Racist killings in Antwerp

A young man aged 18 shot dead a Malian babysitter and a toddler aged two, and a Turkish woman was severely wounded. The attack took place in broad daylight in Antwerp city centre. A short time later his murder-ous raid was brought to a stop by a duty police officer, who shot him in the stomach after issuing three warnings to put down his weapon. The killer had clearly racist motives. He had purchased the gun and bullets the very same morning from an Antwerp gun store. The gun did not require a permit. Police searched his room at the boarding school he attended in Roeselare, and discovered documents indicating that the shooting spree was planned. The killer is from a far-right background: his father has been a Vlaams Belang militant since the very beginning, and his aunt is even a party MP.

Three days before the attack he had his head shaved. He wore a long black leather jacket, far-right badges, khaki trousers and combat boots and nonchalantly wore his weapon round his neck. It may be supposed that the victim count would have been higher still had the police officer not stopped him in his tracks. The killer still had 15 bullets on his person. His twisted deed inevitably leads to parallels being drawn with the massacre in Columbine, USA (FF).

Opinion

When does something click in your head, transforming you from a racist into a murderer? Is that it? An isolated madman who goes berserk? Or can it also be because of a prevailing social context? A context which makes racism punishable in laws and regulations, but in practice puts up with it? No, the immigrant bashers will cry, you cannot seize on one incident to minimise the criticism of many. But is it actually one incident? In the space of one week, an African has ended up in a coma due to a beating by a group of skinheads, a young Moroccan has been drowned to death by a group of night-clubbers, and a Turkish woman, a pregnant black woman and an innocent toddler have been killed by a man inspired by extreme right-wing ideals. The bloodbath is also symptomatic of a more general trend towards a hyper-individualistic society, in which people who are different are no longer fellow people but objects, and ‘me-myself-I’ is the only yardstick by which things are judged.

INTRODUCTION

The Socio-Economic Council for Flanders (SERV), a think-tank in which employers and employees carry out research and consultation, and give advice to the Flemish Government, comes to a remarkable conclusion in a recent report. In the period from 1995 to 2000, industry lost 24,000 jobs in the industrial sector itself, but at the same time its orders created 70,000 extra jobs in other companies. In this way employment figures for 2000 barely this out: industrial companies created 681,000 jobs that year in industrial companies themselves. But in addition industry generated a further 269,000 jobs in net terms, in companies supplying industrial companies: haulage firms, temporary employment, banking and insurance, hardware and software suppliers, design offices, cleaning firms, catering companies, and so on. Between 1995 and 2000 that number even grew by 70,000. The pessimistic image of industrial companies shutting up shop and making staff redundant has a major effect on public opinion because it is so visible, warns De Standaard (11 May). But, the paper goes on, the creation of indirect employment is much less eye-catching and therefore people are also less well aware of it. The study goes on to warn that the importance of industry should certainly not be underestimated: in the trade and services sector, too, its orders create more jobs than does consumer demand.

So much for the period 1995-2000. Unfortunately the statistics are lacking for the time being for the study to be repeated for the years 2000-2005. But, according to the SERV, it is clear that industry has further moved its labour-intensive departments to low-wage-cost countries, and that indirect employment can no longer offset that loss. Between 1995 and 2004 the industrial sector was able to record the same turnover with 25% fewer jobs (De Morgen).

This can be partly offset by the services sector. Financial and business services have in recent years been creating visible, direct employment, but, unlike industry, much less indirect employment. In healthcare (hospitals) and the public sector (education), a large number of new jobs were also created. But the government would rather not direct its employment policy at these sectors too much, the SERV concedes. In the long term such a policy does not contribute to economic development. Since Flanders has relatively speaking more industry and fewer public-sector jobs than Wallonia, the consequences of shrinking employment in industry is more tangible here. It is precisely that dependence on industry that makes Flanders vulnerable, says SERV chairman Philippe Muylers, who is urging the government to concentrate on stimulating innovation there. De Standaard (11 May) concurs with this and feels that the government should take urgent catching-up measures to stimulate technical training, although it commends its efforts in the field of scientific, labour and education policy to close the gap between the education sector and the corporate world.

