BANQUE D'OUTREMER (COMPAGNIE INTERNATIONALE POUR LE COMMERCE ET L'INDUSTRIE) S.A.

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SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE BANQUE D'OUTREMER

The Banque d'Outremer was incorporated on 7 January 1899 under the name Compagnie Internationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie. Its initial capital was 32.5 million Belgian francs, divided into 65 000 shares with a nominal value of 500 francs. Numerous investment banks subscribed to these shares: the Société Générale de Belgique/Generale Maatschappij van België, for 9,420 shares; the Banque Léon Lambert, for 4,800; the Banque de Bruxelles firm underwrote 2,600 securities; Franz Philippson also took 2,600; Balser & Co., for 2,600; the Banque Liégeoise, for 2,000; Joseph Devolder, for 2,280; Jules Urban, Albert Thys, Georges de Laveleye, Jean Cousin and Hippolyte Lippens, for 1,800 each; R. de Bauer, Georges Brugmann, Ernest Grisar, Alfred Havenith and Alfred Simonis, each for 1,000 shares; the Caisse Commerciale de Bruxelles, Cassel & Cie, J. Matthieu & Fils, each for 800 securities. In addition, three foreign groups subscribed to the capital: a French group, allied to the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (12,000 securities); a German group drawn by Deutsche Bank AG , from Berlin (7,000 securities); and a smaller group of British investors which included the brothers Stern, Ernest Cassel and Sir Vincent Caillard (2,500 securities).

The first meeting of the Board of Directors reflected the diversity of the subscribers. Joseph Devolder, Director of the Société Générale de Belgique/Generale Maatschappij van België, was appointed as Chairman; Jules Urban, a colleague of Albert Thys in the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, linked in its turn to the Banque de Bruxelles Group, was appointed as Deputy Chairman; Albert Thys himself, the true instigator of the new company, was chosen as the Managing Director; and Georges de Laveleye, one of his colleagues on the Board of the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, was appointed as Executive Director. We also note the presence, from the inception of the company, of Félicien Cattier, a Doctor of Law and Professor at the ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles), well versed in matters of international law.

The new company was not a bank as we would understand it now. The Articles of Association explicitly states that "the departments will be organised so that they only provide banking and cash transactions to meet the needs of the company or its subsidiaries, to the exclusion of all others". Indeed, its transactions were limited to those of a financial trust: "The company's objectives are to create, take over and develop commercial, financial, industrial, agricultural and forestry businesses, primarily overseas".

The Compagnie Internationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie moved into premises located in Rue de Bréderode and Rue de Namur in Brussels, near the head office of the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie. The public rapidly began to confuse the two neighbouring companies with such similar names that had been founded by Albert Thys. To avoid this problem, Compagnie Internationale changed its name to Banque d'Outremer.

Within the first few financial years, the company was involved in numerous increases in the capital of companies linked to the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (such as the Société Coloniale Anversoise). The new companies that it helped to create included: Charbonnages Réunis Laura et Vereeniging (1900); Compagnie Internationale d'Orient (1900); Société Métallurgique Russo-Belge, Belgo-Canadian Pulp Cy, Société Italo-Belge pour l'Industrie des Sucres and Société Métallurgique de Sambre et Moselle (1901). Also in 1901, the Compagnie Internationale d'Orient was involved in the incorporation of The Chinese Engineering & Mining Co. Ltd, which took over the Kaïping coal mines. The Banque d'Outremer received a large block of shares in this new company.

