Crown prince Filip commits second faux pas

Two months after Crown Prince Filip lashed out at the Vlaams Belang in a conversation at dinner, this week he committed a second faux pas par excellence. On 2 February he signed a list of demands from the employers’ organisation the VBO and its Greek sister organisation criticising European growth strategy and the economic approach of the Belgian Government. This list of demands appeared on the organisation’s website. The trade unions were up in arms the very next day. Both the VBO and the Palace tried to play down the incident. Apparently, the Prince merely signed as witness, but did not express a view, they said. In political circles, however, this time on both Francophone and Flemish sides, a fuss is being made about the incident. The Prince is operating more and more in the political sphere, where he is simply causing controversy. In any event, he got a roasting from Premier Verhofstadt in the Chamber, who advised him to show more restraint. Meanwhile the press is wondering what the Prince is thinking. Is it down to his stubbornness to always to express an opinion, is he being poorly advised or does he simply not have the capacity to ever become king (FF)?

Opinion

YVES DESMET - DE MORGEN - 4 FEBRUARY

He’s at it again. A person can be slow, but with the successor to the crown it is starting to assume alarming proportions. The VBO is a respected and reputable organisation, no question, but only represents one particular interest in the socio-economic centre field. By associating himself with their list of demands, Filip is making a mockery of the impartiality to which the King is bound by the constitution and the other members of the Royal Family are bound morally.

What is impossible in a constitutional monarchy is that a crown prince wants to become king and also hold his own opinions. Someone should have explained to the Prince, who at the end of the day is old enough now (44), during history lessons that in this country the impartiality to which the King is bound by the constitution and the other members of the Royal Family are bound morally.

INTRODUCTION

On 2 February Etienne Vermeersch presented his committee’s report on the removal policy for failed asylum-seekers and refugees. The Ghent moral philosopher was commissioned by Home Affairs Minister Patrick Dewael (VLD) after the federal police had expressed their dissatisfaction with the conviction of four police officers after failed removal and death of the Nigerian asylum-seeker Semira Adamu. The committee concludes that the current removal procedure is not transparent, either for the police or for asylum-seekers. Therefore it now describes in great detail what is permitted and what is not: compulsory measures against those unwilling to leave, handcuffs, but no medication. Also, it must be clearly explained to every asylum-seeker who arrives in Belgium how the asylum procedure and removal procedure work.

But physical repatriation is only the very last stage of the removal procedure. What precedes it is also in urgent need of streamlining and transparency, Vermeersch concludes. To start with, the policy is too fragmented between innumerable departments and ministers, so that no one actually knows who is complying with an order to leave the country. In 2003, 33,800 illegal immigrants were reported in this country, of whom 6,500 were repatriated and 2,500 locked up. In addition, 15,000 were ordered to leave the country and 10,000 released. There can therefore be no question of a consistent and compliance policy, claims Vermeersch.

Secondly, the asylum procedure takes far too long, leading to distressing cases. Perfectly integrated families are thrown out of the country after three or four years, so that the fellow pupils of expelled children at school take action against their deportation. Such procedures should not take more than one year, including the appeal procedure before the Council of State, Vermeersch believes. For this, procedural delaying tactics by solicitors must be curtailed, the Council of State must be strengthened and local authorities (OCMWs - Social Welfare Centres and reception centres) must also help trace expelled asylum-seekers. On this point the committee had to put up with severe criticism from the Consultation Centre for the Integration of Refugees (OCIV). OCIV officials and other social organisations, who are afraid the duty to report will frighten asylum-seekers away from asking for help (Knack, 2 February). The OCIV also finds it strange that video controls are no longer required during the actual deportation, while it was video images that proved decisive in the ruling in the Adarru case. Even more fundamental is the criticism of the OCIV that apart from academics, the committee consists solely of official bodies responsible for implementing removal policy. Nevertheless, Vermeersch is doing his best to show that the committee is in favour of a humanitarian approach. The moral philosopher pressed for rejected asylum-seekers to be treated with respect and wants the perception of them as criminals to be dispelled. And it would be better to tackle employers where moonlighting illegal immigrants are concerned, he feels. A difficult task awaits Minister Dewael, concludes De Standaard (3 February).

