Public prosecutor's office claps Abou Jahjah in irons

Premier Verhofstadt had already announced it during question time in the Chamber on 28 November. All legal means would be used to tackle Abou Jahjah and his organisation, the Arab-European League. Minister for Internal Affairs Antoine Dujuesne added that he even wanted to alter the legal arsenal, should it appear that this was inadequate to take action against the AEL. It would be a matter of hours or days before action was taken, said Verhofstadt. Around 9 p.m. that same day Jahjah was arrested at his home in Deurne (district of Antwerp) after being cornered by police (FF).

According to legal sources, Jahjah was bugged and action was taken following one of his telephone conversations. When the house was searched police found sufficient indications to arrest the man, which means that he is suspected of a 'crime that carries a penalty of one year in prison. What the final accusation was remained a mystery.' According to the commercial broadcaster VTM, the arrest concerned the flows of money with which the AEL was financed. Legal sources are saying that the arrest 'was also based on crimes against the Belgian state or one of its allies'. Apparently there is no link between the operation and the ceremony taking place in Borgerhout in memory of the murdered Mohammed Acharak.

Mayor Detiège refused to comment on the motive of the murderer and are sticking to the promise to provide complete clarification. Apparently the 66-year-old man exhibited isolated, paranoid behaviour, had a 'criminal past' and had until recently been receiving psychiatric treatment.

RUUD GOOSSSENS • DE MORGEN • 29 NOVEMBER

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Mayor Detiège (SPA) was also not prepared to give any further explanation. The AEL itself called for calm yesterday evening. Today the police's main concern is further disturbances. Some 6,000 people are expected to attend the memorial ceremony, which has been organised by the recently established Flemish Forum for Islamic Organisations.

INTRODUCTION

When the Corps Chief of Antwerp Police Luc Lamine was asked in Knack (27 November) his opinion about the civilian patrols of the Arab-European League that are intended to control the so-called police's racist behaviour in Antwerp, he warned that a single incident 'could light the fuse'. The evening before the interview in question appeared, the incident occurred, immediately triggering fierce immigrant riots. According to the Moroccan community in Antwerp, including the more moderate mouthpieces such as the Federation of Moroccan Associations, the family of the victim, the murder of Mohammed Acharak is without doubt a racially motivated crime. Antwerp's Public Prosecutor's Office and Mayor Leona Detiège refused to comment on the motive of the murderer and are sticking to the promise to provide complete clarification. Apparently the 66-year-old man exhibited isolated, paranoid behaviour, had a 'criminal past' and had until recently been receiving psychiatric treatment.

The victim, on the other hand, was a religious but integrated Moroccan, respected and loved by all in his community. But now it is not this peaceful Moroccan who is the focus of interest in the Flemish press, but Abou Jahjah, leader of the AEL. He is seen not only as being responsible for setting up the aforementioned civilian patrols, but also for orchestrating the disturbances that raged for two days in Antwerp. In readers' letters and some comments in the press the cry for a tough approach was deafening. The City Council, headed by Security Administrator Grootjans and Mayor Detiège, which immediately triggering fierce immigrant riots. The AEL itself called for calm yesterday evening. Today the police's main concern is further disturbances. Some 6,000 people are expected to attend the memorial ceremony, which has been organised by the recently established Flemish Forum for Islamic Organisations.

Meanwhile there is less and less room for the moderate votes in the integration debate, notes De Standaard (28 November), while De Morgen (29 November) finds that populism and demagogy are rampant these days - also in the tabloid press.
Riots in Antwerp after murder of Moroccan

The police tried to avoid disturbances but then Abou Jahjah himself appeared on the scene.

On 26 September Antwerp experienced yet another turbulent evening, due to a murder in the district of Borgerhout. There a 66-year-old Belgian shot and killed the 27-year-old son of his Moroccan neighbour. Depending on the source, the perpetrator is a racist or someone with a psychiatric past. According to the officers who overwhelmed him he appeared confused. Immediately afterwards dozens of young immigrants flocked together and began to chant slogans for the Arab-European League and its leader, Abou Jahjah. The mass-mobilised police tried to avoid disturbances, but then Abou Jahjah himself appeared on the scene (FF).

