

The Flemish Republic

A quarterly newsletter explaining why Flanders is seceding from Belgium

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VLAAMS BLOK

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Winning Team

The cause for Flemish independence was boosted enormously on 13 June when the Vlaams Blok, striving for a secession of Dutch-speaking Flanders from Belgium, became the biggest party in the country.

In the Flemish regional elections, the Vlaams Blok won 24.1% of the Flemish vote. It gained the support of one million voters in a country of only ten million inhabitants, six million



One million Flemings voted Vlaams Blok.

of them Flemings. It won 32 of the 124 seats in the Flemish Parliament, three more than the Christian-Democrats, who, in an attempt to stop the rise of the Vlaams Blok, had gone to the elections in a "cartel" with a centrist (though equally separatist) Flemish-nationalist party, the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), that got 6 seats. The elections were a blow to the leftist governing coalition of Liberals, Socialists and Greens, obtaining 25, 25 and 6 seats respectively and, hence, no longer able to form a new coalition.

The Vlaams Blok, originally founded in 1977 as a break-away of the Flemish-nationalist party, has transformed itself into a mainstream conservative party since the late 1980s, aptly filling the gap that the Liberals and the Christian-Democrats left when they moved to the left. From 3 percent of the Flemish vote in the 1987 general elections, the Vlaams Blok jumped to 10.3 in 1991, 12.3 in 1995, 15.8 in 1999, 18.2 in 2003 and 24.1 percent today.

The Vlaams Blok is now not only Flanders', but also Belgium's biggest party. It was supported by 981,587 voters, while the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), the biggest party in French-speaking Wallonia, Belgium's southern half, got only 878,577 votes.

It is significant that with this result the PS is allowed to send 4 members to the European Parliament, while the Vlaams Blok has only 3 MEPs. This discrepancy is due to the unjust Belgian system where the Francophones have always been overrepresented and the Flemings consistently minorised.

Cordon Sanitaire

Within the Belgian context, the largest Wallonian party is the dominant political power

in the country, while the biggest Flemish power, the Vlaams Blok, is rendered powerless. At the instigation of the Socialists, the Vlaams Blok has been isolated into a so-called "cordon sanitaire," a formal agreement by all the other parties that they will never talk to the Vlaams Blok, let alone form a government coalition with it.

As Joshua Livestro explained in *The Wall Street Journal Europe* (June 16, 2004), the cordon sanitaire exists because "(t)he main proponents of the cordon sanitaire are the

Socialists (...): they find themselves in the unenviable position of hav-

ing to contest elections in a (country) that has always been predominantly center-right. Under normal circumstances, that fact would have condemned them to eternal opposition. But the cordon sanitaire helps to maintain the abnormal circumstances that make the formation of a center-right majority government impossible. As long as it stays in place, no coalition can be formed without left-wing participation."

The Flemish voters no longer accept this abnormal situation. They want a Flanders governed by the centre-right, including the Vlaams Blok.

Like a Phoenix

Despite our electoral successes – or perhaps because of our successes – the Belgian regime wants to kill us in court. When Prime Minister **Guy Verhofstadt** and his mentor, Minister of Foreign Affairs **Louis Michel**, came to power in 1999, they said that their priority would be the elimination of the Vlaams Blok. "The issue I want to be judged upon," Verhofstadt said, "is whether I will be able to stop the Vlaams Blok."

As he could not stop us in the voting booth, our party was brought to court on charges of racism by a quango resorting directly under the Prime Minister, the so-called *Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism*. Its director, **Jozef De Witte**, recently launched a campaign to boycott Israeli products. The poster of this campaign showed a blood orange being squeezed and "referred to the worst anti-Semitic propaganda of blooddrinking Jews" (*De Standaard*, March 19, 2004). This, apparently, is not considered to be racism in Belgium as it did not entail prosecution.

We, however, were convicted last April by politically appointed judges because we do not believe that immigrants should have immediate access to the same welfare benefits as those who have acquired our nationality and have lived and paid taxes in our country for years.

