Is Louis Michel fleeing to Europe?

Things have not been going well recently for the Mouvement Réformateur (MR). Several weeks ago the party learned that it was being dumped by the PS in all regional governments. And recently there was also little comforting news for the party from the Federal Government. Its Finance Minister, Didier Reynders, was forced to acknowledge that the Council of State had suspended the entire guarantee and sanction regulation for the lowest rate (6%) of the Fiscal Amnesty Act. That rate applies to fraudsters who want to legally launder their illegal or legal money by investing it for three years under specific conditions. Now the regulation has been suspended, banks and the taxman can no longer impose conditions. This is the fifth time that Reynders has had to touch up his Act. The other MR figurehead, Minister for Foreign Affairs Louis Michel, is in turn considering moving to the European Commission. PS Chairman Elio Di Rupo is apparently prepared to offer him the commissionhip of PS member Philippe Busquin in exchange for chairmanship of the Chamber or Senate and possible another state secretary (Het Laatste Nieuws, 8 July). The Francophone newspapers La Libre Belgique and La Dernière Heure revealed the news. But according to VLD Party chairman Karel De Gucht, there is an agreement that the PS must first offer the commissionerhip to a Flemish candidate. Finally, he is making no secret of the fact that he himself is keen on the post (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN/BERNARD BULCZE • DE STAANDAARD • 8 JULY

The possible departure of Louis Michel is clearly bad news for Premier Verhofstadt. The disintegration of his government is accelerating. The figure of Michel is extremely important in the government to give shape to the compromises with the PS. Yesterday, therefore, there were again rumours that with the disappearance of Michel, Di Rupo actually wanted to administer the fatal blow to Verhofstadt's government. Thus preparations could be made for the arrival of Di Rupo at 16 Rue de la Loi (the Premier's official residence, ed.) and the entrance of the CD&V. But that scenario was explicitly denied by the PS. Guy Verhofstadt issued a communication from the Tour de France in which he labelled all rumours prema- narly and announced talks between the majority parties. The Belgian commis- sioner does not have to be announced until after 22 July.
On 6 July the new Flemish Parliament was installed. Of the 124 members, 118 took the oath. Six chose not to. In the CD&V cartel these were N-VA Chairman Geert Bourgeois and CD&V Vice-Chairman Hendrik Boogaert, at SPA-Spirit Federal Ministers Frank Vandenbroucke and Bert Anciaux and State Secretary Kathleen Van Brempt and at the VLD State Secretary Vincent Van Quickenborne. According to De Tijd (6 July), the SPA-Spirit cartel had a plan to replace the Federal excellence this week. Former Flemish Minister Renaat Landuyt would apparently replace Bert Anciaux in Transport, former Parliamentary Party Leader in the Flemish Parliament Bruno Tobback would replace Frank Vandenbroucke in Labour and Pensions and Spirit Chairwoman Els Van Weert would replace Kathleen Van Brempt. That plan has been shelved temporar}

ily. Federal Premier Verhofstadt (VLD) asked the members of his government to remain in the Federal Government for the time being. In his own words, by making this request he wants to preserve continuity in the Federal Government and avoid the Palace or the institutions being misused in a scramble for positions. In the end the majority parties agreed to reorganise the Federal Government in one go, once all the regional governments are formed. Only then will the six absent MPs be given the chance to take the oath in the Flemish Parliament (FF).

Opinion

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE TIJD • 7 JULY

Verhofstadt was able with difficulty to avoid a scramble for positions, even though he knew that ministerial changes in his Federal Government were unavoidable. But he wants that to happen in one Great Movement. If it happens in stages, there is a risk that the difficult-to-alter picture will arise of an eroding Federal Government, as the Flemish Government came across in the ministerial changes shortly after the Federal elections of 18 May 2003. If his government is reorganised in one go, Verhofstadt can give it the necessary spin. With a strong new team and - who knows - a modified or adapted federal coalition agreement, Verhofstadt can then talk of a new start.

