Verhofststadt locks horns with the CDeV on police

According to federal Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, the Chairman of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten - VVSG) Jef Gabriëls, who is also the CDeV mayor of Genk, overstepped the mark when he declared that as far as the VVSG was concerned there was no longer an agreement on police reform. In the parliamentary debate on 4 July, Verhofststadt said that Gabriëls had let himself be manipulated by his party. Gabriëls denies this, and claims that the VVSG has a ‘conditional agreement’ with the Federal Government. According to De Standaard, not only CDeV mayors but also mayors from the Liberal/Socialist/Green majority feel that the government should cough up more money for the police reform (FF).

Verhofststadt ended his argument in the superlative, saying that it was all a game manipulated and orchestrated by the CDeV, which is using the most commonplace opposition plays, that do nothing whatsoever to help promote security. Of course, that was a remark that CDeV MP Paul Tant could not ignore. He retorted that Verhofststadt was failing to address the core of the matter, and that the Prime Minister was resorting to insults because he did not have any other arguments. ‘You’re not keeping your promises and the municipalities are becoming pressed for money,’ the Christian-Democrat mayor said, whereupon the angry Prime Minister referred to next week’s budget control, which he said would convert the major federal financial promises into hard cash.

On being asked, Jef Gabriëls modified his position of Monday. The VVSG is still conditionally in agreement and that is a position of the negotiating delegation, which met on the matter. ‘The problem,’ Gabriëls said, ‘is that we have the Prime Minister’s word, but that the texts do not correctly render the agreements as we understand them.’ The chairman of the VVSG is asking the Prime Minister to monitor the correct compliance with what has been agreed. There is no doubt that Gabriëls’ treaty is along the lines of what is felt by many mayors from the Liberal/Socialist/Green majority. They, too, are keeping tabs on Verhofststadt & Co.
Flemish minister Bert Anciaux resigns

Before the Government of Flanders takes off on its summer recess (24 July), it first has to overcome a minor crisis. Totally unexpectedly, the Minister for Culture, Sport, and Brussels Affairs Bert Anciaux (Spirit) has tendered his resignation. He feels that he can no longer function as a minister. Anciaux, who wants to steer his party Spirit into a cartel with the SPA for the 2003 federal elections, is extremely disillusioned with the ‘political power games’ that are being played out. In particular, the insinuations that he is only trying to safeguard his own political career with his choice of an alliance with the SPA are gnawing at him. When he also learnt on Monday morning that Brussels MP and friend Sven Gatz had left Spirit for the liberal VLD, it was too much for him. Gatz is allegedly not the only one who is not following the course set by Anciaux. MEP Bart Staes and federal MP Ferdy Willems are reportedly considering defecting to Agalev, whilst Chairperson Annemie Vande Casteele does not want to carry on in the chairperson’s job. It is now up to Minister-President Dewael (VLD) to reshuffle his Government of Flanders team. On Monday evening, after its general council meeting at which Bert Anciaux was not present, Spirit announced that it was totally in favour of a cartel with the SPA and that it was continuing to demand two ministers in the Government of Flanders, even though it would have difficulties providing a replacement for Anciaux (FF).

After the elections of 13 June 1999, the governing coalition had a majority of 71 seats, with the distribution amongst the parties in office looking as follows: 27 seats for the VLD, 20 for the SPA, 12 for Agalev and 12 for VU/ID. Sixty-three of the 124 seats are needed for a majority in the Flemish Parliament. In contrast to the Federal Government level, in Flanders the VU/ID was vital for a government without Christian-Democrats. Now things look rather different. After the break-up of the Volksunie, three Flemish Parliament MPs who opted for Geert Bourgeois’s New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) moved to the opposition benches. A few months later former Minister Johan Sauwens joined the CD&V parliamentary party. The majority thus shrank to 69 seats. Etienne Van Vaerenbergh refused to make a choice, but the majority did not fall. A few weeks ago Margriet Hermans decided to move to the VLD. Now that Sven Gatz has also decided to sit with the Liberal parliamentary party, the Liberal/Socialist/Green coalition without Spirit has 61 seats. The idea of carrying on with just VLD, SPA and Agalev immediately becomes a lot less unrealistic, and that is something that VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht has also realised over the last few days. If he can persuade Etienne Van Vaerenbergh to move to the Liberals as an independent and Agalel leader Gheysels can do the same with Spirit member Herman Lauwers, the four remaining Spirit MPs will no longer be necessary for a majority.

