**Breakthrough in case of Remmery threatening letters**

A breakthrough may have been made in the investigation into the suspect responsible for the threatening letters sent to Remmery, a company based in Ledegem in West Flanders. On 3 May the husband ('Bernard') of a female employee ('Marijke') of the company was arrested. The Kortrijk Public Prosecutor’s Office confirmed that testing of DNA material found on a stamp of one of the threatening letters led to the breakthrough. The female employee apparently felt ‘passed over’ by her colleague of Moroccan origin, Naïma Amzil. Her husband (or another suspect) demanded Naïma’s resignation in a series of letters, before threatening to set fire to the company, kill Van Nieuwenhuyse, and poison the firm’s food products. The case received a great deal of attention when the manager of the company, Rik Vannieuwen-

JAN FEYS/STEVEN DE BOCK • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 5 MAY

Marijke was not immediately Naïma’s best friend. That had to do with the new job thrust upon Marijke. Van Nieuwenhuyse: ‘I needed someone in the kitchen and found that she was suitable. She was a bit frustrated but I increased her pay.’ That was a few weeks before the first threatening letter. Naïma had been absent for several months through illness and maternity leave. Once back she was allowed to resume her former job in the packaging department. That department is seen as the ‘cushiest job in the company’. Perhaps her colleague felt that she had been kicked upstairs to the kitchen instead of Naïma and therefore felt frustrated. Did her husband adopt the weapon of anonymous terror to avenge his wife? Was she aware of what was going on? The cross-examinations will have to decide. Marijke did not hide the fact at work that she voted for the far-right. What is surprising is that the couple were friends with a former suspect. After a comparison of his DNA with a trace found on the last threatening letter proved the man’s innocence, the investigators turned to Bernard and Marijke. It was after all known that there had been a clash between Marijke and Naïma at work. Two weeks ago a DNA sample was taken from Bernard.
Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde: Francophones push up price of split

FF EDITOR

BHV as good as split, read the headline in Het Nieuwsblad on 2 May. According to the paper, there was only one item left on the table: the splitting of the bilingual constituency with the disappearance of registration rights for Francophone residents of the monolingual Flemish constituency of Halle-Vilvoorde after the split. They could vote for Francophone politicians in Brussels. For the residents of the six Flemish municipalities where the Francophones enjoy facilities, the registration right would be permanent. In the constituency’s other Flemish municipalities they would disappear (after 10 to 15 years or limited to the current generation of voters). In short, there would be an agreement before BHV appeared on the agenda of the Internal Affairs Committee in the Federal Parliament again on Tuesday 3 May, it appeared. In the Flemish papers a rift emerged between supporters and opponents of the compromise. The Federal government parties were in favour, and even Hugo Schiltz, former chairman of the Volksunie and senior negotiator on state reform in the 1970s, could live with it. The CD&V and N-VA, part of the Flemish Government but not the Federal, spoke out against registration rights. But barely 12 hours later the Francophone parties torpedoed these optimistic expectations. For them, a registration right for Francophones was far from enough, they cried in unison before the cameras of Flemish television. On behalf of the Francophone government parties and opposition, PS Chairman Elio Di Rupo said the Flemish proposal was simply ‘unacceptable and improper’. The price of the split had to be much higher. In addition to the registration right, they demanded that the three Flemish municipalities of Kraainem, Linkebeek and Drogenbos also become bilingual, like Brussels. In addition, they were also demanding that Flanders build Francophone secondary schools in the ‘Vlaamse Rand’ around Brussels and were calling for more flexible linguistic legislation in Brussels itself. Finally they also want the agreements on reducing debt to be revised. In past years Flanders has cleared almost all of its debt, but not Wallonia. In exchange for this package the Flemings, in addition to the splitting of BHV, would also get the regionalisation of transport and energy. It is clear that this price is far too high for the Flemish parties. Talks are therefore again at a deadlock. But the negotiators are not yet giving up. They are giving themselves one more week to thrash out a compromise. But that will be the very last postponement, since the Chamber Internal Affairs Committee has decided to begin discussing the bills on Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde from next week. Both the Flemish and Francophone parties agreed on this deadline. Only the Vlaams Belang voted against.

