

Rechts in der natürlichen symbiotischen Gemeinschaft (Genossenschaft?). Hoofdstuk VI (99-112) is getiteld 'Vernunft, Rationalität und Religion', hoofdstuk VII (113-126): 'Das Gemeinwesen und seine Regierung (Staat)'. Ofschoon ik op onderdelen nogal eens twijfels heb over Friedrichs beschouwingen, onder andere doordat hij vaak zulke grote lijnen trekt dat het moeilijk is uit te maken wat hij precies bedoelt, en hoewel ik meen dat Friedrich Althusius' betekenis overschat, betwijfel ik niet dat zijn boek een 'must' is voor ieder die belang stelt in de politica van de Emdense theoreticus.

Theo Veen

Roland Baetens, *De nazomer van Antwerpens welvaart: De diaspora en het handelshuis De Groote tijdens de eerste helft der 17e eeuw* (Historische Uitgaven Pro Civitate, XLV; Brussel: Gemeentekrediet van België, 1976, 2 dln., 370, 399 blz., BF 980,-).

Sixteenth-century Antwerp has of late enjoyed a fair share of first-class studies, and for some years the question has been posed, notably by Wilfrid Brulez, whether the crisis centred on Parma's recapture of the city in 1585 and the loss of the Scheldt outlet was really the climax of its European greatness. It was known that many emigrants later returned, that industries revived, that the place continued to attract specie in abundance. In *The Growth of the Antwerp Market* (1963), a work which mapped the frequent ups and downs of the golden age itself, Herman van der Wee referred to 'new strong development' during the Twelve Years Truce, although he devoted only a brief epilogue to 'the slow but courageous recovery' from 1588 and he halted in 1619. More recently, John Everaert devoted a substantial volume to the continued vitality of Flemish firms in the Spanish colonial trade after 1670. It has been left to the alert mind and massive industry of Roland Baetens to look hard at the trading centre itself, with some useful guidelines for the further study of its markets abroad, in the first half of the seventeenth century.

In effect he has written two books, each of which might stand by itself. Following an article on the firm of Van Colen (*Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 1960), he seems to have begun with the intention of writing the business history of the related house of De Groote, the wealthiest of its time and the begetter, in a series of family partnerships that included a branch at Cologne (to which the founder, Nicolaas, emigrated in 1585), of a large quantity of letters, journals, account-books. For the production of statistical series, unfortunately, these are adequate in the main only for the 1640s: the elaborate lists and tables, recording the geography and personnel of the trade of a later Nicolaas and his partners, which fill over 100 pages of volume II, have only a limited value - not so much because Nicolaas himself was an *enfant gaté* as because the tide was already turning against Antwerp in its vital long-distance trades with Italy (chiefly silk) and even the Iberian peninsula, where the Peace of Munster at last established the Dutch as equal competitors. Nine-tenths of this family's remains in the Stadsarchief Antwerpen concern this partnership.

A more interesting figure is Balthasar de Groote, who returned to the city in 1612 and died there in 1656; he was a brother-in-law to Rubens, though himself apparently devoid of cultural interests. With one or more of his brothers, including the Cologne branch until it broke off in 1634, Balthasar operated on the largest assets enjoyed by any Antwerp house, in part thanks to sound marriage strategy, still more to his father (of whom we hear little). The years 1619-1633 were a period of striking growth, but already not one matching the annual percentages achieved by some other firms during the Truce. In 1647 what was

left of Balthasar's fortune was pledged to creditors, mainly relatives, for years ahead. He was a reckless speculator, obstinate, overbearing, perhaps unscrupulous. Professor Baetens does not spare him, while admitting that he can find out all too little about the family's internal personal relations - a matter for regret when emphasis is laid on the biographical factor in business enterprise and on the limitations of the typical (but by no means universal) family firm, subject (though partnership contracts varied) to divided control. Balthasar's undoing was also attributed to a reluctance to employ enough staff, and this has the ring of truth when one considers the large number of his correspondents, the fact that he traded mainly in goods (above all, textiles and diamonds) involving many deals and many ships or overland carriers, and that bad debtors were a bigger risk than the fortunes of war. Good bills of exchange were scarce and the chain of credit long.

