

The Flemish Republic

A quarterly newsletter explaining why
Flanders should become an independent state

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Unfairly Treated

On June 7, the Flemings will go to the voting booth to elect their representatives for the European Parliament and for the Flemish regional parliament, both based in Brussels. The mainstream media, which all receive government subsidies, are actively fighting the Vlaams Belang. They refuse to run VB ads and hardly devote any attention to Belgium's main opposition party. In the past, parties were assigned broadcasting time to run a short informative television spot of their own on the state television channel. This, too, has now been abolished. A journalist openly admitted: "In these broadcasts, Filip Dewinter could openly express his political views. This was sufficient reason to ban these broadcasts."

Especially during the electoral campaign the Belgian media devote as little attention as possible to the VB. Last April, **Prof. Bart Maddens** of Leuven University published figures about the 2007 election campaign period. He calculated how many times the newspapers mentioned the candidates of the major parties and found that an average Socialist candidate was mentioned 25 times, a Liberal 23 times, a Christian-Democrat 22 times, a Green candidate 7.2 times and a VB candidate 6.9 times.

Exclusion

Though the VB represents almost a quarter of the Flemings, its politicians receive only 7.3% of the attention of the papers during the campaign. Prof. Maddens says the VB is the victim of a "cordon médiatique" (a deliberate media exclusion). Prof. Maddens con-

cludes that "the competitive disadvantage" resulting from the media boycott of the VB "should not be underestimated."

While the situation in the written press is bad, it is even worse on radio and television. The Belgian state television VRT is set on damaging the VB and promoting its adversaries. The VRT frequently invites politicians to participate in its programmes, except when these are VB politicians. In the past year the Flemish Socialists were invited 190 times, the Liberals 150 times, the Christian-Democrats 140 times, the Greens (who are not represented in the federal parliament) 13 times, and VB politicians 4 times. The media have also been actively promoting **Jean-Marie Dedecker**, a former Liberal who broke away to start his own populist party, in the hope that he will attract VB voters. Mr. Dedecker was invited 14 times.

Banana Republic

Recent official government figures confirmed that VB received only 1.5% of the television attention for politicians in 2006-07, despite its 24.3% of the votes in the 2004 elections, compared to 43.8% of attention for Socialist politicians, despite their 19.9% of the votes.

The VB is not allowed to compete on equal terms in the election campaign, which by consequence can hardly be called democratic. We are not talking about some African banana republic here, nor about **Vladimir Putin's** Russia. This is Belgium, the heart of Europe, the model of the European Union.

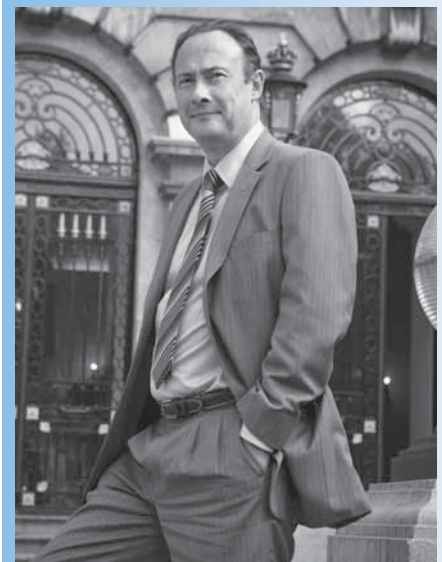


The Right to Live Free

Free and equal media access – also for opposition parties – is a basic condition for fair elections and real democracy. This condition is not being met in Belgium. The Belgian media treat the opposition as if it does not exist. Years ago, the public broadcasting network drew up an official document requiring journalists to ban VB politicians as much as possible from debates and news broadcasts. Other media, including the (lavishly subsidized) newspapers followed the example of the public network.

On the rare occasions that the Belgian media do mention VB, they do not shun lies and disinformation. While an independent, non-Belgian, website found that the three VB members of the European Parliament are among the most active of the entire parliament, the Belgian press told its readers exactly the opposite. The same applies for the VB members in the Flemish regional Parliament. The VB was the largest group in this body in the past five years. The media hardly devoted attention to their activities, which the press *a priori* deems irrelevant.

Despite this unfair treatment, the VB will not give its up fight for a free Flanders. Because the Flemish people have the right to live in a free and democratic country.



Bruno Valkeniers
Vlaams Belang party leader

An interview with Frank Vanhecke, MEP

Freedom is the Pillar of European Civilisation

Frank Vanhecke is the leader of the Vlaams Belang in the European Parliament. He explains why the coming European elections are so important.

