

# The Flemish Republic

A quarterly newsletter explaining why  
Flanders is seceding from Belgium

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## Belgian Taxes Are Choking Flanders

The present Belgian government does not represent the majority of the Flemings, who constitute sixty percent of the Belgian population. Indeed, in Flanders the Liberal Party and the Socialist Party got only 42%



**Opposition Leader Guy Verhofstadt in 1997:**  
"The Flemings are being dragged down by Belgium, by the paralysis of its leading establishment."

**Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt today:**  
"Tax, tax, tax."

of the votes for the Senate and 47.7% for the Chamber of Representatives in the general elections of 18 May 2003. The two left-wing parties were nevertheless able to form a coalition because of their huge majority in Wallonia, the French-speaking South of Belgium.

Once again, free-market oriented Flanders will have to suffer the consequences

of the collectivist policies imposed on it by Wallonia. The new government, nominally led by the Fleming **Guy Verhofstadt**, is being dominated by two Francophone politicians: **Louis Michel**, the strongman of the Walloon Liberals, and **Elio Di Rupo**, the President of the Walloon Socialists.

Each year Flanders pays 8.5% of its GDP to Wallonia in financial transfers needed to foot the bill of the generous social handouts in the South. During the past two decades, various Flemish politicians from different parties have demanded an end

to the widespread abuses in the social security system. However, as no political reform is possible in Belgium without the agreement of the majority of the Walloons, this request has never been granted. Instead, unwilling and unable to cut back its "social" expenditure, Belgium has consistently raised its tax levels, until the country became what the former Christian-Democrat Prime Minister **Mark Eyskens** once called "a fiscal Himalaya."

### Verhoftax

Wallonia has never objected to the high taxation levels because Flanders contributes 64% of the Belgian taxes, while it only receives 57.5%. In 1997, Guy Verhofstadt wrote: "The Flemings are being dragged down by the South, by the paralysis of its leading establishment - the Francophone Socialist Trade Union, the Parti Socialiste and the Walloon Employers." (Guy Verhofstadt, *De Belgische Ziekte [The Belgian Disease]*, p. 38). Two years later, however, after Louis Michel offered Verhofstadt the post of Prime Minister of a leftist coalition, he turned his coat, accepting Belgium's corporatist structure and increasing the government subsidies to the three official trade unions within his first year in office.

Last July, the first measure of the newly installed second Verhofstadt cabinet was to raise taxation levels even further. The Flemings have now come to call their Prime Minister "Guy Verhoftax."

In 2002, the tax burden in Belgium was as high as 46.2% of GDP. It is not surprising that many people no longer wish to work in the official economy and prefer to do jobs on the sly. The black sector of the labour market is estimated to amount to at least 20% of the Belgian GDP, while the European average is only 10 to 15% of GDP.

The Vlaams Blok aims for an independent Flanders, where the Flemish people can decide about their own economic, social and fiscal policies, and where taxes can be brought down by at least the 8.5% that presently go to Wallonia.

## Fighting Abuses

Flanders has the means, the opportunities and the political will to get its economy into shape. It wants to re-organise the state-owned and partly state-owned companies, ensure the retirement pensions, bring down the levels of unemployment.

The Vlaams Blok is convinced that one way of doing this is by **drastically cutting taxes and labour costs**.

However, as Belgium is a bipolar country, where every decision also needs the approval of Wallonia, the Socialist-dominated French-speaking part of the country, everything is bound to remain as it is.

Indeed, because almost forty percent of the working population in Wallonia is employed by the government, because the Walloon authorities refuse to stop their voters abusing social subsidies, because they refuse to tackle the inefficiencies of the system, **Flanders is being dragged down**.

Wallonia simply does not care about the abuses and inefficiencies because the Flemings, who constitute sixty percent of the Belgians, pay the bulk of the Belgian bills.

We cannot allow this situation of **granting privileges to a minority group at the expense of the majority** to continue. It is impairing the wealth and income of Flanders. The Vlaams Blok wants to put an end to this plundering of Flemish resources.



**Senator Frank Vanhecke**  
President of the Vlaams Blok  
"Belgium impairs the wealth of Flanders."

# “Social Partners:” Newspeak for Dictators



Vlaams Blok MPs protest against the fact that Parliament has nothing to say in Belgium. The corporatist regime silences its opponents.

