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Information Concerning Visit to Antwerp

In a matter of a few days we will arrive in our Northern European liberty port of Antwerp, Belgium. We will be there 6 days and during that time we are going to have a chance to enjoy that famous Belgium hospitality you have all heard so much about. We are going to have a good time and one you have earned and deserve. But before we get carried away with all the fun a few comments concerning recent international developments and how they affect Belgium and your visit there should be considered.

You will recall that early in July, riots broke out in the former Belgium African Colony of Congo. The riots resulted in the deaths of many Belgium citizens who were in the Congo; wives of Belgium soldiers and business men were raped, and many Belgium families lost their entire fortunes. Many of these people have recently flown from the Congo to Belgium and the stories of these atrocities and sufferings will be fresh in the minds of many of the Belgium people you talk to. For this reason, some of the background that led to this disaster should be understood by you.

Since the end of World War II, people living in Colonies governed by other Nations have been demanding their independence. In Africa this demand for independence has increased by the day. In 1955, four-fifths of the Africans were under European rule; by 1960 less than half will be under foreign rule. In the Congo, Belgium had planned to grant independence by 1964 and a careful planned five year educational program was in progress to train the indigenous people to run their own government and business. By 1959 the pressure for self-rule was so great that Belgium was compelled to grant the people of the Congo their independence. This was done on 30 June of this year. Five days later the riots broke out and as you know the riots have led to the sending of United Nations troops into the Congo in an effort to restore order.

While on liberty in Antwerp you very likely will be asked how you feel about the Congo situation and the remarks you make will in some cases be accepted as how all Americans feel about this crisis which is presently so important to the Belgium people. The important points that we must get across to the Belgium people are as follows.

(1) We sincerely sympathize with those unfortunate Belgians whose relatives have been murdered or abused and those whose lives and fortunes have been disrupted.

(2) We feel that the Congo situation must be handled by the United Nations. We can understand any desire the Belgium people may have to send troops back to the Congo to protect Belgium interests, lives and property. We in America have a similar problem - Cuba. Although we have not had the great loss of life and injury, we have suffered a heavy loss of property and investment. As disagreeable as the Congo and Cuban situations are to Belgium and the United States, we cannot permit ourselves to lose sight of our long range objective - the defeat of international communism. The free world cannot risk the loss of support of the Afro-Asian and Latin American countries in the United Nations. In this World Forum of the United Nations the free world must, through the democratic process of the free vote, deny the communist bloc the opportunity to continue to engulf still free nations.

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Any unilateral move by either Belgium or the United States might well drive the Afro-Asian and Latin American countries toward the Communist Bloc. In the Americas we called upon the Organization of American States (OAS) to consider the Cuban situation and the spread of Communism in the Western Hemisphere. The vote of censure of Cuba proved the validity of the O.A.S. The Premier of the Congo called upon other African Nations to discuss his country's situation. There was unanimous approval of the United Nations action.

(3) The principal threat to the survival of both Belgium and to the United States and to our way of life is not the Congo or the Cuban situation, but is in the overall struggle against Communism. Russia would truly love to force a wedge in the friendship of Belgium and the United States over the Congo. It would like this as any other situation to destroy NATO. We must be alert not to let situations of this sort blind us to the major threat. That is - Communist determination to destroy our way of life.

Now for a word of caution. The Communists will be seeking any way possible to discredit the success of this NATO sea operation which we are conducting. They will try to replace the favorable impression you men will make on the Belgian people. You may find that you are the target of a Communist agent. He will try to get you into an argument before a crowd of people. He may be abusive, or he may be persuasive. Just remember he is a highly trained professional agitator and while you have been learning your profession he has been studying how to discredit the United States. Avoid these people. They can only lead to trouble. If you find yourself confronted by a person who belittles the U.S., and what we stand for, don't argue with him, ignore him and seek better company. Above all things don't slug him. That is what he is looking for. Conduct yourself with the same quiet dignity that President Eisenhower showed when Khrushchev was so abusive to him and the United States during the Summit Conference in Paris this spring.

Remember you are an American Sailor. Conduct yourself with pride, dignity, and moral principals of the Nation you represent, and have fun. Be a credit to your Country, the U.S. Navy, your family, and your friends.

INTRODUCTION TO BELGIUM

BELGIUM, in French Belgique (bel'zhe'), in Flemish Belgie (bel'khue), has a 42-mile coast line on the North Sea. Its greatest length is 115 miles, between Ostend and Arion. One of the Low Countries, long disputed among European powers, Belgium serves as an entrepot for the continent. On the SCHELDT RIVER estuary lies the great port of ANTWERP, which handles about 90% of Belgium's foreign trade. The North Sea coast is almost straight and lined by dunes; on it are fashionable beach resorts like OSTEND and KNOKKE, and the minor port of ZEEBRUGGE. Apart from the Scheldt, the country is drained by the Meuse River, which is joined by the Sambre at Namur. Both the Scheldt and Meuse, which rise in France, are of good navigability and feed a network of canals.