Opinion

The fact that two of his colleagues, Patrick Vankrunkelsven and Sven Gatz - who were actually his lieutenants - did not believe in his project and opted for the VLD, was the straw that broke the camel’s back, because he regarded their choice as his personal failing. Anciaux is not giving in to the demand of VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht, who first plucked all the cherries off the Spirit cake and then demanded that Spirit also drop a ministerial post. Bert Anciaux is sick and tired of the cynicism and Machiavellianism of the Rue de la Loi. He is fed up of seeing the progressive project in which he believed, and for which he regards Spirit as essential, being depicted as his personal guarantee of a new mandate. Incidentally, if his resignation is accepted he will be without a job. Unlike his fellow ministers, he cannot fall back on a seat in the federal or Flemish Parliament. He was elected as a member of the European Parliament and resigned that office in order to be able to become a minister of the Government of Flanders. Those who say that Anciaux is too weak and too naive to be a full-blooded politician are probably right. But the question is whether the Rue de la Loi does not desperately need a couple of Anciauxes, who at times walk around the political landscape in all too human a fashion.

Spirit is not even in a position to replace Anciaux. That is impossible, since the party no longer has any elected representatives in Brussels in the wake of Sven Gatz’s departure, and legally Anciaux, who was also Minister for Brussels Affairs, has to be replaced by someone from Brussels. Furthermore, it is also political fiction, since both the VLD and Agalev have been making it clear in the last few days that two ministers was too much for a party that now only has five MPs. Therefore, Dewael did not make any intensive efforts yesterday to persuade Anciaux to change his mind. On Monday evening nobody had a ready-made solution for a way out of the political crisis. Once Anciaux had informed him of his resignation, Patrick Dewael immediately started a round of consultations. Senior figures in the government and in Spirit’s ranks were reviewed, but nobody was able to conjure up a solution.

Spirit has 61 seats. The idea of carrying on with just VLD, SPA and Agalev immediately becomes a lot less unrealistic, and that is something that VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht has also realised over the last few days. If he can persuade Etienne Van Vaerenbergh to move to the Liberals as an independent and Agalel leader Gheysels can do the same with Spirit member Herman Lauwers, the four remaining Spirit MPs will no longer be necessary for a majority.
focus on FLANDERS • 29 June - 5 July 2002 • Number 25

POLITICS

LUC VANDER KELEN • HET LAATSTE NIEUWS • 2 JULY

Anciaux is busy organising his own redundancy, since if two more Spirit MPs defect, for example to Agalev, Spirit will no longer be necessary for the majority. Sven Gatz would then simply be able to become Brussels minister in the Government of Flanders, but then for the VLD. It really has to be said now: Bert Anciaux is totally unsuitable to play a leader’s role. He lets himself be blinded by his emotions. Bert consults with Bert, and only when it is too late does he discover that there are also other people living in his street. One by one, his political associates are quitting. Either they are dismissed or the relationship ends in a blazing row. In the Volksunie, in Spirit, in his own ministerial office; it’s the same everywhere. Without a hand to guide him, Bert Anciaux is a spinning comet that does not know where it is heading.

Government of Flanders reshuffle complete

FF EDITORIAL STAFF

Political business and in particular the Government of Flanders have suffered substantial damage on account of Bert Anciaux’s resignation, in the view of the Minister-President Patrick Dewael (VLD). The affair resulted in recriminations flying to and fro, and also set the two largest parties in the majority coalition, the VLD and SP.A, against each other. For ‘coach’ Dewael, 2 July was therefore a busy day. The barbecue that he had promised for the entire Rue de la Loi press contingent on Tuesday evening was cancelled without a second thought. The gap left by Anciaux in the government team had to be filled as quickly as possible. After an initial round of consultations with the party chairmen, he came to the conclusion (like his party Chairman De Gucht), that Spirit should no longer have a second minister. The party was unable to offer enough to warrant that. There were now only four Spirit MPs left in the Flemish Parliament, one of whom still had doubts as to whether or not to defect to another party.

