Rumsfeld attacks Genocide Act in Brussels

We will oppose any expenditure on the new NATO headquarters as long as the problem of the Belgian Genocide Act is not resolved,’ said the American Defence Minister on 12 June at NATO headquarters in Evere. There is little point in organising meetings in Brussels if senior civil or military US representatives run the risk of being prosecuted, Rumsfeld said. ‘He also pointed out that the charge of war crimes levelled against Tommy Franks, Commander of the American forces in Iraq, had caused a great deal of bad feeling in the USA, even though the Belgian Government had now referred the charge to the USA. Foreign Affairs Minister Louis Michel (MR) does not understand Rumsfeld’s attitude. He thought that Belgium had adapted the Genocide Act so that all provisions that caused countries such as the USA and Israel concern had been removed. Michel therefore announced that he would be contacting his counterpart Colin Powell (FF).

Opinion

MIA DOORNAERT • DE STANDAARD • 13 JUNE

The Verhofstadt I Government justified its incoherent diplomatic stuntwork with the argument that in doing so it ‘had put Belgium back on the map’. Being home to the headquarters of major international institutes provides a considerable diplomatic and political advantage. How often is it not said, worldwide, that ‘Brussels’ has decided something when what is meant is the European Union? The EU puts us ‘on the map’ more often than any foreign affairs minister has ever done. The presence of NATO’s headquarters in Brussels also has a highly tangible consequence. Around four thousand international civil servants work at the organisation’s headquarters. All these people or families rent or buy a house, shop in Brussels and its environs and make trips in Belgium. The headquarters provides work for hundreds of Belgians, in the form of secretariat, security officers, catering, maintenance. Each day meetings of specialist work groups are held at the headquarters to which specialists from the Member States are always travelling - possibly with SN Brussels Airlines - and who spend several nights in hotels. Now the economic horizon again looks gloomy, there is less reason than ever to rashly play around with the direct and indirect source of several thousand jobs.

INTRODUCTION

The OECD and the European Commission are warning with increasing urgency against the enormous budgetary impact the ageing of the population threatens to bring with it. The baby-boom generation, born between 1946 and 1965, will begin retiring by 2010, creating a surge in the number of retired people. In addition, those retired people will be drawing pensions over longer and longer periods. In contrast to the growing number of people living off their pensions there is a shrinking active population, which pays the pension premiums in the repartition system employed in Belgium and most European countries. If we in Belgium do not do something, the cost of pensions risks rising from 10% of the Gross Domestic Product to 14% in 2030, warns Henk Becquaert, Principal Private Secretary to former Social Affairs Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SPA) in De Financieel-Economische Tijd (10 June). We are therefore sitting on a pension time bomb. But while France and Austria are up in arms because of the planned pension reforms, the memorandum that serves as a basis for the Verhofstadt II Government contains precious little on the pension problem, concludes Trends (12 June). The legal pension system looks strict with a pensionable age at 65 and 45 years’ service for a full pension, but in practice active Belgians already leave the job market very early, on average when they reach the age of 57, a European record. According to Becquaert, the Government must ensure that companies no longer put employees aged between 50 and 55 out to graze during restructuring. The employers’ organisation the VBO knows why: older employees are too expensive in relation to their productivity. It is therefore proposing applying a ceiling to employers’ contributions for older employees. But it must also be made financially more attractive for employees to continue working, says Becquaert. At present the financial advantage compared with early early retirement pension is too small. In addition, Becquaert and Trends are calling for the further development of supplementary pensions via company pension funds and individual pensions saving, although in recent years the downturn on the stock markets has caused their value to drop sharply. Finally, greater participation in work could also offer a remedy, not by attracting immigrants - that is not politically viable - but by also encouraging women and young people to work. For a country like Belgium catching up with regard to pay for women can be an incentive, says Trends, quoting the EC in a report.

