

*De Spaanse Brabanders of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598-1648. Tekst; Bijlagen.* By EDDY STOLS. 2 unnumbered vols. Brussels, 1971. Published for the Royal Flemish Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium by Paleis de Academiën. Klasse der Letteren, Jaargang XXXIII, 70. Tables. Indices. Bibliographies. Pp. xlix, 421; v, 265. Paper.

This work on the “commercial relations of the Southern Netherlands with the Iberian world, 1598-1648” is the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Eddy Stols, *Lector* at the University of Louvain, written under direction of the economic historian J. A. van Houtte of the University of Ghent. It is a remarkably good study of a complicated subject not heretofore elaborated. The research upon which it is based is sound and extensive. Dr. Stols is the first scholar, as far as I know, to exploit systematically in the Antwerp City Archives the extensive bankruptcy papers of ten local firms engaged in the Iberian trade during the period. In Brussels and Bruges he turned up records for additional firms, and in short research trips to Sevilla, Madrid, Simancas, Lisbon, Paris, and London he filled out his data. An excellent twenty-five page bibliography and the footnotes attest to his careful use of the sources in print and the specialized literature relating to his subject. The author regrets that the records he has uncovered—mainly commercial correspondence enclosing miscellaneous accounts, bills of lading and of exchange, etc., and notarial pieces—do not lend themselves to quantification. He recognizes further research possibilities, particularly in notarial archives.

Dr. Stols divides his main volume (the second consists of appendices) into eight long chapters on as many broad topics, each of which is broken down for treatment under sub-headings. In the first chapter he considers the expanding market possibilities for South Netherlands goods in Spain and Portugal and their overseas possessions in the period (created both by increased Peninsular military and civilian demands and developing colonial markets) and the impediments to taking advantage of these occasioned by changing Hapsburg economic policies, expedients, and regulations, and by alternating states of war and peace. In the economic war waged by Philip III against the rebel Dutch, South-Netherland merchants and their goods were often caught in the middle. Experiments with “free trade” and efforts to create a convoy system failed, but despite the Dutch blockade of Scheldt and Flanders coast and enemy privateers South Netherlands goods found egress through Dunkirk and French and English ports and colonial

goods and bullion in return found ingress. A system of registering goods was eventually devised to limit Dutch smuggling and competition sufficiently successful to give the Southern Netherlands effective imperial preference and to bring about substantial industrial revival in the region.

In the second chapter the author deals with the Flemish commercial colonies in the Peninsula, their size and distribution, vitality, privileges, and organization. To what extent South Netherlanders could trade personally, or indirectly, in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies despite prohibitions forms the subject of the third chapter. The variety of goods and branches of trade are next discussed: textiles, metalware, weapons, naval supplies, works of art, provisions, and in reverse direction especially colonial goods. Then comes a chapter on "Family and Firm," in which the origin, composition, viability, and functioning of a number of the most important of these are discussed. Another chapter analyzes the firm as to structure, and distinguishes the role of correspondents, brokers, shipping agents, apprentices, and servants. Chapter VII deals with transport routes, problems and risks, and money and exchange operations. The last chapter, entitled "The Sociology of the Spain Merchant," examines the standard of living he maintained, how he invested, preserved or increased capital, his life style and social aspirations.

The volume of appendices is a storehouse of information, and provides an indispensable reference work for further investigation of the business history of the Spanish Hapsburg empire in the period. Appendix I is a list of 587 persons native to, or denized in, or trading by way of the Southern Netherlands with the Iberian world, with indication of their family and business connections, periods and places of residence in Spain, Portugal, and/or the colonies, marital and civil status there, field of business or other activity, etc., insofar as the author was able to turn up such information in his sources. Appendix II reconstructs the family trees of fifteen prominent "Spain Merchants." Appendices III-VI consist of lists of voyages in the Brazil, East Indian, and South Netherlands-Peninsular trades with pertinent information as available on each voyage. The remaining eighteen appendices present an impressive amount of raw economic data for the period in other areas: marine insurance, bankruptcies, commodity prices (sugar, cinnamon, pepper), and exchange rates, to mention only a few. This work has separate topical, biographical, and geographical indices.

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