

CONFIDENTIAL Biographic Data for Use by Secretary Snyder and Members of his Party.

I. His Royal Highness, Charles Theodore, Prince Regent of Belgium.

Charles speaks English, having studied in England and served at one time in the British Navy. In 1931 he visited the United States incognito. He is unmarried. Although retiring, so far as publicity is concerned, he is quite popular in Belgium and is considered intelligent and competent.

Charles was appointed Prince Regent of Belgium in September 1944, by virtue of a law voted by Parliament. The background of this law, which has prevented the return, since liberation, of King Leopold III to his country, is extremely complex. The chief element, however, was the fact that Leopold surrendered to the Germans in 1940, remained in the country during the occupation (under not uncomfortable circumstances), and, at least at one point, believed that the Germans would win the war. The "Royal Question" (,i.e., how to solve the problem of King Leopold III, who has not abdicated but who does not rule) has been one of the most important single domestic political issues in Belgium since the liberation. In general, the PSC (the Social Christian or Catholic Party), the largest party, has been pro-Leopoldist, while the Socialist and Liberal parties, the second and third in importance, have been anti-Leopoldist. There have, however, been many internal divisions within parties on this issue. The "Royal Question", an issue involving intense popular feelings and even religious aspects, has now probably become a question to which no clear-cut and generally satisfactory answer can be found.

II. Paul-Henri Spaak, Premier in Present Caretaker Government.

Spaak speaks little English but is an excellent speaker in French. He is friendly toward the United States, particularly since he believes strongly that Belgium's future lies in active participation in collective security arrangements in which the United States is a participant. He is married and has two daughters and a son.

The son of an author of some note and the nephew of a former Premier, Spaak comes from a prominent middle-class family. He was elected to Parliament in 1932 at the age of 33 and first became a Minister in 1935 at the age of 36. He has been Foreign Minister almost continuously since 1939. A member of the Socialist Party, Spaak has sometimes been accused of having few real convictions. It is also said that his chief weakness is an inclination to be lazy.

Spaak was an excellent tennis player and once was a member of a Belgian team in international matches. He also had very friendly relations with King Leopold III, partly, at least, by virtue of frequent tennis matches with the latter.

Spaak's native intelligence, his quickness and his speaking ability have made him an accomplished parliamentarian and international negotiator. He is particularly noted for his ability to reconcile opposing viewpoints in practical solutions.

Since the PSC (Social Christian or Catholic Party) falls just short of a majority in the newly elected Parliament, the new Cabinet, for the formation of which negotiations are taking place currently, will undoubtedly be a coalition in which the Socialists will participate. It is probable that Mr. Spaak will continue as Foreign Minister.

III. Maurice Frere - Governor of the Belgian National Bank since November 1944.

Mr. Frere speaks good English, has a pleasing personality, and is a good conversationalist. A charming gentleman of the old school, he is also considered one of the most able central bankers in Europe. His long experience in international financial and economic affairs, together with his powerful position as Governor of the National Bank, makes him the most important single source of information and policy decisions on these matters in Belgium.

Mr. Frere has no public party affiliation, but his political views tend to be somewhat conservative, while his economic views are liberal in the classical sense. With regard to the "Royal Question", he has indicated to the Treasury Representative his strong disagreement with Van Zeeland's desire to form a Government, repeal the Regency Law and pave the way for Leopold's return. If such a move were successful there would be, according to Mr. Frere, strikes and civil commotion. (Van Zeeland has since failed in his efforts to form a Government.)

Mr. Frere graduated as a commercial engineer from the University of Brussels in 1912. He is married and has two sons.

In 1924, 1925 and 1932 he participated in the Economic Missions of the Commission of the League of Nations to Hungary. In 1931 he was a member of the Financial Mission of The League of Nations in China. He participated in most international conferences of a financial and economic nature between 1920 and 1932, including those which produced the Dawes and Young Plans, which organized the Bank for International Settlements, the conference on the Hoover Moratorium, the Lausanne Conference and various meetings of committees of the League of Nations.

From 1932 to 1937 Frere was League of Nations Counselor at the Austrian National Bank and from 1938 until the German invasion he was President of the Belgian Banking Commission.

Mr. Frere will be in Basle on Sunday, July 10, but will return by special plane, arriving in Brussels about 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, July 11, in order to receive Secretary Snyder. He had hoped to be able to give a lunch for Secretary Snyder at the National Bank on Tuesday, July 11.

IV. Gaston Eyskens - Finance Minister in Spaak Caretaker Government.

Mr. Eyskens speaks excellent English, having studied at Columbia and the University of Chicago and having been a fellow at Harvard, Princeton and Yale. He is very friendly toward the United States, knows our country very well and has written books on the New York harbor and on labor in the United States. He is married. Eyskens is associated with the left wing of the PSC (Social Christian or Catholic Party) in Belgium and is a devout Catholic. He probably will be a member of the new Government, about to be formed in Belgium. He holds liberal social and economic views and has sometimes been accused, by members of his own party, of cooperating too closely with Spaak and the Socialists.