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
New Flemish VLD ministers trigger protest among colleagues in their fifties

Coveliers and Denys feel themselves threatened with elimination in their party

With newcomers Bart Somers, Patricia Ceyssens and Marino Keulen the Flemish Government now includes five VLD ministers. A new redistribution of responsibilities has been discussed together with veterans Dirk Van Mechelen (budget, town and country planning and media) and Marleen Vanderpoorten (education). The new Minister-President Bart Somers is taking on Brussels affairs and passing e-govern- ment over to Patricia Ceyssens. Up to now Brussels’ Guy Vanhengel was responsible for Brussels affairs, but he left the Flemish Government. The condition that at least one Brussels person must sit in the Flemish Government has already been met. The new Green Welfare Minister Adelheid Byttebier is from Brussels. In addition to Vanhengel, Jaak Gabriëls is also leaving the Flemish Government. Marino Keulen is taking over Housing policy from him and he is taking over Media from Dirk Van Mechelen and Sport from Guy Vanhengel. Patricia Ceyssens is taking over Economic Affairs and Foreign Policy from Gabriëls. The VLD’s operation to rejuvenate its Flemish ministers has triggered a wave of protest among the colleagues in their fifties in the party. They feel themselves threatened with elimination (FF).

POLITICAL EDITORIAL TEAM • DE STANDAARD • 7 JUNE

‘I don’t understand the reasoning,’ says Coveliers. ‘On the one hand the party argues in favour of the active welfare state, in which people over fifty should carry on working. But then the VLD does exactly the opposite by replacing older ministers by younger ones in their thirties. Politicians older than fifty (the age of Guy Verhofstadt) are clearly no longer good enough.’

‘Someone needs to explain to me why Gabriëls has to go,’ says the Senator. ‘Clearly the party has let itself be hurried by the SPA. Denys is right to be outraged. This is not a good sign. It will harm the VLD as well. The party mustn’t forget that half the electorate is above the age of fifty.’

MP Yolande Avontroodt [53] agrees. ‘In companies where restructuring suddenly gets rid of a generation of employees in their fifties, a great deal of uncertainty is created on the shop floor. The company is decapitated, as it were. A natural progression puts the younger ones’ minds at rest as well.’ She speaks of ‘the wrong signal’: ‘Content must take priority in any modernisation, not age.’

BART EECKHOUT/RUUD GOOSSENS • DE MORGEN • 10 JUNE

Dewael: We want to remain market-leaders in modernisation

According to the opposition, the VLD has not set up a new Flemish Government, but a new campaign team for the Flemish elections of 2004. CD&V Parliamentary Party Leader Eric Van Rompuy concludes that Flemish policy level has become the strategists’ plaything at party headquarters and that there is a risk of a policy vacuum being created. According to N-VA MP Kris Van Dijck, the Flemish Government has become the best-paid temping agency. In an interview with De Morgen (10 June), former Minister-President Patrick Dewael does not deny that it is his party’s ambition to continue to lay claim to being the leader in the modernisation (FF).

Dewael: ‘We’re watching out for market movers. Politics is played out in a hyper-competitive environment, and on that level we’re not behaving any differently from a normal company. The CD&V has always made it extremely easy for us. On the front benches in the Flemish Parliament sit former ministers who are in opposition on the basis that they’ve suffered a great injustice. Meanwhile on the CD&V’s back benches, out of picture, a new generation sits languishing. Compare that with the modernisation that Steve Stevaert rushed through his party in such a short space of time. Until 1999 the SPA was a rotten party, conservative in ideas and structure, not to mention plagued by scandals. I’m not too spiteful to admit that Stevaert and Patrick Janssens have completed a successful modernisation campaign. If a competitor implements such an operation, you have to position yourself opposite them. [...] We want to remain the market-leaders of political modernisation. Over the past ten years the VLD has set the political tone with its modernisation of personnel and content. It’s not just a matter of new, young faces. [...] According to the CD&V’s opposition leader Eric Van Rompuy, the next election battle will be between Steve Stevaert and Bart Somers. I couldn’t have put it better myself. Clearly the CD&V is assuming that it won’t have any contribution of its own to make.’
Court rules on nightflight dossier

