The Belgians Remember Them

Belgian patriotic Association

Newsletter n° 06

Issue: 2022 - 2 & 3

Editorial

Dear Members and Friends of the Association,

At the end of the commemoration ceremony on May 18 of this year, I announced that the ceremony could become a biennial event, due to the volume of the work required to organize it annually.

During the reception following the ceremony, many people and authorities asked me to retain an annual celebration bearing in mind that, in so doing, we have a unique opportunity to preserve the memory of the victims of Nazism and an original way of awakening the collective consciousness, especially that of the children and young people in the commune.

On reflection, I realize that the work involved in preparing and organizing this event is particularly important because of the impact it has on the public and on youth in particular. It should be pointed out that, besides the involvement of children in the act of celebration, there is all the work beforehand in preparing pupils for this kind of event. The continual input of teachers is essential in raising the awareness in future generations of the importance of preserving patriotic Remembrance. Finally, the message brought to each of the events we organize brings that special touch that fills Rebecq's commemorations with emotion and dignity without falling into insincere sentimentality.

Taking into account the various opinions shared with me, I have decided to continue to organize and present this annual event. This being so, I am pleased to invite you to attend the 2023 commemoration on Wednesday, May 17, 2023.

This naturally leads me to reflect on the moral value that associations such as "The Belgians Remember Them" must bring to the world of Remembrance and the memory of wars in particular. As a memorial association, should we participate only in patriotic ceremonies, as important as they are?

I think it is important that the act of remembrance goes beyond the simple laying of wreaths. It is essential to be aware that behind the splendour of a patriotic act of Remembrance are men and women who, in the past, have sacrificed their lives so that our society may live in the freedom so dearly won. This fact must not be regarded as of little importance, rather it must determine all we say and do in the field of Remembrance.

Based on this understanding, we can therefore envisage adding to our Memory work through historical research, by putting names on faces and by writing the History of the victims of wars in the light of our knowledge. Then our duty to remember takes on a whole new dimension.

In doing so, we no longer commemorate a vague concept, but the memory of men and women whose actions speak directly to us, to whose sacrifices we are forever indebted!

But a memorial association must also be able to react, both in terms of our past history and of the one being written every day in our society. We observe the rise in power of groups that manifest ideas from the far right or left. They are gradually ruining the political life of our countries.

As patriotic associations, we must be alerted by the democratization of parties that do not hide their anti-democratic tendencies, that advocate intolerance and openly demonstrate their adherence to neo-Nazi ideas. This should be the basis of our daily struggle against forgetting.

Today, we must remain constantly on the alert, vigilantly protecting our democratic freedom, so that the memory of those whose sacrifice we celebrate every year is not tarnished by the nauseating ideas expressed by unsavoury individuals - even if this means that we are misunderstood!

It is only by paying this price that we can tell our children how much they owe to those whose names are engraved on our gravestones, on our monuments and in our collective memory.

Wilfred Burie,
President

I warmly thank Mr. Brian Simpson from Antrim, Northen Ireland for correcting the original text

A date to remember:

May 17, 2023

The Belgians Remember Them Association will hold a solemn tribute ceremony in Rebecq dedicated to the airmen of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Air Forces of the Commonwealth who fell on Belgian soil during WW2 and to the members of the Resistance who were taken by the enemy because they had helped airmen survivors to escape.

80 YEARS AGO...

The “Vel d’Hiv Roundup” commemorations in Paris which I was watching on TV brought back memories of events that took place in our country (Belgium) 80 years ago.

Seeing France make it a point of honour and of duty to commemorate what was at the origin of the genocide of the Jewish, Gypsy and Roma populations of Europe, carefully prepared by the Nazis, made me suddenly realize that our country has experienced similar events in respect of which, this year, there were neither reminders nor acts of Remembrance.

The facts

From the beginning of their occupation of the our national territory, the Germans issued a series of decrees relating among other things to the presence of Jews in Belgium. Among these laws was one which provided for taking a census of the Jewish population and their exclusion from professions such as those related to the judiciary, medicine, teaching, administration, the media, etc. Very soon after, Jewish businesses were closed without warning and without payment or compensation of any kind.

Jewish forced labour as part of the «Todt» organization was also decreed. Using this spurious excuse, the extermination of the Jewish populations of occupied Europe was planned in accordance with the arrangements set out in meetings held in Germany between Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Adolf Eichmann and all the other organizers of the “Final Solution”.