In 1903, the company went through a major crisis. To compensate for the devaluation of its portfolio, the capital was increased from 32.5 million to 22.5 million. The Board of Directors ordered major writedowns of the portfolio: To enable the shareholders to make a fully informed assessment of the balance sheet, the Board provided them with a list of all the fixed-term loans granted and all the funds, shares and bonds held in the portfolio. The report presented to the General Meeting of Shareholders stated that: "Our key concern was to evaluate the Bank's assets in a way that ensures there are no surprises later. We felt it would be wise to go as far as possible along this path, by pricing in, sometimes severely, all the unfortunate consequences that may be still experienced by certain companies that have not lived up to our expectations or those of their founders". Another document from 1910, held in this collection, explains the difficulties encountered by the Bank in 1903 as follows: "all major financial creations must go through their childhood illnesses [...]; it is unfortunate that Outremer's crisis coincides with period in which all our industrial, commercial and financial activity has been thrown off course. It is exacerbated by the scale of the [outline] programme and by the hostility that it is pointless to refer to in greater detail but which has resulted in particularly sensitive personal bitterness on Colonel [Thys]'s part, depriving him of the support to which he is entitled". This is an allusion to the opposition of the King faced by Colonel Thys in respect of the development of the Congo.

The Group resumed its investments after the crisis, in particular in China. In 1903, the Banque d'Outremer backed the creation of the Compagnie Internationale de Tramways et d'Eclairage de Tientsin. Five years later, the "Thys Group", as it was referred to then, founded the Crédit Foncier d'Extrême-Orient and took a holding in the Compagnie Française de Tramways et d'Eclairage Electriques de Shanghai.

But other regions of the world also caught the Thys' attention. In 1907, the Banque d'Outremer was involved in the formation of the Sumatra Caoutchouc Maatschappij, the first stage in cooperation with Dutch companies to exploit the colonial resources of the Dutch Indies. This cooperation gave rise, inter alia, to the Nederlandsch-Indische Rubber- en Koffie Cultuur Maatschappij.

In 1909, the company helped to create the Banque du Congo Belge, founded with a capital of 2 million. This bank would take on the role of the Colony's National Bank two years later.

In 1901, Albert Thys took over as Chairman of the company, while Emile Francqui, a director since 1905, became the Executive Director. As a consequence, the company's policy changed considerably. Firstly, it acquired new resources: its capital was increased from 22.5 million to 40 million francs. A large block of the new shares issued was distributed to shareholders of the Compagnie Internationale d'Orient, which would merge with Banque d'Outremer. In addition, at the prompting of Emile Francqui, the company launched itself into banking operations proper: to do so, the company acquired the services of Charles Galland, a former Crédit Lyonnais branch manager with significant experience of all lending and discounting transactions. The Bank's managerial staff was considerably expanded. The report for the 1911 financial year lists the principal transactions dealt with by the Bank and asks for the creation of fifteen-day and fixed-term current accounts and checking accounts. A safe-deposit-box gallery shown on the plans drawn up by architect Brunfaut was made available to customers.

The Bank's holdings in Société Minière du Canada and Simkat (Société Belge Industrielle et Minière du Katanga) also date back to 1910. Also in that year, for the first time the annual report mentions the Agence Maritime Walford, the principal agent for the Anvers-Congo shipping line: this holding ultimately led to it taking control of the Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo the following year. In 1911, the company also created the Crédit Foncier Franco-Bulgare.

In 1912-1913, the management of the company underwent major changes. Emile Francqui, appointed as a director of the Société Générale de Belgique/Generale Maatschappij van België, quit his office of Executive Director and was replaced by Albert Thys himself. He nevertheless retained his office of Chairman of the Board. In 1913, Félicien Cattier became the company's manager, while William Thys, the oldest son of the Chairman, was appointed Secretary General. These management changes did not prevent the company from adding to its portfolio of new securities. In 1912, it was involved in the incorporation of the Ostend company Lumière et Force Motrice. Furthermore, the Bank's internal departments were strengthened by the creation of a "financial studies" department, managed by Henri Fuss (formerly attached to the Comptoir d'Escompte de Paris).

The war years were difficult for the company. At the beginning of 1915, Albert Thys, the founder of the Banque d'Outremer, died suddenly. Emile Francqui temporarily took over the reins of the Bank, despite his many duties for the Société Générale. Like every other credit institution, the Banque d'Outremer was placed under German control. From October 1914 to May 1915, there were four German commissioners in succession: Messrs Welker, Einhorn, Jacobsen and Weinkrantz. They were then replaced by Messrs

Behrens (June 1915-May 1916), Goldschmidt (May 1916-May 1917), Libbertz (May 1917-June 1918) and Sachs (June - October 1918). Bankers by profession, these commissioners monitored the Bank's transactions closely.