Day and night flights from Zaventem must be fully spread out. In their current concentrated format, they are in breach of the Constitution and the European Human Rights Treaty, according to the ruling given by Brussels Court of Appeals on 10 June. The ruling is the result of a complaint lodged by 47 residents of the Flemish communes from Brussels’ northern periphery exposing the concentration of flights and the added noise above their homes. According to the residents’ solicitor, the Court also feels that the regulation with which the government had spread the night flights over three corridors, namely the northern periphery and to a lesser extent the eastern periphery and Brussels, is still discriminatory. The government now has 60 days to come up with a new plan. According to Premier Verhofstadt, the government is already busy spreading out the flights. But according to the residents of the northern periphery, the implementation of January’s agreement, which Verhofstadt is aiming for, is only the first small step in a much broader spreading out of day and night flights. According to the new Flemish Environment Minister Ludo Sannen (Agalev), the ruling means that January’s agreement has to be modified. That is also the view of former Federal Minister and SPA big gun from the region, Frank Vandenbroucke. For Brussels Environment Minister Dieder Gosuin the ruling is even good news for Brussels itself. According to him, the Court of Appeals was opposed in particular to the excessive use of the R25 runway, from which the aircraft mainly overflew Brussels’ northern districts. By making more even use of the other two runways, more air traffic will be directed over the eastern district, over Zaventem and Tervuren (FF).

Opinion

YVES DESMET • DE MORGEN • 5 JUNE

Tables and studies have been produced in their hundreds to give the respective governments (Flemish, Brussels) arguments and reasons for claiming that their little piece of air space was completely unsuited to letting taking-off and landing aircraft fly over there at night. The power of numbers also came into play: where the fewest people and therefore the fewest voters lived a giant corridor was delineated, which was to handle the entire nuisance itself, despite all the protests by residents. François-Xavier de Donnea (former Minister-President of Brussels Region) juggled Brussels standards to keep the aircraft outside Brussels, and the income from them inside. Isabelle Durant (Ecolo) even left the government to convince Brussels voters that she had fought like a lioness for her night’s rest. The Brussels Court has now competently made firewood of that game of raising the stakes. Just because you are a minority does not mean you should have to put up with an unreasonable amount of nuisance, says the judgment. On the contrary, nuisance must be borne jointly by all those who experience the pros and cons of an airport. It cannot be denied that the Court was guided by the basic principles of democracy and non-discrimination.

Property market experiences minor boom

LOW INTEREST RATES AND RISING PRICES MAKE BUYING A HOUSE MORE AND MORE INTERESTING AS OPPOSED TO RENTING

The Belgian, and in particular the Flemish, property market again reached new peaks in 2002. Turnover rose to almost 20 billion euros, an increase of 14.5% compared with 2001 (graphs p. 6).

In Flanders the effect of the drop in registration fees in effect since 1 January 2002 has played a role. Whereas at the end of 2001 a great many purchases were being put off, in 2002 there was a sharp rise in the number of purchases. Not only turnover, but also prices continue to rise. In Flanders by an average of 8.8%, in Brussels and Wallonia by 4.5 and 5.3%. Low interest rates and rising prices make buying a house more and more interesting as opposed to renting. Trends and the property advice agency Stadim have devoted an entire dossier to the subject (FF).

TRENDS • 12 JUNE

Low interest rates and low inflation have boosted the real lending capacity of potential buyers. At the same time the appeal of property is increasing in inverse proportion to the lack of other interesting investment options. This can be seen on several levels: alongside a clear shift from renting to buying, there is also renewed activity across the whole country in the revenue housing segment. According to Stadim, in 2002 the property market’s turnover rose by 14.5% to 19.66 billion euros. Since 1970 there have only been three such leaps, according to Philip Janssens of Stadim: ‘In 1972-1973 the market underwent a sharp recovery after a long period of stagnation. The second jump occurred in 1976-1977 when inflation was above 10%, and the last in 1986-1989 during the recovery after the crisis of the 1980s, when Brussels’ European calling also gave the market a boost.’ With an increase of 30% Brussels was somewhat ahead of the chasing pack, but the result of several major transactions on the offices market (510 million euros) pulled the market upwards. If this is taken out of the equation, growth is limited to 12%. Of the 270 million euros, two thirds was generated by commercial and revenue housing. In Wallonia growth was limited to 180 million euros or 4.5%, mainly in the single-family housing segment. Flanders clearly outperformed this: growth of 14.5% or 1.53 billion euros. The effect of the new decree on registration fees was clearly tangible. ‘The measures that led to a drop in registration fees to 10%, the discount on the first portion of 12,500 euros and the measure that allowed registration fees from a previous purchase to be deducted have borne fruit. The effect of these measures over the coming years could be even greater.’