Frank Vandecasteele | editor in chief
**JUSTICE**

**African male left badly beaten by Bruges skinheads**

On Saturday night, two pedestrians were beaten up by a gang of five extreme right-wing skinheads in Bruges. One of the victims, a Frenchman of African origin is in a coma and fighting for his life. The attack took place outside a bar reputed to be a meeting place for skinheads. The five offenders were subsequently picked up by police. Two were later released, whilst the other three remain in custody (FF).

BJÖRN MAECKELBERGH • HET NIEUWSBLAD • 9 MAY

Raphaël Mensah (50) from Paris is still in a deep coma. ‘Everything that can be broken on someone’s face has been broken in the case of this man. And on top of that, he has various other fractures over his entire body’, says the Bruges public prosecutor Jean-Marie Berkvens. His friend Alain, from West Flanders, came out of the assault relatively lightly. He does not want to have his full name published in the papers, out of fear. The five skinheads attacked him so hard that his memory is just a big black hole. The public prosecutor’s office says that it is not clear why the two men were beaten. Alain makes no bones about it: ‘My friend has Gabonese roots, so he has a dark skin colour. That was obviously not to the taste of those men’.

**Overcrowding in prisons has become a pressing issue**

FF EDITOR

Never before have there been so many convicts in Belgian prisons. At present, Belgian prisons are housing a total of 9,827 convicts, whereas in fact there is only room for 8,300. CD&V MP Tony Van Parys (Het Nieuwsblad, 9 May) blames the government for current overcrowding in prisons. He believes that the government has announced a variety of measures to prevent overcrowding, but has not succeeded in their implementation. One of these measures was house arrest under electronic supervision. Detainees can remain at home, while their behaviour is monitored through the use of electronic ankle bands. According to the government’s proposal, some 1,300 convicts should have been subject to this kind of custody. Presently, it only involves 345. It was also agreed in 2004 that convicts that had no connection to this country would serve their time in their country of origin. Van Parys concludes that hardly anything has become of these plans. His party, the CD&V, proposes that 2,000 new prison cells be built, along with an extension in recourse to community service and an increase in the number of house arrests under electronic supervision to 1,500.

**Authority for auxiliary officers is extended**

FF EDITOR

Auxiliary officers may henceforth check people’s identity, round up offenders, help the police in the surveillance of detainees and draw up reports of road accidents, according to a report in De Standaard (11 May). Originally the auxiliary officers’ sole task was checking parking meters, so their area of authority is thus being extended. They will be deployed to support the actual police officers in safety checks and body searches. From now on they may also carry out body searches and check someone’s identity themselves. The extension of the auxiliary officers’ remit fits into the policy of bringing more uniformed police officers onto the street. Auxiliary officers, who only receive three months’ training, are to remain unarmed, however. Despite the greater police presence on the street, the lack of places in juvenile institutions and prisons is still playing a role because of prison overcrowding. Matters are not much better in the juvenile institutions for young offenders. De Morgen (11 May) reports that under-age offenders guilty of a homejacking could only be arrested four days after the event because only then was there space in the juvenile institution of Everberg.

**Ye and Allata point blame at each other in Belgian Football betting scam**

FF EDITOR

In an open letter to French sports newspaper L’Equipe, the ‘Chinese gambler’ Zheyun Ye claimed that he was in no way involved in the match-fixing scam in the Belgian football competition. He confirmed that he only wanted to invest in Belgian clubs because he loved football. He explained that he has been deemed the key figure of the Chinese betting mafia due to false statements made by his associates. His former right-hand man, Pietro Allata, in particular would have purposely portrayed him as the key figure in the bribery. As quoted in De Morgen, Ye claims that the Chinese mafia does not exist as it does in Italy. Allata reacted furiously. He hopes that the judicial authorities will arrange a meeting between Ye and himself, as he had nothing to do with the betting scam. Ye is currently living undercover in China. An international arrest warrant has been issued against him.
**An end to financial support for asylum seekers**