The Great Movement is expected once all regional governments are formed and the pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place. SPA-Spirit and the Parti Socialiste (PS) are already known to want to transfer a number of federal ministers to the Flemish and Walloon Governments, and vice versa. Just as clear is that Premier Guy Verhofstadt and Vice-Premier Patrick Dewael want to remain in their jobs. This explains why they are doing all they can to safeguard the stability of the Federal Government as much as possible.

www.vlaamsparlement.be

Fighting talk from Blok mars opening session

If it’s war you want, it’s war you’ll get, Dewinter warned

The Flemish Parliament that was elected on 13 June and installed on 6 July amid great public interest looked appreciably different from its predecessor. The Glass House welcomed as many as 43 newcomers. Only 56 MPs also sat in the previous Parliament. In addition, around twenty MPs also made the switch for the Federal Chamber or Senate to the Flemish Parliament. Noteworthy: the Purple-Green parties made the fewest changes: among the 25-man parliamentary factions of both Liberals and Socialists, only 7 members of each faction were replaced. For the Greens there is only one newcomer. The other 28 newcomers sit in the parliamentary factions of the Christian Democrats, the N-VA and the Vlaams Blok. Of the 43 newcomers, there are also 14 successors. They replace MPs who do not wish to take up their mandate because they are remaining ministers or are continuing to sit in the Federal Chamber. Of these, the Vlaams Blok has the most (5), ahead of the VLD (4) and SPA-Spirit (4). As leader of his significantly swollen parliamentary party, which now occupies the entire right wing of Parliament, Filip Dewinter seized the opportunity to give the Parliament several warnings. As usual, he employed his familiar fighting talk (FF).

LIESBETH VAN IMPE • DE MORGEN • 7 JULY

Dewinter did not accept that according to some newspapers, the other parties want to change the rules to reclaim power from the Vlaams Blok. ‘If it’s war you want, it’s war you’ll get.’ The other parties put up a good fight. Eric Van Rompuy proclaimed aloud all the names of Vlaams Blok MPs who had chosen the Federal over the Flemish level. And he dug up a speech by Dewinter in which the latter said exactly the opposite of what he was now saying. Dewinter, who in his familiar blustering staccato climbed to an oratorical high point, appeared unsettled. VLD Parliamentary Party Leader Francis Vermeren completed the attack on Dewinter with an engaging call not to ‘subject the many new MPs to taking a walk with the truth straight away’. And he too had an e-mail from Dewinter in his pocket, which contradicted his recent address. Applause among the democratic parties, jeering on the benches of the Blok.

www.vlaamsparlement.be
High Council for Finance calls for major savings in the fight against ageing

Alongside the High Council for Employment, the High Council for Finance also presented its 2004 annual report on 5 July. The Council for Finance submitted the report to the Federal Budget Minister Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A) and the Federal Finance Minister Didier Reynders (MR) and to government negotiators Yves Leterme (Flemish Government), Elio Di Rupo (Walloon Government and French Community Government) and Charles Picqué (Brussels Government). In its report the Council urges adopting a strict budgetary policy to finance the costs of an ageing population. These costs will apparently amount to 3.4% of GDP over the period 2003-2030. Because the government decided to increase healthcare expenditure more quickly, a large part of these costs will be felt in the period 2003-2007.

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The High Council believes such a relaxation is justified because according to the recent report of the Ageing Commission, the extra costs of ageing between 2003 and 2030 are higher than had earlier been calculated (3.4 instead of 2.7% of GDP). A significant part of this increase will occur in 2003-2007, thanks to the government’s decision to increase health-care expenditure more quickly. In addition, the budgetary results for 2003, if one-off operations are not taken into account, were worse than first stated. Even to achieve the relaxed target in 2007, the Federal Government will have to save 3 billion euros between 2005 and 2007, says the High Council. In the long term the HCF is standing by its target of having a surplus of 1.5% of GDP by 2011. This means that the relaxation of the target of 2007 must be entirely offset in the period 2008-2011. Even after 2011 a surplus of 1.5% will have to be sustained for several years.

The HCF expects the Flemish and French Communities to use the extra money they receive from the Lambermont Agreement to achieve a greater surplus (Flanders) or a smaller deficit (French Community) than had previously been agreed. For Flanders this involves a sum of 163 million euros in 2005. The cabinet of Federal Budget Minister Vande Lanotte said that negotiations were due to be held in the autumn on a revision of the target for the federal states for 2005.

A spokesman for the Flemish Government yesterday called that a ‘unilateral’ measure that is not appropriate simply because Flanders, in contrast to the French Community, already has a low level of debt. The cabinet of Federal Budget Minister Vande Lanotte said that negotiations were due to be held in the autumn on a revision of the target for the federal states for 2005.