Meanwhile, the buying market is gaining ground on the renting market. Belgium’s property patrimony is in the hands of a large number of owner-residents. According to the results of a survey in 2001, 68% of Belgians own their own home, and in Flanders that figure is as high as 72.6%.

WWW.STADIM.BE
Stevaert sweeps away new railway investment plan

Vinck’s plan, which goes by the name of ‘Move 2007’, must form the basis for negotiations with trade unions and the government. Stevaert finds the proposed increases in train ticket prices ‘stupid’. ‘Vinck seems to obsessed with reducing staff numbers. His obsession should be to increase the number of passengers.’ For this reason the SPA proposes making commuter travel free for employees. ‘The employer can act as third-party payer, but will benefit from ‘tax exemption’,’ Stevaert explains. Train travel must also be free during off-peak periods, says the Flemish Socialists. ‘In this way you relieve the peak hours of occasional travellers and create capacity.’ Additional capacity can also be created by using more double-decker trains. Stevaert is opposed to the heavy competition with ‘wet prices’ between rail and the waterways. ‘The train must compete with hazardous transports on the motorways, not on the waterways,’ he says. To partially help the NMBS out he is offering the railways company Flemish money in exchange for participation. ‘If the NMBS rejects this offer in this situation, it must have a very strong argument,’ says Stevaert. He does, however, agree with Vinck that the Federal Government should relieve the NMBS’s debts and provide sufficient working capital.

**THE NMBS AND ITS EUROPEAN COMPETITORS**

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*Source: TiJD Graphics*
Opinion
BART STURTEWAGEN • DE STANDAARD • 11 JUNE

Managers like Karel Vinck are employed by the government to present the bare truth and if necessary act as a buffer if the dossier becomes too heated. Then they can disappear without the government itself suffering politically. Karel Vinck is being more cunning. His proposal actually does no more than line up all the facts and figures on the NMBS and link them to known, inescapable conclusions. After which the ball will return to where it belongs, with the government. This has to decide whether it is being serious when it says it wants to see the share of the railways in the growing transport, both of passengers and of goods, increase. If that is the case, it will have to make the funds available.

Vinck is bringing his employers face to face with their responsibility. He himself does not choose which path to follow, as it were. If someone knows of another that is better than his, let him say so. For him the bottom line is all that counts. If the means are there to make the railways company viable, he will go for it. If not, he will take his hat and leave.

The pressure in the political boiler is therefore increasing in leaps and bounds. Not only that between Liberals and Socialists over the question of how much money it may cost to rescue the NMBS. No, also the pressure between north and south is unavoidably on the rise. After all, some of the necessary increase in efficiency has to come from better co-ordination between the railways and the tram and bus services. And the crazy rule that investments are divided in a ratio of 60:40 between Flanders and Wallonia has to go. Both of passengers and of goods, in- crease. It is up to the unions, Vinck can only increase productivity by also scrapping activities. Nor do they want freight transport to be the domain of a separate private company which is responsible for B-Cargo goods activities. With this company Vinck wants to be able to anticipate the competition more quickly and above all be able to enter into joint ventures more easily with the surrounding railways companies for the international transport of goods.

Railway Unions reject Vinck’s investment plan

That Karel Vinck wants to scrap 10,000 jobs to increase productivity by 30% has not gone down very well with the Christian and Socialist trade unions. They warn that employees’ patience is almost up and are threatening to strike.

The Liberal VSOA trade union has also rejected the 2003-2007 investment plan ‘in its entirety’, but wants ‘to work constructively towards alternatives’. According to the unions, Vinck can only increase productivity by also scrapping activities. Nor do they want freight transport to be the domain of a separate private company which is responsible for B-Cargo goods activities. With this company Vinck wants to be able to anticipate the competition more quickly and above all be able to enter into joint ventures more easily with the surrounding railways companies for the international transport of goods.

Employers reject Stevaert’s proposals

According to the Federal Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen, VBO), businesses will have to come up with 100 million euros if Steve Stevaert (SP.A) gets his way and the employer has to bear the full cost of commuter travel. If commuter travel by tram, bus and metro also becomes free, you can add on a further 200 million, says the VBO. Together this makes up one fifth of the announced wage burden cut, says Pieter Timmermans, Director-General of the employers’ organisation.

