](#footnote-1131) The administrative incapacity of the Ministry of Labor not only hindered the implementation of the new legislation; it also led to tensions with the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Justice had a long established tradition of handling applica­tions for residence permits. This administration now had to take into account the decisions of the Ministry of Labor. The Sûreté was very negative about its new partner in the surveillance of aliens in Belgium. The routine which this office had established in dealing with aliens was put into jeopardy by the defective functioning of their partner in the Ministry of Labor. The Sûreté was forced to grant temporary residence permits because the decision on the economic utility of immigrants was still pending. On the other hand illegal immigrants sometimes received work permits from the Ministry of Labor before the Ministry of Justice had given its advice concerning their sojourn. Some immigrants, whom the Sûreté considered "undesirable" then tried to regularize their sojourn with these work permits. The Sûreté argued that bad communi­cation between the two departments, but more importantly the incapac­ity of the Service of Foreign Labor to process the demands resulted in no control whatsoever of immigrant labor.[[1131]](#footnote-1132)

Delattre resented the limitations which economic interests, administrative incapacity and the rush to self employment imposed on his power. He proposed to prevent immigrants to deteriorate the work conditions by extending his mandate. He drafted a bill to make private economic initiatives of foreigners in industry or trade dependent on official authorisa­tion. The aim was not to curtail self-employment. This bill sought to assure that foreign entrepreneurs obeyed the social legislation, paid their taxes and did not use legally prohibited trade practices. The bill provided for the expulsion of all foreign employers who did not pay their employees the minimum wage, let them work on Sundays or more than 8 hours a day etc.[[1132]](#footnote-1133)

Although Delattre remained Minister of Labor until 1939 this bill was totally ignored in the following years, notwith­standing the vehement discussions just before the onset of the Second World War on the necessity of controlling foreign entrepreneurs. Delattre's objectives could probably be attained by normal channels. The authorities had a sufficient control apparatus to enforce respect for the Belgian legislation. The labor inspection could proceed against those entrepreneurs of Belgian and foreign nationality who disrespected the labor protective legislation. Tax evasion was difficult for foreigners. Small businesses run by foreigners -not those directed by Belgians- were obliged to keep an up to date detailed account ­of their affairs. Each year the Ministry of Finance also demanded an advance of the taxes due for the next fiscal year from all foreign business­men. These businessmen who had not yet obtained an identity card had to present for the renewal of their temporary residence permit a declaration of the Ministry of Finance that they had fullfilled their fiscal obligations.[[1133]](#footnote-1134) Only in 1939 would foreign entrepreneurs became a central focus of state-concern.

The Economic recovery needs immigrants

By 1931 the state had already obtained the competence to regulate the immigration of labor migrants. When the Ministry of Labor in 1931 had decided to let the unions participate in the decision making on further immigration, this had caused virulent protest on the part of the mining companies.

The next six years years saw a reduction in the power of the mining companies, which lost ground both within the mining industry and in relation to the state. Even the mining companies in the basin of Limburg were no longer all-powerful. They had to come to terms with a Christian Democratic miners' union which by 1935 was strongly implanted in this basin. The strike in the summer of 1936 illustrated spectacularly the changing power constellation. The success of the strike was due not only to stronger unions, but also to the support the trade unions received from the Cabinet Van Zeeland. Crucial for our focus on migration is the fact that the state had strengthened its position by introducing a system of work permits for all alien labor. This made it more easy to sanction the unauthorized employment of aliens.

The Recruitment of Aliens for the Mines

The revival of the economy after the devaluation in 1935 meant that coal production could once again be increased. Both the partially and the fully unemployed miners were able to return to working six days a week. The mining companies wanted to introduce more flexibility into the work permit system by legalizing internal mobility within the mining sector. Migrants who had been granted a work permit for a specific mine should be immediately permitted to be recruited by another mine. The mining companies advocated the distribution of work permits for the mining sector and not for a specific mine.[[1134]](#footnote-1135) They also asked for the immediate legalization of employment in the mining sector of every alien legally residing in Belgium. These proposals aimed at a flexible administrative regulation of the employment of aliens in the mining sector. The acute labor shortage in the mining sector was, according to FEDECHAR, sufficient reason to for acquiescing quickly to these proposals.

The Ministry of Labor endorsed the proposals, but was not prepared to surrender its recently acquired power to regulate the labor market in the mining sector. The need for manpower was accepted and FEDECHAR was able to come away from the negotiations with some concessions. Temporary permission was given to allow the immediate enlistment in the mining sector -without previous approval by the authorities- of aliens who were legally residing in the country.[[1135]](#footnote-1136) This concession, obviously, also sanctioned the mobility of foreign miners within the mining sector. The recruitment of the sons of these miners was now also tolerated. The authorities still had the last word. Permission for employment had to be requested post factum and if the administration was of the opinion that unemployed Belgian workers were available the foreigner - at any rate those who had not yet been granted a working permit A - had to be laid off immediately.

The inability of the administration to deal with all demands caused legalization to drag on long after the alien was hired.[[1136]](#footnote-1137) There was in any case little need for a correction in the employment policy of the mining companies. Not only the increasing demand for coal, but also the shortening of the working day brought in after the general strike in June 1936 caused the mining companies to regard the situation in the labor market as alarming. In fact, the mining companies had a free hand in the recruitment and placement of aliens legally residing in Belgium until the summer of 1937. Only then the authorities began to exercise some control over the labor market in the mining sector.

The new power constellation already became obvious when the mining companies not only recruited aliens who legally sojourned in Belgium, but also hired aliens who had immigrated illegally. Newspaper reports or letters from relatives and friends telling of the possibilities of employment in the Belgian mining sector led to an exodus to Belgium. This immigration was not always a spontaneous migration. Some mines urged their foreign workers to have their family members or acquaintances come over.[[1137]](#footnote-1138) The recruitment agents who had done good business in the twenties offered their services once again, both to the mines and to the emigration candidates.[[1138]](#footnote-1139) Tens of Poles, Czechs and Slovaks left for Belgium and many succeeded in crossing the border safely. Once in Belgium these immigrants thought themselves to be in no more danger. They offered their services to the mines and believed that their situation would soon be legalized.

Since these immigrants had entered the country illegally the police could arrest them at any moment and expel them.[[1139]](#footnote-1140) They were extremely vulnerable. Neither were the mining companies allowed to employ these spontaneous immigrants. First their sojourn had to be legalized and then the mines had to request a work permit. FEDECHAR pressed Delattre to grant work permits immediately to those men wanting to work. The indignation within the mining companies was great when the work permits were not automatically granted.[[1140]](#footnote-1141)

The International Labor Market as a Solution

FEDECHAR had already asserted by the summer of 1936 that the recruitment of miners abroad was an absolute necessity. In September 1936 the mining companies submitted a request for the recruitment of 4,000 miners.[[1141]](#footnote-1142) This collective representation of the Belgian mining companies to the authorities was to make it clear that the need for miners was not limited to those mines where the working conditions were poor or the wages low. FEDECHAR maintained that it was only by presenting a unified front would they be able to achieve results in negotiations with the Belgian authorities. No pretext should be given to the Belgian authorities for refusing the request of FEDECHAR. This employers' federation insisted that a disciplined performance by the Belgian mining industry would also engender better results in its negotiations with the authorities of emigration countries.[[1142]](#footnote-1143)

At the end of October Delattre proposed that the mining industry replenish its stock of labor by attracting the Belgian unemployed. He argued that in order to attract unemployed workers, who had been working in other sectors, the wages in the mines had to be increased. Delattre argued that the mining companies were able to grant this increase in wages.[[1143]](#footnote-1144) In order to give this operation a chance to succeed Delattre was prepared, at the request of the Limburg mining companies, to sweeten the pill for these unemployed workers. For two months the authorities would continue to pay out their unemployment benefits. The limited earnings of these workers during their training period in the mine would in this way be compensated. In order to encourage the mining companies to recruit inexperienced Belgian workers Delattre had a secret reward for the mining companies. A reward that revealed that Delattre didn't believe in a national solution to the labor shortage in the mining sector. For every unemployed Belgian recruited by the mining companies, a qualified miner was allowed to be brought in from abroad.[[1144]](#footnote-1145) In principle, Delattre was allowing the recruitment of foreign labor. The country's energy situation was in such dire straights that he considered additional direct productive manpower a necessity. The proposal of Delattre to put the recruitment of foreign miners before the joint commission was not considered opportune by the mining companies. It was only a matter of a small contingent of Polish workers which would be brought into the country in a discrete manner.[[1145]](#footnote-1146) The mining companies then started negotiations- with Delattre's explicit agreement- with the Polish authorities to start recruitments.[[1146]](#footnote-1147)

The revelation of negotiations with Poland was received with indignation in Belgium.[[1147]](#footnote-1148) The official denial by the Belgian as well as the Polish authorities calmed down the protests, but from then on the labor shortage in the mines and the recruitment of foreigners became a matter of passionate public debate. The Socialist and Christian Democratic miners' unions disapproved of the recruitment of foreigners. The attraction of aliens was no solution. Their qualifications were of a dubious nature and many of them would, shortly after arrival, leave the mining industry for other sectors. The only solution to the labor shortage in the mining sector was the radically revaluation of the miners' profession. Better labor conditions and higher wages, together with the setting up of a training scheme for miners would enable a rational use of the national labor reserves. Not only the unemployed workers who had formerly been working on the surface, but also a large number of laborers previously employed in other industrial sectors would then be prepared to make their living in the mines. The authorities were to develop an employment policy, a policy that was to put these changes into effect, especially in Limburg. The paternalistic personnel policy in this region meant that hardly any Belgians were prepared to work in this basin. The public authorities had to keep a strict control over the labor and living conditions in this basin so that thousands of Flemish unemployed could be directed to these mines.[[1148]](#footnote-1149)

The Communists were on the same wavelength and joined the opposition against the recruitment of foreign labor. That Communist workers sometimes bore the brunt of arbitrary dismissals is, without doubt, an element that explains the Communist stance. This protectionist standpoint was, however, only part of a fundamental shift in communist strategy as the class-versus-class strategy was exchanged for the Popular Front strategy. The days of unreserved internationalism were over. While earlier on the Communists had only insisted upon the organisation of foreign laborers within the trade unions, now the regulation of immigration was also called for. The recruitment of foreign manpower was projected as a managerial strategy to undermine the achievements of the Belgian working class.[[1149]](#footnote-1150)

The broad front presented by the trade unions against the recruitment of foreign laborers caused Delattre to rethink his position. The unions strongly emphasized that the necessary manpower could be found. In December 1936 Delattre stated that the only acceptable solution to the shortage of miners was a national one. The professional instruction of the Belgian unemployed must and could solve the labor shortage in the mining industry.[[1150]](#footnote-1151)

The mining companies rejected this solution as unrealistic. In the first instance, FEDECHAR doubted that unemployed Belgians would apply in great numbers. Unemployment insurance had taken away any motivation that the unemployed might have had to work in the mines. Furthermore, the demand for qualified workers could not be satisfied by the recruitment of inexperienced mine workers. Workers new to the profession were able to exercise a positive influence on production only in the long run.[[1151]](#footnote-1152) The mining companies advocated a combined strategy. A strategy which aimed at guaranteeing production as well as cleaning the way for the instruction of Belgians inexperienced in mining. The recruitment of qualified aliens would increase coal production, but also enable the mining companies to train Belgian unemployed labor. Meanwhile, mine management was forced to give its full cooperation to the efforts of the unions to attract the Belgian unemployed to the mining sector. It had to be clearly demonstrated that not enough Belgians were avalaible.[[1152]](#footnote-1153)

The threatening shortage of coal caused not only FEDECHAR, but also a number of coke factories and steel factories to point out that the situation was beginning to become critical and that only the recruitment of miners abroad could offer a solution.[[1153]](#footnote-1154) The pressure on Delattre to give in increased, also within the government. The Minister of Economic Affairs P.Van Isacker and the Prime Minister P.Van Zeeland insisted upon a more pragmatic position. The economic recovery was in jeopardy.[[1154]](#footnote-1155)

At the beginning of December 1936 Delattre had already given his permission for the recruitment of 500 Dutchmen for the Limburg basin. In the Netherlands, a number of qualified miners were still unemployed. FEDECHAR was little satisfied with this offer. The unemployed Dutch miners were, according to FEDECHAR of little value. They were not only professionally of low quality, but they even professed mostly Communist ideas.[[1155]](#footnote-1156) This evaluation seemed to contain a degree level of truth. After the mass dismissals in the Depression years the Dutch mines had built up their personnel through a selective personnel policy to the advantage of young workers from the region who had been to the underground mine-trade schools immediately after elementary school. A significant group of miners -the older, physically weak and politically or morally "undesirable" miners-were in this way doomed to permanent joblessness.[[1156]](#footnote-1157) The Belgian mining companies hardly made hardly any effort to attract these Dutch workers.[[1157]](#footnote-1158)

Meanwhile the united front of the unions began to show signs of strain. The leadership of the Socialist miners' union began to regard the radical opposition to recruitment as untenable. They advocated limited immigration supervised by the unions to forestall any harm to the work conditions of the Belgian miners. The Socialist unionists wanted guarantees that the new workers were to receive the same wages as the Belgians. In an economic slump, priority dismissal for aliens would be required. Those aliens who had been dismissed were to have the right to unemployment benefits.[[1158]](#footnote-1159) It had to be ensured that a repetition of the negative experiences of the depression years were to be avoided. To the outside world the unions showed a solid front, while in fact it was only the Christian Democratic miners' union that obstinately continued to stand firm on the rejection of recruitment of aliens.[[1159]](#footnote-1160) This union denied that there was any reason to make an over-hasty decision. The shortage of manpower was limited. The recruitment of aliens would push the seasonal workers from the mining industry. These Flemings, who wanted to go down into the mines during the winter as they did every year, would alleviate the demand for coal. Moreover the works on the Albert Canal were almost completed so that a significant number of Flemish manpower would become available.[[1160]](#footnote-1161)

The short term results of the union's strategy were extremely limited. In the second half of 1936 barely one hundred unemployed workers requested the financial support the government had promised to anyone who exchanged the unemployment offices for the mines. With some pressure the results were indeed somewhat better. Unemployed ex-miners were induced, with the threat that their unemployment benefit would otherwise be withdrawn to return to the mines.[[1161]](#footnote-1162) The shortage of qualified miners continued and in January 1937 the situation became critical.

In the first days of 1937 the CS (the Socialist union) gave its approval to the recruitment of Polish miners. In exchange for the renunciation of a fundamental opposition to the recruitment of foreigners the Socialist union was promised an immigration commission. This commission would exercise permanent control on the labor conditions and the employment of the recruited migrants.[[1162]](#footnote-1163) The president of the Socialist miners' union N. Dethier defended this decision at the congress of the union. He exclaimed triumphantly that the employment of aliens posed no longer a threat for the labor conditions of the Belgians. The immigration commission would not only be able to necessitate equal labor conditions for aliens and Belgians, but also would enable the union to adapt foreign labor to the demands of the labor market. The priority of the Belgian labor force would be assured. The congress agreed to the decision of its leaders with little enthousiasm. The recruitment of aliens under union control could begin.[[1163]](#footnote-1164) The Christian Democratic union continued to reject the recruitment of aliens. The only solution was, they argued the improvement of labor conditions in the mining sector.[[1164]](#footnote-1165)

On January 26, 1937 Minister of Labor A. Delattre gave his fiat to the recruitment of 600 qualified Polish miners. The FEDECHAR was filled with indignation over this small contingent and stated that surely five thousand Poles were needed to maintain production levels.[[1165]](#footnote-1166) Almost immediately afterwards Delattre raised his quota to 2,000.[[1166]](#footnote-1167)

The Christian Democratic miners union threatened to strike if the foreign miners would be brought in. The importation of Polish workers would substantially weaken the position of power in which the Belgian miners found themselves. It would no longer be possible to enforce improvements in the miners' labor conditions. The Communists were on the same wavelength and threatened to strike as well.[[1167]](#footnote-1168) Four hundred workers in Winterslag spontaneously put down their work in protest to the agreement of Delattre to tolerate new immigrants, but the Christian Democratic miners union did not support the strike.[[1168]](#footnote-1169) Delattre, nevertheless, took this warning seriously and made sure that it was made clear to the Communist and the Christian Democratic organized miners that all Belgians who were ready to work in the mines were also to be hired. Delattre ran up against the fact that certain mine directors still took the liberty of being selective towards Belgians - Communist miners were sometimes turned down. The Minister of Labor threatened to revoke the permit to recruit aliens, if these workers were not hired.[[1169]](#footnote-1170) The permission for the recruitment of Polish workers was also made subordinate to the interests of the Belgian workers. Only employment meeting the same labor conditions as the Belgian miners was accepted. In addition, the mining companies had to pay a security deposit to the value of the cost for travel to the Polish border. This repatriation fund would ensure the return of "superfluous" Polish workers over the space of five years.[[1170]](#footnote-1171)

The mining companies were clearly on the defensive. The recruitment of Poles could by no means be brought in danger. The strict conditions of recruitment were accepted without protest and the mining companies attempted to refute every allegation that they refused to engage Belgians in their mines.[[1171]](#footnote-1172)

Two Thousand Polish Miners for Belgium

The Polish authorities made use of the request for Polish miners to advocate an improvement of the social rights of their fellow countrymen. Thye urged the Belgian authorities to ratify the pension treaty of November 7, 1931. Also granting the Poles unemployment benefits was asked for. The Belgian authorities were not prepared to get into this. The high unemployment in Poland meant that the Polish authorities did not make an issue and resignedly gave their approval of the recruitment of Polish workers.[[1172]](#footnote-1173)

The recruitment of 2,000 qualified miners posed no problem since Poles had been dismissed during the depression in Poland itself, but also in Czechoslovakia, Belgium and France. Hundreds of them had reemigrated and had not found a job at "home".[[1173]](#footnote-1174) Not only the mining region of Upper Silesia, but also Polish rural regions that had only supplied unskilled manpower to the recruitment missions in the twenties now sent qualified miners to Belgium. The Polish miners arrived in three convoys between March 16 and April 3, 1937.[[1174]](#footnote-1175)

Delattre was also ready to legalize the sojourn of a number of undocumented immigrants. Their requests for work permits would be handled within the quota of the 2,000 workers. The Sûreté protested, without success, against the legalization of the sojourn of the aliens who had immigrated illegally. According to the Sûreté it set a dangerous precedent, the mines where these laborers were employed should be obliged to repatriate them. Only in this way the authorities would be able to retain their control over immigration.[[1175]](#footnote-1176) Delattre warned the mining companies, however, that this was a one time approval, the letter of the law had to be respected. If the mines continued to hire undocumented immigrants, they would be forced to repatriate them at their expenses. The FEDECHAR warned in its turn its members that it was advisable to no longer make use of the services of undocumented aliens.[[1176]](#footnote-1177)

The fear of a strike caused the Limburg mining companies to be extremely cautious. The three hundred Poles for this basin were spread out over the three convoys and each group was divided among all the mines.[[1177]](#footnote-1178) The strike did not take place. The Christian Democratic miners' union had resigned themselves to a limited import of foreign labor.[[1178]](#footnote-1179) The pressure of the national leadership of the Christian Democratic union not to bring the economic revival in danger was problably crucial in this decision.[[1179]](#footnote-1180)

The employment of these 2,000 Polish miners was, however, not without difficulty. The specific labor conditions in the Belgian mines - the low mine passages ( a consequence of the small coal stratum) and the advanced mechanisation (and dust) -caused quite a few Polish miners not to perform well. Moreover the work rhythm was much more driven than in the Polish, or, for that matter, the French mines. Even those who had left the Belgian mines in 1932-1933 were surprised by the even more strongly driven work rhythm.[[1180]](#footnote-1181) The as a consequence low productivity of these Polish miners meant that many were not recognized as qualified miners and were employed as hands with the reduction in wages that went along with it.[[1181]](#footnote-1182) The dissatisfaction of the Poles who had been promised a good wage was naturally great. Another expectation, a speedy family reunion went also unfulfilled.

As the Poles had to pay for the trip of their family to Belgium themselves, the limited earnings meant that it was difficult for them to make their wives and children join them. Some mining companies which considered that family reunion was in their interest were ready to offer an advance of the migrants' wages. They also offered to arrange inexpensive housing and paid the repatriation deposit.[[1182]](#footnote-1183) However, if the migrant was employed at a mine that did not see the importance of bringing over the family, the migrant himself had to finance, not only the travel costs, but also the repatriation deposit. Moreover, they had to look for housing themselves.[[1183]](#footnote-1184) This dependence on the goodwill of the mining company, but most importantly the obstruction by the Sûreté who wanted watertight guarantees for an eventual repatriation of these family members caused the Belgian authorities to grant the first permission for reunion of family members only three months after the arrival of the immigrants.[[1184]](#footnote-1185) Meanwhile the patience of the Polish women was severly tested. On their husbands' departure they had been promised that they would be able to take the train for Belgium in 6 weeks. In May the employment offices had already been invaded by these desperate women who had been left behind in Poland without financial reserves.[[1185]](#footnote-1186)

There were also other grounds for dissatisfaction among the Poles: the miserable housing in the hostels, the treatment by the *porions* and the insufficient security of the mines. By the end of May the first recently recruited Polish worker had a fatal mine accident.[[1186]](#footnote-1187)

The dissatisfaction among these Polish miners expressed itself in a series of collective protests. A number of petitions were directed to the Polish consulate, but the Polish workers often only trusted their own strength to exact what they regarded as their rights.[[1187]](#footnote-1188) It was mostly the attitude of mine management, which refused to take the complaints of the Polish workers into consideration - sometimes formulated unclearly due to a broken knowledge of French - that caused the Poles to think that there was nothing they could do other that stop working. The declassification and the question of wages that went along with it was more than motive enough for many Polish workers to go on strike. The migrants, however, also used strikes to express their dissatisfaction over inadequate housing and the delay in the arrival of their families.[[1188]](#footnote-1189)

The authorities met these strikes with a reserved reaction. In spite of the insistance of some mine directors they rarely proceeded to expulsion. A number of "agitators" were dismissed, but the Sûreté - apparently under pressure from the Ministry of Labor and the unions - took care that some of them were relocated to another basin.[[1189]](#footnote-1190) Minister of Labor, A. Delattre, even wanted to modify the work contracts with the explicit aim of protecting the right to strike of these Poles.[[1190]](#footnote-1191)

The mining companies were forced to concede partly to the demands of the Polish migrants. FEDECHAR pointed out that quite a few problems stemmed from language difficulties, that they were merely misunderstandings. The costs of these conflicts began to mount. Some Polish miners gave it all up and returned to Poland. Others went to France, where some had family. A small group found that even taking part in the Spanish Civil War was better than continuing to work in the Belgian mines.[[1191]](#footnote-1192) The Polish consulate was annoyed with the wave of strikes and "desertions". Although they sometimes found the complaints of the Polish miners just, the Polish consular authorities regarded strikes and breaking the work contracts everything but opportune.

The Sûreté proposed to set up a *Commission de surveillance* to settle conflicts between the Polish miners and mine management. Such a commission was established already in April 1937. The workers could file their complaints with the commission, but while their dossier was under discussion they had to remain on the job.[[1192]](#footnote-1193) The presence of a representative from the Mine Administration and from the consulate along with a representative from mine management in this commission meant that the interests of the Polish miners were not totally ignored.[[1193]](#footnote-1194) The Polish worker was able to express himself in his own language and if mine management went over the line, justice was administered to the migrant. Mostly Polish migrants - in particular the workers without any experience in mining- who were not able to cope with work in the mines appealed to this commission. They hoped that in this way they would be able to walk away with a gratis repatriation. If they just quit, they were forced to return on foot. In a small number of cases where it truely seemed that the workers were not in condition, morally or physically, to continue working in the mines, they were repatriated.[[1194]](#footnote-1195)

Further permission for recruitment

The declassification of Polish miners caused not only those concerned, but also the unions to protest. The unions stated that they had been decieved, they had given their approval for the recruitment of qualified laborers and now it seemed they were dealing with hands.[[1195]](#footnote-1196) The mining companies realized that they could endanger further recruiting with this declassification.[[1196]](#footnote-1197)

These considerations, however, were pushed into the background when coal production was no longer able to meet the demand. On April 21, FEDECHAR filed a new request for the recruitment of 1,000 Poles, 1,000 Czechoslovakians and 200 Hungarians.The Hungarians would only be qualified miners, while in Poland and Czechoslovakia as well qualified miners as hands would be recruited.[[1197]](#footnote-1198)

Delattre gave his written agreement two weeks later.[[1198]](#footnote-1199) In the beginning of June, FEDECHAR submitted another request for the recruitment of workers.[[1199]](#footnote-1200) Delattre agreed once again. The total contingent now came to 3,500 workers. That Delattre had given his approval without consulting the unions was resignedly accepted by the Socialist miners' union, while the Christian Democratic miners' union protested weakly.[[1200]](#footnote-1201)

Finally, in August, Delattre loosened his hold on recruitments entirely. The FEDECHAR received an unlimited mandate to supplement its number of underground workers by means of recruitment abroad.[[1201]](#footnote-1202) This decision meant that Delattre's threat in March 1937 that undocumented immigrants would be expelled at the expense of their employers became outdated. These migrants were now permitted immediate employment, but a work permit still had to be requested post-factum.[[1202]](#footnote-1203) The authorities hoped to bring the situation back under control by September. The great demand for manpower together with the faulty administrative capacities of the service within the Ministry of Labor responsible for foreign labor, meant that the grip on the labor market in the mines had to be temporarily loosened. The mining companies were informed that all requests by undocumented migrants had to be filed before the end of the month. After the first of September the authorities would then effectively expel every undocumented immigrant whose sojourn had not been legalized. Delattre warned that the mines who still employed undocumented migrants after September the first risked heavy fines.[[1203]](#footnote-1204) The mines, however, continued to employ undocumented aliens, but didn't file requests for legalization since this only would lead to expulsion. FEDECHAR insisted continuously for an extension of the legalisation. This, together with the growing number illegally employed foreigners meant that the authorities gave in.

By the end of 1937, the Sûreté granted temporary residence permits to all aliens who had illegally entered the country before December 1, 1937. This legalisation gave the Belgian administration the possibility to get an overview of the number of foreign miners in Belgium. According to the Sûreté undesireable aliens were eliminated immediately.[[1204]](#footnote-1205) The temporary residence permit gave the Belgian administration the possibility of intervening in the near future on the basis of the state of the labor market. The Belgian authorities were even ready to take the costs for the expulsion of the politically undesirable immigrants upon its shoulders. Due to the large number of illegal aliens legalization was very near to its heart.[[1205]](#footnote-1206)

Mass recruitments in the Summer of 1937

After Delattre had given his approval for the recruitment of 3,500 workers, the Hungarian authorities provided the speedy delivery of a few hundred unemployed Hungarian miners.[[1206]](#footnote-1207) A Belgian recruitment mission left shortly thereafter to recruit the remaining 3,250 workers in Czechoslovakia and Poland.[[1207]](#footnote-1208) The recruitment mission was given a much clearer mandate than in March. Given that a small number of physically unsuitable candidates had slipped through the Polish medical selection during the recruitment in March FEDECHAR demanded that the candidate-emigrants be medically examined by their own personnel. The Polish authorities agreed, since the cost of repatriation for those who turned out to be unsuitable had been taken upon them.[[1208]](#footnote-1209) The recruitment mission had also been instructed to recruit as many family members or friends of those already employed as possible. Also Poles and Czechoslovakians who had worked before in the Belgian mining industry and had performed well, but had left during the mass dismissals of the depression years had to be drawn again. The success of this strategy, however, depended on the stance of the emigration authorities. The Polish authorities seemed to be accommodating, the following regions were attributed to the Belgian recruitment mission: Wojewodztwa Poznan, Krakow, Pomorsza and the city of Gdynia. Supplementary consent was granted for the recruitment of 300 persons on name in the district Wielun and the mine basin of Dbrowa.[[1209]](#footnote-1210)

The recruitment mission started in Czechoslovakia, but they hardly suceeded in recruiting qualified miners. Only 255 qualified miners could be recruited and 1,034 hands.[[1210]](#footnote-1211) The mission hoped to recruit enough qualified workers in Poland. When the FEDECHAR was informed that a Polish mine *la société Varsovienne des Mines* would close its books and 500 miners would be out on the street the recruitment delegation immediately directed its efforts towards this group.[[1211]](#footnote-1212) A few hundred miners were recruited this way. In July all recruitments in Poland together brought in 1,677 workers for the Belgian mining industry.[[1212]](#footnote-1213)

On July 24 the Belgian recruitment delegation in Sosnowiec was waylaid by candidate emigrants who contested the way in which the selection was being carried out. According to the FEDECHAR's representative in Poland, Deschamps, it was not possibe to do anything in the Belgian mines with these radical workers. The candidates who had already been selected were not retained for the following transport and Deschamps refused to continue working in the, in his opinion, radical regions of Krakow and Dbrowa. Only the regions of Poznan and Pomorsza were still able to offer sound candidates.[[1213]](#footnote-1214) The Polish authorities could not tolerate that the Belgian recruitment delegation would stipulate where it would recruit. The Polish authorities were however prepared to alter their permission to recruit so as to exchange the regions of Krakow and Dbrowa for two other less "radical" areas.[[1214]](#footnote-1215)

The displeasure with the Polish recruitments had already been sensibly intensified by what was happening in Belgium with the miners from *la société Varsovienne des Mines*. 144 of these qualified miners had been employed in the Limburg basin. In Poland they all had been promised that they would be employed in the Walloon basins.[[1215]](#footnote-1216) Since these Poles were unsatisfied with the labor conditions in the Limburg basin, half had stopped their work, one week after their arrival and demanded to be transfered to Wallonia. The mining companies asked the Sûreté to expel them immediately.[[1216]](#footnote-1217) The late intervention of the Socialist union was able to impede the expulsion of some of these Poles, but they had, however to continue working in Limburg.[[1217]](#footnote-1218)

The Belgian mining companies had clearly had enough of the Polish "hot heads". All recruitment in Poland was put to a stop. The recruitment delegation went back to Czechoslovakia, where the authorities had given their permission for additional recruitment. The mission was largely aiming for the great reserves of labor of the province of Carpatho-Ruthenia. Although there were hardly any qualified miners among these Carpatho-Rusyn, still nearly 1,000 men were recruited.[[1218]](#footnote-1219) By the end of August, 1937, all collective recruitments were put to an end.[[1219]](#footnote-1220)

Since July 1937 FEDECHAR had already been considering shifting its recruitment strategy. The mining companies considered the results of the collective recruitments everything but fantastic. They argued that only a recruitment on name could supply good manpower.[[1220]](#footnote-1221) This type of recruitment had two objectives. On the one hand qualified workers could be recruited who had already worked in Belgium. Their adaptation would pose fewer problems than with the qualified miners that had been recruited up to this point. On the other hand a recruitment on name could lessen the alienation that went along with migration. Immigrants who found themselves in a milieu that showed a keen relationship with their original milieu were more quickly satisfied and then also worked better. The mining companies, therefore, saw definite advantages in supporting chain migration.[[1221]](#footnote-1222)

A number of mines had already - independent of the FEDECHAR - sent work contracts to candidate-emigrants abroad. These invitations, however, met with an indignant reaction from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and not a single visa was granted.[[1222]](#footnote-1223) The FEDECHAR reprimanded these mines. It was unjustified to provoke the Belgian authorities. The authorities had far-reaching competence on the level of immigration at their disposal. Only with their cooperation could immigrants be brought in. The mining companies had to create a front to negotiate with the authorities. Negotiations took place with the ministerial departments to modify the way the immigrants were recruited. No fundamental difficulties arose, provided that the repatriation deposit was paid in. How a worker had been recruited was of no importance for the Belgian authorities.[[1223]](#footnote-1224) The Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian authorities also had no difficulties with this as long as the work contracts were not altered. Candidate-migrants could now individually be notified that their arrival was desired.

The cost to the mines were significantly less. Although the same requirements were fixed - a medical certificate and a visa - many of the costs now fell completely on the immigrants. What was more, the travel expenses could also be relegated to the emigrants. Within the earlier negotiations between the FEDECHAR and the authorities from the emigration countries this was never raised since it was understood from the very beginning that the collective recruitments were to be charged to the Belgian mines. An alteration in the way the immigrants were recruited created a vacuum in the labor contracts that were drafted at that time. The mines made it a rule that the emigrant himself would have to pay his travel expenses.[[1224]](#footnote-1225)

The guarantees for the mines were surely as great as with collective recruitments. Often they were dealing with former employees or family and fellow villagers of migrants already working for the recruiting mine.[[1225]](#footnote-1226) Among the mining companies was there a clear enthousiasm for the individual recruitment, in spite of the administrative bother.[[1226]](#footnote-1227)

However, difficulties quickly arose in the emigration couuntries. The reaction of the Polish authorities was unambiguous as soon as they had realized that the emigrants had to pay themselves their travelcosts. In November 1937 passports were no longer issued to candidate-emigrants for Belgium.[[1227]](#footnote-1228) The Czechoslovakian authorities also forbade the individual recruitment a month later.[[1228]](#footnote-1229) Only in Hungary was recruitment continued in this manner. Yugoslavia also reached an agreement with FEDECHAR for the individual recruitment of unemployed miners. By January 1938, most likely 250 Yugoslavians had been recruited this way.[[1229]](#footnote-1230)

The New Workers on the Job

In the course of 1937 eleven convoys with manpower had brought 6,954 workers to Belgium.[[1230]](#footnote-1231) 444 foreign workers were recruited individually by the mines. Along with these organized recruitments there was also a significant amount of uncontrolled immigration. The sojourn of 1,100 aliens who immigrated illegally to work in the mines was regularized.[[1231]](#footnote-1232) Therefore, taken together there was an increase of 8,498 workers in the mining sector.[[1232]](#footnote-1233)

The qualified miners among them found it difficult to adapt to the labor conditions specific to the Belgian mines. Just as with the first recruitment in March, integration of these miners into the labor process was not without difficulty. The conflict with the Polish miners of the *Varsovienne* was not the only expression of dissatisfaction among these qualified miners. They complained, just as their colleagues had in March, that their qualifications were not recognized and that their wages had been reduced as a result. Eighty Hungarian miners employed in Charleroi complained about this to the Hungarian ambassador:

"In Hungary we worked in the mines as hewers. In our Belgian labor contract it is also registered that we are hewers, but at the moment we are employed as haulers...We do not mind to work as haulers, but the wages are too low. The wages are the same as that of the non-qualified miners. We have been miners for 10, 12 and 17 years and we have a family in Hungary and we have to send them a large portion of our wages... it is the mine's business how they employ us, but we have to receive a hewer's wages, because we have to send money home."[[1233]](#footnote-1234)

These protests made it clear that the recently recruited miners could not be fit into the mining industry in just any way. The extremely flexible attitude of the migrants in Belgium during the Depression - an attribute that had made them continuously sought after in the mines - was absent in these miners. Their qualifications had to be respected.

 problems with the unskilled immigrants were of totally different nature. Their dissatisfaction was seldom or never expressed in collective protests, but that many were dissatisfied was made apparent in the search for an alternative to the mines. In Belgium, however, there were hardly any alternative employment opportunities. In France there did seem to be opportunities in the beet harvest and also as wood-cutters. Many agricultural laborers among the new immigrants made use of the opportunity and left for France.[[1234]](#footnote-1235) Industry in Luxemburg also enticed recently recruited workers away from Belgium. The Belgian authorities, at the insistance of FEDECHAR, went as far as to expel recruitment agents.[[1235]](#footnote-1236) The FEDECHAR also negotiated with the consulary authorities to avoid this type of emigration. The mining companies proposed that the consulates should keep the passports of the recruited workers in safekeeping until the labor contract had been completed. The consulates refused to do so.[[1236]](#footnote-1237) A number of mines that wanted to force the stabilization of their migrants by keeping their passports were quickly whistled back. Not only the consular authorities, but also the Belgian authorities clearly stated that this practice was illegal.[[1237]](#footnote-1238)

The FEDECHAR also asked to set up a *Commission de Surveillance* for the other nationalities. It offered the possibility of settling conflicts amicably.[[1238]](#footnote-1239)Nearly all the files handled by these commissions dealt with workers who had stopped working in the mines. The commission attempted to convince these workers, who in a number of cases, had been sent back to the mine by the police, to complete their labor contracts. Often if there were valid, medical reasons repatriation was financed by the security fund. If the migrant, however, had deserted for "no reason" the mine could be relieved of its obligation to repatriate him and also eventually wages still due could no longer be claimed by these workers.[[1239]](#footnote-1240)

The stabilization of the new workers was a great success. As pie-shaped graph 5 demonstrates only a small segment of the recruited workers left the mines. Of the 6,954 who had been collectively recruited 1,398 individuals left the mines in the course of 1937 either they were repatriated or disappeared.[[1240]](#footnote-1241)

This great success - certainly in comparison with the recruitments at the end of the twenties - was a result of the limited alternatives for these migrants. The authorities ensured that these migrants stuck to the mining industry. Nevertheless, their insertion in the mining industry turned out to be imperfect. The mining companies showed little enthousiasm about these new workers. Production had been able to maintain its standard, thanks to this foreign manpower, but productivity in the mines fell considerably.[[1241]](#footnote-1242)

pie-shaped graph 5

Organizing migrants

In the second half of the 1930s, notwithstanding massive recruitments did the employers not step up their efforts to organize the immigrants. The organization of immigrant labor became less important for the employers as the new alien legislation prohibited "recent" immigrants to leave the mining industry. The economic motivation for reaching out to the migrants diminished, but also the political reason diminished in importance. The employers were increasingly forced by the public authorities to come to terms with the labor organizations. The state tried to convince them that the union's were to be considered partners in industrial relations. To keep the migrants away from these organizations was hence not that important anymore. The heavy handed anti-union dimension in the employers' initiatives disappeared slowly.

Modest support for multi-cultural provisions was still possible. The consular authorities or the organizations of the immigrants provided language and culture courses. Some of these initiatives were supported financially by the mining companies. According to the director of the mine of Boussu-Bois, a mine in the west of the Borinage with a considerable number of Polish miners, these provisions had a positive influence on the work performance and the morale of these migrants and were hence worth to be supported.[[1242]](#footnote-1243)

For the trade unions, however, organizing migrants became a crucial task. The agreement of the Socialist miners' union to the recruitment in Poland and Czechoslovakia caused the unions to make an effort to organize the new immigrants. The union clearly stated that, once a worker had legally immigrated to Belgium, his interests had to be defended by the union.[[1243]](#footnote-1244) A national campaign was launched to organize the Polish migrants, even a unionist permanently responsible for the Polish miners was nominated, Jeanne Pirotte. In each basin a commission was set up to look into the situation of the migrants and to see how the union could best defend their interests. The dependence of the migrants on the employer for housing, health insurance...were denounced and with the help of the Socialist party and their influence within government the Belgian unionists tried to diminish this dependence.[[1244]](#footnote-1245) The immigrants'right to strike and to engage in trade union activities was vigorously defended. Expulsion of immigrant trade unionists was radically opposed. The fact that immigrants were denied the right to be political active was not contested, but they should be able to defend their interests on the work place.[[1245]](#footnote-1246) According to the Socialist miners' union unionizing immigrants and defending their pay and working conditions was the only way to prevent that employers made abuse of the immigrants to worsen the working conditions.[[1246]](#footnote-1247) This strategy was fully endorsed by the Communists.[[1247]](#footnote-1248) The Socialist miners' union took the interests of the immigrants to heart and also defended their rights to the full benefits of social legislation. The discrimination of the immigrants in the field of unemployment and old age insurance in particular had to be overcome.

The Christian Democratic union defended a similar position. Although they had opposed the recruitment, this union proclaimed that all the miners in Belgium, whether they were immigrants or not were to join their union. The union also declared that they would defend the interests of the immigrant workers. They should be employed under the same conditions as the Belgians.[[1248]](#footnote-1249)

The Christian Democratic as well as the Socialist miners' union set up ethnic locals for the immigrants. These locals were considered chapters of Belgian locals. An ethnic local where the vehicular language was Polish, Italian ... would simplify the propaganda among the immigrants. While it does not seem that the Christian Democratic effort was very successful, a considerable number of Polish immigrants became member of the Socialist miners' union.[[1249]](#footnote-1250) The unionist responsible for the unionization of the Poles, Jeanne Pirotte was more than satisfied:

"Les premiers résultats ne se sont pas faits attendre: quelques mille membres nouveaux sont venus au syndicat au cours des derniers mois..Il y a de la joie, de l'enthusiasme. Ils ne sont plus des isolés de naguère. Ils sont devenus à nouveau des hommes libres, conscient de leur classe et de leur organisation. Les Polonais en Belgique ont repris les traditions héroïques de leur peuple...Bravo, camarades polonais et prenez courage!...Car vous avez la malchance d'être non seulement des ouvriers exploités, mais aussi -malgré que votre travail soit producteur dans le pays-des "étrangers" "[[1250]](#footnote-1251)

It was not, however, a total success. Virtually only the recent immigrants, the ones who had been recruited in Poland in the spring and summer of 1937, joined the union. The older migrants stayed aloof.

Both of the trade unions took the interests of the migrants to heart and insisted on granting all immigrant labor legally in Belgium the benefits of unemployment insurance.[[1251]](#footnote-1252) Both miners' unions especially demanded full benefits for the most numerous group of migrants in the mines, the Poles. The Socialist and Christian Democratic miners' union insisted on the Belgian authorities reaching an agreement with the Polish authorities. A general labor treaty was advocated which would grant full unemployment and pensions benefits.[[1252]](#footnote-1253)

These pressures were to no avail. The Poles remained excluded from the unemployment insurance. The Belgian-Polish agreement on the miners' pensions which, because of financial reasons was put aside during the Depression was taken up again in 1937. The Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs P.H.Spaak endorsed the immediate ratification of the agreement.[[1253]](#footnote-1254) Minister of Labor A.Delattre expressed also interest in this agreement.[[1254]](#footnote-1255) Financial considerations meant, however, that no progress was being made. The Belgian authorities had tried to enlist the financial support of the mining companies to share the additional expenses which such an agreement would entail. The FEDECHAR refused to do so.[[1255]](#footnote-1256) As the trade unions failed to adapt social legislation to their new interests, their new strategy towards alien labor was in jeopardy.

Immigrants Are Needed for More than Mining

Another extractive industry, the quarries which had also experienced desertion by its traditional work force in the 1920s, saw the demand for some of its products increase considerably after 1935. Some quarries could not meet this demand because of a shortage of qualified stone cutters. These companies insisted on obtaining qualified quarry workers from abroad. The Minister of Labor did not consider the shortage of qualified labor that important, but in the summer of 1937, when the quarries could not deliver the stones they had promised to firms abroad Delattre gave in. 128 Yugoslavian quarry workers were recruited in the months that followed.[[1256]](#footnote-1257) The quarries, but even more so the iron and steel industry increased considerably the number of their foreign employees. It is likely that mostly aliens legally residing in Belgium were recruited since except for these 128 Yugoslavian stone cutters, we found no information on any labor recruitment abroad by these industries.[[1257]](#footnote-1258)

Other sectors which were not able to find enough Belgian labor in the 1920s because of their unattractive work conditions also applied for autorisation to recruit foreigners. Thus, the big farms in Wallonia again had difficulties in recruiting the necessary labor. In 1937 some farm-hands were recruited in Luxembourg. In June 1937 the *Fédération Nationale des Unions Professionelles Agricoles* contacted the Polish consulate for additional manpower for the harvest. Two hundred farm hands, men or women over 21 years of age were needed. The *Fédération* asked for farm hands from the Wojewodztwa of Poznan or Pomorsza as they had had positive experiences with those people and as agrarian labor in those districts was organized in a similar fashion as in Wallonia. The employers would pay all transport costs.[[1258]](#footnote-1259) Notwithstanding the absence of a formal agreement of the Belgian authorities the recruitment mission left in the middle of August and in September, 208 farm hands left Poland for Belgium.[[1259]](#footnote-1260)

In the meantime the farmers had recruited every hand they could get. Some undocumented aliens were also hired. Under pressure from the farmers' organizations the Sûreté called an amnesty. All undocumented aliens who had been hired as agrarian labor before October 27, 1937 were allowed to regularize their sojourn.[[1260]](#footnote-1261)

Another profession where there was a considerable shortage of labor was that of domestic servants. As has been mentioned earlier, there was a shortage of servants even during the Depression. In 1936 with the economic recovery the demand increased. Hungary, which had a long established tradition of providing servants through the *Service du Placement des Servants Hongroises* of the *Ligue des Familles Nombreuses de Belgique* provided, according to the Polish Consulate, about 4,000 girls to Belgian households between 1936 and the middle of 1938.[[1261]](#footnote-1262) Poland and Czechoslovakia also provided hundreds of servants to Belgian families. Private agencies recruited these girls. In this way the Polish catholic mission mediated for Polish girls. In Czechoslovakia, it was mostly Jewish girls who legally immigrated to Antwerp with labor contracts to work as a domestic help.[[1262]](#footnote-1263) The Belgian authorities -as far as they had any control over this labor immigration- only gave their approval to the recruitment of women of at least 21 years of age. They should also be engaged in similar work conditions as the Belgian servants.

The hotel sector applied again for an authorization to employ their highly qualified seasonal labor. The first class hotels at the seaside recieved about a hundred autorisations in 1935. The employers' organizations complained however that the administration lacked efficiency. The work permits were granted or refused at random. The autorities insisted that the authorities should develop a clear-cut policy.[[1263]](#footnote-1264) These hotels insisted that they needed highly qualified, multilingual personnel each season. They claimed that there were not enough qualified Belgians available and that it made no sense to train sufficient local personnel as the need was only seasonal.[[1264]](#footnote-1265) According to both unions enough Belgians were willing and capable to do those jobs.[[1265]](#footnote-1266) Delattre granted in May 1936 just as for the summer season of 1935 about a hundred authorizations.[[1266]](#footnote-1267)

In the fall of 1936, Delattre had already decided to look more seriously into the matter for the next season.[[1267]](#footnote-1268) By the end of March 1937 all the employers had to make up a list of the immigrants they wanted to employ, including which job they would be hired for and what nationality they were. The National labor exchange office would then look into the possibility of finding Belgians for those jobs. All Belgians, and also all foreigners, residing legally in Belgium willing to do this seasonal work, had to register at the local labor exchange offices. Only after comparing the two lists would a decision be made, whether the seasonal immigration of hotel personnel would be tolerated.[[1268]](#footnote-1269) The employers made up a list for personnel with high qualitative demands. The labor exchange offices could not meet the demand as they did not yet have the list of available personnel at their disposal. The unions which had assured that there was no specific shortage of manpower in the hotel industry, also were not able to come up with enough Belgians. The unions contested the fact that the hotels needed such a highly skilled personnel and argued that they only wanted foreigners because they did not wanted to pay their personnel decent wages.[[1269]](#footnote-1270) The Minister of Labor A.Delattre did not follow the advice of the union, the hotels were not refused their traditional migrant labor for the season of 1937.

**9.Alien Policy in Turmoil, 1938-1940**

**1.The Unattainable Objective: Closing the Borders**

While in 1937 the Sûreté had been forced by powerful economic interests to loosen its grip over immigration by tolerating undocumented immigrants in 1938 could the Ministry of Justice reassert its control over immigration. There was no longer need for additional manpower and hence no more allowances had to be made to undocumented aliens. The Ministry of Justice ordered to expel all those who had immigrated illegally.[[1270]](#footnote-1271) At the border the number of aliens refused access to the country increased in 1938 by 400%. Control over immigration was extended within the borders. The number of aliens who were removed from within the country (*renvoyer*) sevenfold.[[1271]](#footnote-1272) A few immigrants still served officially sanctioned economic interests.

a.Labor Immigration

Authorisations for the recruitment of immigrants were rarely given after 1937. The unemployment of these years meant that the authorities believed that local labor could fill all of the needs of the labor market. A transparancy of the labor market through the regional labor exchange offices in constant relation with the central office in Brussels, together with training the work force to answer specific needs of the labor market, would make the dependence on immigrants obsolete. Although contested, three traditional groups of immigrants for Belgium -farm hands, domestic servants and highly qualified hotel personnel- continued to arrive legally in Belgium.

The authorities seriously investigated the need for further immigration in the agrarian sector. The Polish farm hands who had been recruited in the summer of 1937 nearly all returned by December 1938. The hard working conditions and low pay meant that very few were willing to prolong their contract.[[1272]](#footnote-1273) The public labor exchange offices had contacted the farmers who employed these Polish farm hands in order to provide them with Belgian labor as soon as the contracts of the Poles expired. An investigation by the Ministry of Labor indicated that there was a small shortage of qualified farm labor such as cowmen and year-round farm hands. For all the other categories of farm labor enough Belgians were available. Unqualified labor could be easily found among the unemployed industrial laborers. For seasonal qualified farm labor of all categories there was enough manpower available in Flanders.

When in the summer of 1939 the *Fédération Nationale des Unions Professionelles Agricoles* again applied for Polish agrarian labor, the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor Delfosse refused to grant them the necessary authorisations. He argued that the farmers exaggerated the shortage of farm hands. A few authorizations for Polish farm hands could be granted, but only if the farmers agreed to train Belgians in the future.[[1273]](#footnote-1274)

The demand to seek domestic servants from abroad was much less contested. Just as in the Depression of the first half of the 1930s girls were again recruited in Hungary. Girls were also brought from Poland. In 1938 the Polish authorities set up an official recruitment scheme to provide Belgium with domestic servants. Unmarried and qualified girls a minimum of 21 years old were available. De Voghel, director of the Ministry of Labor gave his consent to the Polish authorities for the recruitment of 200 girls. The Sûreté was opposed to the recruitment of any more Poles. Belgium could be stuck with these women as the Polish authorities denationalized more and more of their emigrants. Also it would be adding fuel to the xenophobic agitation. The shortage of domestic servants meant that these arguments were overlooked.[[1274]](#footnote-1275)

The success of this Polish public scheme was limited; only when in the middle of 1938 private recruitment was prohibited in Poland did the number of demands increase. In September 1938 the first transport with domestic servants from Poland arrived.[[1275]](#footnote-1276) Just as in the previous years also Czechoslovakian girls, mostly of Jewish faith, were recruited to serve in Jewish households in Brussels and Antwerp. In 1939 no more authorizations were given for the immigration of such domestic servants. The rising number of unemployed among the Jewish migrants, together with the large number of Jewish refugees were considered a sufficient pool of labor to provide affluent Jewish families with domestic servants.[[1276]](#footnote-1277)

The recruitment of seasonal personnel for the first class hotels at the seaside continued in these years of high unemployment. The tentatives to provide these hotels with enough Belgian personnel remained unsuccessful. According to those who opposed this seasonal immigration a solution could be found in a more adapted organization of the labor market for hotel personnel; an organization which took into account the strong differentiation of the occupational positions within this sector. The *Directeur d'hôtel* should not be placed in the same manner as the dishwasher. In 1938 the National Labor Exchange Office was much better prepared for the placement. The hotel sector got a seperate job placement service and special attention was paid to the highly qualified Belgian hotel personnel. In the winter of 1938 the managers of the first class hotels at the seaside were reminded that only those jobs for whom no Belgians were available could be occupied by seasonal migrants.[[1277]](#footnote-1278)

In the spring of 1938, just as in previous years, the first class hotels at the seaside received authorisation to call upon seasonal qualified labor. 193 work permits for immigrants were granted. The Ministry of Labor agreed with the hotel managers that the Belgian unemployed were not qualified enough to work in these hotels.[[1278]](#footnote-1279) The trade unions were strongly opposed to this immigration. Belgians could do that work and besides, if those hotels didn't consider the Belgians good enough they only had to train them.[[1279]](#footnote-1280)

b.Refugees, a Category Defined by the Receiving State

The politically troubled period just before the Second World War caused an increase in forced emigration. The flow of refugees became a flood. Especially in Germany the Nazis' total control of the state led to an expulsion en masse of mostly Jewish refugees. Thousand of people had to flee not only from Germany, but also - coupled with the expansion of the German Reich- from Austria, Saarland and Sudetenland . To please Hitler Mussolini followed the German example of excluding Jews from the Nation. Also Jews had to flee from Italy. The profile of this group of refugees answered to the new dynamics of the expulsion of Jews from the Third Reich. Instead of young men fleeing the Hitler regime, whole families chose the path of exile. These refugees, almost without exception, had lost all their possessions before departure. Not only from the south and the east was Belgium "threatened" by refugees- the defeat of the Spanish Republicans against Franco's uprising in January 1939 caused the flight of 400,000 Spanish Republicans. These refugees fleeing into France after the victory of Franco were all interned in camps upon arrival and pressured to return to Spain. Some of the Spanish Republicans escaped from the French camps and tried their luck in Belgium.

As there were only very limited legal channels to be admitted into Belgium, most refugees tried to enter Belgium illegally. They even hired smugglers to run them into the country. To stop the illegal immigration of refugees, personnel at the borders was increased. They were assisted by a few hundred *Gendarms* placed at the eastern border.[[1280]](#footnote-1281) Given that more countries were producing refugees, the Belgian authorities made the access to their territory more restrictive. When Mussolini enacted his anti-semitic legislation in September 1938 the Belgian authorities insisted that all Italians entering Belgium had to carry a visa. In October 1938 also Czechoslovakian citizen had to carry a visa and in February 1939 also the Spanish immigrants.[[1281]](#footnote-1282)The conditions which potential refugees, in particular Jews had to fulfill to receive a visa were much stricter than for any other kind of immigrant.[[1282]](#footnote-1283)

The border guards could now formally stop all the politically and racially persecuted emigrants who fled these countries from entering Belgium. The surveillance at the border and the need for a visa meant that thousands of refugees were refused access to Belgium as is illustrated by graph 14 (Appendix 5a). The Belgian border, however, was not impermeable; numerous refugees could slip through. Between the spring of 1938 and the summer of 1939 about 24,000 refugees from old and new German territory found their way into Belgium. These refugees did not have sufficient means at their disposal to provide for their own maintenance once in Belgium . These victims of the Nazis were joined by a few hundred Spanish refugees.[[1283]](#footnote-1284) A repressive alien policy in France in 1938-1939 also caused a number of Russian refugees to be uprooted. Some of them left for Belgium.[[1284]](#footnote-1285)

The facilities for the refugee *stricto sensu* -the political "refugees" - remained intact. "Refugees" continued to receive the right of sojourn by petitioning for asylum. Between July 1936 and August 1939 995 aliens petitioned for asylum, about half of them were granted refugee status. The advisory commission which had to investigate whether asylum seekers were “refugees” was reformed in August 1939 in order to speed up the procedure. The authorities wanted to combat the so-called abuse of the asylum procedure, economic immigrants and even criminals used the asylum procedure to circumvent border control. From September 1939 until the invasion by Nazi-Germany in May 1940 a smaller advisory commission proceeded 144 asylum applications.[[1285]](#footnote-1286)

For the victims of anti-semitic persecution -the refugees *sensu lato*- the Catholic Minister of Justice Ch. du Bus de Warnaffe had decided already at the end of 1937 that no more allowances had to be made. J.Pholien, also a Catholic politician succeeded Ch.de Bus de Warnaffe as Minister of Justice in May 1938. His nomination coincided with a radicalisation in Nazi policies towards Jews residing in Germany and annexed Austria. In the spring of 1938 thousands of Jews were brutally expelled and with the complicity of German police and military forces dumped in Belgium (see graph 12[[1286]](#footnote-1287)).

The Belgian Jewish community re-affirmed their solidarity with the Jewish refugees from the German Reich and pledged to organize their emigration overseas. They also accepted to be liable for the temporarily reception of these Jewish expellees. Pholien conceded to reintroduce the facilities for the refugees *sensu lato*. Jewish refugees from Germany, even if they had immigrated illegally were again to be tolerated. During the summer no less than 4,000 Jewish refugees succeeded to penetrate Belgian territory (graph12). As a consequence, the Minister of Justice, J.Pholien refused to grant the Jewish refugees any longer a temporary residence permit to enable the Jewish committees to organize their emigration. He decided in September to expel all destitute male Jewish refugees arriving in the country.[[1287]](#footnote-1288) He denied them any further favors as he did not consider them refugees. According to the Minister of they were merely emigrants looking for a better place to live.[[1288]](#footnote-1289)

This decision to halt any further Jewish immigration was even among the left not radically opposed. A more restrictive immigration policy not not opposed as long as the "refugees" were not sent back to their country of persecution. Willem Vanderveken, the secretary of the Socialist refugee committee affirmed this clearly in an article in the Socialist newspaper:

"La Belgique a des raisons de se défendre contre une immigration systèmatique dirigée contre les intérêts vitaux du pays..pas mal d'Autrichiens, dont le départ est souhaitée par Hitler, se sont prêtés à un véritable 'marché d'expatriement', et cela avec la complaisance, sinon la complicité, des chefs du Reich, et probablement aussi de certains policiers belges. Pareille émigration clandestine n'aura jamais notre appui. Elle bat en brêche l'édifice de protection que nous avons si péniblement édifié au profit de véritables réfugiés politiques"[[1289]](#footnote-1290)

In October 1938, as a consequence of this option for a more restrictive refugee policy, a few hundred Jewish refugees were treated as any other illegal immigrants and were sent back to the country they had fled. According to the authorities these illegal entrants were not “refugees” but economic emigrants.[[1290]](#footnote-1291) The forcible repatriation was denounced by the Jewish community who got support by broad political circles. J.Pholien had to retreat. Jewish refugees were granted again temporary residence permits to enable them to organize their emigration. The two-track policy that was drafted in the autumn of 1933 for the refugees from Nazi-Germany was reintroduced and remained applicable, without many changes, until the invasion of the German army in May 1940. Political refugees -refugees *stricto sensu-* could receive the right of sojourn by petitioning for asylum, while Jewish refugees were considered refugees *sensu lato* and were granted temporary sojourn.

Notwithstanding the increasingly brutal state policy against the Jews in the German Reich these victims of racist persecution continued to be denied the prerogative of an official refugee status. The Presidents of the advisory commission set up in 1936 to investigate whether asylum seekers were "genuine" refugees decided in January 1939 that the Minister of Justice should take into account the radicalisation of the anti-Jewish policy in Nazi-Germany. Judge Mertens, one of the presidents of the advisory commission, informed the Minister that from October 1938 onwards -the infamous Crystal Night- Jewish emigrants should be recognized collectively as refugees. The distinction between the refugee *stricto sensu* and *sensu lato*, in the sense of a distinction between racial and political persecution had become meaningless. Mertens argued that the international Convention on the refugees from Germany of February 1938 even obliged the Belgian authorities to recognize the Jewish emigrants as refugees as it was now obvious that the Jewish refugees did not receive any protection from the German government. If the authorities did not want all the Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany to obtain refugee status, the task of the commission had to be changed and Belgium had to withdraw its signature from the Convention of Geneva. H.Bekaert, by then *Administrateur-adjoint* of the Sûreté, disagreed that a radical change of course in the refugee policy was necessary. He argued that the Convention of Geneva gave the Belgian authorities complete leeway to decide whether a refugee was eligible to apply for refugee status.[[1291]](#footnote-1292) H.Bekaert claimed that being a "refugee" was not an objectively determined category. "Refugee" was a political constructed entity, a status which had to receive the approval of the attributing state. Although he acknowledged the collective persecution of the Jews in Germany, he stated that this was not sufficient to recognize all Jewish emigrants from Germany as refugees. "Refugees" not only had to be excluded from protection of their proper state, but the national interests of the receiving state should also not be opposed to their recognition as refugees. Thus "undesirable" refugees, those who "abused" the refugee status, should be excluded.[[1292]](#footnote-1293)

This line of reasoning implied in practice that the Jewish refugees were collectively excluded from the refugee procedure. The Sûreté insisted to stop the flood and to expel all these illegal entrants. The political authorities, however, did not consider the Jewish refugees merely as a problem of law and order. The illegal immigration of Jewish refugees was tolerated, but these refugees could not apply for asylum.[[1293]](#footnote-1294) The Jewish refugees who immigrated illegally into Belgium were still tolerated in order to enable them to find a definite host country. This unofficial refugee policy for the German and Austrian Jews was based on the view of Belgium as a pivot within an international scheme of resettling refugees. In the spring and the summer of 1939 the number of Jewish refugees steadily rose (see graph 12). The unofficial refugee policy was questioned again and again within the government, but the authorities balked at a forcible repatriation.

That the authorities percieved these Jewish immigrants from Nazi-Germany as refugees -although no refugee status was granted to them- was not seen positively by everyone. Certain political and social groups used the presence of these Jewish transit refugees as the focus of an increasingly virulent xenophobic agitation. Because of the growing popularity of this xenophobic line of reasoning, the authorities, in consultation with the Jewish committees and the Socialist party leadership, found it more advisable to gather the Jewish refugees in camps so that the population would not take offence at their presence. The aim was to place approximately half of the Jewish transit refugees in camps. At the end of October 1938 the first refugee camp was opened in Merksplas. Roughly five hundred refugees were accomodated here. By the end of May 1939 not even 5% of the transit refugees had been collected in camps.

The authorities were not prepared to invest in the infrastructure for the reception of refugees in spite of its wish to keep antisemitic agitation in check. Allowances could be made for the Jewish refugees -a temporary sojourn was granted to them; however, financing the camps was considered beyond the limits of a "reasonable" refugee policy. The reception of refugees was strictly an affair of private charity. The Jewish Committees could not assume the charge for setting up more refugee camps, but they dutifully continued to assume responsibility for the refugees who had outwitted the border patrol. They housed most of them privately in Antwerp and Brussels. Complete Jewish financial liability for these refugees meant that their reception did not cost the Belgian treasury anything. The Jewish refugees were still forbidden to engage in any economic activity. They had to live on the meager support that the Jewish aid committees distributed until their definite emigration was arranged.

The limited opportunities for further emigration, together with the financial problems of the Jewish committees, signified the failure of subcontracting the reception of Jewish refugees to these private organizations. Although the Jewish committees had given the government assurances that no refugees would become public charges the sheer weight of number involved prevented the committee from finding sufficient ressources. In spite of an intensifying xenophobia, there was a consensus among all the traditional parties that it was not possible to send back Jewish refugees who were already in Belgium even if this would cost the Belgian treasury some money. The authorities were thus "forced" to share the financial burden of the Jewish refugees with the aid committees.[[1294]](#footnote-1295)

Notwithstanding the outbreak of the war Jews fleeing Nazi-Germany continued to arrive.[[1295]](#footnote-1296) Until October 13, 1939 the sojourn of Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany was legalized just as it had been since the autumn of 1933. The war, however, caused any further migration to become impossible. Granting these refugees a short term sojourn to enable them to organize their definite emigration was, therefore, senseless. The authorities decided to grant all Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany a lasting sojourn until the war was over. After October 13, 1939, Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany continued to arrive.

c.Undocumented Immigrants

While until October 1939 refugees fleeing Nazi-Germany were mostly granted an official or semi-official refugee status, no allowances were made for the Spanish and Russian refugees who arrived in 1939. They were not even granted a temporary sojourn.[[1296]](#footnote-1297) They had to go back to France, their first country of asylum. Most of them joined, together with a number of asylum seekers whose demand was refused after a long waiting period the ranks of the undocumented aliens.[[1297]](#footnote-1298) Among the undocumented aliens were also labor migrants who had immigrated illegally, but unwilling or to late to be able to legalize their sojourn by working in the mines or on farms. All those undocumented immigrants were extremely vulnerable. They always had to take care to stay one step ahead of the police, if not they ran the risk to be transported to the border.

In the labor market these undocumented immigrants were joined by the Jewish refugees whose sojourn was covered by an official authorisation, but who were forbidden to work. The daily allowances which the Jewish committees granted these refugees were by the spring of 1939 totally insufficient. Earning some income by working became necessary for the Jewish refugees. Also labor migrants and "refugees" who had not yet achieved the status of privileged aliens, but worked outside the sectors where the Ministry of Labor considered aliens had to work were in a very vulnerable position.[[1298]](#footnote-1299) These immigrants and refugees without work permits were prone to severe exploitation by employers who could employ or dismiss them at will, pay them low wages and did not care about their working conditions.[[1299]](#footnote-1300) Not that the employers ran much risk by employing these aliens as the enforcement by this labor legislation was rather deficient (see further), but the vulnerable position of these undocumented workers made them prone to exploitation.

In particular, that Jewish refugees were flatly barred from working, was criticized by the Belgian refugee specialist and Professor at the ULB Louis de Brouckère. He defended an integral asylum policy, refugees should not only be granted a residence permit, but also a work permit. It was inhumane to grant them only a residence permit and not a work permit.[[1300]](#footnote-1301) Aside from this moral argument Louis de Brouckère and other advocates of a more liberal refugee policy pointed to the negative consequence of this one-dimensional refugee policy: the illegal employment. They argued that refusing the Jewish refugees access to the labor market disturbed the rules upon which the labor market was considered to function. As refugees had no alternative but to stay -even in attendance to emigrate- in Belgium, they were forced when they were not granted a work permit to earn their living in a illegal manner. The ultimate result was a negative influence on the general working conditions.[[1301]](#footnote-1302)

The official refugee policy was not acknowledging the de facto settlement of most Jewish refugees. Given that Jewish refugees were officially not considered as refugees, they had no right to stay. They were illegal immigrants who were only tolerated temporarily, hence no work permit was to be granted.[[1302]](#footnote-1303) Although Jewish refugees remained in Belgium for months as their definite emigration became increasing problematic, they were radically refused any access to the labor market.[[1303]](#footnote-1304)

After the onset of the Second World War the policy towards undocumented immigrants tightened considerably. The Royal Decree of September 28, 1939 made the mere fact of immigrating or staying in Belgium without the permission of the authorities a criminally triable offence.[[1304]](#footnote-1305) Prison terms between eight days and one year could be inflicted on aliens who immigrated without the previous agreement of the authorities. Illegal immigration became a criminally triable offence for the first time in Belgian history. The authorities deemed this necessary for national security and to assure public order.

As mentioned before, until October 13, 1939, the sojourn of Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany was time and again legalized. After October 13, 1939, Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany continued to arrive (graph 12). The Sûreté which had campaigned for a strict control over all illegal immigration for years -including clamping down on refugees crossing the border without permission- now found an ally: the military authorities. The military authorities were preoccupied with the danger of spies and considered any alien -jew or not- who succeeded to enter Belgian territory illegally “as highly suspect and thus absolutely undesirable” and that they had to be expelled “without any other consideration than national defense”[[1305]](#footnote-1306) This preoccupation with spies became paramount in the immigration policy, including refugee policy, even the political authorities underscored this danger. The Socialist Minister of Justice, E.Soudan, rhetorically asked in Parliament: "How can these refugees pass the German border, maybe they are on a mission?"[[1306]](#footnote-1307) This new preoccupation led to the implementation of a tougher refugee policy.

Prime Minister H.Pierlot considered expulsion, however, unacceptable, it was inhumane. The Minister of Justice E.Soudan responded that the only efficient policy was to expel all illegal entrants. He referred to the experiment of October 1938 when the then Minister of Justice, J.Pholien, had repatriated Jewish refugees by force. Soudan assigned this experiment a great psychological impact: not only did those repatriated refugees never return, but also the number of illegal entrants dropped spectacularly.The efficiency of such a policy was demonstrated clearly by this short-lived experiment. He stated that although he personally was opposed to return these Jews to their persecutors, the circumstances did not permit indulgence. National security was at stake. In addition it had the advantage of not having to make a trying selection between those who were a risk for the Nation and those who were not among the illegal entrants. Any other policy was doomed to fail as it would not deter the emigrants. The authorities would have recourse to the judiciairy as illegal sojourn was now a criminally triable offence. The experience with the law of September 28, 1939 showed, however, that magistrates were, according to Soudan too lenient. To confirm the arrest of undocumented aliens was sometimes refused by the judiciary, which considered these undocumented aliens as harmless in comparison to their habitual clientele . Anyway even a less lenient attitude of the judiciairy would not stop the emigrants, an internment in Belgium was for these people already an improvement in comparison with their situation in Nazi-Germany.

From December 9, 1939 onwards the Minister of Justice, E.Soudan, decided that all undocumented immigrants, even Jews fleeing Nazi-Germany were to be arrested and to be brought before court because of illegal sojourn.[[1307]](#footnote-1308) After serving their sentence they all were to be expelled. The Minister of Justice, however, made two exemptions: Political refugees were not to expelled and also those whose existence would be in danger upon return were not to be returned. Both of those categories were to be convicted, but after serving their sentence they were not to be expelled. Soudan stated explicitly that these exemptions were to be interpreted restrictively.[[1308]](#footnote-1309) Soudan’s career as Minister of Justice in Pierlot Cabinet did not last long. On the 5th of January P.E.Janson became Minister of Justice. Janson confirmed the strategy of his predecessor, but he seemed to be more indulgent. He ordered that Jews fleeing Nazi-Germany were not to be expelled.[[1309]](#footnote-1310)

The judiciairy contested the decision of the executive to arrest all illegal entrants. Some refugees who had petitioned for asylum at the advisory commission before they were arrested as undocumented aliens were not convicted by the courts. The court set them free since the judiciairy considered that the facilities for refugees, fully entrenched in Belgian legislation since 1936, had to be safeguarded.[[1310]](#footnote-1311) In most cases however, the undocumented immigrants, including refugees, were convicted, but the judiciairy remained loyal to her lenient tradition in reprimading illegal sojourn and sentenced them only short prison terms.

The undocumented aliens were expelled, after serving their sentence. The expulsion of refugees was considered impossible, but their liberation was also deemed inopportune. They had to stay in prison. The prisons became quickly overcrowded. As an alternative, camps -administrated like prisons- were set up to which the refugees were transfered.[[1311]](#footnote-1312) The Minister of National Defence, buttressed by the Sûreté, continued to insist that all illegal entrants were to be expelled.[[1312]](#footnote-1313) On March 9, 1939 the Jewish aid committees were forced once more to request the Belgian authorities to increase their subsidies for the upkeep of Jewish refugees. P.E.Janson, the Minister of Justice finally eliminated any human consideration in his immigration policy. The distinction between refugees and emigrants from the Third Reich within immigration policy was abolished. Janson decided in March 1940 that all illegal entrants who entered Belgium illegally after 26.3.1940 were to be arrested and to be interned in view of their return to Germany.[[1313]](#footnote-1314)

**2.The Steering of Migrants in the Labor Market**

a.The Distinction between the Legal and Social Reality, the Problem of Enforcement

During this period of economic downturn the Ministry of Labor sought to diminish the use of foreign labor in order to alleviate unemployment among Belgians. Not only immigration was severely curtailed but also aliens who had arrived in Belgium in recent years had to yield their position on the labor market to unemployed Belgians who could replace them.

The leeway of the authorities however, was limited. The privileged aliens were beyond its control. For example in the diamond industry 2,500 immigrants -of whom about half were Dutchmen- had acquired this permanent residency status. Ministry of Labor only had a hold over the other immigrants, those who had arrived after 1928. Rising unemployment made it increasingly difficult for the diamond workers with less than ten years sojourn to obtain a work permit. In 1937 the policy had been very liberal; 885 work permits B had been granted. After March 1938 only 486 migrants requested a temporary work permit -that is, migrants who had arrived in Belgium after March 1928- and only 87 of these aliens received a positive response, whereas 387 applications were rejected.[[1314]](#footnote-1315) In all the sectors until December 1938, 2,128 applications for a working permit were refused.[[1315]](#footnote-1316) These immigrants were supposed to leave the country. The goal of the new alien legislation was to adapt the presence of the immigrants to the state of the labor market.

The administrative capacity to enforce a strict adherence to the new alien legislation was still lacking. The Service of Foreign Labor of the Ministry of Labor could not handle all the applications in due time. In the period October 1936, when the law came into effect, until the end of 1938 141,163 aliens applied for a work permit, 130,162 applications were processed by then.[[1316]](#footnote-1317) In 1939 the office did not catch up. In the first three months 20,059 new applications were received and by the end of March 14,155 of these applications were not processed yet.[[1317]](#footnote-1318) Because of this backlog the office had to neglect its control over the employment of foreign labor and could not draw up statistics on the number of foreign laborers employed by each employer. The Director-General of the Ministry of Labor H.Fuss complained about the lack of personnel which made it impossible to implement the law:

"Cette situation est extrêmement fâcheuse. Elle entraîne de sérieux manquements dans l'application de la loi, en ne permettant pas de subordonner effectivement la mise au travail à une autorisation préalable. De plus, elle provoque de légitimes protestations, non seulement des employeurs et des travailleurs intéressés, mais également des organisations de travailleurs belges, qui se plaignent de l'insuffisance du contrôle."[[1318]](#footnote-1319)

Control over the implementation of the legislation on the employment of aliens was the Achilles heel of the new regulation. That a large number of foreign workers did not receive in due time any reply to their demand for a work permit, caused a kind of semi-illegal employment to florish. It caused serious problems to the agencies charged with controlling the implementation of the legislation.

The Service of Foreign Labor of the Ministry of Labor even totally abstained from this domain. Its limited staff was occupied full time with processing the applications for work permits. The labor inspectors, who were also authorized to draw up summons against immigrants and employers, were more active in this field. The Socialist Minister of Labor A. Delattre had reformed the Labor inspection in 1936.[[1319]](#footnote-1320) We have little information concerning the activities of the Labor Inspection, but it seems this service gained vitality following this reform. At least more infractions were being noticed and also more workers or employers summoned.[[1320]](#footnote-1321) On the base of the quantitative information dressed up by this office as illustrated by graph 13 we can only conclude that infractions on the employment of aliens took a limited share within the infractions which the labor inspector proposed to proceed against. While in 1938 the total number of communicated legal complaints (proces-verbaux) of the labor inspection declined, this was not the case for complaints pertaining to infractions of the regulation concerning employment of foreign labor. The share of these cases within the total number of legal complaints increased, albeit it remained still a small number.[[1321]](#footnote-1322) Seeing the thousands of refugees whose sojourn was tolerated, but who were refused access to the labor market, do those figures in no possible way reflect the dynamic of illegal employment of aliens. We can only conclude that also the labor inspection did not assure the implementation of the new alien legislation.