The HCF is adjusting its recommendations for the medium term. Instead of a financial surplus for the joint government (State, federal states, social security, municipalities and provinces) of 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2007, a surplus of 0.3% will suffice. The HCF is thus following the Purple Verhofstadt II government, which in its coalition agreement of June last year relaxed the budgetary targets for the period 2004-2007.

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Public transport to and from Antwerp enjoys success

The extra numbers of trains and buses organised by the NMBS and De Lijn as an alternative to cars to and from Antwerp are a success. The Railways have noted 4,500 to 5,000 extra users each day who choose the train above the risk of losing hours in traffic jams as a result of the road works on the Antwerp ring road (FF).

The increase in the number of customers is evident on almost all lines, but least so on those that serve the port. Leo Pardon, Director of Passenger Transport at the NMBS, expects this to increase over the coming weeks once the corporate subscriptions take full effect. Among others, BASF and Opel bought hundreds of rail tickets for their staff. On average, a car commuting to and from work contains 1.2 people. This means that the initiative of the NMBS takes up to 2,000 cars off the roads every morning and evening. This provides the NMBS with extra revenue, and the additional costs are met by the regional and federal governments. In any event that is the agreement reached with the Federal State Enterprises Minister, Johan Vande Lanotte, and the Flemish Transport Minister, Gilbert Bossuyt, says Pardon.

www.werkenantwerpen.be
Newspaper publishers saw things improve in 2003

Before 2003 things looked bleak in the newspaper sector: sales fell or stagnated, the price of paper peaked and income from advertising and employment advertisements collapsed.

After several difficult years, newspaper publishers were by and large able to record better results in 2003. They can put this down to higher income from advertising and a stable paper price, but also to internal reorganisation and higher prices. This positive trend appears to be continuing this year. Before 2003 things looked bleak in the newspaper sector: sales fell or stagnated, the price of paper peaked and income from advertising and employment advertisements collapsed. Newspaper publishers such as the VUM (De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad, Het Volk), De Tijd and Francophone publishers Mediabel and Rossel had no choice but to thoroughly restructure themselves (FF).

Michael Sephiha • De Tijd • 5 July

Last year the Press Group (De Morgen, Het Laatste Nieuws) remained by far the biggest newspaper group in the country in operational terms, with an operating result of 47.4 million euros, compared with 35.8 million a year earlier. Admittedly, that figure includes half the results of the Flemish Media Company (Vlaamse Mediumaatschappij, VMMa), the umbrella organisation for the commercial TV channels VTM and Kanaal 2, youth broadcaster Jim TV and radio station Q-Music. The Press Group owns 50% of the VMMa, which represents one third of the media group’s total operating profit. The growth of the Press Group’s publishing activities was especially strong thanks to higher advertising costs, better sales and price rises for the magazine Dag Allemaal and the daily newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws.

In terms of net results, however, the Press Group (23.8 million euros) has to concede to Concentra (Gazet Van Antwerpen, Het Belang van Limburg) which was recently withdrawn from the stock exchange. As part of its ‘delisting’, Concentra sold its interest in the Antwerp holding company Almanij, boosting net profits to 28.48 million euros. A year earlier Concentra had swollen a net loss of 6.17 million euros into an operating profit of 2.56 million euros. The free newspaper Metro, 51% of which is owned by Concentra, performed better and the group’s costs were under control.

Various groups cut costs drastically. In recent years this has been the case for, among others, the Flemish Publishing Company (Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij, VUM - De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad, Het Volk). The VUM implemented a drastic restructuring process, not without some difficulty. Today this appears to be bearing fruit: last year it recorded a record profit of 10.11 million euros, due in part to increased sales. This also includes some of the results of the successful TV production company Woestijnvis. The VUM owns 40% of Woestijnvis.

South of the linguistic border a similar phenomenon can be observed with the Walloon VUM subsidiary Mediabel (Vers L’Avenir) and Rossel (Sud Presse, Le Soir). Last year Mediabel sold 2.4% more newspapers and has implemented two restructurings in the past five years. Rossel did not sell more papers, but restructured its regional mainstay Sud Presse and its flagship Le Soir. In 2003 Rossel’s results include for the first time the figures of the Francophone business newspaper L’Echo, in which it holds half the shares. The Press Group holds the remaining capital. Rossel also holds 49% of the shares in the free paper Metro, which performed much better last year.