Christian Dupont (PS, Minister of Social Integration) is working on a proposal to reform the reception of asylum seekers in Belgium. The main feature of this plan will be the abolition of financial support for asylum seekers. Dupont henceforth only plans to provide material assistance, regardless of the stage of the procedure asylum seekers may have reached. Dupont aims to convince asylum seekers to reside in the municipality (one of the 420) to which they have been assigned. Currently most asylum seekers are moving to the big cities. Minister Dupont believes they will no longer do so if they do not receive any financial support. In 2004, his predecessor, Vande Lanotte (SP.A), decided that municipalities failing to provide satisfactory accommodation for immigrants would only receive half of the minimum income that the social services pay out to them. If the municipality forwarded their asylum application to the big cities, minister Janssens, believes they will no longer do so if they do not receive any financial support. In 2004, his predecessor, Vande Lanotte (SP.A), decided that municipalities failing to provide satisfactory accommodation for immigrants would only receive half of the minimum income that the social services pay out to them. If the municipality forwarded their asylum application to the big cities, minister Janssens, believes they will no longer do so if they do not receive any financial support.

**GUY FRANSEN • DE STANDAARD • 9 MAY**

The asylum procedure consists of two steps. An application first has to be declared admissible. Then a decision has to be given, after an examination of the facts, as to recognition of the applicant as a political refugee. As long as an asylum application has not yet been declared admissible, the applicants only receive material support and they remain in open centres. These are centres run by the Red Cross, the federal agency Fedasil and so-called local reception initiatives organised by the municipalities. As soon as the asylum application is declared admissible, and is being examined in detail, the asylum seeker receives financial support, which is allocated to a public welfare centre (OCMW) that pays them a minimum wage. Since the beginning of 2005 asylum seekers have been spread over 420 instead of 140 municipalities. That financial support will shortly be a thing of the past. From now on Dupont only wants to give material support, irrespective of the part of the procedure in which the asylum seekers find themselves. The plans have already been discussed in detail at government level and will shortly be discussed in the council of ministers. One of the aims of the reform is to take the strain off the large cities. They have already been complaining for years that a large number of OCMWs have been dumping asylum seekers on them. ‘Asylum seekers cannot be legally forced to reside in a particular municipality. In the future they will therefore always be able to go to the large cities, but then they will have to do that without financial support’, says Tina Verraes, Dupont’s spokesperson. ‘We do not think that many penniless asylum seekers will take that step’. The reform of the reception procedure is linked to the new asylum procedure introduced by Interior Minister Patrick Dewael (VLD). Therefore there will have to be a judgement within the year on the recognition of asylum seekers.

**Church occupations: conflict between Dewael and bishops**

Thousands of church occupiers and some 150 hunger strikers are demanding regularisation of their residence in Belgium. Minister of Home Affairs Patrick Dewael (VLD) described the hunger strikes as acts of ‘blackmail’ in *Het Laatste Nieuws*. He refuses to concede to a widespread regularisation as called for by Antwerp and Ghent Bishops. He also believes that Bishops should not be meddling in a Minister’s policies. ‘I was under the impression that there was a Separation of Church and State in this country’, he affirmed. The Bishop of Ghent, Van Looy, stresses the Church’s activity has social rather than political motives. Dewael, on the other hand, maintains that the majority of the church occupiers and hunger strikers are not eligible for regularisation of their residence in Belgium, as they had previously been expelled and are living underground, or have never even submitted a claim for asylum (FF).

**Opinion**

JOOST LONCIN • HET VOLK • 8 MAY

‘If the bishop advocates regularisation, he is making a political standpoint’, says Dewael about André Leonard, the bishop of Namur. ‘I find it rather dangerous to say that you’re a supporter of regularisation and that the minister should do something for the people. That’s gratuitous’. Even when it is a bit gratuitous for the minister to aim his arrows only at the bishops, he is right when he says that he wants to have his administration do its work done and that he wants to see the law applied. That law states that anyone who has their asylum application rejected within a reasonable period must leave the country. But the law also states that anyone whose application is not dealt with within a reasonable period has the right to stay here. Finally the law gives the minister the right to regularise individual cases for humanitarian reasons. And this the minister does, especially if it involves families with young children who in the meantime have learnt Flemish, who have already been left hanging on for too long due to the bureaucracy. Until further notice, an ‘illegal alien’ is still a person without papers whose only crime is being here. He is entitled to be treated as innocent. It is that appeal to that right and that decency that the bishops are making. It is an ethical appeal, and one aimed not only at the minister, but also at public opinion.
Lazard merchant bank upbeat over Mittal offer

On 11 May, Prime Minister Verhofstadt (VLD) and the Minster Presidents of Flanders and Wallonia, Yves Leterme (CD&V) and Elio Di Rupo (PS), received the report by Lazard merchant bank concerning the proposed takeover of Arcelor by Mittal. On the basis of the report, they intend to adopt a position on the takeover bid. Wallonia will also take the findings of the report into account when the decision is to be made over what should be done with its 2.4% holding in Arcelor. Yves Leterme has already shown a positive reaction, although he is not yet willing to adopt an official standpoint. He prefers to wait until the meetings with Di Rupo and Verhofstadt, scheduled for 16 May. (FF).