The Banque d'Outremer took a considerable holding (12 million out of a total of 150) in the general consortium of banks that guaranteed to the discounting granted to members of the grouping by the Issues Department of the Société Générale. The Banque d'Outremer also took an 18 million share of the firm underwriting of an issue of interprovincial notes for paying the war contribution. Finally, it granted large subsidies to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, responsible for organising supplies for occupied Belgium.

The management was deprived of all contact with the many companies operating abroad in which it had holdings: Belgo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Cy, Charbonnages Réunis Laura en Vereeniging, Société Italo-Belge pour l'Industrie des Sucres, several Chinese companies and companies operating in the Dutch Indies, etc. It should be noted however that most of these businesses did not suffer greatly from the conflict since they were in countries that were not involved. On 2 January 1916, the Board of Directors was required by the occupying forces to announce, in a circular letter, that the powers of Mr Charles Galland, the Assistant Director, had been removed and that his signature was no longer binding on the company. The German Commissariat was disturbed by the actions of this official to safeguard the interests of the Bank in France and in Portugal! In the Netherlands, the Bank delegated one of its agents, a Dutchman by the name of Stumpff, to set up an office to collect foreign coupons for the Bank itself and for its customers, and to facilitate relationships between the Bank and its subsidiaries. This office commenced its activities in July 1915. In London, the Bank was represented by John Van der Taelen, the Managing Director of the Société Coloniale Anversoise.

At a social level, the war years were an opportunity for Félicien Cattier to put in place a pension fund to provide employees who had reached retirement age (65) to retire in comfort. Yet in 1916, Félicien Cattier, recently appointed as Managing Director, was forced into captivity in Germany with other notable "colonials", such as Maurice Lippens and Edmond Hinck. This exile lasted until the end of hostilities. Other social measures in favour of staff were taken after his departure: allowances were granted to offset the high cost of living, a canteen was set up to provide staff with a substantial meal at a price below cost.

The financial structure of the Bank was changed mid-war: on 11 October 1916, a general meeting of shareholders was convened to convert the company's 75,000 dividend shares into 75,000 no-par value fifths of a capital share. It was then that the idea of a possible link between the Société Générale de Belgique and the Banque d'Outremer was first aired, and Emile Fancqui was forced to publically denounce the rumours of a merger: "an attempt has been made to attribute to us goodness knows what gigantesque and mysterious project [...] and which would result in the disappearance of the Banque d'Outremer, swallowed up by other Belgian banks in a formidable new creation. I refuse to believe that our shareholders have let themselves be swayed by such gossips".

1917-1918 were particularly difficult years for the Belgian population as a whole. Industry and trade were virtually paralysed. The plethora of unused money held in its accounts prompted the Bank to consider creating special accounts to foster a business recovery when the time was ripe. In 1916, it had opened deposit accounts that would be available after peace was concluded and that generated interest of 3.5 and 4% a year. From November 1917, it launched five-year deposit accounts, repayable quarterly that were transferable at any time. These accounts generated interest of 4% a year, this rising to 4.5% if the deposit remained on the account at the end of the five-year term. This type of account was extremely popular with the public.

In 1918, the company's portfolio contained the following securities:

Banks and financial institutions	9.3 %;
Commercial companies	11%;
Inland navigation and maritime transport	7%;
Railways	5.4%;
Urban transport	13.8%;

Coal mining	14.65%;
Mines	3.35%;
Coke furnaces	3.6%;
Armament works	4.2%;
Electricity generation	7.2%;
Wireless telegraphy	2.7%;
Colonial plantations	7.85%;
Stock farming	0.2%;
Newsagents	7.9%;
Sugar refineries	1.35%.