The police, who came out in force, were bombarded with anything that came to hand. Bricks were handed out. Many police officers were injured. Shop windows and windscreen were smashed. The Arab-European League (AEL) and its leader Abou Jahjah played a prominent role in the disturbances. While it initially seemed as if Jahjah wanted to co-operate with the police, shortly afterwards he threatened Corps Chief Luc Lamine. He held against him the fact that ‘his community had not even been able to get over its sorrow’ and predicted that the AEL would now call for a large, illegal demonstration, ‘in which ten thousand of people would take part’. Bystanders could not help feeling that the AEL had skilfully orchestrated the uncontrolled popular fury. One cynical detail: the murder victim, (Mohammed Achrak, a Muslim) was known in the neighbourhood as a very moderate man who did everything in his power to let the resident population and immigrants live together as peacefully as possible. ‘He would never have approved of what is happening now,’ people said. The disturbances fizzled out around 21:30. An elderly man - possibly an Imam - led a hundred or so hot-heads off to the Bilal mosque in Van Montfortstraat. ‘For reflection, to discuss things,’ it was said. Commissioner Luc Lamine sat down to talks with the Moroccan Community. Antwerp was once again able to lick its wounds.

Antwerp introduces zero-tolerance

after a second successive day of disturbances between young immigrants and police.

On 27 November, at a hastily arranged press conference at Antwerp Town Hall, the brother of the murdered Moroccan Muslim Mohammed Achrak made a striking plea for reconciliation. He does not want the drama to be ‘abused’, although he is convinced that the murder was racially motivated. That did not prevent a second successive day of disturbances between young immigrants and police. Antwerp City Council and the Public Prosecutor’s Office resolutely adopted a tough approach. Zero-tolerance was introduced and ninety youths were arrested. ‘Anyone who abuses the murder to commit offences will immediately be prosecuted,’ warned Antwerp solicitor Bart Van Lijssebeth at the press conference. The leader of the Arab-European League, Abou Jahjah, is being blamed. He is abusing his freedom of expression to disturb the peace, claims Security Alderman Dirk Grootjans (VLD) (FF).

According to those present at the press conference, the AEL leader did not make any effort to calm the immigrant youths. ‘When he arrived on Tuesday evening, he incite them to riot almost immediately,’ claimed Grootjans. ‘We must not allow this.’ There is no point in Antwerp City Council trying to talk to the leader of the AEL, said Grootjans. ‘We are currently investigating whether the citizens’ patrols organised by Abou Jahjah are private militias. In other words, we suspect him of a crime. We will not talk with a man like that. On the contrary, we will use all means available to try and prevent Jahjah destroying the integration in which we have invested so heavily. But we will strengthen our ties with the other immigrant organisations.’ Van Lysebeth announced that an investigation would quickly be launched into Abou Jahjah.

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* between () the eurozone figures

SOURCE: DE FINANCIËLE MORGEN
**SP.A approves cartel with Spirit at conference**

On 23 November, at their conference in Brussels, the Flemish Socialists approved the cartel with Spirit. Of the delegates in attendance, 84.5% were in favour. This high score was a surprise even for the party leadership, as the cartel had come in for severe criticism from many divisions of the party. In particular the older Socialists were dissatisfied. They bear a grudge against Spirit, since the party carries the inheritance of the Volksunie, which has a past of Stevaert collaboration. But there was also criticism from other ranks, who do not trust the whimsical behaviour of Spirit boss Bert Anciaux. Thus, the Brussels SPA division had not yet forgotten that at the Brussels regional elections in 1999, Anciaux had extricated his VU&ID from an alliance with the Socialists and Greens to form a cartel with the Liberals. And finally the quartet of Stevaert, Vande Lanotte, Janssens, and Vandenburgroucke, which has a firm grip on the party leadership, got it in the neck for the barely democratic way in which it had forced the cartel with Spirit onto the party rank and file. In the end it was Steve Stevaert who was able to convince the grumbling party rank and file to approve the cartel. With this conference Stevaert also seems to have secured his position as undisputed party leader, says De Morgen (FF).