A last problem in the enforcement of the new alien legislation was the removal of those aliens who had been refused a work permit. In how far the surge of expulsions in the period envisaged (more than 3.000 aliens were expelled (*renvoyer*) as well in 1938 as in 1939, see graph 15) was due to the implementation of the new alien legislaton is difficult to judge. Were some of these expulsions the consequence of the removal of "recent" migrants due to the declining state of the economy or were they all illegal entrants who just as during the Depression of the first half of the 1930s were ordered to leave the country?

Even if the authorities to expel “recent”immigrants this was not always so easy to execute. In particular Poles who had been dismissed and were now living on welfare could not be repatriated as the Polish authorities refused to accept them. The Foreign Office insisted upon the Polish authorities to facilitate the repatriation of these unemployed Poles in Belgium and proposed to the Polish authorities that a commitment to accept destitute “recent” Poles living in Belgium could be one of the compensations in exchange for the agreement of the Polish miners' pension.[[1322]](#footnote-1323)

b.The Mining Sector, the only "Safe" Haven for Immigrant Labor

(1).The Stabilization of the Migrants in the Mines

The coal stocks piled up slowly because of the economic downturn. The *Commissions de Surveillance* for the recently recruited immigrants no longer met after March 1938. Due to the situation in the labor market, it was no longer necessary to convince unwilling immigrant labor to continue working in the mines until their contracts were completed. "Deserters" of this sort were immediately expelled.[[1323]](#footnote-1324) However, notwithstanding the economic downturn most immigrants recruited in 1937 were still needed in the mines.

The mining companies wanted to retain the immigrants who performed well. They tried to impose a working contract of a year's duration on these immigrants. The migrants would be bound to one mine, this would thus stabilize these workers for another year.[[1324]](#footnote-1325) The migrants, however, were not very eager to sign a new labor contract. Many hoped to move from the mine for which they had been recruited to a "better" mine. They hoped for a higher wage -on a par with their qualifications- , less harsh supervisors or better housing.[[1325]](#footnote-1326)

The Socialist miners' union supported the migrants. After the completion of their recruitment contract the migrants were to be regarded as Belgian miners and, therefore, had to receive the opportunity to change mines. These migrants had to come under the customary rules of the industry, hence a labor contract of unspecified duration with termination possibilities for both parties. Labor Minister A. Delattre was in complete agreement with this vision. The migrants also received the support of their consulary authorities.[[1326]](#footnote-1327) The mine employers decided, given the opposition, not to compel the stabilization of the migrants by a new contract of a year's duration.[[1327]](#footnote-1328)

The acquisition of complete equality with their Belgian colleagues was, however, only a future dream for these migrants. The new employer was obliged to request a new work permit, this entailed that he had to assume the repatriation deposit from the former employer. This provision caused mobility within the mine sector to remain extremely limited, at least for the recently recruited migrants.[[1328]](#footnote-1329) Legal employment of these migrants outside of the mine sector was prohibited. These migrants who left the mines received, in the short term, an order to leave the country.[[1329]](#footnote-1330)

In the course of 1938, the mine employers succeeded in retaining a significant portion of the recently recruited workers. The politically troubled period (the Treaty of Munich coupled with the on-going mobilization in Czechoslovakia) in the second half of 1938, however, meant that a large number of Czechoslovakians left Belgium. As pie chart 5 illustrates a large majority of the Poles were still working in Belgium after a year and a half, while more than half of the Hungarians and two thirds of the Czechoslovakians had left the country.[[1330]](#footnote-1331) The stabilization of these recently recruited immigrants did not solve the manpower problems of the mine industry. The mining companies in the basin of Limburg and Liège noted in the spring of 1939 a shortage of qualified labor. They applied for an authorization to recruit 500 qualified miners from abroad.[[1331]](#footnote-1332)

(2).The Miners' Unions Adopt Different Strategies

The economic downturn caused widespread partial unemployment in the mining industry, full unemployment remained rare. The presence of foreign miners became once again the target of a nationalistic campaign. The Christian Democratic miners' union demanded the immediate repatriation of all workers who had been recruited in 1937.[[1332]](#footnote-1333) This would make the mining industry a truely Belgian industry again. The repatriation of those immigrants would also be advantageous for the safety and morale in the mine basins. This union went even further, only those immigrants who had been in Belgium with their family for at least 10 years should be kept. They were integrated into national life and were *de facto* Belgians. An exception should also be made for the refugees and the nationals of the neighboring countries. The Christian Democratic union argued that the tense international diplomatic situation meant that it was dangerous to be dependent on immigrants for the extraction of coal. Well paid Belgian labor should provide the necessary manpower.[[1333]](#footnote-1334)

The Socialist Union in the Borinage joined with the Christian Democrats in its charges against the redundant foreign workers.[[1334]](#footnote-1335) Although branches of the Socialist miners' union in other basins made similar proposals, this was not the official standpoint of the Socialist miners union. This union argued that the immigrants responded to a structural need for manpower; their replacement would be impossible. The Socialist miners union considered the Christian Democratic strategy simplistic. Belgian labor could not provide all the manpower for the mine.[[1335]](#footnote-1336) Moreover, it was not human to drive these workers out, after having induced them to come to Belgium in 1937.[[1336]](#footnote-1337) The Socialist miners union had already made it clear during the arrival of the Poles in March of 1937 that these miners were considered an integral part of the Belgian working class.

The organizational drive especially among the Polish immigrants which followed as a consequence of this new strategy of the Socialist miners' union was halted in 1938. Deprived of unemployment benefits and even more insecure about their job than the Belgians the migrants felt that the unions did not defend their interests. When the numerous Polish locals of the miners' union tried to organize a national conference to press for their demands the Socialist miners' union was hesitant.[[1337]](#footnote-1338) It is unclear what the reaction was, but its seems that by 1938 the success of the Socialist miners' union among the migrants had already evaporated.[[1338]](#footnote-1339) It seems that even the Polish locals were dismantled. The unions did not acknowledge that their strategy to organize these immigrants who responded to officially sanctioned labor needs had failed.

The most blatant discrimination of immigrant workers -denying them unemployment benefits- was not frontally attacked by the Socialist union. That the immigrants were still unprotected against unemployment was only considered the result of the lack of interest of the countries of origin in the lot of their emigrants.[[1339]](#footnote-1340) That granting unemployment benefits to "recent" immigrants was contrary to the basic assumptions of the newly established alien policy was not mentioned. In fact, refusing immigrants unemployment benefits was the most blatant expression of the subordinate role the immigrants were ascribed in the Belgian labor market by the state and the unions alike. Unemployed immigrant labor had to be repatriated, not financially supported. That the Polish miners, who became member of the Socialist miners' union in 1937 did not accept this role in 1938 should hardly be a surprise. Already upon arrival these professional miners had shown to be used to defend their interests. Their desertion from the Socialist miners union was an sign of protest against their subservient status not only in the labor market, but also in their union.

The refusal to grant them unemployment benefits was even used by the unions to demand their dismissal. The argument was that these immigrants, as they did not receive unemployment benefits, had no alternative, but to accept what the employers imposed.[[1340]](#footnote-1341)

(3).The Authorities Use Migrants as Shock Absorbers

The Socialist Minister of Labor A. Delattre did not follow the strategy of the union of which he was a former president. He did not consider the immigrants an integral part of the working class of the mines. He also did not join the Christian Democrats who demanded the removal of recently recruited immigrants. He made a more pragmatic choice. He demanded that the employers give absolute preferance to their Belgian workers. In order to force the mines to give preferential treatment to Belgians, Delattre refused to extend the work permits of the workers who had been recruited in 1937.[[1341]](#footnote-1342) The Sûreté, however, was given a directive not to bother these aliens. This decision was only aimed at increasing pressure on the mining companies.[[1342]](#footnote-1343)

The work permits of those recently recruited immigrants were extended only at the end of August 1938, when unemployment had abated. Delattre continued to hold on to the necessity of absolute priority being given to Belgian manpower. In addition, immigrants once dismissed should not remain in Belgium. Unemployed aliens had to be repatriated. They should not become a burden on the Belgian state.[[1343]](#footnote-1344)

To increase the power of the authorities over the immigrants in 1939 the work permits of the recently recruited immigrants were only prolonged for 6 months. In 1937 and in 1938 they had obtained a work permit valid for a year.[[1344]](#footnote-1345) It was not that the authorities considered the repatriation of even a part of the immigrants feasible; rather it was to assure that not one Belgian would be unemployed while an immigrant doing the same job was retained on the job. As there was no unemployment in the mining industry, all expired work permits were hence prolonged for another six months in June 1939.[[1345]](#footnote-1346)

(4)Immigrants as the Solution to Labor shortage and Unemployments

As mentioned earlier the mining companies of the basin of Liège and Limburg petitioned the authorities for permission to recruit additional manpower from abroad in the spring of 1939. The new Minister of Labor, the Christian Democrat Delfosse agreed that qualified miners were in short supply. However he was reluctant to grant an authorisation to recruit abroad as there was still a large pool of unemployed Belgians who could be integrated in the Belgian mining industry. Just as in 1937 an authorization for recruitment of aliens would depend, on the condition that unemployed Belgians were trained to become qualified miners.[[1346]](#footnote-1347) At the same time the authorities embarked on a more muscled policy towards the Belgian unemployed, in order to force unemployed Belgians to work in the mines, the Royal Decree of September 2, 1939 stipulated that the refusal to accept a job in the mine would be punished with the loss of the dole. Employers received also a subsidy if they hired unemployed Belgians with no experience in mining.[[1347]](#footnote-1348)

The Christian Democratic Union was strongly opposed to the recruitment of more foreign labor. They argued that among the large number of Belgian unemployed there were certainly enough workers who would work in the mines if the wages were raised.[[1348]](#footnote-1349)

An agreement to recruitment, however, was out of the question when on July the fourth, 1939 the mine Levant et Produits Réunis in the basin of the Borinage closed down. About 4,000 Belgian and 233 foreign, mostly Polish miners lost their job. The Christian Democratic union aggressively demanded that the laid off Belgians should be rehired in the basin itself or in the neighbouring basin Centre by firing immigrant labor. Only in the Borinage were there about two thousand aliens working in the mines.

The Socialist miners union repeated this demand, but in a more reserved manner. This strategy would kill two birds with one stone: the unemployment problem in the Borinage would be solved and also the demand for qualified miners in Liège and Limburg could be met as the immigrants fired in the Centre and the Borinage could be sent to the basin of Limburg and Liège.[[1349]](#footnote-1350)

The Minister of Labor Delfosse was delighted by this proposal and insisted that the mining companies replace at least part of the immigrants with Belgian miners.[[1350]](#footnote-1351) The mine association of the Borinage agreed to fire some foreign labor, but they asserted that a radical removal of aliens would be detrimental to the industry. The bratticemen were mostly aliens -the local miners in the Borinage did not want to do this- and in general the foreign miners lived in company housing close to the mine what implied that a labor supply was assured to do all indispensable tasks. Also, a lot of the immigrants worked in the night shifts, a shift the Belgians shunned. The employers also asserted that they counted on the children of their foreign labor force to assure production in the future.

The employers argued that the replacement of immigrants with unemployed miners would not be an easy task. Most aliens worked in the mines in the west of the basin. Lack of transportation made commuting difficult. A definite solution whereby the Belgian miners would live in company housing was not acceptable to the Belgian miners because most of them owned their own house in the center of the basin of the Borinage. The employers promised to do their best to substitute some aliens with Belgians.[[1351]](#footnote-1352)

While several hundred of the unemployed miners from Levant de Flénu were hired in other mines in the Borinage by August 1939, all 223 aliens who had lost their job in that closed mine were refused in the other mines. These migrants did not receive any unemployment benefits and some returned to their country of origin. The FEDECHAR granted a small daily allowance -30 francs, about half of their wage- to these migrants who stayed to enable them to look for a new job in another basin. Some of them moved to Limburg, where the companies even paid the transport costs -800 francs- if they stayed in those mines for at least six months. Also some of them found another job in the basin of Liège. The lack of housing for their family in Liège and the harder working conditions in Limburg reduced their desire to leave the Borinage, but they had little choice.[[1352]](#footnote-1353)

The rehiring of the dismissed Belgians of Lévant de Flenu by firing immigrants in other mines in the Borinage and Centre had the strong support of the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor Delfosse. He was filled with indignation when in August 1939 the regional mine association of the Borinage refused to guarantee the replacement of 400 aliens with Belgian unemployed miners. Delfosse proposed a concerted effort of the Borinage and Centre basin to dismiss 400 immigrants. The basin of Liège had asked for 400 qualified miners. Delfosse threatened, if the mines obstructed this solution, to enforce the dismissal of the foreign miners in the Borinage by revoking their work permits.

Of the 1,995 aliens in the Borinage there were 811 who had been living in Belgium at least 10 years, and were thus privileged aliens who had an unrestricted right to work. Labor Minister Delfosse had no power to impose their dismissal, however, the sojourn of another thousand aliens depended on his decision. In July 1939, when the unemployment in the Borinage rose because of the closing down of Lévant de Flenu Delfosse decided not to prolong their work permits. Already about 150 immigrants had not obtained a renewal of their work permit. These aliens were still tolerated, but they could be forced to leave the Borinage immediately.

Delfosse preferred that the mining companies select the immigrants to be sent to Liège. He promised the mining companies that the immigrants for the basin of Liège would only receive a work permit for three months. If the mines in the Borinage needed additional manpower -especially if Levant de Flénu resumed its operations- their return could be quickly arranged. This sweetened the pill for the mining companies and they agreed to send 400 of "their" immigrants to Liège.[[1353]](#footnote-1354)

Notwithstanding their agreement Delfosse refused to renew any work permit; the mining companies should be kept under pressure.[[1354]](#footnote-1355) FEDECHAR protested but Delfosse insisted that the mining companies give him a list of 400 immigrants they would fire by the first of October to make vacancies for unemployed Belgian miners.[[1355]](#footnote-1356) The outbreak of the Second World War totally reversed the situation.

c.Foreign Labor Outside the Mining Industry

The restrictive policy of the authorities to refuse work permits to most of the "recent" immigrants if their presence was not absolutely needed was considered insufficient by most of the unions. There had been complaints in the building sector already in 1937 as unemployment remained high in that trade. The private building sector did not recover, only the large public works alleviated unemployment among the builders. The fact that aliens, immigrants from the 1920s, benefited from these public works was not appreciated by the builders' unions. Foreign labor, mostly Italians, was used on the public works in those regions where no unemployed Belgian builders were available. The immigrants were willing to go to faraway places, while the Belgian unemployed builders did not consider it worthwhile to do so. The unions insisted that the authorities find a solution so that it would be feasible for the thousands of unemployed Belgian builders in other regions to do those jobs.[[1356]](#footnote-1357)

During the economic downturn from 1938 onwards the agitation from within the unions against the immigrants increased considerably. The stone workers complained that all those aliens who had been hired during the short revival of their industry in 1937 remained in the quarries and caused unemployment among the Belgians.[[1357]](#footnote-1358) Most of the quarries had been thriving because of orders for the program of large public works which the Governement Van Zeeland had launched. These orders had taken about 30% of the quarry production. Because of budgetary reasons those orders fell by 1938. Hence unemployment rose among the quarry workers. Both unions wanted the mostly Italian migrant labor force to be removed.[[1358]](#footnote-1359) In the metallurgic industry the unions did not complain. The large number of aliens who had been hired in 1936 were fired as soon as business went down.[[1359]](#footnote-1360) The few aliens who were retained in the iron and steel industry had been working in these factories for many years. Most of them had been hired in the 1920s.[[1360]](#footnote-1361)

The trade unions in the building sector protested against the use of immigrants in their sector. In 1938 according to Van Craen of the builders' union, the number of immigrants in construction increased in Liège. Italians and refugees from Nazi-Germany, as well as Dutch workers were more and more hired in the building sector. The so-called "temporary mine workers", those immigrants recruited for the mines in 1937 but who had deserted the mines, also took part in what Van Craen called "the occupation of our builders' yards".[[1361]](#footnote-1362) With increasing unemployment among builders the attacks on the immigrants became more vehement. Not only economic, but also racist arguments became used in the attack. The Socialist Builders' Union advocated the removal of foreign labor on the building sites in the following terms:

"the most unwanted are the Poles and the Italians...These people bring a lot of damage to our industry and to our indigenous labor force: they do not respect the hours, the social legislation etc...They act as if they live in a conquered land and as if they are exempted from the laws and regulations of our country...We agree that there are honest people among them, but those aliens, especially the Poles, will not be able to integrate into our population; they prefer to live beside our people, because they can have their way of doing things more easily."[[1362]](#footnote-1363)

The Socialist Garment Workers Union denounced the presence of Jewish migrants in their sector. The union argued that the presence of aliens, as employees or employers, had a disastrous effect on the garment sector. The foreign employers only produced goods of lesser quality, whose low prices pushed the Belgian employers off the market. These low prices coincided with the willingness of the Jewish workers to work for any wage whatsoever. The presence of Jews in the garment sector signified nothing other than the worsening of labor conditions and unemployment among the Belgian workers. The union insisted that the authorities had to put an end to this.[[1363]](#footnote-1364)

The unions in the hotel sector again expressed a strong anti-immigrant attitude at the end of the 1930s. During the Depression of the first half of the 1930s, the unions had denounced the exaggerated presence of aliens. The attacks on the immigrants became extremely virulent by 1938. The unions claimed that a large number of undocumented workers were being hired in the hotels under unacceptable condition.[[1364]](#footnote-1365) A strict control over the employment of immigrants was demanded. In fact the unions opposed the employment of any foreigner while there was still unemployment among their members. In 1938 the congress of the Socialist Union of hotel personnel voted a resolution in which the continuous employment of aliens was said "to hurt the honor of the workers in this country and doom them to unemployment"[[1365]](#footnote-1366) Aliens could only be employed if no Belgians were unemployed in this sector. In 1939 the attacks against the "abusive" employment of aliens in the hotels increased. Just as in the first half of the 1930s some nationalistic organisations were organized around this issue. The response of the traditional labor organisations came quickly. The Christian Democratic and Socialist Union set up a Defence Committee to put pressure on the authorities and the employers for the absolute priority of Belgian hotel personnel. Even the Communists joined this committee. While the right wing organizations pointed to the Jewish migrants among the hotel personnel, the Communists attacked the Italian and German fascists who were working in the hotels.

All the organizations involved considered it offensive that the authorities agreed with the employers that the Belgian personnel was not well enough qualified. They argued that qualifications were not an issue here. On the contrary it was the aliens who had destroyed the profession by accepting a lower pay and by doing all the tasks imposed on them. These "highly qualified" aliens even agreed to do the dishes. It was their flexibility which made the aliens more desired. The Belgian personnel was prouder of their professional status, they refused to do menial tasks and demanded a decent salary.[[1366]](#footnote-1367)

The crux of the unions' criticism was directed against the lax implementation of the alien legislation. The Service of Foreign Labor was hardly criticized. The unions acknowledged that the Ministry of Labor rarely granted work permits to "recent" immigrants. The unions denounced the lack of control over the employment of aliens. The central problem for the unions was the illegal employment of foreign labor. The state's lax enforcement of respect for the legislation was particularly denounced by the garment, leather and diamond union. These were the sectors to which Jewish migrants and refugees had easy access.

The agitation was especially virulent in the garment sector. The campaign against the Jewish garment workers was even supported by the leadership of the Socialist Garment Workers Union. By 1937 they had already taken a clear standpoint, i.e., it was necessary to put an end to immigration. In order to protect their sector no new aliens -migrants or refugees- would be tolerated. Labor conditions would otherwise be undermined even further by these immigrants who would either work illegally for someone else or would establish themselves as independent craftsmen.[[1367]](#footnote-1368) The protection of the labor market for Belgians was central, all other considerations should be put aside. New immigration, even refugees, should no longer be tolerated.

F.Liebaers, the president of this union argumented this radical position in a pathetic manner:

"We do not have the right to put the future of our whole working class and its trade union movement at stake in order to please individuals or even to rescue them from a critical situation."[[1368]](#footnote-1369)

In the diamond sector the campaign against the immigrants and refugees started only in 1938. A general crisis in the diamond sector at the end of 1938 provoked high tension, whereby the employment of aliens, refugees as well as migrants, was a thorn in the side of the unemployed Belgian workers. The Christian Democratic Union pushed for the removal of foreign labor from the diamond sector.[[1369]](#footnote-1370) As we have seen earlier the legal possibility of refusing work permits was used nearly to its full extent in 1938. The Socialist Diamond Workers' Union was cleary dissatified with the employment of a large number of migrants and refugees in view of the extensive unemployment among diamond workers. The Socialist Union however, kept an even tone in the treatment of this issue. The problem was not that the Belgian authorities had too lax an attitude in respect to the granting of work permits. It was the illegal employment of refugees and migrants which brought the labor conditions into danger. The migrants, who for years had earned their living in a legal manner, were not attacked. The Socialist union deemed necessary the seizure of illegal employment as an anything but easy task. Negotiations with the employers came to nothing. The union appealed to the authorities to look for a solution to the "castaways who had clamped themselves on to our craft."[[1370]](#footnote-1371)

The unionists were strongly irritated about the lack of control over the employment of foreign labor. According to the unions, the biggest problem was that the government was lethargic in enforcing her alien policy. Most of the criticism went beyond the intention of the legislation of 1936, by demanding a strict adaptation of the employment of all aliens -independent of the years of sojourn in Belgium- on the state of the labor market.

d.All "Recent" Immigrants should be miners, September 1939-May 1940

The outset of the Second World War caused the demand for coal to increase sharply. The neighbouring countries (especially Great Britain and Germany) who exported a part of their coal to Belgium stopped doing so. They used all their coal for the war effort. Belgium also changed over to a war industry and needed more coal.

Two solutions were envisaged to satisfy the need for more coal: the lengthening of the working day and/or the increase of the number of miners. The former solution was pushed for by the mining companies, the authorities agreed to it and the Royal Decree of December 15, 1939 lengthened the working day. The strong opposition by the miners who did not want to depart from the forty-eight-hour work week caused the authorities to withdraw this decision. A new Royal Decree, on February 3, 1940 restricted the lengthening of the work day to the exceptional circumstances (the war) and granted labor a wage increase. The miners were guaranteed that as soon as peace returned, the 48-hour week would be restored. The achievement of the strike of 1936 was safeguarded for the future.

This in itself was not sufficient to increase the coal supply. The authorities hoped that to increase the number of miners would solve the problem.[[1371]](#footnote-1372) The large pool of unemployed Belgians could scarcely be tapped. The results of "forced" direction of the unemployed Belgians to the mining sector were minimal. Notwithstanding the threat -introduced by the Royal Decree of September 2, 1939- to deny unemployment benefits to those unskilled Belgians who refused to work in the mines, the number of Belgian miners hardly increased.[[1372]](#footnote-1373) The threat barely materialized. The Socialist miners'union had been strongly opposed to this measure.[[1373]](#footnote-1374)

Less opposition was encountered when the authorities tried to direct more aliens to the mining industry. The Socialist Minister of Labor, A.Balthazar, considered migrant labor as the flexible labor force par excellence. Directing more migrants to the mining sector turned out to be the easiest strategy to implement. The work permits of about 2,500 "recently" arrived aliens -work permits B- who worked outside mining were cancelled in the fall of 1939. Only by agreeing to work in the mining industry, could they remain in Belgium.[[1374]](#footnote-1375) All restrictions on the recruitment for the mining industry of aliens, legally residing in Belgium were lifted. In the fall of 1939 any immigrant could be hired by the mining companies without the autorisation of the Ministry of Labor.[[1375]](#footnote-1376) Even illegal immigrants such as the Republican refugees from Spain could by entering mine work legalize their sojourn. The Jewish refugees from Nazi-Germany who until then had been excluded from the labor market were also given a possibility in the mining industry.[[1376]](#footnote-1377)

These injections of labor did not even make up for the large number of Polish and Czechoslovakian miners who left Belgium in that period for their Armies in exile in France. Other migrants anxious to find out what happened to their families returned to their countries of origin, some migrant labor even went to work in Germany.[[1377]](#footnote-1378)

There remained thus a great need for additional manpower for the mining industry. The Netherlands was seen as the source for manpower. A few thousand Dutchmen were requested at the Dutch labor exchange offices. The Dutchmen were not very eager to leave for the Belgian mines and the Netherlands could only provide a few hundred men.[[1378]](#footnote-1379) Yugoslavians and Poles in Luxemburg whose work permits were collectively revoked in September were also authorized to work in the Belgian mines.[[1379]](#footnote-1380)

The labor shortage in the mining industry became even worse in the beginning of 1940. The Polish authorities in Paris had hoped, since the outbreak of the war, to use the Polish emigrants in Belgium in the war effort, either as soldiers in their newly formed army or to help their ally, France in its war production. All the single Poles had already been called upon in the fall of 1939. The heads of families were yet not drafted, since the Polish government in exile did not have enough financial means for the upkeep of the families at its disposal. The growing shortage of coal for the French war effort meant that the French were eager to use the Polish miners in Belgium. In December 1939, the French mine assocations guaranteed the reception not only of the miners, but also of their families. Two months later, a new recruitment campaign was launched among the Polish emigrants in Belgium. The miners and their families were to be sent to the basin of the Nord and Pas-du-Calais at the expense of the French mining companies. The Czechoslovakian National Committee also continued to call upon their countrymen in Belgium to join their army in exile.[[1380]](#footnote-1381) The FEDECHAR immediately called upon the Minister of Justice for measures to prevent the emigration of these experienced miners and their families. FEDECHAR proposed to introduce an exit-visum to prevent the Poles from leaving. The Belgian authorities refused to do so. They found themselves disarmed, there was nothing illegal about the departure of the Czechoslovakian and Polish miners.[[1381]](#footnote-1382) They, however, decided to arrest some of the Poles most active in the recruitment campaign. This was legally possible on the basis of the exceptional legislation which was passed at the outbreak of the Second World War. With the Royal Decree of September 28, 1939 aliens who were a threat to the national security and also the national economy could be expelled or interned in order to impede further "anti-patriotic activity".[[1382]](#footnote-1383) These arrests succeeded in putting pressure on the Polish authorities to call off, at least partly, the departure of Polish miners' families for France.[[1383]](#footnote-1384)

**3.Immigrants Excluded from Trade**

a.The Middle Class Wants to Exclude the Immigrants

At the beginning of 1936 the High Council of the middle class asked when the government was discussing the modalities for the granting of work permits, that the employees recruited abroad be tied to a work contract for ten years. In this way the middle class would be safeguarded against any competition from these aliens. The Belgian merchants wanted to enjoy a protection analogous to that of the Belgian workers.[[1384]](#footnote-1385) The authorities had the power at their disposal to comply with this demand by the organized middle class. Only after a ten year stay in Belgium would immigrants receive full-fledged right of residence -registration in the population register- which protected them against arbitrary expulsion. The Minister of Justice could decide completely autonomously to deny residence to any would-be traders among them. The broadening of alien legislation in order to curtail the presence of aliens in industry and trade was thus not really necessary.

Recruitment of more than 7,000 mine workers in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Hungary in 1937 meant that the trade sector asked insistently for the protection of its sector. The recruitment of new miners would, according to the middle-class organizations, have a disastrous backlash on the trade sector. These Poles and Czechs would, as soon as they had some savings, leave the mines en masse to seek their livelihood in the trade or artisanal sectors. They demanded the immediate expulsion of immigrants who had misled the Belgian authorities by letting themselves be recruited for the mines, then, after several months work in the mines, setting themselves up as merchants or artisans. Such "abuse" could not be tolerated.[[1385]](#footnote-1386)

This demand could count on a national consensus. The employers in the mines for whom the recruitment implied heavy financial expenses naturally sought to keep these immigrants in the mine. The employers, however, ignored this "desertion" into trade, as the amount of manpower concerned was negligible.[[1386]](#footnote-1387) The unions supported the middle-class organizations unconditionally. Although the current away from the industrial labor market was less of a priority for them, they considered that in order to protect the Belgian self-employed the infiltration in the trade sector had to be kept strictly under control.[[1387]](#footnote-1388)

The authorities were ready to make the professional mobility of these immigrants manu militari impossible. Mining companies and middle-class organizations were summoned to register all aliens who had left the mine sector with the alien police so that the authorities could expel them.[[1388]](#footnote-1389) Although the recently recruited miners either stayed in the mines or went back to their country of origin -if a few attempted to find their livelihood as an self-employed before the outbreak of the war it was higly likely they were unsucessful given the opposition of the authorities- the myth of the "temporary mine worker" who formed a menace for the Belgian merchants and artisans resolutely continued. The authorities were called upon to quickly take action against those who were doing something quite different to what they were brought to Belgium to do.[[1389]](#footnote-1390) In 1938 the aims of middle-class agitation became broader. Not only did the immigrants have to be prevented from forcing their way into their sector, but the aliens, who were already active in commerce, had to come under strict control by the authorities as well.

The middle-class organizations in the Limburg basin took the initiative in this campaign against the foreign traders. As already stated above, the East and Central European miners, who had established themselves with their families, in the regions around Genk and Eisden, were a grateful clientele for ethnic businesses. A number of these foreign traders, but certainly not all, were of Jewish origin.

In February 1938 the branch of the Flemish Nationalist Party (VNV) in Maas-Mechelen - the small town surrounded by the pre-eminently multi-cultural miners community of Eisden- introduced a new topic: " the Jewish hucksters".[[1390]](#footnote-1391) This was the first sign of a crucial transformation in the agitation from the middle-class circles. It no longer had to do with diverting the menace of the recently-recruited miners who were going to set up business: now previously established non-Belgian merchants were targeted. Moreover, these foreign traders were all presented as Jews.

The topic of the "temporary miners" was taken up again. These already established Jewish traders had, according to the Flemish Nationalists also come to Belgium to work in the mines. They had, however cheated the Belgians.[[1391]](#footnote-1392)

Around this, rather minimal Jewish presence in Limburg a campaign was launched on a large scale. Graffiti which called for a boycotting of the Jewish merchants appeared on streets and buildings.[[1392]](#footnote-1393) The Flemish Nationalists who had given the initial thrust to this campaign were quickly accompanied by the Limburg Catholic middle-class movement. From very early on the Catholic movement in Limburg had been confronted with the rising popularity of Flemish Nationalism. The Catholic movement diligently attempted to outdo the Flemish Nationalists in this campaign. They called upon the authorities to put a halt to the massive establishment of aliens in the trade sector.[[1393]](#footnote-1394) The Limburgers had no defense against these aliens, as they made use of dishonest business practices. The foremost manifestation of such practices was the possibility to shop on credit. This was not only unlawful competition, but it was the consumers, moreover, who suffered for it. The frequent attachment of wages that resulted from the granting of credit made it necessary for the authorities to take action to protect the workers.[[1394]](#footnote-1395)

These abuses were not only carried out by the Jewish merchants who had a business in the mine basin, but mostly by the "countless foreign, and mostly Jewish peddlers and agents who go door to door and are in partnership with one or another Isaac or Abraham from Brussels or Antwerp."[[1395]](#footnote-1396) These Jewish trade representatives offered all types of goods on order. Payment in installments made this sales technique all too attractive.

The cry for protection of the Limburg traders grew more shrill. The middle-class organisations argued that dishonest trade activities, such as the extension of credit, evasion of fiscal and social taxes made it impossible for the Limburgian shopkeepers to put up with these foreign merchants any longer.[[1396]](#footnote-1397) Moreover, they took away all the Limburgers' chances for social promotion. The Limburg people wanted more than to be doomed forever to go down in the mines. Didn't they have rights in their own region. It was already bad enough that the coal had been traded away to the French-speaking capital. Local trade had to remain in Limburgs' hands.[[1397]](#footnote-1398)

The Catholic and Flemish-National middle class contracted an alliance to keep the aliens out of local trade once and for all. The agitation continued for months and escalated into a protest meeting against the colonization of Limburg in Genk on October 20,1938. The principal demand made by the Limburg middle-class front was to keep the aliens out of the trade sector.[[1398]](#footnote-1399)

The Limburg Middle-class Front wanted that the admittance of aliens to the trade sector be strictly regulated. Every alien who wished to make his livelihood in trade had to get a permit from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This Ministry, in addition, had to ask for the binding advice of the local middle class. The aliens who received permission had to remain the object of a strict control by the authorities working in conjunction with the local middle class.[[1399]](#footnote-1400)

This Limburg campaign found followers. The Belgian middle class continued to contend with severe difficulties. In spite of the economic upturn in 1936, domestic purchasing power had not been able to recover. Given the weak economic basis of Belgian small commerce could these businesses not cope with the new recession. They received another severe blow. Protection was demanded. The anti-alien campaign was an expression of the economic feebleness of Belgian retail commerce.

Not only in Limburg, but also in other regions, the middle-class circles began in the beginning of 1939 to agitate fiercely against traders of non-Belgian nationality.[[1400]](#footnote-1401) This anti-alien campaign was especially virulent in Charleroi where a Jewish community had settled at the beginning of the thirties. A number of local middle-class associations joined together in mid-1939 to form a front against their competitors of non-Belgian nationality. This Union des Commerçants Belges de Charleroi sought to drive the Jewish merchants and artisans from the city.[[1401]](#footnote-1402) They attributed the proliferation of the Jewish trade activities -just as in Limburg- to their dishonest practices. Since they did not pay any social benefits or other taxes, the Jewish migrants could, at the expense of the local middle class, take control of the market.[[1402]](#footnote-1403)

Jewish competition was criticized to an increasing degree also in cities such as Antwerp and Brussels, where the presence of foreign competitors had always been a part of normal life in the trade sector. In the summer of 1939, the Brussels Chamber of Commerce affiliated itself with the demands of the Limburg middle-class front. A restrictive regulation of the commercial and industrial activities of the immigrants was demanded.[[1403]](#footnote-1404) The Antwerp Chamber of Commerce also pleaded for a restricted policy towards the non-Belgians.[[1404]](#footnote-1405)

The line of reasoning was for all those middle class organizations similar. The competition of the Jewish self-employed was ruining the Belgians. The fight was uneven. The Jewish migrants rejected an honest livelihood, they were active only in trades and production where they could close the Belgians out by working actively together. In this way the Jews were able to evade the social and fiscal taxes. Since the migrants were able to act together in a free zone in which there was not a single control, the Belgians had no reply to this merciless competition which broke all the conventions of the trade world.

"Les immigrés qui ont pu sauver quelques bribes de leur avoir s'empressent d'ouvrir un commerce de détail. L'immigré dédaigne tout négoce dont l'approvisionnement est à la portée de chacun et dans des conditions identiques. Il méprise le commerce des fruits, des légumes, des denrées coloniales où les chances de vente et d'achat sont égales pour tous. Il jette son dévolu sur les produits qui incorporent une forte proportion de main-d'oeuvre, tels que les gants, les fourrures, les confections etc..."[[1405]](#footnote-1406)

It was absolutely necessary to even the score. With everyone equal before the law, aliens must not enjoy any privileges.[[1406]](#footnote-1407) The “alien” interference in the commercial sphere was not always that foreign, a number of businessmen of foreign origin seemed to have already been residing in Belgium for years and had already acquired Belgian nationality. This was, according to the Limburg Catholic middle-class movement, not always a sign that these foreigners were patriotic Belgians. Many had taken the Belgian nationality purely out of pursuit of personal gain. This was not acceptable, the Belgian middleclass had it difficult enough as it was. Every naturalization meant an additional competitor for the Belgian middleclass. The Limburg Catholic middle-class movement proposed that naturalization only was allowable if an affinity for Belgium could be clearly proven. This quickly became a national demand of the organized middleclass. The legislative commitee of the Brussels’ Chamber of Commerce in its session of June 23, 1939 advised the authorities “not to give out naturalization so easily, that it should only be granted after a longer period of residence in the country than had been demanded up to this point and only to those applicants for naturalization who had very clearly provided evidence of an attachment to the country.”[[1407]](#footnote-1408)

This uproar against the economic activities of the Jewish migrants remained fueled, just as in the first half of the thirties, by the continuous stream of immigrants from Nazi Germany.[[1408]](#footnote-1409) Although the number of Jewish refugees in the beginning of 1938 had increased to only a slight degree, in some circles there was talk of an invasion. They argued that immediately after the Anschluss of Austria, thousands of Jews had streamed into Belgium.[[1409]](#footnote-1410) The authorities stood back, measures had to be taken urgently to combat this flood of immigrants.[[1410]](#footnote-1411) This "invasion" of refugees supported the perception that Jewish immigration was a persistent menace.

Again the reasons for Jewish emigation were made suspect. It was not a matter of them being refugees. The specific persecution of which the Jews in Germany were the victims - especially the forcing of Jews out of economic life- meant that these immigrants were denied the right to the privileged label "political refugee". Perhaps they were "economically persecuted", but certainly not politically.

"C'est fort rarement qu'il s'agit de réfugiés politiques. Il s'agit, entre autres, de Juifs auxquels on interdit certaines activités commerciales avec des Aryens, mais non pas entre eux. Ce sont, pourrait-on dire, des persécutés économiques. Mais pas politiques...Pour trouver un prétexte en vue de maintenir ces indésirables en Belgique, les officines qui font métier de les introduire chez nous...affirment qu'il s'agit de réfugiés politiques."[[1411]](#footnote-1412)

The fact that they were not political refugees was also manifest by their apparent wealth. Not only did they have a lot of money at their disposal to hire someone to smuggle them into Belgium and even to bribe the German border patrols, but as wel off that they took luxurious baggage filled with their belongings with them. Clearly, it was not a case of refugees who had left everything behind to save their skins.[[1412]](#footnote-1413)

In 1938 there were already complaints that these Jewish immigrants from Germany had a detrimental influence on socio-economic life.[[1413]](#footnote-1414) In 1939 these complaints multiplied.

The pleas increased for an absolute halt to immigration, this implied the expulsion of refugees who had immigrated illegally. The advocates for a tougher refugee policy stated that Belgium's economic capacities were limited. Belgium was a small country, our "meager 30,000 km2" could not take in even more refugees. It would only be at the expense of our own countrymen.[[1414]](#footnote-1415)

b.The Political Class Takes over the Demands of the Middle Class

After the success of Rex the traditional political circles clearly paid more attention to the organized middle class. The demands of these organizations to take hold of the competition they had to face from aliens in Belgium received immediate approval in the political world.[[1415]](#footnote-1416) That the complaints about dishonest competition were not always well-founded was not an issue for many politicians. The Catholic Party was especially eager to do something about this middle-class demands. In the Congress of the Catholic Party of October 22-23, 1938 the problems of the middle class came up for discussion. In the long run, the Party wanted regulation of the retail trade. However, already a number of urgent measures had to be taken to protect the middle class. In the short run, the vending trade and trade by aliens especially had to be restrained.[[1416]](#footnote-1417) A number of liberals also sought to defend the national middle class in this manner.[[1417]](#footnote-1418)

In the first half of the 1930s a number of small racist groups had, with little success been agitating about the refugee and migrant issue. Racism received, however, quite a large attention after 1937. The movement around the paper *Volksverwering*, published from January 1937, focused on this theme. The central purpose of this movement, based mainly in Antwerp, was to combat the presence of Jews in Belgium. The virulent anti-Semitism of these groups was supplemented by broader political formations.

The Antwerp city council elections in October 1938 clearly illustrated this change in climate. The important Jewish community in the city, which was a center of attraction for many refugees (together with the ties which this Jewish community had with the Socialist mayor of Antwerp, Camille Huysmans), meant that various political parties hoped to use the Jewish theme to their advantage. The election slogans blatantly stated this. Rex proposed," Belgium for Belgians! Down with the Jewish overcrowding!"[[1418]](#footnote-1419) The Flemish National VNV was even clearer and its election meetings were decked out with banners with the writing, " Away with the Jews".[[1419]](#footnote-1420) The Catholic party did not let itself be outbid. An election leaflet of October 1938 did not refrain from using the Jewish issue to criticize their political opponents, the socialists "who made our town to a refuge of all different strange rabble who despise the born Antwerpian."[[1420]](#footnote-1421)

These elections let loose the floodgates. Racism penetrated the political scene. The sense of reserve still valid in the first half of the thirties, was from 1938 on thrown overboard. The changing vocabulary is indicative. When one talked about the influence of the Jewish migrants in trade and industry one did not speak about aliens anymore, but about Jews. The refugees were not spared, their negative influence on the economic sphere was underlined by the political class.[[1421]](#footnote-1422) Concerns about the presence of Jewish migrants became a national preoccupation. The fantastical Jewish statistic made up by *Volksverwering*, which was meant to illustrate the spectacular growth of the Jewish grasp in the Belgian economy, found eager response in respectable circles.[[1422]](#footnote-1423)

This anti-Jewish agitation was not only fed by the economic activity of the immigrants; the mere fact that these aliens were different added more fuel to the fire. The multi-cultural society which was already a visual reality for many Belgians in the big cities, obviously could not be coped with easily. Immigration was denied out of a preoccupation "to protect our people morally, religiously, culturally and nationally and to keep it sound".[[1423]](#footnote-1424) The multi-cultural society was portrayed as an aberation. It was simply an expression of the failure of the national community to assimilate new elements. Belgium was a small country with eight million inhabitants and to incorporate these immigrants, who were totally foreign to the local culture, was not so simple. The differences ran deep and a long incubation period would be necessary to assimilate these aliens into the national community. The Catholic politician, J.Pholien, as Minister of Justice expressed this xenophobic vision in the highest political echelons of the country in 1938. He stated that Belgium had already taken in too many aliens and in particular, too many foreign Jews. The Belgian community could not assimilate these masses.

 "On peut comparer le corps social au corps humain. Ni l'un, ni l'autre n'ont une faculté indéfinie d'absorber et d'assimiler des éléments étrangers."[[1424]](#footnote-1425)

His fellow party member, Coelst, First *Echevin* of Brussels followed in 1939. Coelst limited himself to his city and warned that Brussels would lose its national character if the immigration of aliens was not called to a halt.

"Si un pays ne veut pas perdre son âme et garder son caractère foncier il doit se prémunir contre un afflux trop considérable d'éléments hétérogènes, qui dépasserait sa faculté d'ab­sorption...C'est une question de dosage. Il faut éviter l'indigestion. Compte non tenu de la population étrangère flottante et qui s'est infiltrée à la suite des persécutions que l'on sait, Bruxelles, ville de 190.000 inhabitants, inscrit sur ses registres actuelle­ment plus de 20.000 étrangers."[[1425]](#footnote-1426)

The numerical ratio of Belgians to aliens became a political obsession. The xenophobic discourse gained an "objective" base by the creation of this tolerance threshold. In June 1938, Pholien had already pointed out the necessity of a "reasonable" ratio between Belgian and aliens in order to circumvent difficulties.[[1426]](#footnote-1427) His predecessor as Minister of Justice, also a Catholic Charles de Bus de Warneffe, repeated the same theme during the discussion of the Jewish question by the right of the Catholic party at the beginning of 1939:

"Il y a en Belgique, 10 étrangers par kilomètre carré...Il faut de la mesure."[[1427]](#footnote-1428)

This "otherness" of the Jewish immigrants found its expression, according to these circles, in their political activity also. A Jewish characteristic which had been deeply underlined throughout the whole interwar period within the xenophobic discourse, was its revolutionary extremism. At the end of the thirties, however, a component of the Communist thinking of that time, anti-Fascism was denounced.[[1428]](#footnote-1429) Within the tense international climate of the thirties, this political dimension had a mobilization force which was not to be underestimated. The Belgian neutrality policy and the appeasement policy of the other democratic states in Europe were motivated by the hope of safeguarding the peace. That this took place at the expense of the Sudeets in September 1938 was unfortunate, but peace was of the highest importance. Within this search for a peaceful association with Nazi Germany, the totalitarianism of this regime and the anti-Semitism that went along with it, was minimalized. The Jewish refugees warned -by their mere presence- of the imminent danger of war and a section of the Jewish community actively strengthened this warning. This Jewish anti-Fascist agitation attempted to thwart the trust that the democracies gave to Nazi Germany. In Belgium, the supporters of the neutrality policy, for that reason, portrayed the Jews as warmongers. According to them the Jewish refugees wanted only revenge.[[1429]](#footnote-1430) National interest was best served by neutrality, we had to live together with our neighbours on a peaceful footing. Not only for the sake of peace, but our economy would also fare well. The boycott of Nazi Germany, launched by a section of the Jewish community, was -according to these "nationalists"- a typical expression of the Jewish policy which only thought about the interests of the Jewish community and ignored Belgian interests.[[1430]](#footnote-1431)

The political, economic and cultural threat, which originated from Jewish immigration, was expressed, just before the outbreak of World War II by many, and not the least respectable persons. The evocation of this global threat was a vehicle used by middle class organizations in their pleas for restricting the access of aliens to independent economic pursuits.

The pressure on the authorities increased. Also within the administration was there a strong current pleading for a restrictive stand. The head of the Sûreté, Robert de Foy shared completely the argumentation of the middle class:

"C'est à juste titre que cette classe de la société redoute la concurrence et les pratiques souvent déloyales des commerçants juifs et que, au contraire d'être pour elle une source abondante de profits les consommateurs juifs favorisent surtout le commerce de leurs coréligionnaires."[[1431]](#footnote-1432)

The second in command in the Sûreté, Hermann Bekaert, endorsed this analysis. Not only the migrants, but also the refugees, competed against the Belgian middle class in a ruthless manner.[[1432]](#footnote-1433) Already in the summer of 1939 gave the authorities a response to these demands for a firm stand against foreign entrepreneurs. Action would be taken against the "abusers", but the administration feared the possible economic consequences of the curtailment of free initiative of foreign businessmen. The authorities were however not able to disregard the demands of the middle class, now that they had received a large following even in the most respectable circles. The administration was afraid that its imperfect knowledge of the alien population meant that it was not able to take adequate measures against the abuses. The authorities acknowlegded that they ignored the exact number of aliens in Belgium, an exceptionally large number of them would be living illegally in Belgium and escape any control.

Until now totals for aliens had always been based on residence permits issued by the municipalities. Naturally, using this method undocumented aliens were overlooked. The authorities decided to organize an actual counting. This time the investigation would not be based on documents, but on reality.[[1433]](#footnote-1434) Also undocumented aliens had to be included in this investigation.

c.The State Obtains the Power to Exclude Immigrants from Trade

On September 15, 1939 the authorities undertook an actual counting of the aliens. "Armed" with heavy fines, not only for the aliens themselves, but also for every employer or landlord who did not report an undocumented alien the census took place. This survey, supplemented by investigations of the municipal councils were to enable the authorities to receive a true picture of the number of undocumented aliens.[[1434]](#footnote-1435) This survey was not only meant to track down undocumented aliens, it was also to draw up an inventory of the aliens' economic activities. This inventory was to enable the authorities to punish the many that had "abused" the permission to immigrate. In particular, the authorities targetted the migrants who had circumvented the legislation on work permits by setting up their own businesses.

A bill was being prepared to assure better control over the entrepreneurial activities of the immigrants. The national survey of the alien population aimed only, in this domain, at refining the state intervention. The ground rules of the offensive against `the abuses' had already been laid down. The preoccupation of the authorities was very different from the ones that motivated Delattre when he had made up his bill to control foreign employers in December 1937. His bill had aimed to assure the respect by foreign entrepreneurs of the fiscal and social legislation. The entrepreneurial activities of immigrants as such had not been contested. In 1939, the authorities felt very differently about the commercial and industrial actitivites of the immigrants. The government considered that many immigrants had left the mines - the very sector for which they had been granted their immigration permits - for the commercial or artisanal sectors. In this way, the authorities were embracing the much repeated accusation of middleclass circles.[[1435]](#footnote-1436)

A project was developed by a governmental committee which, only a month later, in October 1939, had already been approved by the Council of Ministers.[[1436]](#footnote-1437) "The protection of the economic life of the nation" was the purpose of this law. Although the self-employed activity of aliens was evaluated extremely cautiously, it clearly pointed out abuses, fraud, difficulties which were paired with the industrial and commercial activities of the immigrants. Regulation of the economic ativity of aliens forced itself to the fore. As the Ministers wrote in their introduction to the bill which would control the independent commerical and industrial activities of aliens:

"Migration...has placed certain branches of our economy in extreme difficulty in which the role... of the aliens is not always clearly defined...the presence of numerous aliens...has changed the usual conditions of competition and in many cases has been able to damage legitimate interests."[[1437]](#footnote-1438)

With the Law of November 16, 1939 professional permits were introduced for aliens who were active in industrial or trade activities. Russian and German "refugees" as well as migrants who had legally resided in Belgium for five years, would receive a professional permit without any problem. Their professional activities would, however, remain under constant state supervision. The obligatory renewal of this permit every two years, together with the duty to resubmit their request with every modification of professional activity stood as guarantor of this. If these aliens went beyond the bounds of these specifications as well as the more general regulations, went bankrupt or were convicted or "transgressed the customs of the trade- and industrial activity of the nationals" the professional permit could be revoked. This could be paired with a simple administrative decision of expulsion.[[1438]](#footnote-1439) The powers which the state wielded over aliens was extended by this provision. Now even long-established immigrants could be expelled because of economic reasons by an administrative decision. For the immigrants who had been in Belgium less than five years the administration would investigate the usefulness of their future business. Only upon favorable advice was the migrant able to pass.[[1439]](#footnote-1440)

Towards the end of 1939, the Government added to its attempt to curtail the activities of independent foreign merchants or artisans a further restriction in peddling. The production range of the peddling trade was increasingly limited. In 1936 P.Van Isacker, the then Minister of Economic Affairs, tried to remove the production range the Jewish market vendors offered from this trade circuit. In 1936 he was successful only to a limited degree. G.Sap, who became Minister of Economic Affairs in April 1939 was more successful. Now most goods which were offered by Jewish market vendors were excluded from the peddlars' circuit.[[1440]](#footnote-1441)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Occupational Statistics

The quantiative data on the foreigners in the Belgian mines

We had at our disposal several statistics made by different authorities whereby the basic units of measurement, the indi­vidual mines, were eventually grouped by province or by mine-district (arrondissement). As basic unit we used the mine-basin, as this mostly had a geological, geographical and institutional unity. Collating these statistics was a hazar­dous task. What was counted was not always clear, but we tried to make an uniform set of figures.

The Borinage is composed of mines in the first district and part of the mines in the second district. Centre is composed of parts of the mines in the second district as well as in the third district. The rest of the third district and the fourth and fifth district are the mines in the basin of Charleroi. These three basins are all in the province of *Hainaut*. The sixth district is the Basse Sambre basin in the province Namur. As it is a small basin bordering the basin of Charleroi and as it is also institutionally linked -the employers' organization covers both basins- we considered them as one basin. Seventh, eighth and also ninth district are the Liège Basin in the Liège province and the tenth district is Limburg.

The figures of FEDECHAR and in general also of the regional mine-associations refer to the number of registered miners. The figures of the Mine Administration refer mostly to the number of occupied miners, either on one day, or rarely over a longer period. The number of registered miners is always higher as it gives the number of miners employed over the period of a month.[[1441]](#footnote-1442) The period in which the personnel is counted is also important, as it registrate the seasonal fluctuation of mine-employment. The number of miners diminis­hes between March and September as the winter miners leave for other industrial or agrarian activities.[[1442]](#footnote-1443)

The figures of the Mine Administration refer to the number of miners employed on 15.9.1922.[[1443]](#footnote-1444) The figures of 31.8.1923 give the number of miners employed on that day.[[1444]](#footnote-1445) The figu­res of November 1923 give the number employed during the week of November 4-11.[[1445]](#footnote-1446) The figures of April 1924 were also collected by the Mine Administration and probably refer to the foreigners registered in April 1924.[[1446]](#footnote-1447) The figures of April 1925 and April 1926 are only dealing with the Borinage and probably refer to the number of miners registered in those months.[[1447]](#footnote-1448) The figures of May 1925 refer probably to the number of registered miners in that month.[[1448]](#footnote-1449) The figures of 15.2.1926 refer to the miners employed on that date.[[1449]](#footnote-1450) The figures of 15.11.1927 refer to the number of miners employed on that date.[[1450]](#footnote-1451)

From September, 30 1930, we have a much more unequivocal set of figures at our disposal, they all refer to the number of registered of miners, so by month and all were collected by the FEDECHAR.[[1451]](#footnote-1452) We have at our disposal similar figures from 1926 onwards. The national figures are specificied by basins (only Charleroi, Centre and Limburg).[[1452]](#footnote-1453)

There were only few censuses by the Mine Administration in the 1930s. First, the number of registered miners on 15 November 1932.[[1453]](#footnote-1454) There is also a census on 15 May 1934 of the Mine Administration which refers to the number of occupied miners on that date.[[1454]](#footnote-1455) For 1934, we also have at our disposal a census of the Ministry of Labor of the foreigners in the mining industry on 15 September 1934.[[1455]](#footnote-1456)

Hence, fluctuations in number of miners can be attributed to the two different sets of criteria of collection of data on employment in the mines; either number of employed miners or number of registered miners. For the censuses of 1934 and 1926 the inclusion of personnel from the cokes factories means that these figures have to be handled even more carefully. Seasonal fluctuations also have to be taken into account to interpret the data. One can say that the evolution of employment in the mines is slightly overestimated in the 1930s due to the Fede­char's figures on registered miners.

These two different sets of criteria do not influence the relation between foreign and Belgian miners to an important degree. The two different measurements being used (registered workers and those actually employed) did not influence the relationship as absenteism among foreigners was lower, but turnover higher. To a large degree these two elements compen­sat each other so that the relationship between foreigners and Belgians is probably not too flawed by these figures. In general, we must remain cautious in dealing with this informa­tion. It only indicates trends.

Other Sectors

The Mine Administration not only gathered quantitative data on the mine industry, but also counted foreign labor in the heavy metallurgic industry (iron , steel and zinc industry) and in the quarries. This information can be found in the censuses of September 1922, May 1924 and February 1926.

For data on the general labor market we had figures for the industrial basins of Wallonia for February 1924 at our dispo­sal. These figures were distinguished by nationality and were collected at the level of the individual entreprises by the *Gendarmerie*.[[1456]](#footnote-1457) The Ministry of Labor conducted a serie of censuses. Data for all firms with at least 10 employees in all sectors throughout Belgium were collected in October 1926 and again in February 1934.[[1457]](#footnote-1458) The population census of December 31, 1930 gives data on foreign labor by nationality and by sector.[[1458]](#footnote-1459) The industrial census of February, 27 1937 also gives data on foreign labor by sector and by nationality.[[1459]](#footnote-1460) The last census was conducted -this time only the aliens were counted-by the Minister of Justice on September 15, 1939.[[1460]](#footnote-1461)

Another set of data is based on the identity cards for aliens and the profession declared upon applications for this card. We have such data at our disposal for June 30, 1936 and for June 30, 1938.[[1461]](#footnote-1462)

Appendix 2: Migration and Nationality Statistics:

The figures on emigration to Belgium are based on the pas­sports issued to citizens of the emigration countries. We had at our disposal data from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Italy.[[1462]](#footnote-1463) Issuing a passport does not imply an effective emigration, it only indicates a intention to leave. These figures only deal with temporary labor migration or definitive emigrants; those leaving for tourism, businesstrips or study are not included. The relation between the passports issued and the effective emigration, at least the one registrated at the border control is also to be found in the Czechoslovakian statistics, but only from 1926 on.[[1463]](#footnote-1464)

It seems, that in all the countries refered to above, children had to ask for their own passport at the age of 16. Before that age, they were registered under the passport of their mother or father.

The Italian statistics refer not only to Belgium, but also to Luxemburg and the Netherlands. Although Belgium was, without a doubt, the most important "consumer" of Italian immigration, Luxembourg and in a lesser degree the Netherlands also took in a number of Italians.

The Belgian immigration statistics were still very much relics of the 19th century. The basic criteria was until 1932 not nationality, but country where the immigrant came from and place of birth. So Belgians born elsewhere who "returned" to Belgium were considered together with foreigners born in Belgium who "re­turned" to Belgium. We only took the data on the immigrants born abroad so as to exclude the "returning" Belgians. These figures refer to all those persons who declared their arrival with the municipal authorites to be registrated in the population register (from1933 onwards that part of the population register which was called the foreigners’ register). Until 1927 the countries mentioned were extremely limited, which meant that the greatest number of immigrants was to be found among the category "other countries in Europe". Poland and Yugoslavia were only included as seperate categories in 1927 and in 1933, Czechoslovakia was added. In general the data of the Belgian statistics are slightly higher than the data of the emigration countries. This diffe­rence can be due to the non-citizens who leave these emigrati­on countries for Belgium and who were incorporated in the Belgian statistics and not in those from Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Probably more important is the illegal emigration, emigrants leaving their country without notifing their authorities, but who, upon arrival, registered in Belgium. The emigrants who came indirectly to Belgium are not listed in either of these statistics.[[1464]](#footnote-1465) The data on emigration from Belgium are not used as they were deemed much less reliable by the Belgian statistical authori­ties than the immigration statistics.[[1465]](#footnote-1466)

The Belgian data on professional qualifications are of little use, since the majority of the immigrants were cataloged under non-defined professions. We, however, used the data on the professional qualifications of Polish and Czechoslovakian legal emigrants as, certainly the latter, are more precise. These data rather refer to the profession of these emigrants in the country of emigration, which can be different than the profession they exercized in their country of origin. The Yugoslavian statistics on the profession of the "returning" emigrants can refer to the profession exercised in Belgium, as well as the profession they had in Yugoslavia. As it is highly probably that the data mentioned on the passport when they left for a specific job to Belgium is being used, the former option is more likely.[[1466]](#footnote-1467)

Another source of data on immigration to Belgium is the number of files created by the Department of Aliens.[[1467]](#footnote-1468) In contrast with the Belgian immigration statistics which count individuals declaring their arrival in Belgium to the municipal authorities these figures refer to cases (either individuals or families (wife, husband and children before majority)) who came to the attention of the central authorities for the first time ( hence also undocumented aliens were counted). An alien who resided in Belgium and then left for a considerable period of time and then returned will be counted as an immigrant for the immigration statistics while he will not be counted for the figures of the Aliens Department as he had already a file. Only from 1891 onwards does the period covered start on January the first and end on December 31. In 1874 the year starts on July the first, on the graph we referred to the data 1.7.1874-1.7.1875 as the number of files of 1874. For 1884 the period is considerable longer than 12 months i.e. 1.7.1884 to 6.2.1886. Thus we have no figures for 1885. For the next few years the graph refers to the period February 6 to February 5. For 1890 the figure on the graph refers to a slightly shorter period, February 6 1890 to December 31, 1890. We do not have data for 1881, 1883, 1914, 1923 and 1924.

A last group of figures are those on naturalization and claims of Belgian nationality, the latter only available from 1871 onwards.[[1468]](#footnote-1469) Concerning the claims of Belgian nationality those who claimed Belgian nationality after age 22 , made possible by the diverse amnesties declared at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century are not counted in these figures. Those older than 22 who claimed Belgian nationality between 1919 and 1923 and between 1926 and 1929 are included in these figues as the statistics did not mention them separately. We have no figures on those who claimed Belgian nationality at age 18 after 1912. In the period 1910-1912 most Belgium-born aliens who claimed Belgian nationality did that at age 18.

Appendix 3: Articles in the Vercruysse bill of 1926 dealing with regulation of alien labor.[[1469]](#footnote-1470)

 Article 13

Est reputé travailleur salarié, pour l'application de la présente loi, toute personne se livrant habituellement à des occupations susceptibles de faire l'objet d'un contrat de louage de services, quand bien même ces prestations seraient fournies à un autre titre ou gratuitement.

 Article 14

Il est interdit à toute personne d'occuper, en Belgique, comme travailleur salarié, un étranger non muni de la carte prévue à l'article 3 ou de l'occuper à des travaux qui ne correspon­draient pas à la profession inscrite sur cette carte. Aucun étranger ne peut exercer en Belgique une autre profession que celle qui est inscrite sur sa carte, sauf à demander la modi­fication de celle-ci, conformément à l'Arrêté Royal prévu à l'article 4.

 Article 15

Tout employeur qui se propose de recruter hors du Royaume un ou plusieurs travailleurs salariés étrangers pour les occuper en Belgique, est tenu de soumettre au Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale, sa proposition d'em­bauchage dans la forme qui sera prescrite par Arrêté Royal. Cette proposition sera accompagnée des contrats individuels de travail offerts aux dits travailleurs et par lesquels devront être garantis à ceux-ci des conditions de travail et de salai­re au moins égales à celles qui seront habituellement en vigueur dans la région et la profession pour des travailleurs de la même catégorie.

 Article 16

Le Ministre appréciera, en tenant compte de la situation du marché de travail et des garanties fournies

quant aux capa­cités professionnelles et à l'état sanitaire des travailleurs embauchés, s'il y a lieu d'autoriser l'emploi de ceux-ci dans le Royaume.

 Article 17

Pour tout ce qui concerne la réglementation des conditions du travail, l'hygiène et la sécurité des travailleurs, les étran­gers régulièrement autorisés à exercer leur profession en Belgique, y jouissent des mêmes droits et obligations que les belges. Des conventions à conclure avec les Gouvernements des pays d'émigration pourront établir la même assimilation sous d'autres rapports et, notamment, pour ce qui concerne les assurances sociales. Les mêmes conventions détermineront les règles à suivre, ainsi que les facilités, garanties et moyens de contrôle, accordés par les Gouvernements intéressés pour le recrutement sur leur territoire des travailleurs visés à l'article précédent.

 Article 18

Le Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale veillera à l'exécution des contrats visés par lui en exécution de l'article 15. Ses délégués constateront les infractions aux obligations qui en résultent, de manière à faciliter aux intéressés le recours contre leur co-contractant devant la juridiction compétente. Tout travailleur étranger convaincu d'avoir, sans juste motif, rompu son contrat ou refusé d'en exécuter les clauses pourra, sans préjudice de toutes les autres sanctions, se voir retirer sa carte d'étran­ger.

 Article 19

Nul ne peut entreprendre pour compte de tiers des opérations d'embauchage ou de placement de travailleurs étrangers sans l'autorisation du Ministère de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale. Cette autorisation n'est accordée qu'à la condition de fournir un cautionnement préalable, qui servi­ra de gage pour l'exécution des obligations résultant du contrat d'engagement ou de placement.

Appendix 4a: Articles in the Holvoet bill of the summer of 1929 dealing with regulation of alien labor[[1470]](#footnote-1471)

AVANT-PROJET DE LOI CONCERNANT LA POLICE DES ETRANGERS

 Article 11[[1471]](#footnote-1472)

Sans préjudice aux dispositions qui précèdent,aucun étranger ne peut, même à titre gratuit, être occupé en qualité de travailleur manuel ou d'employé, sans en avoir obtenu l'auto­risation du Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale, dans les conditions à déterminer par le Gouvernement. Aucun travailleur manuel, aucun employé de nationalité étrangère ne peut, sans la même autorisation, exercer une autre profession que celle qui est inscrite sur sa carte d'étranger.

 Article 12[[1472]](#footnote-1473)

Aucun employeur ne peut occuper un étranger en qualité de travailleur manuel ou d'employé, à moins d'en avoir obtenu l'autorisation du Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale. A cet effet, il soumettra au Ministre un contrat de travail dont la forme sera déterminée par arrêté ministeriel.

Le cas échéant, l'employeur est tenu de signaler s'il entend employer le travailleur étranger dans une profession autre que celle mentionnée sur la carte d'etranger. Chaque autorisation prévue au 1er paragraphe du présent article donnera lieu à la perception d'une taxe dont le mon­tant sera fixé par le Roi.

 Article 13[[1473]](#footnote-1474)

Une commission composée de représentants, en nombre égal, des organisations professionnelles patronales et ouvrières, et de délégués du Gouvernement sera instituée pour donner son avis sur les questions d'ordre général relatives à l'introduc­tion et à l'emploi de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère.

Une arrêté royal pris sur la proposition du Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale détermine­ra le statut organique de cette Commission.

 Article 14[[1474]](#footnote-1475)

Personne ne peut entreprendre l'embauchage ou le place­ment de travailleurs manuels ou d'employés de nationalité étrangère sans avoir obtenu l'autorisation du Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale, qui déterminera le montant du cautionnement à verser par l'inté­ressé.[[1475]](#footnote-1476)

Article 15[[1476]](#footnote-1477)

 L'exécution des formalités prescrites par les articles 11 et 12 peur être suspendue dans les conditions à déterminer par le Ministre de l'industrie, du travail et de la prévoyance sociale sur avis de la commission visée à l'article 13. Les autorisations prévues aux articles 11, 12 et 14 de la présente loi peuvent être retirées dans les mêmes conditions, la Com­mission entendu. Les chefs d'industrie, patrons, propriétai­res, directeurs ou gérants, ainsi que les ouvriers de nationa­lité étrangère occupés en Belgique lorsqu'ils en sont requis par les inspecteurs et controleurs désignés par le Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale, pour veiller à l'application des articles 11, 12 et 14, sont tenus, sous peine des sanctions prévues à l'article 17 de la présente loi, de présenter à ces fonctionnaires tous les documents utiles pour l'accomplissement de leur mission.

Appendix 4b: Amendments of the association of the mining industry of the Liège basin.[[1477]](#footnote-1478)

Article 9

Tout travailleur étranger sera porteur d'un livret de travail qui lui sera délivré par l'Administration Communale de sa résidence, sur le vu de ses papiers d'identité et dans les 48 heures de son installation en Belgique. A chaque changement de résidence ou d'employeur, ce livret sera revêtu du visa préalable du pouvoir judiciaire qui pourra limiter ces change­ments, les interdire, déclarer le nomade indésirable et le reconduire à la frontière.

Article 10

Aucun employeur ou groupement d'employeurs ne peut enga­ger des étrangers résidants à l'étranger, en qualité de tra­vailleur manuels ou d'employés avant d'avoir solicité et obtenu une autorisation précisant le nombre maximum d'étran­gers dont l'immigration pour l'employeur impétrant est ainsi permise.

Lorsqu'en vertu d'une telle autorisation, un employeur engage un travailleur étranger en vue de l'employer à une industrie autre que celle mentionnée sur son livret de travail, il devra en demander l'autorisation aux services compétents du Mini­stère de l'Industrie et du Travail.

Article 11

Personne ne peut entreprendre l'embauchage ou le place­ment des travailleurs étrangers sans en avoir obtenu l'autori­sation préalable, sauf s'il s'agit d'un industriel autorisé à occuper un personnel étranger, suivant les dispositions de l'article 10, ou de son préposé.

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 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAG:Archivum Archidiecezja Gnieznienska, Zespo Prymasa Pols­ki, 111, Akte Protektora Wychodztwa Belgia Generalna.

AAN: Archiwum Akt Nowych

ABZ: Archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

ACC: Association Charbonnière du Centre

ACCA: Association Charbonnière de la Campine

ACCBS: Association Charbonnière de Charleroi et de la Basse Sambre. Bois du Luc, 335.

ACL: Association Charbonnière de Liège

ACV: Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (=CSC)

ADB: Antwerpse Diamantbewerkersbond

AEL: Archives de l'Etat à Liège

AESH: Archives de l'Etat à Saint Hubert

AHCRB: Archive United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Brussels

AMAE: Archive de la Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris quai d'Orsay.

AP: Archiwum Panstwowe

APK: Archiwum Panstwowe Krakow

APKA: Archiwum Panstwowe Katowice

ARA: Algemeen Rijksarchief

ARDH: Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken, onderafdeling Arbeidsbemiddeling.

AHCM: Association Houillière du Couchant de Mons. Bulletin de l'Association Houillière du Couchant de Mons.

AMJ: Archief Ministerie van Justitie

AMSAB: Archief en Museum van de Socialistische Arbeidersbewe­ging

ANMC: Archief Nationale Mijnwerkerscentrale Brussel

ARC: Archive Red Cross, cassier 33, colis sec.8.

BS: Belgisch Staatsblad

BTNG: Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis

BV: Belgische Vakbeweging

BWP: POB

CAAVAA: Comité d’aide et d’assistance aux victimes de l’Antisémitisme en Allemagne

CCI: Comité Central Industriel

CGE: Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione

CMB: Centrale van de Metaalbewerkers België

CNMM: Commission nationale mixte des mines. ARA, mijnadmini­stratie, blauw, D, 6; roos, B, 4E-4.1. also oud fonds, 971.1. Bois du Luc, 1, 327, 332-335.

CNPI: Commission nationale de la production industrielle, ARA, mijnadministratie-oud fonds, nr.972.3. This council was set up in 1925 by the government to give advice on industrial policy. It was composed of civil servants, technocrats and representa­tives of the employers' organizations and some trade union representatives.

CS: Commission Syndicale

FEDECHAR: Fédération des charbonnages Belges

IEV: Institute Emile Vandervelde

IHJ: Institute d'histoire du Judaïsme

ILO: international Labor Office, Geneva

IML: Institute Marxism-Leninism Moscow

JDC: Joint Defence Committee New York

KADOC: Katholiek Archief en Documentatie centrum

KB: Koninklijk Besluit

KCZZ: Komisja Centralna Zwizkow Zawodowych

KPP: Kommunistyczna Partia Polski

KUL: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

MB: Ministerieel Besluit

MSP: Ministerstvo sociln pce

MJ: Ministerie van Justitie

MOE: Main-d'oeuvre étrangère

MOI: Main-d'oeuvre immigrée

MPOS: Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Spoeczny

MSZ: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych

ONPC: Office Nationale du Placement et du Chômage

PCB: Parti Communiste Belge

PCI: Parti Communiste Italienne

PHK: Parlementaire Handelingen Kamer

PHS: Parlementaire Handelingen Senaat

PBK: Parlementaire Bescheiden Kamer

PBS: Parlementaire Bescheiden Senaat

PHVA: Parlementaire Vragen en Antwoorden

POB: Parti Ouvrier Belge

PRM: Prezydium Rady Ministrw

PS: Le Progrès Social, XXVIII, 1939, 50.

PUPP: Panstwowy Urzad Posrednictwa Pracy

RABW: Rijksarchief Beveren Waas

RP: Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej

RTC: Rapport des Travaux de la Commission d'Etudes de la Question de l'Education du Mineur. Association Charbonnière des Bassins de Charleroi et de la Basse-Sambre. Charleroi, Roox-Piette, 1917. Municipal archive Charleroi.