The geographic breakdown of these investments was also telling: Belgium led the way with 37.25%; China accounted for 15,2% of the company's investments; the Netherlands for 7.6%; Canada, 9.45%; the Belgian Congo for 5.8%, and the Dutch Colonies for 4.9%, and so on. The spread of the portfolio had enabled the company to successfully withstand the rigours of the war. The Banking department, for its part, emerged from the hostilities with its position greatly strengthened. Securities held in custody, which had amounted to 169 million at the end of 1913, had increased to 320 million; cash on accounts had risen from 4.5 million to 24 million; the public funds portfolio (Treasury and interprovincial notes) had grown from 5 million to 103 million.

We note in passing that in January 1918, William Thys was appointed as Director of the company, a post he had already filled de facto for more than one year.

At the end of the war, the Banque d'Outremer acquired the activities of Comptoir d'Escompte de Bruxelles, enabling it to develop its banking activities. At the same time, the Bank's capital was raised to 72.5 million. These measures enabled it to play a key role in relaunching the Belgian economy in 1919-1920. During this period, it was involved in a large number of new issues and capital increases, including those of the Banque Belge pour l'Etranger, the Banque Générale du Nord, the Chemins de Fer du Prince Henri, the Electricité et Traction holding company, the company Railways et Signalisation, the company Métallurgique Sambre et Moselle, the Société Générale Métallurgique de Hoboken, the company La Métallo-Chimique, the Société d'Electricité de l'Adamello, the Société Electricité du Brabant, the Franco-Belge de Fours à Coke, the Société Belge d'Exportation Industrielle, the Tissage La Flandre, the New Antwerp Telephone and Electrical Works, and others. Many of these companies, such as the Compagnie Financière Belge des Pétroles, the Compagnie Belge d'Assurances l'Urbaine and the Compagnie Soutière, were new creations. Others, such as La Brugeoise et Nicaise et Delcuve, the metals manufacturing company Ougrée-Marihaye, the Société Intercommunale Belge d'Electricité, were companies already operating. The Bank also played a key role in the launch of the SNETA, Syndicat National pour l'Etude des Transports Aériens, whose activities were to lead to the creation of Sabena airline a few years later. Major efforts were also made with regard to the Colony, and the Bank was involved in the constitution of the Compagnie Africaine de Navigation, the Compagnie du Lomami et du Lualaba, the Cotonco (Compagnie Cotonnière Congolaise) and Cico (Ciments du Congo).

Major changes were made to the Bank's administration in the 1919 financial year. Agreements were concluded in September 1918 between the Banque d'Outremer and six provincial banks, including Banque de Lhoneux and Messrs. Fabri & Co. in Huy. The objective of these agreements was to undertake certain banking operations in common and to put in place mutually beneficial business relationships.

Other agreements were concluded at the same time between the Banque d'Outremer and the Société Générale. In July 1919, an agreement was concluded between the two groups. This was the work of Emile Francqui, who was both Director of the Société Générale and Chairman of the Banque d'Outremer's Board of Directors. Under the new agreement, each establishment would offer the other a sub-holding of at least 25% in all new business it created, in which it took a controlling interest or in which it took a holding. The agreement also covered the expansion of the two institutions in the banking sector with a view to avoiding any friction between their networks. However, when Francqui presented the draft agreement to the Banque d'Outremer's Board of Directors, several of his colleagues expressed

reservations. The most vocal was Adolphe Stoclet, who declared that he was opposed to any limits on the expansionist banking agenda of the Banque d'Outremer. The institution's Managing Director, William Thys, who only acted in an advisory capacity on the Board, felt, for his part, that signing cartel agreements would restrict the Bank's freedom of action and would conflict with the principle of the independence of the institution. Following negotiations between Francqui, Cattier and Jadot, the idea of restricting the expansion of the two groups in the banking sector was abandoned. This concession was not adequate for Managing Director William Thys, who preferred to resign and went on to become Managing Director of the Banque de Bruxelles.

This departure was a minor earthquake in the history of the Bank. The office of Managing Director of the Banque d'Outremer was entrusted to Charles Fabri. Relations between the Banque d'Outremer and the Banque De Lhoneux and Fabri were still tight. Thys, for his part, began to recruit several of the Banque d'Outremer's officers to the Banque de Bruxelles, and notably its legal representatives Némerlin and H. Desmet and Assistant Director Théodore Stumpff.