**BART ECKHOUT • DE MORGEN • 25 NOVEMBER**

The Brussels conference consecrated Steve Stevaert as the genuine party leader of the Flemish Socialists. While party Chairman Patrick Janssens lay low, Stevaert, who is immensely popular even among his own ranks, crept onto the stage at tense moments. Only at the end did Janssens himself appear. In his closing address he repeated his criticism of coalition partner VLD, which he reproached for ‘only being interested in who is in Wetstraat 16 and who is the biggest.’ The Chairman contrasted this with the work of his ministers. ‘I challenge my fellow party chairmen. Go onto the street and ask the people. What have Daems and Verwilghen done for you, and what about Johan Vande Lanotte and Frank Vandenburgroucke? What has Vogels done for you, and what about Stevaert?’ Patrick Janssens had gambled on a score of 68% beforehand. That was, as Janssens feared, the percentage with which the SPA would approve the cartel with Spirit. In the end it reached 84%, but before Stevaert’s intervention it appeared as if the Chairman’s fears would be confirmed. The criticism of the cartel was harsh and varied. There was much applause for one militant who called for a ‘moral charter’ between the SPA and Spirit, ‘so that if the Spiritists get it into their head again (to change partners, ed.) at least we will keep the seats.’ The fear that the collaboration with Spirit could cost their own party mandates was deeply rooted within the SPA. However, most resentment was over the way in which the cartel had come into being. ‘The leaders reach an agreement, the leaders hold a press conference and now we have to swallow it,’ was the harsh line. The only person who dared defend the cartel was met with boos as well as applause. And then came Stevaert. ‘We must not become the N-VA of Socialism,’ he began. ‘We may well have the best ministers, but that is not enough to win elections.’ For his final power argument he brought in his father. ‘My Dad went on and on about that cartel, but he is for the Socialists. Even those who are against Spirit or against the cartel must vote for it, because if not you’re voting against your own party. My Dad would do that too. The rank and file got the message. The cartel would happen because Stevaert wants it to.

**Housing Policy is a spearhead of SP.A Manifesto**

In an interview with Het Belang van Limburg/Gazet van Antwerpen (23 November) on the eve of the party conference, Stevaert explained the party’s stance on housing in a nutshell. According to him, everyone must be able to build or buy their own home. In his view it is the best form of social security as you get older. This goes against the grain for many housing companies - which are also frequently rounded off by socialist mandataries. According to Stevaert, they reject his view because they ‘are only great if they have plenty of social rented houses.’ The SPA is not for the housing companies, but for the people, claims Stevaert. At the conference, housing policy therefore became a spearhead of the refurbished social manifesto. In the next Flemish government the SPA wants to call for a Socialist housing minister and is making a number of proposals to make housing cheaper: alongside cheaper private properties and plots of land, the party is also calling for stable social rental prices and the abolition of the tax on mortgages. Furthermore, the SPA feels there should be a Flemish guarantee fund, whereby the government guarantees the mortgage with the bank. Just like current Housing Minister Gabriëls (VLD), the party wants a better social mix in the social housing blocks and is therefore calling for the income limit as you get older. This goes against the grain for many housing companies - which are also frequently rounded off by socialist mandataries. According to Stevaert, they reject his view because they ‘are only great if they have plenty of social rented houses.’

**POLITICS**

**PARTY CONGRESS**

**FF EDITOR**
The new come back of Bert Anciaux

He presented a book in which he outlines his ideas on an active cultural state.

Following his unexpected resignation as Culture Minister this summer, Bert Anciaux is back in politics. This time as Spirit’s ‘biggest militant’ and with a book that bears the title ‘De Verrijkte Samenleving’ ('The Enriched Society'). On 27 November he held a press conference to present the book and outlined his ideas on an ‘active cultural state’. A state that places intangible values above tangible ones and where the indigenous adults in the communities take up their role of community wardens. He named figurehead Steve Stevaert of the SP.A, with which his party has entered into an election cartel, as a candidate government leader for the Flemish Government in 2004 (FF).