Belgium, an artificial country in which two peoples, Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north of the country and French-speaking Walloons in the south, are forced to live together, is in many ways the model of the European Union.

While the EU does not tolerate any opposition to its supranational project and attempts to depict anyone who opposes the Treaty of Lisbon as a “xenophobe,” Belgium does not tolerate the Vlaams Belang either because we strive for the independence of Flanders and want to safeguard the national identity of the Flemish people.

How do the authorities make life difficult for you?

They do so in several ways. They want to rob our party of its income. This is the new strategy of the Belgian establishment after a previous attempt to kill us in court. In 2004, Vlaams Blok, the predecessor of Vlaams Belang, was convicted and banned as a “racist” organisation. Just like Vlaams Belang today, Vlaams Blok pleaded for a firm immigration policy: this implies a limited



access to the social security system, a restriction of imported marriages and family reunification and a deportation of illegal aliens and criminal immigrants. After the 2004 verdict we established a new party and went on to win the elections.

Another way to silence us is through the media. In the war against our party, the media are in league with the state. Political topics such as crime, the failed integration of immigrants and Flemish independence have been made into taboo subjects which the press does not write about.

The authorities also harass us personally. At the demand of the Belgian government, the European Parliament has removed my parliamentary immunity.

Belgium wants to prosecute me and rob me of my political rights. My “crime” is a leaflet, by a local chapter of the party, in which it was alleged that some under-aged criminals were foreigners. This cannot be proven since no information about the identity of under-aged criminals is disclosed. The leaflet was not written by me. I had not even seen it. But the authorities, though they know who wrote it, hold me responsible because I was the VB party leader at the time of the publication of this leaflet.

Why do they consider your party such a threat?

In The Times of April 24, 2004, the British journalist

Stephen Pollard wrote that “The VB’s ‘racism’ was merely an excuse. The real reason why the authorities have been bent on banning the VB 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.” Pollard hit the nail on the head.

You fear that Belgium’s present is Europe’s future?

In my fifteen years as a member of the European Parliament I have noticed how the EU is increasingly coming to resemble Belgium. The EU does not tolerate dissent, it tries to intimidate everyone who is critical of its project, it does not respect the verdict of the voters, as we have seen following the French and Dutch referendums against the European Constitution. Despite the “No” vote, Brussels continues as if nothing has happened.

Democracy requires conflicting opinions, but Belgium and the EU do not allow them. Freedom of speech cannot be restrained. Not even in the name of multicultural peace and so-called “tolerance.” Freedom is the pillar of European civilisation. That is why we stand on the barricades. Because we want to be in charge in our own country. And because Europe must remain European and free.

French Interests

Since Belgium was established in 1830, the Belgian establishment has always served the interests of France. Apart from Iceland, which had banks bigger than the country itself, Belgium is the only country that will never be able to recover the losses it suffered in the current economic crisis. Indeed, what did the Belgian government do when the crisis hit its banks? It sold Fortis, the largest Belgian banking group, to the French bank BNP Paribas. Other options to save Fortis were not even considered.



Luk Van Nieuwenhuysen MP: “Belgium always serves France. That is Belgium’s *raison d’être*.”

Not welcome

Luc Van den Brande, a Christian-Democrat and former leader of the Flemish regional government (1992-1999), had hoped to become the next Secretary General of the Council of Europe in June 2009.

Initially it looked like Mr. Van den Brande would get the job for which he had the support of **Karel De Gucht**, the Belgian Foreign Minister, a Flemish Liberal. Walloon politicians, however, objected to Mr. Van den Brande having the position because, though he is a moderate who defends the Belgian state, he is in favour of more autonomy for Flanders.

The Walloons wrote a letter to the representatives of the Council of Europe, an organisation of 47 European nations, objecting to their compatriot getting the job. Even **Olivier Chastel**, the Belgian Deputy Foreign Minister, who is a Walloon Liberal, spoke out against Van den Brande’s candidature.

As a result, Mr. Van den Brande has been removed from the shortlist of candidates for the top position at the Council of Europe. Despite the Flemings being the majority in Belgium their interests will never be defended by Belgium.

Police Violence: Vlaams Belang Vindicated

On September 11, 2007, the Brussels police broke up a peaceful gathering of people who had convened to hold one minute of silence for the victims of the 2001 9/11 terror attacks in America. Several Vlaams Belang politicians were beaten, handcuffed, arrested and locked up for the remainder of the day in the prison cells in the cellars of the Brussels Palace of Justice. During the incidents, **Frank Vanhecke**, a VB member of the European Parliament, was grabbed in the genitals by police officers, **Filip Dewinter**, the VB group leader in the Flemish Parliament, was arrested and beaten up while giving an interview to journalists, and **Linda Vissers**, a VB member of the Belgian House of Representatives, was forced to take off her bra in front of the prison wardens, allegedly to prevent her from "hanging herself with her bra while in prison."