Frank Vandecaveye | editor in chief
Bill Gates is delighted with Belgian electronic ID

He announced that Microsoft would be integrating the eID into its chat program MSN Messenger.

On 1 February Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates visited our country. Gates announced that his firm would be integrating the Belgian electronic identity card (eID) into its chat program MSN Messenger. According to Gates, this can help combat abuse of the Internet, for example by keeping paedophiles out of chat programs or scaring off credit card hackers. Gates also wants to investigate in what other applications the eID could play a role. Belgium is the first country to provide its citizens with an electronic identity card. By 2009 every Belgian over the age of 12 must have one. It contains a photo, name, sex, signature, national register number and a microchip. This microchip contains digital keys that not only allow you to prove your identity on the Internet, but also to place electronic signatures on contracts by computer. The eID also has a PIN code unique to each holder (FF).

Luc Vanwelthoven (SP.A), State Secretary for the Computerisation of the State, had called on the technology sector to take initiatives that made use of the electronic identity card two months ago. ‘Microsoft was the first to take action,’ said Vanwelthoven yesterday.

The card contains a microchip, opening up a multitude of possibilities. In time it will be able to serve as a key to open physical doors - perhaps even as a hotel room key, but it can also be used to attach an electronic signature. Gates announced that his firm would be integrating the eID into its chat program MSN Messenger. Anyone who logs onto Messenger via their eID cannot pass themselves off as someone else. This should help avoid abuses. According to Gates, the use of the eID signifies an enormous leap forwards in terms of security. For the time being the collaboration will remain limited to MSN Messenger. However, Microsoft wants to investigate how the eID can also be used elsewhere. According to Gates, the technology will eventually be incorporated into Windows, the operating system and flagship of Microsoft.

www.e-government.be

Banks gradually open self banks for bank card holders

They will be able to use the self bank, regardless of whether they are customer of that bank.

It will shortly be possible to obtain money almost anywhere in Belgium. By 1 January 2007 the number of cash machines available to the general public will have more than doubled. Under pressure from public opinion and politicians, who feel that there are still too many blind spots in the network of cash machines, the banks concluded an agreement to this effect with network manager Banksys. At present there are 1,152 cash machines in Belgium, which are managed by Banksys and carry the bancontact/mister cash logo. These will shortly be taken over by the banks that hold shares in Banksys. The aim is to integrate the machines into the facades of their banks. However, the number of cash machines will not be increased, but in the future every bankcard holder will also be able to use some of the 6,200 selfbanks of the banks themselves, regardless of whether they are customers of that bank. The selfbanks that can be used will be identified by the bancontact/mister cash logo. De Tijd (2 February) speaks of a revolution. At the same time the market is being deregulated, so that outside parties will soon be able to install their own cash machines (FF).

Opinion

Nicot Tanghe • De Tijd • 2 February

The announced changes will easily fill the blind spots. Nonetheless, politicians should ask themselves whether they have not gained a Pyrrhic victory in this dossier. After all, before the banks can open their selfbanks to outside customers, they have to connect the cash machines in their selfbanks to the central Banksys computer system. That is an extensive IT operation, which will cost the banks deep in the purse. It would be naïve to think that most banks will not pass these considerable costs on to the customer. There is also a good chance that the customer will not even notice it. Because in contrast to, for example, Spain, where outside customers have to pay 1 euro per withdrawal, Belgian banks are not opting for a uniform tariff system. No, the banks will agree a fee among themselves and may even decide themselves whether and how to pass these costs on creatively to the customer. We can only hope that the banks in question do so transparently and fairly.

www.banksys.be
Juvenile law divides the governments

The Flemish Government supports a genuine juvenile penal law with more powers for the juvenile judge