The cracks behind the split of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde

the PS is sometimes a better partner for Premier Verhofstadt [VLD] than the SPA

Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde has now held the Rue de la Loi in its grip for several months, while leaving around 90% of Belgians completely cold, claims De Morgen [4 May]. Because no solution has been found for the constituency in question, we may well get early federal elections in June. Even though they do not want a government crisis the Francophones, who are in no way calling for these negotiations, are not taking the dossier seriously. The paper has inferred this from the entirely unreasonable requirements they are demanding in exchange for a split and the fact that they have delegated hardliners Philippe Moureaux (PS) and Olivier Maingain (MR) as negotiators. But reciprocal tensions between the Flemish parties also play a part, the paper claims. Thus the Liberal VLD, and with it the PS of Elio Di Rupo, suspects that the Flemish Socialists are playing a double role and made promises to the Christian Democratic CD&V. This means the PS is sometimes a better partner for Premier Verhofstadt (VLD) than the SPA, maintains the paper. After all, according to CD&V politicians, Di Rupo has quietly decided to continue governing with Verhofstadt and his VLD (FF).

Since the end of last year, when rumours of a change of federal coalition reared their head, the PS has felt that the SPA is playing a double role. More than that: they believe Steve Stevaert really wants Johan Vande Lanotte in Rue de la Loi 16.

Or why for several months the PS has often been a better pillar for Guy Verhofstadt than the SPA. It is a feeling that is unintentionally being strengthened by the sense pervading CD&V circles. As a Christian Democrat said earlier this week: ‘BH-V depends on Di Rupo. And more specifically on whether he chooses the VLD or CD&V. I think he’s made his choice. And it’s the VLD. Rather a weaker party than the much stronger cartel of the CD&V and N-VA.’ Senior Liberals are sometimes expressing their foreboding about the ‘cuckoldry’ of the SPA even more firmly and affirmatively. ‘The SPA made promises to the CD&V in 2004,’ says one of them. ‘That’s patently obvious. Now and then, as with B-H-V, they want to show the CD&V they’ve not forgotten their word. We’re witnessing the prelude to a change of coalition.’ The PS has long been convinced that B-H-V is ‘just one small part of a much greater strategy’. And they are just as firmly convinced that the engine and ropes of that strategy are being operated by the SPA. For comrades, it is a source of fundamental incomprehension.
BHV: guide to a complex federal problem

What makes the constituency BHV special and why is it a problem?

For those for whom the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde reports raise more questions than they answer - and that is not only foreigners but also the majority of Belgians - De Standaard has drawn up a brief outline of the problem using a number of questions. The answers to the questions situate the disputed constituency within the Belgian federal state structure (FF).

1. What makes the constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde special? Federal Belgium consists of three monolingual regions (the Dutch, the French and the German) and one bilingual region (Brussels-Capital). The administrative and legal division of our country is based on these linguistic areas. However, the constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde extends over two different linguistic areas. It includes the nineteen municipalities of the bilingual Brussels region and the thirty-five municipalities of Flemish Brabant. The Francophone parties can rustle up votes in the thirty-five Flemish municipalities in Federal and European elections. And in Brussels, Flemings can vote for Flemish candidates from Halle-Vilvoorde.

2. Why is B-H-V a problem? In 2003 the Court of Arbitration ruled that B-H-V contravenes the principle of equality. In contrast to the rest of Flanders, there is no provincial constituency in Flemish Brabant. In addition to Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde there is a separate constituency of Leuven. If the provincial constituencies are retained, the constituencies in the former province of Brabant must be reorganised, according to the Court of Arbitration. The Federal Government was given until 2007. However, in the event of a split, special measures can apply ‘to protect the legitimate interests of Dutch- and French-speakers in the former province’.

3. What is the fundamental difference of opinion between Flemings and Francophones?

According to Flemish politicians the so-called territoriality principle dominates, while for the Francophones it is the personality principle. The territoriality principle implies that the territory and borders of each Federal State are decisive. In other words, everyone who lives in Flanders must respect its Flemish character, even if they speak a different language. According to the personality principle, the rights of the [Francophone] person are paramount, even if this person lives and works in Flanders.

