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**INTRODUCTION**

The invasion by Israeli troops of Palestinian areas and the accompanying violence have also affected our country. In Brussels, there is one pro-Palestinian demonstration after the other. On 7 April as many as 25,000 demonstrators took to the streets. The demonstration passed off fairly peacefully. Quite unlike the demonstration in Antwerp the previous Wednesday, which mobilised some 2,000 to 3,000, mainly Moroccan, foreigners. After the demonstration – for which the organiser, the Arabic-European League, had not even asked the City Council for permission – had been broken up, a hard core of youths decided to march on the Jewish district. With the predictable result: a massive pitched battle with the police and much vandalism and looting in the area around the station. That the demonstration was nothing more than a pretext for a number of troublemakers and looters was evident from the fact that even several shops owned by Muslims were looted. Seventy-five hotheads were rounded up and Antwerp’s Public Prosecutor announced a policy of zero tolerance. Antwerp City Council, but also several Muslim organisations, among them the Federation of Moroccan Associations, were harsh in their condemnation of the disturbances. Antwerp’s Mayor, Leona Detiège (SP.A), promptly increased the police presence in the Jewish district and around the city’s 20 or so synagogues tenfold. Detiège is also hoping to avoid new disturbances through intense dialogue with the local Jewish and Muslim communities. That this had to happen in of all places a city such as Antwerp that is plagued by far-right extremism, does not make things any easier for her. Meanwhile, the Vlaams Blok again found a reason to convene an extra meeting for her. Meanwhile, the Vlaams Blok again found a reason to convene an extra meeting for her. 

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**Focus on FLANDERS**

**THE DUTCH SPEAKING PART OF BELGIUM**

**PRESS REVIEW**

weekly, does not appear in July • number 13 • 6 April – 12 April 2002

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**Moral philosophy in Catholic primary education**

On 11 April Flemish Minister for Education Vanderpoorten (VLD) unveiled her Education Decree XIV. In principle it had already been approved by the Flemish government and is now moving on to the Flemish Education Council (Vlor) for its advice. In this decree the most striking item was the decision to no longer force municipalities to organise primary education. Municipalities can allow their schools to be taken over by community or Catholic education networks. But if the Catholic education network takes over a municipal school, it is obliged to continue to offer the existing moral philosophy lessons. For the Christian Democratic CD&V the new ruling in the decree is unacceptable. The CD&V had put forward a phasing-out scenario, whereby children who already attended moral philosophy classes at the time of the take-over could continue to do so until they left the school. That the party feels strongly about this is clear from its threat to leave the round-table conference on education, in which parties, schools, parents and teachers are addressing the reorganisation of Flemish education (FF).

**KIM HERBOTS • DE MORGAN • 12 APRIL**

CD&V education specialist Luc Martens is unhappy that Minister Vanderpoorten refused to wait for the results of the round table on education and has already made a number of social choices in the Education Decree. On Monday the CD&V bureau will debate whether to continue its participation in the round table. For Martens the Flemish government is quietly busy switching from municipal education to community education. He is convinced that through the obligation to continue to offer moral philosophy in municipal and provincial schools after a take-over, take-overs by free education are de facto precluded. Furthermore, the official community schools may no longer make use of catholic education syllabuses, which currently happens in many municipal schools. Martens is angry with the Education Minister for taking this option now without waiting for the results of the round-table conference on education.

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Frank vandeveyve | editor in chief
**VEV calls running down of nuclear energy stupid**

According to the Flemish Employers’ Association VEV, the detrimental effects of the running down of nuclear energy from 2015 are enormous. The electricity bills of businesses and individuals will rise sharply. Belgium will have to import electricity in bulk, making it less independent economically. And last but not least: by switching to natural gas- or coal-fired power stations CO2 emissions will double or triple. This means the electricity will emit around half of the 129 million tonnes of CO2 allowed by the Kyoto Protocol, says the VEV (FF).