VLD Chairman De Gucht defends Vinck’s plan

While SPA Chairman Steve Stevaert is opposed to Vinck’s plan and amongst other things has spoken out against the plan to cut 10,000 jobs and raise ticket prices, VLD Chairman Karel De Gucht feels that these cuts are necessary. He has objections to Stevaert’s proposal to make travelling by train free during off-peak periods (FF).

The job losses can be absorbed via a mix of natural outfall, early retirement, retraining and other formulas,’ says De Gucht.

Instead, De Gucht wants to discuss a debt take-over at the negotiating table for the new Federal Government, but not just like that. ‘My proposal is to agree a ceiling for federal investments in the NMBS. Additional investments can then be made by the regions.’

Among other things, Antwerp is fighting the inadequate railway access to the port. As is well known, up to now the PS has always been fiercely opposed to that idea. According to De Gucht, simply taking over the debt is not the answer. ‘If you do that you improve the financial result, but the operating result has to improve too. By increasing productivity and getting rid of loss-making activities. Any take-over of debt has to be linked to a plan for the future.’

If it is up to Stevaert, everyone will travel for free during off-peak periods. De Gucht is opposed to Stevaert’s idea of reducing fares. ‘If Stevaert can find the money for free trains in Belgium, let him say where from. On a federal level there is no money to make this choice. Nevertheless, the VLD Chairman is leaving a small opening for the SPA’s idea of having employers pay for commuter travel: ‘That may be possible as part of the social consultation instead of future pay increases. It’s up to the social partners [employer and employee representatives] to decide that.’
Antwerp left out in the cold in ‘Move 2007’

The NMBS’s plan is the best reason to regionalise the railways

Antwerp’s bench of aldermen is protesting to formateur Verhofstadt against NMBS boss Karel Vinck’s Move 2007 project. They refuse to accept that the building of the second rail link to the port is being shelved. According to them, the postponement of this investment has serious consequences for the economy and travel in the Antwerp region. Conversely Eddy Bruyninckx, boss of Antwerp port authority, believes that the construction of a second rail link to Antwerp’s port is less urgent that the construction of the Liefkenshoek rail tunnel [FF].

HERMAN WELTER • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 12 JUNE

The NMBS’s plan is outrageous, says Ludo Van Campenhout, Alderman for Economic Affairs. ‘Antwerp’s port and industry are extremely important to the NMBS, but the railways company is ignoring the region.’ The plan is the most rational and direct ground to regionalise the NMBS.’ Alderman Robert Voorhamme (SP.A) is even an outspoken supporter of regionalisation. On 11 June the municipal ports commission reached the same conclusion: the entire Antwerp section of the NMBS dossier must be raised with the formateur, just like the problems with the deepening of the Scheldt. Antwerp transport specialist Evrard Claessens finds it no more than logical that Flanders becomes the boss of all the infrastructure on its territory, including the railways. According to Claessens, Flanders must build and finance the basic infrastructure and then lease this infrastructure to the NMBS. This is then responsible for the tracks and their operation. For Claessens the building of the Liefkenshoek rail tunnel is less urgent.

PASCAL SERTYN • DE STANDAARD • 12 JUNE

Eddy Bruyninckx, the Antwerp Port manager who also sits on the NMBS Board of Directors, acknowledges that the construction of a second rail link to Antwerp’s port has become less urgent because since 1990 bulk transports between Antwerp port and the steel plants of Wallonia in particular have fallen off significantly. But Bruyninckx says that at the same time he has warned the Board of Directors that the NMBS will be doing the future of its goods transports a huge disservice if the investments for the re-opening of the IJzeren Rijn - a faster link to Germany - and above all the building of the Liefkenshoek rail tunnel are postponed. ‘In any event we will continue to highlight the paradox that is the NMBS. You can’t keep saying that the NMBS will continue to play a major role in goods transport and at the same time postpone investments like the rail tunnel.’ For Antwerp’s port the rail tunnel is increasingly becoming a lifeline to absorb the expected heavy traffic from around the Deurganck dock. The expectation is that the current road and rail network is inadequate to guarantee the smooth arrival and departure of containers.