As essentially a 'Dispositionplatz', relying (like London to-day?) on accumulated skills and a network of foreign contacts for manysided transactions that did not necessarily involve its own warehouses, still less its own (luxury) industries - busy as these remained until the 1650s, as the author demonstrates - Antwerp was dangerously exposed to changes in the European political scene. Baetens, who wisely accepts that economic phenomena cannot always be explained in exclusively economic terms, stresses two developments, each more hurtful than losses at sea: the French declaration of war in 1635 and the Portuguese rebellion of 1640. The first disturbed a major source of exports in southern Flanders and Hainault, besides removing the services of a neutral carrier on which (as on Hamburg) a house like De Groote heavily depended. In this connection Baetens, who has taken enormous trouble to establish the relative shipping flows of Dunkirk and Ostend (as well as giving us insurance quotations on a variety of sea-routes), misses the usefulness of Calais, whither some Dunkirkers moved before 1635: there are hints of this in *Les Actes en espagnol du Magistrat de Dunkerque 1574-1663*, recently compiled and published by Jean Dams (37 rue Dubois, Dunkerque). The significance of Portugal is hidden by the contraband nature of much of its India trade, but Balthasar de Groote for one, as the dominant figure in the European diamond market, was deeply concerned in it. Although foreign firms at Antwerp itself no longer enjoyed the predominance of a century earlier, Baetens argues that the Portuguese colony there was still wealthier and more important than at Amsterdam. Their role in Spanish government contracts rivalled the Genoese; which is virtually to say that Madrid tried to play Antwerp against Genoa. Baetens is not particularly illuminating on Spanish finance - he has enough on his hands as it is and the De Grootes did not directly touch it - but he uses the investments of Louis Clarisse in the Crown debt to illustrate the great variety of firms who have left their traces in the voluminous files of the city's Insolvente Boedelkamer. A substantial portion of his first volume - devoted to business and society in Antwerp generally, including fresh findings on its demography and physical character - is occupied by the histories of some thirty houses. These, together with the identification of numerous commissionaires abroad, suggest the possibility of a biographical dictionary that would render service to European economic history as a whole.

That, and no less, is the measure of this thesis. Had it been written in French, alas, it would be likelier to obtain the public it deserves. With the connivance of his exceptionally amenable publishers, the author throws out names, percentages, curves in many contexts, gratuitously as it were, to aid further research, especially on the later history of 'the Diaspora'. This term, stressed as the basic reason for economic recovery after 1585, bears a strong resemblance to Herbert Lüthy's 'Banque Protestante'. To restrict it to the emigrants of the sixteenth century, or to protestant emigrants, however, would be

downright misleading, since so many Antwerp families continued to send their sons overseas or overland, whether as part of their training (given the obvious relevance of linguistic capacity) or more permanently. It was this same mobility, after all, that had gradually emancipated it from foreign domination much earlier. Itineracy, and in consequence a cosmopolitanism which made for weak political loyalties, characterized the merchant class; a few still travelled with their goods, most obviously with diamonds. It is well to remember this in view of the fanatical calvinism usually attributed to the 'southern' promoters of the Dutch West India Company, for instance. The Diaspora, to an extent probably far exceeding what is known at present, served Amsterdam far away from Holland and Zeeland. Moreover, the De Grootes' business associates in Amsterdam itself - the Kuystens, Van Goor, Tholinx - were far more than mere agents. There were marriage ties and capital transfers between the two cities; merchants on horseback paid regular summer visits to Holland. Relations were also intimate with Middelburg, given the contribution of the Scheldt transit trade to the movement of food, timber, coal, saltpetre, flax and linens between the two Netherlands; the mounting licence duties on this traffic were high among the causes of Antwerp's ultimate decline. Smuggling across the frontiers, of course, was a commonplace, like the 'colouring' of cargoes at sea (which, as Baetens remarks, has ruffled Antwerp's footprint in foreign archives).

For all he does to establish the reality of Antwerp's revival, Baetens never exaggerates it or conceals its fragility. There was an ominous flurry of insolvencies early in the century. If the liveliness of its quaysides has been seriously under-estimated, a rough count of the firms active in 1632-1635 shows a fall of two-thirds from the level of 1550. Not all the old industries really recovered. Typical of the author, we get a systematic survey of the whole range, from sugar-bakeries, tanneries, salt-refineries and so on to the more capital-intensive industries like printing and diamond-working, of which a historical sketch is added for good measure. The only omission noticed is musical instruments: thus Hans Ruckers and his sons, famous for the sweet tone and robust construction of their keyboards. They fit well into Antwerp's reputation for handling, even when it did not make, artistic products like tapestries and church furniture. One would say that the mentality of its businessmen, greatly given to charities and confraternities, despite an evident tendency to spend well below their incomes (and so many other reminders of the British Victorian entrepreneurs), requires for its full understanding a more powerful evocation of baroque catholicism than is attempted here. Baetens discerns a more pompous style of life than was yet in favour at Amsterdam. His forte is to open up all the relevant questions. He is alert to all the categories of contemporary historiography, occasionally perhaps too impressed by them. On one point, however, the flight from business into public office, in some cases (like that of the De Grootes of Köln) upwards into nobility, he misses the chance to draw comparisons with France and Holland. Did the emigration habit delay this process at Antwerp? Only when stagnation set in, apparently, did its regents, so far as they were not lawyers or noblemen, forsake the counter. In the time of their prosperity, the De Grootes, unlike some of their Amsterdam counterparts or their Antwerp neighbours who at least possessed a 'hof van plaisantie' near the city, limited their real estate to town houses. A careful analysis of rateable values and social stratification, district by district, nevertheless reveals the co-existence of a substantial rentier element which invested in land as well as loans. The higher burghers as a whole are reckoned at a mere five hundred, which leaves a considerable number of quite small merchants. Even the De Grootes were scarcely merchant princes.