**Paul Verbraeken • Gazet van Antwerpen • 11 April**

For the VEV it is all very clear. In 2000, 57.1% of our electricity was supplied by nuclear power stations. At the same time, electricity consumption in Belgium rose annually by 3.09% over the past ten years. The Flemish government also wants to give each family 100 kWh free and obtain 5% of our energy from green current gradually by 2010, mainly from wind turbines. The energy from these is much more expensive and these costs will be passed on. In the Kyoto Protocol, Belgium undertook to gradually limit its CO2 emissions. If classic gas- or coal-fired power stations are introduced, emissions will increase and we will have to buy our ‘clean-air quota’ from poorer countries such as Russia, which will obviously also be reflected in electricity bills. According to the VEV, simply closing the nuclear power stations will push up the price of electricity by 25%. For the consumer, this translates to around 25.5 euros per person. With the extra costs, this could increase to 52.5 euros or 210 euros per annum for a family of four. For VEV Managing Director Philippe Muyters the planned closure is therefore evidence of an ill-considered policy.

In a reaction Olivier Deleuze [Ecolo], Federal State Secretary for Energy, says that in future the average electricity bill in Belgium will in fact fall by 100 euros. Belgian electricity is one of the most expensive in Europe. Here, bills are 20% higher than in other countries. ‘With deregulation, exactly the opposite will happen of what the VEV is saying. And if the VEV wants to be the mouthpiece of the nuclear energy lobby, that’s its affair,’ says Deleuze.

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**Biotechnology seeks and finds capital in US**

Only a few weeks after the takeover of the Mechelen biotech company Tibotec-Virco by the American pharmaceuticals giant Johnson & Johnson, the biotech company Ceres from Malibu, California entered into a co-operation agreement with the American chemicals group Monsanto. Ceres is a company with Flemish roots and Flemish capital (KBC, GIMV) that specialises in genetic research in plants. It was established by Walter de Logi, a former employee of the Ghent biotechnology company Plant Genetic Systems (PGS). In exchange for a minority share, Monsanto will inject 156 million euros of capital into the biotech company, which also announced it was preparing to float on the stock market (FF).

**Roland Byl - Trends • 11 April**

Research and science have always been of a high level in Flanders, but the shift to strong, research-driven companies was a problem here. The number of big Flemish multinationals is small. For the time being we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that American rescue ships are the best solution once the money has run out. And yet the large number of Flemings in plant biotechnology is a fact. In the US Ceres is leader, in Europe it is CropDesign. And let us not forget that - in terms of employment - the former PGS has not been wiped off the map. PGS has changed owners several times in recent years, but at no time has the site in Ghent employed more researchers. And many former PGS people are now spread throughout other biotech companies, of which Ceres and CropDesign are the most conspicuous. Their main competitors are probably the internal departments of the large German and American agrochemical companies. On the other hand, these are also necessary allies. After all, interest from multinationals guarantees contracts and valuable deals. This duality is precisely the raison d’être of the small biotech companies.

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**The Internationalising of Managed Funds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of Local Shares in Local Funds</th>
<th>Weight of Local Shares in DJ Stoxx500-Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>30% after Euro 3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>20% after Euro 15%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15% after Euro 15%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>49% after Euro 49%</td>
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<td>Ireland</td>
<td>35% after Euro 16%</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>20% after Euro 7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>4.4%</td>
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</table>

Source: European Securities Network - Tijd-Graphics
**Investor CVC Capital takes over lighting manufacturer Massive**

Lighting manufacturer Massive International is being sold to CVC Capital Partners, one of Europe’s largest investment companies. According to De Financieel-Economische Tijd, the transaction is for more than 250 million euros. Massive is owned by the De Jaeck family and is the third largest lighting company in Europe behind the company created by the merger of Thorn Lighting and Zumtobel and Philips. Worldwide the group has a turnover estimated at more than 250 million euros and employs around 2,500 people (FF).