WIM VANDE VELDEN • DE TIJD • 11 MAY

The Lazard report, which the markets were also looking forward to, reveals that Arcelor’s stand-alone-strategy is tenable. However, questions are being raised about the payment of a super dividend of EUR 5 billion. This risks being at the expense of investments. According to Lazard, the Mittal Steel project amounts to the steel group growing to become the number one in the world. Mittal also wants to take over all Arcelor’s commitments and even go a step further in Belgium. Leterme points out that the Arcelor takeover will lead to increased output for the stainless steel division of rustproof steel. Flanders is set to play an important part in this. Mittal plans to relocate a facility located in Dudelange (Luxembourg) to Genk, where ALZ is situated. Mittal terms Ghent-based Sidmar ‘state of the art’. Further investment is set to take place in the company. This is also the case of steel R&D centre OCAS, which is coupled with Sidmar and in which the Flemish Government has a stakeholding. Mittal has plans to expand OCAS. Leterme states that he is impressed by the importance of synergy and vertical integration at Mittal. The ownership of iron ore mines and others is a great asset for Mittal, especially given the rapid increase in prices of raw materials.

However, Leterme does not want to adopt any official standpoint as yet. First he wants to wait for Monday’s meeting with colleagues Verhofstadt and Di Rupo.

Arcelor considers the increase in Mittal’s offer to be insignificant

FF EDITOR

This week Mittal Steel announced it is prepared to revise its bid for continental rival Arcelor, which has now reached 22.9 billion euros. However, the proposed increase is viewed as somewhat insignificant. Managing Director of Mittal, Lakshmi Mittal, claims that ‘this decision does not mean that we consider Arcelor’s underlying value to have changed. We believe that a friendly bid will create surplus value.’ (De Tijd 11 May). Mittal is also prepared to take a more sound corporate strategy for the running of his group. Mr Mittal hopes to win Arcelor over with his attempts to open negotiations over the bid, but Arcelor has always declined this invitation. The Luxembourg-based company is after an all-cash bid, but, up until now, Mittal’s bid has consisted of three quarters in shares and one quarter in cash. According to Arcelor Managing Director Guy Dollé, the company is valued at between 34 and 41 billion euros. Arcelor considers the increase in Mittal’s offer to be insignificant. Dollé believes that it is still an unattractive plan, and consequently Arcelor is not changing its position. Either a cash offer must be made, or Mittal must submit their business plan for investigation, so that Arcelor is able to determine the value of Mittal’s share capital, states Dollé. Investors, however, have shown a positive reaction. Arcelor share prices have risen by 2.17%, whilst shares in Mittal have risen by 1.85%. Mittal Steel has appointed French businessman François Pinault to its board of independent directors in an attempt to break the stalemate.

90,000 additional jobs with lower company tax

Lower the rate of company tax from 33.99% to 25% and you secure economic growth of 1.3% and 90,000 extra jobs. Professors Hylke Vandenbussche of the UCL and Jozef Konings of the KUL Leuven came to this conclusion after they had examined a data file of Belgian multinational companies. After all, Belgian companies chiefly invest in foreign subsidiaries, where not only the wage costs but also the company tax are lower. Although Belgium lowered the rate of company tax in 2003, from 40.17 to 33.99%, this is still 8.6% higher than the EU average (25.3%) and even 13.1% higher than the rate in the new Member States (20.8%) FF.