The small Kingdom of Belgium with its ten million inhabitants has a unique corporatist political system. Economic and social policies are decided in consensus between the so-called “Social Partners,” rather than in Parliament. These “Social Partners” are the *Fédération des entreprises de Belgique* (FEB), the official representative of the Belgian employers, and three trade unions or *syndicats* (a Christian-Democrat, a Socialist and a Liberal one) recognized by the state as the *only* official representatives of the employees.

The Belgian state has delegated the management of its entire welfare system to these “Social Partners.” Indeed, **the three official unions, not the state, pay unemployment benefits.** Each year the government gives them the necessary funds and also pays them a fee for every unemployed person they cater for. The perverse result is that it is in the unions’ interest to have high unemployment: the more people without a job, the richer and more powerful the unions become. In 2001, the three unions received 4.78 billion francs (about 118.5 million euro, £ 72.4 million or \$ 119.5 million) from the government to pay unemployment benefits.

## Monopoly

All Belgian civil servants (constituting one quarter of the working population) are *automatically* union members: **the government pays their membership**

**dues directly to the unions** – even if an individual does not want to join. In that case his dues are divided proportionally amongst the three official unions. In 2001, the government paid the unions

2,815 francs (about 69.5 euro, £ 42 or \$ 70) per civil servant, or a total of over 1.82 billion francs (45 million euro, £ 27.6 million or \$ 45.5 million).

The Belgian State deals only with the three officially recognised unions: all other unions are called “independent unions.” The latter are small and powerless. Employers who negotiate with them, run into serious trouble with the three big ones.

## Conglomerates

The mandatory health insurance system is also run by the Social Partners. Each of the official unions is linked to a sickness fund. These funds are represented in the state organisations supervising the health care system. They own hospitals, pharmacies and health resorts. The three big conglomerates also have their own insurance companies, their savings and investment banks and their Members of Parliament.

The Social Partners finance the party of their political affiliation and appoint their representa-

**tives in the party structures, at the national as well as the local levels.** The Social Partners are always represented in the cabinet. Consequently, it is impossible for any government to even

## It is in the trade unions’ interest to have high unemployment.

try to diminish the influence of the Social Partners.

## Clients

The Social Partners have secured well-paid representatives on the boards of all government-run companies

and institutions, such as the National Rail Company, the Belgian postal services, the Belgian Central Bank, the National Radio and Television Company, the universities of Ghent and Liège, etc.

As the unions, their sickness funds, banks and insurance companies operate in Flanders as well as Wallonia, and have huge financial and political interests in both parts of the country, they do not tolerate any questioning of the Belgian State and its unity, because of the real risk that any successor to this state will be less generous to them.

## Archenemy

The Social Partners consider the Vlaams Blok to be its archenemy. **The three trade unions expel all members whom they discover to be Vlaams Blok sympathisers.** The consequences can be very severe, given that the official unions pay the unemployment benefits. The three mainstream parties also signed the so-called “cordon sanitaire:” an agreement whereby they promised never to negotiate (let alone cooperate) with the Vlaams Blok, not even at the municipal level. Vlaams Blok representatives have also been excluded from boards such as these of Ghent University and Vlaams Blok politicians are excluded from participating in most radio and television shows.

## I Was Censored in Parliament

My speech to the Belgian Chamber of Representatives was censored in the Parliamentary Records because I had said “Down with Belgium; Long live the Flemish Republic.” Only in a sovereign Flemish nation-state, however, can Parliament be the democratic expression of the people of Flanders.



Frieda Van Temsche, MP

“We are not even allowed to express our opinions in Parliament.”

# Vlaams Blok banned from visit to Wales and Scotland

## An interview with Dominiek Lootens-Stael, MP.

**The Flemish MP Dominiek Lootens-Stael was excluded from a delegation visiting Wales and Scotland. Never mind that Mr. Lootens-Stael is not a "fascist," the fact that he has been branded as one, was sufficient to ban him.**

### Why were you going to Britain?

I am the leader of the Vlaams Blok in the *Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie* (VGC), the parliament of the Flemish inhabitants of Brussels. In this parliament, one of Belgium's many regional legislatures, the Vlaams Blok is the biggest party, representing over 38% of the votes. As all the other parties have teamed up in a coalition, it is, moreover, the only opposition party. The VGC was invited to visit the Welsh National Assembly and the Scottish Parliament from 7 to 13 September. In Belgium the opposition is usually represented in such parliamentary delegations. Hence, I was put forward as one of its members.