DENIS BOUWEN • DE FINANCIEEL-EKONOMISCHE TIJD • 9 APRIL

The De Jaeck family’s company is known for its great discretion. It is structured around several holdings under Dutch law. In trade union circles the company has the reputation of not being an easy discussion partner in social negotiations. The family is currently represented by the brothers Piet and Jan de Jaeck, both in their forties and men of the third generation. In 1926 grandfather Pieter Jozef de Jaeck laid the basis for the group when he set up a small foundry for the production of copper candlesticks.

Today Massive is a group that exports to around 70 countries and has factories in Belgium (Kontich), Poland, Hungary, and even China. According to the Italian market research agency CSIL, Massive holds a little over 10% of the market in Belgium and the Netherlands.

In the 1990s Massive reorganised several times to rationalise and do away with overcapacity. The trade unions fear that in due course the group will transfer even more production to low-wage countries.

‘Our work is certainly not easy with a company like Massive,’ they say. ‘The management is not really used to being generous in social negotiations.’

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**Non-binding referendums in Flanders**

The Flemish majority parties have agreed on the introduction of a non-binding referendum. The four majority parties, the SPA, VLD, Agalev, and Spirit, submitted a draft decree to this effect in the Flemish Parliament. The initiative for such a referendum begins with the Parliament, but that can also be at the suggestion of the people. In that case, however, 150,000 signatures must be collected. All inhabitants of Flanders over the age of 16 who are entered in the municipal register, therefore also non-belgians, can take part. The voting is not compulsory and the referendum is purely advisory. According to the terms of the Constitution, binding referendums are simply neither permitted in Belgium nor in Flanders. With the non-binding referendum the Flemish Parliament has the last word, but the representatives of those parties taking the initiative confirmed that the result of the referendum will be taken into account in any decisions taken, at least if the number of participants is sufficiently high. Obviously, referendums can only be organised around matters for which Flanders is empowered. In view of their topicality value, the maximum speed on Flemish roads or the size of the compulsory contribution to Flemish care insurance could be matters that are taken into consideration, according to the initiative-takers. Referendums are nothing new. At municipal level they have been possible for a long time (FF).

ERIC DONCKIER • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG • 10 APRIL

The Flemish government and the Flemish parliament would have been better off postponing going to the people until the Constitution had been amended. That would have been a greater guarantee than the current promise that they will take account of the referendum in any event. One can also fundamentally question the sense or otherwise of referendums. The most important argument of the advocates of referendums is that the citizen is more emancipated than ever and must therefore be able to express an opinion on matters that concern him. But we also know that this same citizen can sometimes react in an extremely populist way. The referendum is then the means par excellence of mobilising populist feeling. And then we get referendums on the question of whether immigrants should be given the right to vote or the question of whether the maximum tax burden should be restricted to 30%. In short, referendums are an ideal way of mobilising dissatisfaction and stripping governments of their power to govern.

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 10 APRIL

The idea was one of the elements of the New Political Culture, which was intended to clean up politics and bring it closer to the people. We should therefore be pleased with it. Then again. The question may be asked to what extent the sour Fleming will still make the effort to take part, especially if he knows that the result is not at all binding for the people’s elected representa-
Flemish foreign policy

Since the Sint-Michiels Agreement of 1992-93, foreign policy is no longer the exclusive domain of the Federal State. Moreover, since the recent Lambermont Agreement foreign trade and parts of development co-operation have also been transferred to the federal states. Flanders has now concluded some 24 international conventions. Following last year's reshuffling of powers within the Flemish government, foreign policy moved from Minister-President Dewael (VLD) to Minister Paul Van Grembergen (Spirit). Van Grembergen wants to combine all foreign powers into a Flemish Ministry for Foreign Policy, Foreign Trade, and International Co-operation. And yet Flemish foreign policy is still in its infancy, claims De Financieel-Economische Tijd (4 April). Two weeks ago a conference on this foreign policy was held in Ghent (FF).