In the end Dewael was able to announce on 3 July that the reshuffle of his government team was complete. Brussels VLD member Guy Vanhengel is to become Minister for Brussels Affairs in the Government of Flanders. Vanhengel is already Minister for the Budget and Finance in the Brussels Government, but will combine the two ministerial offices. Vanhengel is the Fleming from Brussels whom the Government of Flanders needs in order to be legally composed. Spirit Minister Paul Van Grembergen takes over responsibility for Culture and Youth from Anciaux. Van Grembergen does however, give up the Foreign Affairs portfolio to the Minister for Economic Affairs and Foreign Trade Jaak Gabriëls (VLD).

The Greens are also getting their piece of the pie: Minister for Welfare Mieke Vogels is being given the Development Co-operation portfolio.

FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

Anciaux attacks VLD's power politics

At Spirit’s general party council meeting, where the formation of a cartel with the SP.A had to be voted on, there was consternation and confusion. Most of the council’s members had just heard the news that their Minister Bert Anciaux had resigned. Bert Anciaux himself did not appear at the meeting. After a lively debate, 82% of the members of the council voted in favour of a cartel with the SP.A, 7% voted against, and 11% abstained. Therefore, Spirit will renew talks with the Socialists, and it is planned for the results of those talks to be presented to another members’ meeting in September. At a press conference the following day, Bert Anciaux criticised the power politics of VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht, in his familiar emotional manner. In the near future, he wants more than anything to go back to working for Spirit as a party activist (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 3 JULY

Anciaux personally feels deeply hurt by the reproaches of opportunism and burning ministerial ambition. ‘At some point I have the right to react to these dirty tricks. The image for the people is not exactly a pretty one, but I’m trying to do something about that. I put friendship above a post, and therefore I am also tendering my resignation. I have no other means of defence at all. After all, there are no words for this. I have to show something by acting.’ Indirectly Karel De Gucht is partly responsible for his resignation. ‘He wanted to set me against my political friends. He wanted to have me wrestling with Paul Van Grembergen.’ Anciaux is asking questions about the way in which De Gucht is attempting to render Spirit superfluous by carrying off Spirit members ‘in an orchestrated fashion’. Anciaux does not deny that the VLD has succeeded in seducing his former fellow party members. However, he does not feel that he has put the Government of Flanders in a difficult predicament, and does not feel that he is leaving Spirit or his department staff in the lurch, either. ‘Sometimes you have to sort things out for yourself. It’s wholly at odds with the goals that I have set myself, but you have to be prepared for it. I’m opting for a vulnerable position with Spirit rather than the prevailing cynicism. I want to go on the stump for the party with greater independence. I’m not asking for the party chairmanship should that post arise.’ Anciaux’s commitment remains intact. He once saved the Volksunie from certain demise, and soon he wants to try to do the same for Spirit. The ultimate goal should be a better and more liveable society, free of any form of racism. ‘I shall never disavow that option. Flanders is not an intolerant society, but we have to get back to the people.’ In a voice faltering with emotion, Anciaux summed up his achievements at the Culture department, and then thanked everyone.
**VLD notches up a pyrrhic victory**

As of 3 July, half of the Government of Flanders team consists of Liberals. When it comes to mandates, the VLD has been able to show its power. The brand new Spirit chairpersons Els Van Weert and Geert Lambert had to climb down in the negotiations held in the night of 2/3 July. Moreover, the VLD now already has five former Spirit mandataries in its ranks. But it is highly debatable as to whether the Flemish Liberals have come out of the Anciaux incident as moral winners, feels De Standaard (4 July) (FF).