The Flemish and Federal authorities appear not to be on the same wavelength as regards juvenile law. On 24 December the Flemish Government decided that the bill tabled by Justice Minister Onkelinx (PS) on the reform of juvenile law would not pass muster. Instead it proposed passing the matter on to the Consultation Committee of Federal and Regional Governments. The Flemish Government supports a genuine juvenile penal law with more powers for the juvenile judge. Minister Onkelinx prefers the old juvenile protection model, where the worst juvenile criminals are referred to the adult penal judge. Precisely because of this Flemish Welfare Minister Inge Vervotte (CD&V) announced that she was revoking the cooperation agreement on the federal juvenile institution at Everberg for criminals, where young Flemish criminals are locked up in a ‘Flemish wing’. Everberg is an institution that is run by three directors, one Federal, one Flemish and one Francophone. By 1 March 2006 Vervotte must provide alternative accommodation. But that did not please the VLD. Vervotte first came under attack from the Liberal Parliamentary Party Leader in the Flemish Parliament Patricia Ceyssens and then from Flemish Vice-Premier Fientje Moerman. According to the latter, the Onkelinx proposal contains a great many good measures. After all, her fellow party members together with the SPA members in the Federal Government, did approve the bill. Minister-President Leterme, who until recently still stood foursquare behind Minister Vervotte, therefore had to ensure that within his own government did not escalate. Following a meeting of the Consultation Committee of Governments he announced that the Federal Chamber Committee would first vote on the Onkelinx bill and that only then would negotiations be held on Flemish ‘changes of emphasis’ (FF).

JOHN DEWIT • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 3 FEBRUARY

‘Having minors sentenced by an adult judge is pointless: society will not become safer and the young people will not be helped,’ said Antwerp Juvenile Court Magistrate Nicole Caluwé on 2 February in the Chamber Committee on Justice which is organising hearings on Minister Onkelinx’s bill. Caluwé spoke on behalf of the Union of Flemish Juvenile Magistrates. Onkelinx wants it to be easier to send the worst juvenile criminals before adult judges. Caluwé: ‘In Antwerp we do that as little as possible. If we hand over a young person (to an adult judge, ed.), we try and get a warrant of arrest from the examining magistrate. That generally fails because we can only provide him with the latest dossier. He is not familiar with the young person’s entire previous record. Also our request is often too late, because we have to wait far too long for an expert report on the young person. Which means: we don’t get our warrant of arrest. And then the juvenile, who until then has been in a secure institution, is suddenly released. He is a wandering bomb and usually re-offends before he comes before an adult judge.’ But even the adult judge only receives the one dossier on the new facts. As a result he rarely gives an actual prison sentence, in barely 16% of cases, because he is not familiar with the young person’s past. Caluwé wants juvenile judges to be able to sentence minors themselves. After all, they are familiar with the full facts.

JOHN DEWIT • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 3 FEBRUARY

Onkelinx bill and that only then would negotiations be held on Flemish ‘changes of emphasis’ (FF).

TOM YSEBAERT • DE STANDAARD • 1 FEBRUARY

The rate of investment will be maintained subsequently, promises Peeters. The Flemish Government spends 100 million euros a year on this project. Such investment must pay off. After the work, Peeters wants checks carried out to see whether the measures actually improve safety. To this end he is asking governors, municipalities and the police to collect accident figures. Conclusions must be drawn after one to three years. It is too early for such conclusions in those projects already completed. ‘You often see a rise in the number of accidents at the outset, frequently with material damage,’ says Lode De Witte, Governor of Flemish Brabant. ‘Road users have to get used to the new situation. Only after six months or so will you see an improvement.’ The Construction Union (Bouwunie) is happy with the rapid developments: ‘It means work for the road-building sector, which is going through a crisis.’