RVA: Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening

SGI: Société Générale d'Immigration

SK: Syndikale Kommissie (=CS)

SUA: Statni ustredni archiv-Praha

UCL: Université catholique de Louvain

UE: Urzd Emigracyjny

UG: Universiteit Gent

ULg: Université de Liège

ULB: Université Libre de Bruxelles

UP: University Press

VEV: Vlaams Economisch Verbond

VUB: Vrije Universiteit Brussel

YIVO: Institute for Jewish Research, New York

1. Article 128: "Tout étranger qui se trouve sur le territoire de la Belgique jouit de la protection accordée aux personnes et aux biens, saufs les exceptions établies par la loi." [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Soignie (1873), p.118. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Rapport sur la prorogation de la loi relative aux étrangers. PDK, 1865 nr.206, p.4. See also PHK, 23.6.1865, p.1259. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The number of people born abroad was according to the population census of 1846 and 1856 95,000 and in 1866 98,000. This rose to 143,000 persons in the census of 1880. This number comes about from the category being used. It is, therefor not only a function of immigration, but also of return migration of Belgian citizen. Stengers (1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The population census of 1890 mentions 171,000 aliens of whom 95.2% were nationals of neighboring countries, in 1900 there were already 206,000 aliens in Belgium of whom 92.5% had crossed only one border. In 1910, 254,000 aliens were counted and 88.8% were nationals of neighboring countries. Stengers (1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Of the 245.465 foreigners in Belgium, 116.780 were considered as part of the active population, of which 2.358 persons had an undetermined profession. We deducted also the large number of members of religious congregations (11.345 persons, mainly women) who had no economic activities. Their presence had hardly economic effects or causes, but was linked to specific political events. Population census 31.12.1910, pp.674-680. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Based on the distinction in the occupational census of 1910 between female servants in charge of preparation of food and those in service of persons. In the last and "better" category, most male servants are to be found. Proportion of

French female servants: 1154 and 278; Germans: 1940 and 888: English: 117 and 208; Dutch: 3064 and 687 and others: 977 and 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The only exception was the diamond industry which took a share of 7 % of the foreigners (about exclusively Dutch and nationals of non-neighboring countries) employed in the secondary sector and 2 % of those active in the tertiary sector. The diamond traders were, however, largely concentrated among nationals of non-neighboring countries: 10 % of those active in the tertiary sector traded in diamonds. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For Brussels see De Schaepdrijver (1990). For Liège see Gerardina (1983), for Charleroi Dumont (1989), pp.147-169. For Antwerp Thys (1906) and Verlinden (1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. In mid-century Brussels, the commercial employees were made up of 8.6 percent of foreign men as against 2.8 percent of the total male labor force. De Schaepdrijver (1990), p.75. Press cuttings (1909-1914) in Potzdam Staatsarchiv, 62 (Deutsche Arbeitsfront), 26396. for the Italians see: Emigrazione e colonie. Raccolta di rapporti dei RR. agenti diplomatici e consolari, pp.98-100. Roma, 1893 and idem, Roma, Tip.Nazionale di G.Bertero, 1903, I, pp.124-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Lis (1986), p.58; Wouters (1963), pp.929-932; De Schaepdrijver (1990), pp.73-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Gobyn (1987) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. During those years was in the Ostend hotels: Splendid Hôtel (1908-1914) and Hôtel du Kursaal et Beau Site (1896-1914) less than 50% of the personnel of Belgian nationality. The French dominated in the kitchen, the Germans were responsible for the administration, and the service in the restaurant was mostly shared by Germans and Italians. The Belgians were occupied in the lower functions. Billiet (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Lis (1986), p.45 and De Schaepdrijver (1991), p.80. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Enquête (1846), part II, p.314. Caulier-Mathy (1963), p.211. In 1876 there were on a total of 25,723 miners in the province of Liège, 2,315 aliens (among them 1,411 Germans and 643 Dutchmen). Although the number of aliens was a topic in the survey of 1886 we cannot make comparisons as the responses to the survey were limited (only 5 mines gave information on the number of aliens), but it seems that the number in 1876 was exceptional high and declined in the following years. Delrée H.(1981), p.58. Renard, (1971), pp.104-105. Rapport de la Commission spéciale, maladies professionnelles. P.V. officiel du Conseil provincial de Liége, 1928, p.3. Cockerill in Commmission de Travail, réponses au questionnaire concernant le travail industriel, vol.1, p.8. Bruxelles, 1887. Alsoa political factor explain this migration. Among foreign labor in Belgium there was a considerable number of Frenchmen who had dodged conscription by emigrating to Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Ronin (1992), pp.99-100. Polonia, 18.7.1914, 22, pp.5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. L'Administrateur of the Sûreté to Governor, 17.7.1834. ARA, MJ, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Not having sufficient means was for example defined in the following manner: "Sont presumés dépourvus de moyens d'existence sauf la preuve du contraire, notamment les joueurs d'orgue, les ouvriers qui ne seraient point nantis d'une somme suffisante pour faire le trajet jusqu'à la destination qu'ils indiquent, les individus qui mendient sous prétexte de montrer des marmottes, des souris blanches ou autres animaux" De Soignie (1858), p.103. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Foutre (1985), pp.126-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Circular letter of the Sûreté of 2.5.1843, quoted in Reiter (1992), pp.117-118 and 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Note, 21.10.1831 and 5.2.1835. ARA, MJ, 247. Saint-Ferréol (1870), I. pp.44-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Note Ministry of Justice, 28.1.1841. "Empêcher de nouveaux ouvriers de séjourner indéfiniment en Belgique soit pour se livrer à la mendicité, soit pour augmenter une concurrence déjà trop forte parmi les travailleurs." Note Ministry of Justice, 18.8.1839. ARA, MJ, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Note, 4.7.1848. Note Ministry of Justice, 28.1.1841. Justice to passport office, 7.2.1841. ARA, MJ, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. In 1845 the passport control at the ports was also cancelled. Foutre (1985), p.139. Exposé de la situation du Royaume (période décennale de 1841 à 1850), publiée par le Ministère de l'Intérieur. Bruxelles, 1852, p.503. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Exposé de la situation du Royaume (période décennale de 1841 à 1850), publiée par le Ministère de l'Intérieur. Bruxelles, 1852, p.503. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Pasinomie, 1846, p.390 and 1856, pp.268-269. De Soignie (1858), pp.102-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Only exceptionally were aliens, because of begging or vagrancy,to be brought before police courts. Circular letters of Sûreté, 18.4.1850 and 21.1.1852 quoted in De Soignie (1873), pp.172-173. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Saint-Ferréol (1870), II, p.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Kurgan and Spelkens (1976), pp.68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. The expulsion to Great Britain of, among others, Louis Blanc was motivated by his illegal (without a valid passport) immigration. Ferréol (1870), I, p.45. Great Britain, the asylum country par excellence, hosted a maximum of 7,000 refugees following the defeated revolutions of 1848. Porter (1979), p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Reiter (1992), p.215. The granting of asylum was hence not considered as a hostile act to the country of origin. The Belgian authorities even asked the permission of the French to grant asylum to Considerant in 1854. Wouters (1966), p.8 see also Wouters (1963), p.1035. Wauwermans (1892), pp.19-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Reiter (1992), p.211. Wouters (1970), p.346. Ferréol claims that there were only 800 French refugees who obtained asylum after the coup of 2.12.1951. Saint-Ferréol (1870), I, p.76 and pp.61-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Asylum demands were refused in principle by the middle of 1852. The Belgian authorities found that they had taken in more than enough refugees. Wouters (1963), p.1038. Saint-Ferréol (1870), II, pp.35-40. Payne (1966), p.48. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. The source for this graph is Rapport sur la prorogation de la loi relative aux étrangers. PDK, 1865 nr.206, pp.10-11. See also Exposé de la situation du Royaume (période décennale de 1851 à 1860) publié par le Ministère de l'Intérieur. Bruxelles, 1865, tome II, p.244c. It indicates the number of aliens refused access to Belgium because of lack of proper identity papers (refouler) and the number of aliens removed from Belgium because of destitution or lack of proper identity papers (renvoyer). The prevention of immigration diminished after the first years of the 1840s and only the political events of 1848 and 1851 caused the number of aliens stopped at the Belgian border to increase spectacularly. By 1861 aliens were no longer prevented from entering Belgium and the control at the borders ceased to exist. Control over aliens already in the country became more important and the removal of undocumented, but more importantly destitute immigrants increased constantly in the 1840s and oscillated around 800 in the 1850s. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Keunings (1988) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Circular letter Sûreté to Governors, 30.5.1865 and Governor to Mayors, 6.6.1865. Mémorial Administratif Hainaut, 1865, pp.345-347. Justice to Interior Affairs, 18.4.1841. ARA, MJ, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. On the enactment of the alien law of 1835 see Vandersteene en Schiepers (1994-1995) . [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. I want to thank L.Vandersteene for sharing her files concerning the issue of establishing residency status and her comments on a first analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. "Les ouvriers étrangers sont entièrement placés sous la main de l'administration qui conserve par devers elle leurs papiers quels qu'ils soient et leur délivre en échange un livret dans lequel ils signent l'engagement de ne pas pouvoir prétendre avoir acquis une résidence sur le sol belge par cela seul qu'ils y ont travaillé plus ou moins longtemps." Note, 28.1.1841. ARA, MJ, 34. it is unclear until when this administrative practice lasted. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Minister of Interior to Minister of Justice, 24.3.1850. ARA, MJ, 250. Minister of Justice to Embassy in Paris, 2.4.1850. Wouters (1963), p.1022. Minister of Foreign Affairs to ambassadors, 9.1.1852. ABZ, Politieke Correspondentie, Réfugiés, vol.II, dok.7 Administrateur Sureté to Minister of Justice, 28.11.1851. ARA, MJ, 902. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Cuvelier (1939), PHK, 2.2.1846, p. 550. Note Minister of Justice, 16.2.1848. ARA, MJ, 851. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Berden to Minister of Justice, 20.4.1874. ARA, MJ, 856. PHK, 2.6.1874, p.241. Only 247 of the 800 Franch “refugees” who were granted asylum following the coup d’état of Louis Napoleon in December 1851 obtained residency status. Wauwermans (1892), p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. ARA, MJ, 902. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Berten to Minister of Justice, 20.4.1874. ARA, MJ, 865 see also 864 and 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Godding (1970), pp.316-320. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. To the category of denizens were added in the alien law of 1835 and this until 1841 also aliens married to Belgian women, who had recognized a child born during their sojourn in Belgium.Godding (1970), p. 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Initially all inhabitants, including aliens had to serve in the militia. From 1848 onwards only the *domiciliés* had to do so. De Soignie (1858), p.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Of the 338 aliens attributed this status between 1831 and 1850, 99 were traders and 43 industrialists, 58 were artisans. Exposé de la situation du Royaume (période décennale de 1841 à 1850), publiée par le Ministère de l'Intérieur. Bruxelles, 1852, p.504. ARA, MJ, 397. De Soignie (1873), p.30. Bekaert (1940), pp.228-231. Beltjens (1905), pp.49-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Circular letter of Minister of Justice to the Courts of Appeal, 11.2.1850. La Belgique Judiciaire, VIII, 1850, p.365. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. "Aucune concession n'a été et ne devait être faite aux prétentions des ouvriers tapageurs par les autorités...de manière que la question du renvoi des ouvriers étrangers reste entièrement soumise à sa libre appréciation." Governor of Liège to Roger, Minister of Interior Affairs, 28.5.1848. Wouters (1963), p.623, see also p.603, 626, 629 and 1000. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Exposé de la situation du Royaume de 1851 à 1860 publié par le Ministère de l'Intérieur. Bruxelles, 1865, Tome II, p.100. De Soignie (1858), p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. As the Administrateur de la Sûreté, Berten wrote to his Minister in 1874 concerning the implementation of article 3 of the law of 3.4.1848 (the expulsion of destitute aliens, even if they had acquired residency status) : “ La pratique a démontré que dans bien des circonstances il serait inhumain de conduire à la frontière des étrangers qui depuis de longues années sont établis dans le pays et qui n’ont plus conservé aucune relation avec leur pays d’origine”. ARA, MJ, 865. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. More detailed research has to be made to assess welfare provisions for aliens residing in Belgium. The following questions have to be addressed:

1.Were aliens who resided for years, even generations in a community still considered as such and hence in line with the poor law of 1845 ineligible for municipal welfare?

2.To which extent did the central state provide welfare to aliens. It seems that the number of such cases which were handled in a humanitarian manner by granting them welfare depended very strongly on the attitude of the Minister in charge. ARA, MJ, 595. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. "C’est au pays sur le territoire duquel ils ont reçu le jour qu’il incombe de les secourir” Minister of Justice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11.1853. ARA, MJ, 702 see also 595. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. In 1833 this caused an expense of 11.630 francs; this increased to 20,478 (1840); 34,566 (1845), 87,330 (1850), 139,999 (1855), 145,827 (1860-de Soignie mentions 200.000), 153,451 (1865), 174,999 (1870) and 237,319 francs in 1875. Some provisions of social assitance resulted from international obligations. Sick aliens received medical care before they were expelled and in exceptional cases they were even repatriated. Also the repatriation of young and insane aliens was provided for. The expenses this entailed were chargeable to the central authorities. It how far this increase is the a result of a more humanitarian atttitude of the administration, more generous social assistance or increasing intrnaitonal mobility remains to be investigated. Between 1861 and 1875 58% was spent on sick aliens and 15% on the insane, two categories of assistance which resulted from international obligations (see further) . Exposé de la situation du Royaume de 1861 à 1875 publiés par les soins de la Commission Centrale de Statistique. Bruxelles, 1885, Tome II, pp.486-487. De Soignie (1873), p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Reiter (1992), p.211. Bartier (1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. The Minister of Foreign Affairs (1.1.1852) wrote to his ambassadors after the expulsion of the French liberal refugees D'Haussonville and Thomas: "Ce n'est pas sans un vif regret que nous avons pris ces mesures extrêmes...Nous avons fait taire nos sentiments particuliers pour rester dans la ligne de conduite, que dès le principe, nous sommes tracés à l'égard des réfugiés politiques." Wouters (1963), p.1034. Reiter (1992), pp.263-264. Minister of Interior to Minister of Justice, 24.3.1850. ARA, MJ, 250. When Alexander Herzen wanted to take up residence in Brussels in 1849 and 1859 -the cost of living in Brussels was lower than in London- he was forced to go back to Great Britain. The head of the Sûreté told him that Belgium as a small country had to take the positions of the other powers into account. Herzen quoted in Ronin (1991), pp.52-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Refugees considered as very dangerous by the continental powers would be probably less threatening when the Channel separated them from the Continent. The British authorities, notwithstanding ideological differences, wanted to remain on friendly terms with the Continental powers and even shipped 1.500 refugees between 1850 and 1858 to the United States. The voyage was entirely paid by the British authorities; later the French authorities also contributed financially to these trips. Porter (1979), p.160. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. "Il ne faut pas que nous laissions s'accrediter l'idée très fausse que la Belgique devient par une légèretè coupable un foyer de conspiration et en quelque sorte, une seconde Suisse pour les états voisins." Minister of Interior to Minister of Justice, 24.3.1850. ARA, MJ, 250. Garsou (1939),p.57. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. The attentat clause provided that an attempt on the life of a head of state would not be considered a political offence, so those offenders could be subject to extradition. This implied a restriction of asylum. It was enacted after an unsuccessful attempt to blow up a train carrying Napoleon III. Van den Wijngaert (1980), pp.163-166. The Faider law made it an offence to insult heads of foreign governments. Payne (1966), pp.158-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Reiter (1992), p.215. Saint-Férreol (1870), pp.50-68. Wouters (1963), p.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. "On a pu remarquer trop souvent que des individus se font passer pour Belges... D’autre part, on considère parfois, comme étrangers des individus qui, réellement, ne le sont point..Cet état de chose tient surtout à ce que les principes, qui régissent la nationalité, ne sont pas suffisamment connus de la généralité ou sont peu compris; et ce qui le confirme, c’est qu’en consultant les décisions judiciaires, les discussions et les opinions des auteurs sur cette matière, nous n’avons pu nous empêcher d’y reconnaître de nombreux désaccords et des contradictions propres à jeter la confusion dans les esprits.” De Soignie (1858), pp.4-5. This introduction was reprinted in its entirety in the 1873 edition. The principle of nationality had scarcely progressed in these two decades. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. For more details Caestecker (1997) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Stengers (1976), p.77. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Very few Belgian-born aliens from the working class claimed Belgian nationality by declaring at majority birth in Belgium “par ignorance ou à dèfaut d’intérêt” Note Director Lederighem, 1894 in ARA, MJ, individual files, 454.246. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Circular letter of the Sûreté to the municipal authorities, 21.10.1865. ARA, MJ, 702.. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. This regulation was not strictly adhered to. The central authorities were not always notified of new immigrants and repeated the instructions time and again. The local authorities also had to notify them of the presence of aliens who did not (and even blatantly refused to) register with the municipal authorties. The Royal Decree of 31.10.1866 had instaured fines for inhabitants, regardless of nationality who were not registered in the population registers and also ordered the municipal police to inform the central authorites of the refusal of inhabitants to submit to this law. Circular letter Sûreté, 30.5.1865 and 6.6.1865. Mémorial administratif Hainaut, 1865, pp.345-347. Circular letter Sûreté, 22.6.1880. Quoted in La Belgique Judicaire, XXXVIII, 1880, p.850. ARA, MJ, 234-236. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. As D'Anethan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said in Parliament: "Ce ne sont pas, d'après nous des réfugiés politiques, nous ne devons pas les considérer comme tels." PHK, 25.5.1871, p.1254 and 7.5.1880, p. 1033. Devreese (1972), p.255. Leenders (1993), p.108. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Devreese (1972). Keunings (1988), p.143. ARA, MJ, 496. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. PHS, 4.7.1865, p.529. PHK, 23.6.1865, p.1261. It is exceptional that a MP, even a progressive liberal, defended these aliens. See for ex.Coomans:"Expulser du pays un pauvre diable dont le seul crime, le seul tort est d'être pauvre cela est absurde, cela est barbare." PHK, 23.6.1865. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Le National, 12.11.1873. Report of the administration, 8.1.1875. ARA, MJ, 583. Le Siècle, 21.1.1883. ARA, MJ, 611. Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 12.4.1886. ARA, MJ, 703. PHK, 7.5.1880, p.1032. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Bills of 1874 and 1881.ARA, MJ, 865. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Decision of 25.3.1878 to expel non-resident aliens by Royal Decree. ARA, MJ, 861. Annual reports on the implementation of the alien law in PDK, 1874-1896 and corresponding individual files in ARA, MJ. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. "Il se trouve que ce sont des vagabonds condamnés qui forment la majeure partie de ce que j'appellerais notre clientèle. La prison ne les guérirait aucunement à leur passion pour le vagabondage L'Administrateur de la Sûreté to Minister of Justice, s.d. (10.1890). ARA, MJ, 603 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Circular letter Sureté to the Gendarmerie, 4.4.1891. ARA, MJ,619. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. "Il suffirait d'un poursuite exercée contre quelques uns de ces mendiants pour délivrer la contrée de ces hôtes incommodes et dangereux, ceux qui pendant quelque temps auraient été privés de leur liberté ne reapparaitraient plus et la mesure prise à leur égard serait d'un salutaire exemplaire pour les autres." Governor of Limburg to Minister of Justice, 10.9.1890. Governor of Limburg to Administrator of the Sûreté, 8.8.1891. For similar pleas see Provincial Council of Limburg to Sûreté, 11.6.1890. Vicomte du Bus to Minister of Justice, 9.11.1887. ARA, MJ, 603. PHS, 11.11.1887. Mayor of Doornik to Sûreté, 3.8.1890. ARA, MJ, 601. PHS, 29.3.1887, p.228. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. L'Administrateur de la Sûreté to Minister of Justice, s.d. (10.1890). ARA, MJ, 603. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. The sources for this graph are Exposé de la situation du Royaume de 1861 à 1875 publié par les soins de la Commission centrale de statistique. Bruxelles, 1865, tome I, p.188 and Exposé de la situation du Royaume de 1876 à 1900 rédigé sous la direction de la Commission centrale de statistique. Bruxelles, 1907, tome I, p.130.

*Expulser* refers here to aliens with residency status who were brought to the border after a conviction for vagrancy or begging (poor laws of 1848 and 1891). Some aliens without residency status were expelled by Royal Decree (*expulser*) from 1878 onwards as this was the only way to be able to convict these aliens if they returned to Belgium.

*Renvoyer* refers to the removing of aliens without residency status, whether passively, by an order to leave the country, or actively, by transporting them to the border. Aliens could be *renvoyé* for political reasons, a conviction for a crime other than begging or vagrancy, and for destitution. Most of the *renvoi* were probably because of destitution, at least in the period 1892-1900 in which the *renvoi* for destitution took a share of 90 to 97% of the total number of *renvoi*. This has been calculated on the basis of the figures published since 1892 in the annual Statistique Judicaire, in which more categories were used than in the previous tables. We isolated the cause, *étrangers renvoyés à la frontières par la gendarmerie et par feuille de route (very few) pour défaut de moyens d'existence* from the other raisons of *renvoi.* [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Initially when the arrested alien vagrant was sent by the court to a *maison de refuge* he was to be expelled, but on February 13, 1892 Minister Lejeune ordered to execute also this decision. On the same date it was decided no longer to expel vagrants by Royal Decree, except for those with criminal antecedents. Minister of Justice to Governors, 12.1.1892. ARA, MJ, 658. Note, 25.5.1892. ARA, MJ, 638. Circular letter Sûreté, 12.1.1892. and 10.3.1892. Halot (1900), pp.200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. ARA, MJ, 635. Halot (1900), p.200. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. PDK, 1896-1897, nr.207. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Monthly report of the captain of the Gendarmerie of Hasselt, 1.11.1892. ARA, MJ, 650. See also Rapport sur l’administration de l’arrondissement de Marche pendant l’année 1893. Apprendices of the Mémorial administratif de Luxemburg, 1893, p.192. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. ARA, MJ, 647. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Although since April 1892 all aliens who were arrested because of vagrancy or begging were eligible for detention in a vagrant colony , not all of these vagrants were even convicted (which implied expulsé), let only sent to a vagrant colony. Only part of the arrested vagrants or beggars were sent to a police court , which on its turn sent only part of them to a vagrant colony. In 1894 4,525 foreign beggars or vagrants were arrested of which only 857 enterred a vagrant colony. In 1895 4,392 aliens were arrested because of vagrancy or begging, of them only 2,399 were brought before a police court which sent 960 of them to a vagrant colony. ARA, MJ, 647 and 650. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. ARA, MJ, 647. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. In addition, emigrants were smuggled into the country on a large scale. Ronin (1993), pp.222-227. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. The source for graph 4 is ARA, MJ, 650. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. ARA, MJ, 647. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. "Les vagabonds se disant étrangers qui seraient soupçonnés d'avoit fait de fausses déclarations au sujet de leur identité ou de leur nationalité devront encore être traduits devant les tribunaux de police" Circular letter Sûreté to Mayors, 10.3.1896. Halot (1900), pp.209-210. In 1908 the Gendarmerie got clearer instructions to unmask the pseudo-aliens. All vagrants who pretented to be French, but whose father was born in Belgium were to be arrested and after a conviction by the police court send to a vagrant colonie. During their stay in the penal colony it could then be determined what their actual nationality was. If they were in effect French then they were immediately expelled, if not they had to serve their sentence. Sûreté to polices, 19.6.1908. ARA, MJ, 658. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Note, 22.12.1896. ARA, MJ, 638. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Vagrants without residency status condemned because of an offence or just because too recalcitrant were expelled by Royal Decree. In 1901 55, in 1902 70 and in 1903 55 aliens. Note of the Minister of Justice, 19.5.1904. ARA, MJ, 638. The source for graph 3 is ARA, MJ, 650. The source for graph 4 is the annual publication Ministère de la Justice, Statistique judiciaire de la Belgique, 1892-1914. *Renvoyer* refers here to aliens without residency status who were expelled because of destitution (in graph 2 *renvoi* was also motivated by other reasons). *Expulser* refers to aliens with (or without residency status) who were convicted for vagrancy and subsequently expelled. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. "Toute acte de cruauté, en pareille matière, trahirait les intentions de la législature” Lejeune in PHK, 10.8.1891, p.1801. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. De Soignie (1873), pp.24-25. See for early 19th century intro-German agreements. Fahrmeier (2000: 118) De Britse overheid weigerde financiële verantwoordelijkheid te dragen voor de British pauper lunatics in asylums abroad, e Britten stelden that common practice has always been to treat lunatics wherever they fell ill without demanding compensation. (alhoewel hiervan in enige mate afgeweken werd tussen ten laatste 1856 en 1858). Britten betaalde wel de repatriëring van Britten en schoven hen als ze voldoende in staat waren te reizen naar de personen consul door ter repatriëring. Voorstel van de Britten in 1866 om hun zienswijze (non-reimbursement of expenses)) internationaal te aanvaarden, maar directe weigering Beieren, Santo Domingoen Württemberg, en indirect door Oostenrijk, Frankrijk, Hamburg, Hesse-Darmstadt, Nassau, Nederland en Pruisen (Belgie wel akkoord en ook heel wat andere staten). Fahrmeier 2000: 172-174 Binnen Duitse statenrijk Eisenacher Vertrag na 1853 dat voorziet dat staten de behandeling (en eventueel begrafenis) betalen van arme personen van de lid-staten die acuut ziek waren (Blum 1987:77; Spree 88). . [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. ARA, MJ, 377. Moniteur Belge, 19.7.1877. Voor akkoord van Luxemburg (1882) zie ARA, MJ, 659 en ook discussie in PHK. The power of the state to expel was also curtailed by the following provisions: The migrants who had lost their nationality because of a long sojourn abroad without acquiring a new nationality were still considered as a responsibility of the original state. In addition these agreements stipulated that an expulsion because of a momentarily lack of work was not permitted. Edgar (1899), p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. ARA, MJ, 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Halot (1900), pp.205-206. In 1875 the authorities still explicitly referred in the law to the free choice of the border for the undesirable alien. PHK, 30.11.1875, p.119. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Circular letter Sûreté, 8.8.1885, 2.4.1886 and 26.10.1896. Halot (1900), pp.204-212. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. "Ma circulaire du 8.8.1885 recommandait de mettre à la disposition de l'autorité judiciaire et compétente et à assimiler ainsi aux régnicoles l'étranger trouvé en état de mendicité ou de vagabondage qui déclarerait être réfugié politique. Je crois nécessaire d'appeler toute votre attention sur l'importance de l'interrogatoire à faire subir aux étrangers arrêtés comme vagabonds en tant qu'il porte sur la question de savoir s'il y a lieu de les traiter comme réfugiés politiques. Ceux qui déclarent être recherchés à l'étranger pour cause politique, seront invités à fournir les indications né­cessaires pour la vérification de leurs dires. Il sera statué à leur égard, d'après les résultats de cette verification par le Ministre, et, le cas échéant par le Conseil des ministres." Circular letter Sûreté to Governors, 28.1.1888. ARA, MJ, 345. For circular letter, 8.8.1885 see Halot (1900), pp.205-206. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Circular letter of Sûreté, 26.10.1896 and 13.12.1910. ARA, MJ, 658. For the protests of he Britisch authorities in the 1890s against the shuffling off to Britain of aliens who had not the Britisch nationality see ARA, MJ, 707. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. One should consider the state-attitude towards vagrants and especially towards travelling groups within a larger perspective than merely the removal of destitute immigrants who could become a threat to public order or become a burden on public welfare. It was part of a larger civilizing or rather disciplining offensive of the upper classes. During the 19th century vagrants were considered a threat to orderly society whereby travelling groups were designated as the work-shy and vagrants par excellence. Their refusal to settle in one place and work steady jobs was resented by the Belgian elites. By the end of the century some travelling groups became stigmatised as gypsies and had to take the brunt of the repression against the vagrants. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. The designation of travelling groups as undesirable and the order to expel them started in 1867. Mostly the expulsion of travelling groups was not warranted under regular administrative practice as these travelling groups had a means of livelihood. By 1896-1897 the state-policy sharpened. Some of these travelling groups were targeted under the label gypsies for an outspoken repressive state-policy. A policy which prohibited their inscription in the population register and ordered their immediate expulsion. Although the nomadic lifestyle was the main criterium for singling them out, it was not the only criteria as some travelling groups were not considered gypsies. More research has to be done -similar to the one of Lucassen for the Netherlands-on the exact definition of gypsies. Circular letters of Sûreté, 16.8.1867, 1.7.1872, 26.10.1896 and 1.6.1897 the last letter quotes the Circular letter of the Minister of Interieur, 19.5.1897. Halot (1900), p.195 and 217. Circular letter Minister of Finance to the border guards, 23.11.1897 quoted in Lucassen (1990), p.58.

We do not pursue the development of the policy towards this group as it is a subject on its own. We only mention that in the beginning of the 1930s bilateral agreements were made with France and Luxembourg to stop the continuously urging on to other countries of gypsies. Belgium accepted some gypsies as nationals and the Belgian authorities designed an administrative regulation to control these gypsies. All the other gypsies were still systematically removed. Bekaert (1940), pp.285-288. Lucassen (1990). Rys (1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Note Sûreté, without date (1900). ARA, MJ, 864. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. ARA, MJ, 865. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. In 1897 29 of the 87 MPs in the House were in favor of abolishing administrative discretion *(renvoi*) in immigration policy. Wnen one of those MPs proposed to grant residency status to all immigrants declaring their arrival with the municipal authorities the reaction of the Minister of Justice Begerem is vehement, he declared this proposal inadmissable. Two former Ministers of Justice De Lanthseheere and Woeste -both personalities in the ruling Catholic party- followed suit and attacked this proposal fiercely, they were adamant about safeguarding administrative discretion in immigration policy. PHK, 20 and 21.1.1897, pp.383-386. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. The attitude of the judiciairy which in 1845 contested the practice of the executive branch in the famous Jones affair and put some limits on the power the Sûreté wielded over aliens has still to be scrutinized for this period. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. This decrease is probably linked to the facilities granted for naturalization after 1881 (see further). Exposé de la situation du Royaume de 1861 à 1875 publiés par les soins de la Commission Centrale de Statistique. Bruxelles, 1885, Tome II, p.486. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Godding (1970), pp.308-314. Bekaert (1934a), pp.7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Note of Gautier, Administrator of the Sûreté to the Minister of Justice, 1887. ARA , MJ, 865. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Godding (1970). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Ministère de la Justice, Statistique Judiciaire de la Belgique (1892-1913). For numerous examples of expulsions of French, and later also German Socialist refugees see Wouters (1970). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Lorsqu’un étranger aura été condamné d’une forte peine du chef d’atteinte à la liberté du travail, il y a aura tojours bien de poser la question d’expulsion” Note Sûreté, 30.1.1890. ARA, MJ, 861. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. In 1876 the opinion of an officer of the Mine Administration, Jules van Scherpenzeel-Thim reflects this view on immigrants: "Malgré les efforts faits par nos exploitants pour conserver leur personnel, un assez grand nombre d'ouvriers ont reçu leur congé. A cette occasion on a agité la question de savoir s'il convenait d'appliquer cette mesure aux ouvriers étrangers ou flamands de préférence aux ouvriers wallons. Au premier abord il peut sembler naturel de soustraire avant tout à la misére les ouvriers du pays...cet acte serait, dans son espèce, très préjudiciable à notre industrie houillère dont le personnel a été reconnu insuffisant aux époques d'une production normale. Nous croyons savoir que, dans cette circonstance douloureuse, nos exploitants se sont inspirés de leur véritables intérêts et de la justice en conservant leurs meilleurs ouvriers, sans distinction de nationalité, ce dont il y a lieu de les féliciter." Delrée H. (1981). This line of reasoning remain dominant until the 1920s, for example Ronin (1993), p.277. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Wouters (1971), pp.419-421. Meert (1984), p.41. Bosseaux (1981), p.179. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. This implied an extension of the state power over aliens with residency status. While from 1848 onwards these aliens could be expelled after a conviction for vagrancy, from 1877 onwards the mere fact of being destitute and being on welfare could be punished with an expulsion. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. ARA, MJ, 374. PDK, 23 and 30.11.1875. PDS, 1875-1876, 37. PHK, 30.11.1875, p.118. Van Mighem (1882), p.39. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Art.10 and 19 of the vagrancy law and art. 28 of the social assistance law, both in 1891. BS, 3.12.1894. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. In contrast to the international arrangements of the 1840s the reciprocial reimbursement was not provided for, but only the principle of granting assistance to each others citizens. Belgium underwrote this engagement only for the aliens who had acquired residency status. An agreement was concluded with Germany on 7.7.1877, with Italy on 24.1.1880 and with Switzerland on 12.9.1896. Edgar (1899), pp.6-8. BS, 22.9.1896. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. ABZ, 3286. PHK, 3.3.1899, p.194. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. For more details on this topic see Caestecker (1997) of which this chapter on nationality legislation is a summary. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. PHK, 22.5.1874, pp.1156-1159. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. Laws of 1.4.1897, 6.8.1881 and 25.3.1894. Pasinomie, 1889, p.324 and 1894, pp.124-133.

From 1885 on amnesty was made dependant on being registered for the draft. This clause was only inserted so that the new Belgians would not only take advantage of obtaining Belgian nationality. They had to share the burden that came with the holding of a nationality. Moreover, there was no reference to the importance of the army as an assimilation instrument for the national community. In the 19th century aliens residing in Belgium, who had disregarded military obligations which their country imposed upon them, had to enroll themselves for the draft in Belgium. They were able to be exempted provided that a reciprocity agreement existed with their country of origin. With most European countries there was such an agreement. But aliens born in Belgium still had to enroll for the draft if they had not fulfilled their military obligations in “their country” even if Belgians in their country were exempt from being drafted. Stateless persons, in any case, had to register for the draft. The aliens enrolled for the draft in Belgium were able to draw lots for military service, whereby they were able to let themselves be replaced just as Belgians were able to do. De Soignie (1873), p.132 Law of 3.6.1870 and 16.8.1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. In 1879 the Court of Cassation had still declared that these children were stateless persons. Pasinomie, 1881, pp.382-384. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. Explanatory statement of the law of 6.8.1881. Pasinomie, 1881, p.363. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. The law of 7.8.1881 fixed the registration fee at 250 francs for an ordinary naturalization and 500 francs for a *grande naturalisation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. The treatment of the request for naturalization remained arbitrary. So refused Catholic members of parliament to grant naturalisation to some Jewish candidates, but also Liberals as well as the Catholics attempted in Parliament to refuse aliens, who were known to be political antagonists, the status of naturalized Belgian. For antisemitism see: PHK, 23.12.1898, p.327; 9.3.1898, pp.801-802; 4.5.1898, p.1418 and 22.12.1898, p.322. Cited in De Vuyst (1977), pp.33-43. The Catholics mostly pointed out the electoral interest that the Liberal Party had in the naturalization of Germans in Antwerp. Le Courrier de Bruxelles, 24.2.1898/1, 1-2 and also 10.8.1881. Barthelemy (1912), pp.164-169. Further archival research would shed light on the extent of use of the naturalization procedure and legislation for electoral raisons. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. Circular letter, 22.6.1880. Van Mighem (1882), p.25. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Pasinomie, 1984, p.125. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. The Court of Appeals was not even applying a strict interpretation of the Civil Code. Many people who had already been in Belgium for several generations were not struck from the voting registers in spite of the fact that there was not positive proof of their being Belgian. PHK, 8.6.1904. Pasinomie, 1909, p.115. Otto (1911), p.101. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. Or of course that one descended from a person who was born in Belgium before the Civil Code was in force (1.1.1814). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. The circular letter of 21.10.1865 which instructed the municipal authorities to carefully inform the Sûreté about every declaration of Belgian nationality was reissued on 20.11.1875 and 11.11.1892 because of the not conscientious compliance by the local authorities of this official notice. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. Biddaer (1898), p.569-572. Le Nouveau Précurseur, 13.5.1903, p.1/1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. Art. 9 of the law of 22.8.1885 and art. 76 of the law of 12.4.1894. Pasinomie, 1885, pp.282-283. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. Pasinomie, 1885, p.283. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Those persons who were born in Belgium to stateless persons (as well to unknown parents, but here policy was not changed) were also considered Belgians. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. PHS, 23.3.1909. Pasinomie, 1909, pp.159-160. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. Along with these, in the period between 1879-1913, there are yet another 114 persons who made use of these amnesty measures but on the basis of extremely limited provisions which could also be used years after the proclamation. Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique, 1910, p.127. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. These numbers are naturally also a function of the increase in immigration. Only a quantitative analysis of the number of aliens having the right to claim Belgian nationality (aliens born in Belgium) who, throughout time did not declare their indigenousness at age of majority would be able to give an unequivocal indication of the changing importance that was tied to Belgian nationality. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. Ronin (1993), p.259. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Okoowicz (1920), pp.335-337. L'ouvrier mineur, 28.4.1912. Le Métropole. 2.5.1912/1,1. Van Malder (1925), pp.61-62. ARA, MJ, 282. The *Polskie Towarzystwo Emigracyjne* was a Polish organization founded in 1908 to control the emigration from Galicia. The organization, which was protected by the Galician Parliament provided at most 10,000 Poles to French agriculture between 1908 and 1914. It does not seem it ever provided manpower to French industry. Ponty (1988), pp.7-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. "Aucune hostilité de la part des ouvriers. Je suis convaincu que nos devrons recourir d'avantage à cette main-d'oeuvre" Note to Warocqué, s.d. Musée Mariemont, Fonds Warocqué 24/3.

 During the first 9 months of 1912 in the mines of the Centre basin pension accounts were opened for 1,569 foreigners. The number of foreign miners increased considerably in 1913 and 1914. Based on the financial transfers for pensions, about 2.350 foreigners were employed in 1913 and 2,650 in 1914. Caisse de prévoyance en faveur des ouvriers mineurs du Center à La Louvière. Rapport de la commission administrative sur les opérations de l'année 1912, p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. "Le Président préconise l'entente des Sociétés du Couchant de Mons pour l'institution d'un organisme tel qu'une Bourse de travail aux fins d'instaurer méthodiquement le recrutement de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère." UEM, Conseil d'administration de Levant de Flénu, 10.2.1914. Journal de Charleroi, 20.11.1913, p.3/5. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. In the Liège basin there were 1,586 aliens who obtained a pension account in 1912; in 1913, 972 and in 1914, 502. Centrale Syndicale Régionale des Mineurs du bassin de Liège. Rapport et bilan annuel, 1920. L'ouvrier mineur, 15.10.1912 and Michel (1987), p.1987. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. In 1912 there were according to the Socialist MP Troclet, 4,320 foreign workers in the Belgian mines. According to the FEDECHAR were there in 1914 only 2.548 aliens working in the Belgian mines. PHK, 9.5.1928, p.1006. Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie, XXII, 1932, 1, p.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. "Les étrangers seraient probablement des Westphaliens, des Polonais ou des Italiens. Certains charbonnages du Centre et de la province de Liège qui utilisent déjà cette main d'oeuvre étrangère en sont satisfaits." ACCA in Conseil supérieur d'hygiène publique. Recueil des rapports-séance du 25.7.1912, p.457. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. L'ouvrier mineur, 30.11.1913, p.2; 20.8.1913, p.2; 15.2.1913,p.3. La Chronique, 7.1.1913/1,6. Gazette de Charleroi, 20.11.1913/3,5. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. Conseil de Conciliation de d'Arbitrage du Charbonnage de Bascoup, 18.10.1911. Quoted in Cochez (1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. Until 1919 no distinction was made between being Belgian by descent and Belgian by birth (either by option or by automatic bestowing of the nationality). This had been formally confirmed by the *Court de Cassation* in 1883, only those who had obtained Belgian nationality by naturalization were seen as a distinct catagory of Belgians. Otto (1911), p.57. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. Pirard in PHK, 15.6.1921, p.1625. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. In the bill the courts were only given this authority temporarily. An administrative organ would be created in order to decide on the applications. An administrative organ that would not be held accountable for its descisions and would also provide no possibility for appeal. The Senate thought, however that the judicial procedure had to be respected. The temporary solution that the bill proposed, i.e. magistrates who would pass judgements in an administrative manner, was defeated in the Senate since it would give the magistrates excessive powers. The Law of 1922 introduced a legal procedure, this implied that the *Tribunal de Première instance* had to justify its descision and that a possiblity for appeal was provided for in the Court of Appeals. Pasinomie, 1922, p.117 and 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. Council of Ministers, 1.8.1919. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. Council of Ministers, 1.8.1919. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. Internal note Foreign Affairs, 5.2.1921. ABZ, 2642 bis I. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. Polish Embassy to MSZ, 9.3.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9.538. When it was found out that a mine had recruited illegally Czech labor the Minister of Labor R.Moyersoen threathened to impose sanctions: "Le recrutement clandestin et l'introduction frauduleuse dans le Royaume de travailleurs étrangers ne pourraient qu'amener le Gouvernment à prendre des mesures dont ils (the mines) seraient les premières à souffrir." Minister of Labor to Fedechar, 15.9.1923. Bois du Luc, 259. Sanctions were however never taken, see further. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. PHK, 18.6.1924, pp.1547-1549 and 26.6.1924, pp.1635-1636. Algemeen Belang der Provincie Limburg, 1.7.1923, p.4/5-6. Vingtième siécle, 12.8.1924. Le Peuple, 28.6.1924/1,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. Maas- en Kempenland, 16.6.1923. Ons Limburg, 12.11.1922/1. Le Franc Mineur, I, 1922, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. PHK, 20.6.1924, p.1935. La Wallonie, 21.11.1922. Van Maldere (1925), p.73. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. "Bien que l'on n'ait pas la preuve que le danger soit directement menaçant.. nous estimons qu'une certaine surveillance ne doit pas se relâcher." Ligue National Belge contre le Péril Vénérien, notre activité pendant l'année 1923, p.6. Ligue Nationale Belge contre le Péril Vénérien to Fedechar, 17.7.1923. AHCM, 1923, p.75. ARC, Cassier 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. Report of the health inspector Spaak, 23.12.1922. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1c, 1, 6D/54. Conseil Supérieur d'Hygiène Publique, XXIV, 1924-1926, p.19. Dispensaire provincial et communal de prophylaxie antisyphilitique de Liège, rapport sur l'excercice 1928. Exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Liège, 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. Circular letter of Governor of Hainaut to directors of industrial firms, 14.5.1924. Mayor Jumet to ACCBS, 24.5.1924. Bois du Luc, 259. PHK, 20.6.1924, p.1636. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. Séance du 17.1.1924 et 11.3.1926 du Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique in: Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Hygiène, Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique. XXIV, 1924-1926, Liège, 1926, pp.14-19, 560, 568-572. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. "si nous nous désinteressons de ces questions, nous risquons de nous voir fermer les frontières à l'émigration. Le comité est d'avis d'examiner en Fédération les mesures à prendre dans l'ordre d'idées suggéré par la Ligue Nationale contre le Péril Vénérien." ACCBS, 27.7.1923. Bois de Luc, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. While the commune of Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont had to pay the medical expenses of the North African labor working in the mine of Mariemont-Bascoup, the mine reimbursed the expenses for the Poles who became sick. Secretary of the Commune to Direction of Mariemont-Bascoup, 19.3.1924. Archive Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont, CPAS 8/362. Stasser, l'action médicale dans l'économie des grands charbonnages modernes, Bruxelles, 1926, p.29. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. Typically is his negative reaction to a plan to recruit Czechoslovakian labor. His opposition was grounded in his anti-Sovjet and anti-German obsession, all the Czechoslovakian immigrants would be a danger for the country."A priori sur 3 citoyens tchécoslovaques il y un ennemi (=Sudets)..les Tchèques et Slovaques..sont des admirateurs fervents de leurs frères de race, les Russes et communistes ou bolcheviks, Prague est après Moscou la grande capitale du communisme...On peut considérer en général les ouvriers tchécoslovques comme des indésirables et des éléments dangereux à laisser pénétrer en Belgique." Minister of Foreign Affairs H.Jaspar to Minister of Justice F.Masson, 24.9.1923. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. "Le Gouvernement a non seulement le droit, mais le devoir de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour empêcher l'entrée et le séjour en Belgique des ouvriers étrangers qui viendraient supplanter nos nationaux et les réduire au chômage" Conclusion de la 1er séance. Procès-verbal de la 2ième séance de la commission intermi­nistérielle, 23.1.1923, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. PHK, 5.7.1923,p.2038. Arbeidsblad, XXIV, 1923, 10, p.2201. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
165. Procès-verbal de la 2ième séance de la commission intermi­nistérielle, 23.1.1923, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. Ministère de l'Agriculture (1920). Van Molle (1992), p.180. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
166. "Elles ne prévoient que la délivrance de permis temporaires, dont la durée est limitée à six mois. Elles permettent de revoir, à l'échéance de ce terme, si, comme c'est un cas fréquent, l'ouvrier n'a pas changé de métier, parfois au détriment de nos nationaux. Cependant, en cette matière, nous sommes tenus à l'observation de traités internationaux qui nous enlèvent une partie de notre liberté d'action, en fixant à deux années le maximum de durée de cette pratique." Vercruysse in La lutte contre le chômage, XIII, 1924, 2, p.49, see also p.34. PHS, 19.5.1924, p.116. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
167. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 1925, pp.63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
168. "(c'est)introduire dans le domaine de la main-d'oeuvre le principe du protectionisme, innovation d'une extrême gravité" L'étoile belge, 14.11.1923. L'indépendance Belge, 24.11.1923. L'étoile belge, 7.11.1923 and 21.11.1923. Straus in PHK, 5.7.1923, p.2036. Committee FEDECHAR, 2.5.1923 and 9.5.1923. Minerva Motors to Justice, 17.1.1924. CCI to Prime Minister, 4.1924 quoted in Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 3.6.1924. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
169. Marcinelle-Nord to Minister of Industry and Labor, 25.5.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. L.André, Director Bois-du-Luc to Gravez, Director General of Produits de Flénu, 4.5.1923. Musée de la Mine, Correspondance Bois du Luc. See also Committee FEDECHAR, 11.4.1923 and 25.4.1923. CNPI, P.V. de la séance du 10.3.1923, p.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
170. H.Jaspar to commissaire d'arrondissement of Charleroi, 16.6.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. See also Minister of Labor to the Direction of Marcinelle-Nord, 25.5.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. Note pour M.le Ministre des Affaires Etrangeres, 1.12.1922. ABZ, 2652bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
171. "Les industriels de Marchienne-au-Pont refusent de s'engager à rapatrier, éventuellement, les travailleurs étrangers de leurs établissements" Jaspar to commissaire d'arrondissement of Charleroi, 16.6.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. PHK, 5.7.1923, p.2038. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
172. Rapport de M. le Commissaire de l'arrondissement de Liège. Annexes à l'exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Liège,1924, p.37. Rapport de M. le Commissaire de l'arrondissement de Thuin et de Soignies. Annexe à l'exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Hainaut, 1924, resp. p. 29 and pp.23-24. La lutte contre le chômage, XIII, 2, 1924, p.47 and XIV, 1925, pp.63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
173. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 5.1925, p.63. Governer of Antwerp Holvoet to Jaspar, 6.2.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
174. "le Ministre de la Justice a, en fait, un pouvoir discrétionnaire pour faire remettre à la frontière tout étranger non résidant, sans qu'il ait à justifier de la mesure prise. Si la Sûreté publique avait usé de ce pouvoir discrétionnaire, elle aurait été à même de faire observer la règlementation." Jaspar to Minister of Justice F.Masson, 21.2.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
175. Jaspar, Minister of Foreign Affairs to F.Masson, Minister of Justice, 13.3.1923. Masson to Jaspar, 29.3.1923. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
176. "Ne risque-t-on pas d'affronter un mal immédiat, con­sidérable et certain, par crainte d'un danger plus ou moins problématique, probablement et vraisemblement à écheance assez lointaine?" Moyersoen to Jaspar, 12.7.1923. "Exclure les indésirables ne suffit pas, il s'agit aussi de faire venir du dehors les travailleurs dont nous avons besoin" Ministry of Labor to Foreign Affairs, 14.7.1923. ABZ, 2652bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
177. For the Dutch pressure: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dutch embassy in Brussels, 7.3.1924. ARDH, 181. Note Emigration to Belgium, 1923. ARDH, 180. Twentsche en Enschedesche, 6.3.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
178. Holvoet to Jaspar, 6.2.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
179. Dutch General-Consul to Foreign Affairs, Den Hague 11.3.1924. ARDH, 181. Correspondance between official labor exhange office Antwerp and Minister of Labor and Industry, 6.1924. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
180. Circular letter of 22.2.1924.AMJ, 12.Vercruysse in Proces Verbal de la 1ère séance de la Commission interministérielle, 2.12.1925. The decision of Jaspar that the Ministry of Foreign should abondon the immigration policy was linked to the weakening of his position as his Ruhr policy had led to a serious political crisis leading to his dismissal on March 6, 1924. Luykx (1973), p.313. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
181. Marcel Habets was director of Cockerill from 1911 until 1936 and hence member of the regional mining association of Liège and Limburg (colliery Zwartberg). Mahoux (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
182. "il faut...faire venir des étrangers, comme ils viennent en France où 70.000 Polonais, autant d'Italiens et des Tchéco-Slovaques travaillent déjà. Une entente à ce sujet devrait se faire, non seulement, entre les divers charbonnages de la Campine, mais entre les bassins charbonniers de Belgique, de manière à aboutir à la création d'un organisme d'embauchage qui règlerait toutes les questions que soulève l'immigration, (salaires, logement, assurances, pensions, instruction, religion, etc.). Cette organisme devrait s'intéresser non seulement aux ouvriers des mines, mais à tous les immigrants et notamment aux ouvriers agricoles; il pourrait devenir le noyau de l'organisme général qui règlerait cette question pour la Belgique entière." Habets in ACCA, 25.6.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
183. We use the term North-Africans as most censuses do not distinguish between the different ethnic groups or nationalities of this region. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
184. The census of September 1922 and August 1923 made some distinctions within the North African migration based on nationality. In the mining sector there were hardly any nationalities other than Algerians and Moroccans. In September 1922 both nationalities were about equally represented (577 Algerians and 446 Moroccans). While the latter doubled by August 1923, the number of Algerian tripled. (respectively 1,086 and 1,898). Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
185. The causes for this sudden offer of Moroccans are not so evident. In the protectorates Morocco and Tunisia emigration was subject to severe restrictions. Stora (1985), pp.71-73. Gallissot (s.d.), p.211. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
186. "Nous n'attirons pas les Marocains et Algériens...nous nous bornons à engager, suivant nos besoins, ceux qui se présentent librement. Pour le moment, nous n'embauchons plus et nous sommes intentionnés de renoncer aux services de ces

étrangers dès que les circonstances le permettront."S.A. des Charbonnages de Mariemont-Bascoup to Communal administration of Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont, 21.2.1924. Archive of Commune of Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont, CPAS 8/362. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
187. In February 1924 the *Gendarmerie* counted 67 North Africans in the chemical industry and 254 in the iron and steel industry in the industrial basin of Wallonia. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
188. Le Soir, 21.5.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
189. L'ouvrier mineur, XX, 1924, 1, p.2. La Wallonie, 9.10.1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
190. Stora (1985), p.72. In 1926 these restrictions were lifted, as they were anti-constitutional but immediately new, more refined requirements for emigration were enacted. Nouschi (1984), p.42. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
191. Swierenga (1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
192. Emigration to Belgium, 9.1923. ARDH, 180. In 1922 356 Dutch builders found a job in Belgium this way. In 1923, 729 Dutch builders, together with 622 Dutchmen for the mines and 85 for metallurgic industry found jobs in Belgium through this arrangement. Bourse officielle du Travail, arrondissement de Bruxelles. Rapport annuel respectively 1922, p.15 and 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
193. Dutch Embassy in Brussels to Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23.10.1923. Copy of circular letter of Minister of Labor R.Moyersoen to public labor exchange office, 28.12.1922. ARDH, respectively 181 and 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
194. This was already noticed by the labor exchange office of Brussels: "La main-d'oeuvre est de bonne qualité en Hollande. Les travailleurs hollandais offrent ces grands avantages que leur rapatriement en cas de crise industrielle survenant en Belgique serait aisé, et qu'ils parlent la même langue qu'une grande partie de la population belge" Bourse officielle du Travail, arrondissement de Bruxelles. Rapport annuel 1922, p.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
195. Vooruit, 31.8.1923/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
196. The Dutch authorities even gave subsidies to those emigrants whose family remained in Holland. Informations sociales BIT, IX, 1924, 1-3, p.154. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
197. The Catholic trade-union of transport workers -a union with a high number of unemployed- argued in its protest against this enforced employment in the mines of the Limburg mines that the salaries were low and that the Belgian and Dutch social legislation was not homogenized. The union also pointed to the high number of mine-accidents and the political and moral (syphillis and overcrowded boarding-houses) dangers of this mine-district. Limburgsch Dagblad, VI, 1923, 250-253, p.1. (Communicated by Luk Minten). Le Franc Mineur, II, 1923, 5, p.2. Ons Limburg, V, 1923, 27, p.1. Letters of this trade-union with Ministry of Labor, 1923. ARDH, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
198. Municipal Council of Nijmegen to Minister of Labor, 12.5.1923. ARDH, 182. Emigration to Belgium, September 1923, p.2. ARDH, 180. For a case-study see: Cillekens, Winterslag roept. Verzet van maastrichtse werkverschaffingsarbeiders tegen gedwongen tewerkstelling in de belgies-limburgse mijnstreek 1922-1923, 19p. not-published manuscript. Communicated by Luk Minten. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
199. Emigration to Belgium, 9.1923, pp.2-3. ARDH, 180. In December 1922 Winterslag hoped to increase its Dutch labor by 400 %, from 100 to 400. By November 1923 510 Dutchmen were working in Winterslag. ARDH, 182. Only very few of the Dutchmen hired in Waterschei were able to commute daily. Paesen (1986), p.73. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
200. Henriquet (1924), p.258. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
201. "Les Hollandais étaient animés d'un très mauvais esprit et boudaient à la besogne: ils déchargaient 12 tonnes de charbon en 8 heures. Ce détail vous permettra d'apprécier leur valeur." André to Gorissen, 14.7.1923. Dutch Vice-Consul in Charleroi to ACCBS, 4.6.1923. Bois du Luc, respectively 582 and 259. Emigration to Belgium, 9.1923, p.2. ARDH, 180. Throughout 1924-1925 emigration to Belgium continued, but on a smaller scale. Most Dutch migrants worked in the building trade or on public works in Brussels. Some unskilled laborers were still sent to the mines of the basin of Charleroi. Report of the director, 16.9.1925. ARDH, 180. Waterschei recruited in 1923 87 Dutchmen, in 1924 only 79. In 1923 76% of the foreign labor recruited was Dutch, in 1924 only 22%. Paesen (1986), p.74. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
202. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 1925, p.52. Jaarverslag van de Districtsarbeidsbeurs te Heerlen, 1923, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
203. Correspondence between the offical labor exchange office of Antwerp and the Minister of Labor, 6.1924. AMJ, 12. CNPI, doc.124, pp.12-19. Probably the "incident" with a Dutch building contractor, Breejen van de Bout from Nijmegen, who obtained a commission for public work in Antwerp took then place. He fired some of his Belgian labor in exchange for Dutch workers and this notwithstanding rising unemployment among Belgian labor. This caused a big scandal in Antwerp. Dutch Consul in Brussels to Director of the Dutch National Service of Unemployment and Labor Exchange, 4.10.1929. ARDH, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
204. According to Italian figures, 883 Italians emigrated officially from Italy to Belgium in 1920; in 1921 this increased to 2,769 and in the first seven months of 1922 there were 14,738 offically registrated departures for Belgium. Le Notizie sull'emigrazione e sul lavoro, I, 1922, 115, p.1. A lot of these Italians registered as leaving for Belgium had only the intention to leave for France, demanding a passport for Belgium was much easier as no visa was required for emigration to Belgium. On this increasing emigration to Belgium see also: H.Jaspar, Minister of Foreign Affairs to F.Masson, Minister of Justice 11.4.1922. AMJ, 12.

The dynamic of this Italian migration is difficult to establish. The upsurge in continental migration -also France noted then a steep rise in Italian immigrants- seemed to have little or no link with the immigration restrictions in the United States. The percentage of southern Italians -the Italians leaving for the States- within the continental movement remained minimal. Cross

(1983), p.101. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
205. Le Notizie sull'emigrazione e sul lavoro, I, 1922, 37, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
206. Bourse officielle du Travail, arrondissement de Bruxelles. Rapport 1922, pp.14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
207. The coordination of the Italian emigration policy was in the hands of the Commissariato Generale dell Emigrazione (CGE) founded in 1901 which after the First World War grew into a dynamic and powerful branch of the Italian state. The CGE succeeded in monopolizing the recruitment of Italian migrants and could hence impose its conditions on the terms of emigration of Italians. The Fascist coup did, at least initially, not change anything in the Italian emigration policy. Mussolini did not dissolve the CGE, as he also wanted to facilitate emigration under government control. Cannistraro and Rosoli (1979), Ostuni (1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
208. Caestecker (1993d), pp.44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
209. AHCM, 22.12.1922. Committee FEDECHAR, 3.1.1923. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.394. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
210. Probably 25 francs in total. ACCBS, 20.2.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. Archive FEDECHAR, La main d'oeuvre italienne dans les charbonnages, s.d.(1922?). [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
211. CNPI, séance du 10.3.1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
212. The CGE decided about at least half of the immigrants. CNPI, doc.83-17.4.1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
213. Bourse officielle du Travail, Brussels to Varlez, ILO 30.3.1923. Archives ILO, E/100/7/4. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
214. "La Bourse Officielle du travail ne place la main-d'oeuvre allochtone que dans les industries où il est avéré qu'elle ne peut entrer en concurrence avec nos ouvriers; mais elle estime que, dans l'intérêt même du pays, il est nécessaire de recourir

au recrutement de cette main-d'oeuvre pour l'occuper là où la pénurie de bras se fait cruellement sentir." Bourse officielle de travail de l'arrondissement de Bruxelles, rapport annuel, 1922, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
215. "Don Luigi Rudolfi, directeur du secrétariat de la municipalité d'Udine regrette...que le contrat de travail, imposé par le CGE soit trop exigeant et compliqué, ce qui fait que les chefs d'industries belges ne veulent pas en entendre parler. A cause de cela, en Belgique, à peine 10% des ouvriers emigrants sont engagés par un contrat régulier." L'Indépendance Belge, 6.12.1922/ 1. Comerro to ACCBS, 8.2.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. Pourbaix (1983), p.150. Réunion du Comité Central, 111.2.1924. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
216. Van Maldere (1925), p.59. Henriquet (1924), p.258. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
217. Caestecker (1993d), pp.46-50. For a similar and also unsuccesful attempt of the French mining companies to control the recruitment of Italian migrants see Trempé (1988), pp.185-186. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
218. See enquête de mai 1924. ARA, Mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4."Nous avons eu l'occassion de parler, avec différents chefs d'industries, de la valeur des ouvriers italiens qui sont déjà au nombre de plusieurs milliers dans les bassins de Charleroi et du Centre.... Ces ouvriers italiens dont on sait ...la belle vaillance servie par une intelligence éprise d'action sont pour les nôtres, qui n'ont rien à leur envier quand ils le veulent un exemple qu'il serait imprudent de dédaigner." La revue industrielle, LVII, 9.11.1923, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
219. "quelques anarchistes, piliers de la maison du peuple, que nous avons dû menacer de renvoi à le première incartade." André, director Bois du Luc to Cigarini, Italian Consul in Charleroi. 28.11.1923. Bois du Luc, 582. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
220. The highest increase in the recruitment of Italians is to be found during 1923. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 5.1925, pp.65-68. Bourse officielle de travail de l'arrondissement de Bruxelles, rapport annuel 1923 and rapport annuel 1922. Le Notizie sull'emigrazione e sul lavoro, I, 1922, 32, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
221. This graph gives the number of Italians requested by Belgian employers, which does not necessarily mean that those migrants actually came to Belgium. The graph is based on: La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, mei 1925, pp.65-68. Bourse officielle de travail de l'arrondissement de Bruxelles, rapport annuel, 1922 and 1923. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.393. (further CGE 1924-1925). [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
222. In February 1924the *Gendarmerie* counted 305 Italians in a total of 347 foreigners employed in the quarries of Wallonia. The statistics of the Mine Administration of 1926 counted 485 Italians among 698 foreigners in the quarries. Appendix 1. Le Carrier, XXVI, 1924, 11 and XXVI, 1924, 2, p.3 and 6. Enquête sur les effets de la loi du 14.6.1921 instituant la journée de huit heures et la semaine de 48 heures. Rapport du CCI de Belgique. Bruxelles, 1924, p.44. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
223. There were some Italian stonemen and some hewers. The latter came mostly from the Ruhr where they had been employed before the First World War. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923, vol.2. Roma, 1926, p.621. Bollettino del R. Ministero degli Affari Esteri, VI, 1928, 6, pp.521-522. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
224. In 1924 40% of the Italians who were sent to Belgium within this scheme would never arrive. CNPI, doc.91-12.5.1925. CGE 1924-1925, p.394. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
225. According to the *Gendarmerie* of Charleroi 70 to 75 % of the Italian immigrants left the mines which had recruited them after one or two days as they were scared to go down in the pit. They went to Brussels or found a job in the blast-furnaces. Only a small number of the Italian immigrants- those with mining experience- remained in the mines. *Gendarmerie* of Charleroi, 16.10.1922. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
226. In Februari 1924 the *Gendarmerie* counted 1,838 Italians in the steel and iron industry. This last figure rose, according to the figures of the employers, to 1,963 in 1925. Appendix 1 and CNPI, doc. 124, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
227. CNPI, doc.124, pp.12-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
228. Le Carrier, XXVIII, 1925, 7, p.1 and 10, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
229. In Februari 1924 the *Gendarmerie* counted 100 Italians in the chemical industry Appendix 1. CNPI, doc.124, p.3. Journal de Charleroi, 7.4.1923. The Employers' Federation of the Chemical Industry was satisfied with the Italian workers, whom they called very disciplined and polite. They declared" la discipline des italien est même meilleure que celle des ouvriers flamands, lesquels sont parfois très turbulents." CNPI, doc. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
230. According to the Italian Consul in Charleroi, Cigarini, there were in August 1923 in Hainaut 4,500 Italians working in the mines and 1,500 in the other industries. La Metropole, 20.11.1923. Le Franc Mineur, II, 1923, 5, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
231. Hallot: "Ne faudrait-il pas s'entendre avec les métallurgistes sur la question des salaires. Nous risquons de voir nos efforts rester vains, les ouvriers italiens devant être attirés par les gros salaires payés dans l'industrie métallurgique.

Roisin: l'industrie métallurgique a une marché fort irrégulière, ses besoins en personnel varient fortement et il n'est guère possible de s'entendre avec elle au sujet de recrutement de la main d'oeuvre." ACCBS Commission de recrutement 5.10.1922. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
232. Vercruysse, Director-General of the Department of Unemployment and Placement within the Ministry of Labor in CNPI, doc.83 and 112. Council of Ministers, 18.12.1922. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
233. "Pour mettre fin à cette situation (the emigration of Italians), d'autant plus périlleuse que notre Consul Général à Milan attire mon attention sur le mauvais esprit de ces émigrants italiens imbus de bolchevisme et de germanophilie, j'ai décidé de rétablir l'obligation du visa consulaire pour l'entrée dans le Royaume de tous les sujets italiens se rendant en Belgique pour y prendre du travail." H.Jaspar to F.Masson, Minister of Justice, 11.4.1922. AMJ, 12. It is highly unlikely that Jaspar reintroduced the visa-requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
234. "Le Département de l'Industrie et du Travail négocie avec le représentant en Belgique du CGE, un arrangement qui définirait notamment les devoirs des immigrants vis-à-vis des patrons qui les ont engagés par l'intermédiaire des bureaux italiens et les mesures à prendre pour ne pas laisser peser sur nos nationaux les charges résultant du rapatriement éventuel." H.Jaspar to le commissaire d'arrondissement Charleroi, 16.6.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
235. Arbeidsblad, XXIV, 1923, 10, pp.2199-2201. Note of 25.10.1923. ABZ, 2647bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
236. A centralized state-control over the recruitment of Italians was probably made difficult by the decision of the Catholic Minister of Labor R.Moyersoen to also grant the private labor exchange offices the right to process the demands for Italian labor. We do not know, however, the exact relationship within this scheme between the Ministry of Labor, those private agencies and the Italian authorities. Concordia to ACCBS, 2.8.1923. Municipal Archive Charleroi, Fontaine l'Evêque, Fédération et Ass.Charb. See also Concordia to Director, Bois du Luc, 181. A.Pauwels to Broekx, 16.11.1923. KADOC, Broekx, 13.2.7.5. KADOC, Bestuursvergadering ACV 6.11.1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
237. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.392. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
238. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.394. The following article was inserted in the contracts: "Les frais de voyage de l'ouvrier, d'Italie au lieu de travail, seront à charge des demandeurs (embaucheur). Le montant de ce remboursement a été fixé, à 280 lires. Cette somme pourra être remboursée à l'ouvrier en quatre tranches de 70 lire chacune, trois, six, neuf et douze mois après la date de son embauche en Belgique" Vercruysse, Ministry of Labor to Varlez, ILO 9.3.1926. Archives ILO, E 100/7/7. It seems that before the mines had only to pay the repatriation of those immigrants which could not finish their one year contract. A bonus was granted after a six month working period. CGE, 1924-1925, p.394. Now, probably in analogy with the Polish contract of 1924 the return trip was to

be reimbursed for all those who finished their contract. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
239. When a few hunderd Italians arrived in Marcinelle Nord in October 1922, recruited through the official labor scheme, they refused to descend into the mines. Journal de Charleroi, 7.10.1922, Le Peuple, 8.10.1922 and 25.5.1923, La Nation Belge, 29.9.1922. CNPI, séance du 10.3.1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
240. "il convient d'acclimater ces ouvriers avec précaution et ne pas les employer d'emblée aux travaux du fond. Il est donc recommandé de leur faire un stage raisonnable à la surface, afin d'avoir le temps de les préparer à l'idée de descendre en insistant sur les mesures de sécurité organisées dans les travaux." Circular letter of ACCBS, 12.10.1922. ACCBS Commission de recrutement 5.10.1922. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
241. ACCBS, 3.11.1922. Gorissen to André, 9.9.1923. Bois du Luc, 582. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
242. Vescovali to Fedechar, 23.12.1923 and 3.1.1924. Bois du Luc, 582. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
243. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.397. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
244. Among them Houillères Réunis and a mining company in Gilly. Le Soir, 1.9.1925. Vescovali to André, 30.11.1923; Ballot to Vescovali, 8.12.1923, Vescovali to André, 9.12.1923. Bois du Luc, 582. Progetto di convenzione con i charbonnages di "Tamines" e "Mariemont-Bascoup" Bois du Luc, 582. the Italain offer responded to a vague idea among some employers, for example: "Jadot(charb. d'Ormont): insiste sur la nécessité de les caserner dans les logements spéciaux et de leur éviter, autant que possible le contact des autres ouvriers dans les hotelleries. Il faut de toute nécessité organiser au plus tôt un contrôle italien." Commission de recrutement du personnel, réunion du 5.10.1922. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
245. Conseil d'Administration Fedechar, 2.1.1924. Bois du Luc, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
246. Winterslag never recruited those 1,000 Italians. Waterschei also stayed aloof from the Italian recruitment scheme. This latter mine hired in 1923 only 2 Italians and in 1924 15, respectively 2 and 4% of its recruitment of foreign labor. Paesen (1986), p.74. Probably was the limited recruitment in the new basin due to the absence of qualified miners among the Italians, also the "interference" of the Italian authorities in setting the conditions of recruitment was not very much appreciated by these mining companies. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
247. It is unclear if political reasons -the aggressive involvement of Fascism in this campaign- had any influence in the decision of the mining companies to retreat from this experiment. For the decrease in Italian migrant labor see further. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
248. Régie 27.6.1928, 295c. André, director Bois du Luc to Cigarino, Italian consul in Charleroi 7.5.1923. Musée de la Mine, Bois du Luc, Correspondance. Morelli (1985), pp.331-333. ACCBS, 28.11.1924 and 9.12.1929. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 1925, 3. Segretariato di Emigrazione, Pordenone to Broekx, 17.11.1922 and to ACCBS, 3.11.1922. Respectively KADOC, Broekx, 13.2.7.5. and Bois du Luc, 181. Note 27.1.1925. Musée de la Mine, Correspondance 160 C. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
249. A director of an important mine-company in Le Soir, 1.9.1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
250. We only discuss in this chapter the Poles of Catholic persuasion. As the Poles of Jewish persuasion had a largely distinct pattern of immigration and socio-economic insertion we discuss their immigration in chapter E. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
251. In Ressaix only 2 families were left of the Poles who were recruited before the War. This mining company considered the Poles as being calmer, better workers than the other aliens, including the Italians. The mine wanted to recruit more Poles. Political report, 12.9.1923. AAN, Ambassada RP w Londynie, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
252. In February 1924 the Gendarmerie counted 511 Poles in the iron and steel industry and according to the employers there were in 1925 590 Poles employed in this industry. CNPI, doc. 124,p.2. Appendix 1. Neptune, 28.2.1925. Polonia, 225. 22.6.1924, p.2. Emigrant, II, 1925, 41(62), p.3. CNPI, doc. 124,p.3. Wychodzca, 1925, 43, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
253. Polish Embassy in Brussels to Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9.3.1923. Embassy in Brussels to MSZ, 14.12.1922 and 3.7.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538."in Liège 400, in Limburg as well as in Charleroi 150 Polish workers." Kowalski to Archbishop, 1.10.1923. AAG, I. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
254. Ponty (1988), pp. 123-134. Committee FEDECHAR, 23.1.1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
255. Those who came from Germany mostly did not yet have a clearly established Polish nationality. Many of those from France deserted the mines and, as probably the employers kept their passport in order to assure that they would fulfil their one-year contract, they arrived in Belgium without a passport. These Polish "deserters" were mostly industrial workers who came either from Upper Silesia or from the big cities. Report concerning protection of Polish workers, 3.7.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Vanderwoude to Broekx, 17.6.1923. KADOC, Broekx, 14.5.6.

Between 1919 and 1924 industrial workers were among the 150,000

to 200,000 migrants recruited in Poland for French industry a small minority. The Polish emigration from France to Belgium is hence not a representative sample of the Polish community in France and its specific social composition indicates that we are dealing here with workers already strongly socialized in the capitalist economy and looking for better opportunities, therefor not only in mining. Polish labor in France was mostly of rural origin and if they could not support industrial work, they could either return to Poland or find a job in French agriculture. Ponty (1988), pp.80-81.

The journal Wychodzca, 1924, 50, p.7 points to Poles who had worked before in Germany as the numerically most important group within the Polish immigration into Belgium. "There are about 4,000 Polish workers in Belgium, three quarters of them originating from the Russian part of Poland. (F.C.: Before the First World War the Russian Poles, especially those from the district of Kalisz with its large estates worked mostly in the eastern provinces of Germany as agricultural labor). They came either directly from Poland or from Germany where they worked during the war. People from Poznan, Silesia and Mao Polski are numerically less important." [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
256. Wychodzca, 1926, 6, p.3 and 5; 1924, 24, p.9 and 1925, 31, p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
257. "Il est sage de se méfier des propositions d'embauchage faites par certains particuliers, les ouvriers polonais qu'ils procurent étant ceux dont la France ne veut pas." Habets in ACCA, 15.10.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
258. Political report, 24.6.1923. AAN, Ambasada RP w Londynie, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
259. Embassy to MSZ, 9.3.1923. Baron E.Coppée to Polish Consul, 28.10.1922. Embassy to MSZ, 9.10.1922. AAN, MSZ, 9538. AHCM, 6.10.1922. Winterslag and Ressaix were both part of the holding

Banque de Bruxelles. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
260. UE to embassy, 26.10.1922. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
261. For the French-Polish labor treaty see Kleßmann (1978), p.162. Ponty (1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
262. This would assure that the employers kept to the terms of their contract and it would prevent the Polish authority from having to repatriate Polish migrants, because of unemployment or sickness. UE to MSZ, 19.1.1924. MSZ to embassy, 5.1.1925. UE to MSZ, 4.2.1925. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
263. UE to Embassy, 20.11.1922. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Polish embassy in Brussels to Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Polish embassy in Brussels to Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30.7.1923. Polish consul to Hymans, 30.6.1923. ABZ, 2652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
264. Polish embassy in Brussels to Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9.3.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
265. Note Foreign Affairs, 20.10.1922. ABZ, 2652bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
266. Note Foreign Affairs, 5.12.1922. ABZ, 2652bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
267. Note Ministry of Labor and Industry, 26.6.1923. ABZ, 2652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
268. "Le Gouvernement Belge n'entend pas intervenir pour régler les conditions de ce recrutement, notamment en ce qui concerne les questions de salaire. C'est, d'autre part, aux employeurs qu'il appartient de s'assurer des capacités techniques des travailleurs étrangers qu'ils engagent à leur service." Jaspar to Polish embassy, 10.8.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. H.Jaspar in PHK 5.6.1923, p.2038. Pro domo, the changes in the affair of the labor treaty with Belgium. Events in 1923. AAN, MSZ, 9539. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
269. "Un traité qui établirait en ce moment une situation stable avec des droits réciproques ne serait pas sans inconvénient, c'est pourquoi je préfère le système de liberté moyennant une surveillance exercée en vue du bien-être général et de la sécurité des populations" H.Jaspar in PHK, 5.6.1923, p.2038. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
270. Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14.7.1923. ABZ, 2.652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
271. The Catholic Minister of Agriculture A.Ruzette to the Liberal Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans, 20.5.1924. ABZ, 2652 bis. La Défense Agricole Belge; 9.5.1923; p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
272. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of Agriculture, 20.6.1924. ABZ, 2652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
273. Wychodzca, 1925, 40, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
274. "Il faut arriver à l'établissement d'un contrat administratif préférable à une entente entre Gouvernements..obtenir de M.le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères (P.Hymans) l'autorisation de traiter directement avec les autorités polonaises." ACCA, 10.12.1924 and 15.10.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
275. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 4.7.1924 and 2.8.1924. AMJ, 12. Robotniczy Przegld Gospodarczy, I, 1925, 5, pp.107-111 (mentions incorrectly that these 400 were recruited for the basin of Liège). Praca i Opieka Spoeczna, V, 1925, 1, p.261. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
276. The Belgian authorities agreed to these recruitments in so far as the immigrants had a clearly established nationality and no criminal record. Their repatriation also had to be ensured. In contrast to 1922 when the mines had to pay the round trip, the travel costs back to Poland were financed by a deduction from the Poles' wages during the two first months. This was a concession to the Belgians because the French mining companies did not have to worry about repatriation. The mines only wanted to recruit single migrants, their family could, because of the housing famine, not join them. Antwerp consulate to MSZ, 6.2.1923. Report UE, 12.1922. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Arrangement provisoire entre le Delegué de l'ACC et UE, s.d. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Zycia Polskie, I, 6.8.1923, 23 and Woj. Poznanski to PUPP, 8.9.1923. APPoznan, Akta Miasta Poznania 11.831. Wychodzca, 1923, 15, p.11 and 1923, 32, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
277. Embassy in Brussels to MSZ, 14.12.1922. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 6.2.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Political report embassy in Brussels, 23.1.1923. AAN, Ambasada RP w Londynie, 50. Political report embassy in Brussels, 24.6.1923. AAN, Ambasada RP w Londynie, 51. Praca i Opieka Spoeczna, V, 1924, 1-2, p.44. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
278. The French Comité des Houillières recruited in 1923 230 miners in Poland for the mines of the Centre basin. They came, because of the Ruhr occupation, overseas (Gdansk to Dunkerque) to Belgium. Probably this was considered too expensive by the mines and the recruitment of the last 100 Poles was then postponed to the summer of 1924. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 2.8.1924 and 4.7.1924. AMJ, 12. Revue International du Travail, IX, 1924, 4, p.793. Interview Boleslaw K. (his father was recruited for Ressaix in 1923), 14.3.1989-Walbrzych. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 6.2.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. J.Lecocq (secretary of the ACC, lawyer) to Sûreté, 6.8.1923. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 16.8.1923. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
279. This private company was founded in June 1924 by coalescing the foreign labor recruiting missions of the Comité des houillères and the Confédération des associations agricoles des régions devastées (CARD- a consortium of farm goups from North East France). French farm and coal groups obtained hereby a near monopoly over labor recruiting in Poland and in addition by diversifying their recruitment to other countries the SGI succeeded to undermine the control by the Polish authorities over their labor-emigration. Cross (1983), pp.55-63. Ponty (1988) [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
280. UE to Brussels consulate, 18.11.1924. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
281. Polish labor was already offered by the Polish authorities for agriculture in 1922, but no action was taken then. Bourse officielle du Travail, arrondissement de Bruxelles. Rapport 1922, p.17. PHK, 5.7.1923. Council of Ministers, 10.12.1923. Revue International du Travail, IX, 1924, 4,p.794. The *Fédération des U.P.A.* was founded in 1919 by large farmers in Wallonia to represent agrarian interests. Van Molle (1990). La Défense Agricole Belge, 18.5.1923; p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
282. UE to Brussels consulate, 18.11.1924. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Praca i Opieka Spoeczny, IV, 1924, 1, p.44. In 1924, there were about 400 Polish farm hands in Belgium. Emigration Council, Consulate in Paris to MSZ, 30.4.1924. AAN, MSZ, 9538. La Défense Agricole Belge, 20.6.1923; p.1. ; 28.11.1923; p.2; 23.1.1924, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
283. ACCA, 15.10.1924 and 12.11.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
284. "pour exécuter practiquement la convention, lorsqu'elle sera faite, il y serait moyen de se servir de l'organisme français existant en Pologne, auquel il suffirait d'adjoindre un agent belge." Habets in ACCA, 15.10.1924. Also Ougrée Marihaye contacted the SGI for recruitment in Poland. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 1.10.1924. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
285. Political report Embassy Brussels, 24.6.1923. AAN, Ambasada RP w Londynie, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
286. Kleßmann (1978 and 1986) [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
287. "Wier möchten Ausländer Pohlen aus Westfahlen auswandern und suchen in anderen Ländern Unterkunft wie Kinder zur Mutter" Wawrzym Puziak (Rücklinghausen Süd) to mine-director, 15.10.1922. Bois du Luc, 181. ACCBS, Commission de recrutement des ouvriers, 21.10.1922. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
288. Note pour monsieur le Ministre, 1.12.1922. ABZ, 2652bis. ACCBS, Commission de recrutement des ouvriers, 5.10.1922. Bois du Luc to Lecocq, 22.12.1922. Bois du Luc, Musée de la Mine, Correspondance. Committee Fedechar, 22.11.1922. Wychodzca, 1923, 12, p.12. Council of Ministers, 18.12.1922. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
289. A clearly established nationality would avoid disputes between Belgium and Poland on the nationality of undesirable aliens. "les autorités polonaises ne refusent pas de se conformer aux usages internationaux et d'accepter en principe de rapatrier leurs nationaux indigents (malades, vieillards, aliénés); mais dans la pratique, elles contestent presque dans chaque cas la qualité de polonais des intéressés qui restent à charge du Trésor Belge." Note Foreign Affairs, 20.10.1922. Note Ministry of Labor and Industry, 26.6.1923. ABZ, 2652 bis. ACCBS, Commission de recrutement des ouvriers, 21.10.1922. Bois du Luc, 181.