4. Is the introduction of a registration right the solution? In exchange for splitting the constituency, Francophones from the Rand could register as voters in Brussels for European and Parliamentary elections. Several weeks ago there was a proposal on the table to introduce such a right. It would apply to all Francophones currently living in Halle-Vilvoorde. The Francophones in the six facility municipalities would also be given a decreasing administrative registration right. This would allow them to then fulfil their municipal obligations in one of the nineteen Brussels municipalities.

5. Is the idea of a registration right new? The Egmont Pact of 1977 included the introduction of a registration right. The Francophones in the facility municipalities, large parts of the seven other municipalities and one or two districts around the capital could choose their domicile in one of the nineteen Brussels municipalities. There they could then fulfil their administrative obligations and, above all, exercise their right to vote. In the end the Egmont Pact did not survive.

6. Does our country already have a sort of registration right? In 1988 Jean-Luc Dehaene resurrected the registration right to undermine the Voeren question. In European and Federal Parliament elections, voters in Voeren and Komen could now cast their votes in the district of Verviers and Ypres respectively.

7. Can the Francophones not submit their own lists in Flanders? Nothing prevents the Francophones from submitting their own lists in Flemish Brabant after a split. In elections for the Flemish Parliament, for example, there is no Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency, but a Flemish Brabant constituency. In this case the MR, PS and CDH combine their forces and go the country as the Union des Francophones (UF). The difference with the current situation is that the Francophone political tenors are not on these lists and parties such as the UF have to struggle with a problem of recognition. The results of the last elections demonstrate the difference. In the Federal elections of 2003 the Francophone parties won 70,000 votes in Halle-Vilvoorde, but in last year’s regional elections the UF won only 40,000.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UF [Union des Francophones]</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSE</td>
<td>3,600 [4.7%]</td>
<td>7,927 [8.6%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halle</td>
<td>14,312 [19.4%]</td>
<td>16,741 [26.5%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lennik</td>
<td>9,478 [13.5%]</td>
<td>8,175 [11.0%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meise</td>
<td>5,820 [9.4%]</td>
<td>8,636 [15.1%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vilvoorde</td>
<td>2,493 [5.2%]</td>
<td>6,286 [12.4%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zaventem</td>
<td>13,580 [25.6%]</td>
<td>18,596 [33.6%]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totaal</td>
<td>40,283</td>
<td>69,361</td>
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</table>

Source: De Standaard
**ECONOMY**

**Innovation fund offers risk capital for starters**

Only one starting business in 400 receives risk capital, while there are an estimated 4,000 young businesses that could be considered innovative.

The fact that innovation is being given such high priority is all to do with employment. Moerman cited a study from the USA to underline that. Only 5% of American businesses are innovative, but this group is responsible for 80% of employment growth.

The Innovation Fund’s task is therefore clear: provide capital where the market fails to do so, thereby creating extra jobs over time. The Flemish Government is giving the Fund 75 million euros, money that comes from the sale of Staal Vlaanderen. According to Moerman, private groups are also expressing an interest in investing in the Innovation Fund, which could increase the budget.

Only young businesses that have had a go-ahead from the Flemish Council of Ministers on 29 April will hold at least 75 million euros (FF).

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**Stevaert wants banks to grant more loans to SMEs**

Stevaert got the idea from Scotland, where the government checks business plans to determine their cost-effectiveness.

True to tradition, every 1 May SPA Chairman Steve Stevaert launches one or more new ideas. This year was no different. This time Stevaert had it in for the banks, which are making more profit than ever before. They hoard all their money to buy each other up and scream blue murder if the customer wants to be able to take his money out of the hole in the wall for free - an idea of SPA Minister Freya Vanden Bossche, claims Stevaert. And that while more and more SMEs are finding it difficult to get a loan from their bank.

Stevaert now wants to put pressure on the banks and give those SMEs that need to borrow money a boost by setting up a government institute where they can have their business plan screened. With a positive opinion from that body in the bag, a company could then put its bank under (moral) pressure to grant it a loan. Stevaert got the idea from Scotland, where the government checks business plans to determine their cost-effectiveness. It is also an example of how the government can support the economy creatively, Stevaert feels. De Tijd is sticking up for the banks and firmly against such a government institute (FF).