SCHEME FOR ELIMINATING BLACK POINTS IN FLEMISH ROAD NETWORK

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<th>July 2005</th>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>74</td>
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focuS on FLANDERS • 29 January - 4 February • Number 5

One of the most important measures to reduce the number of traffic fatalities by 2010 would be the elimination of the number of black spots on the Flemish road network, said then Transport Minister Steve Stevaert (Sp.A) in 2002. An alarmingly high number of injuries and fatalities occur in traffic at black spots. Around 800 of these spots have been indicated and these must all be eliminated by 2008. Many of these are not yet visible, but that is due to the lengthy procedures and the many compulsory purchases that precede the actual work. In 2002-2003, 420 projects were set in motion. Each project involves a procedure of stocktaking, draft, advice from committees, building permit and if necessary compulsory purchase. Of these, 86 were implemented in 2004, for which no compulsory purchase was required. Flemish Public Works Minister Kris Peeters (CD&V) is promising to invite tenders for a further 256 projects this year (FF).

TOM YSEBAERT • DE STANDAARD • 1 FEBRUARY

The rate of investment will be maintained subsequently, promises Peeters. The Flemish Government spends 100 million euros a year on this project. Such investment must pay off. After the work, Peeters wants checks carried out to see whether the measures actually improve safety. To this end he is asking governors, municipalities and the police to collect accident figures. Conclusions must be drawn after one to three years. It is too early for such conclusions in those projects already completed. ‘You often see a rise in the number of accidents at the outset, frequently with material damage,’ says Lode De Witte, Governor of Flemish Brabant. ‘Road users have to get used to the new situation. Only after six months or so will you see an improvement.’ The Construction Union (Bouwunie) is happy with the rapid developments: ‘It means work for the road-building sector, which is going through a crisis.’

SCHEME FOR ELIMINATING BLACK POINTS IN FLEMISH ROAD NETWORK

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Jannie Haek, Principal Private Secretary to the Minister for the Budget and State Enterprises, Johan Vande Lanotte (SP.A), is to be the new Managing Director of the NMBS Holding, making him the successor to Karel Vinck (66), who announced his early retirement from the Belgian railways at the end of last year. Vinck restructured the company into a parent holding with two subsidiaries: the new NMBS, which is responsible for transporting passengers and goods, and Infrabel, which manages the tracks and the rest of the infrastructure. Marc Descheemaeker and Luc Lallemand, both confidants of Vinck, were earlier put in charge of these subsidiaries. Haek now completes the trio that has the task of making the NMBS profitable over the coming years. At the press conference at which Minister Vande Lanotte announced the appointment, he left no doubt as to what Haek’s job was: to put the NMBS back in the black within three or four years. The relatively young Haek (40) has been labelled by the press as one of the heavyweights behind the scenes of the current Purple government. His influence has been compared to that of the former Principal Private Secretary to Premier Verhofstadt, Luc Coene. As Chairman of the Board of Directors of airport operator Biac, he steered that company’s privatisation in the right direction, and importantly - without causing social unrest. The first big test for Haek will undoubtedly be the new management contract between the NMBS and the government in which, among other things, agreements will be made on train ticket prices. It is known that Haek is on the same wavelength as Vande Lanotte in this area. No price increases, but more passengers, is his motto, specifically one quarter more by 2006. Because of this strategic choice, in recent times former NMBS boss Vinck often clashed with the Socialist Vande Lanotte. Vinck was in favour of linear price increases (FF).

There is no getting round it: the Flemish Socialists now dominate the spectrum of public transport in this country like no other party before them. The SPA provides the Transport ministers in the Flemish (Kathleen Van Bremp, Brussels (Pascal Smet) and Federal Governments (Renaat Layd). And then there is Johan Vande Lanotte, responsible for State Enterprises, including the NMBS. The entire leadership of the Flemish transport company De Lijn also belongs to the SPA, as does the new chairman of the Brussels transport company MIVB.

And now they are joined by Jannie Haek. Vande Lanotte will still be his boss, but now as guardian minister. It will be interesting to see whether these two also develop a ‘productive tension’ like the one that existed between Vinck and Vande Lanotte. In his first contact with the press Haek made it clear that he did not want any direct confrontation over the prices dossier. Things should not really get more expensive. Vinck thought differently. He felt that pricing policy is a matter for the management because it is part of the restructuring of the company.