When the regulation of April 1923 was in use, the Poles were especially targetted. The Polish nationality law enabled, according to the Belgian Ministry of Labor a fast denationalization of emigrants what would cause problems if these immigrants became undesirable. Note Ministry of Labor and Industry, 26.6.1923. ABZ, 2652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
290. Kleßmann (1978) [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
291. In total 100,000 to 130,000 Ruhr Poles were living in France by 1926. Ponty (1988), pp.63-68. Circular letter ACC,13.10.1923. Bois du Luc, 582. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
292. Lebacqz to Moyersoen, 13.11.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/56. Moyersoen to Jaspar, 12.7.1923. Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14.7.1923. ABZ, 2652bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
293. "Les ouvriers polonais de la Ruhr constituent un élément assez turbulent" Jaspar in Council of Ministers, 10.12.1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
294. "l'avantage qu'il y aurait pour le pays de constituer une population stable d'ouvriers polonais, plutôt que d'embaucher des Marocains, des Algériens ou des nègres" Political report embassy in Brussels, 23.11.1923. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 37. "Je ne me prononce nullement pour l'entrée des Polonais en Belgique, même en nombre restreint" Jaspar to Moyersoen, 9.12.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
295. Director General of the Mine-administration to the Minister of Labor, 13.11.1923. "Les Polonais sont préférables aux Italiens, et surtout aux Algériens, Tunisiens et Marocains" Note

de 10.12.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
296. Sobanski to MSZ, 14.12.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
297. The last argument was that there were no Polish Jews among these industrial workers. Nota S., 10.12.1923. AMJ, 12.

Such an antisemitic remark remains exceptional in governmental documents dealing with the alien policy of the 1920s. This does not mean that anti-semitism was totally unimportant within the debate on alien policy. The main target of criticism against Jewish immigration was their specific economic insertion. As Jewish immigrants provided in general, a less obvious economic advantage for Belgium this criticism was largely economically motivated, it could however hide a racial or religious bias. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
298. "Rompre la vie de famille nous parait contraire à l'ordre public et aux bonnes moeurs" Note Sûreté, 10.12.1923. AMJ, 12. Prime Minister Theunis to Jaspar, 12.12.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/59. Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 14.11.1923. note Justice, 7.2.1924. Justice to Foreign Affairs, 24.3.1924. AMJ, 12. See also Gazette de Charleroi, 12.11.1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
299. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 6.3.1924. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
300. Jaspar to Sobanski, 12.12.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Minister of Foreign Affairs to Fedechar, 11.1.1923. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
301. Comité Central des Houillères de France to ACC, 1.7.1924. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
302. In Winterslag a Polish Ruhr community settled which originated from Moers and surroundings. Wychodzca, 1929, p.12. Appendix 1. The number of Ruhr Poles increased in the following years, the Polish authorities estimated that in 1929 there were 8,000 of them in Belgium. Polish Ministry of Labor to MSZ, 23.11.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9540. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
303. Robotniczy Przegld Gospodarczy, I, 1925, 5, p.108. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
304. Lebacqz to Fedechar, 15.9.1923. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1C, 1, 6D/63. Minister of Labor and Industry to Director, 15.9.1923. Bois du Luc, 259. Hungarian migrants in Limburg to Ministry of Culture, s.d. ANH, Magyarok Vilagszövetsége P975 (1-20). Stamenkavitch (1929), pp.103-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
305. Henriquet (1924), p.251. De Tijd, 6.10.1924. Paesen (1986), p.136. One of the two *cités* of the mine of Winterslag was called the Roercité because of the concentration of Poles, Czechs and Slovians from the Ruhr. No Belgians lived in this *cité*. The vernacular language was German. Studiereis van het dagelijks bestuur van het ACV naar Limburg, 5.10.1924. AMSAB, Anseele, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
306. Note Sûreté, 10.12.1923 and 22.10.1923. AMJ, 12. In 1923 10% of the foreigners hired by Waterschei were of Polish, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian or Hungarian nationality - these 11 workers were potentially all Ruhr migrants-, in 1924 increased this to 47% (=169 workers). Paesen (1986), p.74. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
307. "La legation de Pologne voudrait que la Fédération prenne contact avec les dirigeants du groupement de mineurs polonais, groupement crée en vue de tenir les ressortissants en dehors des syndicats politiques belges." Comité Fedechar, 5.1.1922. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
308. "The director of this mine mentioned the recruitment of not less than 3,000 Poles. These Poles would find all that was useful and advantageous, even schools near the mine. The language in those schools would be Polish...The director even spoke of a Polish priest and the mine would assure his income." E.Vandervoort, chaplain of Winterslag to Broekx, 11.4.1923. KADOC, Broekx, 14.5.6. Kowalski, Brussels to Archbishop, Gniezo 10.4.1923. AAG, III, 1. The mine of Ressaix was also looking for Poles to supplement its labor force. The company promised to set up a Polish boarding house and to provide company housing for the Polish families. The mine director expressed also his willingness to subsidize cultural and educational work. Political report, 12.9.1923. AAN, Ambassada RP w Londynie, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
309. Nota, s.d.(1924?). Vanderwoude to Broekx, 17.6.1923. KADOC, Broekx, respectively 13.2.7.5 and 14.5.6. Blampain, bishop of Tournai to Archbishop, 6.9.1924. Archives Archbishopric Mechelen, Dessain, IV. ACV, Bestuursvergadering, 6.11.1923. KADOC, ACV. MSZ to Dalbor, 18.5.1925. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
310. The Belgian Church was ready to grant those Polish priests a parish jurisdiction over the Poles. It seems that when the Mission was installed in 1926 the rector of the Mission obtained such a jurisdiction, but the priests who were under it were also dependent on the local parish priests. All priests of the Polish Mission had the status of vicar (except

probably the rector), which meant that they were dependent on the parish priest. Some autonomy was however ceded to the Polish Mission. It seems that The French Catholic Church strove for much more control over the Polish and Italian priests serving the needs of the migrant communities. Schor (1985b). Ponty (1988), p.149. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
311. Kowalski to Archbishopric Gniezno, 10.4.1923. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
312. Correspondance Houet, économe Aumôniers du Travail, Montegnée-lez-Liège and Leyn, Supérieur Genéral des Aumôniers du Travail, 17.10.1924-7.3.1925. Archive Archbishopric Mechelen, Dessain, IV. Mercier to Rédemptoristen, 31.8.1925 and notes, s.d. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
313. Meeting of the bishops, 27 and 28.7.1925. Archive Archbishopric Mechelen, Mercier, III, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
314. Polish consulate in Brussels to Dessain, 17.3.1925. Archive Archbishopric Mechelen, Dessain, IV. MSZ to Dalbor, 18.5.1925 and 5.5.1925. AAG, III, 1 see also AAN, MWRiOP, 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
315. Dolbar, Poznan to Mercier, 1.10.1925. Archive Archbishopric Mechelen, Mercier, XXII, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
316. The League of Nations had only advocated a special institution for those refugees in order to organize their repatriation. As it turned out that this was impossible, most countries within the League of Nations wanted to put an end to this international refugee organization. Refugees were not considered an international, but a domestic problem. Each asylum country had to decide on its own what to do with the refugees on its territory.

Nansen received few financial means from public authorities. His office was to be of a purely charitable nature and to be financed only by private donations. In order to be able to continue more constructive work for the refugees, Nansen collaborated with the ILO. The ILO, with more financial means than the Nansen office, looked for resettlement and employment of the Russian refugees. The most important innovation in those years was the issuing of the Nansen passport to all Russians claiming refugee status. This document certified the holder's identity and category of statelessness and enabled Russian refugees to travel. It was the first facility ever granted to refugees by the international community. Maga (1985), Raeff (1990), Johnstone (1988) and Volkmann (1966). [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
317. "La Belgique, en effet, n'est pas encore sortie de la crise industrielle dont elle est frappé depuis un an. Dans presque toutes les industries il y a encore de nombreux ouvriers sans travail. Il serait, pour conséquent, inopportun, d'introduire, en ce moment, de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère." Secrétaire générale de la Ministère de l'Industrie, du Travail et du Revataillement to ILO, 17.11.1921. Archive ILO, R 202/3/B7. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
318. "Une mesure aussi rigoureuse que l'interdiction absolue de viser les demandes d'entrer en Belgique formulées par des réfugiés risquerait de nous aliéner l'opinion internationale" Internal note Foreign Affairs, 2.2.1923. "Je crois devoir attirer votre attention sur l'intérêt qu'il y a pour la Belgique de se ménager des sympathies dans les milieux russes...Il semble probable en effet que ceux ci seront appelés plus tard à jouer un rôle dans la reconstitution de leur pays." Archbishop Mercier to Jaspar, 26.5.1923. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
319. Russian refugees, report by Dr. Nansen, 7.6.1924. Archives UNO, C.249.1924 [XIII]. Tamigneaux (1987) [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
320. A Russian-Belgian entrepreneur E.N. Fricero whose company was located in Brussels was the stimulating force behind this organization. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
321. Comité Russe en Turquie to Lawford Childs, 1.3.1923 and 10.4.1923. Archives UNO, R 1748. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
322. "les anciens combattants russes... sont, paraît-il, disciplinés et très désirieux de subvenir à leur existence. Chaque équipe même de 5 hommes est dirigé par un sergent." Francq to Cappellen (Director mine of Amercoeur, Jumet), 6.7.1924. Bois du Luc, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
323. "Nous avons eu recours jusqu'ici, dans une assez large mesure, à la main-d'oeuvre italienne qui nous a été d'un secours précieux. Malheureusement, elle n'est guère expérimentée dans la technique du métier de mineur de sorte que son stage est assez long. Nous pourrions actuellement embaucher d'anciens soldats russes du générale Denikine qui, eux, nous rendraient de meilleurs services." Houillières Unies to Foreign Affairs, 17.7.1925. Horloz to Foreign Affairs, 10.7.1924. Forte Taille to Sûreté, 1924 and 29.9.1925. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 2.9.1925. Justice to Fricero, 21.8.1925. Justice to Embassy in Sofia, 5.8.1925. Forte-Taille to Justice, 14.5.1925. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
324. Note Justice, 12.9.1925. Belgian Embassy in Sofia to Sûreté, 27.8.1925. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
325. The travel costs were paid in this period either by the charity organization or by the ILO. The refugees had to reimburse at least a part of these costs. The mines had to pay 1/4 of the costs if the refugee-labor remained in the mine for four months. Note Justice, 23.3.1924. Contrat de travail entre les charbonnages et les anciens combattants russes représenté par Mme Fricero. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
326. "Le Comité Russe demandera..aux enterprises charbonnières, qui occupent des contingents de réfugiés russes, de mettre à leur tête un chef, de préférence un ancien officier, qui sera chargé de renseigner le Comité sur leur manière de servir." Note Justice, 12.9.1925. Gendarmerie Marchienne au Pont to Sûreté, 26.9.1925. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
327. Circular letter Minister of Justice F.Masson to Mayors, 20.2.1924 and 1.6.1925. Municipal archive Jumet, 64/1. Proces Verbal de la Commission Interministérielle, 2.12.1925 and 3.2.1925. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
328. Note of Sûreté to Minister of Justice F.Masson, 3.6.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
329. "Un nombre considérable d'étrangers se dérobe, et nous croyons pouvoir affirmer que 25%- si pas plus- des étrangers, ne sont pas porteurs de la carte d'identité." Note of the Sûreté, s.d.(1925?). Proces Verbal de la 1ère séance de la Commission Interministérielle, 3.2.1925. AMJ, 1B6. Annexe à l'exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Liége, 1925, p.38 and de la province de Hainaut, 1926, p.52; 1927, p.33. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
330. This new distinct identity card for aliens did not imply any curtailment of the residency status of immigrants: " L'essentiel en cette matiére est de connaître les étrangers se trouvant dans le pays et le lieu de leur résidence" Observations préliminaires du premier avant-projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers (novembre 1926). Annex in Remy to Holvoet, 8.12.1926. AMJ, 1B6. In order to make the communes more interested in the supervision of the regulation they would get 10 francs of the biannual tax of 60 francs. This special identity card was already introduced in Antwerp. Gonne, Administrateur, Directeur-Général de la Sûreté Publique in Proces Verbal de la 4ème séance de la Commission Interministérielle, 19.1.1926. AMJ, 1B6. We have no information when and why this special alien administration was introduced in Antwerp. Probably it is linked to the very diverse protests (among them employers, trade unions and Governor Holvoet) against the specific influx of foreigners (mostly Polish Jews and Dutch) in that town, accusing them of causing unemployment, housing shortage and increased crime. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
331. Council of Ministers, 12.10.1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
332. "Quelles récrimations sérieuses y a-t-il? Le département de l'industrie et du Travail serait fort embarrassé si la question lui était posée d'une façon aussi précise!" Note of Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 3.6.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
333. Note of the Sûreté to the Minister of Justice F.Masson, 3.6.1924. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
334. Proces Verbal de la 1ère séance de la Commission interministérielle, 3.2.1925, p.4. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
335. "Les fonctionnaires délégués à celle-ci n'avaient reçu de leurs Ministres respectifs aucune indication quant aux vues que pouvaient avoir ceux-ci sur cette question intéressant à plusieurs titres la politique générale du Gouvernement. Dans ces conditions la Commission estima que si d'un côté la restriction des libertés accordées en Belgique aux étrangers constituerait une innovation diversement appréciée, elle-même était fondée à se considérer comme une réunion d'experts techniques appelés non à discuter la légitimité de l'intervention de l'Etat sur le marché du travail, mais à donner leur avis sur l'opportunité des restrictions proposées et sur les formes que doivent revêtir celles-ci pour fournir un remède efficace aux abus résultant, en certains cas, de la présence d'étrangers sur notre territoire." Vercruysse to the Minister of Labor J.Wauters, 12.2.1926. AMJ, 1B6. The representatives of Labor and Foreign Affairs took actively part in the discussions, these of Justice kept a low profile. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
336. Avant-projet de loi portant reglementation du séjour des étrangers en Belgique. CNPI, doc. 127. For the final draft see Archive ILO E100/7/7 and AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
337. "L'application de la loi projetée doit changer avec les situations. Elle sera large, quand on aura besoin de main d'oeuvre, mais lorsqu'il y a excédent, il faut pouvoir filtrer." Delmer in CNPI, doc.133, p.3 [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
338. Vercruysse: "Pensez-vous que celui qui s'en va, sa caisse à outils sur le dos, puisse être considéré comme industriel? Il n'est pas travailleur salarié cependant. S'ils échappent à notre examen, tous ceux qui déclareront exercer n'importe quelle profession, sans être "salariés", nous somme voués à l'impuissance. Nous devons être armés d'un texte assez restrictif pour dépister les fraudeurs. Mais dans l'application personne je pense, ne vise à empêcher l'activité d'industriels et de commerçants véritables. Notre projet ne révèle pas une manoeuvre protectionniste ni xénophobe." Proces Verbal de la 2ème séance de la Commission interministérielle, 2.12.1925. AMJ, 1B6.

Costermans, Director General of the Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed to a large extent with the proposal of Vercruysse: "Une fois que le travailleur étranger est en possession de sa carte, s'il peut changer de profession où d'emploi à son gré, notre but économique est manqué: Nous avons admis un mineur et trois mois après nous avons un marchand de tapis ou de statuettes! Voilà ce qu'il faut éviter"in Proces Verbal de la 1ère séance de la Commission Interministérielle, 3.2.1925. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
339. "Tout personne se livrant habituellement à des occupations susceptibles de faire l'objet d'un contrat de louage de services, quand bien même ces prestations seraient fournies à un autre titre ou gratuitement" [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
340. "Puisque l'Etat d'origine s'interpose entre ses travailleurs nationaux et les employeurs étrangers pour imposer à ceux-ci les garanties qu'ils doivent lui fournir, chaque employeur traitant isolément est trop faible pour discuter ces garanties avec un Gouvernement étranger. Il n'y a guère que son Gouvernement à lui qui puisse traiter ces questions d'égal à égal et, pour ce faire, pour pouvoir négocier utilement, il doit avoir aussi quelque avantage à offrir à son co-contractant, comme "monnaie d'échange". Vercruysse in CNPI, 19.4.1925, doc.83, p.3. Vercruysse is alluding to the power granted to the state over immigrants by his bill. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
341. Delmer in CNPI, doc.133, p.3. Mahaim in CNPI, doc. 83 and 133. For the limited accuracy of these assertions see further in this chapter and also chapter E. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
342. That Gonne kept a low profile during the discussion makes it difficult to analyze the position of the Sûreté. The Sûreté was probably uninterested or rather hostile to the regulation of the labor market for aliens. The Sûreté still held very much to the traditional alien policy and was not eager for changes as this could lead, they feared - given the composition of the Parliament- to a restriction of the powers they disposed of. Proces Verbal de la 4ème séance de la Commission interministérielle, 19.1.1926. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
343. "La crainte des industriels est qu'on se serve de la loi pour raréfier à un moment donné la main d'oeuvre...Ecarter..les ouvriers étrangers qui viendraient en surnombre, donnerait lieu à l'arbitraire." Trasenster in CNPI, doc.133 en 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
344. CNPI, doc.153, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
345. Proces Verbal de la 1ère séance de la Commission Interministérielle, 3.2.1925. AMJ, 1B6.

Vercruysse refrained also from proposing any state action against employers who violated the terms of the labor contract The migrants themselves had to bring suit against the employers, eventually on the base of a report of the labor inspection. "J'avais pensé un moment à aller plus loin, à attribuer au Ministre une sorte d'action publique contre ceux qui enfreindraient les contrats signés par eux et visés par lui. Cela nous eût entrainés

trop loin et j'y ai renoncé." Vercruysse in Proces Verbal de la 2ème séance de la Commission interministérielle, 2.12.1925. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
346. Trasenster in CNPI, doc.133 en 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
347. Trasenster in CNPI, doc.153, p.5. For similar opinions -opposing government intervention- of the Federation of employers of stone, mine, and steel industry see CNPI, doc.124, p.23. In this document the Fedechar is advocating a regulation of family emigration, but without giving more details.

For the intransigeant attitude of the employers, refuting state-intervention and ignoring any negative influence of foreign labor in the national labor market see the discussion on the final resolution of the CNPI in which the employers insisted radically to retain their total freedom in the labor market. ARA, Theunis, 32. This uncompromising attitude of the employers has to be seen in its proper political context (the "democratic" cabinet Poullet-Vandervelde). [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
348. "Le texte de l'avant-projet de loi élaboré par la Commission Interministèrielle...n'engage que ses auteurs. Aucun Ministre ne s'est prononcé à ce sujet." Vercruysse to Verlaz, 9.3.1926. Archive ILO, E100/7/7. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
349. "L'avis de cet organisme, qui n'aurait qu'un caractère consultatif; serait dans bien des cas précieux et constituerait notamment pour les organisations ouvrières la garantie la plus sûre d'une saine application des principles contenus dans le projet de loi." Commission syndicale de Belgique, rapports moral and financier pour les années 1928-1929, p.83. The Socialist miners' union contacted the Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs E.Vandervelde as the union was eager to participate in the discussions on the new bill, but by then the bill had already been submitted to the Council of Ministers. L'ouvrier mineur, XXI, 1925, p.204. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
350. German Embassy, Brussels to Auswärtiges Ambt, 4.4.1925. Reichsarbeitsverwaltung to Reichsarbeitsminister, 29.6.1925. Archive Potsdam, Reichsarbeidsministerium, 33.159. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
351. Emigration conference, 17/18.2.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
352. Réunion du comité central, 12.7.1924 and 19.7.1924. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage, n°3. ANMC [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
353. Assemblée plénière 22.7.1924, p.4. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage, n°3. ANMC. A.Delattre in PHK, 24.7.1924, p.2223. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
354. Dejardin, president of the Socialist miners union: "Nous avons un gros stock de combustible, qui a atteint presque 10 % de la production annuelle. D'autre part, les charbonnages acceptent 10% d'ouvriers étrangers; s'ils avaient pas eu ces ouvriers, ils auraient produit 10 % de moins et il n'y aurait pas de stock. Faut-il pour conserver les étrangers, laisser nos ouvriers sur le carreau et payer du chômage." CNMM, 27.10.1925, p.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
355. Wauters: "Je ne suis pas protectionniste, mais je trouve désolant que des mineurs traditionnels doivent chômer lorsqu'il y a des étrangers dans les mines du pays...les chômeurs du Borinage pourraient remplacer les étrangers dans d'autre bassins" CNMM, 27.10.1925, p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
356. CNMM, 27 and 29.10.1925, resp. p.11 and p.5. Le XXe siècle, 20.8.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
357. For an analysis of trade union policy see chapter F. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
358. "l'étude de la question d'embauchage d'ouvriers étrangers a marqué un temps d'arrêt momentané par suite des grèves du Borinage et de l'opinion du Gouvernement qu'il y a suffisamment d'ouvriers étrangers en Belgique. Mais elle suivra son cours néanmoins...il serait possible d'obtenir l'autorisation de négocier de façon à pouvoir faire entrer en Belgique un millier d'ouvriers polonais et italiens." Habets in ACCA, 15.10.1924 and 12.11.1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
359. The Belgian authorities expelled, according to German sources in 1925 20% more aliens to Germany than in 1924. Most of them were expelled because of lack of proper identity papers or destitution (in 1924 1,481 aliens were deported to Aachen by the Belgian authorities-mostly Poles). Correspondance between Ministerium des Innern and Auswärtiges Ambt. Archive Potsdam, Reichsarbeidsministerium, 33.159. We have no Belgian figures on the number of expulsions before 1925, in 1925 4,203 aliens residing in Belgium were expelled that year (*renvoi because of destitution*) and 4,900 aliens were not allowed to enter the country. Statistique Judiciare de la Belgique. See also appendix 5a and b. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
360. Circular letter of the Minister of Justice, 11.10.1926. Quoted in Guillaume (1935), p.110. Wychodzca, 1926, 30, p.7. Because of this cumbersome and expensive procedure, the authorities tried to make these vagrants useful to the national economy. When in 1927 the mines of Limburg asked for an autorisation to recruit miners abroad, no visa were granted as the vagrant *colonies* had enough foreigners who could be used in the mines. Justice to Foreign Affairs, 31.1.1927. AMJ, 12. 60 vagrants were in this way recruited for Beringen in 1927. Of course not all of them were adapted for mine work. Nieuw Limburg, 26.2.1927.

During their stay at the vagrant *colonies* were these aliens forced to work at very low wages. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
361. This graph is based on the monthly figures kept by the management of the vagrant *colonie* in Wortel. Only few migrants of foreign nationality were kept in the vagrant *colonie* for women in Sint-Andries (Bruges). While in 1926 on average 5 women were detained, their number rose to 8 after the circular letter of October 1926. Also in the *colonie* in Merksplas where the regime was harder were only few foreigners detained. While in 1926 there were at most 15, this rose to at most 30 in the following years. AMJ, 75C 20. The "vagrants" of Spanish and Portugese nationality continued to be expelled at the French border, while the Swiss and Italians were expelled at the border with Luxemburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
362. Reports of management of Wortel in AMJ, 75 C 29. Nieuw Limburg, 26.2.1927. De Standaard, 20.1.1927. XXe siècle, 18.1.1927. L'Indépendance, 19.2.1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
363. "Il y a tout lieu de croire qu'après une réintégration et une seconde libération ils se garderaient bien de demeurer plus longtemps dans le pays" Cabinet Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 19.1.1927. AMJ, 75 C 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
364. "Il a donné des ordres à Berlin pour que l'on ne donne pas le visa aux passeport d'ouvriers qui seraient recrutés en Allemagne pour supplanter les ouvriers belges" Council of Ministers, 1.2.1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
365. Note Justice, 3.4.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
366. Minister of Foreign Affairs E.Vandervelde to Prime Minister and Minister of Justice P.Poullet, 11.3.1926. Vercruysse, Director General of Ministry of Labor to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9.3.1926. Minister of Labor J.Wauters to Minister of Justice P.Hymans, 6.7.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
367. J.Wauters, the Socialist Minister of Labor to Christian Democratic Minister of Justice P.Poullet, 9.3.1926. Costermans *Secrétaire Général* Foreign Affairs to Minister of Labor J.Wauters, 6.7.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
368. "Des étrangers ne se servent de leur contrat que comme d'un moyen commode pour se faire inscrire en Belgique, mais dés leur arrivée, répudient effrontément leurs engagements et se livrent ici à toute autre occupation qui a leurs préférences...le premier acte..de l'étranger..sur notre sol est une manoeuvre frauduleuse..que le Ministre de la Justice aît le pouvoir de le faire reconduire à la frontière..cela ne me paraît pas douteux" Vercruysse to Minister of Justice P.Hymans, 6.7.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
369. "Si le Gouvernement a le droit d'exercer dans ce domaine une controle et comme corollaire le devoir de le faire dans les conditions les moins préjudiciables pour les particuliers dont les intérêts parfois se confondent du reste avec les intérêts généraux du pays...Il convient de donner satisfaction au légitime désir exprimé par ces chefs d'industrie qui s'imposent d'ailleurs de lourds sacrifices en recourant à la main-d'oeuvre étrangère... Nous n'avons d'ailleurs aucun précédent de charbonnage ayant demandé de la main-d'oeuvre dont il ne savait que faire." Note Justice, 9 and 10.7.1926. Note du Cabinet du premier ministre, 6.5.1926. Minister of Labor J.Wauters to Minister of Justice P.Hymans, 6.7.1926. AMJ,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
370. Minister of Labor to Minister of Justice, 11.10.1926. AMJ, 12. Le Soir, 27.11.1926. Le Peuple and l'Echo de la Bourse, 28.11.1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
371. L'Echo de la Bourse, 21.11.1926, 1/2 and 28.11.1926; Le Midi, 23.11.1926; La Libre Belgique, 23.11.1926; Le National, 27.11.1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
372. L'Echo de la Bourse, 28.11.1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
373. Visa for 100 Poles to be recruited in Germany for the mining company of Hautrage were refused in October 1926. Note Justice, 7.10.1926. Sûreté to embassies in Warschau, Sofia, Belgrade, Bucarest and Budapest, 5.2.1927. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
374. Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman to the Liberal Minister of Justice P.E.Janson, 4.4.1928 and 3.5.1929. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
375. Plan for the reorganization of the mines, 1928. Schéma de la communication faite par M.Delmer, 10.12.1927. Note sur les la main-d'oeuvre dans l'industrie charbonnière belge, 1928. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, D, 3A, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
376. Assemblée plénière 11.1.1928. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. Verslag van maandelijkse vergadering van propagandisten-bestuurders, 2.12.1927. Archive Provinciaal Sekretariaat van de Maatschappelijke Werken Hasselt. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
377. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, document 9 and 29. ARA, Theunis, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
378. "Le grande majorité des ouvriers étrangers est constituée de célibataires qui imposent aux charbonnages le minimum de charges sociales....la disparition des ouvriers étrangers aurait pour effet de rendre les organisations ouvrières maîtresse du marché de la main-d'oeuvre" Committee Fedechar, 27.12.1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
379. Enquête de mai 1924. ARA, Mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. The Italian emigration authorities thought by the end of 1923 that there was a need for about 20,000 foreigners in the Belgian mining sector. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923, vol.2. Roma, 1926, p.39. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
380. The percentage foreigners within the total labor force reached 10% in the Centre basin, 11% in Charleroi, 7% in Liège, 5% in the Borinage and 17% in the Limburg basin. Réponse au Questionnaire de la CNPI au sujet de l'emploi d'ouvriers étrangers. Bois du Luc, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
381. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, doc.9. ARA, Theunis, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
382. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, doc.9. ARA, Theunis, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
383. Bollettino dell'Emigrazione, XXVI, 1927, p.193 , p.352 and p.688. "The request for 1,000 Polish miners is still valid, as the results of the recruitment of Italians are not very successful." Emigration conference, 17/18.2.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. The decrease in recruitment of Italians was maybe also due to the demand of the Italian authorities to reimburse the return trip of the Italian migrants when they finished their one-year contract. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
384. "i soli lavoratori ammissibli sono i cavatori di pietra qualificati, di cui vi è scarsissima disponibilità nel Regno." Bollettino dell'Emigrazione, XXVI, 1927, 2, p.193. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
385. CGE, L'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925. Roma, 1926, p.392. This emigration of Italian migrant labor increased as the Belgian franc devaluated. Especially the Italian workers who had left their family in Italy found it increasingly difficult to send enough money to keep their family up. Il Giornale d'Italia, 23.11.1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
386. Le Carrier, XXVII, 1925, 7, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
387. Bollettino del R.Ministero degli Affari Esteri, VI, 1928, 6, pp.521-522; Il Popolo d'Italia 31.1.1929; CNPI, doc.124, p.2. and Appendix 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
388. Report concerning visits to employment possibilities in Belgium, 7.1926. ARDH, 180. Director of the National Service of Unemployment and Labor Exchange to director Labor Exchange Office Kerkrade, 20.5.1926. ARDH, 182. Waterschei recruited hardly any Dutchmen after 1924. Paesen (1986), pp.134-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
389. "il n'est pas douteux que l'immigration d'éléments arabes soit de nature à provoquer de vives critiques et des incidents avec les travailleurs de race blanche.....ces étrangers constituent des éléments provocateurs et leur attitude vis-à-vis des travailleurs de race blanche n'est qu'une menace continuelle de troubles et de conflits." Note Justice, 23.7.1926. Consulate in Tunis to Sûreté, 28.7.1926. Bonne Fin to Foreign Affairs, 17.8.1926. Haus, director Sûreté to Gorissen, 7.7.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
390. "Gorissen est d'accord pour admettre que ces éléments étrangers n'offrent généralement pas les garanties professionnelles suffisantes et résilient souvent leur contrat après quelques jours de travail pour se livrer au colportage ou à toute autre profession similaire." Note Justice, 10.8.1926. AMJ, 12, XXIV. In the first years after the First World War a small group of Algerians were hawking tapestry. This had been a traditional occupation for some Algerian emigrants already in the 19th century. Probably this group tradesmen has to be distinguished from the large number of Algerians who arrived in 1922-1923 and who looked for a livelihood in heavy industry. North Africans remained throughout the whole of the interwar period largely miners and developed hardly any noticeable independent activity. Liberman (1934), p.36. Original notes of the Mémoires of Messali, cahier 10. Communicated by Benjamin Stora. AMJ, 73C and ARA, MJ, 577. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
391. In February 1924 254 North Africans were counted in the iron and steel industry, their number decreased to 199 two years later and this notwithstanding a rise of 50% of the number of foreigners counted in this industry (from 3,461 to 5,006). Appendix 1 The data of the employers' federations indicate that already in 1925 North African migrant labor was negatively selected. The rise in number of foreigners in the iron and steel industry from 3,461 to 4,200 was not translated in a rise of North Africans, on the contrary only 246 were still working in iron and steel; in the chemical industry there seems to be no more North Africans in 1925. CNPI, doc.124, pp.2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
392. In the basin of Charleroi in May 1925 there were 1,248 Algerians and 509 Moroccans. This is a stabilization of the Algerians in comparison with August 1923, but a decline with about 20% for the Moroccans. The other nationalities of North Africa remain unimportant. Appendix 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
393. Emigration conference, 17/18.2.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. Praca i Opieka Spoeczna, V, 1925, 1, p.280. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
394. The draft of the proposed labor treaty was slightly changed in the sense that Polish control over recruitment was now clearly stated, a Belgian SGI had to be prevented. Polish embassy in Paris to MSZ, 30.4.1924. AAN, MSZ, 9538. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
395. Emigration conference, 17/18.2.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
396. Consulate Cologne to MSZ, 15.5.1926 and 5.2.1925. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. Gorissen to Sûreté, 12.4.1926. Note Justice, 28.4.1926. Gorissen to Polish Consul in Brussels, 11.9.1926. Polish Consulate in Brussels to Sûreté, 4.10.1926. AMJ,12. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
397. Consulate Cologne to MSZ, 14.8.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2229. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
398. Mühlstein to MSZ, 31.1.1925. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Pro Domo, review of the affair of the emigration treaty with Belgium. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 29.5.1926. AAN, MSZ, 9539. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 29.5.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9539. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
399. Belgian Embassy in Warsaw to MSZ, 3.1.1927. AAN, MSZ, 9539. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
400. In addition to putting all Polish migrants on an equal footing to the Belgians for social security legislation were also guarantees asked for the development of Polish education in Belgium to oppose "denationalization" of their citizens. This was however dropped in 1928 when it turned out that there were no legal impedements to the development of Polish schools. Conference concerning the labor treaty with Belgium, 19.9.1925. MSZ to UE, 22.2.1926. MSZ to Belgian Embassy in Warsaw, 1.1927(?). MSZ to Consulate in Brussels, 5.1.1928. AAN, MSZ, 9539. For an overview of the rights of immigrants within Belgian social security legislation see chapter F. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
401. De Roover to Mühlstein, 24.2.1928. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 24.2.1928. AAN, MSZ, 9539. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
402. Foreign Affairs to Labor, 1.10.1926. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, E, 6, 1.2. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 6.6.1925. AAN, MSZ, 9539. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
403. The Polish authorities advanced all transport and visa costs. The mining companies agreed to reimburse these costs in quarterly installments until after one year all costs were repaid to the Polish authorities. This reimbursement by the mines depended on the condition that the immigrant fulfilled the full terms of his one-year labor contract. Note Justice, 5.1926 and 17.6.1926. AMJ, 12. This scheme was similar to the one adopted by the Italian authorities in August 1925, although it seems the mining companies had to reimburse the migrants themselves. It was more advantageous than the Polish contracts of 1923 by virtue of which the mine had to pay the transport costs to Belgium independently of the work performance. We do not have information if the mining companies had, as in 1923 to finance the return trip of the Poles who finished their one year contract, but probably they did.

It seems that the recruitment of 1926 took place without any intervention of the SGI. The SGI tried to conquer the Belgian market. In September 1926 the SGI proposed FEDECHAR a close cooperation to recruit foreign labor at low costs. Comittee Fedechar, 29.9.1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
404. Embassy Warsaw to BZ, 20.1.1926, 29.3.1926, 7.4.1926 and 4.5.1926. Beringen to Minister of Justice, 16.4.1926. Beringen to embassy Warsaw, 17.6.1926. Note Justice, 7.8.1926. Note, cabinet du premier ministre, 6.5.1926. Polish Vice-Consul in Antwerp to Sûreté, 14.7.1926. Ressaix to Polish Consul in Brussels, 12.6.1926. Minister of Justice

to Ministry of Labor, 22.6.1926. AMJ, 12. Wiarus Polski, 15.12.1928. Director Ressaix to technical director of Winterslag, Dufrasne 22.7.1926 and 26.8.1926. AESH, Ressaix, Personnel-copie des lettres. Sergooris (1993), pp.10-11.

Gorissen, the recruitment agent of Charleroi who also wanted to recruit 500 single Poles was refused access to the Polish market as he did not want to comply to all conditions the Polish authorities asked for. The conditions were the following: a labor contract of 6 or 12 months, decent housing , equal treatment as Belgian labor and reimbursement of travel costs. Note Justice, 5.1926. Gorissen to Polish Consul in Brussels, 11.9.1926. Gorissen to Sûreté, 12.4.1926. Notes Justice, 12.4.1926, 28.4.1926 and 17.6.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
405. According to the data of 1926 815 Poles worked in the iron and steel industry. A year earlier there were, according to the employers 590 Poles in this industry. In November 1923 the Mine Administration counted 385 Poles, while the Gendarmerie counted 511 of them in February 1924. Appendix 1 and CNPI, doc. 124, p.2. De Voeding, XIII, 1926, 6, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
406. "Il s'agit d'hommes valides, ayant la capacité professionnelle voulue et dont la fuite donne l'assurance qu'ils ne feront pas du bolchevisme au charbonnage." Visit Gottschalk, 23.3.1926. Gottschalk to Sûreté, 24.3.1926. ILO to Embassy in Sofia, 20.10.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
407. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 14.10.1926. Wauters to Justice, 9.3.1926. AMJ, 12. It seems that only half of them came finally to Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
408. J.Wauters, Minister of Labor to Justice, 9.3.1926 who enclosed in his protest letter the opinion of Willems, vice-consul in Riga to Minister of Foreign Affairs E.Vandervelde, 1.3.1926. "Suivant les renseignements que je reçois les candidats sont en général d'anciens officiers, beaucoup d'un certain âge -35 à 45 ans, qui vivotent ici plutôt miserablement depuis 1918. Ils n'ont pu se créer depuis lors une situation et ils n'ont nulle idée de ce que peut être le travail des mineurs. Il est certain qu'avant deux mois de séjour chez nous ils seront devenus des gens aigris et mécontents." AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
409. "Pour les réfugiés russes munis de passeport Nansen est exclue...de leur faire réintégrer leur pays d'origine. Quand nous les aurons, nous devrons les garder aussi longtemps qu'il leur plaira de rester...C'est une raison pour se montrer prudents avant de les accueillir et de s'assurer au moins de la nature des services qu'ils sont capables de rendre à notre économie nationale." Minister of Labor J.Wauters to Minister of Justice P.Hymans, 6.7.1926. AMJ, 12. Belgium had together with France eagerly embraced the initiatives taken at international level to stabilize the Russian refugees. These initiatives were limited to the creation of a Nansen passport which enabled the refugees to travel and a convention which recommended not to ostracise these refugees. Belgium and France used a definition of Russian refugee which was broader than most other countries did, by including Russians who left the Soviet Union after January 1921. Note 1934. ABZ, 12.178. BS, 193, 12.7.1929, pp.3641-3645. Leenders (1993), p.203 and 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
410. "Il conviendra de signaler à l'attention des bénéficiaires que ce visa leur est uniquement accordé sur l'engagement de ne pas excercer en Belgique une profession autre que celle prévue au contrat de d'engagement. Mention devra être faite dans la formule de visa." Justice to Embassy in Sofia, 7.4.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
411. Sûreté to Embassy in Sofia, 31.5.1926. Note Justice, 29.3.1926. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
412. Travel costs were between 450 and 400 francs. Contrat de travail entre Charbonnages de Gouffre et les 40 ouvriers russes, 13.2.1926. Visit Gottschalk, 23.3.1926. AMJ, 12. Ressaix to Fricero, 3.6.1926 and 25.6.1926. AESH, Ressaix, Copies des lettres. The advantage of Russian refugees was that no visa costs had to be paid, because of their refugee-status the Belgian authorities granted them free visa. Emigration conference, 17-18.2.1926. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2.229. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
413. Gottschalk to ILO, 28.10.1926. ILO to Schlesinger, Berlin, s.d. Archives UNO Geneva, C1241 nr.6 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
414. Gallati (ILO Warschau) to Johnson, 22.9.1928. Johnson to Gallati, 12.2.1929 and 11.3.1929. Archive UNO Geneva, C 1312. Probably only Ressaix recruited in Yugoslavia 25 refugees, the cost seem to be quite high (21,070 francs) but by then (1931) the new immigration legislation meant that the return on this investment would be more sure. Ressaix to Serge Yourieff, 22.5.1931. AESH, Ressaix, Copies des lettres. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
415. "Je crains beaucoup que ces hommes ne quittent le Charbonnage dés qu'ils trouveront embauche dans une usine"Gorissen to Gottschalk, 14.11.1926. Archive UNO Geneva, C 1241. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
416. The share of Russian labor within foreign labor in the iron and steel industry increased between 1924 and 1926 from 3 tot 5%. (116 to 246). Appendix 1 and CNPI, doc. 124, p.2. PHK, 24.5.1934, p.1543. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
417. Declaration of Michel Koud, Russian worker. Archives UNO Geneva, C 1241 nr.6 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
418. Vooruit, 1.2.1926, p.2. Neptune, 28.10.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
419. For this analysis we used the sociological literature on the subject, in particular Waldinger (1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
420. We define ethnic entreprises as businesses set up by immigrant entrepreneurs who cater to specific co-ethnic needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
421. Most of the information on these businesses was collected during interviews with migrants in Poland, Belgium and Czechoslovakia. Most information being used refers to Slavic immigrants, but our more limited information on Italian ethnic businesses confirms the picture. In Brussels and Antwerp also Jewish businesses catered for the needs of their countrymen. De Voeding, XVII, 1930, 6, p.1 and XV, 1928, 7, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
422. In 1938 the Polish journalist Janusz Hetman counted 173 non-Jewish Polish businesses in Belgium. They employed only 200 employees. Wychodzca, 1938, 16, pp.10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
423. Return migration also seem to form a major part of the story of ethnic entrepreneurs. Maybe not so large a part as it was for labor migrants, but quite a number of ethnic entrepreneurs returned. Even a succesful ethnic business did not prevent them from returning as it could be sold at a high price. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
424. Barbers worked mostly in the mines and only opened their shops after hours. In 1938, Janusz Hetman counted about a hundred such Polish businesses, these have to be added to the 173 full time businesses. Wychodzca, 1938, 16, pp.10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
425. Interviews Ludwig M. Genk 13.9.1990; Jozef B. 21.8.1990 Eisden; Jan C. Nowa Ruda 18.3.1989; Vaclaw S. Sokolov 10.6.1990; Jozef S. Modlany 11.6.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
426. Some interviewed said he was Ukrainian. His brother in law told he was an Italian, but that he had spend a long time in Russia during the First World War. Interview brother in law, Walczer Zaclez 16.5.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
427. Interview with his son, Jozef Eisden 21.8.1990. He continued, however, to do his businesses as a side-job. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
428. The next year he opened a new butcher's shop and by 1936 he opened a branch in Winterslag. Interview Walczer, Zaclez 16.5.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
429. Stanislaw R., Janow 11.9.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
430. He also had a branch in Charleroi. Narodowiec, 28.2.1930/1, 1-2. Interview with one of his apprentices Jozef B., 21.8.1990 Eisden. Only in the Borinage at the West of the basin where a Polish migrant community was concentrated, a Polish entrepreneur served the ethnic market (bread and meat), but only locally. Interview Tadek and Edmund B., Hautrage Etat 12.1.1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
431. In Seraing alone there were about 650 hostels in 1930, mostly run by immigrants. Le Peuple, 27.3.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
432. Most of the qualified bakers and butchers were submerged within the labor migration. Only when an opportunity turned up for them to exercise their "real" profession, they became visible. A lot of those craftsmen came at the end of the 1920s, together with other migrants from the French mines. For them it was probably not so much the call of the Limburgian mines which made them move to Belgium, but rather the possibility to escape the mine. Only a few had enough money to establish their own business, some of them could start to work for an ethnic entrepreneur or as a help for a co-ethnic baker or butcher. Others had ultimately to work in the mine and hope for better times. It does not seem that anyone emigrated directly from the country of origin to set up a business in Belgium, very few were called upon directly by an ethnic entrepreneur. Most ethnic entrepreneurs made use of the available pool of artisans among the labor migrants. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
433. CGE, l'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923, Roma, 1926, p.621. In 1924-1925 462 Italian builders were recruited through the official Italian-Belgian recruitment scheme, nearly half of them were mosaic makers. CGE, l'emigrazione italiana negli anni 1924 e 1925, Roma, 1926, p.393. The continuing demand in the 1920s for mosaic makers by Belgian firms indicates that the market was not saturated by the ethnic entrepreneurs. Bolletino dell'emigrazione, XXVI, 1927, 3, p.352. Il Popolo d'Italia, 31.1.1929. Il Corriere, organe delle Missione catholica italiane in Europe, 26.6.1930/1,1-2. Sergooris (1993), pp.27-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
434. According to an Italien source was in the beginning of the 1920s, the cement industry considered an Italian business. Entrepreneurs as well as labor were Italian.Le Notizie sull'emigrazione e sul lavora, I, 1922, 37. CGE, l'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923, Roma, 1926, p.621. Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique Recueil des rapports, séance du 17.1.1924 and 11.3.1926. Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'hygiène, XXIV, 1924-1926, respectively p.8 and 559. In February 1924 the Gendarmerie counted 53 Italians in a total of 77 foreigners in this industry in Wallonia. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
435. Bolletino dell R.Ministero degli Affari Esteri, VI, 1928, 6, pp.521-522. Rosania (1983), pp.140-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
436. Interview Italo T., 7.4.1995 Ghent. Cadore had a monopoly on Italian ice-cream in the Netherlands. Bovenkerke (1983), p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
437. The fortunes of those Italian entrepreneurs during the 1930 are unknown to us. Italian construction firms remained active in Belgium during the 1930s. In the beginning of the 1930s two of them (Bernardi and Tambourini) subcontracted works on the construction of the canal Antwerp-Liège. Ontvoogding, XXI, 1932, 10, p.3. In February 1934 the Labor inspection counted , however, only one

small Italian firm in construction. ARA, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken -oud fonds, 807. Italian entrepreneurs in Great Britain and the Netherlands before the Second World War have been the focus of research done by Sponza (1988) and Bovenkerke and Ruland (1991) and the pecularity of the migratory patterns of these entreprises has been noted in both studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
438. The Immigration Act of 1922 was strengthened in 1924 so that the American borders became as good as closed, except for the quota's. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
439. The Belgian Jewish community of Antwerp considered this, as those stranded migrants were becoming a burden on Jewish charity a way to integrate those Jewish migrants into the local economy. De Diamantbewerker, IX, 1927, 8, p.2. Michielsen (1953), p.119. For the different operations in the diamond production see Hasendonckx (1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
440. Liberman (1935), p.15 and 42. Michielsen (1953), p.136. Wychodzca, 1926, 6, p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
441. Liberman (1935), p.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
442. In her analysis of 2,002 files of Jewish immigrants of Polish nationality arriving in Antwerp in 1920, 1925 and 1930 De Haan counted 149 migrants who upon arrival declared they were diamond workers, half of them were lodged by kinship. This was much more than among other professional groups represented in this sample. De Haan (1990), p.124. The diamond workers' trade union complained that the Polish diamond cutters took a too high number of apprentices, mostly kinship. De Diamantbewerker, VIII, 1926, 7, p.2; IX, 1927, 38, p.2 and 7, p.1; X, March 31 1928, p.2; 1936, 12, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
443. "The foreign comrades exercise a speciality which is unknown to Belgian labor." Verslag van het 16e kongres van de Centrale der Leder en Vellenbewerkers van België, Aalst, s.d.(1937), p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
444. This is al least the version of Liberman. Another explanation could be found in the already present immigrants. Jewish migration from Eastern Europe to Belgium started by the 1890s. These newcomers turned to peddling as a way to earn a livelihood. This was not especially appreciated by the local Jewish community as they made the Jewish presence extremely visible and the Belgian Jews feared an antisemitic backlash. In order to make the new immigrants assimilate into the Belgian society the Belgian Jewish community offered different training courses for craftsmen. Schreiber (1992). It is possible that those Jewish migrants who had followed those training course laid the foundations for a Jewish presence in the leather industry. Until 1914 the leather industry in Brussels was dominated by German entrepreneurs and skilled labor. The First World War created a void in this industry, as all Germans left Belgian and Jewish immigrants made maybe use of this to start businesses in this sector. For the immigration of leather workers see also Note Ministry of Labor, 26.6.1923. ABZ, 2652 bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
445. "N'importe quel ouvrier avec un petit capital de 4 à 5000 fr peut s'installer à son propre compte et devenir patron, il ne réussit pas toujours, il n'a pas de grande immobilisation à faire" Comité National Paritaire pour la fabrication d'articles de voyage, d'équipements de militaires, de sellerie et de maroquinerie, séance du 7.3.1940. AMSAB, Algemene Centrale. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
446. The Polish authorities estimated that there were about 3,000 Jewish Poles in Brussels and Wallonia in January 1926. Emigration report Consulate in Brussels for the year 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. The morocco leather businesses was hence the dominant industry within the "Jewish" economy in Brussels. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
447. In 1927 Liberman counted 35 firms with together 1,100 workers, the labor inspection counted only 14 firms with between 6 and 45 workers, together that would probably make a maximum of 400 workers. The industrial statistic of October 1926 showed 425 aliens, among whom were counted 197 Poles and 11 Russians who worked in businesses in the tanning and leather industry with more than 10 employees. These 208 Jewish immigrants would have been employed almost exclusively in the moroccan leather industry. Liberman (1934 and 1939). Rapports annuels de l'Inspection du Travail, XXVIII, 1927, p.95 and appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
448. Liberman counted 125 small businesses in 1927 with together 500 workers, the labor inspection counted 200 small family businesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
449. From the analysis of the 2,002 files of Jewish Poles immigrating in Antwerp, it seems that a small majority were already moving in this international circuit before they had come to Antwerp, more than half of these 2,002 migrants decided to try their luck somewhere else later. De Haan (1990), pp. 65-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
450. These figures are based on the Polish and Czechoslovakian statistics. Legal emigration here means Jewish migrants- where Jew meant a religious criteria - who asked for a passport to emigrate

to Belgium. That this was only a part of the effective Polish immigration is clear from the figures from the Polish consulate, which show the quantitative evolution of the Polish community in Wallonia and Brussels as follows: on 1.1.1926 3,000 Jewish Poles, this number would increase to 5,000 on 1 July 1927, 12,000 on January 1,1929 and 14,000 the year after. At the end of 1930 yet another 800 Jewish Poles would enter the country. At the end of 1931, the number of Polish Jews rose to 15,000, exclusively on account of family reunion. These figures were derived from the data of the Consulate, from the estimates made by the alien police and the Jewish community. Emigration reports for the years 1929, 1930 and 1931 made by the consulate in Brussels, 6.5.1930. AAN, MSZ, 10379. See also Narodowiec, 10.12.1930. For Flanders (Antwerp!) we have no such figures. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
451. De Kleeding, X, 1928, 5, p.24. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
452. Another industry were Jewish immigrant entrepreneurs were active was the umbrella industry. Jewish immigrant entrepreneurs were active in the hat, glove and umbrella industry, but not to the extent as in leather and diamond. We do not dispose of data to analyze the timing of their breakthrough in these industries and the scale of their businesses. Bollettino dell'Emigrazione, XXVI, 1927, 3, p.352. L'emigrazione italiana dal 1910 al 1923, II, Roma, 1926, p.621. Morelli (1985), p.68. De Kleeding, VIII,2, 1.2.1926, p.3. Centrale ouvrière des cuirs et peaux de Belgique, section de Bruxelles. Rapport moral et financier, 1931-1932, p.8. Rapports annuels de l'Inspection du Travail, XXIX, 1928, p.45. Develglave, manufacture de gants de peau pour dames to Labor inspection 2.1934. ARA, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken oud fonds, 809. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
453. De Kleeding, IX, 1.7.1927, 7, p.4. Bourse officielle du Travail de l'arrondissement de Bruxelles, rapport annuel 1923, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
454. "Ce sont ces maisons-là qui fournissent aux magasins de la ville et aux salles de vente le meuble soi-disant de luxe." Le Travailleur, XXIII, 1934, 12, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
455. Diamond was of course an exception. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
456. Interview with Josef S. Modlany June 11, 1990. The number of Jewish shopkeepers in Limburg was limited. All in all there were about 10 to 15 families. In Eisden there were three Jewish shopkeepers and in Waterschei there were 7 merchants who regularly sold door-to-door in Winterslag. Interview Stanislawa C., Meeuwen September 13, 1990. Maria Z., March 15, 1989 Walbrzych. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
457. 1,411 of the 3,300 foreign peddlars who obtained a vendors'license after 1936 offered products in textiles, fashion and garments, 1,006 of them foodstuffs. This relation reflects much the same as that of peddlars from the neighboring countries (France and Holland) and from other countries. We assume the former to respond much more to the profile of Belgian peddlar (selling fruit and vegetables), but whereby their outlet was by hazard over the border. Statistisch Bulletin, May-June 1936, p.18. The foreign peddlars in this statistic was an already purged group, those migrants with a criminal record were already eliminated, also the recent immigrants and those who sold products (for example spectacles) which according to the government were not appropriate for the vending trade were not granted a vendors' licence (see further). [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
458. Nota Somerhausen, s.d. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde. See also AMSAB, E.Anseele, 19/1. La Tribune Juive, 22.11.1935, 10, pp.128-129. We do not know what the share of export market was within this "Jewish" economy as well as what part of the domestic market was served by the Jewish distribution network and by the department stores to which the Jewish firms delivered. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
459. Green (1986) applied this to the garment trade; my own analysis covers a wider selection of sectors, of course I acknowledge her stimulating hypothesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
460. These sectors were not overall characterized by entrepreneurs with limited capital. Fixed capital was indeed limited for all of these sectors, but the circulating capital could be high (i.e. leather, fur and diamonds). [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
461. De Kleeding, XXV, 1933, 9, p.2. en XXI, 1939, 3, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
462. PS, p.91. Le Vêtement, XVII, 1935, 12. Fabrique d'imperméables E.Baele et A.Blondeel to labor inspection, 1934. ARA, Ministerie Binnenlandse Zaken, oud fonds, 806. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
463. "Ce sont les étrangers qui ont introduit le travail en équipe, par entreprise...ils pratiquent la spécialisation et la division du travail." PS, p.91. De Kleeding, 9.1939, p.3 and 9.1938, p.4. Kleding (periodical of the Belgian employers), XVI, 2.1939, 9, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
464. Glatt (1940). Hogg (1986), p.58. We possess only fragmentary information about the knitting industry, certainly for this sector the research has to be pursued. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
465. Le Vêtement, XVII, 1935, 12. Entrepreneurs who work within a strongly competitive market can not permit themselves any ethnic preference, but have to attract the cheapest manpower. It was

probably cheaper for the knitting industry to employ flemale Flemish labor. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
466. Belgian Consulate in Aachen to BZ, 22.9.1928. Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Minister of Justice P.E.Janson, 4.4.1928 and 3.5.1929. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
467. An exception to the expulsion of illegal migrants could only be made when the employer of these migrants deposited the labor contract and his department assented to it. Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans and Minister of Justice P.E.Janson, (the latter were both Liberals) 27.10.1928. AMJ, 1 B6 III. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
468. "Sans cela nous serons prochainement dans une situation pénible qui nous forcerait à indemniser nos nationaux en chômage tandis que le travail serait accaparé par des étrangers." Minister of Labor to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Justice, 27.10.1928. AMJ, 1 B6 III [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
469. In 1929 16,621 migrants obtained a visa with the agreement of the Ministry of Labor. Vercruysse in Le Progrès Social, XIX, IIième série, 1930, 14, p.209. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
470. See the graphs for the several nationalities in appendix 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
471. Appendix 5, a and b. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
472. Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Minister of Justice, P.E.Janson 25.1.1930. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
473. Report of the meeting with the directors of the labor exchange offices, 4.10.1928. ARDH, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
474. "Il n'y aura plus lieu de craindre le déplacement vers les hauts salaires le jour où le nombre d'ouvriers étrangers en Belgique sera tel que les charbonnages auront toute la main-d'oeuvre qui leur est nécessaire." Habets in ACCA, 25.9.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
475. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, doc.9. ARA, Theunis, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
476. "il se présente assez bien de main-d'oeuvre étrangère. Si donc nous voulions renforcer nos effectifs, c'est aux exotiques que nous devrions avoir recours." report 556, Janaury 1930. AEL, Gosson-Lagace à Jemappe sur Meuse. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
477. 17% in the Centre basin, 17% in Charleroi, 10 % in the Borinage, 16% in basin of Liège and 29 % in the basin of Limburg. All the Walloon basins had doubled their share of foreign labor since November 1928, the basins with industrial coal (Centre, Borinage) even nearly tripled their number of foreigners. Appendix 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
478. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, doc.9. ARA, Theunis, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
479. Notes concerning visa to Polish labor migrants for the mining industry. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
480. The Belgian mining companies wanted not only to guarantee a better recruitment, but also to keep their autonomy in relation to the Polish and Belgian authorities "s'il est bien que nous nous associons autant que possible à l'activité de l'organisme français, il faut, d'autre part, tant à l'égard du gouvernement belge que du gouvernement polonais, que nous conservions notre autonomie." ACCA, 10.4.1929.

The mine of Beringen in Limburg received in the winter of 1929 63 Poles recruited by the SGI, shortly afterwards all but 10 had left the mine. An agreement was then made between the SGI, the Polish authorities and the ACCA that Belgium would have their own recruitment agents. In January 1929 the mines of Le Centre independently of Limburg sent a representative to Warsaw for talks about autonomous recruitment. Antwerp Consulate to UE, 6.5.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. Brussels Consulate to UE, 1.2.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9.630. ACCA, 10.4.1929, 24.4.1929 and 12.6.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
481. ACCBS, 26.11.1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
482. For Poznan the travel costs and hence the bonus was 250 francs, for Silesia it was 300 francs. The figures which refer to this financial arrangement are in our sources not always identical. The exact amounts can be thus slightly different. UE, 1.3.1929. APK, St Ch II, 115. Marcinelle-Nord to Fontaine l'Eveque 16.1.1929. Municipal archives Charleroi, Fontaine l'Evêque Personnel 1927. Note pour Vogels, 27.11.1928. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
483. ACCBS to Charbonnage de Carabinier, 20.4.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. UE, 21.2.1929. Krakowski Urzd Wojewdztwe to Starosty Chrzanowie, 22.5.1929. UE to PUPP, 21.2.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. Copy for L., 6.7.1929. APK, Starostwo Chrzanow, II, 115. . [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
484. Note, 4.4.1929 and 15.5.1929. District council to municipal council, 24.5.1929. APKA, UWSLDP. Consulate in Brussels to UE, 22.4.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. UE to Starosty Chrzanowie, 7.5.1929. APK, Starostwo Chrzanow, II, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
485. Note Ministry of Justice, 13.4.1929. Minister of Labor to Minister of Justice, 3.5.1929. AMJ, 12. For the three recruitment sessions see book-keeping of Gorissen in Bois du Luc, 181. Ultimately 367 Poles arrived in the basin of Charleroi. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
486. PUPP Kielce to Urzd Wojewdztwe Kielecki, 22.5.1929. APKielce, Urzd Wojewdztwe Kielecki, 9383, k.250. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
487. There was also a minor bureaucratic hurdle. The Polish labor migrants leaving for Belgium were supposed to have a passport and a visa, while the French and German authorities only demanded a passport. Note Ministry of Justice, 13.4.1929. Vogels, Marcinelle Nord to Polish Consul, 31.1.1929. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
488. According to information of ACCBS they received respectively 367 Poles in April and another 769 in June. The figures of Wychodzca, 1929, 25, p.5. are similar, as well as the figures calculated on base of the list of names in AEL, Minerie, 86.

Hautrage, a mine in the Borinage received 50 Poles from the second train. According to Gorissen's book-keeping he recruited respectively 382, 730 and 840 Poles. Bois du Luc, 181. We do not know the reason for those differences and especially where most of the Poles of the second transport went to. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
489. We have information from which labor exchange office 798 of the 844 Poles who left with the third transport originated: Sosnowiec (215), Chrzanow (61), Zawierce (220) and Myslowice (90, recruited in UE office), Kielce (182), Krakow and district Bochnia (30). Labor exchange office in Sosnowiec to Starostwo, 9.8.1929. APK, Starostwo Chrzanow II, 115. The three latter offices (total 212 persons) were outside Upper Silesia, the mining region which originally had to provide most of the manpower for the Belgian mines. Of course also migrants from Upper Silesia had not necessary experience in mining, so were the migrants from Zawierce problaby no miners as this was a mountain region within Upper Silesia without industry. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
490. While the number of people recruited in June more than doubled in comparison with March, the number of destitute men among them -based on Gorissen's expenses for the taxes on passports which those people could not afford to pay - trebled. This is an indication of the desperate poverty which drove those people out of Poland. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
491. Those pie charts are based on a quantitative analysis of the lists made up by the ACCBS of recruited miners. On those lists were added the date of departures of "deserters". These lists were then sent to mines in other basins in order to prevent those mines from recruiting these "deserters" or at least to urge them to pay their share of the recruitment costs. The 87 Italians arrived in small groups between February and July 1929. AEL, Minerie, 85 and 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
492. This push factor was probably also linked to pull factors, namely the other occupational opportunities and the presence of countrymen who could help them to find these jobs. The dynamic of "desertion" of these immigrants still needs further research. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
493. The employers' associations of the basin of Limburg, Liège and Centre started to coordinate their efforts by June 1929. ACCA, 27.3.1929, 10.4.1929 and 24.4.1929. It does not seem that the basin of Borinage had shown any interest in recruiting foreign labor. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
494. This mine in Limburg tried to disassociate itself as much as possible from the ACCA and followed its own strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
495. UE to Consulate, Antwerp 6.4.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
496. UE to Consulate, Antwerp 10.5.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
497. Embassy, Brussels to MSZ, 9.8.1929 and to UE, 17.7.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
498. Consulate, Antwerp to UE, 15.5.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
499. "Vandertorf needs a few hundred more Polish workers, it's a pity that from our side there are some difficulties of a formal nature and that constant changes in the contracts are demanded." Extract from a conversation with Vandertorf in Remarks concerning the Polish schools in France and Belgium, 5.1929. AAN, MWRiOP, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
500. "Habets signale les inconvénients du recrutement que les sociétés Charbonnières font à leur guise, et au détriment les unes des autres. Le seul moyen de les éviter est de se mettre d'accord entre charbonnages afin d'organiser un recrutement collectif" ACCA, 27.3.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
501. "Comité fait des démarches et espère obtenir des améliorations très sensibles aux conditions contractuelles tendant à obliger les ouvriers à rester chez nous. Ces avantages seraient acquis seulement pour la Belgique." FEDECHAR, 19.6.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. The bonus was maybe not totally abolished, but certainly reduced: "Le contrat d'embauchage sera amélioré en ce sens que les frais de voyage d'arrivée de l'ouvrier (200frs) pourront lui être retenus, ceci afin qu'il demeure chez

l'employeur; au bout d'un an, ils lui seront restitués, plus une prime de 150frs environ." ACCA, 12.6.1929. In the different versions of the contracts of 1929 we have, there is no mention of deduction for the wages. Probably these contracts are the initial contracts of the Charleroi basin. One of them provides that the Pole who broke his contract had to pay 1,50 francs for each day they still had to work. For those contracts see: Internationale Bergarbeiterverband, Protokoll des 29. Internationale Bergarbeiter-Kongress in Krakau 1930. Bochum, 1930, p.55. La Lutte contre le chômage, XIX, 1930, pp.223-226. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
502. As we do not have at our disposal any direct source on the discussion within the UE -we have only information from the correspondence with the Consulates- we do not know if other motives caused the Polish authorities finally to yield and drop at least partly the bonus.

The Belgian authorities however, put off the negotiations on the Polish-Belgian labor treaty again and again. Throughout 1929 the Polish emigration authorities sought to put pressure on the Belgian authorities to start negotiations on a labor treaty by threatening to withhold the emigrants so necessary for the Belgian economy. The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs opposed this as it would damage the Polish-Belgian diplomatic relations. By 1930 even the UE was opposed to a confrontational strategy as it would endanger an outlet for the increasing number of unemployed Poles. UE to MSZ, 30.4.1929. Consulate in Brussels to UE, 26.11.1929. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 6.12.1929. MSZ to Polish Ministry of Labor, 3.1930. UE to MSZ, 11.4.1930. AAN, MSZ, 9.540. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
503. Consulate, Brussels to UE, 13.6.1929 and 17.7.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. Comité d'immigration, 3.7.1929. UEM, Charbonnages d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. UE to PUPP Sosnowiec, 14.8.1939. AP Kielce, Urzd Wojewdztwie Kielecki, Praca i Opieki Spoeczny, 9205. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
504. Réunion Fedechar, 10.9.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. Committee FEDECHAR, 17.7.1929 and 18.9.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
505. "SGI nous exploite- on l'abandonne." Comité d'Immigration, 3.7.1929. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, II.A.1.4. The last transport organized by the SGI arrived in September 1929. Consulate, Brussels to UE, 12.9.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. Ponty (1988), p.76. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
506. The Polish Emigration Office complained in 1930 to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the negotiations with the immigration committee of the Fedechar were getting more and more arduous. UE to MSZ, 3.6.1930. AAN, MSZ, 9540. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
507. The number of candidates increased considerably in the fall of 1929. According to the local authorities this resulted from letters describing the living and working conditions in Belgium that potential candidates for emigration obtained from relatives and friends who had left for Belgium with the previous transports. Report for Minister, 8.9.1929. Report to UE, 28.11.1929. UE tot Urzd wojewdztwie, 9.10.1929. UE to PUPP Sosnowiec, 14.8.1929. AP Kielce, Urzd wojewdztwie Kielecki, Praca i Opieki Spoeczny, 9205. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
508. In August 1929 517 Poles were recruited; they came mainly from the following districts: Bedzin (89), Kielce (120), Czestochowa (95), Bochnia (42) Zawierce (23), Grodisk (22) and Zywiec (100). Only Zawiercie is in the mining region of Upper Silesia. List of workers leaving on 4.9.1929. AP Kielce, Urzd Wojewdztwie Kielecki, Praca i Opieki Spoeczny, 9230. In the October recruitment rural regions were the nearly exclusive providers of manpower: Kielce (116), Zywiec (136), Bochnia (129). AP Kielce, Urzd Wojewdztwie Kielecki, Praca i Opieki Spoeczny, 9205.

The mining industry declared in 1930 that it recruited a total of about 3,000 Poles. This seems to be an underestimation. We calculated 3,400 Poles without those recruited by the SGI. Archives Fedechar, rapport du Comité sur l'excercice 1929, p.2. Consulate Brussels, Emigration report for 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
509. UE to Urzd wojewdztwie, 12.12.1929. quoted in Narodowiec, 13.12.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
510. Consulate, Brussels Emigration report for 1930, p.2. AAN, MSZ, 10379. Ministry of Labor to PUPP, Czestochowa, 23.4.1930. AP Kielce, Urzd Wojewdztwie Kielecki, Praca i Opieki Spoeczny, 9230. Narodowiec, 18.2.1930. Remy to Minister of Justice, 7.2.1930. AMJ, 1 B6 III. For a description of those recruitment see La Wallonie, 24.2.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
511. Interview Stanisaw N., 12.3.1989 Wroclaw. He was one of the rurally-based migrants who arrived in the Charleroi basin in August 1929. " I had never seen a mine, I was from a village. I had to go because we were poor...When we arrived in Belgium, the next day we had to go down into the mine. Some men refused to go. I went down, it was very deep. I had to crawl, on my knees through a hole. I was so afraid, I cried. I was sick the next day and I wrote to my father to sell his last cow so that I could go back." [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
512. This demand was strangely enough -we do not know the reason why- in July altered to 400 unqualified workers and received approval from the Polish authorities. It is however unclear if these 400 Poles were ever recruited. Consulate, Brussels Emigration report for first half of 1930, p.6 and for second half of 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10379. Gornik, XXV, 1930, 10, p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
513. We have no data on the Poles, but only on the total labor force of foreign nationality. In February 1926 7,667 foreigners worked in metallurgic firms with more than 10 employees (9% of the labor force). When all the metallurgic firms were counted in December 1930, 12,707 foreigners were employed in this industry, but they constitued only 4% of the labor force. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
514. Emigration report for 1929 of the Consulate in Brussels, 6.5.1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Caestecker (1993c), pp.128-129. The concentration of Jewish migrants from Poland in the metallurgic industry, rather than in the mining industry has also been noted in France. Ponty (1988), p.129. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
515. Emigration report of Consulate, Brussels for 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Consulate, Antwerp to UE, 13.6.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9.630. For the demands for qualified steel workers see: CCI, Communiqué social, 25.5.1929, p.48. Demand for 48 rollers for steel tin for Phenix Works: APKa, UWSLDP. UE to Consulate, 15.5.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. Labor exchange of Liège to Phenix Works, 6.5.1929. AMJ, 12.

