

The Flemish Republic

A quarterly newsletter explaining why Flanders is seceding from Belgium

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P*ss on You

"Manneken Pis," the statue of a peeing boy in Brussels, is Belgium's national symbol. Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that a press spokesman of Belgian Vice Prime Minister **Johan Vande Lanotte** who wanted to vent his opinion about **George W. Bush's** visit to Belgium last February, devised a sticker to be put in urinals. The sticker depicted the face of Bush and an American flag with the caption "Go Ahead. Piss on me." It could be ordered (free!) through the official website of Vande Lanotte's Socialist Party.

Undiplomatic

Since 1999, when Belgium received a leftist government coalition of Liberals and Socialists, the country has acquired a reputation for undiplomatic international behaviour. The departure of **Louis Michel**, the previous Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the European Commission in 2004 has not changed this. Though the Liberal and Socialist parties no longer hold a majority in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking Flemings (who make up 60% of the Belgian population) are still being ruled by the left, owing to the overwhelming Socialist majority in French-speaking Wallonia.

Our Own Voice

Belgium's "peeing" on its allies is hurting its political and com-

mercial international relations. Since Wallonia accounts only for a meagre 13% of Belgian exports, Flemish companies are the ones most harmed. As a consequence, the movement for Flemish secessionism has been growing amongst Flemish entrepreneurs.



Manneken Pis is Belgium's national symbol. Is this why Brussels pees on the world and on Flanders?

The Vlaams Belang favours a foreign policy that puts the national interest of Flanders first. Of the 124 members of the regional Flemish Parliament, 38 are openly secessionist and another 54 belong to parties demanding that Belgium become a confederation instead of a federal state. This would allow Flanders to speak with its own voice in international affairs.

Referendum

On February 26, **Elio Di Rupo**, the party leader of the Walloon Socialists and the kingmaker of Belgian politics, told the media that he is certain that the majority of the Flemings would vote against secession in a referendum. The Vlaams Belang, accepting the challenge, called on Di Rupo to hold such a referendum, but the Socialist leader backed down at once, saying that the Belgian Constitution does not allow for referendums. His party is not only peeing on the American flag, but also on the Flemings. By abolishing Belgium, the Vlaams Belang will put an end to this charade and restore democratic rule.

Majority Rights Do Not Exist in Belgium

In 1970 the Belgian Constitution was changed. In order to keep the Flemish majority in the minority position it had been in since the country was established in 1830, the so-called "parity rule" was introduced. This means that half the top jobs in executive functions and the public services are set aside for the Walloon minority. According to an unwritten rule 50% of all government investments have to be made in Wallonia.

Another novelty of the 1970 Constitution was the so-called "bolt mechanism." This implies that for all future changes to the Belgian institutional and social framework, not only a two-thirds majority is needed, but also a 50% majority in each language group. In order to ensure that a measure does not pass, it is sufficient that 31 of the 60 Francophones amongst the 150 delegates in the Chamber of Representatives vote against it, even if the other 129 MPs are all in favour. The Constitution of 1970 has turned Belgium into a country dominated by the majority within the minority – in other words the Socialists in Wallonia.

In a recent interview, **Elio Di Rupo**, party leader of the Francophone Socialists was asked: "What will happen if the Flemings use their majority in the Chamber?"

He answered: "That would be the end of Belgium."

The journalist objected: "That would be democratic rule, a majority in Parliament."

Whereupon Di Rupo said: "Then democracy will be the end of Belgium." (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, Feb. 26, 2005).

The Vlaams Belang strives for Flemish independence, not because we want to have a nation-state for every ethnic group, but because we demand democracy for Flanders. The Vlaams Belang says to the Flemish people what **George W. Bush** said to the world in his *State of the Union* on Jan. 20: "When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."



**Frank Vanhecke, MEP
Vlaams Belang
Party Leader**

"We are Flemish secessionists because we are democrats."