The two Belgian business papers also took some telling blows in recent years. On top of the downturn in the stock markets and the bursting of the Internet bubble, they also had to deal with the recent bank mergers. These mergers led to the disappearance of hundreds of bank branches and so to the cancellation of a large number of subscriptions. Thanks to strict cost controls Editeco, which publishes L’Echo, was able to keep its head above water in 2003. Uitgeversbedrijf Tijd is slowly getting back on its feet, but was unable to get out of the red: its net loss shrank only slightly to 3.53 million euros. 2003 was a transitional year for us. The results remained negative thanks to a number of exceptional elements, including the restructuring and the cost of the Dutch investment journal Beurspelen (which has since been disposed of) and investments in the new paper,” says General Manager of Uitgeversbedrijf Tijd, Hans Maertens, who is counting on getting back into the black this year.

For 2004, most publishers are fairly optimistic, but stress that visibility is limited for the second half of the year. The first quarter was good in terms of advertising income, the second less so. Job advertisements are again doing better.

Michael Sephiha • De Tijd • 5 July

www.vum.be
www.rug.be
www.persgroep.be
www.tijd.be

| CONSOLIDATED RESULTS OF THE BELGIAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS IN 2003 (IN MILLIONS OF EURO) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| group | turnover | operating profit | net profit |
| concentra | 166,33 | 163,74 | -6,17 | 2,56 | -21,11 | 23,80 |
| de persgroep | 293,10 | 334,30 | 35,80 | 47,4 | 19,50 | 23,80 |
| vum media | 300,45 | 322,29 | 2,80 | 16,25 | 0,30 | 10,11 |
| uitgeversbedrijf tijd | 52,40 | 49,30 | -3,13 | -1,29 | -3,65 | -3,53 |
| rossel | 225,11 | 242,94 | -3,73 | 6,09 | -8,52 | 6,94 |
| ipm | 50,95 | 57,06 | 0,95 | 2,55 | 0,25 | 2,91 |
| editeco (1) | 18,37 | 17,17 | 0,47 | 0,23 | 0,81 | 0,083 |
| mediabel (2) | 85,10 | 96,80 | 0,90 | 3,10 | 0,20 | 0,004 |
| mt-m-metro (3) | 4,10 | 7,10 | -3,70 | -1,51 | -3,80 | -0,87 |

(1) acquired by rossel and de persgroep • (2) controlled by the vum • (3) 51% concentra and 49% rossel
New end-of-career regulations necessary

The average career of a Belgian man lasts 37 years, four years less than the European average.

In Belgium, one in four people over the age of 55 are still working (26%). In Europe this is on average four in ten.

The average career of a Belgian man lasts 37 years, four years less than the European average. As a result, the level of employment (59.6%) in Belgium is also 4.6% lower than in Europe, corresponding to 300,000 jobs. For the High Council for Employment it is abundantly clear that the labour market for the over-55s is experiencing a number of difficulties, as a consequence of which a generous distribution of attractive retirement packages over the last decades took place. Older employees are too expensive in comparison with their productivity, very little training is available for them and they are too immobile professionally speaking. In its 2004 Report the Council is therefore calling for sweeping structural reforms designed to raise the retirement age.

The High Council for Employment’s information will be forthcoming if in the autumn, as announced, government and social partners will negotiate over possible reforms of the existing end-of-career regulations (FF).

GUY TEGENBOS/JOHAN RASKING • DE STANDAARD • 6 JULY

Our country has 270,000 men and women between the ages of 55 and 64 who have retired early, or 15% of their age group. Almost 14% more have taken early retirement or are unemployed (no longer looking for work). And 125,000 others are recognised as occupationally disabled, which is 6.7% of the age group.

By 2030 the total population of Belgium will have increased by 600,000, but the population of working age will have fallen by 200,000. This impact of ageing will become noticeable from 2010. To cope with this, the level of employment will have to rise to at least 69%. But that will require much greater participation on the part of all groups in the labour market, not least the over-55s.

The High Council points to the example of Denmark. There a ‘relatively generous system of unemployment benefits is linked to an active labour market policy’ and the obligation for those seeking work to take part in training programmes; furthermore there are proportionally far more jobs available in the care and services sector. And, above all, early retirement before the age of 60 has been abolished.

There remains one major difference between the labour markets of Denmark and Belgium. If in Denmark the average monthly salary of those aged 25 to 29 is set to an index of 100, that of those aged 55 is 117. In our country this wage tension between the young and old amounts to 146. Belgian over-55s are pricing themselves out of the market. Above all, the report of the High Council for Employment points to the existing financial incentives to stop work early as the main cause of the low level of employment among the over-55s. It says: the financial losses involved in stopping work early are very limited; if early retirement is taken, the income is 80 to 85% of the final salary. For lower incomes, even becoming unemployed is not prohibitive, with a payment approaching 89% of the former salary.