### What went wrong?

The British Embassy in Brussels objected to my presence in the VGC delegation. Ambassador **Gavin Hewitt** wrote a letter to the Welsh and Scottish parliaments warning them against "coming into contact" with me. "Mr. Dominiek Lootens-Stael," he said, "is a duly elected member of the Flemish Parliament and we cannot prevent him from visiting the UK. But any politicians or



**Philip Claeys MEP, Dominiek Lootens MP and Luk Van Nieuwenhuysen MP, Vice-President of the Vlaams Blok, in front of the Scottish Parliament.**

officials coming into contact with him should be warned of his background." He referred to the need to "respect the

Belgian parties to isolate the Vlaams Blok and never to cooperate with it on any issues.

### Because the Belgian authorities do not want to admit that our growing electoral appeal has anything to do with Flemish patriotism, they brand us as "racists."

*cordon sanitaire* whereby all (Belgian) mainstream political parties refuse to have contacts with the Vlaams Blok."

### Cordon sanitaire? That sounds French?

Yes, it is a French veterinary term referring to the establishment of a quarantine zone around contagious animals. In Belgian politics, the "cordon sanitaire" refers to an agreement amongst the

### Why so much hatred?

Belgium is dominated by Wallonia, its French-speaking half, which is ruled by the Socialists. The Vlaams Blok strives for the secession of Flanders, the Dutch-speaking North of Belgium. Because the Belgian authorities do not want to admit that our growing electoral appeal has anything to do with Flemish patriotism, they brand us as "racists."

### Why does the British Ambassador behave like a Belgian agent?

I have no idea. Mr. Hewitt's predecessor, Ambassador **David Colvin**, was on speaking terms with all the Belgian political parties, including the Vlaams Blok. After Mr. Hewitt had written his letter to the Welsh and Scottish parliamentarians, Vlaams Blok President **Frank Vanhecke** and myself wrote him requesting a meeting. The Ambassador has not even acknowledged receipt of the letter.

### What are the lessons to be drawn from this affair?

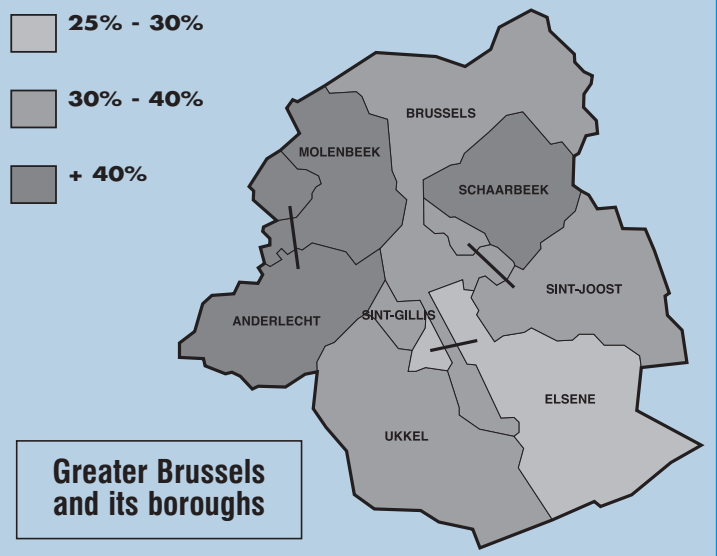
Ambassador Hewitt and the Welsh and Scottish Nationalists call us fascists. If we do not react to this allegation, they say: "You do not react. This proves that you are fascists!" If we do react, they say: "How dare you react! By doing so, you prove to be fascists."

It is, however, a basic human right that the accused be allowed to defend himself. This is a right that was denied to us. We are used to such treatment in Belgium, but we are saddened to experience the "Belgianisation" of Britain.

Nevertheless we shall continue to provide information abroad about our true democratic nature and about the aims of our party, that have nothing to do with fascism and racism.