Why the Belgian Experience is Important for Europe

"A Throne in Brussels: Britain, the Saxe-Coburgs and the Belgianisation of Europe," to be published in May by Imprint in Exeter (UK), is the first popular history of Belgium in the English language. The author of the book, **Dr. Paul Belien**, is a Flemish journalist who regularly writes in British and American publications, such as *The Spectator* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Paul Belien is the founder of the Brussels-based think tank *Center for the New Europe*, a member of the international classical-liberal Mont Pelerin Society and one of the nine co-founders of Belgian Prime Minister **Guy Verhofstadt's** Flemish Liberal Party (which he left when Mr. Verhofstadt steered it onto a socialist course). We asked him why the lessons from Belgium, an artificial state that this year commemorates its 175th anniversary, are important for Europe.



Paul Belien

"The Belgianisation of Europe is a real danger."

What do you mean when you talk about the "Belgianisation" of Europe?

I borrowed this term from **Lord William Rees-Mogg**. When I sent him one of the drafts of my manuscript, he replied that "the Belgianisation of Europe is a real danger." In my book I draw the parallels between Belgian political culture and the political mores of the European Union. My thesis is that a united Europe will be like a "Greater Belgium," with the same basic flaws of political unaccountability and wide-spread corruption.

Belgium acts as a model for the EU since Europe will also be an artificial construct. However, Belgium is a failed attempt to "construct a nation" out of different peoples with separate languages and traditions.

Why did this attempt fail?

Belgium's history is a dramatic search for a national identity or a "civic glue" that could keep Flemings and Walloons together. In the early 20th century, the Belgian construction was based on the ideology of "social corporatism."

Belgium has been made into a welfare state involving huge financial so-called "social" transfers from free-market oriented Flanders to socialist-oriented Wallonia. This has

turned a conflict that used to be linguistic into a bitter conflict over money. Flanders wants to reform the welfare mechanism but cannot, because Wallonia vetoes every reform, thereby abusing the vetoing powers which it has within the constitutional federal framework. The more rigidly the Walloon socialists respond, the more nationalist the Flemish become, which in turn stirs

up Walloon nationalism. This process has been going on for three decades and, paradoxically, it has correlated with the federalization process.

Belgium is falling apart despite the fact that it has been transformed into a federal state. Indeed, these two processes coincide. If the EU models itself on Belgium and becomes primarily a mechanism for income redistribution, the combination of federalism and welfare state socialism will lead to an upsurge of nationalism all over Europe.

So in other words, if the European Union is a "Greater Belgium" and Belgium itself is an artificial construct, it is possible that the EU will also fall apart?

Exactly, and this explains why the EU bureaucracy loves Belgium so much. If the model collapses, it will

prove that an EU superstate cannot work either. And look at it from another angle: "Eurosceptics" who want to convince the world that



"Europe" is not a viable project, must realise that they are fighting the same fight as the "Belgosceptic" Flemish secessionists in Belgium.

Hence your book is anti-Europe?

It depends what kind of Europe you are talking about. If the EU is a supranational institution with minimal bureaucratic interference, allowing free-market cooperation between sovereign member states, there is no problem. Sadly, bureaucracies have a tendency to expand, always trying to enlarge their powers. Remember that when Belgium was founded, it also prided itself on being the "most liberal state in Europe," but it developed into a corporatist, inherently corrupt model, which is run by so-called "Social Partners," i.e. the trade unions and the employers' federations, and where all

major decisions are taken outside the normal parliamentary procedures.

What do the Saxe-Coburgs have to do with this?

Apart from the welfare system, the dynasty is the only thing the Belgians have in common. The royals play a very active, though largely secretive and totally undemocratic, role in keeping their country together. This has made it possible for me to wrap my thesis about Belgium in a story about royalty and make it even more intriguing for British readers. According to recent research, Belgium's first king, **Leopold I** (1790-1865), was the biological father of **Albert** (1819-1861), the husband of British **Queen Victoria**. Leopold is the founder of both the present Belgian as well as the present British royal houses. This family relationship explains why Britain has always defended the artificial Belgian state, even when this was not in Britain's national interest.

More info on Paul Belien's book (hardcover, 350 pages; £25, €35, \$49.90) can be found on: www.imprint.co.uk/books/belien.html and www.secessie.nu/english

Hotel Rwanda

The movie "Hotel Rwanda" shows how Belgium abandoned thousands of Rwandan Tutsi fugitives in 1994. After Belgium pulled back its troops from Rwanda, almost one million people were butchered by extremist Hutu gangs. The African involvement of Belgium and its kings started with **Leopold II's** genocide in the Congo in the 1890s and early 1900s and ended with the genocide in Rwanda one century later.