KRI塞 BARREZEELB • DE TIJD • 9 MAY

The lowering of the Belgian rate to the European average would not only stimulate economic growth and create more jobs. The job market would also become a lot more dynamic. Job reallocation would increase by 6%, according to the professors’ calculations. They concluded that countries with not a very dynamic labour market, such as Belgium, have lower economic growth than countries with a strong dynamic such as the United Kingdom. In addition to the company tax rate, they also determine the country’s wage costs and appeal. The wage gap in respect of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe has been narrowing in recent years, but the gap vis-à-vis Northern European countries has become greater. In the space of five years, wages in Belgian parent companies have risen 13% in respect of other wealthy EU countries.
Flemish Government only given a ‘pass’ in Flemish employers’ report

Policy preparation rises to 63%, and implementation is disappointing and only rises to 39%.

After the excellent initial year of 2004-2005, the Flemish Government is given only a ‘pass with a warning’ by Voka, the network of Flemish employers, for its policy in the year 2005-2006. Every year Voka examines how much work has been done in respect of the economic priorities of Flemish employers, and draws up a progress report on the basis of this. After one year it emerged that 56% of the priorities were already in the policy preparation phase and 27% in the implementation phase. One year later there is little further progress to be reported, according to Voka. Policy preparation rises to 63%, and implementation is disappointing and only rises to 39%. Managing director Philippe Muyters feels that the Flemish Government should increase its efforts, but he fears the delaying effect this year’s municipal elections and the federal elections of 2007 will have (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE TIJD • 10 MAY

As regards policy preparation, the Flemish employers especially lament the fact that the review of the Spatial Structural Plan has been put on the back burner, that no work is being done in structural educational renewal, and that a lot is being said about state reform but little preparatory work is being done. As regards the implementation of the coalition programme, Voka complains that the announced fiscal pact with the municipalities is a long time coming. In that pact the government and the municipalities have to make agreements about the abolition of local taxes that are unfriendly to companies and on how the Flemish Government will compensate that financially. Also the lack of a master plan for Research and Development and the snail’s pace taken in the optimisation of the airport of Deurne are cause for disappointment. Voka also laments the fact that the government is only spending 30% of free budget scope on Voka priorities and that it has little impact on the federal policy agenda.

WWW.VOKA.BE

Flemish Government rejects Voka analysis

FF EDITOR

The Flemish Government emphatically rejects the Voka’s analysis. We are on schedule with the implementation of the coalition agreement and a number of important investments have been approved in school buildings, rest homes and road works, Leterme’s cabinet announced in De Standaard [11 May]. Leterme is also quoted in Het Laatste Nieuws [10 May] as saying that the procedures and regulations do not make it simple to convert policy into decisions, and he goes on to say that he is not leading a ‘show government’. In the autumn there will be a mobilising campaign which should provide for a new élan, although that will not lead to any fire-works either. All economic players will be involved in this. The advertising bureau Duval Guillaume has already been approached to work out a communication plan.

The Flemish trade balance dipped into the red during the past year, whilst that of Wallonia shows a growing surplus, according to De Standaard (9 May). Flanders exported 171.6 billion euros in the past year, but it imported even more: 175.9 billion euros. This resulted in a deficit of 4.3 billion euros in the trade balance. Wallonia registered a surplus of 10.9 billion euros, Brussels a deficit of 4.74 billion euros. The Flemish trade balance deficit is primarily due to the trade with the Netherlands. Since most oil to our country enters Flanders through the port of Rotterdam and oil prices have risen considerably, imports from the Netherlands increased from 35.3 to 39.7 billion euros. Since oil imported into Belgium enters the country through Flemish ports (Flemish import) and since this expensive oil also raises the price of Wallon [and Brussels] export products, after correction the Wallon exports would in reality only increase by 2.3%, according to De Standaard (9 May).

With more than 80% of exports Flanders remains by far the most important region in Belgian foreign trade. The sharp drop in Brussels trade results [exports down 19% and imports down 25%] has a lot more to do with changes in the processing of statistics than with the economic reality. Hitherto export data on the regions were broken down on the basis of the location of the companies’ registered office. Now the production site where the added value is made determines the company’s location. A great many companies have their head office in Brussels, but produce in Flanders and Wallonia.