Vande Lanotte does not agree. Marc Descheemaeker, who heads the transport company NMBS, has already made it clear that he shares the opinion of his former boss: train tickets in our country are relatively cheap and there is clearly room for further adjustment. Descheemaeker and Vinck are both strong personalities, but both liberal inspired and brought up in the private sector. Haek’s ego is at least as strong, but over the years he helped develop his party’s ‘free transport’ policy. The productive tension that existed between Vinck and Vande Lanotte could well therefore shift to the Haek-Descheemaeker duo. At the same time Vande Lanotte said at his protégé’s first press conference that Haek would be judged on the financial performance of the railways group within three years. Vinck promised a balanced budget within that time. Haek immediately signed up to that commitment. And then there is the question of how the NMBS will close a hole that still amounts to more than 500 million euros within the next three years. On Vinck’s arrival, the negative cash flow was still around 1 billion. Almost one third of that disappeared because the government took on 7.4 billion euros of debts, reducing the financial burden by approximately 300 million euros a year. Staff cuts, improvements in productivity, but also cutbacks on investments will bring the deficit to less than 500 million.

Source: NMBS

**THE LARGEST RAILWAY STATIONS WITH SCORE FOR SAFETY, NEATNESS, COMFORT, CONNECTIONS, PARKING PLACES ETC.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PASSENGERS/WEEK</th>
<th>SCORE (OUT OF 10)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>333,443</td>
<td>8,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BRUSSELS-SOUTH</td>
<td>220,669</td>
<td>8,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. GHENT-SINT-PIETERS</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>5,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BRUSSELS-NORTH</td>
<td>182,778</td>
<td>7,1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. LEUVEN</td>
<td>199,946</td>
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<td>6. ANTWERP-BERCHEM</td>
<td>195,832</td>
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<td>8. MECHelen</td>
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<td>6,3</td>
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<td>9. BRUGES</td>
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<td>10. DENDERBEEUW</td>
<td>58,362</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: NMBS
Policy of tolerance towards soft drugs finally clarified

The Drugs Act of May 2003 was too vague in its description of a number of criteria, the Court of Arbitration felt

Adults (18+) found with three grams of cannabis on their person or one cannabis plant on their balcony have little to fear from the police. The possession of such small quantities will be tolerated. This means that possession will still be liable to punishment, but that it can only give rise to the drafting of a ‘simplified report’ with ‘the lowest prosecution priority’. This appears in the new cannabis directive published by Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx (PS) and the College of Public Prosecutors in the Bulletin of Acts and Decrees. As a result, cannabis users now know where they stand. The Drugs Act of May 2003 was too vague in its description of a number of criteria, the Court of Arbitration felt. For example, the Act did not specify quantities, and the exceptions in which cannabis use was not permitted, namely where the situation involved ‘problematic use’ or where such use created a ‘public nuisance’, were too unclear, the Court found. On 9 November Onkelinx issued a circular, but the College of Public Prosecutors refused to apply it because it still included the terms nuisance and problematic use. This led to the public prosecutors producing their own circular for their own field of law, thereby threatening to create a proliferation of rules. This new directive, which replaces all previous regulations, describes all the criteria precisely and defines clearly the limits of the tolerance policy for both public prosecutors, police and users. In the meantime Onkelinx and her colleague in Public Health Demotte (PS) are working on a new drugs act (FF).

Steven Samyn • De Standaard • 1 February

In practice, violations can lead to the police drafting a simplified report (VPV). As well as the identity of the offender and a summary of his/her version of events, this will also contain the type and quantity of the product. What is also striking is that violations covered by this directive that are included in a VPV ‘will not result in the narcotics that are found being seized’. In other words, anyone caught by the police with less than three grams may keep the cannabis.