WWW.ANTWERP.BE

Deceuninck to invest 250 million by 2007

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

Over the next five years the Flemish manufacturer of plastic (PVC) windows and building profiles Deceuninck wants to invest 200 to 250 million euros. This has been set down in its business plan for 2003-2007. In April the firm took over the German Thyssen Polymer from ThyssenKrupp, making it the world-leader in the sector of PVC profiles with a market share of 15%. Deceuninck expects a turnover in excess of 700 million euros in 2007 and a profit of 53 million euros. In 2002 Deceuninck recorded a net profit of 29 million euros. The business plan is based on three pillars: consolidation, integration and development. The further integration of Thyssen Polymer is designed to produce 12 million euros in synergy benefits in 2007. At the same time Deceuninck wants to explore Italy, Russia, Asia and the American West Coast to find a location for its new overseas site.

WWW.DECEUNINCK.BE
Building materials group Koramic disappears from stock exchange

Via his investment company Koceram, Christian Dumolin, boss of the Kortrijk-based building materials group Koramic, is launching a public buy-out bid for the 31% of shares in Koramic he does not yet own. Koramic shareholders will receive cash and Wienerberger shares and will land a premium of 51%. Last year Dumolin shelved his ambition to take over the Austrian building materials group Wienerberger when he reduced his interest in Wienerberger to 20.4% last year and when he sold his roof tiles division to Wienerberger this year (FF).

Marc Deroo • De Financieel-Economische Tijd • 7 June

For five Koramic shares, every shareholder will get six Wienerberger shares plus 17.5 euros in cash. The proposed swap values the Koramic share at 23.41 euros. This is based on the average of the closing prices of the Wienerberger share in Vienna on the five trading days prior to the day on which the buy-out bid is announced. Based on the Koramic price on 5 June, after the dividend has been paid, Koramic shareholders will get a premium of 51%. Shareholders who bought in 1994 when Koramic, then called, floated on the stock market, are cheated because the initial price was 34.95 euros. In July 1998 the Koramic share reached its highest price: 69.41 euros. Koceram will issue the bid at the end of June via its 100% subsidiary Korfinco. The shareholders will have around one month to take up the offer. Koceram will relinquish the bid if it gets less than 95% of the shares. After the sale, Koramic will retain 13% in Wienerberger. To cover the purchase of the Wienerberger shares and the cash payments Korfinco took out a bank loan for around 130 million euros.

WWW.KORAMIC.BE
WWW.WIENERBERGER.COM

Tom barman's much-talked-about film debut

‘An almost physical experience of cinema, a fusion of image and music’

He is the front man of one of Flanders’ best-known, if not the best known rock group deUS, was an innovator and trendsetter in that field and also aspired to international success. It should not come as any surprise, therefore, that Tom Barman can’t exactly complain about a lack of interest in his film debut ‘Any Way the Wind Blows’. What’s more, the film is already being praised to the skies before actually being unleashed on audiences. Flemish film manager Luckas Vander Taalen, who manages the Flemish Audiovisual Fund, immediately pitched forked it into the position of figurehead of the New Flemish Cinema. And yet it is far from being a faultless film according to the accepted criteria of criticism. It creates a disjointed and muddled impression. But it is an almost physical experience of cinema, a fusion of image and music, says Focus Knack. In any event something that we in Flemish film have not often seen, says Tijd Cultuur, which gives the editor himself the final word (FF).