Musing on the downfall of Balthasar, Baetens suggests that his speculative temper, while

it owed something to the traditional gambling habit noticed by Jeannin and others writing of the sixteenth century, was encouraged by over-capitalization in relation to shrinking market outlets. In other words, there came a moment when the most active trading houses should have shifted headquarters once again, especially to Amsterdam or perhaps Frankfurt (whose money market sustained that of Antwerp in ways that are as yet none too clear). There was a whirlwind of bankruptcies between 1643 and 1654, a flight of capital and of artisans, casualties among the Diaspora. Even Baetens is tempted to write of stagnation, although better than anyone else he knows that adaptability was the secret of his 'zakenmilieu' and indeed produces figures for the Brabant watertoll and for lastgeld which incline one to prefer 'recession' to 'crisis'. The best days of the Italian trade (much of it still overland) were done, but not yet, as Everaert has shown, the Cadiz business, even if south Netherlanders had lost their predominance even there to the French. Antwerp, while obedient to the rhythms of the Spanish silver fleets, remained a major money market well into the eighteenth century. Until 29 April 1755 it was one of the dozen centres whose rates were quoted in *Lloyd's List*, which thereafter continued to print its name without a price - a fact at variance with Baetens's map (I, 249). It is for deeper enquiry into the century from 1650 that he looks, with a view to better understanding of the nineteenth-century economic restoration. A 'counter-factual' historian might put it somewhat differently. When Joseph II proposed to reopen the Scheldt, and when the Directory actually did so, what sort of economic complex was waiting to take advantage of it? How much business might it have threatened to take from London, an old partner but now a rival? Above all, over two centuries, was Amsterdam's obsessive veto only too well founded?

J.S. Bromley

H. van Bocxlaer, *Herzele 1643-1796. Een historisch-demografisch onderzoek* (Herzele dossier IX; Brussel: Centrum sociale structuren en economische conjunctuur, 1979, 239 blz.).

Met deze licentieverhandeling, een historisch-demografische studie over Herzele tijdens het *ancien régime* voegt het Centrum sociale structuren en economische conjunctuur van de VUB een nieuw dossier toe aan de reeks Herzele-dossiers waaruit wij reeds de nrs. 5, 6 en 7, handelend over de laatmiddeleeuwse heerlijkheid Herzele, bespraken. Het hier voorliggend dossier is in eerste instantie niet zoals voornoemde dossiers een bronnenuitgave of het verslag van een reeks colleges historische kritiek. Het presenteert zich als een volwaardige, men zou geneigd zijn te stellen 'klassieke' historisch-demografische studie, die langs de gevestigde en beproefde methodes van L. Henry en andere om: namelijk de gezinsreconstructie, na een analytisch-beschrijvend gedeelte tot de studie van nuptialiteit, fecunditeit en mortaliteit komt. De conclusies die de auteur aan het einde van zijn onderzoek formuleert klinken al even vertrouwd. Herzele blijkt - althans demografisch - tijdens het *ancien régime* geen *Einzelgänger* geweest te zijn, het tegendeel zou eerder verwonderd hebben. Natuurgebondenheid, demografische onrust tijdens de zeventiende eeuw, het doorbreken van de 'klassieke' demografische structuur vanaf het begin van de achttiende eeuw: verminderde impact van de 'klassieke' crises, natuurlijke bevolkingstoename... het heeft weinig zin er langer bij stil te staan. Wie ooit een historisch-demografische monografie heeft doorgenomen kent deze bevindingen. Er kleeft een *déjà vu*-ervaring aan een dergelijk onderzoek. Dit moge wellicht vrij negatief klinken, en het is een feit dat een bevestiging van wat reeds voor andere streken gekend was *in se* ook waardevol is, toch lijkt zo stilaan