All sorts of calculations point to the same problem. What are the financial benefits or disadvantages for employees who continue working after they reach 55? How much must they pay as pension contributions to social security and how many additional pension rights does this entitle them to? If the contributions are greater than the additional rights acquired, it is implicitly not advisable to continue working. Retiring is then encouraged, and continuing to work discouraged.

The figures are telling: this form of implicit taxation comes to more than 55% in Belgium, compared with an average of 30% in the other OECD countries. According to the Chairman of the Council, Jan Smets, reducing this negative incentive by 10 percentage points would force up the level of employment among those aged 55 to 59 by 1.5 to 3%.

GUY TEGENBOS/JOHAN RASKING • DE STANDAARD • 6 JULY

The High Council for Employment stresses that the consequences of ageing will not be the same in all regions. From a purely demographic point of view, the population of working age (18 to 64) will shrink much more quickly in Flanders than in Wallonia. If the Flemish working population is assigned an index of 100 for the year 2000, this will rise to 102 in 2010 before rapidly falling and dropping below 100 from 2020, to a low point of 94 in 2030. In such a scenario the labour reserve in Flanders will be far too small to be able to fill all the open vacancies in firms and organisations. That phenomenon is already occurring in regions such as Kortrijk, where French border-workers can make up for the lack of local (Flemish) job-seekers. This situation, which is linked to the economic climate, threatens to become a structure characteristic of the Flemish labour market from 2010.

By then, the greater mobility of Brussels and Wallonian job-seekers could well offer a solution. In Wallonia the working population will grow to an index of 106 by 2010, and still be 102 in 2020. In Brussels the available labour force will be even bigger: the number of people aged 18 to 65 will continue to grow until 2020, to an index of 110.

www.metafa.gov.be
Belgian state police conducted a search in Fournirets house in 1996

According to De Morgen (5 and 6 July), on 25 April 1996 Belgian police conducted a search of the house of serial killer Michel Fourniret. This has emerged from police documents in the Dutroux case. The search was carried out at the request of the French judiciary in Reims as part of an investigation into weapons he was alleged to have stolen from a customs office in Givet, northern France in 1993. In 1994 one of the weapons was found in the car park of Jette university hospital, where Fourniret made a failed attempt to kidnap a nurse. Two years later Fourniret tried to sell one of his remaining revolvers to a circus artist, but a violent row ensued and the state police were called to the scene, and these immediately notified the French police. That ultimately led to a rogatory commission and a house search on 26 April.

DOUGLAS DE CONINCK • DE MORGEN • 6 JULY

In 1996 in Saint-Hubert, Wallonia, Fourniret became embroiled in a furious row with a circus artist named Tarzan over the sale of one of his remaining Givet revolvers. The state police in Saint-Hubert were called to the scene and seized the weapon. Fourniret was indicted by the Dinant Examining Magistrate Hanin for threatening behaviour, receiving and carrying an illegal weapon.

The state police in Saint-Hubert discovered the origin of the weapon and immediately informed the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Reims, which sent a rogatory commission to Belgium within a week to search Fourniret’s house on 25 April 1996 (DM 5/7). However, no connection was made with the other weapon that was discovered in Jette in 1994. Nor is any connection made with Fourniret’s criminal past, who was convicted three times in France between 1966 and 1983 for kidnapping, rape and assault and battery.

The fact that the pieces of the puzzle did not fall into place is according to Belgian police officers involved at the time ‘primarily the fault of the French’. In the final analysis the weapons robbery in Givet was ‘their case’. In Brussels, Dinant and Saint-Hubert information is alleged to have been regularly passed on straightaway to the French authorities, although questions will still be asked over the coming weeks.

“You have to wonder how the French police get to this stage in 1996, logically with Fourniret’s police record, and no one takes the trouble to add his name to the endless lists of suspects in the many unsolved kidnapping cases in Belgium at the time,’ says Jean-Maurice Arnould, lawyer of the parents of victim Elisabeth Brichet.