Ironically, Belgium had massacred the

1993 Arusha peace agreement between the Rwandan Hutu majority and Tutsi minority which was meant to transform Rwanda into



Katleen Martens, MP

"What does not work in Belgium, cannot work elsewhere."

a Belgian-style federal model. It included a "parity rule" which would allow the Tutsi an equal say in Rwandan affairs. The Belgian model went awfully wrong in Africa. Today, Belgian diplomats are proposing the Belgian model as an example for Iraq. What does not work in Belgium, cannot work in less developed parts of the world.

Life On the Front Pages



Filip Dewinter, MP gets "neutral and balanced" coverage in foreign media

Since Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest), formerly Vlaams Blok, became Belgium's largest party, the international media have given it a lot of attention. This attention is focussed mainly on Antwerp, where the local 42 year old VB leader **Filip Dewinter**, "a boyish man in a suit" according to *The New York Times* (Feb. 12), is poised to win the municipal elections next year. The NYT rightly points out that "many of [the VB] supporters [in Antwerp] are Jews who feel threatened by a new wave of anti-Semitism emanating from Europe's growing Muslim communities."

"In Antwerp, the far right is facing off against muslims," *Time Magazine* recently wrote in the

front page article "Life On The Front Lines" (Feb. 28). Though the international media refer to the VB as a "far-right party" and focus exclusively on the immigration issue rather than on the VB's primary goal of Flemish independence, their articles are, as one Brussels newspaper remarked, "rather neutral and balanced." (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, Feb. 23)



Vlaams Belang Wants Referendum on Euro-Constitution

Vlaams Belang wants the Flemish people to decide in a referendum whether or not it approves the so-called European Constitution. The Belgian Constitution does not allow referendums on the federal level, but according to **Karim Van Overmeire**, a Vlaams Belang member of the Flemish Regional Parliament, it is the democratic duty of Flanders to organise a referendum: "The European Constitution is a very important treaty with far-reaching consequences," he says. "It will have priority over the Belgian Constitution, although it only needs the approval of an ordinary majority in Parliament and not the two-third majority that is normally required for changes to the Belgian Constitution. Hence, I think it is only normal that the voice of the people be heard directly."



Karim Van Overmeire, MP

"The European Constitution is so far-reaching that the people should be consulted directly."

Hard to intimidate

Indeed, neutral and balanced coverage is something the VB is not used to getting from the Belgian (and specifically its Francophone) media. The Belgian authorities are trying to put pressure on the international media to depict the VB in less favourable ways, but it is hard for them to intimidate foreign journalists in the same way as they do the Belgians.

Europe Abuses Auschwitz Memory

The memory of the victims of Auschwitz is being abused by the European Parliament. On January 27, the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the European Parliament voted a resolution which was presented in the media as a text to commemorate the victims of the holocaust, calling on the present generations never to forget this shameful chapter of Europe's history. If this had been the case, naturally the Vlaams Belang (VB) would have endorsed such a text.

Unfortunately, the political parties of the establishment, who put forward the resolution, proposed a resolution which directly linked the horrors of Auschwitz to emerging democratic parties, such as the VB, that are branded as "racist" because they oppose present-day multiculturalist policies. The text called upon Europe's schools to systematically associate the Holocaust with the "current fight against racism." It also made a distinction between what it called "legitimate freedom of speech" and a type of freedom of speech which would not be legitimate. The VB de-

mands to know who will decide what type of speech is "legitimate"?

As a consequence, the three VB members of the European Parliament decided to abstain during the vote. Only seven other MEPs abstained, while 617 voted in favour of a resolution.

Ample Proof

The Vlaams Belang also criticized the fact that the original reference to "National-Socialism" was omitted from the resolution and replaced by "Nazism" because the Socialist parties objected to the term "National-Socialism." None of the Belgian newspapers has devoted any attention to the motives of the VB for abstaining during the vote. Instead, the public was told that the abstention was ample proof of the party's anti-Semitism.