In 1929 the Ministry of Labor agreed upon recruitment-contracts for 4,844 Polish migrants. This refers to the number of intended recruitment, which was as a rule higher than the effective legally recruited number. It also shows that other sectors,

-demands for about thousand Polish migrants- recruited manpower in Poland. At least 3,000 Poles were recruited collectively, there were also a considerable number of Poles recruited individually for the mines, but with a labor contract agreed upon by the Ministry of Labor. Le Progrès social, XIX, II, 1930, 14, p.209. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
516. Gobelleterie Nationale in Familleureux wanted to recruit 50 young Poles. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. In 1930 4,4% of the work force in the glass industry was of foreign nationality (1,185 persons), while in 1926 it was 3% (1,114 persons) Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
517. Main d'oeuvre étrangère. Réglement. Projet, 8.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. CCI, communiqué social, 25.5.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
518. Committee FEDECHAR, 17.7.1929. AHCM, 5.4.1929. ACCA,12.6.1929. Winterslag to Sûreté, 29.3.1929. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
519. The chemical industry obtained at least 200 workers. Correspondence FEDECHAR to Minerie. AEL, Minerie, 85. AHCM, 10.5.1929. Czechoslovakian consulate to FEDECHAR, 2.10.1929. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
520. Archives FEDECHAR, rapport du Comité sur l'excercice 1929, p.2. In 1929 only 1,628 contracts for Czechoslovakian migrants were agreed upon by the Ministry of Labor. Le Progrès social, XIX, II, 1930, 14, p.209. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
521. Rapport du comité Fedechar sur l'exercice 1930, p.3. AEL, Minerie, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
522. There were also negotiations with the authorities in Prague to obtain qualified miners. In the first transports some skilled miners were recruited, but they remained largely a minority. ACCBS, 28.5.1930. Interview Vaclaw S., 10.6.1990 Sokolov. Enquête au sujet des 3 Tchèques qui demandent leur passeport pour partir, 18.3.1930. UEM, charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
523. Bulletin de la Fédération Internationale des Mineurs, 5, 1.1930, p.69. Le Peuple, 23.7.1929. There were a lot of complaints about the quality of the Czechoslovakian migrant labor, for example: "Nous regrettons de vous dire que, pour le moment nous ne désirons plus prendre d'ouvriers tchécoslovaques parce que nous avions constaté qu'ils ne sont pas assez stables" Magasins généraux de charbonnages du Borinage to Régie, 14.4.1930. UEM, Charbonnages d'Hensies Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. Report of the inspection, 16.8.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
524. A Belgian visa costed 75 francs. The Czechoslovakians had, however, to pay 75 francs themselves after 4 months sojourn to receive their identity card. Consulate Brussels to UE, 1.2.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. Comité d'Immigration, 3.7.1929. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
525. Comité d'Immigration, 3.7.1929. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
526. Contrat de travail pour ouvrier de nationalité tchecoslovaque. UEM, Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
527. There were in 1930 350 to 400 Czechoslovakian workers in the chemical plants in Tertre and St Ghislain. Letak pro vystèchovalce: Belgie. Praha, 1931, p.15 and 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
528. Minister of Labor to Minister of Justice, 27.10.1928. AMJ, 12. Charbonnage de Ressaix to Royal Consul of Italy, 27.12.1929. AESH, Ressaix, copie des lettres-personnel. Demande d'enrôlement d'ouvriers italiens pour la Belgique, 1929/121 Fontaine l'Evêque, Personnel, 1928. Fontaine-l'Evêque, personnel 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
529. AEL, Minerie, 85 and 86. Narodowiec, 21.2.1930/1, 1-2 and Wychodzca, IX, 1930, 9, pp.1-3. See for the rise in Italian miners graph 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
530. Due to fascist rural policies and a new demographic policy launched in 1926 emigration became to be viewed as a loss for the country. In 1928 Mussolini suppressed the CGE and replaced it with a Central Bureau of Italians Abroad. This institutional change reflected the regime's new emigration policy. This policy was based on restricting permanent emigration and on an increased effort -with the full involvement of diplomatic and consular officials- to politicize the emigrant communities abroad by enrolling the emigrants in fascist organizations. Morelli (1985). Cannistraro and Rosoli (1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
531. When the ACCBS asked all its members if they wanted foreign labor to be recruited and either Poles or Italians the mine Carabinier was the only one who wanted Italians and for the following reason: "nous avons déjà un certain nombre d'hotelliers, occupées par des gens de cette nationalité et nous craignons qu'ils fassent mauvais ménage avec des Polonais." Carabinier to ACCBS, 21.1.1929. ACCBS to Carabinier, 20.4.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
532. A new article was inserted in the labor contracts: "Il lavoratore che espatria in base al presente contratto di lavora ha rinunziato a condurre sota all estero alcuna persona di famiglia od a chiamarla"Demande d'enrôlement d'ouvriers italiens pour la Belgique, 1929/121 Fontaine l'Evêque, Personnel, 1928. Wlocevski (1934), p.91. Morelli (1985), p.69 and 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
533. Le Progrès social, XIX, II, 1930, 14, p.209. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
534. "En ce qui concerne les Travaux Publics il résulte des déclarations de M.Grafé, Directeur de la Fédération que de nombreux ouvriers italiens arriveront prochainement en Belgique et que les autres industries peuvent avoir leurs apaisements." réunion, 13.5.1929 and 8.4.1929. Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la province de Liège, LXI, 1929, p.12, 14. In the summer of 1929 three to four thousands Italians were to be recruited. CCI, communiqué social, 25.5.1929, p.48. Le Travailleur, X, 1929, 5, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
535. Le Carrier, XXXI, 1929, 7, p.3. Nouvelles Carrières de porphyres de Lessines to CCI, 3.7.1930. AMJ, 33 C30/A. In Februari 1926 the number of foreigners in the quarry works was 698. This rose to 1,546 in 1930 (=4% of the total labor force). Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
536. While Cockerill had in February 1926 185 Italian workers among its 3,688 employees, their number increased according to Il Popolo d'Italia, 31.1.1929 to a thousand Italians among the ten thousand employees. Appendix 1. Comité National, 7.9.1927. AMSAB, CMB. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
537. Committee FEDECHAR, 2.7.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
538. "il n'est pas question de s'occuper des ouvriers marocains" ACCA, 12.6.1929. See for the further decline in the number of North Africans in the Belgian mining industry graph 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
539. Probably the recourse to Spanish labor was expensive and their performance was not very good. After the first month 34 % had left the mines that had recruited them. Although the Spaniards were not as "bad" as the Italians, the Poles seemed to be more loyal. AEL, Minerie, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
540. ACCA, 8.1.1930 and 30.7.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
541. Germany and especially the Ruhr was considered by 1930 an valuable recruitment area, the large number of qualified miners who were unemployed were suitable manpower. A plan to set up an official recruitment scheme never materialized. A few hundred German unemployed miners came however on their own initiative to the Belgian mines, especially to Limburg. Correspondence with German labor exchange office in Dortmund and Cologne, April and May 1930. AESH, Ressaix, Personnel copie des lettres. Paesen (1986), pp.134-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
542. ACCA, 12.2.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
543. Seutin - the director of the most cosmopolitan mine of the Limburg (Eisden)- had, after experiences with about all nationalities available a decided opinion: "Seuls les Serbes, les Tchéco-Slovaques et les Polonais ont donné pleine satisfaction." ACCA, 30.7.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
544. Belgian embassy in Belgrade to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 27.8.1929. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 4.9.1929. AMJ, 12. In 1929 the contracts for 1,093 Yugoslavian migrants were agreed upon by the Ministry of Labor. Le Progrès social, XIX, II, 1930, 14, p.209. The first Slovenian migrants had first worked in the mines in the north of France before coming to Belgium. Only later were migrants called upon directly in Yugoslavia. The Slovenians provided qualified miners and the Croats were mostly ancillary workers. Interview Frans T., 21.8.1990. Maasmechelen. Vanderwoude to Broekx, s.d.(1928). KADOC, Broekx, 14.1.9. See also graph 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
545. The UE insisted that the Consulate give only its agreement -a pre-condition for granting a passport to Polish emigrants- if the labor contracts were similar to the ones used for the collective recruitment. Among others the travel costs had to be paid by the mines. UE to Consulate, Brussels 30.7.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9630. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
546. Emigration report Consulate Brussels, 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Consulate Brussels to UE, 6.9.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. In Antwerp (Limburg) the number of individual recruitment increased by the second half of 1929. Consulate, Antwerp to UE, 13.6.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9.630. The Ressaix mine in the Centre basin was probably one of the first mines to use this procedure, whereby they recruited Poles from two villages in the district of Wielun (Solec-Kuyawski and Osiek). AMJ, 12. Woj. Poznan to PUPP, 28.9.1928. AP Poznan, Akta miasta Poznanie, 11.838. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
547. Individual recruited workers and the overall family reunion accounted in 1930 for 1,500 persons. Emigration report Consulate, Brussels 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
548. The Polish consulate in Brussels gave his agreement for the following number of contracts monthly from April until December 1930 respectively: 332, 231, 222, 179, 169, 139, 108, 73, 75. Emigration Report second half of 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
549. Visas for Polish labor migrants depended on having a valid passport, a medical certificate, a certificate of good conduct and a labor contract which had to be approved of by the Ministry of Labor. The Belgian Consul in Akwigranie did not apply this directives strictly as he granted visa to Poles who had a labor contract without the necessary agreement of the Ministry of Labor. Also the Minister of Justice had to give his agreement, this second agreement was necessary as, according to the Belgian consul in Cologne Polish citizens figured prominently in the Belgian criminal statistics. Conversation with the Polish Consul in Cologne, 1930. Polish Consulate in Brussels to Polish Consulate in Cologne, 1930. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1633, p.85 and 67-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
550. "Actuellement, nos consuls bloquent ces étrangers, frères ou amis de nos ouvriers étrangers." ACL, Exposé des Motifs-projet de modifications de l'avant projet sur la police des étrangers (spring 1929). Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
551. The information on spontaneous migration is scarce and because of the uncontrolled character of this migration it is difficult to assess its importance. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
552. Polish consul in Cologne to Polish consul in Berlin, 10.10.1929. Deutsche Arbeiterscentrale to Polish embassy in Berlin, 10.10.1929. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1657. That Belgium absorbed Polish agricultural laborers from Germany only at the end of the 1920s has not only to do with the situation in the Belgian labor market. The Polish authorities agreed only to accept their citizens who were forcibly removed after finishing their seasonal work when the Polish-German treaty on this issue was signed in November 1927. Before, although those Polish immigrants had de jure to leave by 15 December they were tolerated the whole year round. Dohse (1981), p.97. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
553. Polish consul in Cologne to Polish consul in Berlin, 10.10.1929. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie,1657. See appendix 6; the number of Polish, Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian citizens who were registered in Belgium as leaving their country directly for Belgium was higher than the number of passports issued for Belgium in those countries, an indication of the arrival of illegal emigrants and hence also illegal immigrants, at least for the Poles and the Yugosloavains who needed a visa. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
554. Emigration report of the Consulate in Brussels, 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Remarks concerning Polish schools in France and Belgium, 5.1929. AAN, MWRiOP, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
555. UE to MSZ, 30.4.1929. AAN, MSZ, 9540. Wiarus Polski, 10.4.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
556. Office for labor exchange and protection of emigrants in Kalisz to UE, 4.8.1928. UE to Wojewdzwe Katowice, 20.8.1928. APKA, UWSLPO, 172. UE to Consulate in Brussels, 25.5.1929. APK, Urzd wojewdzwe Kielecki, Pracy i Opieki Spoeczny, 9383. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
557. Le Soir, 2.4.1930, 1/6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
558. Belgian Consul in Aachen to Minister Foreign Affairs, 7.5.1929. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. see also Lebacqz to ACCBS, 29.5.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
559. Polish Consulate in Brussels to Polish Consulate in Cologne, 16.10.1929. Polish Consul in Cologne to Polish Consul in Berlin, 10.10.1929. Polish Consul in Berlin to Polish Consulate in Brussels, 26.10.1929. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1657.

The mine Espérance in Liège had created by 1929 a chain migration from some villages in the district Wielun: Ochedzym, Sokolnik.. The emigration from those villages started initially to France. When the mining company Espérance received Polish labor from these villages who had come directly to this mine after working in France, the company had sent work contracts to kith and kin of these workers. By 1929 was an autonomous (and illegal) migration current from these villages to the basin of Liège established. Interview Jan W., Klodzko 6.10.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
560. Polish Consul in Cologne to Polish consul in Berlin, 10.10.1929. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1657. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
561. Emigration report for 1928, Consulate in Brussels. AAN, MSZ, 11735. [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
562. De Haan (1990), p.145. Rapport de M. le commissaire de l'arrondissement de Verviers, p.42. Exposé de la situation administrative dans le province de Liège, 1923. Letak pro Vystèchovalce i Belgie. Praha, 1931, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
563. The minimum age for these Polish female servants was 21. Ponty (1988), p. 239. Emigration report Polish Consulate in Brussels, 1928 and 1929. respectively AAN, MSZ, 11.736 and 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
564. "The families, member of the Ligue found it increasingly difficult to find maids. Rare for everybody, they were impossible to find for the large families." Almanak der Kroostrijke Gezinnen, 1933, p.31. communicated by Segooris Madeleine. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
565. Maandblad De Bond, August-September 1931, communicated by Madeleine Sergooris. The girls' trip was being paid beforehand. Belgiumi Magyar Konyv, 1934. Vromans, Brussels, p.58. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
566. In the course of 1929-1930 more than 1,000 Poles were recruited by the mines in Limburg and thus entitled to a repatriation bonus if they finished their labor contract, only 11 of them applied for this bonus. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 23.10.1930. AAN, MSZ, 11.176. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
567. Marcinelle Nord to Minister of Labor, 12.12.1929. ARA, Mijnadministratie, blauw, D, 3A, 1. For similar complaints see AHCM, 13.9.1929. An analysis of a sample of 825 immigrants arriving in 1929 directly from Poland in Charleroi, Chatelineau en Marcinelle, based on the population registers indicates that after one year more than half of the immigrants had left the three towns mostly to unknown destinations. Vanderputte (1984), p.77. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
568. For this analysis I am indebted to Sabel (1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
569. "Je suis allé en Belgique dans la cantine des ouvriers. Tout aillait bien, en un mois j'ai pu envoyer 100 zotys à la maison. Ils m'ont écrit en me demandant où j'avais trouvé tout cet argent. Pendant la première année je n'ai manqué que 5 yours le travail. Je suis resté 3 jours au lit malade, un jour j'avais mal aux yeux et un jour j'étais à un enterrement. Nous avons quitté à 3 la cantine car la vie y était trop chère. Nous avons alors habité chez un Tchèque, où nous logions à 7" Archives de l'Etat à Mons, Cour d'Assises 1932, 13.26. See also Zaniewski (1942), p.118. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
570. "Les Tchèques (in fact Carpatho-Rusyns F.C.) se sauvait quand le "plafond" craquait un peu" Le Peuple, 23.7.1929/2,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
571. Emigration report of the Consulate in Brussels, 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
572. See appendix 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
573. According to the Polish consulate a few hundred Polish navvies, mostly mine deserters worked on the canal. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 23.10.1930. AAN, MSZ, 11.176. Emigration report 1930 Consulate in Brussels, 30.6.1931. Koodziej en Zakrewska (s.d.), p.147 [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
574. Of course not all factory workers of foreign nationality were mine "deserters". Emigration report 1929. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. The Polish consular authorities for the region of Brussels (not including Limburg and Antwerp) estimated the number of Poles working in industry, but not in mining or the crafts in their emigration reports as the following: January 1926 500; July 1927 1,500; January 1929 3,000; January 1930 and 1931 4,000 and 3,500 in January 1932. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
575. "entrée de main-d'oeuvre exotique, à faible rendement, malhabile, passablement indisciplinée et forte exigeante au point de vue de la rémunération." Report nr 552, September 1929. AEL, Gosson-Lagace à Jemappe sur Meuse [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
576. Their complaints were mostly that the mine paid them too low wages either because their skills were not recognized or because they had to do auxilliary work while they were skilled workers. Report on strike in Gouffre, 27.4.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. Enquête au sujet des 3 Tchèques qui demandent leur passeport pour partir, 18.3.1930. UEM, charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. PHK, 12.2.1929, p.620. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
577. The direction of this mobility is not always obvious. Poles recruited for the basin of Limburg left for better work to the Borinage or the basin of Charleroi and even to France. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 23.10.1930. AAN, MSZ, 11.176. "Depuis quelque temps nous observons de nombreux départs de notre personnel étrangers (Polonais spécialement) pour les bassins de la Campine et de Liège (Espérance en Bonne Fortune). Des tenanciers de cantines viennent au voisinages de nos sièges et phalanstères, recruter pour compte des charbonnages avec promesse de salaires sensiblement plus élevés que les nôtres." Charbonnages Réunis to ACCBS, 6.7.1931. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
578. "The Slovaks saved a lot to send it to Slovakia. They bought some land and build a house over there. All the others, also my father ate well. We ate sausages and ham. The Slovaks did not." Jozef S., Modlany 11.6.1990. The peasant workers hardly invested time and energy in the emigration organizations. Only immigrants who saw their sojourn abroad less than temporarily did so. Notes Kruczkowski in Balicki (1973) [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
579. For more details on thepolicy of the trade unions in the 1920s see Caestecker (1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
580. At least in the case of Czechoslovakia was it clearly the CS which pushed for an agreement. The then Christian Democratic Minister of Labor H.Heyman advised the Minister of Foreign Affairs to conclude an agreement not only with Czechoslovakia but also with Poland. The main provider of foreign labor, Italy was not among the list of countries with whom bilateral agreements were reached on unemployment insurance. The CS had established a special commission in January 1930 to reach a solution. C.Mertens to Minister of Labor H.Heyman, s.d. and Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans, 14.5.1930. ABZ, 2656bis, Question ouvrière. AMSAB, CMB, Comité Exécutif, 5.9.1929. Morelli (1985), p.722.Brown (1926), p.305. Vooruit, 1.2.1926. Archive RVA, Sous-commission de la commission permanente des caisses d'assurance contre le chomage involontaire, 23.4.1931. Note pour Monsieur le Directeur Général du Fonds National de Crise, 17.10.1931 and 9.12.1931. Archive RVA, Correspondance échangée avec le Ministère de l'Industrie et du Travail, 1929-1932. Leën (1933), p.157. The Hungarian consul told that he had asked the Belgian authorities to start negotiations but that they refused to do so. Hungarian embassy in Brussels to E.Kuttner, 21.11.1933. ANH, P85 Brüsseli Követseg, 12t. PHS, 2.4.1930, p.678. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
581. Examen des dossiers du Fonds National, 19.1.1927. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, E, 6, 1.2. Consul in Brussels to MSZ, 31.1.1926 and 29.5.1926. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Jackowski to MSZ, 13.2.1930. AAN, MSZ, 9540. Davignon to Hymans, 30.7.1930. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, E, 6, 1-2. R. Delcoigne to Hymans, 23.12.1929. ABZ, 2659bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
582. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 2.4.1931. AAN, MSZ, 11.565. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
583. Praca i Opieka Spoeczna, XII, 1932, 4, pp.457-460. It was ratified by the Polish Parliament on December 13th 1932. Drukow Sejmu, session 1932/1933, druk 601. The problem of the Ruhr migrants was not settled with this agreement, during the negotiations the Polish authorities had insisted to find a solution to this problem too, but the Belgian authorities answered that this was dependent on a German-Belgian agreement. Such an agreement was not reached in the interwar period. Rada organizayjna Polakw z zagranica to MSZ, 6.5.1932. AAN, MSZ, 11.566. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 23.5.1931. AAN, MSZ, 3491. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
584. Le Franc mineur, XII, 1932, 2, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
585. Jackowski to MSZ, 5.4.1931, 11.10.1932, 9.3.1933. AAN, MSZ, 11.565 and 11.566. Foreign Affairs to Minister of Labor, 16.11.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 6, 4. Consulate in Brussel to MSZ, 25.8.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.130. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
586. "That the Belgian workers do not understand yet the necessity of the revolutionary struggle is not important, what is important is that the Polish workers take the Belgians along in the struggle" Gos Robociarza, II, 1930, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
587. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 20.3.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. Kudlacik to Hond, 17.1.1930. Acta Hondiana, Karydnal August Hond, Korespondencja Tom V Cesc 28, p.263. Private archive ad na Warta. See also the Polish Communist emigration press such as Gos Pracy, Gos Robociarza, Trybuna Emigranta and Emigrant. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
588. Kozlowska (1978), p.17. Na Pomoc, II, May 1930, 1, p.2. Gos Pracy, 26.5.1928. Even in Limburg the immigrant communists took part as a distinct unit in the manifestation in Limburg: "While the train left the station of Winterslag the international was being sung by different workers: Poles, Belgians, Slovenians, Hungarians, Italians and Czechs. This was not yet been seen in Limburg. It made quite an impression. In Hasselt we had our slogans in the manifestation: Long life Russia, long life the proletarian dictatorship. Down with the fascists.." Gos Pracy, 5.5.1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
589. This communist union had a membership that fluctuated between 1929 and 1931 around 200, mainly immigrants. R.Van Doorslaer (1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
590. Commission syndicale centrale, 15.11.1929. Archive PCB, microfilms IML-Moscou. [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
591. Gos Robociarza, II, 1930, 1. Minten (1984), p.116. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
592. ACCA, 28.5.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
593. "vous vous êtes engagé à recommander, par circulaire, à toutes les entreprises utilisant des Tchécoslovaques, de veiller à ce que l'on évite envers eux toutes brutalités de geste ou de parole qui les froisse ou les offense et à ce qu'on les traite en prenant en considération certains traits dominants de leur caractère, notamment une grande fierté nationale" Czechoslovakian consulate in Brussels to FEDECHAR, 2.10.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
594. "Vous nous avez dit que, pendant les premières semaines qui suivent l'arrivée de l'ouvrier en Belgique toute demande de déplacement est immédiatement accordée, mais que, une fois cette période passée, il faut que la demande soit motivée pour qu'il y soit donné suite." Czechoslovakian consulate in Brussels to FEDECHAR, 2.10.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. Not all mines conceded to these demands. "Il est à craindre que les autres ouvriers de la même nationalité n'insistent ensuite pour être rendus libres également." Correspondance Hensies Pommeroeul and Rieu du Coeur, 23 and 30.9.1929. UEM, charbonnage d'Hensies Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
595. Hensies Pommeroeul to Czechoslovakian consulate in Brussels, 21.10.1929. Note du chef garde pour Monsieur Offerman, 12.8.1929. UEM, Hensies Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. Circular letter Polish Consul, s.d. Fontaine l'Eveque, Personnel, 1927. "My mother and my sisters took care of the boarders as much as for us. They got up for them when they left for work and prepared their lunchboxes" Interview Janek Z, Eisden 20.8.1990. "The mine director asked all the families if they would want to make dinner for the miners living in the hostels" Interview Jozef B., 21.8.1990 Eisden and Frans T., 21.8.1990 Maasmechelen. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
596. "L'intérêt capital à attirer en Belgique non point des individus isolés mais des familles entières." Guinotte, the most important representative in the mining sector of the Bank of Brussels in ACCA, 15.10.1924. The mines in the basin of Limburg and Centre were aiming especially at family reunion. In 1926 Beringen mine was already reimbursing the travel costs of the family members of its Polish workers who had been working in this mine for at least six months. ACCA, 9.7.1930. Emigration possibilities in the future, 1.6.1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.069. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 14.12.1923. AAN, MSZ, 9538. Beringen to Minister of Justice, 17.6.1926. AMJ, 12. Ceska Kolonisacnispolecnost to Magasins Généraux des Charbonnages du Borinage, 7.9.1929. Hensies-Pommeroeul to Magasins Généraux des Charbonnages du Borinage, 13.9.1929. Czechoslovakian consulate in Brussels to Hensies Pommeroeul, 26.10.1929. UEM, Hensies-Pommeroeul, main-d'ouvre étrangère.

Not all migrants were considered worth this special attention: "Nous regrettons ne

pouvoir intervenir dans les frais de voyage des femmes d'ouvriers tchéco-slovaques cette main-d'oeuvre nous ayant occasioné trop de déboires jusqu'à présent." Ressaix to ACC, 29.4.1929. AESH, Ressaix, copie des lettres Personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
597. According to the Communist paper Trybuna Emigranta, the mine de Hainaut in the Borinage manipulated the salaries of its Poles in this way to make them send their children to the mine. "The salary of each miner who has a child above 14, who works in a factory or as domestic help and not in the mine is reduced by 7 francs weekly for each child." Trybuna Emigranta, 2, 9.2.1929, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
598. Emigration reports for the period 1928-1931 of the consulate in Brussels in AAN, MSZ, 10.379. We do not want to reduce the role of women in the Polish mine-communities to spouses only, some worked also in the mines or elsewhere. In Limburg there were much more families. This was a result of the specific immigration history (the Ruhr community) and the facilities which the companies offered (housing). The latter partly explains the movement into this basin from the Walloon basins at the turn of the decade.

The figures on family reunion do not represent the willingness of all immigrants to stay, at least for a certain time in Belgium, as the unmarried migrants had considerable difficulties to set up a family. The lack of single young women in their ethnic communities and the absence of contacts with the large society caused them mostly to return to Poland to find a spouse. Sending for a fiancee became increasingly difficult after 1929 as the restrictive visa policy impeded these girls to join their future husbands in Belgium. Consulate in Brussels, Emigration report for 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
599. These are estimations based on incomplete data in Séance du 17.1.1924 et 11.3.1926 du Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique in: Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Hygiène, Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique. XXIV, 1924-1926, Liège, 1926, pp.11-14, pp.556-570. In 1931 the Walloon mines provided housing for more than half of the Polish single workers (3,304 on 6,592). Emigration report 1930 Brussels consulate. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. The situation was worst in the basin of Charleroi. Consulate in Brussels to UE, 21.9.1929. APKielce, Urzd Wojewodz Kielecki, 9383. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
600. For example in the basin of Charleroi. Edward K. (former inhabitant of Chatelineau, now in Poland) to author, 10.5.1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
601. Consulate in Brussels to UE, 21.9.1929. APKielce, Urzd Wojewodz. Kielce, Prace i Opieki Spoeczny, 9205. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
602. MP Rutten denounced the poor housing of the foreign workers and told that the mines of the Société Générale provided adequate housing. Minister of Labor H.Heyman confirmed this. PHS, 9.4.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
603. Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Hygiène, Conseil Supérieur d'hygiène publique. XXIV, 1924-1926, Liège, 1926, pp.3-23, pp.551-577. Moyersoen, Minister of Industry and Labor to Fedechar, 18.6.1923. Bois du Luc, 582. Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Mine Administration, 31.3.1930. AESH, administration des mines, ancien 3ème, ouvriers étrangers. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
604. De Christelijke Mijnwerker, orgaan van de Algemene Bond der christene Mijnwerkers van Nederland, 28.9.1929/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
605. The strategies of all the mines were variations on these two possibilities. A pure strategy was very difficult to implement, as we will see the dependency on outside agencies and the attitude of the migrants themselves forced most mines to make compromises. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
606. "the Belgian companies wish to retain the Polish workers forever. Some even try to denationalize the young generation." Emigration possibilities in the future, 1.6.1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.069. [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
607. Our focus here is on the assimilationist strategy of Waterschei. A variant was the policy pursued by the direction of Zwartberg, namely an assimilation not into the Flemish community, but into a French dominated Belgium. Independent of the actual strategy being used any independent workers' culture or trade union activity was combatted. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
608. When the company granted a Polish organization a small subsidy for a festivity for the Polish children the director stated clearly that this was an exceptional gesture: "Veuillez toutefois prendre note que ce subside vous est accordé à titre tout à fait exceptionel, car nos charbonnages ont pour principe de ne subventionner que les cercles qui étendent le bénéfice de leur activité à la population locale toute entière." Mine company Waterschei to Polish Union, Waterschei 8.12.1929. Private Papiers Zdrodzyniak. Flemish Catholic organizations were not considered ethnic organizations and received full support of the mine companies. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
609. Notes concerning the Polish schools in France and Belgium, 5.1929. AAN, Ministerstwo Religii i Oswiata Publiczne, 234. Vandervoort to Broekx, 11.4.1923. KADOC, Broekx, 14.5.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
610. Wychodzca, 1927, 33, p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
611. The Polish authorities promoted this ethnic strategy fully and insisted that only this strategy could yield substantial results in terms of the stability of the labor force. A strategy which respected their ethnic heritage could give the migrants "l'impression qu'ils ont retrouvé, en Belgique, un coin de leur patrie" Circular letter Polish consul, s.d. Fontaine l'Evêque, Personnel, 1927. The Polish authorities had of course other objectives than the mining companies. The Polish authorities aimed at the preservation of the Polish tradition to assure the return of the migrants to Poland. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
612. In 1926 a Polish school had also opened in Waterschei. The support of this mining company to this Polish school was limited and more pragmatic. It indicates that Waterschei had to yield to the autonomous aspirations of its labor force and to the authorities of the emigration countries who provided the necessary manpower. For an overview of Polish education in Belgium and the forces which shaped the changes in the educational facilities which these migrant communities had at their disposal see Caestecker (1991) [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
613. Annual report Consulate in Brussels. SUA, Ceskoslovensky urad zahranicni, 156, k.48. [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
614. Habets:"La proportion d'ouvriers étrangers est très grande à ce charbonnage, c'est pourquoi on a adjoint aux délégués des ouvriers socialistes et aux délégués des ouvriers chrétiens, un délégué par nationalité. Cela est pas régulier, mais on sera peut-être forcé d'entrer dans cette voie dans le Limbourg.... Les réclamations sont présentés chaque semaine à l'Ingénieur. Ces charbonnages naissants ne peuvent suivre les même méthodes que les autres charbonnages." CNMM, 12.1.1926, p.6. We do not know how long this procedure was being used. We also do not know the criteria for selecting the ethnic representatives, according to Gruselin a Pole and a Czech were nominated "dans une réunion tenue à la cantine du charbonnage et à laquelle assistaient le consul polonais et la direction de la société". Quoted in Minten (1984), p.104. [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
615. This was first experimented in a mine in the Liège basin (Seraing) in the first half of the 1920s. By 1929 Waterschei, Zwartberg and Winterslag also had foreign *porions*. The increasing percentage of immigrants among the underground workers caused to provide some responsible positions to migrants for safety reasons, but also in order to train newcomers. All the mines of Limburg opted for some degree of a multicultural strategy by the end of the 1920s. In the first half of the 1920s the language problems had been much more limited. The Ruhr migrants knew mostly German and the North Africans and Italians some French. This was not the case with the Poles and Czechoslovakians recruited in 1929. The promotion of immigrants remained, however, a political decision. The virtual absence of foreign *porions* in Wallonia, notwithstanding the increasing share of qualified miners among the immigrants is a clear proof of this. CNMM, 12.1.1926. Interview Stanlislawa C, Meeuwen 13.9.1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
616. Polish Catholic Mission in Brussels to Hond, Primate of Poland, 18.3.1926 and 14.2.1927. AAG, III, 1. In 1926 Hond succeeded Dalbor as Primate of Poland. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
617. Polish Catholic Mission in Brussels to Hond, Primate of Poland, 18.3.1926 and 2.12.1926. AAG, III, 1. Rooner to bishop, 1927. Parish priest Winterslag to vicar De Groot, 18.4.1927. Archive bishopric Liège, Kerkhofs, 71. Parish priest Winterslag to Broekx, 22.8.1928. KADOC, Broekx, 14.5.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
618. Polish Catholic Mission in Brussels to Hond, Primate of Poland, 14.2.1927 and 28.12.1928. Polish Consul in Antwerp to MSZ, 21.10.1929. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
619. Polish Catholic Mission in Brussels to Hond, Primate of Poland, 24.8.1929. The director of Waterschei Fontaine who had also asked for a Polish priest was delighted with the arrival of the Flemish priest who had learned Polish. Polish Catholic Mission in Brussels to Hond, Primate of Poland, 14.2.1931. AAG, III, 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
620. Most of his expenses were paid by the mining company Cheratte-Hasard. Kotowski to Hond, 4.4.1928. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
621. Report Kosibowicz to Hond, 1927. Kudlacik to Hond, 16.11.1928, 28.12.1928, 5.3.1929, 31.7.1929 and 20.9.1929. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
622. FEDECHAR asked for 10 more Polish priests. Kudlacik to Hond, 17.6.1929, 3.1929, 24.8.1929 and 19.10.1929. The catholic director of the mine de Hainaut had high expectations of the influence of a Polish priest: "Nous verrions probablement nos Polonais revenir à l'église et abandonner le Syndicat communiste Polonais qui existe et peut prendre des grandes proportions" Debilde to Polish consul, 29.6.1929. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 30.7.1929. AAG, III,1. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
623. All 4 Polish priests (except maybe the one in the Borinage) received an income from the Belgian authorities as a *vicarus* (800 francs). This was less than half of their income. The Polish authorities granted the Mission also a small subsidy (in 1930 4,500 francs). The financial support of the mines remained essential for those priests. The mines provided them with free housing and about half of their income. The priests in Liège, Centre and the Borinage were financially supported by mainly one large mine company, Hasard-Cheratte, Marcinelle Nord and de Haunait respectively. The priest in the basin of Charleroi was financially supported by the ACCBS (24,000 francs annualy). Kudlacik to Hond, 6.11.1929, 14.11.1929, 20.5.1930, 7.6.1930, 2.2.1932, 16.1.1935 and 25.6.1935. AAG, III, 1. Leheuwe to Blampain,vicarus-generaal, 3.6.1930. AESH, Ressaix, Copie des lettres. ACCBS, 9.12.1929 and 12.12.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
624. Castiau (1973), p.4. Morelli (1985), p.336. Vooruit, 23.10.1927/11-3. ACCBS, 9.12.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
625. Verhelst (1977), p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
626. Some priests were even recruited as agents for the Sûreté, in particular to denounce Communists. Extrait du rapport de l'aumônier polonaise pour la période d'octobre 1930 à octobre 1931. Bois Du Luc, 181. Kudlacik to Hond, 20.5.1930 and 8.8.1933. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
627. Kudlcaik to Hond, 14.3.1930. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
628. Report Kotowski to Archbishop, 18.3.1926. AAG, III, 1. The President of the Polish workers' organizations disapproved of the support the Polish Mission asked from the collieries, the Polish government should, he argued, support the Mission. Kotowksi to Hond, 4.4.1928. AAG, III, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
629. There were only very few Poles member of the powerful Belgian *mutualités*, be they part of the Christian Democratic or Socialist labor movement or founded by the employers. Emigration report Embassy Brussels, first half 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. This figure indicates that only a minority of the Polish migrants was organized, in particular the peasant workers were not eager to pay their dues to such a mutual aid organization, hence they were mostly not insured against health risks outside the

workplace. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
630. An indication of the limited "gratitude" of workers for the facilities granted by the company: the second cité of Winterslag, the Roercité was not considered to be company possession by the Polish worker, but as their territory. In common parlance they did not use the official Flemish name of the streets but had there own names such as Warszawski Rynek (Warszaw Market) and Nasz Platz (Our place). Interview C. Georges, 13.3.1990 Meeuwen. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
631. "Cette façon de faire serait, pensons-nous, la première qui rappellerait aux 5 tchécos qu'ils sont en rupture de contrat de travail et équivaudrait pour eux à un rappel au respect des engagements antérieurs." Mariemont-Bascoup to Fontaine-L'Evêque, 20.9.1929. Municipal archive Charleroi, Archives Fontaine-L'Evêque, Personnel 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
632. For example in a case against 12 Polish "deserters" Winterslag asked for the reimbursement of the travel costs and also 500 francs indemnities from each of them. For one of the Poles this meant 950 francs indemnities in total. In another case the indemnity asked for was probably even higher as the value of the coal which this "deserter" would have dug was asked for. It seems that the courts only fined the "deserters" the reimbursement of the travel costs. Further research in this field is necessary as we only looked into the archives of the Conseils de Prud'Hommes in the basin of Limburg, where the mine companies did not sue their "deserters" except for

the above-mentioned case. Committee FEDECHAR, 16.1.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. Informations sociales BIT, XXXIV, 1930, 7, p.289. Usine Belge, 31.5.1930, p.154. Winterslag to Conseils de Prud'Hommes, 16.11.1929. Arbeidsauditoriaat Hasselt, werkrechtersraad-bundels 1929-1936, werklieden. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
633. Informations sociales BIT, XXXIV, 1930, 7,p.289. ACCBS, 8.7.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
634. "l'effet moral serait très puissant et la fixation de la main-d'oeuvre plus facile pour tous."Committee Fedechar, 16.1.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. "ce qu'il importe avant tout, c'est d'apprendre à cette main-d'oeuvre étrangère qui occupe une place de plus en plus importante dans la population ouvrière du pays, à respecter ses engagements." Orban who defends the proposal of the regional association of Centre basin in ACCA, 11.9.1929. Ivan Orban was the administrator of the Limburg mine Houthalen-Zolder and he was close to the Bank of Brussels. Mahoux (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
635. "Il faut améliorer et discipliner cette main-d'oeuvre...Au fur et à mesure que nous avançons le problème se montre plus important et plus complexe. Plus de solidarité au sein de la Fédération devient indispensable." Roisin in Committee Fedechar, 16.1.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. Roisin was president since 1921 of the ACCBS

and director of the Sacré-Madame mine. Mahoux (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
636. "Le but poursuivi par notre Association d'amener et de conserver en Belgique le plus de main-d'oeuvre étrangère possible, n'est donc pas atteint par ce moyen." Habets in ACCA, 25.9.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
637. Committee Fedechar, 18.9.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
638. "Ce système, laissant à l'ouvrier plus de liberté, aurait pour conséquence, qu'au lieu de quitter la Belgique où ils sont contraints de travailler là où le travail peut leur déplaire (refers here to the experience with the Czechoslovakians), ils y resteraient, ayant la faculté de s'employer autre part." Kerstens in ACCA, 25.9.1929. Jospeh Kersten was in the 1920s the central figure of the mining interests of the Société Générale. He was the *inspecteur des charbonnages patronnées par la Société Générale* until 1930, when he was replaced by Edgard Stein. Mahoux (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
639. Meeting 6.9.1929 and 13.9.1929. Bulletin de l'AHCM, 1929. ACCBS, meeting 6.9.1929. Main d'oeuvre étrangère. Réglement. Projet, 8.1929. Bois du Luc, 306. ACCA, 25.9.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
640. For such lists see AEL, Minerie, 85 and 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
641. "la solution d'une entente régionale....entre les divers groupements industriels au sujet de la stabilité de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère.. est adoptée, de manière à éviter d'une part, toute surenchère, d'autre part, tout débauchage." réunion, 8.4.1929. Bulletin de l'Union des charbonnages, mines et usines métallurgiques de la

province de Liège, LXI, 1929, p.12. ACCBS, 6.9.1929. ACCA, 25.9.1929. The information we have on recruitment by the iron and steel industry indicates that only a small number of workers were involved. That such an agreement had already been reached in the basin of Liège by the middle of 1929 had, of course, much to do with the vertical integration of the businesses in this basin. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
642. "On étudiera la possibilité de créer un système de cartes où la profession sera indiquée, ainsi que le groupement recruteur, à défaut, on recherchera un moyen pratique d'identification du groupement recruteur par example, par un mention ou un cachet opposé sur le passeport." CCI, communiqué social, 10.7.1929, p.61 and 25.4.1929, p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
643. We have no information whether there were other extra-sectorial agreements concluded than the one in the Liège basin and to what extent all these agreements were respected. [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
644. In one mine Polish labor threatened to strike if the mining company did not hand them back their passports. When they finaly obtained their passports, after the Polish embassy's intervention they did stay in the mine. Overall, they were satisfied with the working conditions. Report of missions, 7-30.7.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. Already in 1926 Beringen, a mine in Limburg, had tried to retain the passports of the Poles they had recruited. Gos Pracy, 26.11.1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
645. "notre droit n'étant pas discutable et pouvant vous être confirmé à tout instant par le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères.. Nous espérons que les charbonnages s'apercevront que cette mesure leur fait plus de mal que de bien, qu'elle ne retient pas au travail les ouvriers qui veulent s'en aller et est considérée comme une atteinte à leurs droits-ce qu'elle est en réalité- par les meilleurs d'entre eux" Czechoslovakian embassy to director Hensies-Pommeroeul. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, main-d'oeuvre étrangère. Committee FEDECHAR, 16.1.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
646. "Le 30 août 1929, lorsque le gouvernement italien a voulu faire enlever aux ressortissants italiens émigrés en Belgique, par l'intermédiaire de ses consuls, les passeports, je me suis élevé contre cette prétention estimamt(sic) qu'il n'était pas possible, sous prétexte de fixer l'ouvrier à son travail, de vinculer sa liberté civile et de l'empêcher, sous le contrôle de l'autorité italienne, de quitter librement tant son patron que le pays. Vous avez bien voulu partager ma manière de

voir" RB(Remy) to Minister van Justice P.E.Janson, 7.2.1930. AMJ,1 B6 III.

Maybe also considerations following from the new politicized migration policy of fascist Italy caused the Italians authorities to decide to seize the passports of their emigrants in Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
647. CCI to Nouvelles Carrières de Porphyre de Lessines, 26.7.1930. AMJ, 33 C30/A. The Italian weekly of the PCI in Belgium refered only to the retaining of passports by the Italian authorities for those emigrants who worked for the Italian section of the World Exposition. Morelli (1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
648. "Lorsque l'employeur est tenu de remettre le passeport à l'ouvrier sur la demande, cela veut dire qu'on peut conserver le passeport, donc il faut que l'ouvrier le redemande et on sait déjà qu'il veut partir." Comité d'Immigration, 3.7.1929. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies-Pommeroeul, II.A.1.4. "M.Habets signale qu'il est très difficile de faire entrer dans des contrats de clauses qui ne sont pas légales. Toutefois pour les Tchéco-slovaques on a intercalé des les contrats un article disant: "les ouvriers ont le droit de redemander leurs papers personnels et les charbonnages doivent les leur remettre de suite. Cette formule obligeant l'ouvrier à comparaître devant les patrons avant son départ, donnerait sans doute une satisfaction partielle" Fedechar, 17.7.1929. Bois Du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
649. Coppée to ambassador of Czechoslovakia, 10.12.1929. AESH, Ressaix, Copie des lettres Personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
650. FEDECHAR to ACCBS, 15.10.1929. Bois du Luc, 181. Hensies Pommeroeul to FEDECHAR, s.d. UEM, Charbonnage d'Hensies Pommeroeul, main d'oeuvre étrangère. ACCA, 23.10.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
651. Circular letter FEDECHAR, 26.5.1930. AEL, Minerie, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
652. There were migrants who were ready to pay the amount due to the mining companies for the remaining transport costs themselves in order to be able to find another job. Emigration report of the Consulate in Brussels, 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
653. Committee FEDECHAR, 6.6.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
654. Marcinelle Nord to Minister of Labor, 12.12.1929. ARA, Mijnadministratie, blauw, D, 3A, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
655. and of course a passport. Circular letter of 24.5.1929. Exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Hainaut, 1929, pp.43-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
656. Polish consul in Cologne to Polish consul in Berlin, 10.10.1929. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1657. [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
657. In 1929 the Polish consulate in Essen noticed an increase in the number of the Poles who asked for help after an expulsion from Belgium. Most of those Poles previously had lived in France. The monthly figures were the following: 63, 76, 73, 96, 105, 133, 159, 143, 123, 196, 165, 134. Report Polish Consulate Essen, 28.6.1930. Cologne, Emigration report 1929. Polish ambassador Brussels to MSZ, 21.10.1930. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 2232.

The Zentralstelle für jüdischen Wanderfürsorge noticed in the second half of 1929 that the German-Belgian migration reversed its direction, now Jewish migrants left Belgium for Germany while before it was the opposite. Maurer (1986), p.71. [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
658. Journal de Liège, 7.10.1927, 20.10.1927, 12.11.1927. Le Matin d'Anvers, 3.4.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
659. L'Avenir du Luxemburg, 19.6.1930/1,6. Morelli (1982). Especially in Limburg where the Communist influence remained marginal throughout the 1920s was the outcry in the press and by the local authorities hysterical, when in 1929 and 1930 some foreign and Belgian Communists were identified. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 10.11.1929. AAN, MSZ, 11.173. "La plupart de ces étrangers seraient sympathisants aux idées communistes. Beaucoup d'ouvriers, la plupart, posséderaient une arme...Cette situation ne laisse pas d'être quelque peu inquiétante" Parquet de la Cour d'Appel de Liège to Minister of Justice, 29.3.1930. AMJ, 1B6. Massin (1980), pp.72-73. De Gazet van Hasselt, 24.4.1930/1, 1-2. Verslag over de staking te Zwartberg, Genck 1930. AMSAB, Massin. De Bilzenaar, 3.5.1929, p.3 and 19.11.1929. Provincial Archive Limburg, Staking 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
660. The Communists of foreign nationality which had organized the strikes in Zwartberg, La Brouck and also those who had participated in the Communist manifestation of August the first were all expelled. Trybuna Emigranta, 7.8.1929. Nowa Gazeta, 15.12.1929, p.3. Jérôme (1983), p.112. La Voix Communiste, 6.3.1932. Minten (1984), p.116.

Before November 1927 the Socialist Ministers and especially E.Vandervelde had mostly succesfully opposed the expulsion of immigrants for the mere fact of being communist or professing communist ideas. Only if they de facto disturbed the public order an expulsion was acceptable for the Socialists. Council of Ministers, 16.11.1925 and 28.2.1927. Vandervelde to Tschoffen, 6.7.1925. IEV, Vandervelde, Correspondance. [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
661. Proces verbal de la conference de la MOE central du 28 september 1930. Archives PCB, Microfilms IML-Moscow. For the Jewish and Italian migration see respectively Van Doorslaer R. (1994) and Morelli (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
662. Rapport de la commissaire de l'arrondissement de Thuin, p.43 in Exposé de la situation administrative de la province de Hainaut pour l'année 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
663. PS, p.73. The implementation of the Belgian refugee policy before 1929 has not been studied yet. We only have some information on the Nansen-refugees. We do not know if facilities were granted by the Belgian authorities to other groups of refugees and why those immigrants were granted refugee-status. According to Bekaert (1940), p.352 Russian refugees with juridical antecedents were not eligible for refugee-status. [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
664. ARA, Hymans, II, 165. According to Bekaert (1940), p.391 12,000 Russian "refugees" had found asylum in Belgium. This does not necessarily mean their number increased with 4,000 in the 1930s as there were no clear-cut statistics on "refugees", they were mostly included among the foreigners of their nationality of origin. [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
665. Le Travailleur, XV, 1936, 9, pp.2-4. De Beule (1980), pp.149-150. La lutte contre le chômage, XIV, 1925, p.38. Morelli (1979b, 1981b, 1983). Interview Jozef W. 1986, Warsawa. [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
666. See appendix 5c. [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
667. G.Vanderveken in Le Peuple, 12.12.1929/2,1. Report for the annual congres of the POB, Bruxelles, 1931, pp.142-143, 243, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
668. Provincial council of Limburg, 2.10.1930, pp.175-191. That the tension between the two distinct Socialists' allegiances -national labor and the refugees of leftist signature as representatives of the organized international labor class- could run up high is illustrated in the trade union congress of 1931. SK, XXVIIe Syndikaal kongres gewijd aan de economische krisis gehouden op 30 en 31 januari 1931. Brussel, 1932, p.19 and 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
669. Council of Ministers, 24.7.1929. De Voghel told the Polish and the Dutch Consul that the government and the Sûreté now took revision of the alien legislation more serious because of the "excesses" within the Italian emigration. Consulate Brussels to MSZ, 27.2.1930 and 8.4.1931. AAN, MSZ, ? Dutch Consul to Director of the National Service for Unemployment and Labor Exchange, 4.10.1929. ARDH, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
670. Council of Ministers, 17.7.1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
671. As we do not have any information at our disposal on the course the Antwerp experience took, we can deduce only that it was not considered that successful, probably because it was impeded by constitutional limits.

In Antwerp a high number of immigrants were refused an identity card. According to De Haan's quantitative analysis of 2,002 Jewish migrants arriving in Antwerp in 1920, 1925 or 1930, 43 % of the single immigrants and between 20 and 30% of the married aliens were refused an identity card. That this was merely based on the criminal records of these immigrants is unlikely; probably the local administration acted on its own behalf. Economic criteria seem to have been important in their decisions (aliens active in the diamond business had no problems, while those in other trades did). This refusal had hardly any effect on their sojourn in Belgium, as the Sûreté refused to expel any alien who did not endanger public order. The Antwerp authorities also organized a yearly count of the aliens. In 1928 there were some 6,000 aliens discovered who were unknown to the

local administration. De Haan (1990), pp.91-92. Le Matin d'Anvers, 3.4.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
672. For different versions of the bill see AMJ, 1B6. The version of January 1929 (Avant-projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers) was sent to the FEDECHAR see Bulletin de l'AHCM, 1929, p.6 and Bois du Luc, 181. For the articles dealing with the regulation of alien labor see appendix 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
673. Rapport au Gouvernement de la Commission Holvoet s.d. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
674. see comments of Procureur Generaal, Procureur Schepper and L'officier judiciaire principal dirigeant d'Anvers, quelques considérations par rapport à l'avant projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers, 4.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
675. Procureur Generaal to the Minister of Justice, 22.1.1929. Louwage, officier judiciaire principal dirigeant de Bruxelles, 2.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
676. "M.Beltjens estime qu'il conviendrait de dire que c'est pour raison d'ordre public que la suppression est proposée: des étrangers épousent des Belges pour ne pas être expulsés, des ménages se créent pour tourner la loi." Commission Meyers, 26.9.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
677. The law of 1897 made it difficult to convict an alien merely for disobeying an expulsion order. The prosecutor had to prove that the alien had left the country. Only an expelled alien's re-entrance into the country was an infraction of the law. The conviction of destitute foreigners who disobeyed an expulsion order was a different case. They could be convicted because of vagrancy. [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
678. According to the Holvoet bill the Minister of Justice would have the authority to expel all aliens (*renvoyer*). Only two privileged categories of the law of 1897 would be eligible for expulsion depending on a decision of the Council of Ministers (*expulser*):

1.Aliens who were authorized by the King to establish their main domicile in Belgium, *les domiciliés*

2.Aliens who were married to a Belgian and had one or more children born out of this wedlock who were born during this sojourn in Belgium or who lived in Belgium for at least 5 years.

for art. 2 was the reasoning behind the dismissal of the absolute protection established by the law of 1897 the following: "L'intérêt de la collectivité ne doit il pas primer l'intérêt particulier de la famille?"

The third category of 1897, those who could opt for Belgian nationality lost all protection which the alien law of 1897 had given them.

Commission Meyers, 3.10.1929. AMJ, 1B6 and PDK, 1929-1930, nr.291, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
679. The belief in the value of a repressive strategy is highlighted in the following argument of the Procureur Generaal who evaluated the articles which dealt with the expulsion order and the administrative sanctions against those who did not obey this order: "A certains égards la situation des étrangers visés dans ces dispositions...peut être assimilée à celle des individus trouvés en état de vagabondage ou se livrant à la mendicité. Or, la procédure instaurée pour réprimer la mendicité et le vagabondage a donné d'excellents résultats. Je suis convaincu, pour ma part, qu'elle peut sans aucun inconvénient, être étendue aux étrangers indésirables." Procureur Generaal to the Minister of Justice, 22.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6.

There was discussion among the representatives of the Judiciary whether the cases of the expelled aliens who were still in the country should be dealt with by a court as there was the possibility that an appeal could deal more adequately with the legality of the expulsion and with the problem of nationality (was it an alien or a Belgian?). The repressive argument prevailed. Procureur of Brussels to Sûreté, 4.1.1929. Procureur Generaal to Minister of Justice, 22.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. P.V. de la Commission Meyers, 1929. AMJ, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
680. Rapport au Gouvernement de la Commission Holvoet s.d. AMJ, 1B6. De Voghel, Chief of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Labor told the Dutch Consul that his Ministry had considered it convenient to use the insistence of the Sûreté to change the legislation to insert some articles on labor in the new bill. The Ministry of Labor considered that there was no pressing need for such a regulation at that very moment, but they wanted to be armed when the economic situation would deteriorate. Dutch Consul in Brussels to Director of the National Service for Unemployment and Labor Exchange, 4.10.1929. ARDH, 183. Vercruysse continued to insist on the need for a regulation of labor migration in order to prevent immigrants to shift from those segments of the labor market where there was a labor shortage to other segments of the labor market. In May 1930 he had even to convince some Socialists of his concerns about "des abus trop flagrants et nombreux". Le Progrès Social, XIX, IIe série, 1930, 14, p.197. [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
681. "Les décisions du Ministre devront tenir compte des avis..d'organismes paritaires (les Commissions de surveillance des Bourses du Travail, le Comité national de la main-d'oeuvre)" Note relative aux articles 11, 12, 13, 14 et 15 du projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers. AMJ, 1B6. The bill of January 1929 was according to the annotation in the archives of the Ministry of Justice the definite bill of the commission Holvoet. In the summer of 1929, however, another version was passed to the CCI in which the remarks of the Ministry of Labor on the procedure his Ministry would instaure to authorize an employer to engage an alien -consulting corporate institutions- were incorporated in a much more detailed way. The rest of the bill seems to be identical. We do not know if these changes reflect a conflict between the Department of Labor and the Holvoet Commission on the trade union involvement or if they only specify some details of the Holvoet bill. As we didn't find any reference to such a conflict we presume the last interpretation is the correct one. For the two versions see appendix 4. Committee FEDECHAR, 17.7.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
682. "Il faut que les ouvriers étrangers restent, sinon, chez les patrons qui les ont engagés, tout au moins dans le groupe industriel" Note (of Ministry of Labor) relative aux articles 11, 12, 13, 14 et 15 du projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers. AMJ, 1B6. Committee FEDECHAR, 28.11.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
683. FEDECHAR to Minister of Labor H.Heyman, 30.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. Committee Fedechar, 6.2.1929 and 3.4.1929. Renkin, Prime Minister to President of AHCM, 9.7.1931. Bulletin de l'AHCM, 1931, p.56. [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
684. "Ce contrôle doit rester dans les limites d'une grande modération. Les pays étrangers exigent que leurs nationaux soient traités comme les ouvriers belges. Restreindre leur liberté d'engagement serait les transformer en parias. Cela nous vaudrait des difficultés diplomatiques et le tarissement de ces sources de recrutement." ACL, Exposé des Motifs-projet de modifications de l'avant projet sur la police des étrangers. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
685. Committee FEDECHAR, 17.7.1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
686. "Ces éléments qui pénètrent en Belgique sans papiers réguliers sont, en effet, ou de bons ouvriers attirés chez nous par les renseignements favorables qui leur ont envoyés des compatriotes, ou des indésirables qu'il y a le plus grand intérêt à refouler, sans retard, hors du territoire." Fedechar to Minister of Labor H.Heyman, 30.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. ACL, Exposé des Motifs-projet de modifications de l'avant projet sur la police des étrangers. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
687. "L'immigration en fraude est un fait et, soit difficultés administratives, soit impossibilité d'acquitter les frais de passeport, elle subsistera. Il y a intérêt à ce que ces immigrants régularisent leur situation au lieu d'aller grossir les effectifs des entrepreneurs marrons (marchands d'hommes) ou d'échouer dans les milieux interlopes." ACL, Exposé des Motifs-projet de modifications de l'avant projet sur la police des étrangers. Bois du Luc, 181. For the amendments of the ACL see appendix 4b. [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
688. "Nous ne pouvons pas admettre que ces autorisations dépendent des bourses de travail. Celles-ci sont le refuge habituel d'indésirables (motifs-incapacité physique-tares morales-occupation d'appoint à côté de secours chômage-exigences de salaires disproportionnés, aux capacité, etc...). Les bourses de travail voudront imposer l'embauchage de ces indésirables avant tout engagement d'étranger...Puisqu'il faut passer par un contrôle économique, il vaut encore mieux de le limiter à un contrôle d'ordre numérique collectif et de le confier à un fonctionnaire compétent de l'Administration Centrale, qui s'inspirera, espérons-le, des besoins généraux de l'industrie." ACL, Exposé des Motifs-projet de modifications de l'avant projet sur la police des étrangers. Bois du Luc, 181. Committee Fedechar, 17.7.1929 [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
689. It was generally accepted that the shortage of labor would increase in the short future because of the low birth rate during the war. Nobody predicted an economic crisis. CCI, communiqué social, 25, 1929, p.48. [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
690. "La note... du CCI,...tendant à la règlementation légale de l'immigration et à la stabilisation du personnel immigré dans les limites de leur profession et de leur contrat paraît devoir donner satisfaction..quant au débauchage par les autres industries. Au cours de sa séance du 25 avril la Commission d'Etude du CCI a pris connaissance d'un avis de principe de Monsieur Hankar Urban opposé à tout projet de législation conformément d'ailleurs aux tendances qui semblaient prédominer précédemment dans les milieux du CCI. L'assemblée après discussion... a estimé en principe qu'il y avait lieu de poursuivre l'étude du projet de loi malgré les inconvénients à résulter éventuellement d'une discussion aux chambres législatives qui tendra sans doute à aggraver le projet dans un sens restrictif de la liberté des industries....L'assemblée s'est déclarée en principe d'accord sur les observations générales de la Fédération." Committee Fedechar, 17.7.1929 and 3.4.1929. Rapport du Secrétaire sur les travaux de l'exercice 1929-1930. Bulletin de l'Union des Charbonnages, mines et usine métallurgique de la province de Liège, 1930, p.25. CCI, communiqué social, 10.7.1929, p.61 and 25.4.1929, p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
691. This Commission was called after its President, Meyers the Procureur Generaal of Liège. In this commission were seated the following persons: in total three Procureurs, the Auditeur Général, Advocat Général Pholien, Directeur Général of the législation pénale Dullaert, the Administrateur of the Sûreté Beltjens and his predecessor Remy, the then Advocat General of Ghent. [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
692. The position of the state when strikes broke out would be especially exposed. "ne mettront-ils pas souvent le Ministère en fâcheuse posture, notamment lorsque l'embauchage l'ouvriers étrangers doit exercer une influence sur l'issue d'une grève." Procureur Generaal Cornil to Minister of Justice P.E.Janson, 22.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
693. These articles are "de nature à nuire à la bonne marche de nombreuses industries. Enfin, ce contrôle par le Gouvernement du recrutement de la main-d'oeuvre est-il en lui-même opportun? Le Gouvernement ne me parait devoir exercer vis à vis des étrangers qu'un droit de police...Ces articles contiennent des dispositions qui vont à l'encontre des principes de liberté qui ont toujours été à la base de notre organisation sociale. Si l'application de ces prinicipes traditionnels donne, en ce moment, lieu à certains abus, la mise en oeuvre des dispositions nouvelles nous engagera dans la voie du protectionisme économique" Procureur Général Cornil to Minister of Justice, 22.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6.

This liberalism paid little attention to the individual freedom of the alien. One should be cautious to include within this liberalism the defence of the civil rights of the aliens. The insistence from all those circles for far-reaching police powers over the aliens does incline us even to ignore it. The freedom they evoke is first of all the freedom of the employer to recruit immigrants. The official advice of the Commission Meyers on this issue was more moderate "que pour le moment, cette question ne présentait pas la même urgence que l'élaboration d'une loi de police relative aux étrangers, parce que la crise de main-d'oeuvre rend naturellement la concurrence étrangère peu redoutable chez nous." Meyers to Minister van Justitie, 10.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
694. But des dispositions proposées par le Ministère de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale. Note s.d. (1930?). AMJ, 1B6. See also the remarks on the side line: "art.11-2 mise en esclavage , art.12-1 étatisme." Avant projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers, C6. AMJ, 1B6. for the articles see appendix 4.

Also other important personalities, such as the Mayor of Brussels were opposed to the articles concerning the regulation of foreign labor. "Le Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale sera amené, fatalement, à s'inspirer moins de considérations d'ordre et de sécurité publique que du souci de protéger la main d'oeuvre nationale. L'action syndicale s'exercera auprès de lui, afin d'obtenir que soient écartés les ouvriers étrangers, notamment en période de grève. Une hausse artificielle des salaires pourrait en être la conséquence. Au surplus, la nécessité d'une autorisation préalable avant l'embauchage d'un travailleur manuel ou d 'un employé...entraînerait des retards souvent incompatibles avec les exigences des entreprises industrielles. Mayor Brussels to Commissaire, 7.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. Général Major Blanpain agreed that some regulation of foreign labor was necessary, but favored a flexible system allowing employers to engage temporarily illegal aliens. Général Major Blanpain to Minister of Justice, 5.1.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
695. Supplement économique de l'Indépendance belge, 19.5.1929/1 and 12.5.1929/1. L'Etoile Belge quoted in Communiqué social du CCI, 25.10.1929, 20, p.90. Journal de Liège, 3.9.1929. Le Matin, 14.9.1929. Avenir du Luxemburg, September 1929 (press cutting in AMJ, 12) [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
696. Commission Meyers, 26.9.1929. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
697. Gottschalk to ILO, 21.9.1929. Archive ILO, E 3/7/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
698. "Divers indices montrent que le marché du travail est, sur plusieurs points, sursaturé et que nous allons vers la submersion, dans certaines professions, par des éléments dont aucune procédure régulière n'a autorisé l'entrée dans le pays. Il faut donc admettre que la règlementation est éludée par ceux qui craignent de ne pouvoir entrer chez nous par la voie régulière... Mes moyens d'investigation ont montré que, dans de nombreux cas, les certificats d'emploi fournis à l'appui des demandes de visa, sont de pure complaisance et que, dans de nombreux autres cas, la demande ne répond pas à un besoin réel au point de vue du marché du travail belge. Ce côté de la question échappe forcément à votre Administration. Il est donc désirable d'en revenir à la consultation de mon Département comme autrefois." Minister of Labor H.Heyman to Minister of Justice P.E.Janson, 25.1.1930. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
699. Invitations for the Commission de législation concernant la Sûreté de l'Etat et la police des étrangers, 16.1.1930 and 5.5.1930. AMJ, 1B6. We do not know the motives of Minister of Foreign Affairs Hymans to insist on this provision. [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
700. "Le Ministre de la Justice peut donc renvoyer l'étranger et à fortiori peut-il le laisser résider "à titre provisoire" en mentionnant sur la carte d'étranger...: Le titulaire de la présente carte n'est autorisé à demeurer dans le Royaume que pour y remplir les obligations imposées par le contrat de travail visé le .......par le Ministre de l'Industrie, du Travail etc..si le contrat terminé, l'individu obtient du dit Ministre l'autorisation de travailler pour un nouveau patron, il recevra un nouveau permis provisoire." But des dispositions proposées par le Ministère de l'Industrie, du Travail et de la Prévoyance Sociale. Note Sûreté, s.d.(1930). AMJ, 1B6.

This did not mean that the Sûreté was ready to concede part of its domain to the Minister of Labor. The institutionalization of some kind of control over the economic activities of aliens by integrating the expertise and interests of the Ministry of Labor was not really something which senior civil servants within the Sûreté were favoring as is clear in the following quote: "Si la nouvelle loi sur les étrangers était vôtée par le Parlement, il resterait à examiner si la Sûreté Publique est liée, pour l'admission d'un étranger à résidence, par l'avis du Ministère de l'Industrie et du Travail. Il va sans dire que la Sûreté Publique, doit rester indépendante dans ce domaine, tout en tenante compte des suggestions que le département de l'Industrie et du Travail lui ferait en se basant sur l'état de marché du travail." Report Second Director Liekendael, Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 6.2.1930. AMJ, 1b6 III. [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
701. Article 12 stated that a government authorization was necessary for any labor exchange office which wanted to provide foreign labor. A caution had to be paid by these offices. What the exact purpose of this caution was, is not clear. PHK, 1929-1930, 291.

This article came from the Holvoet bill (see appendix 4, article 14), but the Meyer commission had considered it as irrelevant. Probably due to the insistence of H.Heyman, the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor and also H.Hyman, the Liberal Minister of Foreign Affairs was this article inserted in the final bill. The following quotation probably refers to this article: "Jaspar donne connaissance des modifications apportées à l'avant-projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers à la suite des observations présentées par MM. les Ministres des Affaires Etrangers et de l'Industrie et du Travail relativement à l'embauchage des ouvriers étrangers. Le conseil marque son d'accord." Council of Ministers, 26.5.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
702. Minister of Labor H.Heyman to C.Mertens, 5.3.1930. Quoted in BV, 20.4.1938, 4, p.115. See also Le Peuple, 15.1.1937/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
703. "Une commission paritaire est inutile et dangereuse; son ingérence peut susciter des abus et de stériles discussion. Une note, délibérée en Commission du CCI a été envoyée en se sens au Ministre compétent." Réunion du 19.5.1930. Bulletin de l'Union des Charbonnages, mines et usine métallurgique de la province de Liège, 1930, p.13 [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
704. "Ce projet prévoit un article rélatif aux travailleurs de l'industrie; cet article ne contient pas de disposition qui soit de nature à vous donner directement satisfaction, il doit être complété par des A.R. dont nous aurons soin de demander l'examen au moment de leur élaboration." CCI to Nouvelles Carrières de Porphyre de Lessines, 26.7.1930. AMJ, 33 C 30/A. The quarry owner complained that he had recruited Italian labor which had left the quarry shortly after their arrival. He insisted that the CCI would provide him means to retain these Italians in his quarry. [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
705. PDK, 11.6.1930, pp.1-15. The main provision was the introduction of an alien card, to be renewed every two years. The bill also provided for the possibility to expel an alien married to a Belgian and the *domiciliés* under the provision that this was decided by the Council of Ministers. [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
706. The MP Meysmans, nominated commissioner had not finished his report in due time. R.de Foy to H.Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
707. RB(Remy) to Minister of Justice, 7.2.1930. Report Second Director Liekendael, Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 6.2.1930. AMJ,1 B6 III. That the Sûreté was still not interested in protecting the national labor market was obvious when on the occasion of the Expositions in Antwerp and Liège in 1930 strong pressure was exerted (for political as well as economic reasons) to abolish the visa-requirement for Germans, and to a lesser degree also for Hungarians and Rumanians. The Sûreté was strictly opposed. R.De Foy, a director of the Sûreté argued that only after the vote of the new alien bill could the visa-regime be abolished; one had to realize that Germany was the center of Communist activity and that Hungarian workers were the main propagandists of Communist ideas in Belgium. Other concerns had little or no relevance. Commission interministérielle chargée de l'examen de la question de la suppression des visas de passeports, séance du 6 mars 1930 and Note. Provincial Archive of Antwerp. [↑](#footnote-ref-708)
708. See appendix 5b [↑](#footnote-ref-709)
709. Emigration report 1929, Consulate Brussels. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Le Peuple, 12.12.1929/2,1. Polish consulate in Cologne to Polish consulate in Brussels, 1930. AAN, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, 1633. Polish embassy in Paris to Polish embassy in Marseille, 8.8.1930. AAN, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, 321. Jackowski (1972), p.393. Emigration report first half of 1930, Consulate Brussels. AAN, MSZ, 10.069.

"Conformément à vos instructions générales, je veille autant que possible à ce que la concurrence de la main-d'oeuvre polonaise soit limité strictement aux besoins des employeurs et que l'afflux en Belgique de la base population israélite soit réduite au minimum." Belgian Ambassador in Warsaw to Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Hymans, 6.7.1932. ABZ, 2.669bis I A, Pologne. We ignore to which instructions the ambassador refers, but this message indicates clearly what was at stake in those years. [↑](#footnote-ref-710)
710. See appendix 6, compare a and c to b and d. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. AAN, Konsulat Generalny w Opolu, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-711)
711. "The small businessmen, small artisans and Jewish industrial workers who really came en masse to Belgium by different routes are the strongest inflicted by this new immigration policy. The unemployed in those sector can not regularize their sojourn as the Ministry of Labor refuses to approve their labor contract" Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 15.4.1931. AAN, MSZ, 9.631. [↑](#footnote-ref-712)
712. Consulate, Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. APK, St G Kr 412. ACCA: 28.5.1930, 25.6.1930, 30.7.1930 and 1.10.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-713)
713. ACCA, 1.10.1930. Consulate, Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. APK, ST G Kr 412. Emigration report 1930. AAN, MSZ, 10.376. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. AAN, Konsulat Generalny w Opolu, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-714)
714. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. AAN, Konsulat Generalny w Opolu, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-715)
715. Circular letter FEDECHAR, 12.11.1930. Archives Fedechar. [↑](#footnote-ref-716)
716. Council of Ministers, 3.10.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-717)
717. R.B. Cabinet of the *Administrateur* of the Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 7.7.1932. AMJ, 33 C31. [↑](#footnote-ref-718)
718. Council of Ministers, 27.10.1930. The next month proposed P.E.Janson, the Minister of Justice to reform the Sûreté so that it would be better able to control the increasing number of foreigners in Belgium. He proposed to engage additional personnel and to set up a distinct service for the foreigners. A commission was established to decide about the reform. Council of Ministers, 17.11.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-719)
719. Council of Ministers, 24.11.1930. BS, 15.1.1931, pp.184-186. PHK, 10.3.1932, p.1214. [↑](#footnote-ref-720)
720. Note Polish Consulate, Brussels 4.1931. AAN, MSZ, 9.631. Wychodzca, 1931, 3, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-721)
721. The nature of Belgian labor migration in the Netherlands was also very different. While Belgians mostly commuted daily to their jobs in the border regions of the Netherlands, Dutch migrant labor not only worked, but also resided in Belgium. Although economic reasons were probably paramount, the Belgian authorities argued that it would be unacceptable to give the citizens of the Netherlands (a neutral country in the First World War) better treatment than former allied countries such as Italy and Yugoslavia. The citizens of the Netherlands, however, had been exempted earlier, together with the French, from a directive from the Ministry of Labor which prohibited the public exchange offices to handle applications from immigrant labor. Dutch Consul to Folmer, 10.12.1929, 20.10.1930, 15.1.1931 and 19.3.1931. Dutch Consul to Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19.3.1931. Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18.3.1931. Foreign affairs to Consul in Brussels, 25.6.1931. ARDH, 180 and 183. For the negative reaction in the Netherlands to their inclusion in this law see Moore (1986), p.57. [↑](#footnote-ref-722)
722. Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18.3.1931. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of Labor, 15.7.1931. Foreign affairs to Consul in Brussels, 25.6.1931. ARDH, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-723)
723. The border guards had the difficult task to distinguish between labor immigration and all other types of entry into Belgium. The Dutch Consul feared that any Dutch worker who came as a tourist to Belgium would be refused access as the border guards would suspect him to be a labor migrant. Consul in Brussels to Minister of Foreign Affairs in Den Hague, 19.3.1931. ARDH, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-724)
724. Among them a few hundred Poles. Emigration report for the first half of 1931, Polish consulate in Brussels. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 7.7.1931. AAN, MSZ, 9.631. The undocumented immigrants working in the mines of Limburg did not even have to go abroad for a visa, the provincial authorities in Hasselt granted them visa. ACCA, 15.4.1931 and 6.5.1931. Entretien avec Mr. Cool, 10.02.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie,

roos, C, 2, 5/2. Interview Wolf 25.5.1990 Prague. [↑](#footnote-ref-725)
725. AHCM, 27.3.1931. FEDECHAR Committee, 15.4.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-726)
726. Gosson-Lagace a mine in the Liège basin, decided in October 1930 not to hire anymore foreigners as there were too many complaints concerning their work performance. Yet the next month the direction was forced to engage again aliens as not enough Belgian workers were available. AEL, Gosson-Lagace, rapport mensuel d'exploitation, 565 and 566. Till the spring of 1931 it was no problem for Poles to be hired in the mines. Narodowiec, 8.11.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-727)
727. CNMM, 9.12.1930. The figures on the recruitment of manpower in 1931 - when legal immigration was getting increasingly difficult- indicate that more foreigners legally sojourning in Belgium were drawn to the mines. 1,049 workers obtained a pension account -so people who never worked before in a mine- in the basin of Charleroi during the first three months of 1931. Foreigners constituted probably a large share of those new miners (in March 143 Belgians against 162 aliens). Conseil regional mixte des Mines du bassin de Charleroi, 9.4.1931. Bois du Luc, 163. According to the trade unions the mining compagnies refused to engage Belgian who were fired in other industries, because they were too demanding. It was not so much the nature of the work, they argued, but the low wages which made that the number of Belgian miners stagnated. Comité national, 28.4.1932. Livre des procès-verbaux du Comité National de la Centrale Syndicale Nationale des travailleurs des Mines de Belgique. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-728)
728. "Malgré la crise qui sévit dans toutes les industries, la main d'oeuvre se recrute difficilement, d'autant plus que des restrictions gouvernementales ont été apportée à l'introduction d'ouvriers étrangers dans le pays." PV de la réunion du Conseil d'administration de la Société Anonyme des Charbonnages de Winterslag, 5.6.1931. ARA, Coppée A, 29.451. [↑](#footnote-ref-729)
729. The mine directors stated however that the final decision to hire somebody would remain in their hands. ACCA, 14.1.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-730)
730. ACCA, 29.4.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-731)
731. Committee Fedechar, 6.5.1931. ACCA: 29.4.1931, 13.5.1931, 3.6.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-732)
732. Proces verbal de la conference de la MOE central du 28 september 1930. Archives PCB, Microfilms IML-Moscow. [↑](#footnote-ref-733)
733. "Our union is attacked by the Belgian authorities. Our very active comrade Roman Kusek was accused of being a Communist although he was in the board of our union and an outspoken Socialist. Nothing could help, even not the interventions of our MPs" C.Suyvoet in Prawo Ludu, VI, 1930, 22, p.1. L'ouvrier mineur, XXVII, 1933, pp.101-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-734)
734. Meeting of the Provincial Council of Limburg, 2.10.1930, p.189. L'ouvrier mineur, XXVII, 1931, 7, p.133. "En Campine, parmi les étrangers, ceux qui comprennent la nécessité de l'union n'osent guère entrer dans nos organisations car ils sont dénoncés et les expulsions se font très facilement." Nos effectifs, s.d..(report of the Socialist miners' union, 1931) Kadoc, Broekx, 5.2.3.1.

It seems that the Christian Democratic miners' union succeeded to unionize more immigrants from 1930 on. Belgian labor also joined increasingly this union in the 1930s as a means to protect themselves aginst the deprivation due to unemployment. It seems that those immigrants who obtained full-fledged unemployment benefits (for example Poles) also joined the Christian Democratic union in large numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-735)
735. BV, 1930, 7, pp.168-170 and 1929, 11, p.218. PDK, 27.3.1929, pp.1-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-736)
736. PHK, 12.2.1929, p.629 and 673. The advise of the Commission of Procureurs Généraux to whom this bill was put in 1929 was negative. Sûreté (de Foy?) to Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-737)
737. L'ouvrier mineur, XXVII, 1933, pp.101-103, 107, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-738)
738. Nos effectifs, s.d. KADOC, Broekx, 5.2.3.1. L'ouvrier mineur,1-3.1931, pp.44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-739)
739. A.Gailly in Le Métallurgiste, 12.1931, p.2. Quoted in Vanderputte (1984), p.24. [↑](#footnote-ref-740)
740. Provinciaal christelijk vakverbond, verslag over het dienstjaar 1931. KADOC, Broekx, 5.2.2.5. De Belgische Hout- en Bouwwerker, 9.1930, p.2 and 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-741)
741. "We have to be careful and we have to prevent that migrant labor from being played against us by the reaction." SK, XXVIIe Syndikaal Congres gehouden op 2, 3 en 4 augustus 1930, Brussel, 1930, p.19 and 27. La Wallonie, 4.6.1930/2,7. L'Action Syndicale, 11.10.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-742)
742. The ACV proposed in fact the Vercruysse bill, whereby the migrants had to apply personally for temporary autorisations limited to one occupation. Le Franc Mineur, XI, 1930, 10, p.1. Arendt (1931), II pp.275-284. "A law has to be voted in order to be able to remove somebody because of economic reasons, because there are enough people here and there is no more work." Frederix in Meeting of the Provincial Council of Limburg, 2.10.1930, p.187. [↑](#footnote-ref-743)
743. Le Franc Mineur, XII, 1931, 7, p. 2. SK, Buitengewoon kongres gewijd aan de ekonomische krisis gehouden op 30 en 31 januari 1932, Brussel, 1932, p. 17. De Volkswil, 17.1.1932, 3, p.93. Ons Limburg, XIII, 1931,1. Arendt (1931),II pp. 275-284. Provinciaal christelijk vakverbond, Verslag over the dienstjaar 1930. KADOC, Broekx, 5.2.2.5.