The saga of the stolen weapons could well provide an answer to the one question that criminal lawyer Jef Vermassen asked on VTM news. Fourniret kid-
INTEGRATION POLICY AND CULTURE

RACISM

Increase in racist incidents in Antwerp

Jews in Antwerp and Muslims in asylum centre are victims of racist violence

FF EDITOR

After an initial incident at the Talmoed High School in Wilrijk (Antwerp) on 24 June, a further five incidents have since been reported against Jews in Antwerp. In some cases the attackers were young boys of North African origin, but in one incident the aggressor was an East European, and in another a native was recognised firing blanks (with a toy pistol).

Antwerp’s Mayor, Patrick Janssens, expressed his concern, but his spokesman also pointed out that the mostly light incidents are also the result of the call by the mayor to report any form of anti-Semitic violence (De Morgen, 3 July). And yet it is remarkable that in both 2002 and 2003 the Centre for the Fight against Racism registered around thirty reports of anti-Semitism, while there has already been that number in the first half of 2004. Nevertheless, the 30 complaints appear few compared to the estimated 1,000 complaints against racism the Centre receives each year. Meanwhile, Leaders from the Jewish and Moroccan Communities keep harping on that the conflict in the Middle East must not be brought to Antwerp. Thirty complaints appear very few, but within the Jewish Community it is known that the complaints registered are merely the tip of the iceberg, claims De Standaard (3 July). In particular, the easily identifiable orthodox Jews are victims of spitting and jeering on a daily basis.

Last weekend it was the Muslims from the open asylum centre in Ranst near Antwerp who were the victims of racist violence. In the night of 2 and 3 July four masked, Dutch-speaking men broke in and asked each of the asylum-seekers in turn whether they were Muslims. Those who answered yes were told by the attackers that they should go back to their own country and were then beaten with sticks and iron bars. One Chechen had to be taken to hospital. According the organisation ‘Refugees Flanders’ a climate has clearly arisen in Flanders since the Vlaams Blok’s election victory in which racists believe that they can take the law into their own hands.

Opinion

MATTHIAS DANNEELS • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 5 JULY

Everyone deserves an answer to the question of where this senseless violence is coming from, in what deformed, numb brain it was born. But we must still ask the question. Because this is no isolated incident. This is the violent emanation of an overheated climate against which it is impossible to give enough warning. It is not right to point the finger at the government - although we are all good at doing so. This all has to do with the erosion and abandonment of the most elementary social rules, with holes in our sense of values. The big words have gone: education, civilisation, tolerance and respect for all.

www.antiracisme.be

DESIGN

50 years of Scandinavian design in Ghent

Scandinavian design, which caused a furore in the 1950s with group exhibitions abroad, conquered the world in record time. Functional, simple, discreet, beautiful and yet affordable, this consumer design par excellence managed to embody the modern social and democratic ideals of the affluent post-war society. Half a century later the five Scandinavian countries (Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland) are again seizing the initiative to embark on a world tour with a large-scale exhibition. Until 19 September it is the guest of the Ghent Design Museum (FF).

DE STANDAARD • 7 JULY

Instead of showering the birthday boy with flowers, it is especially striking how the creators are trying to put their glorious collective design past behind them. Instead of again exporting the cast-iron image and homogeneous picture of old, they are highlighting mutual differences with the 120 selected objects. The result looks like an extensive self-examination. Gone is the glorified ideal image. There is plenty of space for fragmented reality and for key questions.

Does Scandinavian design actually exist? What is left of the myth? Widar Halen, Chief Conservator of the Museum for Decorative Arts and Design in Oslo and also curator of the exhibition, is sure that the objects will speak for themselves. He illustrates this with the glass Apple by Ingeborg Lundin for the Swedish Orrefors - a classic example of mythical Scandinavian design. The Apple was seen for the first time in 1957 at the Milan Triennale and is one of the objects that secured the reputation of Scandinavian design abroad and as such is housed in the historical section ‘Constructing Scandinavian design’.

The historical section ‘Symbols of modernity’ contains, among other things, the international stars of the colourful and kitschy plastic pop design from the 1960s: in particular the Dane Verner Panton, with his revolutionary sleigh chair from 1959 (the first industrial plastic chair ever made from a single material, a single piece and in a single injection process).