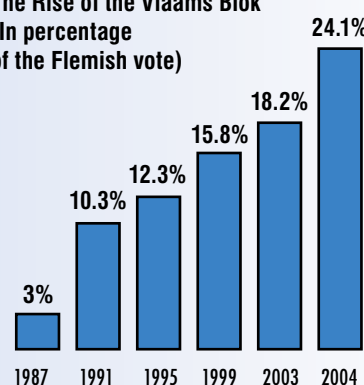
A s **Stephen Pollard** pointed out in *The Times* (April 24, 2004) "(t)he real reason why the Belgian authorities have been bent on banning the Vlaams Blok for

years has nothing to do with racism and the rights of immigrants. It is that the party advocates secession from Belgium and the establishment of a Republic of Flanders. Worse still, as Belgium's only conservative party it upsets the country's cosy political applectart."

If the Belgian Supreme Court reaffirms last April's verdict, next November 9th, the Vlaams Blok will be forced to disband, but like a phoenix another Flemish-secessionist party will rise.

Frank Vanhecke, MEP

The Rise of the Vlaams Blok (In percentage of the Flemish vote)



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“How can you be a racist by An interview with Frank Vanhecke

Mr. Vanhecke, you are the party leader of the Vlaams Blok. Are you a racist?

Of course not. The Belgian Anti-Racism Act is a **catch-all law**. It defines “discrimination” as “each form of distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, which has or may have as its aim or consequence that the recognition, the enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social or cultural sphere or in other areas of social life, is destroyed, affected or restricted.” [my emphasis]. The law is no joke: **It reverses the onus of proof**. The complainant does not need to prove that the accused “discriminates” or propagates “discrimination;” it is up to the latter to prove that he does not.

Why was your party prosecuted?

The dirty war against our party began in October 1988 when we gained 18% of the votes in the municipal elections in Antwerp, Flanders’ largest city. “The Vlaams Blok is a disease and has to be fought with all means,” **Louis Tobback**, the socialist Minister of the Interior, said (*Avro Televisier*, 7 Nov. 1988). Following the general elections of 1991, when we won 10.3% of the Flemish vote, the **Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism (CEOFR)**, was established. This agency, funded by the government, is controlled by the Prime Minister’s office and has representatives of all political parties except the Vlaams Blok on its board. It was given the authority to prosecute people who “discriminate.”

The recent verdict has not condemned the party itself, but three non-profit organizations of the party. Why?

Because the regime wants to kill our party by intimidating everyone who cooperates with us. The Belgian Anti-Racism Act not only punishes “racists,” but every-

one who in whatever way “cooperates with” them or “belongs to” groups advocating “discrimination.”

When did the procedures start?

In 1993, the CEOFR brought the son and son-in-law of **Karel Dillen**, the founder of the Vlaams Blok, to court. Not because they were “racists,” but on the charge of art. 3: “cooperating” with the Vlaams Blok. However, the Brussels Penal Court declared itself incompetent to issue a verdict. According to the Belgian Constitution political and press crimes had to be brought before a court with a jury – the so-called *Cour d’Assises*. The CEOFR, doubting whether a popular jury would ever convict the Vlaams Blok, decided not to bring the case before *Assises*.

This let you off the hook?

No, because CEOFR chairman **Johan Leman** asked the government to change the Constitution so that political and press crimes of a racist nature could be brought before professional judges. Judges in Belgium are not elected or appointed by lawyers, but are appointed by the governing parties.

Robbed by the Regime

In 1989, Belgium voted a law prohibiting most private donations to political parties. Political parties are subsidised by the state in proportion with the number of votes they received in the elections.

The *Parti Socialiste* (PS) proposed a bill to stop all state funding of the Vlaams Blok. “A democracy should not subsidise its enemies,” PS parliamentary leader Claude Eerdekens said (*Het Nieuwsblad*, 13 Oct. 2003). The Ghent ruling allows the governing parties to rob the Vlaams Blok of all its finances, thereby preventing it from campaigning in the elections.

On 7 May 1998, after new electoral victories of the Vlaams Blok, all parties except the Vlaams Blok voted the requested constitutional change, and an addition to the Anti-Racism Act. The added article 5bis allows the courts to deprive “racists” or those “cooperating” with them of their political rights. This means that they will no longer be able to vote or to stand for election.

On 11 October 2000, three days after yet another Vlaams Blok election victory, the CEOFR brought three non-profit organisations of our party to court on the charges of “cooperation” with a racist organisation. On 29 June 2001, a Flemish judge of the Brussels Penal Court **refused** to issue a verdict, arguing that it is up to the electorate to decide the fate of political parties.

That is the essence of democracy, surely.