Also the public labor exchanges offices, in which the trade unions had important leverage

advocated that the Minister of Labor should get advice on immigration issues from an employer-trade union committee. Archive RVA, Commission de placement, 30.10.1930, 15.1.1931 en 26.3.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-744)
744. Le Franc-Mineur, XII, 1931, 7, p.3. Note 9.1.1931. KADOC, Broekx, 5.1.2.5.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-745)
745. The employers present at the meeting with De Voghel agreed as they hoped that the government would then quicker agree on recruitment "Faute de qui, ils devraient, bien à regrets passer outre pour ne pas voir péricliter leur personnel ouvrier." Conférence au Ministère de l'Industrie et du Travail, 3.1.1931. RABW, KS, 2054. Habets who was not present at that meeting considered that his colleagues had made a major blunder. Even for tactical reason was such a principal concession, according to Habets unacceptable. "Habets n'a pas hésité à dire à M.De Voghel qu'il lui paraissait que l'intrusion de la Commission régionale Mixte dans cette affaire était inadmissible." ACCA, 28.1.1931 and 14.1.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-746)
746. ACCA, 24.6.1931 and 8.7.1931. Commission, 5.01.1932, pp. 2-3. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. Committee Fedechar, 6.5.1931. It is unclear if the regional joint mine commission ever discussed this issue and gave a positive advice. Regularizing the sojourn of more than 500 undocumented workers seems to have been decided without consulating the miners'unions. [↑](#footnote-ref-747)
747. Le Franc Mineur, XII, 1931, 7, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-748)
748. Commission de la main-d'oevre étrangère dans les mines, 18.05.1934, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos C, 2, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-749)
749. For the quarries see: Seventh arrondissement of mine administration to Heyman, 16.12.1932. AEL, administration des mines - division de Liège, nr. 427. Archives mine administration Namur, Correspondance sixth arrondissement, 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-750)
750. Commission, 16.02.1932, p.3. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. La Vie Nouvelle, VII, 1932, 4, p. 2. CNMM, 23.6.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-751)
751. Assemblée plenière, 19.02.1932, p. 1; Comité Central, 18.05.1932, p. 14. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. Already by the middle of 1931 was this a recurrent demand of the Socialist miners' unions of the Borinage. Emigration report for third quarter of 1931. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. J.B. Brohee in Le Peuple du Borinage, 25.6.1931/1, 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-752)
752. Comité National, 28.04.1932, pp. 214-217. Livre des procès-verbaux du Comité National de la Centrale Syndicale Nationale des travailleurs des Mines de Belgique. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-753)
753. Solidarity with the Italian refugees demanded that an exemption had to be made for them, but: "Les charbonnages devraient avoir comme politique de renvoyer les étrangers sans bruit et sans mesure législative." Crise charbonnière, 24.12.1931. ABZ, 2681bis. Quoted in Hogg (1986),p.85. Lombard en Dejardin in CNMM, resp. 22.1.1931, p.4 and 4.9.1931, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-754)
754. The direction of Charbonnages de Hainaut declared "les ouvriers étrangers travaillaient par la plupart depuis plusieurs années et une grande partie d'entre eux avaient charge de famille établie en Belgique...dans ces conditions, il ne pouvait être fait de distinction de nationalité, sans commettre d'injustice, eu égard aux états de service du personnel étranger" Mine Administration to Minister of Labor H.Heyman, 6.04.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-755)
755. Especially in Limburg with its large number of foreign miners was the outcry against the dismissal of some Belgians virulent. Note meeting, 8.1.1932. Provincial archives Limburg, vreemdelingen. Ons Limburg, XIII, 1931, 11,p.1. The Christian Democratic miners' union of Leopoldsburg to Heyman, 11.01.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. De Standaard, 6.1.1932; Nieuw Limburg, 30.1.1932. De Gazet van Hasselt, 9.1.1932; De Sportwereld, 24.12.1931; Het Nieuwsblad, 22.12.1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-756)
756. "The danger of those foreign miners would not have been so threatening for the Belgian working class if they had been unionized, but we deal here with a unconscious, illiterate mass of Lumpen proletariat without character" Juliaan van Craen in De Volkswil, 3.1.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-757)
757. Commission, 5.1.1932, p.2 and 16.02.1932, p.1. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. De Voghel was very close to the trade union perception of the issue. He believed that the mining companies fired the Belgians before the immigrants as the latter were not unionized and worked harder and longer. Narodowiec, 5.6.1932/1, 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-758)
758. Constandt (1987). Personnel register Hôtel de Littoral-Continental Osborne- Westend Palace. Private Archive Marc Constandt. Foreigners' register, 1923-1940. Municipal archive Middlekerke, Westend, WL 183. Arbeidsblad, XXXI, 1930, 7, p.1060. La Belgique Hôtelière, IIIL, 1935, 22, p.720. Billiet (1987), p.146. [↑](#footnote-ref-759)
759. L'Alimentation, XVII, 1930, 3, p.3; 7-8, p.2; XVIII, 1931, 10, p.4. The unions insisted that seasonal personnel should only be granted a temporary sojourn permit (for the season only, so 1.5 until 30.9), but in the summer of 1930 they still agreed that these migrants were needed. Arbeidsblad, XXXI, 1930, 7, p.1060. It is possible that there was no increase in foreign personnel in the hotels in Brussels and Antwerpen, but that the employment pattern of the 1920s was just continued. The union complaints could then be caused only by the rise of unemployment among the Belgians and not by an increase in the foreign personnel. We have no figures on the number of foreigners in the hotels in Antwerp and Brussels, but even in 1923 foreigners were already engaged engaged during the summer season when the number of tourists increased. Bourse officielle du Travail de l'Arrondissement de Bruxelles, Rapport annuel 1923, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-760)
760. See the increase in the number of Italians working in the mining industry between 1930 and 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-761)
761. See dismissals of Italians in the iron and steel industry in the winter of 1930 in Hainaut. Council of Minister, 27.10.1930 and Wochenbericht das Wanderungsamt, 15.12.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-762)
762. Le Prolétaire, 16.4.1932. The National Railway Company - a public company- commissioned from January 1931 onwards works under the strict condition that only national labor would be used. A sole exemption was made for the citizens of Luxemburg. The entrepreurs could only use foreigners if they were indispenable for the execution of the work. Their number had to be mentioned in the work application and a daily fine of 50 francs was forseen for any additional foreigner being hired. BV, 1934, 1, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-763)
763. Narodowiec, 4.10.1931/5,1. In the basin of Limburg there was no partial unemployment in 1930-1931. Committee FEDECHAR, 3.12.1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-764)
764. In 1930 the number of Poles in agriculture increased. About 1,500 Polish migrants were employed. mostly in agriculture, and to a lesser extent in domestic services. Consulate Brussels, Emigration report 1930, pp.8-9. Emigration report, 1931. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. According to the population census of December 1930, however, only 81 Poles were active in agriculture. This could indicate that the employment of the Poles was only of a seasonal nature. Appendix 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-765)
765. PHK, 10.3.1932, p.1214. In 1931 4,034 immigration permissions were granted in total to labor immigrants, 570 of which for personnel of circuses. In 1932 this diminished to 2,112, 217 of which for circuses. Sûreté to Ministry of Finance, 2.3.1933. AMJ, 33 C31/3. Until August 1932 domestic servants were exempted from the strict application of the Royal Decree of December 15, 1930. This most likely meant that the Ministry of Justice gave its approval to the immigration of these labor migrants without consulting the Ministry of Labor. [↑](#footnote-ref-766)
766. Protest of Les Palaces d'Ostende and Continental Palace Hotel in Blankenberghe, 1931. AMJ, 33 C 34/1. According to R.de Foy, director of the Sûreté, in 1930 80% of the personnel for the hotel industry was recruited abroad. Revue de l'Institut de Sociologie, XXII, 1932, 1, p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-767)
767. The Christian Democratic and Socialist union in Limburg had only 4 unemploymed migrants (3 Poles and 1 Hungarian) among their members on the dole in March 1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-768)
768. Emigration report 1929, Consulate in Brussels. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Polish consulate in Antwerp to UE, 27.4.1931. AAN, MSZ, 11.176. Emigration report for the year 1931 of the Antwerp Consulate, 14.6.1932. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Frey (1975), p.62.

Economic hardship had already increased considerably by 1930. "Daily, we have a few dozen persons who come to ask some financial support, sometimes for something to eat, sometimes to be repatriated." Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 26.11.1930. APK, St G Kr 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-769)
769. According to a travel agency 1,225 Poles had returned in 1931. The consulate added another few hundred and estimated that 1,550 Poles returned in 1931. There had been a considerable increase in returns by the end of 1931. The problem with these figures is that it includes those Poles who had come from France. Consulate in Brussels, emigration report for 1931, p.15. Emigration report, third quarter 1931. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. Report about repatriation, 10-12.1930. AAN, MSZ, 9.946. [↑](#footnote-ref-770)
770. During the first quarter of 1932, 800 Czechoslovakian migrants returned, mostly at their own expense. Embassy in Brussels to Ministery of Labor, 9.4.1932. SUA, MSP, H1/a-1 3974. [↑](#footnote-ref-771)
771. "The only help we can offer is shelter and some food, we give tickets for the Salvation Army... Some desperate workers had left their spouses and children at the embassy as they saw no solution to organize the return. The Belgian authorities refused to cooperate financially. There are families who sleep in the Consulate. They are on a waiting list to be repatriated." Consulate in Brussels to UE, 23.11.1931 and 14.4.1932. AAN, MSZ, 9946. Gazet van Antwerpen, 24.4.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-772)
772. A large number of those Polish poor came from France. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 7.3.1932. AAN, MSZ, 10.069. [↑](#footnote-ref-773)
773. Notes Sûreté, 2-3.1931. Sûreté to Merksplas, 14.2.1931. AMJ, 75 C 29. In the second half of the 1920s, after the Belgian-German agreement of 1926 the immigrants had only to earn 25 francs before they were released. See pp.197-199. [↑](#footnote-ref-774)
774. The Dutch authorities complained about the rise in illegal immigrants, mostly immigrants who had absconded from the vagrant colony of Wortel (Wortel was close to the Dutch border). R.de Foy advised teightening the disciplinary regime in these colonies to stop the escapees. We ignore if his advice was taken heed of, but in July 1932 was a concession done to the vagrants. The Belgian authorities diminished the sum of money a foreign vagrant had to earn before he could be released from 150 to 125 francs. The authorities hoped to limit in this way the number of foreigners absconding. Circular letter Sûreté, 2.7.1932. Note pour la Sûreté, 31.5.1932. Note R.de Foy, s.d. AMJ, 75 C 29. Narodowiec, 26.8.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-775)
775. Eventually the other types of immigration would also be regulated by visa requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-776)
776. In 1934 173 Hungarian girls were recruited in this way. Belgiumi Magyar Konyv, respectively 1934 and 1935. Vromans, Brussels, respectively p.58 and p.57. [↑](#footnote-ref-777)
777. According to Beltjens, the *Administrateur* of the Sûreté an increasing number of female foreigners were using this channel to immigrate into Belgium, they even accepted just room and board as payment in order to get into the country. "Je constate que depuis un certain temps que nombreux sont les ressortissants étrangers qui viennent en Belgique s'engager comme gens de maison, c'est notamment le cas des femmes qui s'engagent même en condition de ne recevoir que le couvert ou qui viennent dans le pays soi-disant pour apprendre le français. Parmi ces dernières, les Allemandes sont particulierement nombreuses." Beltjens to H.Heyman, Minister of Labor 19.8.1932. AMJ, 33 C 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-778)
778. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, 24 (April), 1935, p.22. La Belgique Hôtelière, 22, 15.11.1935, p.720. Arbeidsblad, XXXIII, 1932, 3, p.254. [↑](#footnote-ref-779)
779. The Dutch immigrants got after a sojourn of 6 months an identity card and thus residency status. The period of 6 months had to enable the Sureté to check their antecedents and eventually to oppose granting them further sojourn. Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dutch embassy in Brussels, 9.4.1935. ARDH, 185. Minister of Finance H. Jaspar was strongly opposed to this agreement as it would only increase the number of unemployed and the expenses for the unemployment insurance. He probably insisted to postpone the ratification of the agreement. The bill was already published in the Parliamentary Documents and was published in the Statute Book on June 2, 1934. It was only ratified in January 1936. H.Jaspar to P.Hymans, 16.5.1933. ARA, H.Jaspar, 81, chômage-index. PDK, 9.5.1933, nr.141. Leën (1937), pp.131-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-780)
780. Director to Minister, 12.4.1935. Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dutch embassy in Brussels, 9.4.1935. ARDH, 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-781)
781. Appendix 5a. [↑](#footnote-ref-782)
782. "Le Conseil est d'avis qu'il y a lieu de ne pas se montrer trop accueillant pour les juifs allemands." Council of Ministers, 17.6.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-783)
783. "Jusqu'au 3.10.1933 ...le Comité est intervenu pour faire obtenir des autorisations de séjour aux réfugiés dont la presque totalité se trouvaient menacés de refoulement." Report CAAVAA, 9.4.1933-9.4.1934, pp.14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-784)
784. Note concerning the Brussels Committee of help and assistance for victims of anti-Semitism in Germany, 10.10.1933. JDC, 450. [↑](#footnote-ref-785)
785. By 1935 at most 400 refugees were attributed the status of refugee *stricto sensu*. La Tribune Juive, 15.5.1935, 1, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-786)
786. Verslag van Commissie Justitie, belast met het onderzoek van het wetsontwerp houdende begroting van het Ministerie van Justitie voor dienstjaar 1936. PBS, nr.30, p.16. Rapport sur l'activité de la Commission interministèrielle pour les réfugiés allemands, 11.1933-7.1935, p.4. ABZ, 12.181. G.Vanderveken, pour le droit d'asile, s.d. (1936?), p.6. IEV, E.Vandervelde, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-787)
787. Au Secours, IX, 1933, 11, p.1 and XX, 1934, 4, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-788)
788. Rapport CAAVAA 9.4.1933-9.4.1934, pp.14-15. Note pour le Cabinet, 2.12.1933. ABZ, 12.181. A special document was issued for this purpose, a *sauf-conduit*. This residence permit was valid for three months and in contrast to a temporary residence permit valid for six months, it did not imply that a decision for an identity card for aliens was pending. Residency could never be attained by those sojourning in Belgium with a mere *sauf-conduit*. Circular letter Interior Affairs, 10.1.1934. Municipal Archive Antwerp, MA 58.078. [↑](#footnote-ref-789)
789. For more details on this policy towards the refugees from Nazi-Germany Caestecker (1993c), pp.25-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-790)
790. "Je me demande si, vu les circonstances spéciales que traverse le pays, nous ne pourrions pas, par mesure de police, ne plus octroyer le séjour définitif même aux étrangers non soumis à la formalité du visa." RB, Cabinet de l'Administrateur de la Sûreté to Cocq, Minister of Justice 7.7.1932. AMJ, 33C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-791)
791. BS, 1933, pp.4102-4106. [↑](#footnote-ref-792)
792. ARA, Ch. de Broqueville, 692. BS, 1933, p.4103. [↑](#footnote-ref-793)
793. In the law there was no set term in which an alien should obtain an identity card. According to Bekaert a period of five years was considered a minimum. Bekaert (1934a), p.111. By this law the foreigners' register, kept by the municipalities was no longer a mere administrative tool, but obtained a legal value. The foreigners' register became now together with the population register the municipal registers forseen in the law of June, 2 1856 on the registration of the inhabitants of Belgium. A registration in the foreigners' register was not considered as legal sojourn, it was only considered as a first contact with the authorities. Bekaert (1940), p.193. [↑](#footnote-ref-794)
794. Destitute aliens were exempted. Revue de l'administration et du droit administratif de la Belgique, LXXXI, 1934, 77, pp.169 -170 and p.266. BS, 1933, pp.5249-5251. [↑](#footnote-ref-795)
795. The nationalities which had to carry a visa to immigrate into Belgium were from November 1930 onwards refused residency status. It is unclear if they obtained residency status after being prolonged their visa for a certain time. The Sûreté proposed in July 1932 to refuse all foreigners residency status. It is unclear if this became the administrative practice. The Royal Decree of August, 13 1933 eliminated all ambiguities. To refuse residency status to all immigrants during an extended period was then the official policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-796)
796. "Comme il est utile de pouvoir exercer ici un contrôle, en principe seule la carte blanche (temporary residence permit)...a été conférée aux intéressés (German refugees=F.C.): ceci permit de revoir les cas de 6 mois en 6 mois et de vérifier notamment si les enfants, arrivés en âge de travailler, ne se livraient pas au travail." Rapport sur l'activité de la Commission interministèrielle pour les réfugiés allemands, 11.1933-7.1935. ABZ, 12.181. [↑](#footnote-ref-797)
797. La Centrale-Rapport de l'Ezra pour l'année 1934, p.41. Communicated by Jean-Philippe Schreiber. [↑](#footnote-ref-798)
798. Commission interministèrielle pour les réfugiés allemands, 10.1.1936. ABZ, 12.181. "Sauf pour les personnes entrées pendant cette période d'affolement (summer and spring of 1933), il a été éventuellement retenu à charge du réfugié sensu lato (Germans fleeing the racial discrimination) le fait qu'il s'était rendu en Belgique ... sans avoir au préalable introduit une demande." Rapport sur l'activité de la Commission interministèrielle pour les réfugiés allemands, 11.1933-7.1935. ABZ, 12.181. [↑](#footnote-ref-799)
799. Report of the activities for the months of April to October 1934. JDC, 628. Israelitisches Familienblatt, 13.12.1934, p.3. Le Drapeau Rouge, 1.12.1934/2, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-800)
800. Only in 1934 the French authorities called into question the random expulsion of their superfluous immigrants. The French mining companies, under strong pressure of the French authorities financed the repatriation of their dismissed Central and East European miners in 1934. In the spring of 1935 the French government began its own repatriation program. Cross (1983), p.200. Ponty (1988), pp.312-314. [↑](#footnote-ref-801)
801. Embassy to Ministry of Social Affairs, 9.1.1935. SUA, MSP, H III, 4025. Commission de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère dans les mines, 18.05.1934, p. 2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-802)
802. "Quant aux ceux qui ne désireux pas d'obtempérer aux injonctions gouvernementales, et je persiste à penser qu'ils sont les plus nombreux, seules les rigueurs de la loi pénale les détermineront à quitter un pays où, malgré les vicissitude du temps, il fait meilleur vivre que partout ailleurs." Rapport de M.de Foy Annexe 3 au procès-verbal de la séance du 13.11.1933. Comité d'Assistance aux étrangers. ARC, cassier 33, colis sec 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-803)
803. This measure was of a dubious legality but mostly upon return they were inflicted a prison sentence. Bekaert (1934b), pp.117-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-804)
804. La Croix-Rouge de Belgique, XIV, 1935, 11, p.592. Le Service Social, 1935, 7-8, pp.99-110. The aliens in the prisons of Verviers, Charleroi and Vorst (Brussels) were mostly undocumented immigrants. Of 885 aliens who, after serving a prison sentence for mostly minor offenses, had to leave the country in 1933, 152 of them were legal residents of Belgium (had an identity card). Le Service Social, 1935, 7-8, pp.103-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-805)
805. Le Service Social, 1935, 7-8, p.111. Within the budget of the Ministry of Justice the derisory sum of 25,000 francs was alloted to the repatriation of insance, sick and very young aliens. AMJ, 76 C 21/I. [↑](#footnote-ref-806)
806. They had to stay there until they earned 125 or 150 francs. Note, 13.7.1936. AMJ, 78 C 29. Narodowiec, 26.8.1936. We do not have any additional information at our disposal on the aliens in the vagrant colonies after July 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-807)
807. Some Jewish undocumented immigrants found a livelihood in the working of skin remnants, an extremely hard and dirty work. De Kleeding, 1937, 1, p.3; 6, p.6 and 11, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-808)
808. Liberman (1936-1937?), pp.11-12. An undocumented Romanian immigrant received only half the salary of his colleagues who were legally in the country. Zeicher Salomon to Jeanne Vandervelde, 22.9.1933. IEV, J.E.Vandervelde, box 4. "A Polish friend who arrived illegally in 1933 found a job in the mine I was working. He had to work in a stall where it was extremely hot and humid. It was back-breaking and dangerous work, but he could earn some money to go back to Poland." Interview Stanisaw N., Wrocaw 12.3.1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-809)
809. A case in this point were the *Ostjuden* who fled Nazi-Germany. *Ostjuden* were Jews who had left Poland for Germany since the end of the 19th century. They had acquired the right to reside and to work in Germany, some had even become German citizens. The Nazi regime had revoked this all. A large number of *Ostjuden* fled Nazi Germany. In Belgium, they were not recognized as refugees *sensu lato*, the Belgian authorities considered them to be Poles who could go back to Poland. "il nous reste encore un grand nombre de réfugiés destinés pour le rapatriement.. des ressortissants polonais qui étaient établis en Allemagne depuis des années, qui ont perdu tout contact avec leur pays natal et n'en connaissent plus la langue... malgré les grandes privations qu'ils subissent ici et en dépit d'expulsion à laquelle ils sont exposés, refusent de se rendre en Pologne." La Centrale -Rapport de l'Ezra pour l'année 1934, p.41. communicated by Jean-Philippe Schreiber. [↑](#footnote-ref-810)
810. "A mon sens le projet de M.Janson contenait d'excellentes choses. Le vote de ce projet aurait l'immense avantage de faire table rase de textes surannés et incomplets qu'il a fallu adapter aux exigences modernes par des artifices administratifs." Ministry of Justice (de Foy?) to Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1 B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-811)
811. See appendix 5c. [↑](#footnote-ref-812)
812. Council of Ministers, 23.1.1933 and 7.3.1933. ARA, de Broqueville, 674. R.Van Doorslaer (1996), p.95. [↑](#footnote-ref-813)
813. Wiadamosci z Belgii (1934) in AAN, MSZ, 10.973. Interview Stefan K. Warsaw 4.2.1990. Morelli (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-814)
814. "les travailleurs étrangers sont nos frères de lutte" Drapeau Rouge, 1.12.1934/2,6, 15.12.1934 and 15.7.1933/4. [↑](#footnote-ref-815)
815. Council of Ministers, 22.10.1934. Note of Jaspar on Comte de Romrée de Vichenet to Jaspar, 14.10.1934, p.3. ABZ, Correspondance Politique, Yougoslavie, novembre 1933 - 1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-816)
816. Statistique Judiciaire de la Belgique, 1931-1940. Bruxelles, 1942, p.300. Caestecker (1991), p.559. [↑](#footnote-ref-817)
817. Their legal position made them, however, prone for minor offences. "Pour une condamnation souvent minime, même conditionnelle, un réfugié est par la mesure d'expulsion qui le frappe, déclassé, incapable de trouver du travail faute de papiers en rêgle. Il doit vivre caché et devient par la force des circonstances un malfaiteur." Coubaux to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178.

The reasons for expelled immigrants to remain in Belgium were multiple. The lack of alternatives was especially for refugees -Russian "refugees", but also Communist refugees- the reason par excellence. Other factors were the remaining kith and kin in Belgium along with the possibility of earning a living even as an undocumented alien. Le Service Social, 1935, 7-8, pp.103-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-818)
818. Council of Ministers, 23.01.1933. ARA, Ch. de Broqueville, 674."Ce projet avait été déposé pour parer au plus pressé et sans cependant abandonner l'idée directrice du projet déposé en 1930." Ministry of Justice (de Foy?) to Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1 B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-819)
819. "J'estime qu'il est inadmissible d'aggraver le régime des étrangers, tant que les pouvoirs de la sûreté publique resteront sans contrôle et sans limite" PHK, 24.5.1934, p. 1540. The Socialist MP Somerhausen handed in -a second time- his bill which advocated an appeal procedure for expelled aliens. PDK, 31.5.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-820)
820. PHK, 6.6.1934, p. 1639. The bill was defeated by a vote of 80 against 74 votes. Some Liberal MPs joined the Socialists and Communists in defeating the bill. Also the Flemish Nationalists opposed this bill because the Sûreté had expelled some Dutch nationalists. The attitude of the Liberals was more an expression of their general opposition against the policy of their party member Minister of Justice P.E. Janson then against the provisins fo this specific bill. Hymans (s.d.), pp.694-699 and 972. The Christian-Democratic MPs, with the exception of Vaes and Allewaert, voted together with the Catholics in favor of the bill. They believed that aliens should be forbidden from being politically active."Une surveillance plus sévère est indispensable. Les internationaux sentiront ainsi qu'ils ne doivent pas se permettre, chez nous ce qu'ils n'oseraient faire chez eux". La Vie Nouvelle, VII, 1932, 21, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-821)
821. "Le Ministre (of Economic Affairs F.Van Cauwelaert=F.C.) regrette...que la Chambre ait refusé de voter le projet de loi Janson." Committee Fedechar, 24.10.1934. Bois Du Luc, 181. Also R.de Foy had hoped that this bill would pass. Bekaert (s.d.), pp.1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-822)
822. “ Nous devrions avoir le moyen de nous protéger contre les indésirables qui s’introduisent chez nous par la porte des subtilités juridiques.” Gazette de Centre, 4.8.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-823)
823. Bekaert (1940), p.403. Grippa (1988), pp.26-28. Van Doorslaer (1991), pp.735-740. PHS, 26.7.1934, pp.1186-1187. [↑](#footnote-ref-824)
824. PBK, 1934, nr.197. [↑](#footnote-ref-825)
825. PHK, 11.7.1934, pp.1814-1825; PHS, 26.7.1934, pp.1186-1187 and 22.1.1936, p.126. BS, 5.8.1934, p.4242. [↑](#footnote-ref-826)
826. According to the Belgian statistics the law would only be applied at the end of the 30's. In 1938 the Court of Appeals would revoke the nationality of six Belgians, in 1939, nine, and in 1940, two. Annuaire statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge, LXV, 1943, p.57. According to Rolin in PHS, 22.1.1936, p.126 at the end of 1935 a first judgement was made by the Court of Appeal of Liège. [↑](#footnote-ref-827)
827. "Je ne me préoccuppe nullement des opinions politiques des étrangers qui viennent chercher asile chez nous. Ils peuvent même suivre les assemblées politiques, mais je leur demande de ne pas faire de la propagande chez nous" PHK, 22.5.1935, p.1159. [↑](#footnote-ref-828)
828. Their was also an element of party politics involved "J'ai proposé l'expulsion de communistes..Jamais comme tels. Lorsque je proposais une mesure, c'est parce que j'avais la conviction absolue qu'ils noyautaient notre parti et faisaient oeuvre néfaste dans nos syndicats." E.Soudan to E.Vandervelde, 25.10.1935. IEV, Correspondance E. Vandervelde. Le Drapeau Rouge, 17.08.1935/4, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-829)
829. While only 115 Italians were organized in the PCB in January 1935, their number increased to 200 in 1936. Morelli (1985),p.25. [↑](#footnote-ref-830)
830. Promien, I, 1935, 15, p.2 and 16, p.2. For the communist organization of the Jewish migrants from East European and for the Italians see respectively Van Doorslaer R. (1996), pp. 113-116 and Morelli (1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-831)
831. Tygodnik Polski, I, 22.3.1936, 2, p.2; 4.10.1936, 30, p.3; 1.11.1936, 34, p.4; 29.11.1936, 38, p.4. Dziennik Ludowy, 6.10.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-832)
832. BV, 1936, 12, p.256. [↑](#footnote-ref-833)
833. "L'inconvénient le plus grave à mon avis de pareille procédure, réside dans le fait que la Sûreté Publique ne peut, en matière politique surtout, découvrir ses sources d'informations. Soumettre celles-ci à des débats contradictoires, c'est de les tarir irrémédiablement et à brève échéance. Au surplus, la lenteur inévitable de pareille procédure est inconciliable avec la célérité des décisions à prendre en matière de Sûreté Publique." Ministry of Justice (de Foy?) to Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1 B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-834)
834. Vakorgaan der centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, I, 1933, 5, p.18; 6, p.19 and III, 1935. 24, p.19. La Belgique Hôtelière, 22, 15.11.1935, p.720. De Voeding, XXI, 1934, 7, p.3 and XXII, 1935, 7, p.3.

The census of February 1934 underestimates the number of foreigners in the hotel sector

as we are dealing here with a highly seasonal industry. The hotels at the seaside even employed then still a considerable number of Italian and French nationals (five important hotels in Ostend with a staff of 165 had among them 76 foreigners (=46%) of which 45 Italian and 10 French nationals). In Brussels and Antwerp the hotels had also some staff of foreign nationality. ARA, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 804. [↑](#footnote-ref-835)
835. In 1936 158 Poles and 191 Italians had listed on their identity card that they were working in agriculture. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-836)
836. In December 1930 there were on a total of 35,494 workers in this industry 1,546 foreigners (=4,3%), this had declined by February 1934 to 3% (1,017 foreigners on a total of 34,221). Mine Administration to Minister, 24.6.1933 and 26.8.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. Mine Administration (6th district) to Minister, 16.12.1932. AEL, Administration des Mines, division de Liège, 427. Mine Administration to Minister of Labor, 23.7.1931. Archives Mine Administration, 6th district Namur, Correspondance 6th district, 1931. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-837)
837. While in 1930 foreigners were 4.4% of the labor force in the glass industry declined this to 1% in 1934 (from 1,185 foreigners to 360). The chemical industry noted a similar fall in foreign labor. While in 1930 foreigners constituted 3,5% of the labor force this declined to 2% in 1934 (from 1,885 to 701). Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-838)
838. Appendix 1. PCB, MOE Plenum du 12.12.1932. Rapport d'activité et taches. Archives PCB, microfilms IML-Moscow. [↑](#footnote-ref-839)
839. In 1932 549 of the 3,058 workers in the excavation works for the Albert canal were aliens (215 qualified Germans and 150 Italian navvies who had previously worked in construction). De Ontvoogding, XXI, 1932, 10, pp.3-4. Le Prolétaire, 15.10.1932, 24.9.1932 and 12.11.1932,p.2. In 1935 among 46 foreigners working on a section of the Albert canal 31 were of Italian nationality. All these foreigners had been hired by this firm before 16.12.1929. Le Prolétaire, XVIII, 1936, 871, p.2. In February 1934 the labor inspection counted 1,374 foreigners -a majority of Italians and some Yugoslavians or Dutchmen - in construction. About a third of these foreigners (449) worked for 5 large entrepreneurs who commissioned large public works. ARA, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 807. See also investigation of "Pieux Franki" in AMJ, 33 C 31/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-840)
840. In December 1934 only 159 foreigners worked in the skin and leather firms with more than 10 employees (in October 1926 425 foreign workers were employed in those firms). According to Liberman in 1934 still 450 to 500 leather workers were active in about 100 firms. In 1936 there were, according to a trade-union source, in Brussels only 89 businesses in the moroccan industry. Centrale ouvrière des cuirs et peaux de Belgique, section de Bruxelles. Rapport moral et financier, 1935-1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-841)
841. "La majorité des maroquiniers polonais avaient été licenciés...Dans la maroquinerie les patrons qui ont continué à travailler ont remplacé le travail horaire par le travail à façon et à domicile." Centrale ouvrière des cuirs et peaux de Belgique, section de Bruxelles. Rapport moral et financier, 1931-1932, p.6 and 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-842)
842. In 1930 took this sector 13% of the total days of registered unemployment in Belgium, although this sector was only responsible for 3 % of the industrial employment. Baudhuin (1946), p.103. [↑](#footnote-ref-843)
843. Steinberg (1986 II), pp.37-38. PS, p.92 and 96-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-844)
844. Van Criekinge, la conjuncture économique de l'industrie de cuirs en peaux en Belgique. Bulletin de l'Institut des Sciences Economiques, IV, 1933, 3, p.240 and Palsky (1926), pp.378-379. [↑](#footnote-ref-845)
845. De Kleeding, 9.1938, p.4 and 10.1937, p.3. Palsky (1928), pp.378-381. [↑](#footnote-ref-846)
846. According to figures of the Polish Consulate for 1933, 265 of the 750 Polish Jews in Brussels who were unionized in the Leather and Garment Union received unemployment benefits (=35%). For the hat workers it was only 10% (5 of 50), the leather workers 25 % (50 on 200) and 42% among the garment workers (210 on 500). In Antwerp 500 Polish diamond workers were fully unemployed. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 27.9.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.070. [↑](#footnote-ref-847)
847. Among the immigrants working in the mines very few obtained unemployment benefits. In the basin of Limburg only three Poles and one Hungarian obtained unemployment benefits on March 15, 1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. In November 1932 in the basin of Limburg and Charleroi not one foreigner who was a member of one of the miners' trade unions was unemployed. Only in the Centre basin five Polish, three French and two Italian miners were unemployed and were members of the Socialist miners' union. (no information on Christian Democratic Union). Enquête sur la main-d'oeuvre, 15.11.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, B, 4D, 5, 3. In October 1932 in the arrondissement Charleroi there were four unemployed unionized foreigners. Correspondance Commissariat de l'Arrondissement de Charleroi to Secrétaire communal. Municipal Archive Charleroi.

In Brussels, according to Polish sources in 1933, most unionized Poles outside the "Jewish" economy received unemployment benefits: construction 15 unionized of which 10 were unemployed; hotelsector 12 unionized of which 5 unemployed; metallurgic industry 25 unionized of which 15 unemployed; food sector 25 unionized of which 10 unemployed; printing 6 unionized of which 3 unemployed. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 27.9.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.070. [↑](#footnote-ref-848)
848. PCB, MOE Plenum du 12.12.1932. Rapport d'activité et taches. Archives PCB, microfilms IML-Moscow. The number of Jews in Antwerp who received financial assistance to enable them to celebrate the Pesach is an indication of the increasing poverty within the migrant community. While between 1925 and 1929 this oscillated between 150 and 400, their number increased to 1,100 in 1933. Frey (1975), pp.42-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-849)
849. The stack-bar graph of the Yugoslavian re-emigration (appendix 8) illustrates this diminished return movement after 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-850)
850. Heyman tried to enforce the expulsion of Italians working in the quarries, but because the expulsion of these aliens was legally impossible and the employers were uncooperative he had to give up this plan. Mine Administration to Heyman, 26.8.1932 and his remark on this letter. Heyman to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans, 15.9.1932 and to Minister of Justice F.Cocq, s.d. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-851)
851. "La question est délicate... Il faudrait s'abstenir de toute mesure qui pourrait provoquer à l'étranger des représailles dangereuses pour nos nationaux... La main-d'oeuvre étrangère en Belgique ne peut être considérée comme une des causes principales de la crise. Les chômeurs étrangers sont peu nombreux. Les étrangers remplissent des métiers très durs tel que : mineurs, métallurgistes, etc...délaissés par nos nationaux" Conclusion de l'enquête sur l'état de misère, 31.05.1933, p. 8. ARA, Jaspar H., 81, Chômage. [↑](#footnote-ref-852)
852. When they become unemployed, they were ordered to leave the country. "On pourrait les (immigrants who have not yet acquired a residency status) inviter à quitter le pays s'ils ont du travail mais cela me paraît bien inhumain. Il faudrait qu'on me dise que la situation de la main d'oeuvre belge est désespérée pour que je puisse m'y résoudre." RB, Cabinet de l'Administrateur de la Sûreté to Cocq, Minister of Justice 7.7.1932. AMJ, 33C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-853)
853. Council of Ministers, 16.03.1933, p. 3 ARA, Ch. de Broqueville, 674. Minister of Finance H.Jaspar to Minister of Social Assistance H.Carton de Wiart, 3.1933. ARA, Jaspar H., 81. Embassy in Brussels to MSZ, 25.8.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.130. [↑](#footnote-ref-854)
854. Those foreigners who were member of an unemployment fund before June 5, 1933 could still remain member, but they received only a (minimal) insurance premium of their own contributions. From June 5, 1933 onwards could nationals of countries with which no new bilateral agreement was concluded not become member of an unemployment fund anymore.Examen des observations du Service de la main d'oeuvre communiquées par lettre du Directeur Général du Travail, 26.9.1935. Projet de convention assurant aux chomeurs involontaires des indemnités et allocations. Archive Ministry of Labor, not classified. Pasinomie, 5e série, 24, 1933, p. 153. Arbeidsblad, XXXV, 1934, 1, p. 44. Note pour la Commission interministérielle chargée d’étudier la question de l’indemnisation en Belgique des chômeurs polonais. Commission interministérielle, 6.11.1933. AMJ, 109 C 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-855)
855. De Strijdkreet, XXXIII, 1933, 18, p. 3 and XXIV, 1934, 17, p. 3. These exemptions were probably motivated by the interest of the large number of Belgian emigrants in these countries. The Belgian emigrants in France retained also their rights on unemployment assistance. Ponty (1988), p.292. [↑](#footnote-ref-856)
856. De Kleeding, XV, 1933, 9, p. 2. See also: Le Peuple, 7.09.1933/1, 3; 11.9.1933/2,1 and 13.9.1933/2,1 ; Le Travailleur, XXII, 1933, 9, p. 4; De Strijdkreet, XXIII, 1933, 18, p.3; Arbeidsblad, XXXV, 1934, 1, p. 52; Prawo Ludu, IX, 1933, 40, p.2. Provincial Council Liège, 17.10.1933, p.605. De Voeding, XX, 1933, 12, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-857)
857. ACV-maandblad, V, 1933, 6, p. 499, p.502 and 506 and 9, p. 719. [↑](#footnote-ref-858)
858. KADOC, Zedelijk verslag voor het Kongres van de centrale der Vrije Mijnwerkers (1933),p.24. ACV council 1.8.1933. De vrije mijnwerker, XIV, 1933, 9-11, p.24 and XVI, 1935, 6-7, p.4. La vie nouvelle, X, 1935, 5, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-859)
859. "Pourquoi devrait-on se montrer plus bienveillant à l'égard de ces étrangers qui prennent le travail de nos ouvriers et augmentent le nombre de nos chômeurs?" Note sur les renvendications émises, 4.07.1933, p. 1. ARA, Jaspar H., 81, Documentation sur le chômage avant le 1.01.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-860)
860. According to the Polish consulate 3,000 Poles were members of the miners' unions. In the beginning of 1933. On 1.1.1935 there were only 1,602 foreigners member of the Socialist miners' union. In the basin of Charleroi about 500 foreigners left the miners' union in 1934. L'ouvrier mineur, XXX, 1934, 11, p.54. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ,

27.9.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.070. Rapport et Bilan des Opérations de l'exercice 1934, Centrale regionale des ouvriers mineurs du bassin de Charleroi in L'Action Syndicale, 15.6.1935. Report Kuttner Erzsébet, 24.2.1934. ANH, P85 Brüsseli Követseg, 12t. Provinciaal christelijk vakverbond, verslag over het dienstjaar 1933. KADOC, Broekx 5.2.2.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-861)
861. The number of foreign members of the Garment Workers Union of Antwerp declined from 400 to 30; in Brussels there was a similar decline as well. The Garment Union set up separate sections for the immigrants with lower dues, but without much success. De Kleeding, XX, 1938, 11, p.2. Le Vêtement, XVII, 1935, 4, p.3. De Kleeding, XVI, 1934, 12,p.6. BV, 1935, 5, p.102. In 1934 there were 1,603 foreigners among the 11,213 members of the Socialist diamond workers union. The Dutch who were not excluded from unemployment insurance formed a majority of the foreign union members (1,117). Only 304 Poles were still members. De Diamantbewerker, XVII, 1935, 38, p.2. During the period 1933-1936, 1,145 foreigners left the diamond union, mostly Poles (718). Only 366 Dutchmen had done so too. Hasendonckx (1975), p.357. The issue of granting Poles unemployment insurance was discussed again in the Council of Ministers in March 1935. Although we do not know why the issue was raised again the conservative cabinet Theunis rejected radically any change. " Il ne peut être question d'accorder aux ouvriers polonais le bénéfice de l'assistance chômage" Council of Ministers, 9.3.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-862)
862. An Italian priest working among Italian migrants in the industrial basins of Charleroi spoke of the fear of being deported en masse among the single Italian migrants. In order to check this disaster “certains se hâtent de contracter marriage, d’autres prennent la nationalité belge” de Sanctis to his superior in Rome, 30.9.1932. Castiau (1973), p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-863)
863. Parliamentary proceedings, questions and answers, 1931-1932, p.624. [↑](#footnote-ref-864)
864. The statement of Senator Segers, supported by Liberals and Christian-Democrats during the discussion over applications for naturalization in the PHS, 14.7.1932, pp.1413-1415 is typical: “Nous ne sommes tout de même pas un bureau de bienfaisance à l’usage de l’étranger, particulièrement en ce moment où nous avons déjà tant de peine à soutenir nos ouvriers. Il est donc tout à fait inopportun d’aggraver la charge de notre législation sociale en faisant des gracieusetés à des étrangers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-865)
865. PHK, 17.3.1932, p.1350 and PHS, 20.7.1932, p.1455.For the *grande naturalization* the minimum age was raised from 25 to 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-866)
866. From September 1934 onwards immigrants could apply for financial assistance to return to their country of origin (see further). About one hundred twenty Czechoslovakian citizens who were legally in Belgium decided in 1933 to return, in 1934 another hundred returned of which a small part was repatriated at the expense of the Belgian authorities.In 1935 128 Hungarian were repatriated by the Hungarian social committee, an organization close to the embassy. Krajan, IV, 1935, 24, p.7. Embassy in Brussels to Minister of Social Affairs, Prague 20.1.1936. SUA, MSP, HIII 4025. Belgiumi Magyar Konyv 1935 Vromans, Brussels, p.44. PDK, 1935, doc.5 IV.Embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Social Affairs, 9.1.1935. SUA, MSP, H III, 4025. Ons Limburg, 8.9.1934, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-867)
867. According to the official figures 1600 Poles were parttime and 44 full time unemployed. AMJ, 109 C 92. At least thousand Polish Jews lost their dole. [↑](#footnote-ref-868)
868. A list of unemployed miners made up by the municipalities in *Hainaut* in 1934 mentions 26 persons with a surname which did not sound Belgian. Half of these foreigners came probably from North Africa. Liste nominative des mineurs chômeurs complets, 1934 Charbonnages Hainaut. ARA, mijnadministratie, B, 4D, 5, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-869)
869. PHK, 25.3.1936. Report on the situation in labor market in Belgium, first semester of 1931, p.14. AAN, MSZ, 10.379. The urban background of the Jewish migrants made it also more difficult for them to go back. For a peasant's son there was always a possibility to return to the farm or at least to work in the old country as a farm hand.

To establish the dynamics by which the Jewish migrants engaged increasingly in peddling would demand a detailed analysis of the changing occupations of these migrants. Peddling was also a part of the economic activities of the Jewish migrants in the 1920s. The Depression had cut down drastically the alternatives available to them. We believe that the exclusion of most of the migrants -we must however remember that only a minority of the migrants were unionized- from the unemployment insurance created a last push towards peddling, but this process preceded 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-870)
870. For an overview of the evolution in the legislation concerning the vending trade and the sources used for the quantitative analyses which will follow, see further. In total there were 5,000 foreign peddlars who had applied for a license by December 1, 1935. Council of Ministers, 29.11.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-871)
871. 1,922 Poles had applied for a vendor's permit by February 1, 1936, probably only 645 of them had already immigrated before 1926, 177 had arrived between February 1926 and September 1927. The number may be somewhat higher since those who had a criminal record did not receive a vendor's license irrespective of the length of time they had been in Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-872)
872. Liberman (1936-1937?), p.11.

That in general the immigrants were not well off during those years is illustrated by the large number of them who were recognized as destitute. On the 210,768 foreigners who obtained an identity card in 1936 were there 22,641 who obtained it gratis because of destitution (=10.7%). Being destitute meant either being on welfare or having an income under 6,000 francs (5,000 in communities of 30,000 or less) and for a family was added 2,000 for the second person and 1,000 for each additional person. Minister of Finance to Minister of Justice,s.d. Minister of Justice to Minister of Finance, 2.5.1939. AMJ, 1B6 (I). Bekaert (1940), pp.221-222. [↑](#footnote-ref-873)
873. Comparing the data on the number of foreigners in firms with more than 10 employees in December 1934 with the occupations on the identity cards of immigrants in June 1936 -at a moment when the economy was recovering does not reveal important changes. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-874)
874. In 1934 and in 1935 the Hungarian Committee had mediated for the placement as domestic servants of respectively 250 and 114 Hungarian girls (women) who were already in Belgium. Belgiumi Magyar Konyv, 1934 and 1935. Vromans, Brussels, respectively p.58 and 57. Vanderputte (1984), p.101. Embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Social Affairs, 25.1.1934. SUA, MSP, H III, 4025. Rapport CAAVAA 9.4.1935-9.4.1936, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-875)
875. "There is high unemployment among the (Jewish) Czechoslovakian diamond workers and among the navvies (Slovaks and Rusyni) because of the end of the building season. In some cases the embassy has been able to provide them with jobs in the mines" Embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Social Affairs, 25.1.1934. SUA, MSP, H III, 4025. [↑](#footnote-ref-876)
876. This was in line with the resolution of the Migration Congress of the Socialist Union in 1926. L'Alimentation, sept. 1933 in IHJ, box 7. Le Prolétaire, 16.7.1932. SK, XXVIIIe syndikaal kongres gehouden op 26 en 27 september 1932, Brussel, 1932, p. 50 and 53. SK, XXIXe syndikaal kongres op 28, 29 en 30 juli 1934, Brussel, 1934, p. 22. De Kleeding, XV, 1933, 6, p.6 and XVI, 1934, 12, p.2. De Voeding, XX, 1933, 6, p.4. F.Liebaers in Le Soir, 8.1.1933. Le Carrier, XXXIV, 1932, 5, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-877)
877. Vakorgaan der centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuispersonneel, I: 15.3.1933, p.19; 1933, 6, p.19; 8, p.2; 16, pp.4-7. Our information on the Christian Democratic union is more limited as we hardly consulted their union journals (for ex. we did not find the journal of the Christian Democratic diamond workers, leather workers...). [↑](#footnote-ref-878)
878. De Kleeding, XV, 1933, 9,p.2 also 10, p.2; XVI, 1934, 12, p. 1 and 6; Le Travailleur, XXII, 1933, 1, p.4 and XXIII, 1934, 12, p. 1; De Strijdkreet, XIII, 1933, 14, p.7; XIV, 1934, 1, p.3 also 19, p. 2 and 12, p.6; XV, 1935, II, p.2. Le Peuple, 11.1.1934/5, 12.11.1934/3 and 10.10.1934. Le Prolétaire, XV, 1933, 756, p.2 and XVI, 11.8.1934, 796, p.2. De Ontvoogding, XXIII, 1934,1, p.20. PHS, 6.12.1933, p.64. De Belgische Hout- en Bouwwerker, 1.1934, p.2. De Metaalbewerker, 1935, ?, p.2/5-6. De Voeding, XXI, 1934, 7, p.3; 8, p.4, 9-10, p.3. Le Soir, 11.7.1934. BV, 1934, 1, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-879)
879. "Il est en tout inadmissible que le patron reste seul à décider s'il doit embaucher un Belge ou un étranger, surtout lorsque cet étranger, exclu, par la volonté du gouvernement, du droit aux indemnités du chômage, est prêt à accepter les conditions du travail et de salaire notablement inférieurs" Le Prolétaire, XVI, 1934, 805, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-880)
880. "On ferait bien de renvoyer ...les misérables dans leur pays d'origine." Le Peuple, 11.11.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-881)
881. "Nous sommes obligés d'envisager un régime moins libéral pour les étrangers" SK, Zedelijk en geldelijk verslag voor de jaren 1934 - 1935, Brussel, 1936, pp. 39 - 40. ACV-maandblad, VII, 1935, 4 - 5. p. 582; VI, 1934, 9, pp. 943 - 944 and 10, p. 1160. [↑](#footnote-ref-882)
882. Letter of 11.2.1935. Morelli (1985), p.621. For similar severe condemnations of the Belgian Socialists by Italians leftist see Morelli (1985), p.707, 719 and 722-723. [↑](#footnote-ref-883)
883. 21% of the immigrants in the Borinage, 12% in Centre, 10% in Liège, 6% in Limburg and 3% in the basin of Charleroi. L'ouvrier mineur, XXX, 1934, 11, p.54. We do not have figures on the Christian Democratic miners' union at our disposal, but they certainly unionized a number of Polish miners. Le Franc Mineur, XV, 1934, 8-9, p.8. There were sometimes surprising benefits attached to trade union membership. In Péronnes lez Binche (Centre basin) the Poles were granted church services in their own tongue on the condition that they adhered to the Catholic trade union. Kudlacik to Hlond, 31.8.1933. AAG, III, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-884)
884. "Cette situation est à prendre en considération par nos militants; la crise a chassé un certain nombre d'étrangers, mais si une nouvelle activité se manifestait, leur nombre ne tarderait pas à augmenter et en raison de la répugnance des Belges pour le travail des mines, la tendance des étrangers à rester isolés ou à entrer dans d'autres organisations pourrait présenter un certain danger...Je voudrais demander à nos camarades militants de revoir les moyens à employer pour syndiquer cette main-d'oeuvre encore si réfractaire, hélas à l'organisation." L'ouvrier mineur, XXXI, 1935, 5-6, p.115. [↑](#footnote-ref-885)
885. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 1, p.4. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, III, 1935, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-886)
886. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, 1934, 14?, p.22. For similar xenofobic articles see III, 1935, 22, pp.9-10; II, 1934, 19?, p.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-887)
887. Due to complaints about the "abuses" in the hotel sector the Sûreté investigated the situation in some of these hotels in March 1935. On 127 foreigners working in 5 first class hotels in Brussels and Antwerp had 90% (114) acquired residency status, hence they were already in Belgium at least before the summer of 1932. AMJ, 33 C 30 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-888)
888. Some of these organizations were set up by qualified Belgian hotel personnel who alleged that they had been working in France where they had been expelled in order to protect national labor. The hotel sector was one of the few sectors, where the French law on the protection of national labor was implemented, at most 10 and 20% -depending on the professional category- of the personnel could be of foreign nationality. Schor (1985c). [↑](#footnote-ref-889)
889. Report of the Gendarmerie, 30.6.1934. Legion National, 6.7.1935. Centrale des Fédérations des Ouvriers de l'Industrie Hôtelière de Belgique, 8.1935. Bulletin officiel de l'Association nationale des employés de l'industrie hôtelière, 1934. AMJ, 33 C 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-890)
890. In the general files we consulted no clear pattern in the decisions of the Sûreté concerning these foreigners without residency status is discernable. Only a research into the individual files can yield more conclusive results, but it seems that the attitude of the Sûreté got more restrictive than in the first half of 1932 when the Administrateur of the Sûreté refused to expel aliens without identity card who still had a job. Also in other sectors where complaints were lodged by indigenous workers or labor organizations the Sûreté proceeded in a similar manner. Very few migrant labor had however not yet obtained residency status so the results of this action can only be limited. See the files in AMJ, 33 C 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-891)
891. This chapter is a translation of Caestecker (1993c), pp.131-135. [↑](#footnote-ref-892)
892. Report Polish Consulate in Brussels, 15.2.1933. AAN, MSZ, 10.069. Liberman (1936-1937?), p.15. Although anti-semitic remarks were rare in this period, we consider that the agitation on the "Jewish" economy could rely on a diffuse anti-Semitism which existed in Belgian society. To assess its influence is difficult seen the absence of research on the attitude towards Jewry in Belgian society. [↑](#footnote-ref-893)
893. "Des émigrés insaisissables, travaillant dans des conditions d'hygiène déplorables sont occupés à ruiner littéralement le commerce de la maroquinerie, de la mode, de la fourrure, de la ganterie, de l'imperméable. Ils sont les véritables vers rongeurs des métiers à base artisanale." Neptune, 24.10.1935/4, see also 25.10.1935. Le Soir, 20.12.1933/ 1, 1-2; 20.6.1932/2,2 en 16.3.1933/1, 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-894)
894. De Kleedingnijverheid, XXIV, 1936, 11, p.14. Le Soir, 17.3.1933/1, 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-895)
895. "Le "polak" se fournit chez le "polak". Et le polak vend surtout au "polak" de préférence au colporteur qui va de porte en porte et qui, à son tour, par ses prix imbattables tue le commerce local...et les marchés." Neptune, 25.10.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-896)
896. "Nos marchés publics et nos rues, dans les villes et les villages, sont envahis surtout depuis quelques temps par une basse pègre de mercantis et de colporteurs étrangers se livrant à une commerce sans vergogne dont les marchandises sont souvent d'origine plus que suspecte." The Catholic Senator Paul Crokaert in Le Soir, 20.12.1933/ 1, 1-2. See also Le XXe siécle, 27.10.1934/4, De Kleedingnijverheid, XXII, 1933, 12, p.14 and Le Pays Wallon, 24.11.1934/2, 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-897)
897. National Federation of Fashion Industry to the Mayors of the Brussels district, s.d. Quoted in Le Soir, 16.3.1932/1, 7.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-898)
898. This discontent probably did not have an objective economic basis, as the production supply of the Belgian market vendors was limited to primary goods (alimentation) and as they offered very few durable consumption goods. Lack of archival data concerning this professional group means that this question cannot be effectively pursued. [↑](#footnote-ref-899)
899. "Il appartient aux pouvoirs publics de mettre un frein à ce genre de commerce déloyal et malhonnête...La Belgique aux Belges d'abord et place aux commerçants honnêtes." Le Pays Wallon, 24.11.1934/2, 1. PHK, 25.3.1936. Le Soir, 16.3.1932/1. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-900)
900. "certaines industries (ganterie, maroquinerie, chapellerie) sont gravement comprises par la concurrrence anormale d'étrangers qui fabriquent à domicile, au mépris des lois sociales et fiscales, des articles qu'ils offrent ensuite en vente à des prix dérisoires... spécialement..des commerçants ambulants mis en cause par les groupements professionnels des ouvriers de la chapellerie." Minister of Economic Affairs P.Van Isacker to Minister E. Vandervelde, 18.2.1936. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde, correspondance. De Tijd, 4.7.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-901)
901. By 5th of May 1933 30,000 Jews would have escaped out of Germany to Antwerp. Le Bien Public, 11.5.1933/1,2. Nieuw Vlaanderen, 20.5.1933. In Genth alone there would have more than 6,000. De Gentenaar, 12.2.1936/1,4. Quoted in Dumon (1989), p.135. PHS, 12.3.1936, p.448. Even the high-quality paper L'indépendance Belge (for example 5.10.1935/3, 7) contested the official version that there were only a few thousand refugees in Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-902)
902. "il y en a, et c'est le plus grand nombre, qui ne cherchent qu'un lieu d'habitat plus clément." Neptune, 26.10.1935/4. Verslag van de Commissie van Landbouw belast met het onderzoek van de Begrooting van Landbouw-Middenstand voor het dienstjaar 1934, p.8. PDS, 1933-1934, nr 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-903)
903. "Beaucoup de Juifs allemands se disant réfugiés politiques continuent à vendre leur "ersatz" et fond une "bedide goumerce" qui rapporte." Le XXe siécle, 27.10.1934/4. Het Volk, 24.5.1934/1, 1. Liberale syndicaliste, 3.1935. Neptune, 29.10.1935/4. [↑](#footnote-ref-904)
904. Ministry of Justice to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13.10.1933. Coubaux to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-905)
905. "La situation toute spéciale des intéressés commande et justifie le recours à certaines mesures d'exceptionnelle bienveillance" Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Minister of Labor P.Van Isacker, 22.9.1933. ABZ, 12.178. A first case in point was his demand to exempt the Russian "refugees" from the exclusion of unemployment insurance. Coubaux (Nansens-office) to Foreign Affairs, 11.7.1933 and 13.10.1933 and Foreign Affairs to Labor, 15.7.1933 and 16.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-906)
906. Note pour le Service Juridique, 19.10.1933. Note pour C, 20.10.1933. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 5.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-907)
907. See for example the reaction to the demand to grant unemployment benefits to the "refugees" :"Sans méconnaître les raisons d'humanité qui ont fait proposer cette mesure, il y a lieu de considérer qu'actuellement la France, les Pays Bas et le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg sont les seuls pays ayant conclu avec nous une telle convention qui se justifie par le contact permanent de populations voisines. Il est impropable que les pays d'origine des réfugiés dont il est question eussent conclu un tel accord avec notre pays et même que celui-ci eût trouvé avantage à passer avec eux une convention de l'espèce." Minister of Labor P. Van Isacker to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans, 24.11.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-908)
908. R.de Foy to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans, 13.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-909)
909. Cabinet of the Minister of Hygiene and Social Prevention to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 6.10.1933. Foreign Affairs to Labor, 16.10.1933. Foreign Affairs to Hygiene and Social Prevention, 16.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-910)
910. The Belgian delegation to the Convention was composed of E.Meyers, Honorary Director General of the Ministry of Justice and L.Deltenre, Under Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs to Justice, 27.7.1933. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-911)
911. The Convention tolerated -under pressure of the national states- the expulsion of refugees, but only for reasons of public order or national security. This provision gave the Belgian authorities more leeway to dispose of "refugees" who had acquired residency status than national law did. According to the alien law of 1897 only aliens who disturbed *la tranquillité public* could be expelled. To return "refugees" to their country of origin was ,however, excluded by the Convention. The Belgian delegation in Geneva had tried, in vain to limit the Convention to a declaration of intentions instead of a binding agreement. Proces-verbaux de la cinquiéme séance du Comité Intergouvernementale pour les réfugiés, 28.10.1933. ABZ, 12.178. Bekaert (1940), pp.350-352. [↑](#footnote-ref-912)
912. Rapport sur la Conference de Geneve de 26.10.1933 relative aux réfugiés russes, arméniens et assimilés. ABZ, 12.178. The ratification of this Convention by Parliament was postponed until the French Parliament endorsed the convention, see chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-913)
913. ACV-maandblad, VII, 1935, 4-5, p.582. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 4, p.4. KADOC, ACV-Raad, 11.12.1934 and ACV-Bestuur, 7.12.1934. Only the Communists attacked vehemently the special status attributed to the Russian "refugees". Le Drapeau Rouge, 9.9.1933/1, 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-914)
914. "Il convient d'expulser les étrangers exclus du chômage et qui sont sans moyens d'existence." Council of Ministers, 17.06.1933, p. 9. ARA, Ch. de Broqueville, 674. "A Genck, un grand nombre des ouvriers étrangers sont au compte de l'Assistance Publique et il convient d'en débarrasser celle-ci. Le Gouvernement étudie les conditions dans lesquelles le rapatriement pourrait se faire." ACCA, 8.11.1933. On 922 recipients of welfare in Genk 371 were aliens. Annual report welfare, 1933. Municipal archive, Genk. [↑](#footnote-ref-915)
915. Commission interministérielle, 6.11.1933. Note de Foy, 22.7.1933 and 11.9.1933. AMJ, 109 C 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-916)
916. Note, 8.1.1934. AMJ, 109 C92. Commission de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère dans les mines, 18.5.1934, p. 1. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. Le Service Social, I, 1935, 7-8, p.157. Already in the 1920s repatriation was an item within the budget of the Ministry of Justice. Before 1934 the Ministry of Justice only repatriated insane, sick and very young aliens. Comité d'Assistance aux étrangers. ARC and PBK, 1935, doc.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-917)
917. AMJ, 109 C92.In 1935 350 persons and in 1936 76 persons left from Genk for their country of origin with financial support of local and national authorities. Annual Report Welfare Department. Municipal Archive Genk. [↑](#footnote-ref-918)
918. AMJ, 109 C92. [↑](#footnote-ref-919)
919. That year 140 Czechoslovakians were repatriated at the expense of the Sûreté (total 300 returnees). Probably there were about twice that many Poles being repatriated by the Sûreté. Krajan, IV, 1935, 24, p.7. Embassy in Brussels to Minister of Social Affairs, Prague 20.1.1936. SUA, MSP, HIII. PDK, 1935, doc.5 IV.Embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Social Affairs, 9.1.1935. SUA, MSP, H III, 4025. Ons Limburg, 8.9.1934, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-920)
920. Kudlacik to Hlond, 2.2.1932. AAG, 47. This change in orientation went along with an institutional change. In 1932, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs obtained the responsibility for the emigration policy from the Ministry of Labor. This reflected the belief that, in those years of protectionism, only international initiatives could adequately respond to the immigration restrictions. Janowska (1981), pp.112-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-921)
921. Office of the Poles abroad to the consulate in Brussels, 4.1.1934. AAN, MSZ, 10.602. Narodowiec, 16.10.1932 and 21.2.1936/1, 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-922)
922. Caestecker (1991), p.566. [↑](#footnote-ref-923)
923. The two other Czechoslovakian schools, in Zwartberg and Waterschei were also supported by their mines, but less generously. Czechoslovakian embassy to Ministry of Social Affairs, 25.12.1934. SUA, Ceskoslovensky urad zahranicni (CUZ), 156, k.48. Interview Frantisek H. (teacher Zwartberg) Kolosdeye 6.1990. When, in 1935, the Italian authorities opened an Italian school in Genk, they also received financial support from this mine. Morelli (1985), p.176. Charges sociales diverses et libéralités-prévisions. RABW, KS, 210, 92. Consulate in Antwerp to MSZ, 21.3.1938. AAN, MSZ, 10.605. [↑](#footnote-ref-924)
924. MSZ to Hlond, 8.6.1932. Kudlacik to Hlond, 24.1.1934. AAG, 47. Monceau-Fontaine to ACCBS, 18.7.1932. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-925)
925. "A number of mines express a negative attitude towards the Polish Mission, as they view the patriotic influence of a permanent Polish priest with dissatisfaction...Wallonia wants to belgicize the Polish children as quickly as possible, given the diminishing natality." Kudlacik to Hlond, 4.5.1932. AAG, III,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-926)
926. The miners' wages were regulated by the wage agreement of 1.11.1926. Wages dependent for 75% on the index of living costs and for 25% on the price of coal. As the price for coal for industrial use had dropped by 40 % between the end of 1929 and the summer of 1932 the decline in the wages in the Borinage was considerable. All extras which the employers had granted in the boom of 1929 were of course already taken back by 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-927)
927. Driessen (1981). Wodon, chief of cabinet of the king to E.Vandervelde, 1932. IEV, E.Vandervelde, EV/1171. [↑](#footnote-ref-928)
928. Entretien chez M. Ministre, 4.7.1932. Notes, 5.7.1932. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. Le Franc-Mineur, XIII, 1932, 8, p.5. CNMM, 7.9.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-929)
929. "M.Demaret demande si d'après l'arrangement à la CNMM il est entendu que l'on élimera les pensionnés et les célibataires étrangers. La réponse est affirmative pour les pensionnés. Pour les célibataires étrangers chacun fait qu'il veut." AHCM, 15.7.1932. The basic idea of the employers at that moment was that they would agree on the replacement of the immigrants by unemployed Belgian miners if it would not entail any additional costs for them.

An argument against replacing the foreigners with Belgians was that the Belgians would, as soon as the economic situation improved, leave the mines. Roisin:"Il y a des ouvriers qui passent d'une industrie à l'autre et ceux qu'on réembaucherait actuellement ne prendraient pas l'engagement de rester au Service des charbonnages." CNMM 13.7.1932. See also La Libre Belgique, 22.7.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-930)
930. According to the employers this reluctance to insist on the replacement of foreign labor was caused by diplomatic reasons. AHCM, 15.7.1932. As we have seen earlier the government was also reluctant to intervene in the personnel policy of industry. [↑](#footnote-ref-931)
931. Le Peuple, 4.07.1932/1, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-932)
932. Kudlacik, rector Polish Catholic Mission to Primas, 13.7.1932. AAG, III, 1. Wiarus Polski, 13.6.1932/1. La Voix Communiste, 17.7.1932/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-933)
933. Sia, 9.1932, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-934)
934. BV, 1936, 12, p. 256. Morelli (1985), p.722. [↑](#footnote-ref-935)
935. Robotnik, 4.8.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-936)
936. Gos Wychodcy, 11.8.1932/1, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-937)
937. Narodowiec, 24.7.1932 and 20.7.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-938)
938. Heronimek wrote that the unions also asked to fire the Belgian single miners to make place for the unemployed heads of families. Robotnik, 4.8.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-939)
939. A.Zdanowski, member of the emigration commission of the KCZZ, found the explanation of Mertens satisfying: "Our Belgian comrades never asked to fire Polish workers. They only reacted against the use of unconscious forces within the emigration to worsen the working conditions of Belgian labor. The Belgians are fully entitled to do that." Robotnik, 3.8.1932/1, 2-5.

The KCZZ considered their intervention in Belgium successful. It had refuted the argument of the conservative forces in Poland that the Belgian Socialists were insistent on firing Polish labor. Sprawozdane komisje Centralnej zwizkow zawadowych z dzialalnosci i stanu zwizkow zawadowych w Polsce w latach 1929-1932. Warszawa, 1933, p.51. [↑](#footnote-ref-940)
940. Bericht über den Verlauf des Streiks der belgischen Bergarbeiter, 20.10.1932. Archives PCB, microfilms IML-Moscow. L'Action Syndicale, 16.7.1932. Journal de Charleroi, 29.7.1932/3,4 and 31.7.1932/5, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-941)
941. Because of the lack of archival information we cannot analyze the attitude of migrant labor during this strike. It seems they mostly took part in the strike because of the intensity of pressures to join in from their Belgian colleagues. Only in very few mines, especially in the Borinage, did the migrants continue to work throughout the strike. By the end of August about 1/4 of the Poles had resumed working and these Poles fell victim to rising violence. Kudlacik to Primas, 26.8.1932. AAG, III, 1. Narodowiec, 31.8.1932/1 and 30.8.1932/5. Driesen (1981), p.163. AEL, administration des mines - division de Liège, n°432 and Espérance et Bonne Fortune, 93. AESH, administration des mines - anciens 4éme, grèves jusqu'à 1936. La Gazette de Centre, 16.8.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-942)
942. The Minister of interior stated clearly in a circular letter in August 1932 that immigrants should also receive welfare. The embassies exerted considerable pressure on the municipal authorities to grant their unemployed citizens in Belgium welfare. In the basin of Charleroi the immigrants obtained some support, though less than the Belgians. In the Borinage the immigrants hardly obtained anything. Journal de Charleroi, 31.08.1932,/5. Gos Wychodcy, 11.8.1932/1, 2. Robotnik, 4.8.1932. Narodowiec, 29.7.1932 and 6.8.1932, 17.8.1932. La Voix Communiste, 7.8.1932. French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Gouverneur Generaal, 25.8.1932. AMAE, Europe 1930-1940, Belgique, 223. "En septembre c'était véritablement la famine parmi les ouvriers étrangers, plus encore que chez les Belges. Il n'était pas rare d'entendre dire par un ouvrier immigré qu'il n'avait pas mangés depuis 2 ou 3 jours." Histoire de la grève de 1932. Archives PCB, microfilms IML-Moscow. [↑](#footnote-ref-943)
943. Journal de Charleroi, 13.08.1932/3 and 16.10.1932/3. De Mijnwerker, XXVI, 1932, 7, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-944)
944. Gos Wychodcy, 24.8.1932/1, 1-2. The members of the mine association of Charleroi were asked by the Sûreté to give information about all foreigners who they deemed unwanted in order to expel them. ACCBS, 18.7.1932. Bois du Luc, 205. The Polish emigration press of nationalist signature protested against the expulsion of innocent foreigners. Also the Polish ambassador intervened to make the Belgian authorities revoke expulsion orders. Wiarus Polski, 15.8.1932/1 and 19.8.1932/1. Narodowiec, 7.9.1932/1. Especially in Limburg the repression against the foreign strikers was virulent. The local authorities, according to the Socialist press even took independent activities "The head of the police of Genk tries to spread panic under our comrades. He sends them a piece of paper which states that they have to leave the country immediately. The comrades should not pay attention to this, as such orders can only be issued by the Ministry." Vooruit, 20.7.1932. Volksgazet, 30.08.1932; 27.7.1932; 26.7.1932 and 19.8.1932. De Volkswil, 28.8.1932/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-945)
945. 900 Polish workers (with dependents 1,800 persons) returned to Poland during those months, mostly from Wallonia. About 800 Czechoslovakians left in those months. Emigration report 1932. SUA, MSP, H III 4025. Narodowiec, 9.10.1932/1. Gos Wychodcy, 24.8.1932/1, 1-2. Also large number of Italian migrants left Belgium. "Ici nous avions un peu de compatriotes, mais maintenant nous les avons perdus en grande quantité" Postcard of de Sanctis, 30.9.1932. Quoted in Castiau (1973), p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-946)
946. "Tous les chômeurs borains seront réembauchés et pour diminuer le nombre des reculants, les pensionnés complets n'ayant pas de charges familiales ainsi que les étrangers n'ayant pas leurs famille en Belgique seront licenciés, mais à conditions que la main-d'oeuvre nécessaire soit trouvèe" Conseil régional mixte de l'industrie

charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, sous-commission, 4.10.1932, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-947)
947. "M.Debilde déclare que quelle que soit la décision de la CNMM il ne licenciera pas ses ouvriers étrangers." Committee FEDECHAR, 16.11.1932. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-948)
948. AHCM, 2.12.1932. "Le Borain éprouve une répugnance à quitter sa localité natale et quand il le fait c'est avec esprit de retour, sans s'inquiéter si le charbonnage aura, au moment de son départ, des effectifs pour le replacer." Conseil régional mixte de l'industrie charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, sous-commission, 4.10.1932, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3.

This argument was repeated throughout the whole crisis period, for example. AHCM, 27.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-949)
949. Rapport spécial sur la grève. UEM, Hensies-Pommeroeul, rapports mensuel. Conseil régional mixte de l'industrie charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, sous-commission, 4.10.1932, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-950)
950. "Il y a vis-à-vis d'eux un engagement moral de les conserver" AHCM, 2.12.1932. This dismissal of foreign miners who had participated in the strike led to the complaint by Mester that the employers had considered the French to be foreigners. Conseil régional mixte de l'industrie charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, sous-commission, 4.10.1932, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-951)
951. "J'ai promis au Consul de Pologne de faire mon possible pour conserver les ouvriers polonais qui ont travaillé pendant la grève." CNMM, 4.1.1933. Conseil régional mixte de l'industrie charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, sous-commission, 4.10.1932, p.2. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. AHCM, 21.10.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-952)
952. See graph 18. 2,216 foreign miners in July 1932 and 1,748 in december 1932, appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-953)
953. The miners' union also had to deal with internal contestation against a strict adherence to the demand to dismiss all single foreigners. The unions even asked the employers to re-engage certain foreigners. "on nous crée des difficultés avec les étrangers, des militants interviennent auprès de nous pour les maintenir dans les mines." Comité central, 7.11.1932, p.88 and 14.11.1930, p.90. Livre des Procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-954)
954. Comité central, 7.11.1932, p.88. Livre des Procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-955)
955. The foreign personnel in the mines in the west of the basin were paid less than their Belgian colleagues in the same mine and the mine directors refused to give this bonus to the Belgians who were to replace the immigrants.

The mine owners did not consider these low wages a violation of the wage agreement. Their

interpretation of the wage agreement of 1920 was at odds with the way the trade unions saw it. While the trade unions considered that each job category corresponded with a certain wage, the employers argued that the setting of the first wage was a totally voluntary agreement by the workers and employers and that the wage agreement of 1920 came into effect only to regulate wage changes. "M.Stein fait remarqué que le salaire conventionnel n'existe pas pour un ouvrier qui ne travaille pas en 1920 et M. Roisin ajoute qu'à son avis le salaire conventionnel est celui que l'ouvrier accepte quand on l'embauche. A partir de ce moment ce salaire doit subire les fluctuations de la convention" Committee FEDECHAR, 31.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-956)
956. Procès-verbal de la sous-comission du réembauchage tenue à la Direction Générale des Mines à Bruxelles 28.12.1932. Réunion tenue le 15 novembre 1932 à la Direction Générale des Mines à Bruxelles. CNMM, doc. 396-397. Certainly in Liège unemployed miners who refused an employment offer were removed from the dole. The miners'unions sent lists of unemployed miners to the employers' association who in their turn informed the unions if an unemployed miner had refused a job offer. In Limburg the public labor exchange office sent unemployed miners to the mine. If the miner refused to go his right to dole was revoked. In the Borinage this was not the case, as the relations between the trade unions and the employers were very tense and the employers refused to cooperate with the trade unions as they were afraid they would have to yield their autonomy in personnel policy. CNMM, sous-commission de réembauchage 29.11.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-957)
957. "Les charbonnages veulent bien le faire mais quelle sera la garantie que les chômeurs borains viendront remplacer les étrangers? Ces licenciements ne pourraient être faits quand le syndicat aura une personnalité juridique." Committee FEDECHAR 9.11.1932 see also 5 and 12.10.1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-958)
958. Le Soir, 4.7.1933/2,1. Le Peuple, 8.7.1933/1, 1-2. Journal de Charleroi, 2.7.1933/4. La Province, 29.6.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-959)
959. De Mijnwerker, XXVIII, 1934, 1, p.3. PHK, 25.7.1933, p.1150 and 1165. [↑](#footnote-ref-960)
960. "les ouvriers Borains ne sont pas des Sidis, des Hongrois, des Polonais taillables et corvéables à merci" PHK, 25.7.1933, p.1153. [↑](#footnote-ref-961)
961. Et. Deladrier in Le Peuple, 20.7.1933/1,6. The reaction in the press to this proposal was in general very positive, for example Le Populaire, 8.9.1933.