### The Vlaams Blok percentage of the Flemish vote in the Brussels boroughs during the general elections for the Chamber of Representatives

	1999	2003
Anderlecht	32.4	44.2
Brussels	28.6	34.1
Elsene	20.9	28.4
Schaarbeek	31.8	44.8
Sint-Gillis	24.8	33.9
Molenbeek	31.9	44.0
Sint-Joost	21.6	30.0
Ukkel	26.3	37.4
Total	28.7	38.9





## Belgium: The Fattest Lady that Ever Walked

Belgium, with its 10.2 million inhabitants and a labour force of 4.2 million, has 500,000 people on the dole and 1,000,000 working for the government – which means that the income of 1.5 million Belgians (or 23% of the voting population) is being provided directly by the state. Belgium has as many state employees as the Netherlands (16.2 million inhabitants) and one of the largest public sectors in Western Europe. The situation is worst in Wallonia, the Socialist-dominated Francophone South of Belgium, where almost 40% is either unemployed or working for the government.



Marleen Beckers-Govaerts, MP

**“The income of 40 % of the Walloons is being provided directly by the state, hence the Flemish taxpayers.”**

The corporatist-syndicalist framework of Belgium is a royal invention. It was established in the 1920s and 30s by Belgian King **Albert I** (1875-1934) who tried to devise a social welfare construction that could unite the inhabitants of his artificial multinational kingdom. Albert was one of the first politicians to understand that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the state and the welfare state would be one and the same thing. Hence, he ensured that the Belgian welfare system could not be divided along ethnic lines and forged a coalition with the Socialist Party that dominated Wallonia, the Francophone South of the country.

“Three enemies lie around my throne,” Albert wrote: “Conservatives who are against the state; Flemish activists who are against the monarchy and the Belgian Nation; and demagogues who adhere to a certain Catholicism resembling French popular democracies. To hold out against them, I can only count on the support of Socialism, which is national, in favour of Belgian unity, and in favour of centralism – three elements that make it an ally of the dynasty.”

This coalition between the Crown and the Socialists is still intact today. It explains why leading Belgian Socialists, such as former NATO Secretary General **Willy Claes** and former Parti Socialiste President **Guy Spitaels** are still frequent guests at the royal palace, despite being convicted in corruption cases, while Vlaams Blok politicians who have never been convicted for any wrongdoings, have never been invited.



The Royal Palace in Brussels:

**Socialist crooks remain welcome here, even after being convicted.**

## The islamisation of Flanders

For the past five years Mohammed has been the most popular name given to new-born boys in Brussels, the capital of Europe and Belgium. The same applies to Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, and to major cities like Rotterdam and Antwerp.

In Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders, 29.3% of the population is not of Flemish origin. This proportion is predicted to rise to 35% by 2007 and to 40% by 2012, as immigrants are still entering the city and locals are moving out. Most of the newcomers are muslims.

Today, 35% of the primary school children in the Antwerp suburbs are of foreign origin, while in the centre of Antwerp the figure is as high as 58%. In many schools, there are now more muslim children than there are Christians.



Antwerp's once most illustrious secondary school, the Atheneum, where generations of Flemish scientists and artists were educated, today has 80% (!) muslims amongst its students and has in practice become an islamic institution. In this

school, as in many others, students get the day off for islamic feasts and Flemish girls are so intimidated that they no longer dare to wear a cross.

### Shared values

Like Brussels, Antwerp has an abundance of mosques, many of them strongholds of islamic fundamentalism. Many Flemish Christians and Jews feel threatened by the growing muslim presence in their home town, and many feel alienated in their own neighbourhoods.

Adding insult to injury, the Antwerp town council has recently decided to transform the oldest public

swimming pool of the city into a *hammam*, an oriental steam bath, that will be open exclusively to women. The project will cost 6.3 million euro.

The Vlaams Blok is not a racist party, but wants to stop the islamisation of Flanders. In Antwerp, the party has 33% of the vote. It voices the growing, but understandable, frustration of the indigenous population. Along with the people, the Vlaams Blok doubts whether the muslim immigrants share the basic Western values of freedom and tolerance and whether it will be possible to assimilate large numbers of immigrants with a different cultural background into Flemish society.

## Interested?

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