STEFANA MICHELESEN • DE STANDAARD • 27 NOVEMBER

Anciaux feels supported by recent research by political scientist Mark Elchardus, who sees a new fault line in society between those who have faith in institutions and the future and those who feel orphaned in this society. ‘I didn’t know that scientific research had been carried out into what I felt,’ said Anciaux, who admitted that in the past, just like the VLD, he had focused too much on ‘emancipated’ citizens. Anciaux wants to give a ‘progressive answer’ to the new duality of the enriched society. This consists of putting young people and children, a pet subject of Anciaux, first. At the same time we have to ‘reach our hand to the older generation, to build a society together’. As an unadulterated confederalist, Anciaux believes that this must happen from beneath. ‘I am therefore calling for the vilLAGification of the municipalities: we must hand over power to the communities, to the mamas.’ Mamas is the word Anciaux uses for indigenous parents, who can boost the neighbourhood and their self-respect by assuming their role of community wardens.

Changes at the top of KBC and Dexia

Remi Vermeiren at KBC and Luc Onclin at Dexia are resigning

Next year Remi Vermeiren, top man at bank and insurance company KBC - a merger of Kredietbank, Cera Bank and ABB Insurances - is to relinquish his duties at the bank at the age of sixty-three. He will be succeeded by a duo. André Bergen, Financial Director of the Antwerp based image-processing firm Agfa-Gevaert, will take over as Chairman of the Management Committee of KBC Bank while Willy Duron, Head of KBC Insurances, will replace Vermeiren as head of KBC Holding. Bergen sat on the Management Committee of De Generale Bank when this was taken over by Fortis in 1998 (FF).

STEFANA MICHELESEN • DE STANDAARD • 27 NOVEMBER

With his switch from Agfa-Gevaert to KBC Bank André Bergen is remaining pretty much within the same family, since both companies lie within the sphere of influence of the Flemish financial group Almanij. Apart from being Chairman of the Management Committee of KBC Bank while Willy Duron, Head of KBC Insurances, will replace Vermeiren as head of KBC Holding. Bergen sat on the Management Committee of De Generale Bank when this was taken over by Fortis in 1998 (FF).

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

Dexia Bank’s Managing Chairman, Luc Onclin, is also resigning. He is leaving for personal and family reasons. Onclin will be replaced by the young rising star Axel Miller, a 37-year-old lawyer who has been a member of Dexia Bank’s Management Committee for barely one year, where he was given charge of the complex and sensitive integration process of Dexia Bank and Artesia-Bacoba. Miller showed himself to be a crafty negotiator, reaching a social agreement with the trade unions six months after his appointment.

KBC IN THE VERMEIREN-ERA

SOURCE: TIJD GRAPHICS

KBC dj-euro stoxx bank index

1998 1999 2000 2001 2002

SOURCE: TIJD GRAPHICS
Take-over of Gilde Brauerei by Interbrew takes momentum

The Leuven brewer Interbrew has reached an agreement with the city of Hanover on the take-over bid for Gilde Brauerei. With 15%, the city is the major shareholder in Brauergilde Hannover, which owns 85% of the shares in Gilde Brauerei. Interbrew now holds more than 50% of the shares. Interbrew already had the support of the management, the Board of Directors and the majority of the shareholders of Brauergilde Hannover. The takeover is now all but complete, says spokesman Corneel Maes. Alongside Beck’s and Diebels, Interbrew is in this way acquiring two more well-known brands of beer in Germany, namely Gilde and Haasseröder (FF).

GUY VANDEN BROECK • DE FINANCIEEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 27 NOVEMBER

Interbrew concluded an agreement with the city of Hanover in which Interbrew’s basic principles were again clarified. After all, in all its takeovers Interbrew assumes the preservation of tradition, brand growth, providing opportunities for local management and sponsoring the municipality. ‘That is precisely what the city of Hanover wanted to hear and see on paper,’ says Corneel Maes. The city’s authorities initially feared that the brewery would lose its autonomy in time and threatened legal action. Although it has not been formally established that Hanover is also offering Interbrew its 10%, this can be assumed, suggests Maes. Furthermore, the takeover is already a success because Interbrew holds much more than 50%. The public bid runs until Friday. If Interbrew becomes the 100% owner of Brauergilde AG, it will have to come up with 523 million euros. This price corresponds to 8.6 times the company’s cashflow. According to stock market firm Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, this is below the sector average for such purchases.