Only the Communists strongly criticized this proposal, as it undermined the solidarity between the workers: Le Réveil Syndicaliste, 8.7.1933 and 5.8.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-962)
962. PHK, 27.3.1934, p.1309. [↑](#footnote-ref-963)
963. The Limburg mining companies preferred that the Flemish miners settle in the company houses in the cités. ACCA, 27.9.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-964)
964. AHCM, 6.10.1933. CNMM, 19.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-965)
965. Federation of the trade unions of the basin of Charleroi to municipal council of Monceau sur Sambre, 23.11.1934. Protest to the Maire, 11.1934. Municipal Archive, Charleroi, Monceau sur Sambre, 98.51.01. La Voix Communiste, 3.9.1933,p.2. La Vie Nouvelle, XVIII, 1933, 35,p.2. KADOC, raadszitting ACV 12.9.1934, p.2. Narodowiec, 15.10.1933. Le Peuple, 4.6.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-966)
966. "N'y a-t-il rien à faire pour récupérer les chômeurs complets? Poser cette question, c'est poser celle des ouvriers étrangers" Van Isacker in PHK, 25.7.1933,p.1161. "Le ministre nous donne raison concernant les étrangers" Comité central, 13.7.1933, p.150. Livre des Procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. La Province, 2.7.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-967)
967. ACCBS, 30.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-968)
968. "le départ d'un certain nombre d'étrangers... devra etre envisagée, si l'on veut arriver à un résultat suffisant...à alléger les charges de chômage et à amener dans les masses ouvrières un apaisement que nous devons désirer dans l'intérêt du pays" Projet d'allocution à prononcer par le Ministre lors de l'installation de la Sous Commission de réembauchage, p.2. CNMM. [↑](#footnote-ref-969)
969. J.Van Buggenhout, President of the Christian Democratic miners'union had, in contrast to the Socialists, at least some political clout as this labor movement was represented in the government. Van Buggenhout threatened already in January 1933 to prevent any protectionist measure for the mining industry if the mine companies in Limburg did not give absolute preference to Belgian labor. Waterschei to Gruyters, 24.1.1933. RABW, KS, 61, 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-970)
970. ACCBS, 30.10.1933. "M.le président insiste pour qu'on montre beaucoup de bonne volonté pour s'efforcer d'arriver au but souhaité - remplacement de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère par les ouvriers chômeurs- par le Government. Il croit savoir en effet que si les mesures prises par les charbonnages n'auraient pas les effets utile il interviendrait une loi renvoyant les étrangers dans leur pays d'origine" ACCBS, 13.11.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-971)
971. The mining companies wanted also to exempt he immigrants who had worked during the strike of 1932. ACCBS, 30.10.1933. CNMM, sous-commission de réembauchage 29.11.1933. Committee FEDECHAR, 31.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-972)
972. In Genk there were a certain number of unemployed immigrants who were living on welfare. The Sûreté wanted to expel them. The mines did not oppose this, but: "Les charbonnages de Campine ont intérêt à conserver les bons éléments. Il conviendrait donc d'épurer, à cette fin, les listes de chômeurs, et de communiquer le résultat de ce travail à la Sûreté." ACCA, 8.11.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-973)
973. We have to be cautious with these figures. The figures of March 1933 are registered miners, compiled by the FEDECHAR and the figures of May 1934 refer to the miners occupied on March, 15 1934, compiled by the Mine Administration. Hence the decrease in foreigners is overestimated. The figures of September 1934, registered miners compiled by the FEDECHAR confirm this picture, with a decline of 22, 20, 7 and 15% and an increase with 5% in comparison with March 1933. Appendix 1.

This decline of immigrant labor is not only a result of dismissals. Some immigrants decided in these years, just as in 1931 and 1932, that it was no longer worth working abroad and decided "voluntary" to quite their job and return home. [↑](#footnote-ref-974)
974. FEDECHAR, Rapport du Comité sur l'exercice 1934, p.36. FEDECHAR Committee, 11.8.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-975)
975. "Charbonnage doit envisagé pas crise mais période normale... main-d'oeuvre acclimatés, presque assimilés -il faut en tenir compte- pas possible employer chômeur 1 mois et le voir partir" Réembauchage, 29.10.1933. Téléphone à M.Bolle, 24.7.1934. ARA, mijnadminisratie, roos, C, 2, 3. AHCM, 2.3.1934 and 27.10.1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-976)
976. "Sur la question maintien des étrangers nous faisons simplement cette réserve que les patrons seuls ne doivent pas être juges de l'indispensabilité de la main-d'oeuvre ètrangère." Delattre in Le Peuple, 8.10.1934. De Mijnwerker, XXX, 1934, 7, p.3 and 6. Le Franc Mineur, XV, 1934, 12, p.4. Mester to Lebacqz, 16.4.1934. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. Ons Limburg, 15.12.1934/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-977)
977. Minister of Labor, P.Van Isacker to Minister of Justice, P.E.Janson, 28.4.1934. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-978)
978. Committee FEDECHAR, 24.10.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-979)
979. Commission de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère dans les mines, note sur la question de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère dans les mines. ARA, mijnadministratie, C, rood, 2. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-980)
980. This is a translation of Caestecker (1993c), pp.136-139. [↑](#footnote-ref-981)
981. BS, 30.1.1935, pp. 494-499 and 24.6.1935, pp. 4192-4198. [↑](#footnote-ref-982)
982. For the French-Belgian agreement see BS, 23.1.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-983)
983. The authorities had overestimated the number of foreign peddlers. They thought there were about 10,000 foreign peddlers active in Belgium. Council of Ministers, 29.11.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-984)
984. Denizen would not be forced to leave, only those who had not yet obtained residency status would be liable for expulsion. The aliens with residency status who were refused a peddlers' license could only be induced to do so. If however they continued to peddle notwithstanding a refusal of a license they were liable for a condamnation and hence an expulsion. Note Sûreté, 25.11.1935. AMJ, 73 C. [↑](#footnote-ref-985)
985. Mémoire remis par l'Association des marchands Juifs en Belgique à Monsieur Van Isacker, à la date du 5.2.1937. Circular letter to the Mayors, 11.1935. Yivo, D.Trotzki, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-986)
986. Several dozens of Czechoslovakian citizens were victim of this law. Czechoslovakian Embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Social Affairs in Prague, April 2, 1936; January 20, 1936. SUA, MSP, HIII 4025. The Czechoslovakians were mentioned among the 200 members of the Union of Jewish Merchants, victims of the peddlers law. Mémoire remis par l'Association des marchands Juifs en Belgique à Monsieur Van Isacker, à la date du 5.2.1937. Yivo, D.Trotzki, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-987)
987. Minister of Economic affairs P.Van Isacker to Minister E. Vandervelde, 18.2.1936. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde, correspondance. [↑](#footnote-ref-988)
988. This generosity anticipated the new principles for the granting of vendors' licenses which were enacted in April 1936. Central to this policy was the period of ten year residence, of 977 vendors' licenses which were granted to Poles the distribution was the following: 598 with more than 10 years residence in Belgium, 312 with less than 10 years and 67 about which the length of residence was not yet specified. P.Van Isacker to E.Vandervelde, 18.2.1936. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde, correspondance. PHK, 3.4.1936, pp.1143-1145. [↑](#footnote-ref-989)
989. P.Van Isacker to E. Vandervelde, 18.2.1936. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde, Correspondance. [↑](#footnote-ref-990)
990. De Voeding, XXI, 1934, 7, p.3 and 8, p.4 and for mining see pp. [↑](#footnote-ref-991)
991. "It would absorb unemployment and alleviate the burden on society" BS, 1934, p.6501. See address P.Van Isacker to the Catholic employers' organization at their annual congress. Le Journal Financière, 24.9.1934/1. KADOC ACW-National, 34, bureau de la LNTC, 10.10.1934. ARA, Ch.De Broqueville, 696. De Voeding, XXI, 1934, 9-10, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-992)
992. "Décider le contingentement, c'est très bien, mais encore faut-il qu'en toute logique, il soit prévu une clause permettant d'éloigner du territoire les éléments étrangers non admis au travail, si ces éléments deviennent gênants." Sûreté, note pour Monsieur le Ministre (1934). Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Prime Minister G.Theunis, 4.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-993)
993. Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Minister of Justice F.Bovesse, 4.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-994)
994. The result would be:"de contrarier l'exploitation et d'augmenter les charges de celle-ci. Ces mesures risqueraient donc de contratrier l'inscription des commandes et de créer précisément le chômage que l'on désire éviter." CCI to Minister of Industry F.Van Cauwelaert, 12.10.1934. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. CCI to Van Isacker, 9.10.1934. ARA, de Broqueville, 696. Van Themse (1989), p.553.

The other organizations of employers, either the Flemish VEV or the organization of Catholic employers were less opposed to such a government intervention. VEV berichten, VIII, 1934, 10, p.230. RK bedrijfsbeleid, II, 1933, 5, p.669; III, 1934, 4, p.139 and 7. p.290. [↑](#footnote-ref-995)
995. "il faut envisager les mesures correlatives à prendre pour éloigner du pays des étrangers désoeuvrés, qui après peu de temps seront sans ressources et qui peuvent donc facilement devenir des mécontents et des agitateurs... Il est donc indispenable d'envisager le moyen de modifier la loi de 1897, et de nous réserver pour le cas de besoin, la possibilité d'une intervention préalable sous forme du retrait de la qualité de "résident" et d'une invitation à quitter le pays." Note pour Monsieur le Ministre (of Sûreté, 1934). AMJ, 1B6 (II). Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Minister of Justice F.Bovesse, 4.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-996)
996. Révision de l'AR du 14.8.1933 (this proposal was written by a senior civil servant of the Minister of Justice Standaert). AMJ, 1B6 (II). The influence of the Holvoet bill is clearly discernable. [↑](#footnote-ref-997)
997. This dual scheme elaborated partly on the Royal Decree of December 15, 1930 by which a special statute for labor migrants was introduced. This proposal, which made a lasting distinction between labor and other migrants duplicated the French practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-998)
998. Minister Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Prime Minister G.Theunis, 11.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-999)
999. Council of Ministers, 1.2.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1000)
1000. A service was also established by this law which would oversee the implementation of this law. The law provided for serious sanctions for aliens and employers alike who did not respect the law. BS, 1935, pp. 879 - 883. The law of February 15, 1935 was never implemented, but it had a strong influence on the reform of the alien legislation in 1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1001)
1001. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 8.3.1935. AMJ, 33 C 31. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans the immigrant must acquire residency status after a maximum of 5 years of sojourn in Belgium. The period of 5 years could be reduced under the condition of reciprocity by agreements with foreign countries. This was the case with the Belgian-Dutch labor treaty of 20.2.1933. Minister Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Prime Minister G.Theunis, 11.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-1002)
1002. See chapter G, p.23 As we mentioned before we do not know what probation periods were used after November 1930. Only the law of August 15, 1933 established a clear-cut legal procedure, but without setting definite terms by which an alien received residency status. [↑](#footnote-ref-1003)
1003. The Minister of Labor E.Rubbens had agreed to decide only in agreement with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to implement the law. Council of Ministers, 7.12.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1004)
1004. BS, 1934, pp.6501-6503. The employers who went above the established quota would be fined, but it was not mentioned what would happen with this money. [↑](#footnote-ref-1005)
1005. "Il est d'ailleurs certain que nous devrons recourir bien souvent à la voie du "rapatriement obligatoire" . En effet, les traités ne nous permettent pas ...de retirer la qualité de "résident" et inviter à quitter le pays...vis à vis des travailleurs français, néerlandais, luxembourgeois et de quelques autres, de sorte qu'il s'agira précisément d'éliminer les étrangers et que nous n'éloignons qu'en négociant leur "rapatriement"." Note pour Monsieur le Ministre (of Sûreté, 1934). AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-1006)
1006. Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans to Prime Minister G.Theunis, 4.12.1934. AMJ, 1B6 (II). [↑](#footnote-ref-1007)
1007. De Tijd, 4.7.1935; Het Volk, 12.12.1934/3-6; Ons Limburg, 22.12.1934/1, 3-4 and 15.12.1934/1. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 1, p.4. For the miners' unions see further. [↑](#footnote-ref-1008)
1008. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVI, 1935, 5, p. 14. Het Volk, 11.12.1934/4, 7. The CSC insisted that the implementation of the quota law had to take into account the labor treaties Belgium had reached with other countries and had to exempt Russian "refugees" and immigrants who had long lived in Belgium and were married to Belgian women. KADOC, ACV-Raad, 11.12.1934. ACV-Bestuur, 7.12.1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1009)
1009. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 4, p.4; 6, p.1. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuis personeel, XXX, 1935, 24, p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-1010)
1010. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 6, p.1. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, XXX, 1935, 26, p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1011)
1011. De Voeding, XXI, 1935, 3, p.4 and 4, p.4. Vakorgaan der Centrale van Hotel-, Spijs- en Drankhuis personeel, XXX, 1935,24, pp.19-24 and 25, p.13.

The decision to grant this immigration permission was probably one of the last decisions of the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor E.Rubbens. The joint commission of the hotel industry met on March 14 to discuss the matter. On March 19 the government abdicated and on March 25 was Delattre nominated Minister of Labor. [↑](#footnote-ref-1012)
1012. Cross (1983), pp.200-201. Ponty (1988), p.304. Already in 1934 were there some policy-makers within the administration favoring amore restrictive policy towards French workers in Belgium as a mean to protect Belgians working in France. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 2.7.1934. ABZ, 2642bis, III. [↑](#footnote-ref-1013)
1013. The employers in the basin of Charleroi told the Christian Democratic Minister of Labor E.Rubbens that they were reluctant to fire more immigrants because a large number of the unemployed Belgian had been fired because of "insubordination au cours des événements de 1932". ACCBS, 22.3.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1014)
1014. CNMM, 11.3.1935, pp.3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1015)
1015. L'Action Syndicale, 13.4.1935,p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1016)
1016. Draft proposal, 29.5.1935. AMJ, 109 C 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-1017)
1017. Raven to Minister of Economic Affairs P.Van Isacker, 14.9.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, B, 4E, 3/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1018)
1018. "La question est excessivement difficile. Je vous affirme que je voudrais faire quelque chose. Mm. Van Isacker and Rubbens n'ont pas essayé parce que c'était trop difficile; ce ne l'est pas moins pour moi." A.Delattre in PHK, 10.4.1935, p.911. [↑](#footnote-ref-1019)
1019. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVI, 1935, 6, pp.7-8 and 9, p.3. Musin (1935), p.61. Commission régionale mixte des mines du bassin de Charleroi, 27.5.1935. Bois du Luc, 116. "Des étrangers continuent à vivre quand nos enfants borains se meurent de rachitisme et de tuberculose, parce que le travail a déserté leurs corons...les étrangers de malheur." La Démocrate, organe des travailleurs chrétiens de Bruxelles II, 16.2.1935, 39, pp.1, 1-2. PHK, 10.4.1935, pp.906-908. Ons Limburg, 15.12.1934, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1020)
1020. Charbonnage Bonne-Espérance, Note sur l'emploi de la main d'oeuvre. ARA. mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1021)
1021. Between 1.10.1934 and May 1935, 51 new foreigners were hired in the basin of Charleroi. L'Action Syndicale, 11.5.1935,p.3. Musin (1935), p.62. Even in the Borinage some immigrants were hired. Mester in Le Peuple, 26.7.1935/4, 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1022)
1022. De Mijnwerker, XXXI, 1935, 10, p.10. CNMM, 23.5.1935. Even Socialists such as E.Vandervelde and J.Destrée were not opposed to taking measures to replace foreign miners with unemployed Belgian miners, resp. PHK, 30.1.1935, p.293 and press cutting in Municipal Archive Charleroi. [↑](#footnote-ref-1023)
1023. The Christian Democratic union insisted that the Belgian authorities would finance the repatriation of those foreigners to their country of origin. According to the unions between November 1934 and April 1935 about 500 migrants were hired in the Limburg mines. The labor exchange offices investigated who among the unemployed Flemish labor in the neighboring province Antwerp were willing to work in the mines in Limburg. Two hundred workers seemed to be willing to do so, but they were not qualified so the mining companies were not eager to hire them. Hou Zee, 1.11.1935, p.1. PHK, 10.4.1935, pp.907-908. Meeting of the propagandists, 4.1.1935. KADOC, Broekx, 3.8.34. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVI, 1935, 6, pp.7-8 and 7, p.5. Also the small Flemish Nationalist miners' union was in favor of a gradual removal of all foreigners in this basin. De Bilzenaar, 7.9.1935 and 15.2.1936. Hou Zee, 1.11.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1024)
1024. CNMM, 23.5.1935. On the commitment of the Government Van Zeeland to diminish unemployment among Belgians by replacing immigrants with unemployed Belgians see Le Drapeau Rouge, 1.6.1935/3,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1025)
1025. Council of Ministers, 31.5.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1026)
1026. Dauwe to Delattre, 2.4.1935, p.6. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2 ,5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1027)
1027. Dauwe to Delattre, 22.6.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1028)
1028. Committee FEDECHAR, 1.5.1935. FEDECHAR, Rapport du comité sur l'exercice 1935, p.22. The mining companies also became willing to co-finance the repatriation of some "useless" immigrants. The mines sometimes paid up to a fifth of the repatriation costs. "L'intervention des charbonnages dans les frais du rapatriement de certains ouvriers étrangers décidé par la Sûreté est opportune lorsqu'il s'agit du rapatriement des malades ou d'indésirables, mais non d'ouvriers qualifiés donnant toute satisfaction." ACCA, 17.7.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1029)
1029. Committee FEDECHAR, 5.6.1935, 26.6.1935, 3.7.1835 and 17.7.1935. Dauwe to Delattre, 22.6.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1030)
1030. The employers of the Borinage agreed to send to the public labor exchange office a list of unemployed Belgians who refused to work in order to remove them from the dole. AHCM, 5.7.1935. It seems that before the trade unions decided whether to remove somebody from the dole, the employers were not willing to send them the list of those who refused work. [↑](#footnote-ref-1031)
1031. P.V. de la réunion, 27.3.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C,2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1032)
1032. According to Mester a hewer or timberer should be willing to work as a haulier, but only if he got the wage of a hewer. This was necessary as the wages of the hauliers were too low for a man with responsibility for a family and also because one should not dishonor the profession. Le Peuple, 26.7.1935/4, 1-2. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVI, 1935, 7, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1033)
1033. BS, 1935, pp.5381-5383. [↑](#footnote-ref-1034)
1034. Le Drapeau Rouge, 5.10.1935/2, 5 and 17.10.1935. L'Action Socialiste, III, 1935, 39, p.3. L'Action Socialists Révolutionnaire, III, 1935, 35, p.2. Compte Rendu du Bureau Politique du PCB, 9.9.1935. IEV, 131.

Probably there was some Communist influence in a one day strike protesting the dismissal of 2 Poles in the Centre basin. In this strike most of the Belgian miners participated, including the Christian Democratic workers' representative. This strike was quite annoying for Delattre as it broke out just before he enforced the dismissal of foreigners by his ministerial decree. Mine Administration to Delattre, 17.8.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, B, 4e, 3/2. Le Drapeau Rouge, 24.8.1935/2, 4. De Mijnwerker, XXXI, 1935, 10, p.70. [↑](#footnote-ref-1035)
1035. FEDECHAR to A.Delattre, 28.8.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1036)
1036. Wychodzca, 1937, 22, p.7. Polacy zagranica, VI, 1935, 11, p.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-1037)
1037. AHCM, 13.9.1935 and 4.10.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1038)
1038. Note for Delattre, 5.11.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, C, roos, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1039)
1039. Committee FEDECHAR, 18.9.1935 and 25.9.1935. Association Charbonnière, les directeurs du travaux. Reunion du 11.9.1935. Bois du Luc, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1040)
1040. ACCBS, 23.8.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1041)
1041. Note of Raven, 11.10.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1042)
1042. Sûreté to director Sacré-Madame, 2.9.1935. ACCBS to Director Sacré-Madame, 10.9.1935. Bois du Luc, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1043)
1043. At least 50 Polish victims of the Ministerial Decree were repatriated. It is unclear how many of the total number of foreigners repatriated by the Sûreté in 1935 were victims of this Ministerial Decree. Some North African miners were repatriated by a French charity organization. More of these dismissed workers wanted to be repatriated, but they had to apply for repatriation in Brussels. As they were mostly illiterate that was not so easy. Wychodzca, 1937, 22, p.7. Embassy in Brussels to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19.9.1935 and 28.10.1935. AMAE, Europe 1930-1940, 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-1044)
1044. Tréfois to chief-engineer, 3.10.1935. AESH, administration des mines, ancien 5, ouvriers étrangers. Raven to Delattre, 5.10.1935. Delattre to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, 10.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, rood, 2, 5/1. The authorities were totally unprepared for the potential diplomatic repercussions of this decree. So stated a senior civil servant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to French protests that the Algerians would not be exempted, as the French-Belgian protocol of July 1935 was only covering the territory of "metropolitan France." Embassy in Brussels to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19.9.1935. AMAE, Europe 1930-1940, 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-1045)
1045. The coal export was exempted from the sanctions, due to the Abyssian war, against Italy. Foreign Affairs to Economic Affairs, 30.12.1935. Rapport sur les négociations charbonnières menées à Rome du 12 au 15.12.1934. ARA, mijnadministration, blauw, C, 1b, 3. Van Isacker (1953), pp.159-164. Copie Modus vivendi. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. Ambassade d'Italie, 23.9.1935. Archives FEDECHAR, Main-d'oeuvre italienne, 1 (section protocole). [↑](#footnote-ref-1046)
1046. This was already pointed out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs P.Hymans when the quota law was enacted. Foreign Affairs to Labor, 24.11.1934. ABZ, 12.178. [↑](#footnote-ref-1047)
1047. The same day an article in Le Peuple denounced the quota law as being inhuman, contrary to the internationalism of socialism and anyway of no help to alleviate unemployment. [↑](#footnote-ref-1048)
1048. Committee FEDECHAR, 2.10 and 9.10.1935. Raven to Legrand, 15.10.1935. AHCM, 1935, p.90. Embassy in Brussels to French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20.11.1935. AMAE, Europe 1930-1940, 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-1049)
1049. Raven to Delattre, 5.10.1935. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1050)
1050. Main d'oeuvre étrangère dans les mines. 2.10.1935, pp.2-3. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1051)
1051. Committee FEDECHAR, 16.10.1935. [↑](#footnote-ref-1052)
1052. Aide mémoire, 12.4.1937. ARDH, 185. Probably this protocol set the modalities for the implementation of the Dutch-Belgian agreement of February 20, 1933 which was ratified by the Belgian Parliament in January 1936. Leën (1937), pp.131-140. The immigration of Luxemburg citizens of course remained uncon­trolled. [↑](#footnote-ref-1053)
1053. de Foy to Minister of Justice, 10.6.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1054)
1054. Between 1935 and 1937 the following figures:

refouler: 2.683, 2.304, 2.320.

renvoyer: 1.077, 751 and 476

Statistique Judiciaire de la Belgique, 1931-1940. Bruxelles, 1942, p.300. See appendix 5a and b. [↑](#footnote-ref-1055)
1055. to tolerate the hiring of illegal immigrants "serait anéantir tout l'effort très péniblement réalisé" Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, s.d. (3.1937?) AMJ, 33C 30/9-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1056)
1056. de Foy to the Minister of Justice de Laveleye, 10.6.1937. Note Bekaert, 14.6.1937. AMJ, 33C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1057)
1057. "La Sûreté a pris pour règle de ne plus autoriser l'inscripti­on des travailleurs dans les régistres de population, sauf dans des cas spécialement intéressants" H.Bekaert to Ministry of Labor, 17.8.1937. AMJ, 33C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1058)
1058. BS, 20.2.1936, pp.946-947. Although the international refugee regime was highly collectivist (only groups such as Russian and German refugees were considered "refugees") this was not the case for the new Belgian refugee regime. Independent of origin aliens could apply for asylum. The international agreement on refugees from Germany of July 1936 facilitated the liberalization of the Belgian refugee policy by putting a halt to the practice of urging "refugees" from Nazi-Germany on to other countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1059)
1059. The expulsion of a German Communist refugee, Heinrich Bell in March 1936 and his subsequent arrest by the Gestapo led to a lot of commotion. As a result of the public protest the Communist aid organization, the Red Help, also became a member of the advisory refugee commission. The German Communist refugees who had been resid­ing illegally in Belgium since 1933 applied officially and mostly with success for asylum. These changes strengthened the institution­alization of the right to asylum. Asylum remained however a favor granted by the authorities and not a right. "Refugees" were not allowed to have a criminal record and they could still be expelled if they "misbehaved". Caestecker (1993c), pp.67-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-1060)
1060. Report CAAVAA 9.4.1936-9.4.1937. Centrale, XIV, 1937, 12, p.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-1061)
1061. Conclusions sur une étude sur le problème juif, quoted in Mémoires de Charles du Bus de Warnaffe, pp.68-69. Communicated by Prof.J.Stengers. Report CAAVAA 9.4.1937-9.4.1938, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1062)
1062. P.Cornil in Het Roode Kruis van België, XI, 1936, 6, pp.381-383. A.François in La Croix-Rouge de Belgique, XIV, 1935, 11. C.Collard in Le Service Social, 1938, 7-8, pp.109-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-1063)
1063. De Foy in Procès-verbal de la séance du 16.10.1933. Commission d'assistance aux étrangers. ARC, cassier 33, colis sec 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1064)
1064. Ministry of Justice (R.de Foy) to H.Bekaert, 31.5.1935. AMJ, 1 B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1065)
1065. Rapport présenté par M.Lucien Fournez, 29.6.1935 (annex au Procès-verbal de la séance du 11.7.1935. Commission d'assistance aux étrangers). Procès-verbal de la séance du 17.7.1934. Commission d'assistance aux étrangers. ARC, cassier 33, colis sec 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1066)
1066. A.Delattre, Minister of Labor to P.Van Zeeland, Prime Minister, 9.10.1935. AMJ, 33C 31. See also p.311. [↑](#footnote-ref-1067)
1067. This was also the opinion of the Socialist Minister of Justice E.Soudan: "Il y a chez nous des milliers de travailleurs étrangers qui travaillent dans des taudis pour des patrons étrangers qui pratiquent le "sweating-system" ..ils produisent à des prix de revient inférieurs à ceux de nos propres industriels. On travaille dans ces taudis à des salaires de famine, quatorze ou seize heures par jour et l'on n'observe aucune de nos lois sociales..Si je les expulsais, il est probable que demain je recevrais pas mal de protestations." PHK, 27.2.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1068)
1068. We did not find this bill. The few traces we found about the discussion of the bill indicate that it was only slightly changed when it became the law of March 31, 1936. Thus we use the final draft of the bill in our analysis of the discussions between December 1935 and April 1936. It is therefore possible that we underplay the changes brought about by the discussions within the Government. [↑](#footnote-ref-1069)
1069. That the employer and not the foreigner himself had to apply for a work permit was motivated by the difficulties which the immigrants would have to fill in all the forms. It seems the original project foresaw that aliens already in Belgium had to apply for a work permit themselves as the law of 15.2.1935 had also stipulated. Max Gottschalk had proposed imposing on the employers, the formality of applying for a work permit. Delattre agreed to this proposal. Procès-verbal du comité ministériel restreint, 13.1.1936, p.2. AMJ, 33 C 31.

Only in sectors where labor worked for several employers (diamond, ports, domestic service...) was the old procedure kept intact; the immigrants themselves had to ask for their admission. The employers did not need permission in these sectors- an admission of the migrant worker was sufficient. Such an admission was called a working permit C.

The final decision depended on the Ministry of Labor, but the Minister of Transport decided for the seamen and the Minister of Economic Affairs for the hawkers who were in somebody elses' service. MB, 1.4.1936. BS, 9.5.1936, pp.3511-3512. MB, 30.4.1937. BS, 3.6.1937, pp.3557-3558. [↑](#footnote-ref-1070)
1070. The work permit of the privileged immigrants, according to the initial bill, had to be renewed every two years. This was dropped only to reduce the need for additional personnel to implement the new legislation. Leën (1937b, p.352) defended the covering of privileged immigrants by this administrative formality because of the dissuading influence on employers’ hiring policy.

The priviliged alien was however also liable for expulsion. Indeed, any infraction of this legislation by an alien -a new, a recent or even a privileged immigrant- could be punished with an expul­sion. Privileged immigrants would be also aliens married to a Belgian who had children born in this wedlock or who had already lived in Belgium for five years. Also foreigners born in Belgium and citizens of Luxemburg would be considered privileged aliens. The French immigrants and probably also the Algerians, but not the other North Africans, would receive (in agreement with the French-Belgian labor treaty) the status of privileged immigrant after five years of sojourn in Belgium. This would be also the case for citizens of Switzerland, the Netherlands and later also Italy; countries with which Belgium had concluded labor treaties. (Belgian-Italian labor treaty of 29.9.1938). The Dutch citizens obtained an even more privileged status with the Dutch-Belgian protocol of April 1936, a labor permit could no longer be refused to a Dutch immigrant. Foreign Affairs to de Foy, 2.3.1936. AMJ, 33C 31. BS, 7.4.1936, pp.2320-2324. [↑](#footnote-ref-1071)
1071. "croit-on que les réalités économiques permettent d'empêcher tout embauchage de travailleurs étrangers préalablement à l'obtenti­on d'un permis administratif." H.De Man to P.Van Zeeland, 7.1.1936. IEV, E.Vandervelde, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-1072)
1072. "L'usage de pareille arme, particulièrement cruelle, ne peut jamais être qu'aux ultima ratio et son caractère extrême n'est pas compatible par conséquent avec une organisation générale préalable.­.nous disposons déjà de cette arme par le moyen du contingentement, moyen brutal certes, comme l'est inévitablement toute intervention en cette matière, mais auquel le régime proposé ne fait qu'ajouter un élément de sournoiserie et d'arbitraire." H.De Man to P.Van Zeeland, 7.1.1936. IEV, E.Vandervelde, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-1073)
1073. For the discussions in the Council of Ministers and in the restricted committee of the council we found a long note of Minister H.De Man to Prime Minister Van Zeeland, 7.1.1936 (IEV, E.Vandervelde, 78), the minutes of one of the several ministerial committees dedicated to this issue and a series of amendments on the bill. i.e. Procès-verbal du comité ministériel restreint, 13.1.1936, p.2 and Foreign Affairs to de Foy, 2.3.1936. AMJ, 33 C 31. Although the change in alien legislation was discussed three times in the Council of Ministers (8.11.1935, 22.11.1935 and 19.3.1936) the information in the notes of the Council refer only to the financial implications in terms of increasing expenses in personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1074)
1074. Immigrants with less than 10 years sojourn in Belgium, but who already had an identity card (= residency status) could now be expelled by a simple decision of the Minister of Justice. PDK, 1935-1936, 217, p.11. PDK, 8.4.1936, 227. BS, 1936, 2318-2324. PHS, 12.3.1936, p.446. Note of Georges Capelle, 17.3.1937. S.P. 1.517.056. Note de Foy, 16.7.1937. H.Bekaert, *Administrateur-Adjoint* Sûreté to Labor Ministry, 17.8.1937. AMJ, 33C 31.

The MP Somerhausen was furious about this whole procedure:

"Jamais le parlement n'avait donné pouvoir au gouvernement de le faire. Si le gouvernement avait sollicité ce pouvoir, le Parlement le lui aurait refusé à coup sûr. Il a fallu pour cela user d'un subterfuge législatif absolument répréhensible...le Parlement a ratifié à la suite d'une véritable escroquerie politique." Archives IHJ, Memorandum sur la Main D'oeuvre Etrangère élaboré par Mtre Marc Somerhausen à la demande du Comité d'Aide et Protection des Travailleurs juifs. Communicated by J.Ph.Schreiber. See also BV, 1937, 7, p.210. [↑](#footnote-ref-1075)
1075. H.Bekaert to Ministry of Labor, 17.8.1937. AMJ, 33C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1076)
1076. It is likely that the Sûreté considered the category immigrants with an identity card but who were not privileged aliens as a transitional category. Probably by 1946 it would have disappeared. [↑](#footnote-ref-1077)
1077. This final procedure for the request for a work permit of the privileged immigrant was only established by the Ministerial Decree of August, 2 1937. This change in the law was probably due to French diplomatic pressure as their citizens who had already sojourned in Belgium for five years had considerable difficulties in being hired. The prelimi­nary permission necessary to hire those privileged immigrants blocked their occupational opportunities. A lot of employers refrained from using immigrant labor, even French and privileged, for the mere fact that Labor Ministry’s permission took a long time to process. Foreign Affairs to de Foy, 2.3.1936. AMJ, 33C 31. Protocole signé à Bruxelles, 16.7.1937. French embassy in Brussels to Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, 20.8.1937. AMAE, Europe 1918-1940, Belgique 225. BS, 15.8.1937, p.5121. [↑](#footnote-ref-1078)
1078. Conférence tenue le 12.5.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1079)
1079. According to the Sûreté, it was inconceivable that children of foreign immigrants would have an inferiour status to their parents: "Agir autrement, mènerait à la situation paradoxale suivante: on pourrait refuser le permis de travail qui devrait d'autre part être accordé "de plano" à leurs parents, entrés en Belgique en même temps qu'eux; et l'octroi du permis de travail pourrait même être remis en question à chaque génération des families résidant en Belgique depuis 20, 30 ans ou davantage." Note Capelle 18.5.1937 with agreement R.de Foy. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1080)
1080. Bolle, the director of the Service of Foreign Labor of the Ministry of Labor explained in January 1939 that the policy towards the demands of migrants' children did not exactly follow the terms of the law, but rather its spirit. The competent service within the Ministry of Labor tried to treat those boys as new immigrants whose position on the labor market could still be strictly regulated. That they should be considered as privileged immigrant was, according to Bolle "bien délicate, parce qu'elle permet à ces enfants de s'orienter vers des professions qui intéressent nos nationaux; ainsi dans la mesure du possible, j'essaie dès le début d'engager les intéressés vers d'autres professions moins encombrées. Mais peut-être serai-je obligé, par la loi même, de les laisser librement choisir l'industrie qu'ils préférent." PS, p.77. [↑](#footnote-ref-1081)
1081. The Holvoet bill forsaw a scheme similar to the French one in which the profession was mentioned on the alien card, which was as well a temporary residence permit as a work permit. The maximum validity of the alien card would have been two years. Mentioning the profession would have been depended on an admission of the immigrant and a permission of the employer to hire him. The provisions of the Holvoet bill concerning sojourn had been enacted by the law of August 13, 1933. The law of March 31, 1936 enacted the provision concerning employment but by a seperate administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-1082)
1082. In 1933 the president of the Christian Democratic miners' union, J.Van Buggenhout, had proposed to some representatives of the mining industry a system of labor permits to regulate access to the mines for immigrant labor. A joint employers-trade union commission (including also a representative of the Minister of Justice and of the Mine Administration) within the regionally based public labor exchange offices would decide on the granting of those labor permits. The president of the Socialist miners' union in the Borinage, E.Mester was positive toward the idea. Abrassart and Beauvois, two important mine directors did not oppose this idea either; they probably wanted to reduce the union's influence but control over migrant labor was certainly not opposed : "Contre l'idée de la carte, nous n'avons pas d'objection.­.Cela ne nous gêne pas." Proces-verbal de la reunion tenue á Bruxelles, 29.11.1933. CNMM, doc. 423. Abrassart was the president of the AHCM and Beauvois was the director of the mine Bray in the Centre basin. Mahoux (1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-1083)
1083. We did not find any criticism emanating from the Christian Democratic Union, although the exclusion of the unions from the policy making was probably also resented, just as in 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-1084)
1084. IHJ, Memorandum sur la Main D'oeuvre Etrangère élaboré par Mtre Marc Somerhausen à la demande du Comité d'Aide et Protection des Travailleurs juifs. Communicated by J.Ph.Schreiber. See also BV, 1937, 7, p.210. [↑](#footnote-ref-1085)
1085. The law "va...à l'encontre du but qu'il poursuit. Il avait pour but de protéger la main d'oeuvre nationale contre une concurrence prétendument déloyale. Par la terreur de l'expulsion, par l'asservissement au patron, par l'interdiction de changer d'emploi sans autorisation préalable du ministère, l'arrêté en question contribue à l'avilissement des salaires." IGJ, Memorandum sur la Main D'oeuvre Etrangère élaboré par Mtre Marc Somerhausen à la demande du Comité d'Aide et Protection des Travailleurs juifs. See also the Socialists Louis De Brouckère and Henri Rolin in Le Peuple, 20 and 21.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1086)
1086. Le Peuple, 20.4.1937. La Voix du Peuple, 25.4.1937. The sections of the Jewish Socialist Party in Belgium demanded that the POB use all of its influence to abolish the new law. Notes pour les membres du bureau du Parti, 10.5.1937. IEV, E.Vandervelde, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-1087)
1087. La Voix du Peuple, 20.12.1936/1, 6-7. Bulletin intérieur du PCB, 9.1.1936, p.5. La Drapeau Rouge, 25.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1088)
1088. Delattre: "au moment où nous avons une politique de main d'oeuvre étrangère on nous le reproche." AMSAB, Microfilms POB Bureau, 10.5.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1089)
1089. J.Rens in BV, 1937, 6, pp.181-182 and 7, pp.209-210. C.Mertens in BV, 1938, 4, pp.114-116. De Metaalbewerker, XXXIV, 1937, 2, p.1. Comité Exécutif, 8.7.1937. AMSAB, Centrale der Kleding, 11.

The Socialist union of Leather workers insisted -without rejecting the need for a regulation of foreign labor- on a radical revision of this law in the sense of introducing a serious appeal procedure against expulsion. SK, Zedelijk en geldelijk Verslag voor de jaren 1936-1937, pp.57-58.

In June 1939 the Socialists MPs A.Gailly, E.Brunet, F.Fischer, L.Piérard, E.Van Walleghem and J.Vandervelde proposed a bill in Parliament that would abolish the work permit for the privileged immigrants. They proposed to mention on the identity card of those aliens that they were entitled to work. PDK, 14.6.1939, nr.117. [↑](#footnote-ref-1090)
1090. The national leadership of the Socialist Garment Union was very positive about the law. They were convinced that the authori­ties would assure a halt to immigration in their sector. The absence of an institutional provision for their participation in the decision making process was not considered a problem. Even the fact that the employer had to demand the labor permit was hardly criticized. If the immigrant worker could himself apply for a permit, according to this union -as unemployed immigrants could not be tolerated- a certificate of the employer to confirm that the immigrant had a job would still be necessary. This union also endorsed the removal of destitute foreigners. De Kleeding, XIX, 1937, 3, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1091)
1091. BS, 7.4.1936, pp.2259-2261. Council of Ministers, 30.3.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1092)
1092. "Refugees" obtained also a special status, for their hawking permits see further. [↑](#footnote-ref-1093)
1093. Statistisch Bulletin, May-June 1936, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1094)
1094. PHK, 3.4.1936, p.1145. [↑](#footnote-ref-1095)
1095. Statistisch Bulletin, May-June 1936, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1096)
1096. "Il va de soi que les autorisations accordés malgré l'insuf­fisance du séjour devraient être retirées, si la Pologne différait davantage l'octroi à la Belgique de compensations suffisantes." P. Van Isacker to E.Vandervelde, 18.2.1936. IEV, J.E. Vandervelde, correspondance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1097)
1097. Boriau (1989). According to the Polish journal *Kupiec Polski i Rzemieslnik we Francji* (11, 1936, p.2) the Belgian authorities threatened to expel 1,000 Polish Jews who resided for less than ten years in Belgium if the Polish authorities refused to engage Belgian engineers in Polish factories (sic). According to the same journal the Polish consular authorities obtained that these Poles could remain in Belgium. This concession was obtained only if these Polish Jews stopped their businesses and in exchange for some commercial advantages for Belgium and the use of Belgian engineers in Polish industry. [↑](#footnote-ref-1098)
1098. The peddlers' licenses for these Poles were prolonged until the end of September "vu l'état de nos relations économique avec la Pologne". P-H.Spaak to M.Somerhausen, 24.5.1937. IEV, J.E.Vander­velde. Council of Ministers, 31.8.1937. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 24.4.1937. ABZ, 2462bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1099)
1099. The Polish authorities apparently did not want to make any sacrific­es for this minority group. The Colonels who, after the death of Marszalk Jozef Pisudski in 1935, governed in Poland started treating their Jewish citizens as second class citizens. Renouncing the protection of the national market to save the livelihood of a few Jews abroad was probably not considered appro­priate for this regime. [↑](#footnote-ref-1100)
1100. "The profes­sion of peddler or market vendor must be refused to foreigners."Gazet van Antwerpen, 21.10.1936/1, 1-2, for numerous analogous articles in this paper in 1936 see Saerens (1983), pp.198-199. Le Commerce, organe des métiers en négoces, III, 17.4.1935, p.3. The Chamber of Commerce of Luik demanded that foreigners obtain the vendors' license only on the basis of reciprocity, while the principle of 10 years residence was considered to be contrary to the national interest. Bulletin mensuel de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 180, juillet 1936, p.184. [↑](#footnote-ref-1101)
1101. "Cornill (Ministry of Justice): "Comment établir la nécessité d'employer un étranger faute de belge capable..la justification du travail est la plus grosse difficulté" Wolf and Bloch (Jewish refugee committee) estiment qu'il ne devrait pas y avoir de justification spéciale pour le réfugié politique qui demande à travailler en Belgique." Comité d'Assistance aux étrangers, 16.10.1936. ARC. Articel 7 of a Communist bill on the political emigrants, s.d. (5.1936). IEV, J.Vandervelde, box 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1102)
1102. Some unionists pleaded for a more lenient processing of the applications for work permits of political refugees. These refugees were here to stay and their political background made it more difficult for them to find an employer willing to demand for a work permit. Jef Rens in BV, 7, 20.7.1937, p.209. Vooruit, 29.6.1936/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1103)
1103. Bekaert (1940), p.331. [↑](#footnote-ref-1104)
1104. The authorities conceded not to expel no longer Russian "refugees". PDK, 287, 13.5.1937. PHK, 27.5.1937, p.1586. PDS, 264, 6.6.1937. PHS, 17.6.1937, p.1730. BS, 2.9.1937, 245, pp.5380-5387. In order to enable the Sûreté -now that the expulsion of Russian "refugees" was excluded- to sanction "refugees" if they endangered national security and public order a provision was introduced in the law of June 29, 1937 to confine "refugees" to a certain area in the country and if they did not obey to the order, they could be sentenced to imprisonment. [↑](#footnote-ref-1105)
1105. Only "legal" sojourn, defined as registration in the population register entitled a "refugee" to this favorable regime. Newly arriving Russian "refugees" mostly fleeing Nazi Germany retained their refugee status, but were not entitled to this refugee regime. Even granting them sojourn was completely depended on the goodwill of the Belgian authorities. Repatriation was however excluded. Bekaert (1940), pp.336-339. [↑](#footnote-ref-1106)
1106. "Dans le principe le gouvernement ne peut, en la matière endosser de nouvelles obligations internationales dont il ne peut actuellement mesurer toutes les conséquences et qui risquent dès lors de déborder ses possibilités pratiques." Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of Justice, 17.6.1936. ABZ, 12.180. [↑](#footnote-ref-1107)
1107. "Sont considérés comme réfugiés provenant d'Allemagne les personnes possédant ou ayant possédé la nationalité allemande et ne possédant pas une autre nationalité, et à l'égard desquelles il est établi qu'en droit ou en fait elles ne jouissent pas de la protection du Gouvernement Allemand." The stateless who had been living in Germany and were not covered by the Nansen-agreement were also included in this arrangment. "il est établi" referred to the intervention of the receiving states. Rapport de M.H.Bekaert, directeur de la Sureté Publique sur les travaux de la Conférence inter-gouvernementale tenue à Genève le 2.7.1936. IEV, J.E.Vander­velde. BS, 16-18.11.1938, pp.6796-6801. [↑](#footnote-ref-1108)
1108. Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18.1.1938. Note pour C, 10.8.1937. Projet de note à remettre à l'Administration de la S.P., 18.1.1939. Rapport de M.Meyers, Directeur Général honoraire au Ministère de la Justice présenté à la réunion du 10.6.1937 du Comité d'Assistance aux Etrangers (Croix-Rouge), p.7. ABZ, 12.180.

The discrimination of refugees in the domain of social legislation should also be attenuated according to the convention. The Belgian authorities adhered to the Convention but with the proviso that the reciprocity rule for social legislation for the German "refugees" would remain intact. [↑](#footnote-ref-1109)
1109. art.4-d2e of the law of 30.3.1936, repeated in art. 3-d of the law of 29.12.1936 mentioned that refugees with an identity card (so not a temporary residence permit), but who had not yet spent 10 years in Belgium were also entitled to a peddlers' licenses. BS, 31.3.1936, p.2260 and 31.12.1936, pp.8290-8322. This preferen­tial treatment of the Russian "refugees" was repeated in the reformed peddlers' law of 28.11.1939 (art.6-3b). BS, 8.12.1939, p. 8354. In the introduction to the law of 16.11.1939 (professional permit the need for a more generous treatment of "refugees" was mentioned in the introduction, but not in the law itself (except for the sanctions -a "refugee" could not be expelled- art.19-1). BS, 27-28.11.1939, pp.7925-7934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1110)
1110. "Il semble peu indiqué d'accorder à des personnes dont l'activité politique a souvent été une des raisons de leur départ d'Allemagne, un document sous le couvert duquel elles pourraient plus facilement se livrer en Belgique à la propagation de leurs idées." Foreign Affairs to Justice, 22.1.1937. ABZ, 12.180. There was also not yet a legal obligation. These "refugees" were protected by an international convention in 1938, but this convention was only ratified by Belgian Parliament in November 1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1111)
1111. Measures prises ou adoptées en Belgique en vue d'assister les réfugiés-situation en novembre 1935, p.7. ABZ, 12.180. This was not explicitly inscribed in the law, although the need for favorable treatment of "refugees" was mentioned in the introduction to the law. [↑](#footnote-ref-1112)
1112. Prof. A.Meusel, Bericht über Belgien, pp.9-11. Refugee survey 1937-1938, special reports III German refugees. Royal Institute for International Affairs, London. Jüdische Rundschau, 9.2.1937, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1113)
1113. Note of Ministry of Labor, 25.3.1936, p.4. It is unclear on what Delattre based his figures, but the political scientist Walter Leën estimated on the basis of the Dutch experience that 5 to 6% of the demands could be refused. Leën (1937a), p.348. [↑](#footnote-ref-1114)
1114. E.Soudan in PHK, 3.4.1936, p.1145. Before 1935 the budget for repatriation had been minimal, a few hundred thousands francs. Note Sûreté Publique, Comptabilité 31.3.1936. AMJ, 73C. PDK, 5-IV, 1935, p.93; 1936, p.21 and 1937, p.21. [↑](#footnote-ref-1115)
1115. Frey (1975), p.83 and 87. The repatriation of 30 to 40 Czechoslovakian citizens in 1937 was financed by the Belgian authorities. Czechoslovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czechoslovakian Ministry of Labor, 19.1.1938. SUA, Ministerstvo vnitra, 1936-1940, 5/23/3/12. 4649. [↑](#footnote-ref-1116)
1116. Annuaire de la Chambre de Commerce d'Anvers, 1936-1937, p.62. [↑](#footnote-ref-1117)
1117. PS, p.102 [↑](#footnote-ref-1118)
1118. Minister of Finance H. de Man to Justice Minister F.Bovesse, 11.2.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. We do not have any figures at our disposal, it is possible that fewer of these immigrants were refused a work permit. According to the Czechoslovakian consulate were among the small Carpathian Jewish community in Antwerp -about 1,000 immigrants- only 7 persons threatened with expulsion on the basis of the law of March 31, 1936. In two cases the residence permits were restituted after an interven­tion of the consulate. Czechoslovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Czechoslovakian Ministry of Labor, 19.1.1938. SUA, Ministerstvo vnitra, 1936-1940, 5/23/3/12. 4649. [↑](#footnote-ref-1119)
1119. The Ministry of Labor asked the Socialist Garmet Workers Union for advice concerning these outworkers who appealed against the refusal of a work permit.As the union did not know these people the Ministry was told not to take these appeals into account. Comité Exécutif,4.3.1937. AMSAB, Centrale der Kleding, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-1120)
1120. Their wives also had to hand in their identity cards. The intervention of lawyers meant that the Ministry of Justice had to acknowledge the illegality of revoking the spouses' identity cards. The Royal Decree of 31.3.1936 legalized only the expulsion of the applicant of the work permit. Minister of Justice F.Bovesse to M.Somerhausen, 1.4.1937. AMJ, 1B6 III. M.Somerhausen to H.Bekaert, 5.4.1937. Minister of Justice F.Bovesse to M.Somerhausen, 7.4.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1121)
1121. Concerning two tailors who were already living 8 and 9 years in Belgium: "Les intéressés nous fournissent régulièrement des manteaux de dames: spécialisés dans cette branche et familiarisés avec nos méthodes particulières de travail, ils constituent à la lettre, les éléments sur lesquels repose la marché de notre Département de Manteaux" Innovation to H.Bekaert, 3.5.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1122)
1122. See files in AMJ, 33 C 31/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1123)
1123. Immigrants married to Belgian women were immediately granted a labor permit. Note, 25.6.1937. A.Delattre to E.Soudan, 6.7.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1124)
1124. Vanthemse (1988-1989) [↑](#footnote-ref-1125)
1125. "Mon mari a été renoncé (sic) pour la raison suivante: le patron ayant demandé les papiers nécessaires pour faire les démarches- avait appris que la loi oblige le patron- au cas, ou il n'aurait plus dans le futur de travail à fournir à l'étranger à son service- de rapatrier ce dernier avec sa famille-donc de payer leur voyage." Grigorieff (Russian "refugee") to Secretariat of the Queen, 17.2.1938. Royal Archive, Secours R.E. 1.5.241. [↑](#footnote-ref-1126)
1126. De Kleeding, 1937, 11, p.3. This dominance of one-person enterprises is clear for the leather and fur industries. In 1940 there were about 300 to 400 Jewish firms in the moroccan industry, while at the end of the twenties at the peak of the success of this industry there were only 170 businesses. In 1940 in the fur industry, there were more than 100 firms. PS, p.97. Comité National Paritaire pour la fabrication d'articles de voyage, d'équipements de militaires, de sellerie et de maroquinerie, séance du 7.3.1940. AMSAB, Algemene Centrale. Sherman (1974), p.174. [↑](#footnote-ref-1127)
1127. City archive Brussels, police, 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-1128)
1128. The confection, leather and fur businesses, together with the diamond industry made up 65 % of the commercial and 72 % of the industrial enterprises which were considered by the Germans to be Jewish. The garment industry, with 1131 commercial businesses and 899 industrial firms, was the numerically most important sector, followed by the leather and fur with 399 commercial businesses and 490 firms, and, third, the diamond industry with 528 businesses and 521 firms. Small-sized enterprises were dominant. 1,007 of the 1,676 firms in the garment sector- 67 % - had a stock of less than 10,000 francs. Steinberg (1983), p.39. Sherman (1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-1129)
1129. By April 1937 the Service had accumulated 12,000 files which were not yet processed. Le Peuple, 20.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1130)
1130. *Procureur* of Liège to Minister of Justice F.Bovesse, 29.12.1936. Delattre to Justice, 8.2.1937. Note Justice, 11.2.1937. AMJ, 33 C 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1131)
1131. "En fait, le contrôle de main-d'oeuvre étrangère est pratiquement inopérant...Tant que la situation de l'office de la main-d'oeuvre ne sera pas améliorée, il sera malaisé d'envisager les mesures propres à assurer la surveillance de l'activité des travailleurs étrangers" Sûreté to Minister of Justice C. du Bus de Warnaffe, 25.1.1938. AMJ, 1B6/6-1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1132)
1132. Delattre to Bovesse, 24.9.1936. Bill of Delattre, December 1937. AMJ, 33 C 44B/I. [↑](#footnote-ref-1133)
1133. Caestecker (1993c), p.168. Bekaert (1940), p.200. [↑](#footnote-ref-1134)
1134. Note pour le ministre, 5.6.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Although we do not have an explicit reference for the motivation of this proposal it is highly probable that we can repeat the argument of 1929: the limitation of state intervention in "their" labor market. To increase the flexibility in "their" labormarket had nothing to do with a liberalization in favor of mobility of the migrants within the mining sector. The mining companies, certainly in Limburg and the Borinage wanted to curtail the miners' mobility in an autonomous manner, via arrangements between the mines. ACCA, comité des directeurs de

travaux, 24.5.1937. RABW, KS, 491. AHCM, 21.5.1937 [↑](#footnote-ref-1135)
1135. In the spring of 1936 a first concession was granted when internal mobility within the mining sector was sanctioned until July 15, 1936. This was later expanded to a tolerance of the immediate employment of all aliens legally residing in Belgium on March 9, 1936, and this tolerance was valid until October 1,1936 and then extended to December 1, 1936. This toleration was extended and officially sanctionned until 30.4.1937. BS, 3.6.1937, p.3558. Mine Administration to Fedechar, June 8,1936. AEL, Six Bonniers, 60. Fedechar to Mine Administration, 27.7.1936. ARA, mijnadministration, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Minister of Labor to Fedechar, 3.8.1936. AEL, Six Bonniers, 60. ACCBS, 27.5.1936. Committee Fedechar, 7.10.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1136)
1136. In the summer of 1936 (until September 23,1936) the mining industry filed 760 requests for the post factum regularization of the employment of aliens. These were applications for a work permit for aliens legally residing in Belgium. By the end of September, the employment of not a single one of these aliens was regularized. None of them had received a work permit .

It is unclear whether this figure only refers to aliens who were recruited to the mining sector after March 9,1936 or of all aliens who had been recruited by

individual mines, therefore also the migrants who had changed their place of employment within the mining sector. FEDECHAR to Mine Administration, 28.9.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1137)
1137. Narodowiec, 24.6.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1138)
1138. Wychodzca, 1936, 23, p.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1139)
1139. Narodowiec, 26.8.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1140)
1140. Committee Fedechar, 23.1.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1141)
1141. Fedechar to Delattre, 28.9.1936. ARA, mine administration, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1142)
1142. Recrutement d'ouvriers étrangers, 15.9.1936. Bois du Luc, 203. AHCM, 28.12.1936, 5.3.1937 and 26.2.1937. FEDECHAR attempted to eliminate the competition for workers among the mines by regarding the expenses which were a consequence of the recruitment of aliens as partly a common obligation of the mining industry. The first proposal to share the recruitment costs was based on the total amount of workers being employed, 50% of the expenses to be divided by the number of underground workers and 50% by the number of immigrants recruited. This was rejected in favor of a division which took the resources of the mine more into account. Production would count for 25 % of the expenses, while 75% would be linked to the number of foreigners recruited. Fedechar, committee 5.5.1937 en 20.10.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1143)
1143. "Pour avoir des gens, il faudrait lâcher du salaire, car c'est encore dans les charbonnages que l'on gagne le moins et la situation des charbonnages le permet." Aide-mémoire de l'entrevenue, 17.11.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos,

C, 2, 5/1. Moreover, Delattre stated that the mine employers could not afford to take any more liberties in the recruitment of Belgians. Every Belgian who applied, regardless of his conviction, had to be accepted. This attack on the managerial authority was little appreciated by the mine employers. The Communist pressure on Delattre among others explains this fundamental stance. Habets:"on ne peut pas réembaucher des ouvriers dont on sait pertinament bien ou qui déclarent même qu'ils viennent aux charbonnages dans le but de formenter la gréve." Aide-mémoire de l'entrevenue, 17.11.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1144)
1144. Aide-mémoire de l'entrevenue, 17.11.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. AHCM, 23.10.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1145)
1145. Habets:"On ferait venir les ouvriers étrangers délicatement par petits groupes...les patrons n'ont pas jugé qu'ils devaient en référer aux ouvriers au sujet de cette question." Aide-mémoire de l'entrevenue, 17.11.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1146)
1146. Rapport du comité sur l'exercice 1936, Brussel, 1937, p. 21. RAL, Charbonnage de Six-Bonniers, 68. The FEDECHAR had also contacted the Italian authorities to recruit in Italy. However, the Italian authorities asked extensive social rights for their emigrants. These demands were probably a part of the negotiations about an Italian-Belgian agreement on the free mobility of manpower and reciprocity in the field of social rights. An agreement on these topics was reached on 29.9.1938. Committee Fedechar, 23.1.1937 and 25.11.1936. Morelli (1985), p.92. [↑](#footnote-ref-1147)
1147. La Voix du Peuple, 2.12.1936 and 7.12.1936. Belang van Limburg, 1.12.1936, 1/7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1148)
1148. A.Lombard in Journal de Charleroi, 18.12.1936. A.Musin in L'Action Syndicale, 7.3.1936. Van Laerhoven in L'Action Syndicale, 12.12.1936/3. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIII, 1937, 1, p.6. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 1, p.5. J. Bodart in La Cité Nouvelle, 17.2.1937. La Cité Nouvelle, 20.12.1936, p.4. Mondelaers, de aanwerving van de arbeidskrachten in de Belgische mijnnijverheid, p.2. KADOC, Broeckx, 13.2.7.5 Rens, Dethier, Lombard and Van Buggenhout in Aide-mémoire de la réunion de la Commission d'Etudes de la réduction de la durée hebdomadaire du travail, 23.11.1936, p.10. Archives Fedechar. CNMM, 23.1.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1149)
1149. "Nous conservons tous nos sentiments de fraternité envers nos frères de classe des autres pays, nous voulons les préserver contre une exploitation éhontée du patronat belge, mais nous voulons ainsi éclaircir les travailleurs belges sur l'action néfaste du patronat minier." La Voix du Peuple, 21.10.1936, p.6/5-6. PHK, 11.2.1937, p.618. [↑](#footnote-ref-1150)
1150. "Le gouvernement, modifiant complètement son attitude s'oppose à l'introduction de main-d'oeuvre étrangère: il veut organiser l'adaptation prof. des chômeurs à d'autres industries que la leur." AHCM, 7.12.1936."M.Raven retire sa promesse de permettre l'entrée d'un ouvrier étranger embauché..Intervention de M.Buggenhout." Committee Fedechar, 25.11.1936. Raven to Fedechar, 17.12.1936. Bois du Luc, 203.

The climate at the time (the Spanish Civil War, The electoral breakthrough of the PCB...) caused the Sûreté to become concerned about putting further stress on public order by soliciting foreign workers. This support for a protectionist policy from the Ministry of Justice can also have contributed to the tightening of the policy."Sans doute, il est peut-être difficile, de recruter exclusivement pour les besoins des charbonnages, de la main d'oeuvre nationale, mais j'estime qu'il faudrait épuiser tous les moyens pour l'obtenir. La Pologne, soucieuse de se débarrasser d'un excédent de population, ne manquera pas de favoriser l'émigration des éléments de sa population les plus turbulents. La situation de notre pays exige que nous nous montrons de plus en plus circonspects dans l'admission des étrangers." L'Administrateur de la Sûreté Publique R.de Foy to Minister of Justice F.Bovesse, 21.11.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, rood 2, 5/1. Caestecker (1993c), p.77. [↑](#footnote-ref-1151)
1151. "ce système serait une oeuvre de très longue haleine et dont le résultat est douteux...ce qu'il nous faut, ce sont des gens qui peuvent produire tout de suite puisque la demande de charbon est en face de nous." Aide-mémoire de la réunion de la Commission d'Etudes de la réduction de la durée hebdomadaire du travail , 23.11.1936, p.10. Archives Fedechar. Kommissie voor arbeidsbemiddeling in het mijnbedrijf, 21.1.1937. Kadoc, Broekx, 5.2.3.1. Loi sur la semaine de travail de 40 h, Waterschei, 5.8.1936. RABW, KS, 139, 109. AHCM, 7.12.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1152)
1152. "Il est intéressant pour nous de démontrer que dans le résidu des chômeurs qui subsiste dans les vieux bassins, il n'y a pas de main-d'oeuvre utile à récupérer." AHCM, 20.11.1936.

Also the Limburg mining companies did so, but they refused to yield their prerogatives in recruitment: "pour ne pas déforcer la demande pressante relative à la main d'oeuvre étrangère, il faudrait au moins accepter l'offre qui est faite de tenter de faire sortir la main d'oeuvre du pays encore disponible...cette tentative ne serait pas applicable aux indésirables." ACCA, 23.12.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1153)
1153. Usine métallurgique du Hainaut to Minister of Economic Affairs P.Van Isacker, 9.1.1937. Offices belges des Cokes to Van Isacker, 6.2.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1A, 10. La Province, 7.12.1936. According to the Christian Democratic miners' union, the Socialist metal workers' union had made steps in the same direction with the Minister of Economic Affairs. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 2-4. We found, however, no confirmation of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-1154)
1154. Fedechar to Associations Charbonnières, 18.12.1936. Bois du Luc, 203. Raven to P.Van Isacker, 14.12.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, 1A, 10. PHK, 11.2.1937, pp.623-625. "Une proposition de M. Van Zeeland relative à l'introduction de 2,500 ouvriers étrangers sur les 5,000 demandés par les patrons" Proces-verbal de la LXVII reunion du comité de l'office de redressement économique, 21.12.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, C, rood 4d, zwart 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1155)
1155. "des éléments peu diciplinés, irréguliers au travail, à qualités professionnelles médiocres, mais surtout, pour la plupart, ayant des idées extrêment avancées, dangereuses au plus haut point pour les masses ouvrières que nous avons pu jusqu'ici, soustraire aux influences communistes et révolutionnaires." Fedechar to Raven , 11.12.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, rood 2, 5/1. ACCBS, 7.12.1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1156)
1156. Study of the southern Limburg employment bureaus. Cited in Kreukels (1986), p.419. [↑](#footnote-ref-1157)
1157. AHCM, 28.12.1936. Fedechar, rapport du comité sur l'excercice 1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-1158)
1158. "Dethier signale le danger d'une importation massive d'étrangers...Tous les camarades..sont du même avis..et demandent que Dethier intervienne auprès de Delattre afin de lui conseiller la plus grande prudence et la plus grande fermeté dans cette affaire... Il résulte des explications.. sur..la situation de la main

d'oeuvre dans l'industrie des mines..qu'il sera extrèmement difficile de s'opposer à l'entrée des étrangers dans les mines." Liège miners'union, Executive Committee, 9.11.1936. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1159)
1159. Its aim for the long run went further, their target was the expulsion of all aliens from the mine sector. The Christian Democratic mine workers' union was, for the most part, a union of Flemings. They argued that the great labor reserves in Flanders which had little industrial tradition were able to provide enough manpower to man the Limburg mine industry completely given the necessary instruction. The Christian Democrats' radical opposition against the recruitment of aliens was, however, not limited to Limburg, in Wallonia where this union held a minority position it also adopted a radically protectionist position. This union argued that national solidarity was necessary if they were to make the mine industry attractive to Belgians. Solidarity that had to provide the means to tangibly improve the labor conditions and in particular the wages. "La corporation des mineurs ne peut être victime de toutes les autres. On dit qu'il y a une grande marge entre nos prix et ceux des charbons étrangers. Si les métallurgistes veulent produire plus d'acier, il n'est que juste que les mineurs en tirent aussi un peu de profit." Van Buggenhout in CNMM, 23.1.1937. Van Buggenhout to Delattre, 3.12.1936. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Progrès, 23.10.1936. The small Flemish nationalist miners union in Limburg adopted a similar standpoint. Sinjaal, 17.1.1937, 31.1.1937 and 28.2.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1160)
1160. Belang van Limburg, 18.12.1936, 3/1-2. Mondelaers, de aanwerving van de arbeidskrachten in de Belgische mijnnijverheid, p.2. KADOC, Broekx, 13.2.7.5 Another short-term solution that this union presented to meet the coal shortage was to "guide" aliens who were legally residing in Belgium to the mine sector regardless of the duration of their stay. The compulsory "return" of these aliens to the mine was, however, quickly opposed. It was not to combine with the reevaluation of the miners' profession, the cornerstone of their strategy to make the mine industry once again an attractive industry for Belgians. "L'important pour nous c'est qu'aucune contrainte ne soit employée à l'égard de ces ouvriers (the foreigners legally sojourning in Belgium who were working outside of the mine sector) et que le salaire qui leur sera payé soit assez élevé pour les décider à retourner vers un métier très dangereux." Aide-mémoire de la réunion de la Commission d'Etudes de la réduction de la durée hebdomadaire du travail , 23.11.1936. Archives Fedechar. La Vie Nouvelle, 13.12.1936 and 20.12.1936, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1161)
1161. Aide-mémoire de l'entrevenue, 17.1.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. ONPC to the Mine Administration, 14.5.1937. Archives of the Ministry of Labor, not numbered. [↑](#footnote-ref-1162)
1162. Le Peuple, 8.1.1937/1, 4 and 9.1.1937/1, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1163)
1163. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIII, mars 1937, pp. 36-43. Vooruit, 10.1.1937, 3/6. A.Lombard in l'Action Syndicale,30.1.1937. N.Dethier, Rapport moral et financier du centrale des mineurs présenté au congrès bi-annuel de 18 et 19 juillet 1937. Cuesmes, 1937, p.58. [↑](#footnote-ref-1164)
1164. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 2-4, p.13. Het Volk, 12.1.1937/1, 7. Committee Fedechar, 3.2.1937. ACCA, 8.2.1937. Le Progrès, 23.10.1936. The Christian Democratic miners' union was prepared to permit the departure from the forty-eight-hour work week in order to alleviate the temporary demand for coal. Within the Socialist union the base -not the top- regarded the temporary

departure from the forty-eight-hour work week as an attempt to undermine the reduction in work hours won by the strike of 1936. Delattre had put severe pressure on "his" union to give in, but without result. "Si on n'applique pas la dérogation la semaine prochaine, il y aura des milliers d'ouvriers au chômage dans d'autres industries...Il y a un devoir de solidarité à accomplir envers le pays et envers les ouvriers d'autres métiers." Delattre in CNMM, 23.1.1937. La Cité Nouvelle, 8.3.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1165)
1165. Delattre to Fedechar, 26.1.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. "une autorisation d'entrée dérisoirement insuffisante." Committee Fedechar, 23.1.1937. L'Indépendance Belge, 13.1.1937/4,4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1166)
1166. PHK, 11.2.1937, p.628. [↑](#footnote-ref-1167)
1167. "It cannot be the government that lets the importation of alien workers from Poland hinder the improvement of labor conditions. We will never put up with that (applause from the Catholics, from the Flemish Nationalists, from the Rexists and from some Socialists)" J.Van Buggenhout and J.Bodart in PHK, 11.2.1937, p.618-620 and 628. De Tijd, 12.1.1937. For the Communists: Deselleir in PHK, 11.2.1937, p.630. Het Vlaamsche Volk, 20.2.1937/2, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1168)
1168. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 2-4, p.16. Le Peuple, 22.1.1937/1, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1169)
1169. "Je répète-et c'est la toute dernière fois-que si des cas pareils se présentent encore je ne donnerai l'autorisation pour aucun ouvrier étranger nouveau" Delattre to Raven, 3.4.1937. "Je ne puis admettre qu'un ouvrier ne soit pas réembauché sous prétexte qu'il a fait parti du parti communiste."idem, 22.11.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1170)
1170. A repatriation security also had to be contributed for the spouses and children who eventually joined the miners. As the railways had lowered their tariffs in July 1937 the security of 400 francs was reduced to 250. The trip was free for children up to 10 years old and 135 francs for older children. Circular letter Fedechar, 25.5.1937. AEL, Minerie, 107. Note pour le Cabinet de Monsieur le Ministre, 1937. AMJ, 33 C/9-1. MB, 15.3.1937. BS, 1937, pp.1822-1824. BS, 1937, p.5128. Committee Fedechar, 24.2.1937, 10.3.1937, 19.5.1937, 9.6.1937 and 11.8.1937. PS, p.47.

The Sûreté naturally also continued to make its demands, therefore, all "unwanted" Poles (which they defined as deliquents and subversives) who had been brought to Belgium by collective transport were repatriated at the cost of the mining companies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1171)
1171. According to the director of Zolder, a mine in the Limburg basin which had just started production but did not yet need labor, Mondelaers of the Christian Democratic union had "engagé des ouvriers travaillant dans d'autres charbonnages à se présenter à Zolder, à seule fin de pouvoir collectionner des refus d'embauchage...De Winter pense qu'on doit laisser aucune effort pour prendre les chômeurs mineurs, en vue de ne pas donner au Ministre sujet à intervenir contre l'engagement des ouvriers étrangers." ACCA, 8.2.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1172)
1172. Internal memo Foreign Affairs, 4.11.1936. ABZ, 2652bis. Interministerial emigration commission, 22.3.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9895. [↑](#footnote-ref-1173)
1173. In Sosnowiec 4,000 Poles registered for the Belgian selection commission that only needed 300. Dziennik Ludowy, 9.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1174)
1174. The emigrants were recruited in the districts Bielski, Cieszyn, Chorzw and the Dbrowa mine basin. The two latter are part of Upper-Silesia. The Liège mine Hasard-Cheratte had a special group of 62 workers unaccustomed to mine work come over from a few villages in the district Wielun. Villages where this mine had got their labor from since the 1920s. Wiarus Polski, 8.3.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1175)
1175. "ne pas l'utiliser le fond de rapatriement serait créer pour les charbonnages le droit d'invoquer des exceptions et anéantir tout l'effort très péniblement réalisé, en vue de la sauvegarde des intérêts du Trésor." Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, s.d (3.1937?). AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1176)
1176. Fedechar, committee 24.3.1937. Nevertheless, the employment of aliens without work permit seemed to be a prevailing practice. So complained a group of Czechoslovakians, who had already been waiting two months for their work permits and in the meantime were without means, that many of their fellow countrymen were working in the mines without work permit. Account from the police La Louvière, 18.3.1937. AMJ, 33 C30 9/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1177)
1177. Répartition des ouvriers polonais, 27.4.1937. RABW, KS, 55, Directeur des Travaux. Sinjaal, 28.3.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1178)
1178. Van Buggenhout to Van Zeeland, 7.10.1937. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 12, p.14 and 1937, 2-4, p.43. Only the small Flemish Nationalist miners union called for a strike, but without result. Sinjaal, 11.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1179)
1179. ACV Maandblad, 1937, 3-4, p.359 and 365. [↑](#footnote-ref-1180)
1180. Wiarus Polski, 1.5.1937. Directeur A.Dumont to E.Stein, s.d. RABW, KS, 210, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-1181)
1181. Instead of beginning with a minimum wage of 42 francs on which they, as qualified workers had hoped, sometimes their wages were reduced to a minimum wage of an apprentice, 32 francs. The dissatisfaction also resulted from a different way of calculating the wages. In Poland and Czechoslovakia qualifications were granted on the basis of the amount of training that one had received and one was paid per day. In Belgium wages were based on the quantity of coal that one was able to dig and the qualification level attributed depended on the effort. Polacy Zagranica, 1937, 11, pp.18-19. Commission de surveillance, 24.3.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1182)
1182. AHCM, 30.4.1937 and 21.5.1937. Fedechar, Committee, 17.8.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1183)
1183. The Sûreté only gave its approval at the end of May to the arrival of family members of Polish miners who could not be housed by the mines. The workers who had found housing on the private market only then were able to get permission to have their families come over. The Sûreté gave its approval "pour des raisons d'humanité et d'ordre social et l'avantage économique a retirer de la présence de ces familles" Bekaert to Delattre, 29.6.1937. AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. Note mine, 1938. Municipal archive Charleroi, Fontaine l'Evêque, Personnel 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-1184)
1184. Committee Fedechar, 30.6.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1185)
1185. Narodowiec, 21.5.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1186)
1186. Polacy Zagranica, VIII, 6, 1937, p.46. La Voix du Peuple, 23.8.1937, 3/6. O.Mercier to Director, 9.12.1937. Fontaine l'Evêque, personnel 1937. Brussels consulate to the Polish Ministry of Social Affairs, 24.4.1937. APK, Starostwo powiatowe Zywieckie, 273. Narodowiec, 6.5.1937. Committee Fedechar, 7.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1187)
1187. Polish consul to Director of Limbourg Meuse, 1.6.1937. Limbourg Meuse to the Polish Consulate, 4.6.1937. RABW, KS, Eisden, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1188)
1188. We counted about 20 short strikes by these Polish workers in May and June 1937 in Wallonia. Committee Fedechar, 7.4.1937. Report Gendarmerie, La Louvière 22.4.1937 and 30.6.1937. AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. L'Action Syndicale, 1.5.1937/ 3. Polacy Zagranica, 1937, 11, pp.18-19. Komenda Policji Panstwowej w Zywcie to Starostwo, Zywiec, 10.5.1937. APK, Starostwo powiatowe Zywieckie, 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-1189)
1189. Committee FEDECHAR, 21.3.1937. Mine Administration, first arrondissement to Minister of Labor, 3.6.1937. Report Gendarmerie Quévrain, 13.4.1937. AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. Charbonnages de Marihay to Mine Administration, 5.1937. AEL, administration des mines- Liège division, 427. [↑](#footnote-ref-1190)
1190. On this occasion the tension within the union strategy was clearly expressed. On the one hand the unions regarded the migrants as full-fledged members of the Belgian working class but, on the other hand they imposed on the immigrants a statute which restricted their occupational mobility.