**BOUDEWIJN VAN PETEGHEM • DE STANDAARD • 4 JULY**

Spirit is losing, that is certain. Whereas a short time ago there might have been some lingering doubt as to the legitimacy of its demand that it retain two members of the government team, this doubt has melted away like snow in the sun as more Spirit members have abandoned the party’s ship. That Spirit loses does not in any way mean that Bert Anciaux loses. In right-thinking circles the former minister is viewed as an incorrigible and pathetic piece of emotion, but in his case that emotive side goes hand in hand with a large dose of intellect. Anciaux has emotion as his core business and thereby carved out a very individual and successful place for himself on the political scene. His power of judgement tells him to keep going along the path on which he has already experienced a lot of trouble and bother, but which personally has not done him any political harm. The senior politician has himself said that he will now work as a standard party activist for Spirit and will be going on the road. He need not worry about his livelihood, since he will be receiving a year-long retirement allowance equal to a parliamentary salary. He stresses that he still backs the Liberal/Socialist/Green coalition, but riles at what he describes as the pernicious Liberals, who are busy sawing the legs from under his party in a most abominable fashion. We shall have to wait and see whether the Anciaux ‘brand name’ will do as well with the electorate without an effective party machinery. The cartel with the S.P.A can serve as a new vehicle to bring his message - and himself - to the people. The Socialists derive their benefit from the fact that through Anciaux they can tap a new, and largely young, segment of the public that would otherwise pass them by.

It has been striking to note that over the last few days Anciaux and S.P.A Chairman Patrick Janssens have been on the same wavelength as regards their condemnation of the Liberal devil incarnate Karel De Gucht. Vlach, their leader, Flemish Liberals and Democrats are being depicted as politicians who go on and on about the new political culture but who, when it comes down to it, get up to ‘old politics’- whatever that means.

There is no doubt that the VLD has tried to ‘spirit away’ as many Spirit members as possible to the Liberal camp, although at the end of the day defecting politicians make their own decisions. Moaning about this is beside the point - although it does not detract from the fact that the Flemish Liberals are nonetheless left carrying the can as recruiters of 'defectors' from other parties. Actually, the VLD does not really have an extra minister, since VLD cabinet member Guy Vanhengel is being given a double cap, one for Brussels and one for Flanders. Patrick Janssens, who was against a fifth VLD minister, did not fail to point this out. There has been a bit of a reshuffle of competencies, and the harvest reaped by the Liberals is not immediately impressive. Furthermore, the Government of Flanders decides on the basis of plurality, which implies all the more that the relationships of power between Liberals, Socialists, and Greens have not fundamentally changed at all. In any case it is conspicuous that in the entire affair the Socialists, and to an even greater degree the Greens, have lain as low as possible-also during the talks in the night of Tuesday/Wednesday.

**Foreign investments in Belgium fall by 80%**

According to the OECD, direct foreign investments in our country fell back last year by 80%, from 243 to 51 billion dollars. The downturn amounted to 56% across the whole of the OECD area. Together with Germany, Belgium has suffered the sharpest decline in terms of direct foreign investments. But Belgium can take pride in the fact that, after the USA and Great Britain, it attracted most investments from all OECD countries in the period 1999-2001 (FF).

**STEFKAAN MICHIELSEN • DE STANDAARD • 4 JULY**

The OECD points out that foreign investments in 2000 stood at an unusually high level on account of the busy cross-border merger and acquisition activities, especially in the technology and financial sectors. The extremely high stock market prices also help to explain the record amounts recorded in 2000. Despite the sharp fall last year, Belgium still attracted more foreign investments than in 1999, when the country recorded a figure of $38.7 billion in foreign investments.

After the USA and Great Britain, Belgium was the most important destination for foreign investments in the OECD area in the period 1992-2001, according to OECD figures. In this period foreign companies invested $422.3 billion in our country - only slightly less than in Great Britain, which welcomed investments to the tune of $444.4 billion. Belgium does not cut a bad figure as an investor, either. Between 1992 and 2001, Belgian companies invested abroad to the tune of $414.1 billion, a figure that takes sixth place. The USA also heads up this list, with $1,145 billion in investments abroad, followed by Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan.
Karel Vinck in charge of the Belgian railways

Karel Vinck, CEO of Umicore, will hold the top job at the Belgian national railway company NMBS/SNCB for the next three years, after reaching an agreement with the Federal Government. In the presence of the Minister for Transport Isabelle Durant (Ecolo) and the Chairman of the Board of Directors Alain Deneef, he gave all the details of his appointment on 28 June. The negotiations had initially been difficult. Vinck had asked the government for a number of guarantees, which he regarded as indispensable for him to be able to function effectively as managing director. First of all, he asked for the age limit of 65 to be scrapped. After all, Vinck is 64. He also asked for the chairmanship of the strategic committee and the remuneration committee, and requested a toning down of the system whereby a second signature, that of the director-general (probably PS member Vincent Bourlard), is necessary for all major infrastructure works. He also asked for control over the communication policy. However, he only received guarantees regarding the age limit.