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**Opinion**

It is true that lending by Belgian banks is at a low level, but that is largely because in recent years multinationals have increasingly looked elsewhere for finance. The InBevs or Beaulieus of this world get their money where it is cheap:

- from the stock exchange, bond markets or foreign banks. In contrast, Belgian banks are granting more and more loans to SMEs, according to the figures. A bank that grants too few loans will be forced out of the market by another. And if no bank is prepared to take the risk of financing a business plan, then something must be wrong with the plan. Banks are obliged to assess commercial projects in terms of their cost-effectiveness. Not only out of a desire for money, but also because otherwise they will not survive. Non-profitable banks quickly end up in foreign hands, and then Flemish SMEs will certainly not be paid any greater attention. It would be counter-productive to disrupt the loans market with a government body. If such a body forces banks to grant loans they did not actually want to, it will price Belgian banks and the Belgian economy out of the market. For all its good intentions, this plan conveys the popular adage that above all banks should not make a profit. It does not deserve any credit.
Trade union and party involved in dispute over ASB on 1 May

ASB is intended as a replacement for the crisis contribution for social security and the solidarity contribution for pensioners, two taxes currently paid by workers

This year’s Labour Day (Feest van de Arbeid) was marked by a difference of opinion over the General Social Contribution (Algemene Sociale Bijdrage, ASB). The Socialist ABVV union has placed all its hope in this new tax to guarantee the financing of social security. The Flemish Socialist SPA is against it. The ASB is a tax on all incomes: on wages, company profits, income from capital and from property. The idea is also defended by the Francophone Socialists of Elio di Rupo, by Groen! and even by the Christian ACV union. According to SPA-party Chairman Steve Stevaert, who gave his 1 May address in Ostend, the home town of Budget Minister Vande Lanotte, the ASB is an extra tax on labour and therefore repugnant. He believes that in the first place, more people should be found jobs, thereby allowing social security to feed itself. He also feels that stronger action should be taken against the excessive expenditure in health insurance, in which doctors and pharmaceutical companies play a part. ABVV boss Xavier Verboven claims, however, that Stevaert has misunderstood the idea, as the ASB is not intended as a tax increase but as a replacement for the crisis contribution for social security and the solidarity contribution for pensioners, two taxes currently paid by workers. For most workers the ASB will work out to their advantage, Verboven ensured his listeners in Leuven. New ABVV boss Caroline Copers also vigorously defended the ASB in her maiden speech in Antwerp. De Standaard and De Morgen sided with Stevaert in their comments. De Standaard also suspects other motives behind this internal discussion within the Socialist movement [FF].

Guy Tegenbos • De Standaard • 2 May

The trade unions want an extra income stream directly into social security. After all, in principle it is they that manage social security money, together with employers. If the extra money for social security has to come from or via the treasury, it is not they but the politicians who have the final say. This is just what the SPA wants. It believes that the political vote must hold sway in health insurance in particular, for which the ABVV wants to earmark the ASB. The debate is currently dominated by doctors’ unions, health funds and social partners. SPA members such as Frank Vandenbroucke and Steve Stevaert also believe that the healthcare sector must become a single system for all Belgian residents, and that separate systems for wage- and salary-earners on the one hand and the self-employed on the other are outmoded. In that logic the social partners are also no longer really necessary in managing health insurance. The union, however, wants to retain its influence in this area. There is a further community snake in the grass. The PS and ABVV want to avoid social security being financed entirely through taxes. Then the trade union is no longer involved in management and for them that was precisely the firmest guarantee against a community splitting of social security and its sub-sections. An ASB will serve to reduce taxes on labour, the ABVV also claims. For workers and pensioners it will replace the solidarity charges they currently still have to pay. They will pay no more in the future. However, the other groups, including those who live off income from capital, will - because they currently pay nothing. The belief within the SPA is that the reality is rather more prosaic. Those on lower incomes will be exempt from paying that sort of contribution and as a rule those on the highest incomes will only marginally be affected by that sort of measure, it is therefore once again the middle classes that will have to foot most of the bill, it claims. The party is also aware that an ASB will be viewed as a tax increase come what may. And it no longer wants to be blamed for having raised taxes.