Non-ferrous producer Umicore has to clean up in Olen

Flemish Environment Minister Vera Dua (Agalev) is forcing the non-ferrous company Umicore, formerly Union Minière, to clean up an area of 500 hectares in Olen, Limburg. The company site itself also has to be cleaned up. The ground there is full of lead, cadmium, zinc and salts, while the groundwater in a large area around the company is also contaminated with heavy metals and salts. In an initial phase Umicore must clean up the site grounds and the groundwater. A second phase will include any soil decontamination of 675 plots required following a soil investigation. Umicore is disputing its responsibility for the extent of the contamination. (FF).

JOHAN RASKING/ANTOON WOUTERS • DE STANDAARD • 26 NOVEMBER

Minister Dua reached her decision on the basis of a soil investigation by the Public Flemish Waste Company (Openbare Vlaamse Afvalstoffenmaatschappij, OVAM). It relates to contamination from the past and not the company’s current activities. Because the contamination is historical, Umicore had lodged an appeal against the OVAM investigation. But this was rejected by Dua ‘because the responsibility of the company is clear’. Umicore disputes the legal scope of its responsibility and is going to the Council of State.

‘This does not mean that the company is not prepared to participate constructively in the clean-up, as it has already done in the past and still does. We have been cleaning up a number of sites on a voluntary basis for the past two years. We also want to participate in cleaning-up actions outside our site, always on a voluntary basis. Provisions have been created for this purpose,’ says Umicore spokeswoman Moniek Delvou. What all this will cost depends on the market and how the dossier is handled from now on. The degree of pollution and the clean-up solution chosen will also play a part. For the time being only the groundwater outside the plant is involved. It is not yet clear whether the ground is also contaminated. That can make a significant difference to the costs. According to OVAM, the area involves 80 ha of industrial land and 400 to 500 ha of other land. That area is bordered by the Kleine Nete, the Kneuterdijk and the Bankloop. Lead, zinc and cadmium, together with salts, have mainly been found in the groundwater. Later the ground itself must be investigated to ascertain the exact level of contamination. Only then can a solution be sought for the 675 plots. ‘The contamination spread via the groundwater and Umicore has to clean up that area at its own expense,’ says Dua. Most of the area is an agricultural and conservation area with isolated houses and new developments. Under no circumstances should the owners or residents have to fund the clean-up costs. This will remain the case even if the property is sold. The residents will receive a letter from OVAM.

NATIONAL BANK: ECONOMIC PROSPECTS 2002

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SOURCE: INFOGRAFIEK RUG
The Antwerp family business Sibelco is taking over the Australian David Mitchell. Mitchell is the largest independent producer of quicklime and limestone in Australia. Sibelco is the world’s largest producer of quartz sand and clay. The company, which employs some 7,400 people worldwide, also exploits minerals such as magnetite, barium sulphate and bentonite. Last year Sibelco achieved a group profit of 67.55 million euros on a turnover of 1.695 billion euros (FF).

**ERIC DE LEYE • DE FINANCIEEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 26 NOVEMBER**

The take-over in Australia is via Unimin Australia, the Australian subsidiary of the American Unimin. Sibelco owns 66.5% of Unimin. How much Unimin paid for the Australian company has not been announced. The take-over of Mitchell strengthens not only Sibelco’s presence in Australia, it also provides end product diversification, says Laurence Boëls, General Secretary of Sibelco. The Belgian multinational was already present ‘down under’ with Unimin Australia, but mainly supplied sand and clay. To these can now be added quicklime and limestone. Each year Mitchell produces around 1 million tonnes of quicklime and limestone in its twelve plants in eastern Australia. Last year the company recorded a net profit of 2.37 million euros on a turnover of 31.47 million euros. The Antwerp-based Sibelco is the world’s largest producer of quartz sand and clay. Quartz sand and flour are used in the glass, ceramics, construction and chemical industries. They are used to make, among other things, glass fibres for telecommunications and sheet glass. With the take-over of Watts Blake Bearne & Co for 164.7 million euros in 1999 and the take-over of Hepworth Minerals and Chemicals for 136.2 million euros in 2000, the Sibelco group also became a major producer of all types of clay.