This unofficial tolerance ruling will not apply if there are aggravating circumstances or in the event of a breach of the peace. The directive clearly specifies what is to be understood by breach of the peace. It involves, among other things, the possession of cannabis in schools or in their immediate vicinity, including bus stops or parks in the neighbourhood. The possession of cannabis in a prison or juvenile institution and ‘ostentatious possession’ in a public place or publicly accessible place will also be deemed to be a breach of the peace.

To avoid checks at events such as rock festivals, each public prosecutor may issue a specific temporary directive. This could, for example, temporarily allow the use of cannabis in a publicly accessible festival field. Where minors are concerned, the directive changes nothing. The possession and use of cannabis by minors will remain liable to punishment at all times.

Introduction of explosive cases on top of agenda again

Explosive cases or other intelligent cases render the contents worthless if not opened by a standard procedure

On 31 January near Brussels (Relegem) a money transport van belonging to the security firm Group 4 was attacked by four heavily armed men who opened the doors with high explosives. It was the second attack on a money transport this month. On 13 January there was a similar attack around ten kilometres away in Groot-Bijgaarden, also on a Group 4 money transport van. Since Home Affairs imposed strict security measures in 1997 following a wave of attacks in 1995 and 1996, everything had been quiet in the money transport sector. The two attacks this year have again prompted Home Affairs to begin crisis talks with the sector. In particular, the compulsory introduction of the explosive case is once more top of the agenda.

Explosive cases or other intelligent cases render the contents worthless if not opened by a standard procedure. No transports using such cases have ever been attacked in this country. Neither of the money transports had them, even though two thirds of the firm’s vans are already fitted with them. Group 4 therefore announced that it wanted to equip all its vans with the cases as quickly as possible (FF).

Filip Verhoeest • De Standaard • 1 February

The attack in Wemmel took place on a traditional money transport that did not use an explosive case. The security firm Group 4 announced that it wanted to equip all its transports with such cases as quickly as possible. Spokesman Bocqué: ‘Two thirds of our vans already use these cases.’ The sticking point is not only the investment required by security firms. It also appears that their customers, the banks and shopping centres, are not always prepared to pay for the extra security. Security staff is demanding that all vans without exception be fitted with an explosive case.

Group 4 is also beginning an investigation to see whether there is a mole in the organisation. It is striking that on both occasions the criminals knew that the money transports did not have explosive cases. ‘We cannot preclude the possibility that the criminals had inside information,’ says Bocqué.
Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde: Flemish Front survives

During the spring break (7-14 February) Ministers Vande Lanotte and Reynders will hold bilateral talks with party representatives and work out how much room for negotiation there is

Following the division among the Flemish parties in the Home Affairs Committee in connection with the timing of the negotiations on Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, the potential consequences for the collaboration in the Flemish Government were eagerly awaited. In the Committee the SP.A, Spirit and the VLD agreed with the negotiation path outlined by Federal Ministers Vande Lanotte (SPA) and Reynders (MR). The CD&V and N-VA were outraged, but this did not lead to a rift in the Flemish Government, in which all five parties sit together. The N-VA and CD&V are demanding that the competent chamber committee ratify the splitting of the constituency at the beginning of March. The party council of the Flemish-national N-VA, the most radical government party in this matter, is calling for the split to be a fact by 10 March, when the Consultation Centre of Flemish Associations (Overlegcentrum van Vlaamse Verenigingen) in Overijse is organising an action meeting on the split. This demand is being backed by cartel partner CD&V, also the party of Minister-President Leterme. And yet a new deadline is not without its risks. An initial deadline of 1 January has already been missed. Although SPA Chairman Steve Stevaert does not want to pin himself down to a date, he also believes that the talks have to progress and is therefore proposing that the negotiators Vande Lanotte and Reynders apply the ‘confessional procedure’.