As regards the other requirements, something had to be settled or an amendment of the new Railways Act is required. A working group now has to examine the extent to which this Act can be adapted to the conditions that Vinck is laying down. Aside from Vinck and Deneef themselves, there are four experts in this working group: Philippe Delaunois (former director of Cockerill Sambre), Jean-François Katz (chairman of the Institute of Company Auditors), Luc Luyten (industrial policy expert) and Hugo Vandamme (former senior executive at Barco). The working group will report at the end of this year.

Minister for Transport Durant feels that adaptations to the brand new law would mean yet more loss of face, and every possible effort should be made to avoid that. Vinck is being given three years to make the NMBS/SNCB dynamic and customer friendly, and to prepare the company for the European free market (FF).

The Umicore chief executive repeatedly stressed the conditions that he had laid down for taking on the job. Durant’s department maintained that ‘turning the Railways Act upside down’ was out of the question. At the same time it was acknowledged that a number of Vinck’s demands were ‘legitimate’, but the message was that many of them could be realised without an amendment to the law. Vinck would certainly be able to sit on the remuneration committee, as long as he did not want to chair it. Obviously he had to play a key role in the communication policy, as long as this did not result in the Board of Directors being gagged. A protocol could provide a better framework for the controversial double-signature system. The plurality-based decision making of the NMBS/SNCB management committee could not be tampered with, but Vinck could be given a casting vote in the event of a tie in the votes. And he could certainly chair the strategic committee if board chairman Deneef was absent. However, Vinck stuck by his demand that he should be the permanent chairman of this committee, and there appeared to be an impasse in the making. Then came the suggestion from the government that this problem should be shifted to a working group with experts. The idea of the working group provided the necessary breakthrough.

Opinion

After two months of tussling, four calls for candidates and as many selection rounds, Minister Isabelle Durant was able to deliver the verdict and put an end to the waiting. The NMBS/SNCB has a managing director again. Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) has a couple of reasons for being satisfied. With Karel Vinck, the appointment has gone to the heavyweight that had long been the Prime Minister’s favoured candidate. Vinck also enjoys the support of the opposition CD&V, so that is an added bonus. Rejected candidates may yet find further evidence in the way in which the selection procedure was carried out to put a few spokes in the wheels by going to the Council of State. If that legal pitfall is avoided, the real work can finally begin. However, the enormous problems with which the railway company is confronted are far from having been solved yet. The NMBS/SNCB is labouring under a huge debt burden, which will only swell further with the new investment plan. Even the partial assumption of debt promised by the government will not be enough to remove that millstone from around the company’s neck. At the same time we are heading for a European liberalisation of rail traffic, and in this context the NMBS/SNCB, as a small player in the heart of the continent, risks being blown away.

Anyone who knows anything about the government and the company is aware that the NMBS/SNCB will only be able to weather that storm after drastic restructuring, in which several thousand jobs will be lost, especially in Wallonia. Vinck is the man whose job it will be to break that unhappy news to the unions. The fact that he already has several successful reorganisations under his belt is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the government having chosen him.

ECONOMY
Manure row between Flanders and Wallonia

A
fter the Flemish Manure Bank received visits in February from the Computer Crime Unit and a number of investigators from the public prosecutor’s offices of Tournai and Dinant, who at that time confiscated all transport documents relating to 2001, some 48 Flemish manure carriers had their premises searched last week by order of a number of Walloon public prosecutor’s offices. They, too, had transport documents confiscated. The Minister of the Government of Wallonia for the Environment Michel Foret suspects the companies of having carried Flemish manure to Wallonia illegally. Flemish Minister for the Environment Vera Dua (Agalev) is indignant. According to her, the manure in question is not manure that has been transported illegally, but processed manure that serves as a soil-enriching agent and is recognised by the federal authorities for export (FF).