Source: DE STANDAARD

LARGEST BELGIAN CARPET GROUPS (CONSOLIDATED RESULTS IN MILLION EURO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARPET GROUP</th>
<th>TURNOVER</th>
<th>OPERATING PROFIT</th>
<th>NET PROFIT</th>
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Source: DE STANDAARD
Rise of unemployment comes to a stop in Flanders

But unemployment among foreigners of non-European origin is rising twice as fast as among Belgians

FF EDITOR

April saw an end to the rising unemployment in Flanders, say experts from the Flemish Public Employment Service (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding, VDAB). Admittedly, compared with a year ago, there are 17,653 more people seeking work, but that is down to statistical adjustments. After all, since August 2004 8,000 additional older jobseekers have been included in the figures and since October 2004 the employees of a Local Employment Agency have again been viewed as jobseekers. Without these adjustments there is actually zero growth.

At the end of April unemployment stood at 8.09%. For the first time in four years the VDAB recorded fewer young highly skilled unemployed males than previously. As the number of jobs on offer is also on the rise, it is fair to talk of an economic upturn. In total there are now around 1,000 fewer young unemployed people than a year ago. However, there are still 12,000 more young people unemployed than in 2000.

The fact that unemployment among foreigners of non-European origin is rising twice as fast as among Belgians is a cause for concern, notes De Standaard (3 May). Since 2000 the increase in this group has been 75%, more than twice that among Belgians.

The improved economic situation has in fact caused the number of jobs available in Flanders to rise slightly, by 3%. For the first time in four years unemployment among highly skilled males is down. And there are now around 1,000 fewer young unemployed people than a year ago. However, there are still 12,000 more young people unemployed than in 2000.

The fact that unemployment among foreigners of non-European origin is rising twice as fast as among Belgians or unemployed people of European origin is a cause for concern, notes De Standaard (3 May). Since 2000 the increase in this group has been 75%, more than twice that among Belgians.

Equally concerning is the fact that half of young unemployed people are semi-skilled or unskilled. Among young foreigners the figure is as much as 60%.

It is for this problem group of semi-skilled or unskilled jobseekers that Federal Employment Minister Freya Vanden Bossche has developed a package of measures. Across the three regions of Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia, 21% of young people below the age of 25 are unemployed. Of these, 70% are semi-skilled and unskilled and find it very difficult to get a job. For them, Vanden Bossche has launched the start bonus. Young people in part-time education, for example, can keep their bridging payment if they find a part-time job. The employer gets 100 euros. This start bonus is also available to young people in part-time employment who are receiving further training. Here too the employer gets 100 euros to keep wage costs down. Finally there is also a start premium for young job-seekers setting up their own business.

http://arvastat.vdab.be

<table>
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<th>UNEMPLOYED JOB SEEKERS</th>
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<td>2004: 204,045</td>
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<td>2001: 100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000: 92,000</td>
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<td>Source: VDAB</td>
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31 suspects in Beaulieu-case

The court has spent 15 years investigating the textile group and the activities of Roger De Clerck and his six children

Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office is demanding that legal action be taken against 31 suspects in the fraud case centring on the Beaulieu carpet empire of the West Flanders De Clerck family. The court has spent 15 years investigating the textile group and the activities of Roger De Clerck and his six children. The result is a 220-page claim in which the owners are suspected of having diverted tens of millions of euros from the companies to the family via fictitious accounts. Several banks are thought to have been involved. The fact that the investigation dragged on for so long is not just the result of the lack of resources and manpower the examining magistrate was able to deploy, but also of the unwilling cooperation of the De Clerck family. There remains the open question of whether the eldest son, Jan De Clerck, who until recently headed up Domo, will have a lucky escape. After all, he has already partly admitted his guilt and even paid a heavy tax penalty, much to the annoyance of his father, Roger, who built Beaulieu up over several decades into the biggest carpet group in Western Europe. In the early 1990s he divided his empire between his six children. But the sector has since entered a period of crisis as a result of over-capacity, falling margins and an image problem, as wall-to-wall carpet has had to give way to hard flooring in most living rooms. In 2003 the total turnover of the carpet factories of the former Beaulieu amounted to 2 billion euros, the total loss 25 million euros (FF).
The 31 suspects include Roger De Clerck, his six children, his six children-in-law and his business partners Noël Demeulemaere and Harout Katchadourian. The court believes it has sufficient evidence to take the 31 to court for forgery, falsification of annual accounts, abuse of trust, conspiracy and removal of company property. Most dossiers deal with the systems with which according to the court the De Clerck family unlawfully acquired tens of millions of euros from its companies. The money was used to illegitimately pay part of staff and owners’ wages. The court even claims that a system was set up with the former Bank van Roeselare (now KBC) to convert currency smuggled from the UK into wages for employees. Some of the 54 suspects will have a lucky escape because the public prosecutor claims the facts are statute-barred or because there is insufficient proof of guilt. According to the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the case is not statute-barred because all the fraud systems had the same intention and the effect of the false documents is still being felt today. The De Clerck family’s lawyers have already lodged a complaint over the slow progress of the court with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. They claim that the proceedings against their clients are not being conducted within a reasonable time limit.

On 2 May the French President Jacques Chirac opened his two-day Rencontres pour l’Europe de la Culture in Paris. Eighteen culture ministers and dozens of artists and intellectual names gave culture a prominent place on the European Forum. Chirac himself called for umbrella European initiatives such as travelling exhibitions, a quality label for heritage and a massive digital European library, but also for diversity in cultural expressions as a barrier against commercial standardisation. On the same day Le Monde asked on its front page how it is that Belgium produces so much cultural talent. After all, Flemish and Walloon cultural players are currently showing off in France. The Walloon brothers Dardenne in Cannes, the Flemish choreographers/theatre producers Jan Fabre and Alain Platel, Gerard Mortier as Director of the Paris Opera and conductor and renowned Bach performer Philippe Herreweghe. There is no lack of examples: the brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne are taking part in the Cannes Film Festival competition for the third time in a row; this year Jan Fabre is Co-Director of Avignon Theatre Festival, where his L’Histoire des larmes is on the programme; Alain Platel is celebrating triumphs in the Opéra Garnier in Paris, the metropolis where Gerard Mortier is at the head of the Opera. This little list, in itself impressive, can easily be made much longer. Visual artists Luc Tuymans and Wim Delvoye are also in great demand in Paris, London and New York. And what about choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, musicians such as Philippe Boesmans and Philippe Herreweghe, authors such as Jean-Philippe Toussaint, not to mention Antwerp’s fashion designers? Le Monde asks how this blossoming can be explained. So much talent, from a country that has to make do without culturally obsessed politicians, a country that tends to make cultural subsidies go a long way. Why has Belgium got the patent on this imaginative force that is unique, often provocative and often drenched in black humour? With Guy Duplat’s book as a guide, Le Monde explains that nothing much has really changed with their small neighbour: it is not a question of Belgium suddenly wanting to assert itself ‘culturally’. On the contrary, even. The country has collapsed into factions. Flanders, seeking its own identity, supports ‘its’ artists with great enthusiasm, in some cases even pitchingforking them into being cultural ambassadors. On the other side of the linguistic border, conversely, the government is wrestling with education budgets and support for the cultural sector is not a top priority. How can it be, then, that they both produce so much artistic talent? One possible explanation lies in the divided, highly complex political situation. A situation that incites both Wallonians and Flemings to creativity. Finally: despite all their differences, Flemings and Francophones still have something that binds us together, our own common source of inexhaustible creativity: surrealism.