Eyskens may give the impression of being somewhat pedantic in conversation, but he is considered to be a keen student of economic affairs. He has a great deal of self-confidence and obviously enjoys occupying a ministerial post.

Eyskens became Finance Minister in February 1945, but resigned in October of that year in connection with the "Royal Question". In March 1947, he again became Finance Minister and he has held that position ever since. Eyskens, in succeeding Mr. Gutt as Finance Minister, continued to follow the measures initiated by the latter in the matter of Belgian monetary reform and only differed from Gutt in the severity with which he felt wartime collaborators or profiteers should be punished.

V. Georges Moens de Fernig - Minister of Foreign Trade in Spaak Caretaker Government.

Mr. Moens de Fernig speaks English fairly well. He is a wealthy man, has a pleasing personality and has a great deal of vigor and drive. He is married and has four children.

Moens de Fernig has no public party affiliations - he is considered a "technician" in the Government, not a politician. The Embassy believes that he usually votes for the FSC (Social Christian or Catholic Party). He was, however, Minister for Food in Spaak's short-lived all-Socialist Cabinet in March 1946. There is no way of knowing whether he may hold a Cabinet post in the next Government.

Moens de Fernig spent his youth and received his early education abroad, mostly in England and Italy. He has been associated with the Belgian Chamber of Commerce since 1924 and in 1946 became its President. He has been active in a number of business enterprises and beginning in 1930 he spent about a year in the Belgian Congo studying business possibilities there.

Shortly before the war, Moens de Fernig became associated with the large Belgian chain grocery, A. Delhaize, and is now president of its board. He is also a member of the board of the Banque de Reports et de Depots. In 1935 he was appointed judge of the Commercial Tribunal and at that time was the youngest magistrate in the country (he was born in 1899). Since 1935 he has also acted as Honduran Consul General and head of the Honduran Mission in Belgium.

In June 1944 he was arrested by the German Secret Police and detained in St. Gilles prison. He was subsequently moved to The Hague for trial, but the trial did not take place.

VI. Paul de Grootte - Minister of Reequipment in Spaak
Carotaker Government.

Mr. de Grootte does not speak English. He is a "technician", i.e., a member of no party. The Embassy believes that he usually votes Socialist. He is married.

De Grootte's appointment as Minister of Economic Coordination was apparently made upon the insistence of the Minister of Communications, Rongvaux, who had considerable influence over Spaak and who wanted to make sure that the Ministry of Economic Coordination would be sympathetic to the plans of the Ministry of Transportation for the reconstruction of the Belgian National railroads, the S.N.C.F.B. (Société Nationale des Chemins de Fers Belges).

De Grootte received a commercial engineer's degree from the University of Brussels and has, during most of his professional life, been in transportation work. Before the war he was secretary to the permanent Commission for Coordination of Transportation to the Congo. He also taught courses in transportation at the Commercial College of the University of Brussels. He was active in resistance groups during the German occupation. After the liberation he served in various public capacities connected with transportation and communications. He has held his present position since August 1946.

Mr. de Grootte's Ministry has, under his leadership, initiated studies of the investment problem in Belgium and has formulated the "de Grootte Plan" to coordinate and stimulate capital goods formation over a ten-year period with the goal of achieving adequate levels of investment. A primary function of the Ministry has thus been to establish targets for the optimum level and composition of capital formation and to evaluate current performance in these fields. The methodology used by the Ministry in these tasks has undergone revisions and improvements but the statistics published thus far, while useful, since there previously had not been any data on this subject, are primitive by American standards. At the same time, by virtue of the very fact that it has undertaken this work, which is entirely new in Belgium, and despite the fact that it has virtually no directive power in the economy, de Grootte's Ministry has often been charged with advocating "dirigism" or "planism."

VII. Hubert Ansiaux, Director of the Belgian National Bank.

Mr. Ansiaux speaks English fluently. He is married and is in his early forties. Last winter he was in a serious automobile accident in Paris and as a result had to remain away from his work for about three months.

Mr. Ansiaux is perhaps the most outstanding of the financial economists in Belgium who are engaged in formulating the foreign financial policies and practices of the central bank, and in his capacity of Director of the Belgian-Luxembourg Exchange Institute and of chairman of the Payments Committee of the OEEC he exercises very considerable influence on the foreign financial policies of the Belgian Government. In London during the war, Mr. Ansiaux worked closely with Gutt as the latter's advisor. Ansiaux's close personal relationship to Gutt and to de Voghel, who is a Director of the National Bank and who previously was Finance Minister, placed him in position to influence the policies of the Finance Ministry while those two men headed that Ministry.

Since OEEC was organized Ansiaux has been spending much of his time in Paris working on payments problems.