At the first meeting of the ministerial working party on 2 February, at which negotiations were held on BHV, an agreement was in fact reached to follow the ‘confessional procedure’. During the spring break (7-14 February) Ministers Vande Lanotte and Reynders will hold bilateral talks with party representatives and work out how much room for negotiation there is (FF).
Vlaams Belang abstains from vote on Holocaust in European Parliament

Last week the Vlaams Belang again put itself in the spotlight in the European Parliament. On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz the EP approved a resolution condemning the Holocaust and the extermination camps. In the same resolution the Parliament also expressed its concern over the emergence of xenophobic parties. Ten Euro-MPs abstained, among them the three Euro-MPs of the Vlaams Belang. These included Party Chairman Frank Vanhecke and Koen Dillen, son of the party’s founder, Karel Dillen. (FF).

Opinion

RIK VAN CAUWELAERT • KNACK • 2 FEBRUARY

The Vlaams Belang is defending its abstention during the vote by claiming that this resolution will be used against ‘parties that fight for European values’. No ideology has based itself so emphatically on European values as German National Socialism. The Nazi bigwigs Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Müller and Adolf Eichmann, who in January 1942 met in a villa on the Wannsee, have to be protected as much as possible. Not just the cultural.

Bourgeois is not so keen on open-air art and the intertwining of culture and tourism

The 2003 Beaufort summer exhibition heralded the start of a triennale for contemporary art on the coast. Artists such as Jan Fabre, Dirk Braeckman and Antony Gromley constructed monumental works of art on the beach. Former Tourism Minister Renaat Landuyt (SP.A), who was greatly in favour of the project, estimated the number of visitors at 400,000 and the economic impact at 11 to 25 million euros. The concept and theme of the second edition, which was normally to have taken place in 2006, are ready, but the non-profit organisation Beaufort has not got the budgeted 6 million euros. The Department of Tourism, which was supposed to come up with 750,000 euros, is playing for time. Landuyt’s successor Bourgeois is not so keen on open-air art and the intertwining of culture and tourism (FF).

It is not up to the tourist sector to establish events, says Geert Bourgeois. Rather, its task is to organise the associated promotion, welcome and ‘marketing’ to a broad public. ‘What is covered by culture? What is covered by “international appeal”, a power that belongs to the Minister-President. Anything covered by tourism must also have added touristic value. Often things go wrong at the start, and the representatives of the tourist sector are even not allowed to join the initial meetings when an event is being developed.’

Bourgeois is calling for stricter selection in the subsidising of events. A first test will be the coastal action plan. In 2006 the organisers of 2003 Beaufort want to follow up the ‘triennale’. They are asking for 750,000 euros in subsidies, from both Culture and Tourism. Bourgeois does, however, support the Poetry Summer in Watou (close to the French border), because this also gives the region a touristic boost in terms of accommodation. ‘And why should we not involve Bruges or the coastal hinterland in the action plan? We don’t need to limit cultural tourism to a stretch of sand. There is still plenty that needs opening up.’

Top cultural events act like magnets to strengthen the image of Flanders among foreign tourists. Precisely because of this, events policy must be given a new emphasis, Bourgeois feels. The stress must not be on the one-off, but on what is continually available. ‘Nowhere in the world is there such a concentration of touristic attractions in such a limited area. Flanders is a collection of artistic towns, with their beguinages, museums, bell towers and beautiful sites. We are too modest about what we have. Events, with the appropriate marketing, can help reveal this well-kept secret.’

Culture on the coast is no must

Bourgeois is not so keen on open-air art and the intertwining of culture and tourism

GEERT VANDER SPEETEN • DE STANDAARD • 3 FEBRUARY

The coastal action plan can cut-back model we have to take into account. The coastal action plan can spend 2.2 million euros in 2005. I can’t reserve one third of that for Beaufort. The money will go to quality projects with a sustainable effect and a long-term vision. I’m not saying that Beaufort will not be one of them. But we must make every tourist experience possible. Not just the cultural.”