Insinuations that the VB be lacking in compassion for the victims of the



holocaust are libellous and untrue. The Europarlament's political posturing makes light of the horrors of totalitarian systems such as National-Socialism. Flemish Jews, such as the Antwerp lawyer and Talmudic scholar **Henri Rosenberg**, whose grandparents died in Nazi extermination camps, know that the Vlaams Belang is in favour of a clear and honest holocaust resolution, without ulterior motives. When such a resolution was put forward in the Flemish Parliament on March 2, the VB supported it.



Fathers and Sons

In his 1984 biography of Belgian King Leopold III (1901-1983), father of present King Albert II, Lord Keyes records that Leopold told him how he was informed during the war of the gruesome medical experiments the Nazis were conducting on prisoners (Roger Keyes, "Outrageous Fortune: The Tragedy of Leopold III of the Belgians, 1901-1941," p. 359). Leopold's informant was his personal physician and friend, SS General Karl Gebhardt. His "boastful account of the experiments he had carried out on human guinea-pigs" left Leopold "frozen with horror."

This did not, however, persuade the King (as he confessed to his secretary in 1943) "to turn against a system of ideas of which I am inclined to approve." Indeed, as the King had told his secretary after visting Hitler in 1940: "You know what I think of the Jews. The damage which they have done is not sufficiently known. It is they who are responsible for all our problems."

After the war, Gebhardt was executed by the Americans for crimes conducted in Auschwitz, while

Leopold lost his throne to his son Baudouin, the elder brother of the present King. The royal family, however, never apologised for its Nazi sympathies. On the contrary, King Albert II was in Auschwitz last January to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp. Despite the

fact that the King is the only son of a former Nazi collaborator to play a role in Belgian politics, the Belgian regime is constantly trying to link the Flemish secessionists to the Nazis, with the accusation that the Vlaams Belang be run by "the sons of former Nazi collaborators."



Leopold III and Baudouin

Does Turkey belong in the European Union?

Philip Claeys and Koen Dillen, two VB members of the European Parliament, recently published a book (in Dutch) about the admission of Turkey to the European Union. Although he is not a VB member, Prof Eric Suy, the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, an expert in International Law and a well-known Flemish secessionist, wrote the book's preface. Excerpts:

Geographically Turkey is not a European state. Turkey is an islamic state and a prominent member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to which all islamic states from Senegal to Indonesia belong and which is recognised by the United Nations. In the same UN, Turkey also belongs to the regional groups of the Western European and Other States Group (WEOG). As such Turkey competes with the real European states for the assignment of "Western posts" within the various organs of the UN. Turkey also participates as a full

member in the activities of the regional group of Asian States. As a consequence, Turkey eats from three different baskets, depending on whether it invokes its European component, its geographical position in Asia or its religious character.

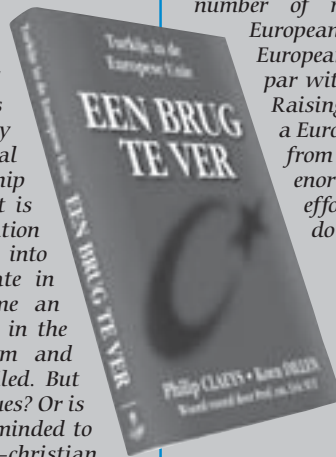
Turkey's attitude to human rights and democracy is problematic. Never mind, say proponents for the admission of Turkey: the negotiations can be stopped if Turkey were to violate the essential conditions for membership of the European Union. It is being said that the negotiation process will turn Turkey into a perfect democratic state in 15 years. It will become an example to other nations in the area, proving that Islam and democracy can be reconciled. But what about European values? Or is it backward and narrowminded to dare to speak of the judaeo-christian

values that define Europe's identity?

[...]

Apart from the ideological arguments (the influx of 80 million Muslims), the institutional and economic consequences of Turkey's admission will be decisive. Once it becomes an EU member, Turkey will have the highest number of representatives in the European Parliament. In the European Council it will be on a par with the present Big Ones. Raising the Turkish economy to a European level, will demand from the European taxpayers enormous and sustained efforts. Are we prepared to do this?

The Vlaams Belang demands that a referendum be held to settle the matter of Turkey's admission to the European Union.



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