Ruben Nollet • Tijd Cultuur • 11 June

‘The aim was to tell a small story. Now this film has taught me that such an ambition is actually a great one. The reason I wanted many different characters in the film was that I wanted to feel out lots of styles and possibilities and angles of approach. ‘Any Way the Wind Blows’ actually began as a short film, but I developed it further because everyone said there was more in it. I don’t think that people abroad will be shocked by the pioneering things this film does. Look, I definitely made it as a reaction against what I saw. You can read that in my declaration of intent. Why do I never see a certain type of humor in our films, a way of interacting with each other, a certain natural flair? Why do I have to turn to Almodóvar to see someone who doesn’t finish his sentence and why should I therefore laugh or why does it affect me? Why do I never see these little things? That was what drove me. Why do we always have those puppet-show situations, characters that are no more than ‘the Babe’ or ‘the Dope’ or whatever? ‘Any Way the Wind Blows’ became the story it is because I concentrated hard on the little things. Things like language and use of language. I wanted to get away from the ‘sum up your film in one sentence’ idea of cinema. I took my inspiration from people like Almodóvar or Kitano or Kaurismäki. Their films are full of ideas that we don’t really understand, but they are there and you feel it, even if you don’t understand it.’ ‘Any Way the Wind Blows’ also received financial support from Wallonia. Barman believes that is important: ‘I’d really like the film to do well in Brussels and Liege, for the time being the only place in Wallonia where it is being released. I want it to be seen in Belgium, point. I want to show that we in Flanders can also make something a bit different from films full of Famous Flemings that Wallonians hardly know. That non-Flemings will sometimes have trouble with understanding the subtleties of the language is not a problem for Barman. ‘I’m pretty sure that there is a mood you don’t often get in Flemish films, and I want Wallonians to see that as well.’ Barman is less happy that ‘Any Way the Wind Blows’ is constantly being pushed forward as the figurehead of the New Flemish Cinema: ‘Not that the hype has really bothered me, but it isn’t fair of people to count their chickens before they’ve hatched. But hey, that’s the way it is. I’m happy with all the attention the film is getting. Bring it on. The film cost 65 million francs. There is public Community money in it and it would be fantastic if I could repay that. Apart from the fact that I believe the film deserves to be seen.’

Focus on Flanders • 7 June - 13 June 2003 • Number 23
**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **10 to 22 June**: La Traviata by Giuseppe Verdi, Flanders Opera, Ghent; info: 70/22.02.02 www.vlaamsopera.be
- **19 June**: Goldfrapp, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
- **22 June**: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, conducted by Simon Rattle, Harmoniemesse by Haydn.
  - **23 June**: Orchestre de Belgique
  - **24 June**: El Tattoo del Tigre, Royal Circus, Brussels; info: www.panameronko.info
  - **25 June**: Open Tropen with Orisha, The Walters, Zuco 103, Turnhout; info: 014/42.75.55
  - **26 June**: Carmina Burana with Millionarium, LaReverde, Medio Antiquo, Medieval and Renaissance music, Landcommanderij Aldenbiesen, Bilzen www.musica.be
  - **27 June**: Bitches Brew/Tiacoma narrows by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Rosas, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: 02/201.59.59 www.kaaistudios.be

**EXPO**

- **From 22 March to 17 January**: Jacques Brel, ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Schildknaapstraat 50, Brussels; reservation required; info: www.jacquesbrel.be
- **Until 28 September**: From 22 March onwards: The Groeningemuseum in Bruges reopened after facelift; info: 050/44.87.12
- **Until 30 June**: Music Planet; one century of pop music in an exhibition, Brewery Belle Vue, Molenbeek; info: www.euroculture.be 02/513/29/84
- **From 1 March onwards**: The Groeningemuseum in Bruges reopened after facelift, info: 050/44.87.12
- **Until 30 August**: 50 Years of Matchbox Pieces of Belgian Art, exhibition, Rubenshuis, info: 03/232.01.03
- **Until 9 November**: 50 Years of Matchbox: Meet the Discreet Millionaire and the Fading of Colours by Patrick Guns, info: www.smak.be
- **Until 22 June**: Jan Fabre, Searching for Utopia, exhibition, Zwart Huis, Knokke; info: 050/61.36.65
- **Until 29 June**: SMAK exhibitions: Arts the fading of colours by Patrick Guns; info: www.smak.be
- **Until 6 July**: Artists on the move: meeting between North and South with Philip Aguirre, Soly Sisse, Gerald Dederen, Michel François, Meshe Gaba, Kan Si, Laone Lopes, Birame Ndiaye enz., De Marktken, Brussels
- **Until 9 November**: Guided by Heroes, exhibition, Z33, Hasselt
- **Until 3 August**: The four seasons in the art of the Low Countries, City Museum Leuven; info: 016/22.69.06 www.leuven.be
- **Until 22 June**: Jan Vanriet, exhibition, De Zwarte Panter, Antwerp, info: 03/233.13.45
- **Until 28 June**: Cris Brodahl, Galerie Annette de Keyser, Antwerp, info: 03/331.65.56
- **Until 21 June**: The Bibliotheca Alexandrina, exhibition, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, Brussels; info: 02/519.53.11
- **Until 7 September**: Exhibition: Masterpieces of Belgian Art, the Simon Collection, Museum of Elsene, Brussels; info: 02/512.64.22

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