Out the guidelines for the evacuation of the Jews from Europe, all had higher European, German values in mind. (...) Was it in the name of European values that VB Euro-MP Koen Dillen went to visit Léon Degrelle, leader of the Belgishe Rex, at the time in Spain? The meeting must have been very cordial, as on his departure the young Dillen was given a photo signed by Degrelle of himself in German uniform in conversation with Adolf Hitler, ‘as a memento of the Golden Spurs’. It must be a thrilling prospect for the people of Antwerp that Koen Dillen’s party may one day be involved in the running of the port city, so that European values will at least be safe there.
Diary

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• 9 February: A Campagna with Corsican polyphonic songs, Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be
• 9 and 10 February: Mark Tomkins, dance, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be 02/201 59 59
• 11 February: Balletts C de la B with 1-2-3 propositions, dance, Vooruit, Ghent; info: www.vooruit.be 09/267.28.28
• 10 February: Manecas Costa (Guinean Bissau), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
• 11 February: Audistore and Eavesdropper (electronic music), Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• 11 February: Borodin Quartet and Yuri Bashmet with Brahms, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
• 11 February: Ensemble Babakhabov (Uzbekistan), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
• 11 February: Ensemble 415 with JS and PE Bach, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• 12 February: Eva Ayllon and Waldemar Bastos (Peru), Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be
• 12 February: Orquesta Tipica OTRA (Argentina), Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp; info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
• 15 February: Il Fondamento conducted by Fael Dombreg with Zelenka, Fux and Heinichen, Conservatory, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
• 15 to 18 February: Quando l’uomo principale è una donna by Jan Fabre and Troublemyn, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 15 February: Rachel Podger (violin) with Telemann, von Biber, JS Bach, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 16 February: Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev with Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Rachmaninov, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 16 to 23 February: Richard III, by Giorgio Battistelli (composer) and Ian Burton (libretto), director: Robert Carson, Flanders Opera House, Ghent, conductor: Luca Pfafii, info: 070/22.02.02 www.vlaamseopera.be
• 17 February: Eros and thanatos, Spectra Ensemble e’ Diabolus in Musica with vocal music by Vivier and Scelli, Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be
• 17 to 20 February: Rosas and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker with Désir, the second part, Kaaitheater, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be 02/201 59 59
• 17 to 19 February: Kulturama, the cultural high days of Leuven, Face a Face with Fabre, photos by Loayla Aerts, Film festival in Stuk and music with Tri, Amaparamo, rockumentary Festival Express, Jazzcotetch dancers and the Flemish Radio Orchestra conducted by Baldur Brönniman with Norman Perryman and many others, info: 016/31.63.29 www.kulturama.be
• 18 February: Het Collectief, Robin Engelen and Oxalys with Schönberg, Korngold, Dlave, Ravel and Stravinsky, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 18 February: The Flemish Radio Orchester conducted by Baldur Brönniman with Norman Perryman, compositions by Dvorak and Adams, Bijloke, Ghent, info: www.bijloke.be
• 18 February: Novalis Trio with Rachmaninov and Anton Arensky, Wanderer Trio with Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: www.concertgebouw.be
• 19 February: Trio Parnassus with Turina, Albéniz, P. de Sarasate and E. Lalo, De Singel, Antwerp; info: 03/248.28.28 www.desingel.be
• 21 February: Low, Ancienne Belgique Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be
• 26 February, The Neville Brothers, Ancienne Belgique Brussels; info: 02/548.24.24 www.abconcerts.be

EXPO

• Until 27 February: Tatu-Tattoo, exhibition, Royal Museum for Art and History, Cinquantenaire, Brussels; info: 02/741.72.11 or www.kmkg.be
• Until 27 February: (Imperfect by design, exhibition, Royal Museum for Art and History, Cinquantenaire, Brussels; info: 02/741.72.11 www.kmkg.be
• Until 17 April: Jazz in Little Belgium, MIM-museum (musical instruments), Brussels; info: www.mim.fgov.be
• 5 February: The memory of Congo, the colonial period, exhibition, Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren); info: www.175-25.be
• 5 February: SMAK-exhibitions: Ozla Barry, Michael Borremans and Bernd Lohaus + opening Art Now-exhibition with Ivo Provooost & Simona Denicolai, SMAK, Ghent; info: www.smak.be

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