TOM COCHEZ • DE MORGEN • 29 JUNE

Every year some 500,000 tons of manure are exported from Flanders to Wallonia. In the other direction, an average of about 55,000 tons of Walloon manure is transported to Flanders. Despite a Walloon ban on the import of untreated manure, which dates from 1987, no questions were asked - until, that is, the beginning of February, when a Flemish lorry carrying manure got stuck in the mud in Hainaut. The Minister of the Government of Wallonia Foret made it a point of honour. Shortly afterwards, the judicial authorities came knocking on the door of the Flemish Manure Bank in order to gain an insight into the manure traffic, details of which are meticulously recorded and updated there. ‘Yesterday’s house searches are part and parcel of the same investigation’, says François Suykens, chairman of the Manure Bank. Suykens maintains that there is no problem with this manure. ‘After all, we’re not talking about untreated manure here, but processed manure which has received a certificate from the federal authorities. This manure can be exported abroad - France and Germany are particularly good customers - but apparently not to Wallonia.’

Minister Dua also asserts that there is no legal problem whatsoever. ‘Processed manure ranks as a soil-enriching agent,’ says spokeswoman Ann Bats. ‘That is a federally recognised product that can be exported. However, Wallonia is treating processed manure and untreated manure as the same. That interpretation is causing problems.’

In any case, Dua wants further talks with her Walloon counterpart as soon as possible. If Wallonia digs its heels in, the Flemish minister is pressing for Wallonia to adopt a stand that has been raised by a number of customers - but apparently not to Wallonia.

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The fibre-optic network of the bankrupt Ebone, that is run from Hoeilaart and was taken over at the beginning of the year by KPNQwest, was shut down on 2 July. The interim financing that had been raised by a number of customers in order to keep the network running, ran until 30 June. On Monday 1 July the network was still operational, but the next day the staff stayed away. Some forty people were still working in Hoeilaart. The second network of the bankrupt KPNQwest, which is run from The Hague, is still operational. ‘We are still looking for a solution for The Hague,’ says receiver Jan van Apeldoorn. His Belgian colleague Jean-Michel Derick reckoned that a takeover of Ebone was no longer possible (FF).

ERIK DE LEYE • DE FINANCIEEL- ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 3 JULY

Now that the network has been shut down, the chance of an acquisition of the entire Ebone network has ebbed away. ‘There’s no longer any chance of a takeover. We’re very pessimistic,’ was how Jean-Michel Derrick summed things up. The Ebone network will probably be sold off in parts. The shutting-down of the network will probably not have any consequences for data traffic in Europe, since there is sufficient capacity available for it to be re-routed. The KPNQwest network did remain operational on Tuesday. How long that can be maintained is something that receiver Jan van Apeldoorn does not dare predict. However, the chance of a takeover of the entire KPNQwest is also getting smaller by the day. There is sufficient interest for parts, but the receivers are opting for the sale of the whole, since this brings in more.

The Dutch telecoms company KPN and the Swedish firm Telia have expressed interest in a number of parts of KPNQwest. Here, too, time is pressing. ‘We’re already in injury time,’ stresses Van Apeldoorn.
Airbus A400M: what about Flemish compensations?

According to agreements with the European partners, Belgian companies will receive EUR 1.3 billion in orders as compensation for the building of the military transport aircraft Airbus A400M. Minister Van Mechelen (VLD) claimed in the past that Flemish companies will be receiving at least 50% of the compensations, but Flemish industry has its doubts (FF).

HANS BROCKMANS • TRENDS • 4 JULY

According to Karel Vervoort of the FLAG (the Flemish industrial lobby group for military aviation contracts), Flemish aviation companies have so far secured some 15% of the Airbus contracts. ‘The problem is that the Federal Government is acting as though there were no compensations,’ he sighs. ‘There can therefore not be any neat agreements made on the distribution of the regions. The result is that the contracts are won by shadowy lobbyists, who pocket their commission, just like in the good old days’. All this has proved more than enough for the Flemish MP Eddy Schuermans (CD&V) to raise a number of questions on the issue in the Flemish Parliament. ‘It looks as though the Walloon companies are using up the compensation portfolio in the inception phase, whilst there is little left over for the Flemish companies’. The Government of Flanders has already expressed another standpoint on several occasions. Is Flanders going to receive adequate compensation or is it all just promises?

