

The Flemish Republic

*A quarterly newsletter explaining why
Flanders is seceding from Belgium*

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The Belgian Crisis Drags On

On December 21 Belgium's **King Albert II** appointed **Guy Verhofstadt** as the country's new Prime Minister. Mr. Verhofstadt, the previous Prime Minister, was ousted from office in the last elections on June 10. When the Belgian politicians negotiated for six months but proved unable to form a new government coalition the King brought the loser back. Mr. Verhofstadt is now leading an "interim government" until next Easter in the hope that by then the politicians will have reached agreement on a new coalition that reflects the will of the electorate.



It's time for independence.

Mr. Verhofstadt's task is to buy time. Belgium is a multinational country of 10 million inhabitants, consisting of 60% Dutch-speaking (free market oriented) Flemings and 40% French-speaking (predominantly Socialist) Walloons. Since its establishment in 1830-31 the country has been dominated by the Walloon minority, which is constitutionally entitled to 50% of the government positions. Apart from the political overrepresentation which Wallonia enjoys it is also showered with welfare subsidies from free market oriented Flanders. The Belgian Francophones can – and do – veto any Flemish proposal to reform the welfare system.

Predominance

Flanders is no longer willing to accept this, but the Walloons refuse to give up

power. Hence, the total political stalemate in the bipolar Belgian state.

Mr. Verhofstadt's "interim cabinet" has a two third majority of 101 of the 150 seats in the Belgian Federal Chamber of Representatives. The coalition consists of Mr. Verhofstadt's own Flemish Liberal Party, the Flemish Christian-Democrat Party, the Walloon Liberal Party, the Walloon Humanist Party and the Walloon Socialist Party. It is predominantly Walloon, backed by 53 Walloon seats (out of a total of 62 French-speaking Representatives) and 48 Flemish seats (out of a Flemish total of 88 Representatives).

Democracy

Elections have no consequences in Belgium, at least not for the Dutch-speaking majority. Last June's elections were (as always) won by the right in Flanders, but have (as always) led to a leftist government. Flanders votes for change, but does not get what it is entitled to."

The Verhofstadt cabinet has to lay the basis for a cabinet led by **Yves Leterme**, the leader of the Flemish Christian-Democrats, after Easter. There are, however, no indications that the Walloon politicians, who vetoed all Mr. Leterme's proposals for six months, will change their attitude in the coming weeks. Either Mr. Leterme renounces his election promises for greater Flemish autonomy, which won him last June's elections, or by Easter the Belgian political crisis resumes in all earnest.

The Vlaams Belang is Belgium's largest opposition party. It strives for the independence of Flanders because, like other peoples, the Flemings have the right to live in a democracy. But democracy is only possible in a sovereign and independent nation.

My Farewell

This is in all likelihood my last editorial for The Flemish Republic. Our party is 30 years old. I had the privilege of leading it for 12 years. Next March the party will choose a new leader. I have not come forward as a candidate because I think that after three terms the party needs a fresh approach.

As our party is healthy and thriving it will be able to elect a new leadership, unlike Belgium where the inability of the governing elite to appoint a new Prime Minister has resulted in the old Prime Minister, who was defeated in the polls, returning as "interim Prime Minister." The Vlaams Belang will not be needing an "interim leader."

Three years ago in this column I wrote that the Vlaams Belang would bury Belgium and establish the independence of Flanders. I am confident that the person who succeeds me as the leader of our great party, the single largest party in Flanders but also in Belgium, will be the one to finish this job. I wish him or her all the best.

I also want to wish all of you, readers of our international newsletter, success and happiness in your professional as well as private lives.

As ever,



Frank Vanhecke

**Leader of the Vlaams Belang 1996-2008,
Member of the European Parliament**

Senator Karim Van Overmeire: Belgium Will Be Easier to Divide than Czechoslovakia

Last December, Vlaams Belang Senator Karim Van Overmeire published a book about the method by which Flanders can obtain its independence. In the book he refers to the secession of Norway from Sweden (1905), the partition of Czechoslovakia (1992) and the secession of Montenegro from Serbia (2006) as examples to follow. We met with the senator to discuss his book. Excerpts:



What lessons do you draw from these historical examples?

The examples show that nations can become independent in a non-violent way. It has been done before. Obviously, every situation is different. The fact that Belgium has a common dynasty and the situation of Brussels as a French-speaking enclave within Dutch-speaking Flanders complicate matters. The fact that we belong to the

European Union, however, makes things easier. We will not have to organize border controls, nor will we need a new currency.

You stress that you are not a secessionist, though you are a proponent of Flemish independence. Can you explain that?