These defections did not undermine the Banque d'Outremer, far from it. Furthermore, to encourage the commitment of its employees, management decided to give them a share in the Bank's results of 5% of the sums distributed to shareholders as dividends. This ex gratia payment was to amount to at least one month's salary.

The years 1920-1925 were marked by major foreign exchange instability. The annual reports published by the Bank over this period stressed the need for solidarity between the economies of all nations. The monetary depreciation in the wake of the war weakened trade and industry.

This did not prevent the Banque d'Outremer's management from proactively preparing the way for the future. Financial and administrative links were established between the Bank and the Caisse Générale de Reports et de Dépôts, of which Charles Fabri became a director.

1923 saw a relatively lucrative transaction: shares in Belgo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Cy held by the Banque d'Outremer were sold in Canadian dollars for a sum equivalent to 54 million Belgian francs. This money was immediately allocated to the reserve with the latter (amounting to a total of 100 million) then equating to the same figure as the equity capital.

The creation of companies continued apace. In 1923 alone, the Bank was involved in setting up the Société Auxiliaire Industrielle et Financière des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains; the Compagnie Minière des Grands Lacs Africains; the Société Africaine de Construction; the company Charbonnages d'Houthaelen; the Société Anonyme Radio-Belgique; the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce des Tabacs Fumaro; the Société d'Entreprises Electriques en Pologne; the Crédit Foncier de l'Indochine, etc.

The annual report for the 1926 financial year placed great emphasis on the monetary stability that had finally been achieved. It then examined the Group's various holdings, which had significantly increased in number since the end of the war.

In the banking sector, the Banque d'Outremer had major stakes in the Banque Commerciale du Congo, the Banque du Congo Belge, the Banque Belge pour l'Etranger, the Banque de Flandre and the Caisse Générale de Reports et de Dépôts.

In the transport sector, the Bank had holdings in the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo, the Société Luxembourgeoise des Chemins de Fer et Minières Prince Henri, the Agence Maritime Internationale, the Compagnie Africaine de Navigation, the Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo, the Compagnie Française de Tramways et d'Eclairage Electriques de Shanghai and the Compagnie de Tramways et d'Eclairage de Tientsin.

The Group had also become greatly involved in the electricity sector, holding shares in Centrales Electriques des Flandres et du Brabant, the Société d'Electricité de l'Escaut, the Société d'Electricité de la

Campine, the holding company Société d'Electricité et de Traction, the Société Intercommunale Belge d'Electricité and in the Société Belge Radio-Electrique.

The metal manufacturing and mechanical engineering companies in which the Banque d'Outremer held securities were the Ateliers de Construction de Hal, the company Hadir (Société des Hauts-Fourneaux et Aciéries de Differdange- Saint Ingbert- Rumelange), the company La Métallo-Chimique, the Société Générale Métallurgique de Hoboken, the Ateliers Demoor and the Société Métallurgique de Sambre-et-Moselle.

In coal mining, the Bank had long been involved in Charbonnages Réunis Laura & Vereeniging, and also in the Chinese Engineering & Mining Co.

The Colonial Securities Department was impressive, including shares in the Société Africaine de Construction, the company Citas, the Cofokat (Compagnie Foncière du Katanga), the Société Auxiliaire Industrielle et Financière des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains, the Compagnie Minière des Grands Lacs Africains, the Cico (Ciments du Congo), the Compagnie Sucrière Congolaise, the ABC (Compagnie Commerciale et Agricole d'Alimentation du Bas-Congo), the Cimenkat (Ciments du Katanga), the Société Coloniale Anversoise, the Compagnie du Katanga, the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, the Cotonco (Compagnie Cotonnière Congolaise), the Compagnie du Lomami et du Lualaba and the Société Minière du Luebo.

In the Dutch Indies, the Bank had holdings in the Nederlandsch-Indische Rubber- en Koffie Cultuur Maatschappij, the Cultuur Maatschappij Batoe Lempit and the Sumatra Caoutchouc Maatschappij.