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE FINANCIËLE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 4 APRIL

At the conference in Ghent Hugo van Driessche, Principal Private Secretary to Paul Van Grembergen, zoomed in on the Flemish development projects, which primarily involve co-operation with South Africa, Chile, and Eastern Europe. According to Diane Verstraeten, Director-General of the Flemish Foreign Policy Administration, helping close the chasm between North and South is one of the strategic objectives. The other objectives are less visible, but possibly of greater importance. Thus, the aim is to give Flanders greater weight at international forums, strengthen the Flemish position as a partner for bilateral relations, and support the creation of wealth in Flanders.

The objective of giving Flanders a voice at international forums is a battle that is fought mainly on the European stage. Dewael put a great deal of energy into setting up the ‘Committee of the European Regions with Legislative Powers’, which is intended to be the regional cornerstone of the European union. Belgium’s presidency of the EU also provided a first, because for the first time regional ministers chaired European Councils of Ministers. A further step Flanders is dreaming of is for national votes in European Councils of Ministers to be split according to their federal states. Alongside the European Union, Flemish diplomacy, such as it is, focuses on neighbouring countries. Another Flemish House was recently established in Paris, which also houses the Flemish trade attachés. In bilateral relations the emphasis is mainly on actual dossiers that are of importance to the Flemish economy - think of the negotiations with the Netherlands on the Westerschelde and the IJzeren Rijn. However, David Crieke-mans of the University of Antwerp (UA) pointed out that as Flanders’ most important trading partner, Germany deserves more attention. That is being worked on, replied Verstraeten. In September 2000 a Flemish representative was appointed in Berlin. This year Germany is also the ‘target country’ of Flemish foreign policy.

A separate place is taken by the countries of central and eastern Europe, for which the ‘Central and Eastern Europe Programme’ was set up in 1992. More than 400 co-operation projects worth 1.5 million euros have now been implemented. Conventions have been entered into with the Baltic States and a bunch of eastern European countries.

www.flanders.be

Ambassadors can learn Dutch for free

In a letter last week Paul Van Grembergen (Spirit), the Flemish Minister for Internal and Foreign Affairs, offered foreign ambassadors in Belgium a free crash course in Dutch. The foreign embassies reacted positively. Indeed, the habit of foreign embassies relying exclusively on the Francophone press for information on this country’s comings and goings appears to be a thing of the past once and for all (FF).

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 6 APRIL

The individualised crash courses will be given by 3L (Leuven Language Learning). The Flemish business club De Warande will provide the infrastructure. Most foreign ambassadors speak French. However, they have recently been showing a greater interest in also learning Dutch, says Van Grembergen’s spokesman. One embassy gave this reaction yesterday to the free lessons: ‘Good, then we won’t have to pay for them any more.’ Many ambassadors already have a smattering of Dutch. According to those embassies contacted, the time when diplomats were only informed about this country via the Francophone press and so got a distorted picture of Flanders is long gone. In some embassies more than half the staff are bilingual Belgians who assist the foreign diplomats. ‘Every day we have a news briefing involving the Flemish and Francophone press. An embassy that cannot distinguish the differences in nuance between the two does not know what it is getting into,’ says Nick Orbaen, spokesman for the British embassy. Another information channel is Focus on Flanders, a weekly publication in which the Flemish authorities incorporate articles from the Flemish press. The texts are translated into English, French, and German, mainly for the benefit of foreign correspondents, but also for diplomats.

www.flanders.be
A new well-thought-out strategy for the VLD?

The conservative wing of the liberal government party the VLD has recently been making itself heard. First there was the initiative of Euro-MP Ward Beysen, who set up a pressure group within the party in Antwerp under the name Liberaal Appel with the aim of enticing voters away from the Vlaams Blok. A week later there were the comments of VLD Parliamentary Party Leader Jeanine Leduc in the Senate, with which she set the immigrant representatives against her and earned the applause of the Vlaams Blok. A week later Leduc repeated her performance on the commercial broadcaster VTM. Male immigrants who go and look for a partner in their country of origin, immigrants who refuse to learn our language or integrate, the work-shyness of some immigrants, these things irritate her and she is letting everyone know about it. Johan Leman’s centre against racism even felt it ought to begin an investigation into alleged racism in her comments. VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht is clearly weary of Leduc’s populist tendencies and also gives her a slap on the wrist.