MARK DEWEERDT • FINANCIÈLE-ECONOMISCHE TIDJ • 5 JULY

Dewael said that the federal government’s recent decision on the purchase of military equipment overreaches itself. The decision was aimed at having military orders no longer placed on the basis of economic compensations, but the armed forces’ operational requirements. In itself that is all very well, but after the conclusion of the purchase contract the federal government no longer provides any economic follow-up of this matter. Dewael regards as unacceptable the fact that only the Defence department [led by minister Flahaut | Parti Socialiste |] does this. He considers that it is naive to believe that Flemish industry will be involved in the A400M programme by means of competition, since Flemish companies can only be involved in the last phase (that of the fitting-out) of the A400M, and they have no traditional ties with Airbus. Dewael decided that the Government of Flanders would actively continue to bring pressure to bear.

Anciaux, bogeyman and Santa Claus of the culture sector

With Bert Anciaux, Flemish politics is losing one of the most controversial culture ministers of the last few decades, opines De Morgen (2 July). Anciaux saw culture not as something solely for an elite, but as something for young people, the less well educated and immigrants, and more than anything he felt it had to strengthen the community spirit. Therefore culture had to be socially relevant. In a Flemish culture sector that had just become autonomous and had thrown off the rigid straitjacket of the subdivision into catholic, liberal, and socialist segments, this vision was not really appreciated. However, the sector could not level many complaints at Anciaux from a budgetary point of view, since under his tenure as minister, funding for culture rose by no less than EUR 125 million (FF).

KARL VAN DEN BROECK • DE MORGEN • 2 JULY

On 7 September 2000, before a hall (De Vooruit, Ghent) packed with officials and prominent figures from the cultural world (theatre directors, culture journalists, advisory committees), Anciaux introduced two concepts that continue to define the culture debate to this day: participation in culture and social relevance. At that point the Flemish culture sector had arrived at a point where it at last wanted to enjoy its recently acquired autonomous status. Quality could finally prevail over allegiance to a particular political party when it came to the allocation of subsidies. The literary sector even gained an autonomous Fund for Literature, which could grant subsidies itself. Anciaux did not question this autonomy, but he did question aloud the legitimacy of culture subsidies.

He felt that the ‘ascetic elite’ in the country’s temples of culture had a twofold assignment: far greater efforts had to be made to let difficult target groups (young people, immigrants, and the less well educated) participate in all this subsidised culture. Secondly, Anciaux ascribed culture a key role in the fight against bitterness and cold attitudes in society. A year later he sounded even more animated, during a second speech in De Vooruit. According to Anciaux, art and culture had to strengthen community spirit, give a sense of meaning to people’s lives, and strengthen the social fabric. The reactions were not wildly enthusiastic, but rather cynical and condescending. When the Reve affair erupted at this time (when the Dutch writer Reve was awarded the Dutch Literature Prize but the traditional presentation by the king could not take place because Reve’s ‘paedophile’ companion Van Schaathuizen had become the talk of the town. A number of Flemish writers then called for Anciaux’s resignation, ed.), and Anciaux found himself in a head-on confrontation with the writers,
relations between artists and the minister soured still further. Anciaux became the target for the whole sector. Last week, during the Colourful Flanders debate on culture, it appeared that the sector was yearning for conclusions. Anciaux now had to make it clear, and quick, what he meant by participation and social relevance. Now that Anciaux has left, the question is whether these conclusions will be quickly forthcoming. Given that not a single senior Flemish politician has taken an interest in culture in the last few years, Anciaux was quietly able to carry through a thorough reform and modernisation of the sector and also imperceptibly oversea EUR 125 million increase in the culture budget. That brings us to the question with which the culture sector should perhaps concern itself most; does Anciaux’s departure signal the disappearance of not only the biggest bogeyman but also the biggest Santa Claus from the Government of Flanders?