Finally, there was a plethora of diverse securities, including shares in the Société Anonyme des Fours à Coke Semet-Solvay & Piette, the company Tissage La Flandre, company limited by shares Société Anonyme de Téléphonie Privée, the Compagnie Soutière, the Société Anonyme Italo-Belge pour l'Industrie des Sucres.

Legislation favouring amalgamations was passed in 1927. Among the first mergers to take place under this legislation, mention must be made of that between the Générale and the Banque d'Outremer. This transaction, seen by the management of both banks as enshrining the amicable links that had always existed between them, became possible once the Société Générale had unified the securities making up its authorised capital on 28 February 1928: capital shares and reserve shares. The 100,000 capital shares were replaced by 8,000 reserve shares, giving an idea of the extent to which the reserved fund had increased in value in 75 years. After this transaction, the par value of the existing 108,000 reserve shares was set at 1,250 francs each. In February 1928, the Générale's capital was increased from 135 million to 400 million by issuing 212,000 new shares, 104,000 of which were distributed to the Banque d'Outremer's shareholders with 4 new shares in the Société Générale being swapped for 9 shares in the Banque d'Outremer's directors, namely Félicien Cattier, Charles Fabri, Henry Le Bœuf and Adolphe Stoclet, joined the Société Générale's Board of Directors. Others became advisers to this company, a title especially created.

The absorption of the Banque d'Outremer added significantly to the Société Générale's lead over competitor banks and in particular over the Banque de Bruxelles. Its portfolio was swelled by numerous securities, in particular in the banking, electricity and air and maritime transport sectors. More specifically, the trophies of war acquired by the Société Générale and which included an impressive block of colonial securities, further added to the Group's domination of the Congolese economy.

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31. Iriag (Internationale Rohöl-Industriegesellschaft) A.G., alias Petromine (Société A Internationale pour l'Industrie du Pétrole) s.a., à Vienne : participation sous Lombard, avec statuts.	•
1923-1927	1 liasse
32. Sumatra Caoutchouc Maatschappij : rapport annuel pour 1924, prospectus d'é imprimé par la Amsterdamsche et Meuse et par la Maatschappij voor Ondernem Nederlandsch-Indië. 1924-1925	
 S.A. Industrias de Seda Nacional (société de culture de vers à soie, à Sao Paulo, Br 1924-1928 	ésil). 1 liasse
34. Société Franco-Belge de Matériel de Chemins de Fer s.a., avec procès entre la d'Outremer et la Société Française Financière et Coloniale. 1924-1928	Banque 1 liasse
1727-1720	1 112350
35. Société Anonyme des Carburants Makhonine s.a. : constitution et liquidation. 1925-1926	1 liasse
III. PROJETS ET SYNDICATS	
36. Société Anonyme Recherche et Études Hydrologiques s.a. : copie des lettres es par Paul Lippens à propos de sondages effectués à Knokke pour la Con Immobilière Le Zoute. 1912-1913	
37. Pétroles en Tunisie : relations avec la Banque française pour le Commerce et l'Ind 1920	ustrie. 1 liasse

38.	Notes et correspondance échangées entre F. Cattier et Albert Marchal con projet de prise de contrôle de la société Visserie de Douai (vis à bois) et industrielle dans le Nord de la France.		
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39.	Télégramme de F. Cattier demandant d'étudier le placement de liquidités d Marconi en fonds d'État belge ou bons du trésor interprovinciaux ; notes à ce 1922		
40.	Situation de la société Oberschlesche Eisenbahn Bedarfs A.G. (en Haute Silés de prise de participation dans une société constituée pour le contrôle métallurgique de Friedenshütte.	· · ·	
	1922	1 liasse	
41.	Projet de prise de participation dans la société Les Charbons Reconstitués s.a. 1923	1 liasse	
	7. COMPTABILITÉ		
42.	Livre journal (n° 97). septembre 1927-mai 1928	1 volume	
43.	Livre journal (n° 98). décembre 1927-avril 1928	1 volume	
	8. PERSONNEL		
45.	Règlement général du personnel : brochure. 1922	1 liasse	