De Morgen (3 April) compares the level of her displays with sour ramblings of an old woman behind the counter of a café, but points out that a gulf is beginning to open up between the range of ideas of the Verhofstadt-Dewael-De Gucht troika and the conservative wing within the party. However, this same newspaper (30 March) also sees in this a well-thought-out strategy to remain the biggest party in Flanders. The beneficial effect of the Purple-Green renewal for the party appears to have faded away. In the latest opinion polls the VLD is slightly going back. In the latest opinion polls the party appears to have faded of the Purple-Green renewal for the party. To keep the tension within the party leadership and the conservative wing troika and the conservative wing of the VLD, that wants to dethrone Verhofstadt’s credo. He therefore changed his party from PVV to VLD - the only real party modernisation of the last twenty years. The other attempts at modernisation by political parties to make themselves more attractive to the voter are - compared to VLD operation - nothing more than jostling in the wings. Grow remains even now the credo of the VLD, that wants to dethrone the CD&V for a long time as key player on the political field. But many liberals do not believe in the NCD modernisation operation on which Karel De Gucht is working.

Boudewijn Bouckaert - lecturer at Ghent University and Chairman of Nova Civitas, a political-liberal club - does not think that there will be a sudden shift to the right in the VLD because the dissatisfaction of the dark-blue rank and file is scattered. Furthermore, after such a change of course the party will most likely leave the coalition and we will get an Orange-Red-Green majority (CD&V, SP.A, and Agalev), predicts the lecturer. However, one positive thing, maintains Bouckaert, is that in that case the prospect would appear of a major centre-right formation that would permanently assume the role of the CD&V.

Grow, we must grow to come to power. For years that was Verhofstadt’s credo. He therefore changed his party from PVV to VLD - the only real party modernisation of the last twenty years. The other attempts at modernisation by political parties to make themselves more attractive to the voter are - compared to VLD operation - nothing more than jostling in the wings. Grow remains even now the credo of the VLD, that wants to dethrone the CD&V for a long time as key player on the political field. But many liberals do not believe in the NCD modernisation operation on which Karel De Gucht is working.

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There is no doubt that the Flemish liberals and democrats want to stay in power after this first period in the government velvet. And governing tones down the friction within the party. To keep the tension within his group under control, the VLD chairman sometimes speaks threateningly to his own people and coalition partners. De Gucht also demonises the far-right, thereby warning his fellow party members about the siren’s song from that corner.

His two prime ministers, the Federal Verhofstadt and the Flemish Dewael, are also doing their best to highlight the liberal accents of government policy. And sometimes they brutally put their coalition partners in their place. The cocktail being served them by their party leaders has to make the vast majority of VLD members continue to believe. Which does not prevent a gulf between the party leadership and executive and the grass roots, stresses Boudewijn Bouckaert.

The liberal belief is useful in an election victory and a party chairman is always judged by the results of a vote. You can bet your life that De Gucht will play the tax cuts card during the election campaign. It is becoming more difficult to manipulate his right flank with the subject of safety. It will be a long time yet before the reform of the police will really start to pay dividends in the field. And there the stepping down of Guy Verhofstadt will change little in the major towns and cities. There are rumblings in the VLD, but to win at the next elections the liberals will unite around the banner: fewer taxes and more safety.
Budgetary control and additional investments