Secession means that the Flemings secede from Belgium, but the Flemings are a 60% majority in Belgium. Flanders is not going to secede from Belgium, establishing a new nation and leaving Belgium to the French-speaking minority in Wallonia. No, Flanders and Wallonia, are going to dissolve the Belgian federation, thereby establishing two new nations, who will both be succession states to Belgium.

Do you propose a referendum on Flemish independence?

There were referendums in both Norway and Montenegro, but not in Czechoslovakia, where the Czechs and Slovaks dissolved their federation. The Czechoslovakian politicians were worried about what to do if one half of the federation were to vote in favour of dissolving the federation while the other half voted against it. If one organizes a referendum every outcome must



Flemish Interests



Belgium can only exist by denying Flanders its freedom. Only a Fleming who, like **Guy Verhofstadt**, betrays the interests of his people can become a Prime Minister in Belgium. Belgium can only survive if it ignores the election results in Flanders. This is why Belgium has to go.

Gerolf Annemans, MP

lead to a workable solution.

And what about Brussels?

Brussels used to be Dutch-speaking but, owing to the Frenchification process organized by the Belgian authorities, it has become a French-speaking enclave within Flanders. Nevertheless, French-speaking Brusselsers are not Walloons. The Vlaams Belang wants Brussels to retain its current position as the capital of Flanders, but is prepared to let it keep its present bilingual status. We are, however, prepared to discuss the status of Brussels.

an artificial construct which keeps the Flemish nation captive.

Join the Friends of Flemish Independence

Senator Karim Van Overmeire has founded the 'Friends of Flemish Independence.' FFI is a worldwide network of local representatives who follow the media in their own countries and react whenever wrong information is given about Belgium and the Flemings' struggle for independence.

A website will be established to support these people with valuable information. If you are interested in joining FFI, please contact friends@flemishrepublic.org.



Karim Van Overmeire is chairman of the Committee for Foreign Policy and European Affairs of the Flemish Parliament. He is also a member of the Belgian Senate and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the West European Union.

The Only Option

If the Walloons and the French-speaking Belgians keep vetoing the democratic demands of the Flemings there is only one option left. The Flemish regional parliament must unilaterally declare Flemish independence. Flanders has no other option than to leave the Belgian federation.

Filip Dewinter, MP



The appendix to your book is a draft for a Flemish Constitution. Surely the people will have to be consulted first?

Of course Flanders will have a different Constitution than the one laid out in the appendix to my book. I inserted the draft Constitution in the book, however, to show that Flanders will be a more democratic, transparent and efficient state than contemporary Belgium with its extremely complicated structures. Unlike in Belgium, referendums will be possible in Flanders, because, unlike Belgium, Flanders will be a nation, while Belgium is

30 Years of Vlaams Blok / Vlaams Belang

Last December the Vlaams Belang celebrated its 30th anniversary. The late **Karel Dillen** (1925–2007) founded the Vlaams Blok party in 1977. The party was the first political party in history to openly advocate the abolishment of the artificial Belgian state and the establishment of an independent Flanders. From 75,000 votes in the 1978 general elections, the very first the party participated in, it grew to attract the votes of one million of the six million Flemings.

In the meantime, other parties, such as the N-VA and LDD, also propose Flemish independence and establishment parties, such as the Christian-Democrats, advocate a confederate Belgium with considerable Flemish autonomy.

Prosecution

In 1996 Karel Dillen stepped down as party leader and was succeeded by **Frank Vanhecke**.

In an effort to kill the party the Belgian authorities had it prosecuted. In 1999 the Belgian Parliament, where French-

speaking Walloons are overrepresented, changed the Constitution so as to limit freedom of expression. It also voted a series of new laws with the sole purpose of criminalising and defunding the VB, including an Anti-Racism Act and an Anti-Discrimination Act which define “discrimination” so broadly that they allow prosecution of every and any individual.



When the judiciary refused to issue the verdict which the authorities favoured the case was dragged from one court to another until finally, in 2004, a court was found that was willing to declare our party a criminal and racist organization. This was done on the basis of

an anthology of no more than 16 texts (including an article written by a female Turkish-born VB member about the position of women in fundamentalist muslim societies) published by local party chapters between 1996 and 2000.

Vindication

According to the court what we wrote was not necessarily untrue, but our “intentions” were of a criminal nature. Such a *procès d'intention* (a conviction based on speculation about our supposed motives) is a real disgrace, and the fact that the Belgian judiciary had to resort to this proves that no other reasons for convicting us could be found.

After the verdict was pronounced the Vlaams Blok dissolved itself and a new party, the Vlaams Belang, was established. Like its predecessor, this party has continued to thrive. Today Belgium has become virtually ungovernable, with an “interim Prime Minister” who has to keep the country together, while an ever larger number of Flemings demand independence.