Yes, but the CEOFR took the case to the appeal court. On 26 February 2003, the Flemish section of the Brussels Court of Appeal reaffirmed the previous ruling. CEOFR president Leman said he would continue appealing until he had found a judge who would find against

the Vlaams Blok. He took the case to the *Cour de Cassation*, the Belgian Supreme Court, consisting of Flemings as well as Francophones. On 18 November 2003 it overruled the Brussels verdict.

Meanwhile Leman was replaced as CEOFR chairman by **Jozef De Witte**, the brother of a high-ranking socialist civil servant, while the case was brought before the Court of Appeal in Ghent, a stronghold of Socialists and Liberals. Ghent finally gave the CEOFR what it wanted.

What happened?

On 21 April 2004, judge **Alain Smetrijns**, a pro-Belgian Francophone from Ghent, who works part-time at the *Cour de Cassation*, read out a verdict convicting each of the three Vlaams Blok non-profit organisations to a considerable fine of € 12,400. The ruling acts as a precedent allowing the CEOFR to prosecute every Vlaams Blok politician, every party member and even everyone who works for us on a contractual basis, as a “cooperator” of the Vlaams Blok. The ruling states literally: “By ‘belonging to’ a group or society is meant that the culprit [...] is a part of the group or society [...]. It is not necessary for him to have conducted any activities within the group or society. Similarly, ‘cooperating,’ by which is meant any form of support for the functioning of the group or society, does not imply the execution of criminal acts. The punishability of ‘belonging to’ and ‘cooperating’ follows from the mere knowledge that the group or society, to which one belongs or with which one cooperates, [...] commits discrimination.”

The aim of the verdict is to kill the Vlaams Blok. This, too, is stated explicitly in the ruling: “Rendering punishable every person who belongs to or cooperates with a group or society [...] serves as an efficient means to suppress such groups or societies, as the lawmaker intended. Rendering punishable the members or collaborators of the group or society inherently jeopardizes the continued existence or functioning of the group or society [...].”



Agnes Bruyninckx, MP
“The Socialists are stealing our money.”

...y telling people the truth?" ...e, party leader of the Vlaams Blok

Surely the court had to prove that the Vlaams Blok was a racist organisation?

Judge Smetrijns "proved" that we are "racists" by quoting from a selection of excerpts provided by the CEOFR. These excerpts were taken from an anthology of no more than 16 different texts published by various local Vlaams Blok chapters between 1996 and 2000. Though many of these texts simply quoted official statistics on crime rates and social welfare expenditure, they were, according to Smetrijns, published with "an intention to contribute to a campaign of hatred." One of the texts, which dealt with the position of women in fundamentalist muslim societies, was written by **Belkiz Sögütli**, a female Turkish-born Vlaams Blok member from Aalst who had herself been raised in such an environment. The court said the Aalst section of our party published her story "not to inform the public about the position of women in the islamic world, but to depict the image [of non-indigenous people] as unethical and barbarian." This accusation is disgraceful. The court cannot know what our intentions are in publishing a true story nor in quoting official statistics. How can one be a criminal by telling people the truth?

What will you do now?

We have appealed against the verdict. Pending the verdict of the Supreme Court next November, the party can continue its activities. However, if the *Cour de Cassation* confirms the Ghent ruling, the Vlaams Blok will have to disband itself in order to avoid criminal prosecutions against its members and its "cooperators." We also expect that the party's leaders will lose their rights to vote and stand for election. Indeed, anyone who "cooperated" with us in the past five years, can lose his political rights. The law is retroactive until 1999.

If the Vlaams Blok is disbanded, another Flemish-secessionist party will be founded.



Vlaams Blok party leader Frank Vanhecke:

"The court claims to know what our intentions are. It condemned our party to death on the basis of our so-called criminal intentions in quoting official statistics."

Belgian Justice

Belgium gained international notoriety last year with its attempts to prosecute British Prime Minister **Tony Blair**, the American President **George W. Bush**, U.S Secretary of State **Colin Powell**, U.S. General **Tommy Franks** and many others. After America threatened to move NATO headquarters out of Belgium and after U.S. congressman **Gary Ackerman** (Dem., New York) pushed a bill (the so-called "Belgium Invasion Act") to protect U.S. citizens – if necessary by military force – from irresponsible prosecution by foreign nations, Brussels reluctantly changed the country's universal jurisdiction bill. This in-

famous piece of legislation had given Belgian courts the power to try foreigners whom they deem to be human rights criminals, regardless of where the alleged crime occurred and regardless of the nationality of the perpetrator or the victim.