FF EDITORIAL STAFF

In the end, the Flemish government’s budgetary control (29 March) appeared not as difficult an exercise as had initially been feared. The required saving of 250 million euros was achieved by means of a 1% saving in each department. Education (Minister Vanderpoorten), Welfare (Minister Vogels) and Internal Affairs (Minister Van Grembergen) got away with a saving of 0.6%. Minister-President Dewael emphasised that his government would continue to comply with the orthodox budgetary standards of the High Council for Finances. Economic growth of only 1% was being taken into account, and debt was being reduced quicker than planned, according to Dewael. The money box of the Finance Fund for One-Off Expenses will also remain intact. Each year that fund is topped up with budgetary surpluses. This time Transport, the Environment and Scientific Research were allowed to drain it for ‘sustainable’ investments. Steve Stevaert is getting 75 million euros extra to make ‘black crossroads’ safer and for waterways transport. Environment Minister Vera Dua (Agalev) got 25 million euros extra for the warm reduction of pig stocks, a golden handshake arrangement for pig farmers, who are willing to sell up. On top of that she received a further 37 million for the purchase of woods and conservation areas. Finally, Minister Van Mechelen (VLD) got 37 million extra to develop the micro-electronic innovation centre Imec in Leuven, whereas Minister Vanderpoorten (VLD) is being given 12.5 million euros to modernise the schools infrastructure. Finally, no definitive decisions were taken on the financing of health and social care insurance (budget of Welfare Minister Vogels, Agalev). It was, however, agreed that as planned, from October elderly people in homes requiring extensive care could also benefit from the insurance. At present, that is only the case for elderly people who receive home care. With a compulsory contribution of only 10 euros, health and social care insurance is likely to be looking at a deficit of 20 million euros by the end of this year.

Despair among Sabena pilots increases

On 7 April an unemployed ex-Sabena pilot with five children put a bullet in his head. Five months after the bankruptcy of Sabena, the man saw his career and financial security reduced to 750 euros a month. His wife was a former stewardess with Sabena and had now found a job. For the 550 or so of the 700 Sabena pilots who still have not found another job, the situation is gradually becoming hopeless, at least if they still want to work as pilots. But for a pilot another job is unmentionable. Furthermore, without a new airline they are in danger of losing their pilot’s licences at the end of this year. Although they can count on financial support from the Flemish and Federal governments to renew their licences (FF).

PIETER LEURIDAN • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 9 APRIL

Dirk Goethals, who co-ordinates the employment unit for former Sabena employees at the Flemish Employment Office VDAB, is getting despondent. ‘Actually the job market offers excellent prospects for unemployed pilots. Most have trained as engineers, which means they could quickly find jobs in all sectors of industry. There is also an interest from education. A great many ex-Sabena pilots have a young family and have run up considerable debts. Such a job could help them relieve the financial pressure. Even if it was just for a couple of years. But apart from one or two exceptions, they are extremely dismissive of these job offers.’ Money has nothing to do with it, stresses Goethals. ‘Most of them are prepared to take a significant pay cut if they can just start work as a pilot again. Flying is a passion for these people. But we must remain realistic. It does not look as if the aviation sector will be recruiting again next year.’ Of the 150 ex-Sabena pilots who are flying again, the majority were able to find jobs with Birdy, SN Air Brussels, and Thomas Cook Airlines. For the other ex-Sabena employees the situation looks a little better. Of the 2033 Flemish former employees who asked the VDAB for assistance in finding work, 594 have found jobs.
Onkelinx wants to use this occasion to stand up for the promotion of the four-day week, with or without loss of pay (FF).

Opinion

GUY TEGENBOS • DE STANDAARD • 8 APRIL

The voluntary four-day week as a reorganisation of working time championed today by Minister Laurette Onkelinx is defendable in a number of companies and situations. Onkelinx can get Flemish Minister Steve Stevaert (SP.A) on her side if she realises that it also reduces traffic jams. Onkelinx’s range of ideas on the four-day week is not entirely new. It first made an appearance in the 1980s. Then, the people behind the idea had a better use of the production apparatus in mind. However, the politicians of the day bent it into an instrument for re-allocating work. At that time the problem was the shortage of jobs. They therefore wanted to divide the scarce work between as many people as possible. Today the main problem, at least in Flanders, lies elsewhere, although the economic downturn has made this all but indiscernible. Over the coming years a shortage of manpower will be much more likely than a shortage of jobs. The four-day week with and without a reduction in working time is good for keeping people in work more easily and promoting their welfare. But this only increases the need for the large group of people not in work to be activated. That will be the sticking point.