On April 29, 2009, the "Committee P," the committee which controls the police forces on behalf of the Belgian federal parliament, issued a report which condemned the "unnecessary and excessive use of police force and violence" on September 11, 2007.

Unlikely

The Committee P report criticizes **Freddy Thielemans**, the Socialist mayor of Brussels, who told the police to break up the demonstration and ordered the officers to keep "on the offensive." It also criticizes the decision to use French-speaking officers, who gave orders exclusively in French while most of the demonstrators were known to be Dutch-speaking Flemings. Regarding the

order to female prisoners to remove their bras, Committee P said this was inappropriate, but had been "a personal mistake by one of the female police officers."



Though the Vlaams Belang feels vindicated by the report, the party regrets that no disciplinary measures will be taken against Mayor Thielemans and the Brussels chief of police. The officers who submitted Mr. Vanhecke to a vicious genital grip have not been punished either.

Intimidation

The extremely aggressive behaviour of the police, who deliberately humiliated peaceful demonstrators, including elected officials, on September 11, 2007, was designed

to intimidate VB members in the exercise of their democratic rights, such as the right to demonstrate.

Filip Deman, a VB member of the Home Affairs committee of the Belgian House of Representatives, regrets that the Committee P cannot guarantee that the Belgian authorities will allow citizens to demonstrate peacefully in the future.

Immediately after the incidents on September 11, 2007, the Belgian government apologized to Italy for the maltreatment of **Mario Borghezio**, an Italian member of the European Parliament who was arrested together with Mr. Vanhecke. It is indicative that the government is still refusing to apologize to Mr. Vanhecke and other Belgian citizens who were molested on the same day.



Belgian State Funds Campaign against Opposition

In Belgium, the state funds political parties. It is illegal for parties and politicians to accept private donations (except very small ones). As a result, 83% of the income of the political parties comes from the state, which in effect has turned the parties into branches of the state. Parties such as the Vlaams Belang, which are opposed to the Belgian model, are threatened with the loss of their income. The government declares them a "racist," hence

criminal, organization and defunds them, thereby effectively killing them.

In Belgium, the state also severely restricts electoral campaigns. Candidates are only allowed to spend a limited amount of money. It is illegal to give the voters any gifts, including gimmicks such as pencils or balloons. Meanwhile, however, the government spends an unlimited amount of money on a free pop concert against Flemish independence, which is the main

political aim of Vlaams Belang, the country's major opposition party.

Two weeks before the elections, on May 17, a huge pop concert was organized in Brussels in favour of "strengthening Belgian unity." Admission was free. The main sponsors of the festival were the National Lottery, which is 100% state-owned, the public radio and television company, which is 100% state-owned, and Belgacom (Belgian telecom), which is 54% state-owned. National Rail, also 100% state-owned, granted reduced fares to people coming to the concert by train.



Senator Anke Van dermeersch: "Belgium is unfair. Vlaams Belang voters pay taxes, but have to tolerate that the state uses their money to fund their opponents."

Book Banned in Belgium

Belgian book publishers and even the major book stores boycott books written by Vlaams Belang authors or people perceived to be close to the party. **Koen Dillen**, a VB member of the European Parliament, is an expert on French politics and has already published many books on the subject. He does so under a pseudonym. Recently, using the alias **Vincent Gounod**, he wrote an authoritative biography (634 pages) of **François Mitterrand**. The book was published by a company in the Netherlands, and was also in the bookstores in Belgium until... the Belgian media discovered who the real author was. Overnight, stores in Belgium removed the

book from the shelves and Belgian papers refused to review it.

However, Dillen's book on Mitterrand had already been reviewed on the Belgian state radio VRT, where it was hailed as "outstanding." After the identity of the author was revealed the VRT removed the review from its website.

Contrary to Belgium, Dillen's book is not being boycotted in the Netherlands. It received abundant praise in the Dutch media, including the liberal *NRC Handelsblad*, the most influential newspaper in the Netherlands, which called it "a gem of a political biography," and the leftist *Groene Amsterdammer*.

Symbolic Boycott



Joris Van Hauthem, MP: "Only in Belgium the government refuses to remedy unconstitutional situations."

Several Flemish (Dutch-speaking) municipalities around Brussels are boycotting the organization of the European elections. In 2003, the Belgian constitutional court ruled that these municipalities should become a separate constituency from the bilingual Brussels constituency. Despite the court ruling, which declared the present situation to be unconstitutional, the successive Belgian governments have so far refused to remedy the situation. Though the boycott is merely symbolic, the municipalities state that they are not prepared to collaborate in organizing unconstitutional situations.