Intimidation

Another example of political abuse of the Belgian courts, is the case against the Vlaams Blok. But the party is not the only victim of Belgium's antidiscrimination laws. Another victim is the 80 year old Flemish **Cardinal Gustave Joos**. The Cardinal recently said that homosexual acts are pervert acts. The *Centre for*

Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism (CEOFR) opened an inquiry against the Cardinal because his declaration "may affect" the rights of homosexuals. Though the old man will probably not be charged, as convicting a cardinal is something the Belgian regime does not (yet) dare, he has been intimidated to such an extent that he suffered a nervous breakdown.

If this story proves anything, it is that politically motivated suits are not uncommon in a country such as Belgium that does not understand the basic principles of liberty, democracy and freedom of expression.

Genocide

André Flahaut, the Belgian minister of Defence, strikes again. In April, the Walloon Socialist had his ministry publish a booklet for secondary school pupils, listing the world's "13 major genocides." According to the list the biggest genocide in history was committed in North America and cost 15 million lives. It started in 1492 and continues to... this very day. The genocides of Soviet Russia and Communist China are conspicuously absent from Flahaut's list, as is the Congo genocide committed by Belgian King **Leopold II** in the late 19th century. However, an Australian genocide of 1824, which claimed 10,000 lives, is included in the list.

The anti-Western bias of the Belgian authorities is so extravagant that it makes one ashamed to be a Belgian and is in itself sufficient reason to become a Flemish patriot.



Nancy Caslo, MP
"The anti-Western bias of Belgium is extravagant."

Royal Censorship

Last April, Belgian television censored a British documentary about Belgian king **Leopold II**'s reign of terror in the Congo (1885-1908), during which 10 million Africans are said to have perished. The Congo natives were mutilated and murdered for not delivering enough rubber to the private rubber companies of the cruel king.

Belgium's Foreign Minister **Louis Michel**, a Francophone Liberal, and Belgium's present Belgian king **Albert II** both pressured Belgian state television not to broadcast the BBC documentary *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*. The Royal Palace expressed its concern about the documentary's "historical accuracy." "This is a partisan work and its thesis is completely one-sided," Mr. Michel said. "The film is a biased diatribe."

As a compromise the state television had the documentary "put in the right context." "We have had the facts qualified by Belgian specialists," **Jan Van den Berghe**, the television's royalty expert said. Every comparison between Leopold's genocide and that of **Adolf Hitler** was cut from the documentary, as were all references to the wealth of the Belgian royal family - which is to a large extent based on the Congo proceeds of Leopold II.

Criticism of the monarchy is taboo in Belgium because it might tarnish the king's image. The king plays a central role in Belgian politics. Being neither Fleming nor Walloon (the Saxe-Coburgs are a German family although they speak French), the king is considered to be an independent arbiter whose motives may not be questioned.



The atrocities of Leopold II remain a taboo subject in Belgium.

Down with Brussels

Belgium is a multi-national country in which two different peoples live uneasily together: the Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north and the French-speaking Walloons in the south. Flanders is a unilingual region where since 1930 Dutch is the only official language. Wallonia is unilingual as well and speaks French. The only officially bilingual part of Belgium is Brussels. This city was historically Dutch speaking, but became predominantly Francophone during the 175 years of Belgium's existence.

Belgium has always been dominated by a culturally aggressive Francophone establishment that has tried to impose its

language on the Flemings. It wanted Flanders to become bilingual (Dutch and French), while Wallonia was to remain exclusively Francophone.

Parity

The Flemings, however, managed to limit the bilingual status of Flanders to Brussels and to prevent the "frenchification" of the rest of Flanders. In exchange they accepted the "parity principle" whereby the Walloons are entitled to 50% of all the major functions in Belgium, although they constitute only

40% of the population. The principles of the "parity" and the unilingual status of Flanders and Wallonia have been laid down in the Belgian Constitution. Despite the Constitution, however, 35 Flemish municipi-

ties are demanding an immediate secession from bilingual Brussels and a merger with Dutch-speaking Leuven. Francophone parties, however, are vetoing this.

The Vlaams Blok supports the mayors. It demands respect for the Belgian Constitution. If Belgium is unable or unwilling to respect its own Constitution, then the "parity principle" must be abolished.



palities surrounding Brussels, the so-called Halle-Vilvoorde region, have remained part of the bilingual Brussels constituency.

Constitutionally, they should have been merged with the rest of

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Saxe-Coburg Watch