WWW.FLANDERSINVESTMENTANDTRADE.BE

TRADE BALANCE 2005 (in euro)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flanders</th>
<th>Wallonia</th>
<th>Brussels</th>
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<tr>
<td>Export</td>
<td>+8.4%</td>
<td>+16.3%</td>
<td>-19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>+16.3%</td>
<td>-9.41%</td>
<td>+24.96%</td>
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SOURCE: DE STANDAARD
Sabena Technics to comply with contracts after fire

The severe fire has meant that the heavy maintenance department is at a standstill. This department accounts for five percent of the turnover of Sabena Technics and employs 135 of the company’s 1,200 employees. These employees can probably find employment in other departments within the company. The CEO of SabenaTechnics, Christophe Bernardini, said that the activities for heavy maintenance would be resumed as soon as possible. In order not to lose customers, part of the capacity will be absorbed by the sister company TAT. In addition Sabena Technics in Zaventem can use hangar 8, which is currently being used for the painting of aircraft.

In the event of the resumption of the activities, two bottlenecks appear. Firstly, the machines that were lost in the fire have to be ordered again. Then those machines have to be checked and approved again, before Sabena Technics can secure a certificate again. Whether Sabena Technics will manage to keep all its customers, as the company is hoping, remains to be seen. But one of its good customers, SN Brussels Airlines and Virgin Express, confirmed that it was remaining loyal to Sabena Technics.

Sabena Technics is responsible for the maintenance of 16 of the 48 aircraft used by SNBA and Virgin. It is not yet known what will happen to the burnt-out hangar. The owner of the hangar, the airport operator BIAC, will be consulting with the interested parties in the next few weeks.

www.sabenatechnics.be

VRT chief executive Mary given a serious warning

Minister Bourgeois is of the view that Mary is poisoning the debate

In the Flemish Parliament the new VRT decree has been approved. It lays down that important strategic decisions should from now on be submitted to the board of directors. Moreover, it is that same board of directors that determines which decisions are strategic. The managing director— at the moment Tony Mary— still has authority, according to the decree, for personnel policy, programming and other operational duties. Mary has carried out a genuine campaign in the press in the last few months against this passage in the decree. He fears political interference in the broadcasting company again via the board, and is demanding guarantees. That same fear is also alive in the boardcasting company’s new service. In a letter to Media Minister Bourgeois (N-VA), the board of editors-in-chief Leo Hellemans, Jos Bouveroux and Pieter Knapen express their concern over a possible attack on their editorial autonomy. In the Flemish Parliament all political parties did their best to pacify the worried journalists. However, Mary himself came in for considerable criticism. CD&V MP and former media minister Eric Van Rompuy even called for Mary’s resignation, because he is contesting the statutory framework within which he has to work. Current media minister Bourgeois (N-VA) was not soft on Mary either. He is of the view that Mary is poisoning the debate and demands loyalty from the managing director. In a letter to Mary, which was also signed by VRT chairman Guy Peeters, he asks for his loyal cooperation (FF).

At the end of the debate in the Flemish Parliament minister Bourgeois announced that he was asking Mary for guarantees. ‘If Mr Mary leaves the slightest doubt as to the loyal and correct compliance with this decision, he can no longer operate. Someone at the head of the public broadcasting company cannot just say that he is unable to live with the request to implement a decree that has been approved’. In any case, there will be further talks between Bourgeois and Mary. The more time goes by, the more it appears that the question is not so much whether Mary will leave the broadcasting company, as when. Mary himself has already made it known that he certainly wants to pursue the negotiations on the 2007-2011 management agreement [with the government]. As far as Bourgeois is concerned, negotiation on the management agreement can only go ahead when Mary shows his loyalty to the decree. Minister-President Leterme (CD&V) does not feel that Mary should step down and is convinced that common sense will prevail.
Leterme finds out how federalism works in Canada

**Flemish** Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) paid a working visit to Canada last week. His most important talks were with Laurent Beaudoin, chairman of the board of directors of Bombardier, the train and bus manufacturer, which has a plant in Bruges. For that Bruges plant, which employs 800 people, a decision is to be taken this year on the order for the Regional Express Network around Brussels. Together with senior Bombardier executives, he also went over other possible contracts with public-sector companies such as De Lijn (Flemish buses and trams), the NMBS and MIVB (Brussels trains and trams). Leterme also had instructive talks on how federalism works in Canada (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE TIJD • 6 MAY

From the political talks that Leterme had in Montreal, Quebec City and Ottawa, he also learnt that in Canada, too, federalism is increasingly seen as a means of increasing the effectiveness of policy. ‘In Canada they’re also looking for instruments to objectify the financing of the provinces, to give the federated states more responsibility over their own policy, and to give them accountability as to their actions and the way they spend their funds’, says Leterme. What is called accountability there is, according to him, wholly a continuation of his concept of ‘responsible federalism’. Leterme wants to have a study carried out into the financial flows in the 26 federal countries and the way in which accountability is constitutionally regulated.