**Night flights create new noise pollution**

Some time ago the Flemish Government concluded an agreement in principle with the Government of the Brussels Region and the Federal Government to tackle the problem of night-time noise pollution around Zaventem airport. With the help of experts, Transport Minister Isabelle Durant (Ecolo) had new flight paths mapped out that would create less noise. These no longer ran across the eastern and southern edges of Brussels and over Brussels itself, but over the less heavily populated northern edge. They have been in use since 31 October. But since then complaints have been pouring in from the Flemish municipalities to the north of Brussels. The Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V) accused Isabelle Durant of favourising her French-speaking Community. According to the opposition party, the Green minister made sure that all noise pollution disappeared within her Brussels constituency. The action group against noise pollution in the northern area, Daedalus, demanded that the old regulation with flights both to the north and south of Brussels be restored. Local politicians such as Jean-Luc Dehaene (CD&V), Hans Bonte (SPA) and Willy Courtas (VLD) from the municipality of Vilvoorde are calling for action. In Grimbergen the Vlaams Blok is adding fuel to the fire. Flemish Environment Minister Vera Dua leap into action and promptly ordered the Flemish environmental administration Aminal to take measurements in the area in question. The conclusion was clear as day: the levels of noise pollution had increased. That was not what had been agreed. The agreement clearly stated that no new people should be affected and that noise levels should not increase for anyone. So shortly before the elections the local problem finally received the necessary attention at the very highest level, as Minister-President Dewael and Federal Premier Verhofstadt (VLD) are putting it on the agenda of the Consultative Committee of the Federal and Regional Governments. Neither Dua nor Verhofstadt, however, are in favour of revising the agreement (FF).

**ZAVENTEM AIRPORT**

All the Flemish parties have now announced that they want to re-examine the agreement in July. The Aminal measurements were initially disputed by the airports operator, BIAC. But yesterday the two administrations agreed that they acknowledged each other’s results. The two services will compare their results further over the next few days and, if necessary, take new measurements. This exercise must deliver generally accepted results by Friday. That is when the Consultative Committee of the Federal and Regional Governments is due to meet. In consultation with Flemish Minister-President Patrick Dewael, Premier Guy Verhofstadt again placed the night flight agreements on that Committee’s agenda. In doing so, he wants above all to avoid the dispute taking on a the nature of a dispute between the communities. The Federal Transport Minister, Isabelle Durant (Ecolo), said yesterday that she did not see this as evidence of mistrust of her policy. ‘The Premier is simply playing his role as Chairman of the Consultative Committee,’ said her spokesperson. But Durant immediately added that she does not want to go back over the principles of the agreement. ‘Before the concentration of night flights, 20,000 people suffered from noise pollution at night. Now that figure is down to 11,000.’ She also denies that the decision to spare Brussels and the southern area is Community-inspired. The Ecolo minister is, however, prepared to take measures. In particular, she is thinking of speeding up the carrying out of insulation work and the stopping of flights involving the noisy B727. According to an agreement with courier DHL, that aircraft is being taken out of circulation between 1 January and 31 March 2003 in any case. That operation may well be able to be brought forward.
Van Parys: government is manipulating crime figures

The head of the Federal Police claims he would never tolerate a political guideline on figures

According to Tony Van Parys, CD&V MP and former Justice Minister, this country's crime statistics are being falsified. On 26 November in the Chamber's Justice Committee he showed a letter from one of the Director-Generals of the Federal Police, in which the latter urged his subordinates ‘not to publish any crime figures that are conflict with details previously supplied to the competent ministers’. The officers in question had to gather figures on the crimes that were a priority in the Safety Plan of Justice Minister Verwilghen. According to Van Parys, this is proof that the Government is manipulating crime statistics. And yet he is not accusing Justice Minister Verwilghen (VLD), as it is not clear who he is not accusing. Justice Minister Verhofstadt (VLD) produced figures that revealed a drop in crime of 8%. Van Parys disputed these figures at the time because they did not tally with figures from the National Institute for Statistics in a reaction the next day the Director-General in question, Paul Van Thielten, explained the passage as if he had simply insisted on accuracy in reporting. The head of the Federal Police, Herman Fransen, added that he would never tolerate a political guideline on figures. (FF).