The Belgian authorities were given the responsibility of enforcing the decrees, but few positive responses were received by the occupying force from those communes reluctant to denounce the presence of citizens of the Israelite faith among their population. The obligation to wear the yellow star and the confiscation of Jewish assets for the benefit of Germany would put an end to Jews from avoiding so-called Forced Labour. We are at the beginning of 1942.

An assembly point was set up in the former «Lieutenant-General Dossin de Saint-Georges» barracks in Mechelen. It was a great place for this kind of operation. Located between the two cities where most Belgian Jews lived - Brussels and Antwerp - the city of Mechelen was equipped with a network of railways which facilitated the deportation to Germany of those who had been arrested.

The SIPO-SD (Security Police) and the Gestapo organized the raids. The Nazis would be ably supported by Belgians committed to collaboration. Although some members of Degrelle’s Rex movement(*) were involved, it was mainly Flemish SS who would help the Germans in this shameful task. Thanks to their involvement, 24,916 Jews from Belgium (44% of those living in the country) and 351 Gypsies would pass through Mechelen to be deported to Auschwitz. To these must be added 520 Jews from Nord-Pas-de-Calais (France), victims of the September 11, 1942 raid in the Lille region. At the end of 1942, Flemish collaborationists gradually took over the management and the running of the Jewish gathering centre for Belgium in Mechelen.

Entrance of «Dossin barracks», in Mechelen

Raids were held from August 1942 to July 1944. Those arrested were brought to Mechelen where they stayed for a few days, while a new convoy for the death camp at Auschwitz was formed. The living conditions in Dossin are unimaginable: overpopulation, poor hygiene, lack of freedom, etc.

Only 1,251 deportees from Mechelen to Auschwitz would survive that hell.

(*) *Rex was a French-speaking collaborationist party founded by Leon Degrelle, who believed in the Nazi’s victory.*

Dr.Ge/HA

Au Gouvernement Provincial
du Brabant

BRUXELLES
et à

Monsieur le Commissaire de police en Chef
à BRUXELLES.

Concerne : l'ordonnance du 27.5.42 établissant une marque distinctive pour les Juifs (bulletin des ordonnances pour les pays occupés n° 79, page 943).

L'ordonnance oblige tous les Juifs en Belgique, ayant accompli l'âge de six ans de porter en public l'étoile juive. Est considéré comme lieu public, non seulement le séjour au grand air, surtout dans les rues mais également dans des locaux fermés, où tout le monde est admis, ainsi que dans les restaurants et entreprises d'hébergement. D'autres restrictions de séjour en dehors de celles de l'ordonnance du 29.8.41 sont ordonnées simultanément. Pour autant que le séjour en dehors de leur habitation est permis encore momentanément aus Juifs pendant l'obscurité, l'obligation du port de la marque distinctive est obligatoire également après le commencement de l'obscurité.

Il a été interdit de porter des décorations et des marques d'honneur avec l'étoile juive. Comme les Juifs ont été éloignés des fonctions et emplois qui donnent droit au port d'uniformes ou tenues de service par l'ordonnance du 28.10.40, il a été jugé inutile d'interdire spécialement le port de l'étoile juive sur les uniformes et tenues de service. Si des anomalies quelconques se produisaient à ce sujet, on est prié d'en faire rapport.

Les étoiles juives sont délivrées par les services belges qui tiennent les registres des Juifs. Jusqu'à nouvel ordre il a été prévu trois étoiles pour chaque personne. Les communes de l'agglomération bruxelloise peuvent obtenir la quantité nécessaire probablement le vendredi 5 juin à la Oberfeldkommandantur; avis suivra également pour la réception des étoiles par les autres communes de l'arrondissement. Il y a lieu de veiller à ce que la distribution des étoiles aux Juifs puisse si possible avoir lieu le même jour.

Des demandes d'exception ne sont admises que pour les Juifs vivant en mariage mixte, duquel existent des descendants non juifs (métis de $\frac{1}{2}$ ou de $\frac{1}{4}$) et pour des femmes juives vivant en mariage mixte sans enfants.