The most important section of the exhibition is the contemporary one, which focuses on ‘The new millennium’. There is also no classic division by country here. In an increasing context of globalisation, the creators find the emphasis on national character outmoded. In creating the exhibition, Widar Halen was assisted by prominent design specialists from the four other participating countries. One of these is Henrik Most. He is project manager for the Danish Design Centre in Copenhagen and was responsible for the Danish selection. He feels that the often-repeated stories of the good old 1950s pollute the atmos-
**CULTURE**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **11 July:** *Vlaanderen feest* and De Gulden Ontsporing (The golden lapse), Celebration day of the Flemish Community; Brussels with concerts in the Ancienne Belgique, the Brussels Parliament, De Markten, The Music Village and Brass band parades and street theatre acts; Final party on the Grande Place with Laïs, Admiral Freebee, Jo Lemaire and Boudewijn De Groot; info: www.opbrussel.be www.vlaanderenfeest.be
- **17 July:** Summertime: Piotr Anderszewski, piano with Bach and Chopin, Concertgebouw Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
- **24 July:** Summertime with Toots Thielemans Quartet, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
- **27 July:** Musica Antiqua: Festa Veneziana, I Fagiolini, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
- **1 August:** Musica Antiqua: Helsinki: Baroque Orchestra conducted by Aapo Hakkinnen, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
- **2 August:** Musica Antiqua: Il Fondamento conducted by Paul Dombrecht, concerts for Harpsichord by Bach, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
- **6 August:** Musica Antiqua: Akademie für Altes Musik Berlin with Telemann, Vivali, Keiser and Bach, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be

**SUMMER FESTIVALS**

- **9 to 11 July:** Cactus Festival with Macy Gray, Pati Smith, Elvis Costello, Heather Nova, Ser- gent Garcia, Minnewaterpark, Bruges; info: www.cactusmusic.be
- **15 to 25 July:** Blue Note Festival, Bijloke, Gent; Jazz with Joe Lovano Quartet, John Mc Laughlin, Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Zap Ma, Branford Marsalis Quartet, Wynton Marsalis & The Lincoln Jazz Orchestra, Marc Moulin and others; info: www.bluenotefesti- val.com
- **16 to 18 July:** Belgium Rhythm & Blues Festival, Peer (Limburch) with Bonnie Raitt, Tony Joe White, Durango, The Strikes and others; info: www.bbf.be
- **16 to 26 July:** 10 Days Off: DJ-festival with live acts in De Vooruit, Gent; info: www.vooruit.be, www.10daysoff.be

**EXPO**

- **Until 28 August:** The Realm of the Dragon, exhibition, St Pietersabdij, Gent
- **Until 17 October:** Animals in Architecture, Museum of Architecture, Brussels
- **Until 5 September:** Speaking Sculptures, The Songye, Museum of Africa, Tervuren; info: www.afrimuseum.be
- **Until 3 October:** Marcel Breuer, Design & Ar- chitecture, exhibition CIVA, Brussels; info: www.civa.be
- **Until 22 August and 5 September:** SMAK; ex- hibitions: Juan Uslé, Op en Rooms and Sam Dun- rant with ‘12 Signs. Transposed and illuminat- ed, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
- **Until 1 August:** The Invention of Landscape, exhibition, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp; info: www.rubens2004.be
- **Until 22 August:** Fire from the War, historical exhibition, Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres
- **Until 31 July:** The Brueghel track: exhibitions on bruegel’s paintings, Bruges
- **Until 5 September:** Sam Durans, 12 Signs, SMAK, Ghent; info: 09/221.17.03 www.smak.be
- **Until 26 September:** Olympic Games for an- imals, Museum of natural sciences, Brussels; info: 02/627.42.38 www.natuurwetschap- pen.be
- **Until 26 September:** The Thomas Neyrinck Collection, exhibition, Belleveumusea, Brus- sels; info: 070/23.37.28
- **Until 18 August:** Honoré d’O & Toon Tersas, Muha, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be
- **Until 27 September:** The fall of the New Troy, Pukkelpop 2004, Festival in the Hoogstraten with Gilberto Santa Rosa, Ivan Vil- lon, Carimi, Axelinho Longomba, Gabriel Rios, Squadra Bossa ft Buscemi, Fruko y sus Tesos, Antilliaanse Feesten, Jabbeke, Wilsing, Kneistfestival, Antwerpen, info: 059/56.20.15
- **Until 3 October:** Armando, exhibition, Mu- seum Constant Permeke, Jabbeke
- **Until 12 September:** Copyright Rubens, KMS K, Antwerp
- **Until 29 August:** Not Done, exhibition, Mu- HKA, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be
- **Until 29 August:** Unvarnished, photo exhibi- tion by Carl De Keyzer, PM MK, Ostend; info: www.pmkk.be
- **Until 29 August:** Vic Gentils, exhibition: PM MK, Ostend; info: www.pmkk.be
- **Until 30 September:** Witslag, Roger Ravel- museum, Machelen-Zulte
- **Until 19 September:** Scandinavian design, ex- hibition, the story behind the myths’, Ghent De- sign Museum; info: www.imudesign.org
- **Until 5 September:** International Cartoonfes- tival Knokke-Heist with cartoon competition, press cartoons from Belgium and the Nether- lands, Luqannah, Duzenberg; info: www.knockheist.be