Onkelinx calls for four-day week

In an interview with De Standaard (8 April), Federal Minister for Labour, PS Deputy Premier Laurette Onkelinx (PS) speaks in favour of a four-day week without a reduction in working time and without loss of pay. Employees should be able to voluntarily switch to a four-day week, in which just as many hours are worked, but spread over fewer days, she says. Onkelinx is also impressed by the success currently being enjoyed by the four-fifths career with loss of pay. Employees are being encouraged towards this by all manner of bonuses. At the end of this month the government will study how the jumble of existing career plans can be simplified.

A Holland-Belgium in art

Ghent’s Museum for Fine Arts is currently hosting a new sort of ‘Low Countries Derby.’ The Flemish art historian Marc Lambrechts came up with the idea of comparing Dutch and Belgian art from the first half of the twentieth century. Under the title ‘Affinity and Individuality’ he brings some 90 works face to face on the basis of common stylistic features or subjects. Big names such as George Breitner, Kees van Dongen, Theo van Doesburg, and Piet Mondriaan (NL) or Emile Claus, Frans Knooppf and Georges Vantongerloo (B) alternate with unknown artists. The whole thing provides an overview of the North-South dialogue in styles and trends, from post-impressionism and symbolism via expressionism and the various advantages to the new realism of before and during the Second World War. When putting together his ‘miscellany’ of works, Lambrechts by his own admission favoured the unsuspecting approach of the wandering visitor rather than letting himself be guided by scholarly criteria. The exhibition is surprising because it reveals so many unknown affinities. But the visitor in-voluntarily weighs the works up against each other. It is precisely this chauvinistic exercise that makes the exhibition such a pleasure, claims Tijd Cultuur (FF).

BERT POPELIER • TIJD CULTUUR • 10 APRIL

The period of time in question, from 1890 to 1945, pretty much begins with the Belgian group of artists Les XX, and ends just before the emergence of Cobra and the Jeune Peinture Belge. Much has already been said of the similarities and differences between Belgian and Dutch art of the past, mostly generalisations. In comparison with the art of other European regions, the art of both the north and south displayed a strong inclination towards realism, intense observation and accurate description of the visible. The main differences in outlook would only come with the splitting of the Netherlands, around 1600. The south brought forth Bruegel and Rubens, the north Vermeer and Saenredam. Put another way, Catholics versus Protestants, the hungry vital urge versus the quiet self-assurance. The modern art of the south is seen as imaginative, gracious and even sensual, that of the north as serene and simple, serious and even strict. These are clichés that are not entirely incorrect. Not by chance is Magritte Belgian and Mondriaan Dutch. The exhibition opens with a painting from 1889 by James Ensor, placed next to a canvas from 1893 by Floris Verster, both a still life with flowers. What is immediately striking is that both paintings are post-impressionist, but Verster remains closer to reality than Ensor. It is that sort of difference that will also distinguish many Dutch from Belgians at a later date. Belgians evidently want to dream, to show what lies concealed behind the visible reality. This perhaps explains why symbolism around 1900 and surrealism around 1930 were much more strongly represented in Belgium than in the Netherlands. Obviously the similarities and differences are easiest to highlight in the years in which mutual contacts were most frequent. The Dutch art historian Piet Boyens has shown that two of the most important Flemish expressionists, Gust de Smet and Frits van den Bergh, developed considerably during their stays in the Netherlands. Both artists had fled to the neutral Netherlands during the First World War. There they became acquaint-
ed with the work of, among others, Jan Sluyters, Leo Gestel, and van Dongen, who thanks to their visits to or stays in Paris were familiar with the new outlooks of cubism, futurism, and fauvism. In the Netherlands the Belgians also saw for the first time the graphic art of the German Expressionists, included in art periodicals such as ‘Der Sturm’ and ‘Das Kunstblatt’. In the exhibition’s final rooms, which deal with the period from 1925 to 1945, the emphasis is on the abstract avant-garde. Surrealism is largely ignored, because Dutch surrealism did not amount to much.