BELGIAN CULTURE MUST BE HOT IN FRANCE

IN A VIGOROUS PIECE OF ANALYSIS LE MONDE ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN WHY THEIR TINY NEIGHBOUR HAS SUCH A SURPLUS OF TALENTED ARTISTS

As right-minded Belgians we did not dare say it ourselves. But now Le Monde has put it on its front page how it is that Belgium produces so much artistic talent? One possible explanation lies in the divided, highly complex political situation. A situation that incites both Wallonians and Flemings to creativity. Finally: despite all their differences, Flemings and Francophones still have something that binds us together, our own common source of inexhaustible creativity: surrealism.
CULTURE

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19 and 20 May: Maria José Franco, Flamenco dance, Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp [www.zuiderpershuis.be] and Handelsbeurs, Ghent, info: www.handelsbeurs.be 09/265 91 65
20 May: Polyphonic improvisation, Huelgas Ensemble conducted by Paul Van Nevel, Flagey, Brussels; info: www.flagey.be (02/641 10 20)
20 and 21 May: Brussels Jazz Marathon with Qu4tre, Melanie de Biasio & Steve Houben, Vera Zanello & Friends, Dubicki – Tripodi Quintet and Jeff Neve Trio, Flagey, Brussels; info: www.flagey.be (02/641 10 20)
12 May: laps Touré, [Fra/Maur], Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp, info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
12 May: Quirine Viersen/Silke Avenhout concert with KPM, Cellist, Barber and Chostakovitch, De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28
12 and 13 May: The Musical Box, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.28.28
13 May: OXACT – Metamorphosen by Richard Strauss and Das Lied von der Erde by Gustav Mahler, info: www.bijloke.be
16, 18, 19 and 20 May: Mario Joao e Mario Laginha Quintet, Flagey, Brussels/Handelsbeurs Ghent/CC Hasselt and De Warande Turnhout, info: www.flagey.be (02/641 10 20), www.handelsbeurs.be (09/265 91 65), 011/22 99 33, 014/41 69 91
12 May: Die Zauberflöte by WA Mozart, conductor: René Jacobs, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.de-munt.be
13 May: In/out of the treasure rooms: jewel collections – architects, Mexico City, exhibition De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28
28 May: Wrong time, wrong place; exhibition In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, info: 057 23 92 20 www.inflandersfields.be
19 June: Airworld, design and architecture in aviation, Design museum, Ghent, info: www.design.museum.be +32 (0)2 267 99 99
26 June: Cast for eternity [bronze statues from Indo-Persian, the Hiphajj in Belgian and Dutch collections] , Etnographic museum, Antwerp, info: +32 (0)3 220 86 00
19 June: Barry Flannagan, exhibition, SMAK, Ghent, info: www.smak.be 09/221 17 03
4 September: Hidden worlds, art from artists with various backgrounds, Museum Dr. Guislain, Ghent, info: www.museumdrguislain.be (0)9 216 35 95
9 Octobre: Congo: Nature and Culture, exhibition, KUMA, Tervuren, +32 (0)2 769 52 11 www.africamuseum.be
14 August: Beyond Desire/Desire, attitude and styling in African and Western culture - MoMu, Antwerp +32 (0)1 470 27 70 www.momu.be
31 December: Master pieces from the Dutch treasure room, KMSK, Antwerp, info: www.kmsk.be
15 May: Moroccan Jews – Two cultures in one, Jewish Museum, Brussels

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE
• 10 and 11 May: Sasha Waltz, Schubert wau am Leniner Platz, Improvments, De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28
• 11 May: South San Gabriel, Handelsbeurs, Ghent, info: www.handelsbeurs.be (09/265 91 65)
• 11 May: Sarah Bettens, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.28.28
• 11 May: Mariza, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.28.28
• 11 May: Spectra Ensemble conducted by Philip Rathe, Process music with Ligeti, Reich, Rzewski and Goeyvaerts, De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28
• 12 May: Daby Touré, [Fra/Maur], Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp, info: www.zuiderpershuis.be
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• Until 12 May: Die Zauberflöte by WA Mozart, conductor: René Jacobs; De Munt, Brussels; info: www.de-munt.be
• Until 13 May in Ghent, until 31 May in Antwerp: Rinaldo, Opera by GP Haendel, director: Nigel Lowery, Flanders Opera House, Ghent and De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.vlaamseopera.be
• 18 May: Concert Vesselina Kasarova and de Munt Orchestra with Haendel, Gluck, Mozart, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.de-munt.be

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