**DIARY**

- **17 to 26 July:** Gentse Feesten, Festival in the city centre with street theatre, acts, perform- ances, concerts on different places; info: www.treftpuin.be
- **17 to 26 July:** Polé Polé Ghent with Gabriel Rios, Los Bombenos, Los Carlos, Tune, Yusa, Bonson, Dutchi and others; Ghent; info: www.polopele.be
- **23 July to 5 August:** Klinkers Festival Bruges with Sidestripper, Band Azaaflo, Joanna Amee- dooehra, Manuel Reyes y Grupo, Ricardo Tesi, Eugenio Benaato and Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Bruges; info: www.brugge.be
- **29 July to 1 August:** Sminks Festival (world music, carribean, african) with Moris Kante, Coco Ralado, N au de Caros, Agushevi, Brass Band, Sutrafrum, Palo Flamenco, Globoesonic & The Shakti Spirit Dancers, Lhaha, Pietra Mon- tecorvo, Arianna Saval, Laurence Revey and many others, Boechout; info: www.sminks.be
- **30 July to 8 August:** Lokere Feesten with Krezip, Simple Minds, Axelle Red, 2 Many DJs, Hooverphonic, Mauro Pawlowski & The Grooms, Paul Weller, Jools Holland and many others, Lokeren; info: www.lokeresefeesten.be
- **5 to 7 August:** Dranouter Folkfestival with Arid, Calexico, 2000 Monkeys, Tom Barman, Albinon Morris Men, Black Drifters, Goran Bre- govic, Sarah Bettens, The Cheiftains, Venus in Flam, Orchester Baobab and many others; info: www.folkdranouter.be
- **11 to 15 August:** Knokke-Heist, Ostend, Antilliaanse Feesten, Hoogstraten with Gilberto Santa Rosa, Ivan Vil- lon, Carimi, Axelinho Longomba, Gabriel Rios, Squadra Bossa ft Buscemi, Fruko y sus Tesos, Antilliaanse Feesten, Jabbeke, Wilsing, Kneistfestival, Antwerpen, info: 059/56.20.15
- **13 to 15 August:** Antilliaanse Feesten, Hoogstraten with Gilberto Santa Rosa, Ivan Vil- lon, Carimi, Axelinho Longomba, Gabriel Rios, Squadra Bossa ft Buscemi, Fruko y sus Tesos, Antilliaanse Feesten, Jabbeke, Wilsing, Kneistfestival, Antwerpen, info: 059/56.20.15
- **13 to 15 August:** Marktrock Leuven with Hooverphonic, Axelle Red, Triggerfinger, Man- za, Armand and many others; info: www.mark- trock.be
- **19 to 21 August:** Pukkelpop with Faithless, Offspring, Groove Armada, Dandy Warhols, N eneh Cherry, Roger Sanchez Chemical Brothers, deUES, Stereo MC’s, Roni Size, The White Stripes, 50 Cent, Soulwax, Godfaffrap, Lamb- chop, Franz Ferdinand and many others; info: www.pukkelpop.be
- **20 to 28 August:** Reiefeest 2004, open air event, Bruges; info: www.reiefeest.be

**POCKET FINDER**

Focus on Flanders provides a weekly overview of articles from the Flemish press and appears in English, French and German. This newsletter is published by U Tietuiterij Lannoo nv, Kasdeelstraat 97, 8700 Tielt and can also be obtained by e-mail.

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With thanks to: Concreta nv, De Vijltnv, De Vlaams Dagblad, Paul de Pergroen, U Tietuiterij Jabbeke, Tielt and Roularta Media Group nv and their editorial teams for supplying the articles.

Translation: Eurologos
Printing: Drukkerij Lannoo nv, Tielt
Subscription rate: by post: €220 euro, 220 euro
Either transfer the sum to account no.: 472-1020001-19 with the KBC in Roeselare
Or give us the number and expiry date of your cred- it card (Visa/Eurocard): 472-1010001-19
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