WWW.YVESLETTERME.BE

Antwerp pays tribute to enfant terrible Jan Fabre with ‘Homo Faber’

**FOR THE FIRST TIME THE CITY OF ANTWERP IS STAGING A RETROSPECTIVE OF FABRE’S PLASTIC WORK, IN TWO MUSEUMS, UNDER THE TITLE ‘HOMO FABER’**

Jan Fabre is not only one of the most important Flemish artists of his generation, he is undoubtedly also the most versatile and perhaps also one of the most infamous. Fabre is not only a plastic artist; he is also a choreographer, theatre director and performance artist.

For the first time the city of Antwerp is staging a retrospective of his plastic work, in two museums, under the title ‘Homo Faber’. The MuhKa presents ‘vintage work from the early period’, whilst the Royal Museum for Fine Arts is displaying recent and never-before-exhibited sculptures and drawings. Fabre has them ‘enter into a dialogue’ with works by old masters from the museum’s collection (FF).

NICA BROUCKE • DE MORGEN • 11 MAY

The self-declared ‘warrior of beauty’ has a few key works from the collection enter into a dialogue with his own recent work. The old masters have in turn left their mark on him. Bruegel’s well-known representation of bee-keepers recurs in Fabre’s large monkish sculptures, which he clad with wafers of human and animal bones. Fabre also has more in common with the old masters than with fellow artists of his own generation when it comes to theme, too. The artist sees himself as a secular mystic in search of a spiritual dimension. ‘Just like the mystics, he is involved with transcendence, via ‘the sensually material’, endorses Paul Huvenne, director of the KMSKA. ‘With Fabre you’ve got a genuine interaction. His work can explain the topicality of the old masters and vice versa’.

Fabre’s great respect for his predecessors is expressed in ‘I let myself run dry’ (2006), an astounding true-to-life wax copy of Fabre with his nose pressed against a canvas by Van der Weyden. Blood is dripping to the ground.

The performance Virgin/Warrior, which Fabre produced with Maria Abramovic in the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in December 2004, is the point of departure for a glass installation with suits of armour in the Rubens room, where the master of baroque and the master of mise-en-scène find common ground in a joint aversion of the moderation of the mediocre.

The fact that Fabre is more than anything a Homo Faber, a doing person, can be seen in the exhibition in the MuHKA. ‘Evolution’ or movement forms the leitmotif in Fabre’s early oeuvre. ‘That aspect is one that curator Bart De Baere wanted to emphasise’, he says. ‘You also see that all elements that I’m using now were already present then’.

On his eighteenth birthday he made his first blood drawings. In a series of photos the artist-as-a-young-man is up and at it with a razor. He has the swagger of a man ‘who will change the world’ - figuratively and literally. Fabre created new kinds of insects and clad figures in thumbnails, coloured in beds in blue ballpoint ink, bedding and all. In a butcher’s shop, he set up his sculptures of tartar steak.