Topographically, Belgium may be divided into three sections; the low, sandy regions of Belgian Flanders and Campine in the North, the central fertile loess plain between the Meuse and Scheldt rivers, centered on Brussels; and in the east, the rugged plateau of the ARDENNES, which rises here in the Botrange to 2,283 feet. The climate is distinctly maritime, somewhat similar to England's with mild winters, cool summers and frequent fogs. Only the Ardennes display more rigorous, continental conditions. Belgium is one of the most densely populated (over 740 persons per square mile) and highly industrialized nations of Europe, but agriculture also plays a prominent part in its economy; local crops have, however, to be supplemented by imports, chiefly cereals. There is intensive cultivation, even in the Ardennes, a backward section still largely wooded. The main crops are oats, rye, wheat, potatoes, barley, sugar beets, tobacco, flax, grapes, and vegetables. Cattle raising, dairying and the breeding of draft horses are important.

Belgium's industry is almost completely based on its rich coal fields. The principle deposits have long been the bituminous beds in the Borinage of Hainaut, at the foot of the Ardennes near MONS and CHARLEROY. Though these resources are becoming depleted, a new, even richer basin has been discovered in the Campine region East of Antwerp. There are minor iron deposits in the Southeast corner adjoining the Lorraine basin of France; however, practically all the ore for Belgium's iron and steel industry, among the world's greatest, is imported from France. Other minerals extracted include copper, silver, zinc, lead, tin, phosphates - chiefly from the uplands. The metallurgical and engineering industries furnish most of the exports. A string of industrial towns in the Sambre-Meuse Valley (Mons, Charleroi, NAMUR, and, foremost, LIEGE) turn out steel, machinery, and appliances; there is also refining of copper and zinc, and diversified manufacturing.

BRUSSELS, the splendid metropolis, remindful of Paris, is also an important industrial center, and Antwerp, one of Europe's great ports and the country's second city, has shipyards and varied consumer industries, besides being a diamond-cutting center rivaling Amsterdam. Next to metalurgy, textiles are Belgium's leading manufacture, for which the once-flourishing towns of Flander attained great fame. The historic cities of BRUGES and GHENT, veritable treasure-houses of medieval and Northern Renaissance architecture, manufacture celebrated lace, as do Brussels, and MECHELIN (which is the seat of the Roman Catholic primate). Ghent, though it has lost its front rank in trade and industry, is still a busy port and Belgium's chief center for cotton and linen goods. The woollen industry has its center at Verviers in the Ardennes. Carpet weaving, tanning and cement milling flourish at TORNAL. Large fishing fleets are based on the coast.

Belgium's communications are commensurate with its industry and large transit trade. There is a dense railroad net of 3,080 miles, which connects all parts of Europe, besides narrow gauge lines for interurban traffic. An intricate pattern of canals is woven across the plains. Among these is the Albert Canal linking Liege with Antwerp, the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal (partly in the Netherlands), and the Willebroek Canal, which makes Brussels an inland port. Belgium's great art treasures, fine beaches and resorts, among which are SPA in Hohe Venn, bring it numerous tourists. Here, European oilpainting began at least as early as in Italy. The universities of LOUVAIN (founded 1426), Brussels, Ghent, and Liege are great Western centers of learning.

The Belgians are almost evenly divided into two language groups by a line running roughly East-West below Brussels. North of this line the prevailing language is

ish and French are official languages. Virtually the entire population is Roman Catholic. Belgium takes its name (in general use only since the late 18th century) from the Belgae, a Celtic people of ancient Gaul mentioned by Julius Caesar. The Roman province Belgica was much larger than modern Belgium. The region was conquered in the third century by the Franks. After the divisions of Charlemagne's empire during the ninth century, Belgium was included in Lotharingia and later in the duchy of Lower Lorraine, which disintegrated in the 12th century. The history of medieval Belgium is largely that of feudal states like the duchies of Brabant and Luxembourg, and textile cities as Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres rose, achieving virtual independence. In the 15th century all of present Belgium passed to the duchy of Burgundy, which was soon absorbed by the Hapsburgs. The Treaty of Campo Formio (1797) transferred Belgium from Austria to France; the Treaty of Paris (1815) gave it to the Netherlands. After a revolt in 1830 Belgian independence was declared, and in 1831 Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha became King of the Belgians. A final Dutch-Belgian peace was signed in 1839. Belgium received part Limburg and Luxembourg, and had its perpetual neutrality guaranteed. In 1885, King Leopold II assumed personal possession of the Belgium Congo, which passed to Belgian Administration as a colony in 1907.

Germany invaded the country in both World Wars. After the First World War, Belgium obtained Moresnet, Eupen, and Malmédy, and, as a mandate of the League of Nations, Ruanda-Urundi, in Africa. It was again overrun by the Germans in May 1940, Leopold III surrendered unconditionally, but his cabinet continued in London. Liberation by allied troops was effected in September 1944. The unsuccessful German counter-offensive of December 1944 - January 1945, in the Battle of the Bulge near BASTOGNE, caused much destruction in addition to the damage wrought by allied air raids. However, Belgian economy recovered far more rapidly than the rest of Europe, mainly on account of the contribution of the Belgian Congo during the war. Politically, the controversy over the return of Leopold was resolved when he abdicated in favor of his eldest son, Prince Baudouin. Belgium joined with the Netherlands and Luxembourg to form a customs union. In 1948, this bloc, known as Benelux, signed, with England and France, a Five Power Pact, participated in the European Recovery Program, and became in 1949 partner to the newly formed NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION.

Area: 11,779 square miles (compares to about the size of the state of Maryland).
Population: 8,000,000 (U.N. est. 1954).