Prince of Muslims

A recent book by the Belgian "royalty watcher" **Jan van den Berghe** reveals that a few years ago **Prince Laurent**, the third and youngest legitimate child of Belgium's **King Albert II**, seriously considered converting to Islam. The Prince had fallen in love with a Mauritanian woman, the daughter of the second richest man in that country. Laurent wanted to become a Muslim in order to be able to marry her.

Half a million of Belgium's 10.5 million inhabitants are Muslims. Their number is growing year by year, as is their percentage of the population. Van den Berghe writes in his book that Prince Laurent, apart from marrying the Mauritanian, had also hoped to become the leader of the Belgian Mus-

lims by converting to Islam. However, the family of the Mauritanian girl objected to the marriage. The relationship ended and the Prince decided not to convert.

Nevertheless, Prince Laurent still wants to be seen as the friend of the Muslims. In April 2003 he married **Claire Coombs**, a British woman living in Belgium. Their first child, **Princess Louise**, was born in February 2004. At his first press conference after the birth of the child, Prince Laurent announced that a Muslim friend of his was going to be his daughter's godfather. Since the Catholic Church does not allow Muslims to become godparents, it is not clear whether Princess Louise has been baptised a Christian at all.

Out of the Crisis?

Former Belgian Prime Minister **Guy Verhofstadt**, former Belgian Prime Minister **Jean-Luc Dehaene**, former Belgian Vice Prime Minister and current European Commissioner **Louis Michel** are but a few of the former leading Belgian politicians who hope to be elected in the European Parliament.

Having mismanaged Belgium for years, they now want to move on to the European level. Mr. Verhofstadt, who is responsible for the institutional crisis Belgium is in, has written a book about Europe, ironically entitled "A Way Out of the Crisis."

When he and **Annemie Neyts**, a member of the European Parliament for his Liberal Party, recently presented the book to the Dutch press, the journalists from the Netherlands confronted Mr. Verhofstadt with the mess he had left behind in Belgium. He got angry and Mrs. Neyts scolded the Dutch journalists, saying that Dutchmen should not

judge Belgian politics considering the attack on the Dutch royal family last April, in which several bystanders were killed.

The journalists reacted with indignation. Mrs. Neyts apologized. She seemed to have forgotten that the Dutch have a free press, which cannot be treated like the lackeys in Belgium.



Philip Claeys, MEP: "Beware Europe: Verhofstadt will treat you like he treats Belgium."

Belgium Attacks Pope, Wants to Improve International Reputation

Last April, the Belgian government, at the request of the Belgian Parliament, had its ambassador to the Vatican officially protest against a statement by **Pope Benedict XVI** that the use of condoms alone will not be able to stop AIDS spreading in Africa. The Belgian Chamber of Representatives, including the Christian-Democrats, approved a resolution condemning the "unacceptable papal remarks" about condoms. The Vlaams Belang was the only party to vote against the resolution. VB Representative **Alexandra Colen** said that Belgium is violating the separation of Church and State by criticizing the Pope for defending Catholic doctrine.

The Vatican reacted by "deploring the fact that a parliamentary assembly should have thought it appropriate to criticize the Holy Father on the basis of an isolated extract from an interview" and added that "some groups [clearly intend] to intimidate, as if to dissuade the pope from expressing himself on certain themes of obvious moral relevance and from teaching the Church's doctrine."

that incidents like this will not improve Belgium's international reputation. Belgium is listed 152nd in a list ranking 200 countries by their reputation, behind countries such as Algeria, Romania, Libya and even Liberia. Belgium's reputation badly affects the export-oriented Flemish economy.



Senator Karim Van Overmeire: "The best way to improve our international image is to abolish Belgium."

The Flemish regional government recently decided to appoint a "Flemish image manager," whose task it is to improve Flanders' international image. Senator Van Overmeire emphasized that the international image of Flanders is better than that of Belgium. He warned, however, that the French-speaking Belgian establishment attempts to harm Flanders by depicting the Flemings as intolerant xenophobes because they want to preserve their national identity and aim for independence. Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs, **Karel De Gucht**, actively opposes the establishment of Flemish diplomatic missions abroad.

As long as Belgium exists, Flemish "image managers" will not be able to achieve much and Flanders will remain a victim of Belgium's dreadful reputation.



Alexandra Colen, MP: "Belgium violates the principle of the separation of Church and State."

Image Manager

VB Senator **Karim Van Overmeire** is convinced

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