Rags, with a Belgian frame, formed the canvas for his ‘poetic-terrorist’ texts: ‘Belgian art has been wrung out!’, ‘You should take everything seriously, not tragically’, ‘I am doomed to art’. Other ‘vintage’ works, including the Spiders’ Puppet Theatre (1979), an installation/doll’s house’ with dead (and, take note, also living) tarantulas, had to be thoroughly restored.
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**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- **Until 27 May:** KunstenFestivaldesArts with artists from all over the world on 18 spots in Brussels with Christoph Marthaler, Meg Stuart, Romeo Castellucci, Alain Platel, Wang Bing, Marie N’Diaye, Chris Kondek, Frank Thys and others, Brussels; info: www.kftda.be 07/02/22.199
- **11 to 17 May:** La der Levine des sentiments, Video reinvents the opera by Boris Berges and Aloïa Van der Avoort. Video Installation, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00 and www.kfda.be
- **15 May:** Dmitri Makhitin (violin), Alexander Kniazev (cello) and Boris Beregovsky (piano) with Ludwig van Beethoven and Sergey Rakhmaninov Conservatory Brussel; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **15 and 17 May:** Jan Fabry and Troublyn with The King of the Loss and The King of plagiarism, De Vooruit, Ghent; info: www.vooruit.be 09/267.28.28
- **17 May:** The Da Vinci Code, avant-première of the film and opening ceremony of the Comic, De Bijloke, Brussels; info: www.debijloke.be 02/507.82.00
- **17 May:** Confessions d’un autre genre, theatre, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **17 May:** Amor concerto, AB, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/507.82.00
- **17 to 19 May:** Spectra Ensemble with compositions by Kagel, Vermeersch and Van Der Harst, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.debijloke.be
- **19 May:** Alfred Brendel, piano with Joseph Haydn, Franz Schubert and WA Mozart, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **20 May:** 20th Century Philharmonic de Liége et de la Communauté Wallonie-Bruxelles conducted by Armin Jordan with Steven Stucky, De-Regulation, exhibition, Muhka, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be (0)3 260 99 99
- **20 May:** Mary Coughlan; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **20, 21 and 22 May:** La Passerelle Dance Studio. Réctal of the student, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **20 May:** Mary Coughlan, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24
- **21 May:** Ictus Happening, One.Only.One, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **21 May:** Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Walter Weller with Alban Gerhardt (cello) with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **22 and 26 May:** Martha Argerich & Aleksander Rubinstein-Bazarkovsky (Argentina/Russia), piano adventures, De Singel, Antwerp and Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be, www.desingel.be
- **22 May:** Dutch Chamber Choir and The Rascher Saxophone Quartet conducted by Tōno Kajiwata with Mauricio Kagel, Eriksen Tjønn and Giya Kancheli, Miniemen Church, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **25 May:** Feeder, AB, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24
- **26 May:** Orchestre Symphonique de la Monnaie conducted by Stéphane Denève with Les Biches, Aubahe and La Voix Humaine by Francis Poulsen, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

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**EXPO**

- **27 April to 18 June:** Seredio, Furtado do Associates (architectural school from Porto), exhibition, De Singel, Antwerp, info: www.desingel.be
- **Until 2008:** Art at the Frontline 1914-1918, Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels, info: 02 737 78 33, www.klm-mra.be
- **Until 24 June:** Kikkdozen en denkmodellen [Showcases and models of thought], Jan Fabre, exhibition, Flemish Parliament, Lokettenzaal, Brussels; info: www.vlaamserelatie.be
- **Until 21 May:** Theo Van Rysselberghe, exhibition, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00
- **Until 28 May:** Yearning for Beauty, The Vienna Werkstätte, exhibition Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- **Until 31 May:** Antwort-Frankfurt: Migration and innovation around 1600, exhibition, Hessenhuis, Antwerp, info: http://museum.antenperen.be/etnografisch_museum
- **Until 28 May:** Kotaq Ataman (Turkey), De-Regulation, exhibition, Muhka, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be (0)3 260 99 99
- **Until 28 May:** Kotaq Ataman, Kuba, exhibition, Extra City, Antwerp; info: www.extracity.org
- **2 April to 28 May:** International Festival of Photography, CC Scharpoord, Knokke; info: www.fotoknokke.be
- **Until 1 October:** Beaufort Outside: open air exhibition along the Flemish coast; info: www.2006beaufort.be
- **Until 3 September:** Beaufort Inside, exhibition, PMMK, Ostend; info: www.2006beaufort.be www.pmmk.be 07/22.50.05
- **Until 29 May:** New Territories, exhibition about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, De Hallen, Bruges; info: www.cultuurcentrum-brugge.be
- **26 and 27 May:** Technocalyps, documentary by Frank Thys, KVS, Brussels; info: www.kftda.be
- **Until 3 September:** Homo Faber, Jan Fabre and the ancient Masters, KMSKA, Antwerp; info: www.kmska.be 03/238.78.02
- **Until 15 August:** Homo Faber, Jan Fabre, the early work, Muhka, Antwerp; info: www.muhka.be
- **Until 3 September:** Brugel 06, summer festival with exhibitions and events in connection with the 16th century painter, Brugel printed and Bruegel imagery, Royal Library, Brussels; info: www.brugel06.be 02/454.87.54

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**DAILY NEWS**

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