Delattre wanted to remove the clause in the labor contract which stated that breaking a labor contract implied expulsion since this denied them the right to strike. The Minister of Internal Affairs the Catholic A. De Schrijver agreed, "mais rappelle les raisons qui ont fait introduire celle-ci et il vous demande de procéder à un nouvel examen de la question.. Ministre de la Justice (the Liberal A. De Laveleye) estime que la suppression envisagée serait inopportune". The conclusion was to retain this clause since it gave the possibility to the executive power - but not the obligation - of expelling aliens. Therefore, if these Poles broke their labor contract due to their participation in a strike could the law be applied eventual with some relaxation. Raven to Delattre, 8.7.1937 and 23.8.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1191)
1191. Of the 2,000 Poles about 150 left Belgium by end of May. Wiarus, 1.6.1937. Narodowiec, 6.5.1937 and 15.5.1937. Caestecker and Van Doorslaer (1988), pp.232-233. Komenda Policji Panstwowej w Zywcie to Starostwo, Zywiec, 10.5.1937. APK, Starostwo powiatowe Zywieckie, 273. Gendarmerie Bray, 3.4.1937. AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. Service d'assistance aux étrangers, 15.4-10.6.1937. ARC, casier 33, colis sec.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1192)
1192. Circular letter Fedechar, 21.4.1937. AEL, Charbonnage Six Bonniers, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-1193)
1193. Interesting enough no representative of the trade unions was invited. [↑](#footnote-ref-1194)
1194. see the files in ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1 and RABW, KS, Eisden, 88. It was almost only medically unsuitable workers who were eligible for repatriation. Report on the activities of the representative of the Polish Red Cross in Belgium for 1937. AAG, III, 2. Service d'assistance aux étrangers, 15.4-10.6.1937. ARC, casier 33, colis sec.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1195)
1195. La Vie Nouvelle, 3.7.1937, p.2/1. Le Peuple, 29.10.1937. La Voix du Peuple, 23.8.1937, p.3/7. Sinjaal, 25.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1196)
1196. Director A.Dumont to E.Stein, s.d. RABW, KS, 210, 92. The idea of setting up a commission which would exercise control over work qualifications was discussed within the government, but in the end this plan was never executed. It is unclear whether they were discussing a technical commission which would resolve the conflicts with the Polish miners or which would assist with the recruitments in Poland. Fedechar, committee 21.4.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1197)
1197. The FEDECHAR also wanted to recruit in Italy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs vetoed this. This was paired with the tense diplomatic relations with Italy in connection with the conflict in Ethiopia. The Belgian ambassador was removed in 1936 and normal diplomatic relations were only restored in 1938. ACCBS, 31.5.1937. Committee Fedechar, 9.6.1937, 7.7.1937, 11.8.1937, 31.8.1937 and 29.9.1937. Morelli (1985), pp.842-846. Saenen (1993), pp.49-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-1198)
1198. Committee Fedechar, 21.4.1937, 28.4.1937 and 12.5.1937. ACCA, 31.4.1937 en 26.5.1937. Habets to the Hungarian envoy, 29.4.1937. ANH, K85, Brüsszeli Küvetseg, 12t.

The need for hands meant that even in April 1937 the declassification of the Polish miners was only a political, not a technical problem. At first Delattre had refused to take into consideration the request for the recruitment of helpers and this in spite of the fact that in the Centre basin among others the Socialist union had supported the request by the employers to recruit hands. CNMM, 15.2.1937. ACCBS, 22.3.1937 and 26.4.1937. AHCM, 26.3.1937 and 9.4.1937. Charbonnage de Sacré Madame to ACCBS, 23.3.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1199)
1199. Committee Fedechar, 2.6.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1200)
1200. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XXVIII, 1937, 7-8. L'Ouvrier Mineur, XXXV, 6.1939, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1201)
1201. Committee Fedechar, 11.8.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1202)
1202. It is highly likely that this entailed paying a security deposit. Only the interests that the Sûreté defended were still taken into consideration. A certificate of good behavior and morals and a statement of the national authorities that the interested party was always able to return to their homeland were all that was needed to regularize their sojourn. In June the first step had already been made, the administration would take into consideration the requests by undocumented aliens, but the mines were only able to employ these aliens after they had been granted a work permit. In August, they could be employed immediately. Interal memo Fedechar, 11.6.1937 and 5.8.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. Committee Fedechar, 9.6.1937. Memo mine administration, July 1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Fedechar to the Hungarian ambassador, 7.8.1937. ANH, K85, Brusszeli Kovetsig, 12t. [↑](#footnote-ref-1203)
1203. Circular letter Fedechar, 13.8.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. Raven to the chief engineers, 12.8.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. AHCM, 15.10.1937 and 19.11.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1204)
1204. Circular letter of Fedechar, 10.12.1937. Bois du Luc, 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-1205)
1205. The legal employment opportunities for the illegal immigration apparently had a clear influence on the prospects for the undocumented aliens. The representative of the Polish Red Cross had many more requests for repatriation on behalf of Poles who had immigrated illegally before June and after August than during the summer when there was no problem to regularize one's sojourn. In May and June there were 3 to 5 registrations daily, in July and August it was somewhat calmer and in the peroid between September and November there were once again 3 to 5 applications sometimes as many as 8 to 10 per day. Report on the activities of the representative of the Polish Red Cross in Belgium for 1937. AAG, III, 2.

The regularization of illegal immigrants in 1937 can not be compared to the situation in the 1920s when the sojourn of illegal immigrants (those needing a visa) or illegal emigrants was easily regularized. See appendix 6 (b-d) for the reversal in the relation between issued passports and immigration registered in Belgium as an indication for the decline of illegal emigrants who could regularize their sojourn in Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-1206)
1206. In the middle of June 250 qualified Hungarian mine workers arrived in Belgium. Fedechar to the Hungarian Embassy, 8.5, 14.5, 25.5.1937. ANH, K85, Brüsszeli Küvetseg, 12t. Fedechar to AHCM, 29.11.1937. UEM, Association Charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, Main d'oeuvre étrangère, recrutement 1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1207)
1207. In all probability its mission was to recruit mostly qualified workers, probably 2,100 of the 3,250. Kurier Poznanski, 7.7.1937. Committee Fedechar, 2.6.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1208)
1208. Commission de Surveillance, Limbourg-Meuse 3.6.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. Midzyministerialny Komisja Emigracyjny. AAN, PRM 72-1. Committee Fedechar, 30.6.1937 [↑](#footnote-ref-1209)
1209. Those from the district Wielun were again destinated for the mine Cheratte-Hasard who had recruited since the 1920s in a few villages in this region. Kurier Poznanski, 7.7.1937. Wychodzca, 1937, 15, p.13. ACCA, 7.4.1937. Committee Fedechar, 21.4.1937 and 19.5.1937. Urzd Wojewodztwie Poznan to Starostwo w Szubinie, 9.6.1937. AP Poznan, Starostwo powiatowe Nowym Tomysli, 1301, s.46. The employers also made up a black list with Poles who had worked in Belgium in the 1920s and who they certainly did not want to come back. Fedechar to ACCBS, 26.10.1936. Bois du Luc, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-1210)
1210. Among them there was a small number who were recruted on name. Committee FEDECHAR, 14.7.1937 [↑](#footnote-ref-1211)
1211. Committee FEDECHAR, 19 and 26.5.1937. This Polish mine, was dependant on a Belgian financial group and the direction had advised its miners to leave for Belgium since unemployment lay in the future. The director also had assured them that the labor conditions were analogous to those in Poland. Onderzoek naar de conflicten tussen Limbourg-Meuse en Poolsche arbeiders van het convooi van 31 juli, 13.8.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1212)
1212. 3,677 Poles were collectively recruited in 1937, 2,000 of them in March alone. Annual report FEDECHAR, 1938. Narodowiec, 24.8.1937. Memo mine administration, July 1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Among them: In July 1937, 700 workers set off from Wielkopolski. Kurier Poznanski, 7.7.1937. From Gydnie 73 unemployed miners. Wychodzca, 1937, 15, p.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-1213)
1213. Ministry of Social Affairs to the Consulate in Brussels, 31.7.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9633."Difficultés et scenes tumultueuses lors de l'embauchage en Pologne." Committee Fedechar, 28.7.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1214)
1214. Ministry of Social Affairs to the Consulate in Brussels, 31.7.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.633. Interministerial Emigration Commission, 10.12.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.895. [↑](#footnote-ref-1215)
1215. "il résulte de plusieurs déclarations des ouvriers que dans leur intention ils pensaient travailler dans des charbonnages du bassin du Sud,le travail en Campine étant d'après ce qu'ils ont entendu dire, trop dur pour eux." Commission de surveillance Limbourg Meuse, 14.8.1937. RABW, KS, Eisden, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1216)
1216. "M. Seutin demandent leur expulsion. Téléphoné à la Sureté qui déclare que le rapatriement aux concours de la Sureté aura lieu dans le plus bref délai possible". Handwritten memo. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1217)
1217. "Suyvoet (Socialist union delegate for Limburg) désire les envoyer dans le Borinage... ne peut le faire, a convenu avec Federation et consulat de la rapatrier... Les gens pensent allez ou ils veulent." Entretien avec Suyvoet. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. "la Commission estime que vu que le contrat est valable et qu'il est de l'intérêt général de ne pas créer de précédent pouvant nuire au recrutement en se basant sur des déclarations imprécises, estime que les ouvriers dont il est question ont rompu le contrat et doivent être mis dans l'obligation ou de travailler aux Charbonnages de Limbourg-meuse ou de retourner en Pologne." Commission de surveillance Limbourg Meuse, 14.8.1937. RABW, KS, Eisden, 88. "Désastre de la Varsovienne" Committee Fedechar, 11.8.1937. Onderzoek naar de conflicten tussen Limbourg-Meuse en Poolsche arbeiders van het convooi van 31 juli, 13.8.1937. Meyers to Raven, 13.8.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. Narodowiec, 26.8.1937. Dziennik Ludowy, 21.8.1937. La Voix du Peuple, 16.8.1937/4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1218)
1218. Committee Fedechar, 4.8.1937, 28.7.1937, 25.8.1937 and 31.8.1937. Memo mine administration, July 1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Annual report FEDECHAR 1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1219)
1219. Committee Fedechar, 31.8.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1220)
1220. AHCM, 2.7.1937, 9.7.1937 and 11.7.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1221)
1221. The Liège mine, Hasard-Cheratte, was an example of such a recruitment strategy. In March 1937, Hasard had recruited 62 Poles in one village (in the wielun district), only one of them returned to Poland shortly thereafter. Wychodzca, 16, 1937, p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1222)
1222. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Fedechar, 2.8.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1223)
1223. Committee Fedechar, 14.7.1937, 4.8.1937 and 11.8.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1224)
1224. Circular letter Fedechar, 12.8.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. The mining companies wanted even to stipulate in the contracts that the immigrants had to reimburse the repatriation bonus through a deduction from their salary. AHCM, 2.12.1937. Committee Fedechar, 24.11.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1225)
1225. B.Pawlicki to the mine at Charleroi, 1937. L'abbé Trochonowicz to Deschamps, 10.10.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1226)
1226. ACCA, Comité des Directeurs des Travaux, 8.11.1937. RABW, KS, 491. [↑](#footnote-ref-1227)
1227. At the end of March 1938 FEDECHAR gave in and declared itself ready to bear the costs of the transport, the medical examination and the visa formalities. The Belgian authorities, however, were not granting anymore admissions to immigrants. Urzd Wojewodztwie Poznan to Starostwo w Godzkih, 22.11.1937. Starostwo powiatowe Nowym Tomysli, 1301, s.50. MOS to the Consulate in Brussels, 19.11.1937. Polish Consulate to MSZ, 25.3.1938. AAN, MSZ, 9.633. Interministerial Emigration Commission, 11.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.895. Committee Fedechar, 1.12.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1228)
1228. Circular letter, Fedechar, 14.12.1937. Bois du Luc, 186. Committee Fedechar, 8.12.1937. The motivation for this prohibition is more unclear here, the prohibition would have been due to a dispute between travel agencies. AHCM, 17.12.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1229)
1229. Fedechar to ACCBS, 27.10.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. AHCM, 29.10.1937. Committee Fédéchar, 8.12.1937. Mine Administration to Raven, 12.5.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Belgian ambassador, Belgrad to Spaak, 20.1.1938. AMJ, 33 C30 9/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1230)
1230. In our overview of the recruitments we mentioned 3,667 Poles, 2,289 Czechoslovakians and 250 Hungarians so together only 6,206. We do not know the nationality of the remaining 748. [↑](#footnote-ref-1231)
1231. Fedechar-Rapport du comité sur l'excercie 1938, p.65. [↑](#footnote-ref-1232)
1232. The reunion of families brought also a few thousand women and children to Belgium. Il est signalé que le nombre de personnes faisant partie de familles d'ouvriers étrangers déjà immigrés ou en instance d'immigration s'élève à environ 2.000: 93 Hungarian families (255 persons); 105 Czechoslovakian families (254 persons) and 530 Polish families (1,542 persons) Committee Fedechar, 15.9.1937. AHCM, 17.9.1937. In November 123 Hungarian families arrived. Hungarian consulate to Ministry of Industry, 24.10.1937. Director of district to Minister of Industry, 17.9.1937. ANH, K85, Brüsszeli Követsig 12t. Yugoslavian families were also brought to Belgium. Fedechar, Committee, 27.4.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1233)
1233. ANH, K85, Brüsszeli Követsig, 12t. [↑](#footnote-ref-1234)
1234. The number of "deserters" seemed significantly greater among the Czechoslovakian workers than among the Poles. However, we do not have any clear figures. According to the Czechoslovakian embassy in Brussels only 100 of their emigrants had left by January 1938 on their own initiative the mines. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of Labor, 19.1.1938. SUR, Ministerstvo vnitra 1936-1940. 5/23/3/12.4649. Narodowiec, 14.11.1937. Commission de surveillance, 17.12.1937 and 3.3.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Horvath to ACCBS, 12.10.1937. ACCBS to Fedechar, 10.1937. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1235)
1235. Committee Fedechar, 14.7, 11.8, 25.8, 8.9 and 20.10.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1236)
1236. Committee Fedechar, 28.7.1937 and 4.8.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1237)
1237. Commission de surveillance-Limbourg Meuse, 17.9.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, rood 2, zwart 5/1. Consul de Pologne au Directeur Gérant du Charbonnage Limbourg Meuse, 1.6.1937. RABW, KS, Eisden, 88. The socialist union pressed Delattre to take action against such practices not in defence of the rights of the migrants but as that, in its opinion, got in the way of the unionization of these workers. "Les locaux où nos réunions syndicales se tiennent sont généralement gardés par des gendarmes ou agents de police. Très souvent, ceux-ci demandent aux ouvriers qui se préparent à assister à la réunion, leurs pièces d'identité. Les étrangers qui n'en ont pas n'osent évidemment pas se rendre à nos réunions." Le Peuple, 24.10.1937. Delbrouck to Delattre, 15.6.1937. Delattre to Raven, 3.8.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1238)
1238. "une commissie dont nous avons pu apprécier l'utilité, pour les uns et les autres." Fedechar to Raven, 28.10.1937. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, c, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1239)
1239. Circular letter, 14.1.1938. Bois du Luc, 186. This letting off the financial responsibility of the mines was opposed by the Sûreté and happened extremely seldom. Only in the hypothetical case when the Sûreté granted a residence permit to an immigrant in spite of his "desertion" was the financial responsibility of the mine terminated. Also when another company (illegally) employed these "deserters" the repatriation costs could be recouped from the new employer. Committee Fedechar, 10 and 24.11.1937. Circular letter Fedechar, 31.1.1938. Bois du Luc, 186. Sûreté to Fedechar, 22.7.1938. AMJ, 33 c 30 9/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1240)
1240. Fedechar-Rapport du comité sur l'excercie 1938, p.65. [↑](#footnote-ref-1241)
1241. Résumé des opérations, année 1937. Charbonnages Belges, 16.10.1937, UEM, Société charb. Couchant de Mons. RABW, KS, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-1242)
1242. "Les Polonais qui vivent en ménage sont très régulier au travail. Ils sont économones et soucieux d'une certaine tenue morale; c'est, selon le direction du charbonnage, le résultat heureux de leur groupement en société, de leurs entrevues fréquentes avec un instituteur polonais, avec le clergé polonais et avec les autorités consulaires." Jacquemyns (1939), p.419. [↑](#footnote-ref-1243)
1243. "Dès qu'ils ont franchi la frontière de notre pays, nous les considérons comme de la famille et nous avons comme devoir de les protéger." V.Van Laerhoven in L'Action Syndicale, 1.5.1937/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1244)
1244. On the issue of health insurance: The Polish authorities insisted that the new immigrants have health insurance upon arrival. This implied that the immigrants were enlisted by the employers' health funds. Delattre insisted that they have free choice of health insurance. Forced enlistment was prohibited and the immigrants obtained a period of 8 days in which to join a health insurance of their choice. The unions had to try to enlist the support of the immigrants in those few days. A longer orientation period was opposed by the Polish authorities since they would otherwise have to carry the financial burden for the accidents and sickness of these immigrants in that period. See correspondence in ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. FEDECHAR, Committee, 9.6.1937, 14.6.1937, 1.9.1937. Raven to Legrand, 6.7.1937. Bois du Luc, 186. UHCM, 8.10.1937. Comité Central des Mineurs du Borinage, 8.9.1937. Livre des Procès verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1245)
1245. Le Peuple, 24.10.1937. Dziennik Ludowy, 10.6.1937 and 26.10.1937. Wiarus Polski, 10.6.1937. See also p.485 and 491. [↑](#footnote-ref-1246)
1246. L'Action Syndicale, 17.4.1937/3 and 15.5.1937. Dziennik Ludowy, 1.6.1937. Delattre, Minister of Labor supported strongly this strategy "En aucun cas, les ouvriers étrangers ne peuvent être payés à des salaires inférieurs à ceux des ouvriers belges" Delattre to Raven, 21.8.1937. ARA, Mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1247)
1247. The Communist militants were ordered to defend the immigrants within the Socialist trade unions. Circular letter de la fédération communiste de Charleroi, 21.4.1937. AMJ, 33 C30/9/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1248)
1248. Ons Limburg, 19.6.1937 and 7.5.1938. Van Buggenhout in Zedelijk Verslag van de centrale van de Vrije Mijnwerkers, 1937, p.3-5 and in CNMM, 15.7.1937, p.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1249)
1249. In the first 9 months of 1938 the number of immigrants, members of the miners' union in the basin of Limburg increased by 403 units. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIII, 10, 1937, p.3 and XXXIV, 1938, 10. Ons Limburg, 29.5.1937. Caestecker and Van Doorslaer (1988), p.223. L'Action Syndicale, 10.4.1937, 8.4.1937, 24.4.1937, 15.5.1937 and 4.9.1937. Regional Miners' Union of the basin of Liège, Executive Committee 8.6.1937 and 2.8.1937. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts. Réunion du Comité Exécutif de la centrale des Mineurs du Borinage du 8.2.1938. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1250)
1250. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIII, 10, 1937, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1251)
1251. Pauwels to Delattre, 21.5.1937. Archive RVA, Documents and notes attached to Direction committee ONPC. ACV maandblad, XIX, 1937, 8-9, p.19. BV, 12, 20.12.1938. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIV, 1938, 2, p.3. N.Crespin in L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIV, 1938, 12, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1252)
1252. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIII, 10, 1937, p.3 and XXXIV, 1938, 2, p.3. La Voix du Peuple, 2.9.1937. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XVIII, 1937, 7-8, pp.17-18 and XX, 4-5.1939, 4, p.14. La Cité Nouvelle, 3.7.1937,p.2/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1253)
1253. Note Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4.11.1936. ABZ, 2652bis. For an overview of the developments up to 1936 see pp.303-304. [↑](#footnote-ref-1254)
1254. Narodowiec, 6.4.1938, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1255)
1255. "Nous n'avons pas à faire plus pour les étrangers que pour les Belges" Committee FEDECHAR, 6 and 13.10.1937. AHCM, 8.10.1937. The negotiations were only taken up in 1939 and the Belgian authorities asked again for compensations, given that only Polish and no Belgian miners would obtain advantages.Démarche faite le mardi 5 mars 1940 auprès de Monsieur Balthazar, Ministre du Travail. AAN, Poselstwo RP w Brukseli, 12. The Polish authorities had strongly insisted on reaching an agreement, but the Belgian authorities had refused to do so. In Warsaw one was convinced, according to Narodowiec, that only by refusing any further recruitment for Belgian mines they would be able to convince the Belgian authorities to grant the Polish miners access to full benefits of Belgian social legislation. Narodowiec, 27.3.1939, p.3. The Belgian authorities did not believe this threat would ever materialize. P.V., 20.6.1938. ABZ, 2462bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1256)
1256. These immigrants came from the following districts: Gospic, Vojnic, Glina, Ogulin, Brinje. (a large number were born in Dreznica and Vodote). Joly, président du Groupement des Carrières de la vallèe de la Meuse to Ministry of Justice, summer 1937. AMJ, 33 C 3 30/10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1257)
1257. The general data for the quarries, based on the identity cards indicate only 860 foreigners in June 1936, but 1,526 in June 1938. For June 1936 there were 16,248 foreigners working in the heavy metallurgic industry, so much more than in 1934 with there were only 5,839 foreigners counted in the metallurgic firms with more than 10 employees. Appendix 1 and 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1258)
1258. Pomorza and Poznan were regions with large estates.

Some more details on these recruitments: The Poles should be of catholic faith. Knowledge of French would be an advantage, but was not essential. The contract foresaw a working day of 12 hours and medical insurance. The duration of the contract was 15 months (September 1937-December 1938) and the Poles who finished the contract received a return ticket to Poland. Monthly wages were between 375 and 500 francs. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 19.6.1937 and 19.7.1937. Fédération Nationale des Unions Professionnelle Agricoles de Belgique to Polish Consulate in Brussels, 19.7.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.634. Wiarus Polski, 2.12.1938. Muzeum Literature A.Mickiewicza, 3.528, notatki A.Kruczkowskiego 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-1259)
1259. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 13.8.1937 and 6.9.1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.634. See also AAN, MSZ, 9.895, p.118. Narodowiec, 23.10.1937/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1260)
1260. La Défense Agricole Belge, 27.10.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1261)
1261. Polish Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 19.8.1938. AAN, MSZ, 9.632. [↑](#footnote-ref-1262)
1262. Report 9.11.1938 and 14.2.1939. Municipal Archive Antwerp, MA 6774. [↑](#footnote-ref-1263)
1263. "on a accordé ou refusé des autorisation du travail au petit bonheur. Et bien cela, n'est pas digne d'une administration bien organisée" La Belgique Hôtelière, IIL, 1935, 22, p.720. [↑](#footnote-ref-1264)
1264. "Leur genre d'exploitation les oblige à n'employer que du personnel stylé et ayant une connaissance approfondie du métier. L'étranger constitute 90 p.c. de la clientèle de ces maisons, conséquement la direction se voit, en outre, contrainte à n'employer que du personnel qui parle les trois grandes langues couramment." La Belgique Hôtelière, IIL, 1935, 22, p.720. [↑](#footnote-ref-1265)
1265. De Voeding, XXIII, 1936, 4,p.5. Vakorgaan der centrale van Hotel, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, IV, 1936, 6, p.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-1266)
1266. La Belgique Hôtelière, IL, 1936, 10, p.324. [↑](#footnote-ref-1267)
1267. Delattre to President ONPC, 4.9.1936. Archive RVA, comité de direction de l'ONPC 1935-1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1268)
1268. De Voeding, XXIV, 1937, 1 and 2, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1269)
1269. De Voeding, XXIV, 1937, 6, p.4 . [↑](#footnote-ref-1270)
1270. "Les intéressés entrés dans le royaume sans être porteurs du permis sont, dés leur inscription dans les registres communaux, invités à quitter le pays... C'est la seule façon de tempérer l'afflux croissant des immigrants." Sûreté to Minister of Justice, 25.1.1938. AMJ, 1B6-1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1271)
1271. Appendix 5a and b. Not all these expelled immigrants had immigrated in 1938, also immigrants who had immigrated before 1938, but who had not acquired residency status yet or were refused a work permit could be expelled. [↑](#footnote-ref-1272)
1272. Wiarus Polski, 2.12.1938. Balicki (1971), nr.103. [↑](#footnote-ref-1273)
1273. Probably no Poles were recruited, the onset of the Second World War meant that it had become impossible. Bulletin de l'ONPC, III, 1939, 12, pp.951-959. Archive RVA, P.V. du Comité de Direction de l'ONPC, 1935-1939. PV nr.224, 26.6.1939. Rapport du la Commission du Placement "L'ONPC et le placement agricole en 1938" Plan d'organisation pour la campagne 1939. ACLVB, boxes NBDAW, Algemene Raad en Arbeidsbemiddeling. communicated by Guy Vanthemse. [↑](#footnote-ref-1274)
1274. ONPC to Minister of Foreign Affairs P.H.Spaak, 15.6.1938. Note Sûreté. AMJ, 33 C30/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1275)
1275. Their wages oscillated between 500 and 600 francs. The employer paid the transport costs in advance, which the girls had to pay back. The return trip was at the girls'expenses. They had to work six and a half days with 8 days holiday a year. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 8.7.1937, 20.8.1937, 9.7.1938, 19.8.1938, 31.8.1938 and 20.10.1938. AAN, MSZ, 9.632. Emigration report consulate in Brussels for 1937. AAN, MSZ, 9.895. [↑](#footnote-ref-1276)
1276. It is unclear if there was a halt to immigration of other domestic servants. Report 9.11.1939 and 14.2.1939. Municipal archive Antwerp, MA 6.774. Minister of Labor to Minister of Justice, 28.3.1939. AMJ, 33C 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-1277)
1277. Vakorgaan der centrale van Hotel, Spijs- en Drankhuispersoneel, VI, 1938, 2, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1278)
1278. PS, p.80. [↑](#footnote-ref-1279)
1279. L'Alimentation, XXVI, 1939, 3, p.2 and 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1280)
1280. J.Pholien Minister of Justice to P.E.Janson, Prime Minister 2.4.1938. Royal Archive, Secrétariat de Leopold III, 114/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1281)
1281. La Revue Communale de Belgique. Journal de droit administratif et d'administration, LXVIII, 1939, pp.172-173. Council of Ministers, 23.9.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1282)
1282. Note de service, 25.7.1938. AMJ, 37C1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1283)
1283. Garfinkels (1974), p.75. [↑](#footnote-ref-1284)
1284. Comité de la Croix-Rouge Russe en Belgique to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10.9.1939. ABZ, 12.181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1285)
1285. AMJ, Klepper X1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1286)
1286. The source of graph 12 is AMJ, 37C6. This figures refer to the number of people (not families) who werer registered by the Brussels committee for Jewish refugees. This committee was the most important aid committee, there was also a Jewish committee in Antwerp which supported a large number of Jewish refugees. This graph is only meant to show the dynamic in illegal immigration of Jewish refugees,not the absolute numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1287)
1287. Ordre de service, 14.9.1938 and 19.9.1938. AMJ, 37C. [↑](#footnote-ref-1288)
1288. "Ce qu'il y a de redoutable dans le problème israélite c'est que l'Allemagne ferme les yeux sur les émigration juives. Il y a des passeurs professionnels qui les favorisent...Si l'Allemagne fermait le robinet d'émigration, ce serait moins grave." J.Pholien in La Nation Belge, 22.11.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1289)
1289. Le Peuple, 29.8.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1290)
1290. Nothomb to Verhulst, 7.10.1938. AMJ, 37C1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1291)
1291. "Dans l'esprit des délégués à Genève, le "il est établi" de l'article I veut dire qu'il appartient à chaque governement intéressé d'établir ou de ne pas établir dans le chef d'un individu qu'il ne jouit plus de la protection du Gouvernement allemand. Chaque gouvernement s'est réservé le droit de reconnaître ou de ne pas reconnaître la qualité de réfugié, ceci pour lui permettre, en réalité, de garder à l'intérieur du pays, le contrôle qu'il n'a pu exercer complètement à la frontière." H.Bekaert in Commission interministérielle chargée d'examiner la situation des étrangers réfugiés, séance 150, 20.1.1939. AMJ, 37C. further Commission interministèrielle... [↑](#footnote-ref-1292)
1292. That abuse and undesirability were defined by the receiving state was beyond question. "S'il est vrai que les événements d'Allemagne atteignent des catégories entières d'individus..chaque étranger doit faire l'objet d'un examen particulier. Cette condition...est destinée à éviter de graves abus qui doivent être écartés. Créer des catégories dans lesquels l'étranger peut se placer d'office en raison de telle ou telle condition déterminée, c'est permettre à des indésirables et ils sont nombreux - d'obtenir des advantages qui ne doivent être réservés qu'à des personnes irréprochables et dans la mesure des nécessités nationales. La situation des pays démocratiques est suffisamment grave pour que l'immigration soit resserrée dans des limites telles que la population de ces pays ne soit pas amenée à un revirement d'opinion à l'égard des immigrés." H.Bekaert to H.Marx, 4.1.1939. AMJ, 37C6. In his survey of the administrative status of aliens Bekaert wrote laconically: "Quelques catégories de réfugiés entrés dans le pays en nombre considérable n'ont pu, faute de vérification de la réalité de leur qualité, être admis à séjourner qu'en transit." Bekaert (1940), p.215. Some Communist refugees were refused the status of refugee, also to protect "national" interests. Note by Sir Herbert Emerson on refugee conditions in Belgium, 27.2.1939. JDC, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-1293)
1293. Commission interministérielle..., p.4. PS, p.74. [↑](#footnote-ref-1294)
1294. In June 1939 a budget of 6 million francs was alloted to the Ministry of Justice to subsidize refugees, in 1940 this was increased to 8 million. for more information see Caestecker (1993c), pp.180-252 on which this overview of the refugee policy is partly based on. [↑](#footnote-ref-1295)
1295. “Malgré la ligne Siegfried il entre encore 103 réfugiés par semaine”Bekaert to de Foy, 9.1939. AMJ, 37C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1296)
1296. Council of Ministers, 2.5.1939. I.Blume in PHK, 22.6.1939, p.733. Regarding the Russian refugees Belgian diplomats protested to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that these refugees had been urged on to Belgium. France should respect the Convention on the Russian refugees of 1933 and keep these refugees. Notes Foreign Affairs, 19 and 21.8.1939. ABZ, 12.181. A special case which goes beyond the scope of our analysis are the more than 3,000 Basque children who were granted asylum in very particular conditions. Legaretta (1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-1297)
1297. Le Service Social, 1938, 7-8, p.106. [↑](#footnote-ref-1298)
1298. Interview Marek, Maasmechelen 21.8.1990. Service Social, 1938, 7-8, p.105. [↑](#footnote-ref-1299)
1299. "Des Belges, très patriotes, exploitent scandaleusement des étrangers qui ne sont pas en règle; des étrangers en exploitent d'autres." Le Peuple, 17.6.1938/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1300)
1300. "Refuser aux réfugiés ce droit au travail qui est bien le premier des droits de l'homme est à la fois cruel et absurde." Le Soir, 25.6.1938/1,2. PHK, 14.6.1938, p.1832. [↑](#footnote-ref-1301)
1301. "Et rien ne peut ètre calculé pour aggraver le mal que de rejeter vers un marché clandestin du travail, déreglé et perturbateur, la masse croissants des étrangers qui pourraient nous aider si puissamment à restaurer l'économie du monde." Louis de Brouckère in Le Soir, 25.6.1938/1,2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1302)
1302. Delattre:"je suis objet de démarches pour l'obtention de permis de travail. C'est inouï. Des gens qui viennent sans autorisation en Belgique ne peuvent pas avoir la carte de travail." Bureau POB, 24.10.1938. AMSAB, POB-microfilm. BV, 20.4.1938, 4, p.114-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-1303)
1303. The only possibility for Jewish refugees to earn a living in a legal manner was to work as domestic servants, from September 1939 onwards was also mine work a possibility for these refugees . Report on the situation in Belgium, June 1939. JDC, Eurexco 191. Service Social du Foyer, rapport sur l'activité 5-9.1939. Archive IHJ, box 5. AMJ, 37C 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1304)
1304. Bekaert (1940),p.461. [↑](#footnote-ref-1305)
1305. Chef d’Etat-Major Général Van den Bergen to Minister of Justice Soudan. AMJ, 37C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1306)
1306. PHS, 21.12.1939, p.159. [↑](#footnote-ref-1307)
1307. Soudan, Minister of Justice to Procureur Général (Court of Appeal Brussels and Liège), 1.12.1939. AMJ, 37C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1308)
1308. Soudan, Minister of Justice to Pierlot, Prime Minister, 11.12.1939. AMJ, 37 C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1309)
1309. Jews with a criminal record had to be expelled. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 12.3.1940. Janson, Minister of Justice to the Procureur Général. AMJ, 37 C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1310)
1310. Joris (1940) [↑](#footnote-ref-1311)
1311. If a refugee left this camp he was to be expelled. For more details see Caestecker (1993c), pp.262-274. [↑](#footnote-ref-1312)
1312. From March 8, 1940 was the control over the border, no longer the competence of the Minister of Justice but of the Minister of National Defense. [↑](#footnote-ref-1313)
1313. Ordre de Service, 21.3.1940. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, 12.3.1940 and 16.3.1940. AMJ, 37C1-I. We have no information if these refugees were indeed repatriated. [↑](#footnote-ref-1314)
1314. PS, p.103. Probably a few hundred of the 885 foreigners who obtained a temporary work permit in 1936 arrived in Belgium between 1926 and 1928, the same period in which the diamond industry flourished. Now that they had passed the point of 10 year's sojourn, a work permit was granted to them without any problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-1315)
1315. PS, p.65. It is unlikely that in these figures the mostly only provisional refusals at the end of 1936 and in the first half of 1937 were incalculated. [↑](#footnote-ref-1316)
1316. PS, p.65. [↑](#footnote-ref-1317)
1317. Director-General of the Ministry of Labor H.Fuss to Secrétaire Général, 21.4.1939. Archives Ministry of Labor, not numbered. [↑](#footnote-ref-1318)
1318. Director-General of the Ministry of Labor H.Fuss to Secrétaire Général, 21.4.1939. Archives Ministry of Labor, not numbered. [↑](#footnote-ref-1319)
1319. Royal Decree of March 6, 1936. BS, 29.3.1936. Arbeidsblad, XXXVII, 1936, 4, pp.506-507. [↑](#footnote-ref-1320)
1320. There has as yet no historical research been done on the changing role of the Labor inspection in the Belgian system of industrial relations. Figures concerning its activities were published in the monthly review of the Ministry of Labor, Revue du Travail. [↑](#footnote-ref-1321)
1321. We have little information on other enforcement agencies. As mentioned the processing of work permits diverted the manpower resources of the Service of Foreign Labor of the Ministry of Labor, but also the police, *Gendarmerie*...could dress up legal complaints. In how far legal complaints were match by court action or if they were dismissed by the courts is also not known to us. [↑](#footnote-ref-1322)
1322. Director Lavers of the Foreign Office: "l'arrangement soulargerait le trésor belge d'une charge approximative d'un million frs par ans" ." PV, 20.6.1938. ABZ, 2462bis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1323)
1323. P.V. de la séance de la commission de surveillance des ouvriers Tchécoslovaques, 3.3.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1324)
1324. Circular letter Fedechar, 13.3.1938. Delattre to Fedechar, 29.3.1938. Bois du Luc, 186. Mine Administration to Raven, 11.5.1938. Meyers to Raven, 11.5.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 1, zwart 5/2. Note, 21.2.1938. RABW, KS, 491. [↑](#footnote-ref-1325)
1325. Narodowiec, 16.4.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1326)
1326. Delattre to Raven, 21.3.1938. Bolle (Ministry of Labor) to Raven, 7.6.1938. Suyvoet to Delattre, 19.3.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1 and 5/2. Wiarus Polski, 18.2.1938/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1327)
1327. Mine Administration to Raven, 11.5.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1328)
1328. Wiarus Polski, 18.2.1938/1. Mine Administration to Raven, 11.5.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1329)
1329. At the end of 1938 the Sûreté counted 120 of these recently recruited migrants who had a residence permit but were not working in the mines. The expulsion of these migrants was to follow as quickly as possible. Note de la Service 26.11.1938. AMJ, 33 C30/9-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1330)
1330. Fedechar, rapport du comité sur l'excercice 1938, p.65. In May 1938 70 of the 2,000 Polish professional miners who were recruited a year ago- returned, either because they were fired or because they decided themselves to return. Wiarus Polski, 7.5.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1331)
1331. Comité des Gerants ACCA, 3.7.1939. ARBW, KS, 2057. Belang van Limburg, 22.4.1939/1,6-7. Charbonnages de Bonne Fin, Liège to Mine Administration, 16.3.1939. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2 [↑](#footnote-ref-1332)
1332. CNMM, 28.1.1938 and 8.12.1938. Mondelaers to Heymans, 17.6.1938. Van Buggenhout to Heymans and Janson, 19.4.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. Van Buggenhout in PHK, 9.3.1938, p.977. [↑](#footnote-ref-1333)
1333. The union also argued that one had to be on guard against spies. PS, p.131. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XX, 1939, 4, p.14. CSC, XI, 1939, 7, p.219. Le Soir, 13.7.1939. ACV Maandblad, XI, 1939, 1, p.7. PDK, 1939, nr. 63, p.22. CNMM, 26.3.1938 and 22.9.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1334)
1334. Mester in CNMM, 28.1.1938. Lutte ouvrière, 13.8.1938/2 and 30.8.1938/2. Borinage-assemble plenière 25.3.1938 Hornu. ANMC, loose notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1335)
1335. "Il est vraiment simpliste de ramener toutes celles-ci dans un cadre étriqué de la seule question des salaires comme le fait M.Van Buggenhout. Se refuser obstinément de découvrir l'ensemble et l'origine des causes n'est, certes, pas une preuve manifeste de compétence pour en rechercher les remèdes dans l'intérêt général, et, en particulier des mineurs." L'ouvrier mineur, XXXV, 9.1939, p.4. Le Peuple, 4.9.1939. Liège mine workers' union, executive committee, 12.9.1938. Pamphlet of the Limburg Miners' union to the Miners. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts, 2.2. L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIV, 1938, 10, p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1336)
1336. "On ne peut tout de même jouer avec des hommes comme avec des balles de tennis, c'est-à-dire les emmener et les repousser au gré des événements et du bon plaisir d'autres hommes." N.Dethier in Le Peuple, 4.9.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1337)
1337. Dziennik Ludowy, 4.12.1937."Gillot signale que les étrangers insistent pour qu'on les réunissent ...Le comité lui conseille d'agir avec la plus grande prudence." Regional Miners' Union of the basin of Liège, Executive Committee 21.2.1938. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1338)
1338. Jacquemyns (1939), p.319. "Une protestation des ouvriers polonais...qui refusent de payer leur cotisation parce qu'ils ne touchent pas d'indemnités de chômage." Regional Miners' Union of the basin of Liège. Executive Committee 11.7.1938. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1339)
1339. Comité Central, 8.9.1938. Livre des procès-verbaux de la Centrale des Mineurs du Borinage. ANMC. The Christian Democratic union attributed the very small pensions which the retired immigrants received also only to the selfishness of the authorities of the country of origin. The Belgian authorities were not held responsible for this. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XIX, 1938, 10-11, p.9. "Il est toujours cruel de renvoyer des ouvriers étrangers parce qu'il n'y a plus momentanément du travail pour eux chez nous. Il n'y a pourtant peut-être pas d'autre moyen pour obliger le gouvernement de leurs pays respectifs à intervenir dans le coût de l'assurance de façon à les traiter sur le même pied d'égalité que les belges en cas de chômage." N.Crespin in L'ouvrier mineur, XXXIV, 12.1938, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1340)
1340. Van Buggenhout in PS, p.131. [↑](#footnote-ref-1341)
1341. A.Delattre to Fedechar, 29.3.1938. Bois du Luc, 181. Raven to A.Delattre, 18.7.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie roos, C, 2, 5/1. ACCA, 4.7.1938. Bois du Luc,186. Réponse de la Federation à Heymans, 10.8.1938. UEM, Hensies-Pommerseul, Fedechar. Fedechar to Mine Administration, 6.8.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. The fundamental priority of the Belgian work force also meant that the employment of the 1937 immigrants' children became absolutely dependant on the situation in the labor market. Wiarus Polski, 7.9.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1342)
1342. Consulate in Brussels to MSZ, 15.4.1938. AAN, MSZ, 9633. [↑](#footnote-ref-1343)
1343. Federation-Rapport du Comité sur l'excercice 1938, p.66. Committee Fedechar, 31.8.1938. A.Delattre to Mine Administration, 27.12.1938. Bolle (Ministry of Labor) to Raven, 7.6.1938. Bolle to Raven, 24.8.1938. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, rood, zwart 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1344)
1344. The Ministry of Justice had given the immigrants recruited in 1937 only temporary residence permits -an inscription in the register of foreigners- which covered their sojourn each time for six months. In 1939 not only their residence permit but also their work permit had to be renewed every 6 months. Each new permit implied a tax of 75 francs per person (more than a daily wage for a miner).

The other non-privileged foreign miners who were already in Belgium in 1937 -which implied that they had mostly arrived before 1932 and after 1929- had been registered in the population register, hence had obtained an identity card which was valid for two years. Although they still could be expelled if their work permit was refused, the Ministry of Labor granted them a work permit for two years. Polish Consulate in Brussels to de Foy, 18.12.1939. Note de Foy, 31.1.1940. AMJ, 30 33 C9/1 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1345)
1345. AHCM, 23.6.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1346)
1346. Note pour Monsieur le Ministre, recrutement de main-d'oeuvre étrangère pour le Charbonnage de Bonne-Fin à Liège. Mine Administration to Directeur Bonne-Fin, 8.3.1939. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1347)
1347. BS, 10.9.1939, p.6329. "Malgré la raréfaction de la main-d'oeuvre indigène, je suis cependant opposé au concours de la main-d'oeuvre étrangère; j'ai arrêté provisoirement l'embauchage des étrangers. Mais je ne puis cependant nuire à l'intérêt général. C'est pourquoi j'ai pensé qu'il serait possible d'améliorer la situation en acheminant vers la mine des ouvriers d'autres catégories qui auront à s'adapter à l'activité nouvelle. C'est une expérience de résorption du chômage qui mérite d'être tentée." Minister of Labor Delfosse in La Libre Belgique, 28.5.1939. This policy had the support of the mining industry which was in favour of a more muscled policy towards the unemployed in order to force them to work in the mines. The unions were opposed to this repressive policy. Vanthemse (1989), p.213. Charbonnages d'Hensies-Pommeroeul to AHCM, 29.4.1939. UEM, Hensies-Pommeroeul. Projet de réponse au questionnaire de l'ONPC, 8.4.1939. RABW, KS, 2057. Directie Waterschei to Stein, 16.3.1939. RABW, KS, 210. PV de la séance extraordinaire de la Commission Consultative du Bureau Régionale de Liège de l'ONPC. AEL, Colard, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-1348)
1348. M.Thomassen in De Tijd, 13.5.1939. Het Volk, 14.5.1939/1. Cité Nouvelle, 3.1.1939. Ons Limburg, 12.8.1939. G.Eyskens in PHK, 25.5.1939, p.233. De Vrije Mijnwerker, XX, 1939, 4, p.14.

This union was especially opposed to the recruitment for the basin of Limburg. The 2,000 navvies on the Albert canal who were winter miners should be able to keep this seasonal job and also the slackening zinc industry in this province could provide manpower for the mines. Belang van Limburg, 14.5.1939/1, 5 and 22.4.1939. Frederix in de Provincial Council quoted in Ons Limburg, 22.7.1939 and Belang van Limburg, 17.7.1939/3,2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1349)
1349. Narodowiec, 30.6.1939/3. Consulate to MSZ, 2.6.1939. AAN, MSZ, 9635. Le Peuple, 10.6.1939. Lutte ouvrière, 19.8.1939,p.2. When it turned out that the Government was looking into the possibility of saving Levant de Flenu by a financial injection the Socialist miners union was certainly opposed to any further dismissal among the foreigners as it would jeopardize the need for qualified miners in the basin. Le Peuple, 14.8.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1350)
1350. PHK, 25.5.1939, p.92. [↑](#footnote-ref-1351)
1351. Conseil régional mixte de l'Industrie Charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, 8.8.1939. UEM, Levant et Produits de Flénu, le problème de l'exploitation des charbonnages. [↑](#footnote-ref-1352)
1352. We do not know how long this daily allowance was granted by the Fedechar. Consulate to MSZ, 2.6.1939 and 6.7.1939. AAN, MSZ, 9635. Narodowiec, 30.6.1939/3 and 9.8.1939/3. La Libre Belgique, 11.6.1939. Démarche faite le 5.3.1940 auprès de M.Balthazar, Ministre de Travail. AAN, POB, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1353)
1353. Conseil régional mixte de l'Industrie Charbonnière du Couchant de Mons, 8.8.1939. UEM, Levant et Produits de Flénu, le problème de l'exploitation des charbonnages. [↑](#footnote-ref-1354)
1354. AHCM, 18.8.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1355)
1355. Committee FEDECHAR, 23.8.1939. ACCA, 30.8.1939. AHCM, 1.9.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1356)
1356. De Ontvoogding, XXVI, 1937, 8, p.123. [↑](#footnote-ref-1357)
1357. The general data for the quarries, based on identity cards indicate only 860 foreigners in June 1936, in June 1938, 1,526 and in September 1939, 1,271 foreigners. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1358)
1358. BV, 20.7.1939, 7, p.239. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1359)
1359. According to the profession on the identity cards, in June 1936, there were 16,248 foreigners in metallurgic firms (label: métaux bruts et façonnés). Two years later in June 1938 there were only 9,825 and in September 1939 their number dropped to 9,091. Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1360)
1360. Of the 204 foreigners working at the Société Métallurgique de Sambre et Moselle in October 1939, only two had been recruited after 1936. Mine Administration to Ministry of Economic Affairs, 17.11.1939. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 5/2.

Of the 232 foreigners readmitted to Cockerill in October 1940 -more than 2/3 of those employed when the Germans invaded Belgium in May 1940- , none had been recruited after 1936. 20 % of them had completed at least 15 years service at the company, 65% at least 10 years, 14 % at least 5 years and only 1 % 4 years. AEL, Cockerill Sambre, 1543. [↑](#footnote-ref-1361)
1361. De Ontvoogding, XXVII, 1938, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1362)
1362. De Ontvoogding, XXVIII, 1939, 3, p.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-1363)
1363. This one sided defence of the "national" interests meant in fact that this trade union continued to defend a outdated artisanal economic model, whereby quality was the only norm. De Kleeding, XIX, 1939, 8, p.3 and XVIII, 1936, 12, p.2. PS, p.193. BV, 1938, 12, p.307. [↑](#footnote-ref-1364)
1364. L'Alimentation, XXV, 1938, 9, p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1365)
1365. 20.11.1938, p.385. [↑](#footnote-ref-1366)
1366. Le Pays Réel, 9 and 10.3.1939. La Voix du Peuple, 31.1.1939. L'Industrie Hotellière, XX, 1939, 1, p.1. La Gazette, 18.1.1939. Rapport de la Sûreté, 11.3.1939. Meeting, 9602. AMJ, 33C 30/7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1367)
1367. De Kleeding, XIX, 1937, 3, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1368)
1368. De Kleeding, XX, 4.1938, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1369)
1369. PS, p.103. Gazet van Antwerpen, 27.11.1938/4,1-2 and 19.11.1938/3, 6-7. quoted in Saerens (1983), p.203. [↑](#footnote-ref-1370)
1370. De Diamantbewerker, XXI, 27.1.1939, 4, p.1. It seems that the Socialist leather union took a similar stance. In May 1939 its congress asked the national committee to investigate the consequences of the high number of immigrants, especially in the glove industry. BV, 20.7.1939, p.204. [↑](#footnote-ref-1371)
1371. With the outbreak of the Second World War most miners were exempted from the draft. [↑](#footnote-ref-1372)
1372. "Le recrutement de mineurs parmi les chômeurs est une déception presque totale." ACCBS, 18.10.1939. AHCM, 6.10.1939. Committee FEDECHAR, 18.9.1939. Miners' Union Liège, executive committee, 30.10.1939. AMSAB, Nauwelaerts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1373)
1373. According to this union was an obligatory employment of Belgians in the mines only acceptable, if first all those aliens who were recruited for the mines and were now working in other industries or were active in commerce would "return" to the mines. P.V. de la Commission Consultative de l'ONPC-Liège, 4.8.1939. AEL, Colart, 70. L'Action Syndicale, 14.10.1939/3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1374)
1374. Delbeke (1981), p.38. "Des ouvriers venus en Belgique, il y a 13 ou 15 ans,et qui depuis lors ont travaillé dans les fermes et les usines, se voient refuser, actuellement, le permis de travail sous prétexte qu'il y a des chômeurs on les invite à chercher de la besogne dans les charbonnages. Ces hommes qui ont 45, 50 ans, et qui n'ont jamais travaillé dans un charbonnage sont incapable de se faire engager." Démarche le 5 mars 1940 auprès de Monsieur Balthazar, Ministre de Travail. AAN, Poselstwo RP w Brukseli, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1375)
1375. In October 1939 Minister A. Balthazar prolonged the work permits of all foreign miners in the basin of the Borinage and Centre. His predecessor Delfosse had refused to renew the work permits since unemployment among the Belgian miners in the Borinage had risen because of the closing down of Levant de Flenu in July 1939. Balthazar promised that as soon as all the unemployed miners from Levant de Flénu were employed, the Centre basin and the Borinage would also get the autorisation to hire any foreigner legally sojourning in Belgium. ACCBS, 18.10.1939. Committee FEDECHAR, 18.10.1939. Ministerial Decree of 21.11.1939. BS, 2.12.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1376)
1376. Committee Fedechar, 17.1.1940 and 14.2.1940. AHCM, 6.10.1939. I.Blume in PHK, 17.1.1940, p.325. [↑](#footnote-ref-1377)
1377. Departures peaked in October 1939, when 930 Poles, mostly miners, left for the Polish Army in exile in France. Between October and December 1939 1,042 Poles left Belgium for France. Given that Belgium was a neutral country no legal enforcement of the draft was possible, thus those departures were voluntarily. Caestecker (1993b), pp.241-250. [↑](#footnote-ref-1378)
1378. Directer General Grignard of the Dutch labor exchange offices, 4.12.1939. Note Department of Social affairs, 29.11.1939. Verslag der besprekingen op 11.4.1940 gevoerd tusschen de Nederlandsche Rijksdienst en den NDAW betreffende de Nederlandsche en Belgische grensarbeiders. ARDH, 185 and 186. Committee FEDECHAR, 22.11.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1379)
1379. Le Peuple, 2.11.1939. Note 1e bureau, s.d. (11.1939?) AMJ, 30 33 09/1. Committee FEDECHAR, 31.10.1939. Limburgsche Middenstandspost, 1940, 1, p.5. Schleder (1986), p.700. [↑](#footnote-ref-1380)
1380. PHK, 17.1.1940, p.338. Interview Frantiszak H. Kolodege 6.1990. Heumos (1989), p.154. Correspondance concerning these recruitment in Centre pour l'Histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale Brussels, microfilms AA Berlin, microfilm 22 secreta Deutsche Botschaft in Brüssel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1381)
1381. Heumos (1989), p.156. AHCM, 13.10.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1382)
1382. BS, 30.9.1939, pp.6702-6704. [↑](#footnote-ref-1383)
1383. Caestecker (1993b), pp.250-254. [↑](#footnote-ref-1384)
1384. Belang van Limburg, 4.12.1938, p.1. Bulletin mensuel de la Chambre de Commerce de Liège, 4.1937 and 6.1937. [↑](#footnote-ref-1385)
1385. Bureau Permanent des chambres des métiers et négoces de Belgique to Minister of Justice-Sûretè, 10.4.1937. AMJ, 33 C 30/9/1."des étrangers qui refusent l'honnête travail qui leur est offert pour des emplois plus faciles" PHS, 1.12.1937, p.60. [↑](#footnote-ref-1386)
1386. See Nieuw Limburg (paper closely linked to the Limburgian mining companies), 26.11.1938 for the minimal interest paid to this problem, whereby their proposition the expel all foreign traders was rather a way to placate the Belgian middle-class organizations than to acknowledge a problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-1387)
1387. L'Action Syndicale, 12.12.1936/3 and Ons Limburg, 12.8.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1388)
1388. Secretary Cabinet Minister of Justice Hermann Bekaert to Chambres des Métiers et Négoces en Belgique, 1937. AMJ, 33 C.30/9-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1389)
1389. "Mineurs d'occasion" La Libre Belgique, 15.1.1939. PS, p.88. PHS, 1.12.1937, p.60 and 9.2.1939; PHK, 31.5.1939, p.318. Nieuw Limburg, 6.5.1939/1. Journal de Charleroi, 7.5.1939/1, 1-2. Even the miners unions used the argument of the "temporary mine worker" to oppose the obligation for unemployed Belgians to work in the mines. PV de la séance extraordinaire de la Commission Consultative du Bureau Régionale de Liège de l'ONPC. AEL, Colard, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-1390)
1390. PHS, 1.3.1938, p.321. [↑](#footnote-ref-1391)
1391. Hou Zee, 2.4.1938/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1392)
1392. Fraternité, I, 5.1938, 2, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1393)
1393. Theo Brouns, Legal adviser of the Chamber of Commerce and Trade of Limburg in Limburgsche Middenstandspost, XIII, 11, 1939, pp.3-5; Volk en Staat, 21.11.1938/1 and 7; Belang van Limburg, 17.11.1938. Hou Zee, 26.11.1938, p.1. Further Brouns... [↑](#footnote-ref-1394)
1394. PHS, 1.3.1938, p.321 and PHK, 17.1.1940, p.330. Kamer van Ambachten en Neringen der Provincie Limburg to Prime Minister, 5.4.1938, quoted in Limburgsche Middenstandspost; XIII, 5, 1939, p.11. Limburgsche Middenstandspost, XIII, 7, 1939, p.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-1395)
1395. Brouns...p.519. B.Druwe, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Trade of Limburg in Belang van Limburg, 4.12.1938, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1396)
1396. Limburgsche Middenstandspost XIII, 6, 1939, p.2 and 7, 1939, p.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-1397)
1397. Belang van Limburg, 17.11.1938 and 5.8.1939. Limburgsche Middenstandspost, 1940, 2, p.5. Hou Zee, 19.11.1938, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1398)
1398. Belang van Limburg, 17.11.1938. Hou Zee, 26.11.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1399)
1399. Limburgsche Middenstandspost, XIII, 12, 1939, p.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1400)
1400. for exemple Union des commerçants et des classes moyennes de Bruxelles-Sud to City Council, s.d. (11.1938?). Municipal Archive Brussels, police, 295. Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Namur, XX, 1939, 1, p.4. Kleding, XVI, 2.1939, 9, p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1401)
1401. This Union des Commerçants Belges de Charleroi was an umbrella-organization with the following members: Chambre Syndicale des Commerçants et Artisans, Corporation des Marchands Tailleurs, couturiers et confectionneurs belges de l'arrondissement and Association des Commerçants (an autoritarian corporatist movement). Journal de Charleroi, 6.5.1939 en 4.5.1939/6, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1402)
1402. "Le nombre des commerçants étrangers est passé à Charleroi de 7 p.c. environ il y a quatre ou cinq ans à 48 p.c. Certains quartiers de la ville ont été conquis immeuble par immeuble, indiscutablement à la faveur de la différence des charges, par des immigrés." Gazette de Charleroi, 7.5.1939/1, 1-2, see also 5.5.1939/2,6 en 12.10.1938/2, 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1403)
1403. "Une réglementation sévère qui fixerait une discrimination précise entre ceux qui sont véritablement attachés à la communauté belge et les parasites dangereux qui, sans domicile stable, éludent les lois sociales et fiscales, et font une concurrence déloyale..à nos classes moyennes" P. Ectors, President of the Brusselse Chamber of Commerce in Le Soir, 20.8.1939. Bulletin officiel de la Chambre de Commerce de Bruxelles, LVI, 16.9.1939, 34, pp.647-649. [↑](#footnote-ref-1404)
1404. Rapport du Conseil des Associations Juives de Bruxelles 1937-1940, p.12. Archives IHJ, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1405)
1405. Coelst, first Echevin of Brussels in La Libre Belgique, 10.1.1939/1, 1-2. "Les étrangers forment une véritable "confrérie". Ils sont informés sur tout, ils s'entr'aident comme les Belges ne le font pas. Leur manière de vivre et de travailler sont telles que le commerçant Belge est incapable de lutter." La Gazette de Charleroi, 5.5.1939/2,6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1406)
1406. La Libre Belgique, 1.5.1939/ 1,1 and 16.10.1938. See also Le Moniteur de l'Alimentation quoted in La Flandre Libérale, 22.6.1939/1, 3. Le Pour et le Contre, 2.10.1938, p.1/1-2. Le Matin, 9.11.1938 reproduced by Gazette de Liège, 13.11.1938/2,1. PHK, 19.1.1939, p.448. Voeu présenté à l'approbation du Conseil Communal, s.d. (1.1939). Municipal archive Brussels, police, 295.

Gazet van Antwerpen, 31.8.1938/4,1-2 and 8.5.1939/3, 6-7. Quoted in Saerens (1983), p.200 and 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-1407)
1407. Bulletin officiel de la Chambre de Commerce de Bruxelles, 16.9.1939. Le Soir, 20.8.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1408)
1408. "Diese antisemitische Propaganda knüpft mit Vorliebe an die Tatsache der Einwanderung von juden aus Deutschland an und behauptet dass Land werde von Immigranten überschwemmt, die der einsässigen Bevölkerung eine gefährliche und illegale Konkurrenz bereiten." Arbeitsgemeinschaft von juden aus Deutschland, an unsere Freunde, 27.4.1938. Yivo, D.Trozky, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-1409)
1409. De Gentenaar, 1.4.1938/1,4. See also De Nieuwe Staat, 1.4.1938/2,3-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1410)
1410. Kamer van Ambachten en Neringen der Provincie Limburg to the Prime Minister, 5.4.1938. Quoted in Limburgsche Middenstandspost, XIII, 5, 1939, p.11. Journal du Tabac, V, 10, 31.5.1939, p.1. Gazet van Antwerpen, 2.5.1938/4,2. Quoted by Saerens (1983), p.88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1411)
1411. Gazette de Charleroi, 11.6.1939/2,3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1412)
1412. This was especially obvious in June 1939, when a few hundred Jewish refugees disembarked in Antwerp from the Saint Louis. "Les juifs allemands débarqués à Anvers avec leurs bagages cossus" Le Bien Public, 23.6.1939/1,3. See also La Nation Belge, 18.6.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1413)
1413. "votre lettre.. relative au danger pour votre industry, qui semble résulter de l'affluence, en Belgique, d'étrangers israélites." Craen to the President of the employer-organization of the maroccan industry, 14.4.1938. KADOC, G.Craen, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-1414)
1414. P. Ectors, President of the Brussels Chamber of Commerce in Le Soir, 20.8.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1415)
1415. Rapport de la Commission des Affaires economiques chargé d'examiner le Budget du Ministère des Affaires Economiques. PDS 1937-1938, 104. Rapport de la Commission des Affaires Economiques chargée d'examiner le budget du Ministère des Affaires Economiques, des Classes Moyennes et de l'Agriculture pour l'exercice 1939. PDS, 1938-1939, 25, p.45. Verslag namens de Commissie voor Arbeid en Sociale Voorzorg. PDK, 1939, nr 63, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-1416)
1416. De Politiek van het Blok der Katholieken van België. Verslagen en Besluiten der Congressen. Brussel, 1939, p.78. [↑](#footnote-ref-1417)
1417. Bill proposing to introduce right of patent drafted by liberal politicians E.Leclercq, L.Mundeleer, V.Maistriau, Ch. De Jaegher and F.Masquelier. PDS, nr 51, 25.5.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1418)
1418. Saerens (1983), p.134. [↑](#footnote-ref-1419)
1419. Gemeenteblad Antwerpen, 21.11.1938, p.305. See also De Wever (1992), pp.748-760. [↑](#footnote-ref-1420)
1420. Saerens (1983), p.126. [↑](#footnote-ref-1421)
1421. Gemeenteblad Antwerpen, 6.3.1939, p.275. PHK, 21.6.1939, p.692 and PHS, 9.2.1939, p.571. Louise van der Plas in Le Soir, 20.12.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1422)
1422. Bulletin Communal, Bruxelles, 20.3.1939, p.363. Le Journal du Tabac, V, 10, 31.5.1939, p.5 and V, 11, 15.6.1939, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1423)
1423. Brouns...p.519. "Depuis quelques temps, le Bruxellois se demande s'il est bien à Bruxelles, tant les étrangers foisonnent sur les boulevards. Tous les idiomes s'entrecroisent: allemand,croate, magyar, polonais, russe, italien, catalan, basque, sans compter le yiddish." La Gazette, 25.1.1939 [↑](#footnote-ref-1424)
1424. PHK, 14.6.1938, p.1831. Council of Ministers 13.6.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1425)
1425. La Libre Belgique, 10.1.1939/1, 1-2 and Bulletin communal, Bruxelles, 20.3.1939, p.378. [↑](#footnote-ref-1426)
1426. PHK, 14.6.1938, p.1831. [↑](#footnote-ref-1427)
1427. Bulletin officiel de la Fédération des Associations et Cercles Catholiques, XII, 1939, 110, p.42. [↑](#footnote-ref-1428)
1428. See for this issue Saerens (1983), Schreiber (1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-1429)
1429. "évadés des pays totalitaires, parce que ré­fractaires à un régime implacable qui a accumulé dans leur cerveau des tumeurs de haine et de révolte." Coelst in La Libre Belgique, 10.1.1939/ 1, 1-2 For the critic on the left that the Jewish left put the Jewish interest before their class interests see Liga Sinjaal, V, 2.7.1939, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1430)
1430. "Si les juifs étrangers n'ont rien à perdre d'une guerre économique entre la Belgique et l'Allemagne, il n'en va pas de même de nos nationaux qui ont, eux, le plus grand besoin de débouché allemand." Gazette de Liège, 26.12.1938/2,2. See also Le Rappel, 28.12.1938. [↑](#footnote-ref-1431)
1431. Sûreté (de Foy) to Minister of Justice P.E. Janson, 23.4.1938. AMJ, 1B6 (III). [↑](#footnote-ref-1432)
1432. "On est amené à donner..aux illégaux (Jewish refugees from Germany) ...un permis de séjour. Alors ils ouvrent un atelier de bonneterie ou de fourrure qui leur permet de travailler jour et nuit." PS, p.52. [↑](#footnote-ref-1433)
1433. Pierlot:" L'opinion publique se plaint, à juste titre, de ce que beaucoup d'étrangers résident en Belgique, sans être munis de l'autori­sation requise par la loi. Il importe de procéder à un véritable recensement. L'enquête qui aura lieu devra se faire non sur documents, mais sur la réalité." Council of Ministers, 20.7.1939 [↑](#footnote-ref-1434)
1434. The results of this survey were only partially published before the Second World War. Statistisch Bulletin, XXVI, 1940, 4, pp.9-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-1435)
1435. Council of Ministers, 3.8.1939. Minister Albert Devèze to Governors and Maires, 1.7.1939, 8.8.1939 and 12.10.1939. Bestuurlijk memoriaal der provincie Limburg, 1939, pp.44-46. Sap, Minister of Economic Affairs and Trade at the Provinciaal Congres of the *Middenstand* in Hasselt. Belang van Limburg, 14.8.1939. Delfosse, Minister of Labor stated about the East and Central Europeans who were recruted in 1937 and were no longer working in the mines:" Ces gens sont restés en Belgique, les uns sont devenus coiffeurs, d'autres commerçants etc." Regional mixed mine commission of Mons, 8.8.1939. UEM, Levant et Produits de Flenu, le problème de l'exploitation des charbonnages. [↑](#footnote-ref-1436)
1436. Council of Ministers, 28.9.1939 and 26.10.1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-1437)
1437. BS, 27.11.1939, pp.7925-7934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1438)
1438. The aliens who were granted *d'office* a professional permit had a possibility to make an appeal before an administrative commission. For "refugees" both of the international conventions applied, so expulsion was prohibited. [↑](#footnote-ref-1439)
1439. The executive measures of this law were ready to be published by May 1940. Due to the German invasion the executive measures were only published after the war, in 1945. Correspondence between Ministry of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Justice, 3.5.1940 and 9.5.1940. AMJ, 33 C 44 B/I. Caestecker (1992c).

In comparison with the law of 31.3.1936 the legislation on the professional permit extended the state powers to expel aliens even further. As well the legislation on the work permits as the one on the professional permit made the sojourn of "recent" immigrants depend completely on the administration. While privileged labor-migrants (labor permit A, granted after 10 years of legal sojourn, but most immigrants were already granted eligible for this status after 5 years) could only be expelled if they had not applied for a work permit (a formality), The law of November 16, 1939 gave the authorities much more leeway to expel alien businessmen who had resided five years or more in Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-1440)
1440. No more peddling licenses could be granted for the sales of cloths, hats, shoes, leather, fur and skins. Royal Decree of 29.11.1939 and Ministerial Decree 9.12.1939. BS, 1939, pp.8352-8356 and 8634-8636. [↑](#footnote-ref-1441)
1441. The difference between the two can be quite high. For February 1934 there was a difference of about 10 % between the figures of the mine administration (129,470 miners present) and those of the Fedechar (143,315 registered). Fired, sick and absent, but registered employees were not counted by the Mine Administra­tion. PHK, 27.3.1934, p.1317. Strangely enough the figures of the Mine Administra­tion of November 15th, 1927 are higher than the figures of the Fedechar on registe­red miners in December 1927.

The number of registered miners changes every month, it refers to the number of miners who have worked, at least one day during that month. Even Fedechar's data on registered miners which we collected from different sources, shows sometimes inexplicable contradictions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1442)
1442. It is not easy to extrapolate the seasonal fluctuations from the ones caused by economic fluctuations. In the 1920s there was, according to calculations of the Mine Administration an average seasonal fluctuation in employment of 5 %, so 8,000 workers. Fluctuations du nombre total d'ouvriers occupés dans les charbonnages, nombre calculé pour la statistique mensuelle, d'après le nombre de journées. Commission d'étude du problème charbonnier, Annexe au Document 9, Tableau 5. ARA, mijnadministratie, blauw, D, 3A, 1. CNMM, 5.1.1931. Roisin: "dans le bassin de Charleroi il y a 2 ou 3.000 ouvriers qui vont faire la campagne briquetière en France" CNPI, P.V. de la séance du 10.3.1925, p.22. [↑](#footnote-ref-1443)
1443. Arbeidsblad, 11.1922, pp.1717-1718. For the original data see ARA, mijnadmi­nistratie, roos, C, 2, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1444)
1444. Ouvriers étrangers occupés au 31 août 1923. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1445)
1445. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. Annales des Mines de Belgique, XXV, 1924, 1, p.247. [↑](#footnote-ref-1446)
1446. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1447)
1447. Bulletin de l'AHCM, 1926, p.64. [↑](#footnote-ref-1448)
1448. Bois du Luc, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-1449)
1449. Revue du Travail, octobre 1926, pp.1563-1565. In the figures of February 1926, we counted 1,752 Belgians and 132 foreigners working in *Fours à coke et Agglomérés* which were mentioned as separate from the mines in four arrondissements (1,3, 4 and 10th). We deducted these persons from the general figures of this census, since it seemed to be the first time that these figures were added to the number of workers in the mines. In the sixth arrondissement two metallurgic mines which employed 29 workers were also deducted from the total figures of the Mine Administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-1450)
1450. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 1. Arbeidsblad, XXXI, 1930, 6, pp.918-920. [↑](#footnote-ref-1451)
1451. Archives Fedechar, Main d'oeuvre belge et étrangère de 1930 à 1949. For the more detailed statistics (i.e. each time 30.9 and 31.3), with distinctions by nationality, we have at our disposal a complete series from 30.9.1930 til 30.9.1933 and for a table of March 1940. Bois du Luc, 186 (1940) and ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2 and 3.

For the basin of Liége this statistic gives 7,251 foreigners in Janaury 1931, as this figure is about a thousand more than December 1930 and February 1931 and does not fit the set at all, we presume this number is augmented by error with 1,000 so we inserted 6.251. [↑](#footnote-ref-1452)
1452. They give the number of registered miners on December 31. Fedechar, enquête sur la main-d'oeuvre 29.6.1931. AEL, Colart, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-1453)
1453. In comparison with the figures of Fedechar of 30.11.1932 on foreign registered miners, there is hardly any difference. 15.11 has specifications on professional qualifications and presence of family in Belgium for the global group of foreign miners. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1454)
1454. ARA, mijnadministratie, roos, C, 2, 3. It is possible that that the date for the basin of Liège and Limburg was only collected on October tenth, 1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1455)
1455. Leën (1937), p.20. For the original data see ARA, Ministerie van Binnenland­se Zaken oud fonds, 809. Some *Fours à coke* and *Fabriques d'agglomérées* were included. We could deduct 449 workers who worked in those firms and which were mentioned separate from the mines. We have about the same firms as in 1926, just as in 1926 is it sometimes impossible to subtract the personnel of those firms as they are submerged in the total of a mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-1456)
1456. AMJ, 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-1457)
1457. Enquête sur la situation des industries, établissement de 10 ouvriers et plus, 31 october 1926-second partie-volume II. Bruxelles, 1928, pp.46-56. (By nationality, sector and province). For February 1934 see Leën (1937), p.19 and for the original documents of this census see ARA, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken-oud fonds, 804-808. [↑](#footnote-ref-1458)
1458. Bevolkingstelling van 31 december 1930, boekdeel V, tabel XLI, p.72. Leën (1937), pp.12-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-1459)
1459. Tabel XXVI, p.35. Economische en Sociale Telling van 27 februari 1937. Brussel (1942). [↑](#footnote-ref-1460)
1460. Statistique des étrangers au 15 septembre 1939, Bruxelles, 1941, pp.54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-1461)
1461. Statistisch Bulletin, XXIII, 1937, 3, pp.4-5. Statistique des étrangers au 30 juin 1938, Bruxelles, s.d., pp.99-100. Both were according to nationality and sector. These data are perhaps slighlty less accurate than an actual census, but only few aliens excerized another profession than the one stated on their identity card. AMJ, 33 C 44B/I. [↑](#footnote-ref-1462)
1462. For information on the Polish statistics see Revue international du travail, IX, 1924, 4, pp.777-805. Statystyka Pracy, 1925-1938. For the Italians we base our data on Un secolo di emigrazione italiana (1978), p.371 and 351. For information on the Czechoslovakian statistics see Revue international du travail, X, 1924, 1, pp.61-90 and the statistics itself: Zprvy Sttnho Uadu Statistického Republiky Ceskoslovenské, 1929-1940. The Yugoslavian statictics were found in Annuaire Statistique Royaume de Yougoslavie (table 12 Iseljavanje i podanstvo).The Hungarian and Austrian statistics have no information on emigration to Belgium.

For the Czechoslovakian statistics there are two different data for 1937: the annual overview in 1938 mentioned that 2,831 passports were issued for Belgium, while in 1940 the figure diminished to 2,255. No explanation is given for this discrepancy therefore we will consider the 1940 figure as a mistake and we will use the 1938 number. [↑](#footnote-ref-1463)
1463. Of course the declared intention to emigrate to Belgium, either at the passport office or the border does not mean that one does leave for Belgium. [↑](#footnote-ref-1464)
1464. A large number of immigrants sojourned first in Germany or France before coming to Belgium. They were registrated in the Belgian statistics as coming from France and Germany. We did not use these figures as the figures of migrants coming from neighbouring countries give little indication about labor migration. Here we are dealing much more with general population exchanges. [↑](#footnote-ref-1465)
1465. Driemaandblad uitgegeven door het Bureel der Algemene Statistiek, XXVIII, 1932, 72, p.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1466)
1466. The small number of agrarian laborers is an indication of this option. [↑](#footnote-ref-1467)
1467. These figures are to be found in Statistique judiciaire de la Belgique de la Belgique, 1931-1940 and the previous annual publications of the Ministry of Justice from 1892 onwards, for the period 1874-1894 our source is PDK. Non published are the data of 1914-1923 which are to be found in AMJ, 10C. [↑](#footnote-ref-1468)
1468. The figures on naturalization and claims of Belgian nationality are to be found in Expsoé de la situation du Royaume and from 1870 onwards in Annuaire Statistique de la Belgique et du Congo Belge. [↑](#footnote-ref-1469)
1469. Archive ILO E100/7/7 and AMJ, 12. See also Commission Syndicale de Belgique, rapport moral and financier pour les années 1928-1929, p.88. [↑](#footnote-ref-1470)
1470. In the footnotes one find the version of January 1929 of the Holvoet bill. The drafts are to be found in AMJ, 1B6. [↑](#footnote-ref-1471)
1471. idem in version of January 1929 [↑](#footnote-ref-1472)
1472. idem in version January 1929 [↑](#footnote-ref-1473)
1473. This is a complete new article, absent in the draft of Janaury 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-1474)
1474. in the version of January 1929 was this article more explicit as the last phrase was: le cautionnement "servira de gage pour l'exécution des obligations résultant du contrat d'embauchage". [↑](#footnote-ref-1475)
1475. In the version of January 1929 was added: "et qui servira de gage pour déterminer l'exécution des obligations du contrat d'embauchage." [↑](#footnote-ref-1476)
1476. In the version of January 1929 was this article much shorter: "Les autorisa­tions prévues aux articles 11, 12 et 14 de la présente loi peuvent être retirées dans les conditions à déterminer par le gouvernement." [↑](#footnote-ref-1477)
1477. ACL, Projet de modifications à l'avant-projet de loi concernant la police des étrangers. Bois du Luc, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-1478)