Why Flemish Independence Is Important for Europe

On 24 November, the British author **John Laughland** gave a speech in Brussels about Flemish independence. Below is an excerpt:

The question of the break-up of Belgium is no longer taboo in the Western European press. On the contrary, it is discussed openly as a possible, even likely future event.

There is no question that an independent Flanders could be a viable state. In terms of population, Flanders is bigger than the historic nation-states Denmark, Norway and Ireland, and than many more recently created states. There is no question that Flanders has the requisite historic identity to constitute a sovereign state. It certainly has more claim to historical existence than Bosnia.

The reason why the break-up of Belgium will be opposed by the European Union is that it will not serve the cause of EU integration. The break-up of Belgium would show that the fault-line which is at the heart of the European project runs right through the EU's very capital. That

fault-line is the contradiction between democracy and supranationalism. Flemings of course understand that a supranational state is inimical to democracy, and that it destroys it.

Fatal Flaw

The main EU decisions are taken in secret by the unelected Commission and the unaccountable Council of Ministers. National parliaments are systematically emasculated by the EU, which gives governments the right to make laws, in secret. The fact that the defunct European Constitution is even now being re-introduced, having been rejected in referendums in France and the Netherlands in 2005 shows that the EU is prepared to override the results of democratic direct polls in order to achieve its aims. Democracy is actively suppressed by European integration.

The break-up of Belgium would be a

highly symbolic of this fatal flaw. Many Belgian leaders including the late **King Baudoin** indeed said that the EU was a sort of Greater Belgium.

Service

The European Union now displays all the worst characteristics of Belgium itself: an impossibly complicated institutional structure which is kept that way deliberately in order to serve vested interests; an opaque and deliberately undemocratic decision-making process; a vast system of internal financing which is used to pervert the political process by buying off certain powerful interest groups; and of course rampant corruption.



By showing up the Belgian model itself as a lie, the independence of Flanders would provide a great service to democracy and to the whole of Europe.



Saxe-Coburg Watch Royals Leave the Red Cross

The Belgian Red Cross suffers from the same disease as the whole of Belgium. While the Flemings have to work and pay, the Walloons spend and refuse to stay within their means. Every year the Flemish chapter of the Red Cross has to subsidize the Walloon chapter with many millions of euros.

The Flemings have had enough. They want more autonomy for the regional chapters.

Traditionally a member of the Belgian royal family is the president of the Red Cross. Up until last year **Princess Astrid**, the daughter of Belgium's **King Albert II**, was RC chairperson. She sided with the French-speaking Walloon minority against the Dutch-speaking majority.



Embarrassed

Last Fall, it became clear that the Flemish majority would no longer vote the Princess into a new term in office as RC president. In order to

avoid the embarrassment of being voted down, the Princess announced that she was no longer a candidate for the function.

Her younger brother, **Prince Laurent**, at once announced that he was a candidate to replace his sister. Prince Laurent is on bad terms with his sister as well as his older brother, **Crown Prince Philip**. King Albert, however, ordered his youngest son, whose name has been implicated in recent corruption affairs, to keep out of RC affairs.

Hence, from this year on, for the first time in almost a century, the royal family no longer has anything to do with the Belgian Red Cross.

Pioneers

Today the dream of Flemish independence is alive in the hearts and minds of millions of our compatriots. That Flanders is as close to its independence as it is today would not have been possible without the pioneers of our party, those idealists who faced defamation and persecution for their convictions and for freedom and democracy in Flanders.

Marijke Dillen, MP



Belgium Starts International Propaganda Initiative

Karel De Gucht, the Belgian minister of Foreign Affairs, has ordered all Belgium's ambassadors abroad to "take initiatives to promote a positive image of Belgium abroad."

In a confidential memo to the ambassadors Mr. De Gucht writes that they are to counter the negative image caused by the political crisis in Belgium. The ambassadors are to assure their foreign contacts that it is not unusual for Belgian politicians to take a very long time

to put together a government coalition. However, the 193 days which elapsed between last year's general elections on 10 June and the formation of an "interim government" on 21 December constitute a record, even for Belgium. Worse, the real government, which reflects the voters' verdict, has not even been formed.

Mr. De Gucht has ordered the ambassadors to take "informal" and "discrete" initiatives, which are to "result in positive radio and television broadcasts or

newspaper articles"

The ambassadors should avoid press conferences and other "spectacular initiatives" because these might have "the opposite effect." Indeed, one never knows what questions journalists might be inclined to ask.

The ambassadors are to emphasize that the political crisis in Belgium is not going to affect the country's international obligations and economic stability.

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