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### Diary

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **3 to 12 July**: Klitchenmeur with Armenian Navy Band, Paradox Trio, Vernon Reid, DJ Logic, Orchestra Baobab, Muntplein, Brussels; info: 02/513.82.90 www.beursschouwburg.be
- **5 July to 31 August**: Doris Egbergs Drive-In Movies on Friday and Saturday evenings, Jubelpark (Cinquantenaire), Brussels www.jubelpark.be
- **Until 1 September**: The Summer of Antwerp with Music for the neighbourhood on 12 squares, street theatre performances and circuses, Antwerp; info: 05/323.86.60 www.zomervanantwerpen.be
- **Until 1 September**: Summertime Festival Flanders in different Flemish cities, info: 03/328.19.10 www.zomerfestival.be
- **13, 14 and 15 July**: Cactus Festival with St Germain, Roberto Menescal, Michael Frantz, Stereochead, info: 05/331.20.14 www.cactus-music.be
- **14 and 15 July**: TW Classic with Joe Cocker, Zucchero and Bryan Adams, info: 0900/266000 www.twclassic.be
- **13 and 14 July**: Brosella Folk Festival with Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Martin O’Connor & Eric Rigler, Kevin Mulligan & Friends, The Jews Brothers Band, Charles Lloyd Quartet etc. info: www.brosella.be
- **20 to 27 July**: Blue Note Festival with Stefano di Battista Quartet, Elvin Jones & Eric Rigler, Kevin Mulligan & Friends, with Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Martin O’Connor & Eric Rigler, Kevin Mulligan & Friends, The Jews Brothers Band, Charles Lloyd Quartet etc. info: www.brosella.be
- **25 to 28 July**: Sfinks Festival: world music with Najar Aataou (Mar), Fernando Abreu (Bral, Aia [Barbados], MafaZlda Arnaudh [Portugal], Fado), Boneman [Austr, didgeridoo], Trio BaClissoko & Yvi Slan [Guinée, Ialma [Gambia], Adolphe Dominguez & Wenge Tonya [Tokyo, Drum Drum [Papoua NG] and many others, Echochout, info: 03/455.69.44 www.sfinks.be

### EXPO

- **Until 15 September**: Lost Past 2002 - 1914, exhibition, Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, info: 070/22.50.02
- **Until 15 September**: Bernard Frize, exhibition, SMAK, Ghent, info: 09/221.17.03
- **Until 15 September**: 100 years - 100 chairs, exhibition Design Museum, Ghent, info: 09/267.99.99
- **Until 15 September**: Johan Tahon [sculptures] and Permeke, Permeke Museum, Jabbeke [West-Flanders], info: 05/81.12.88
- **Until November**: Living Tomorrow, where visions meet, the house of the future, Vilvoorde, info: www.2livtvom.be
- **Bruges 2002**: info: 070/22.33.02
- **Bruges 2002**: Until 15 September: *In situ*: exhibition on different locations with Manon De Boer, Messieurs Delmotte, Robert Devriendt, Job Koelewijn, Ugo Rondinone, Joe Scanlan and Joëlle Tuerlinckx; Until 21 July: *the modular museum* and Schone Aussicht 2, Kolenkai, Bruges; Until 15 September: Home theatre, Concertgebouw, Bruges; Until 8 September: HanzenMedici, exhibition, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02.00 www.brugge2002.be
- **Until 18 July**: Rubens and the Flemish Baroque painters, exhibition, City Hall, Brussels, info: 02/279.64.34
- **Until 14 July**: Silver work by the De Vecchi Family, Provincial Museum Sterckshof-Zilvercentrum, Antwerp, info: 03/560.52.50
- **Until 31 August**: Kunst-stof: exhibition on contemporary art and design, Broelmuseum, Kortrijk
- **Until 28 July**: The ritual art of the Lego, athletics and beauty in hot heart of Africa, exhibition, KBC gallery, info: 02/429.85.68

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### Focus on Flanders

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### CULTURE

**8700 Tielt**

**MUSIC, DANCE THEATRE**

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**25 June - 5 July 2002**

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