Opinion
ERIC DONCKIER • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG • 27 NOVEMBER

In more normal terms this means that the Director-General asked his officers to make sure that their figures do not contradict the crime figures published earlier by Premier Guy Verhofstadt. Does this mean that crime statistics in this country are being falsified? According to Tony Van Parys in the Chamber yesterday, that is indeed the case. We dare not go that far. The fact is, however, that as soon as Premier Verhofstadt had unveiled his crime statistics, significant doubts emerged concerning these crime statistics. And the First Minister has still not managed to dispel these doubts. It is therefore high time that Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt stood up and explained in detail where his figures come from, how they were gathered and interpreted, what the evolutions are, where they can be verified...If he cannot do this, the only possible conclusion is that the figures were tinkered with. And that leads to another conclusion for the Prime Minister... Since this government came to power it has become impossible to find comparable figures. The reference basis was regularly adapted, which meant it could no longer be compared with previous years. Why was this necessary? Is the Verhofstadt government afraid of being compared to the past? Are the results really that bad?

The poetic path of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

The Rosa dance company has been staging productions for 20 years now

Rosas, the dance company of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, has been operating for 20 years now. This was the reason behind the organisation of an exhibition in the PSK in Brussels on De Keersmaeker and her group. Using photos, films and drawings Rosas XX depicts the birth of productions. There is no didactic explanation. Above all, De Keersmaeker did not want the visitor to be forced into her point of view. Rather, the exhibition should be a ‘poetic path’. In addition to the thirty or so productions put on by the choreographer, she also established a dance school. And she is currently back on the stage with the solo production ‘Once’ in her own Rosas Performance Space in Brussels. The choreography is built around music from a live album by Joan Baez from 1963. After Purcell, Monteverdi, Bartok, Mozart, Steve Reich and the jazz of Aka Moon the music chosen is an extremely personal choice, she stresses, through the memories of her childhood. Zipp looks back at her career by confronting the choreographer with earlier statements on her craft (FF).

KRISTIEN VERMOESEN/ROEL VERNIERS ZIPP/DE STANDAARD • 27 NOVEMBER

Of her work it was once said that the anger of the first dance performances was not present in her later work. De Keersmaeker: ‘If you are forty, you are involved in different things from when you are twenty. That’s normal. And healthy. I think I was more impatient when I was younger. You could call it anger with a lot of energy. That had to do with age, but also with the times. The 1980s were the punk years, of kicking out against the establishment. Not that I ever had any punk ambitions, but protest did form the basis of my performances: I didn’t accept things as they were.’ In one of her first files at the exhibition ‘Rosas XX’ De Keersmaeker quotes dance guru Merce Cunningham: ‘I am firmly convinced that movement in itself is expressive, free from all intent.’ ‘Yes,’ reacts De Keersmaeker, ‘that is basic in much modern dance. Do I still believe in it? Yes and no. I believe in the abstract power of movement. But after 20 years I’m convinced that for me, dance has to do with speaking. Not with telling a linear story, but with communicating. A body is a carrier of emotions. The more formal the structure, the more I need it to be filled out with its own personal story. Hence yes and no. After all, I’m full of intentions. You also need to look at the context in which the statement was made. It’s a rejection of narrative dance, where dancers have to portray something, as in classical ballet but also in certain forms of modern dance, such as Martha Graham or José Limón. Zipp: ‘A dancer finds it difficult to cheat: each dancer
has movements that come from inside them and their character traits often take on visual form.’ De Keersmaeker: did I say that? Now, I’m trying to move away from movements that are close to the dancers. Or to make sure that the dancers take on the movements I suggested. So that there is a closeness between the movements and what they are saying. Sometimes they produce entirely personal versions of the material I provide. I’ve always been involved in group pieces. But group pieces in which individuals come to the fore: physically, but also as people, in their manners of dancing and speaking. I want a choreography in which there is a line for every separate dancer.

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