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CULTURE

MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE

• Until 17 November: Brugges 2002, Cultural Capital of Europe; info: 070/22.33.02 www.brugge2002.be
• Until 23 April: Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Opera, Ghent; info: 09/225.24.25 vlaamseopera.be
• Until 28 April: Festival Robert Altman, Filmuseum, Antwerp; info: 02/508.32.11 www.desingel.be
• Until 30 April: Festival South USA, Filmuseum Brussels; info: 02/507.84.83
• Until 18 April: Cavalleria Rusticana by Mascagni, Opera, Ghent; info: 09/225.24.25 www.vlaamseopera.be

EXPLO


• 19 and 20 April: Mirth by Arco Renz, dance, Monty, Antwerp; info: 03/238.91.81
• Until 23 April: Institute for living voice #2, concerts, workshops and debates in Bruges, info: 09/225.24.25 www.desingel.be
• Until 25 April: Emerson Quartet with Quintet by Chostacovich, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28
• Until 26, 27 and 28 April: Fazrooukh Ghassim and Abaroen, The Antichrist, Tadchistan, Theatre, translations into Dutch and French, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28

• Until 18 April: Akram Khan, Loose in Fight, Half and nine, Rush, dance, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be

• Until 21 April: seen from outside: Flanders Opera in Ghent, exhibition; info: 09/225.24.25 www.vlaamseopera.be

DIARY

• Until 13 May: exhibition: Attachment +, contemporary art, Notaatschool
• Until 26 May: Pik Wouters, exhibition, KMSK, Antwerp, info: 03/238.78.09 www.antwerpen.be/cultuur/kmska
• Until 26 May: Pik Wouters, exhibition, PSK, Brussels; info: 02/507.84.66 www.psksba.be

• Until 25 June: Photo Festival Knokke-Heist with Erwin Olaf, Paradise 2001, Photo Exhibition, CCS Chaarpoord, Knokke-Heist

• Until 21 April: Akram Khan, Loose in Fight, Half and nine, Rush, dance, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be

• Until 25 April: Emerson Quartet with Quintet by Chostacovich, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28

• Until 25, 26 and 27 April: Farrokh Ghassim and Abaroen, The Antichrist, Tadchistan, Theatre, translations into Dutch and French, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28

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• Until 23 April: Akram Khan, Loose in Fight, Half and nine, Rush, dance, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaitheater.be

• 23 April: Amine Mesli & El-Azala El-Dine, Gharnati music from Tlemcen (Algeria), De Vooruit, Ghent; info: 09/225.24.25

• 20 April: Godspeed you black Emperor, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/508.32.11

• 26 April: Moiano, Cactus Club, Brugge; info: 050/33.20.14

• 27 April: Woven Hand, Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/348.29.24

• 27 April: Woven Hand, Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32

• Until 20 April: Domino 2002, Festival: the margins of pop music, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/348.29.24
• Until 25, 26 and 27 April: Farrokh Ghassim and Abaroen, The Antichrist, Tadchistan, Theatre, translations into Dutch and French, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28

• 27 April: Woven Hand, Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32

• 27 April: Woven Hand, Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32

• 27 April: Woven Hand, Botanique, Brussels; info: 02/218.37.32

• 17 April: Godspeed you black Emperor, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24

• 19 and 20 April: Mirth by Arco Renz, dance, Monty, Antwerp; info: 03/238.91.81

• Until 23 April: Institute for living voice #2, concerts, workshops and debates in Bruges, info: 09/225.24.25 www.desingel.be

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