Les demandes d'exception doivent être adressées pour l'arrondissement de Bruxelles à la Oberfeldkommandantur, Verwaltung (place du Trône) sur formulaires spéciaux y délivrés; la carte d'identité doit être produite et les documents justificatifs doivent être annexés.

Celui qui a été exempté de l'obligation du port de l'étoile juive provisoirement ou définitivement, devra toujours être porteur de l'attestation lui délivrée à ce sujet. L'attestation n'est valable que si elle est jointe à la carte d'identité.

Les Juifs qui contreviennent aux prescriptions de l'ordonnance doivent s'attendre à des peines judiciaires et à l'internement dans le camp de Breendonk.

Im Auftrage :

German circular of 3/05/1942 ordering the Jews of Belgium to wear the yellow star

The question

This terrible story of women, children and men who, because of other men, have experienced the unfathomable pain of deportation and the despicable fate that these men had in store for them must make us reflect on one thing and, in doing so, confront the question, “Why don’t we commemorate these sad events in Belgium?”

Whereas in France the highest authorities have the courage to confront the history of their country in the face of collaboration and the deportation of its Jewish population, in Belgium, a heavy silence surrounds our responsibilities in this regard. It seems that the annual commemoration of Breendonk will be done only every 3 years for organizational reasons. It will probably be the same for Dossin Barracks.

Recently, I saw a clip produced by the youth movement of the NVA, a Flemish political party called “democratic”. In it we see the president of these individuals trampling the national flag and proudly wearing the flag of Flemish collaboration in 1940-1945 war. This man could be elected by voters during the next elections in 2024!

At a time when nationalism is being reborn in Europe and when the totalitarian overtones of the far right are beginning to resonate in the chambers of the parliaments of our countries, should we not be alarmed more than ever by this situation and emphasise to ourselves that, if we no longer commemorate the victims of Nazism, we are opening the door to the deadly ideas of an extreme right ready to plunge Europe back into the same horrors as seen in 1940-1945?

The inner courtyard of the Dossin barracks

Flanders Resistance group: Pieter-Paul Baeten

Pieter-Paul Baeten

We never talk about them enough, but there were great Resistance fighters in Flanders. Among these patriots was Pieter-Paul Baeten.

Pieter-Paul was born in Lier (Province of Antwerp) on March 23, 1926. When war was declared and our country was invaded by Wehrmacht troops, he was a student attending the Royal Athenaeum of Berchem, in the Province of Antwerp.

A studious student, he took courses in Latin-Greek taught by a professor who wore the Nazi uniform. For the young student this was something unbearable thing that he considered he must fight at all costs.

So, with about fifteen classmates, he joined the Resistance in the «Witte Brigade Fidelio» group in Lier. He was in charge of printing and distributing leaflets calling people to resist the enemy. He was then assigned to the mail service and risked being arrested by transmitting the messages of his chiefs.

Becoming increasingly daring, the young man stole ration cards and stamps as well as blank identity papers from the municipal administrations of the Lier region. He also travelled through Wallonia in search of farms that could hide survivors of plane crashes or Resistance fighters wanted by the Gestapo. With his group of friends, he formed a kind of fighting unit from the shadows that showed extraordinary courage.

Unfortunately, on October 15, 1943, the group was denounced by traitors to the Germans. Arrested, the young men were taken directly to the Antwerp prison and held incommunicado. Pieter-Paul would experience the torture and other evil acts of the Gestapo. But he held out against this. Having failed to obtain any useful information, his torturers deported him to Germany as a political prisoner «Nacht und Nebel».

He went to several Nazi camps, including Essen prison and Esterwegen concentration camp, as well as those at Gross-Rosen, Mittelbau-Dora and the Boelcke-Kaserne of Nordhausen. All stages of this “journey” would be marked by torture, beatings and ill-treatment by the camp guards. The young man would experience hunger, thirst, lack of sleep and the diseases that usually attack the bruised bodies of degenerate youth.

On April 4, 1945, Pieter-Paul Baeten was freed by American troops. He was then taken home to Lier where he met his parents. He still only weighed 34 kilos.

The Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp was liberated by the Allies in 1945. They discovered the horror.

Throughout his life he would testify to the horror of concentration camps and the despicable nature of collaboration. By going to schools, he would continue tirelessly to warn his contemporaries, and especially the younger generations, of the danger of the ideas of the extreme right, of anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

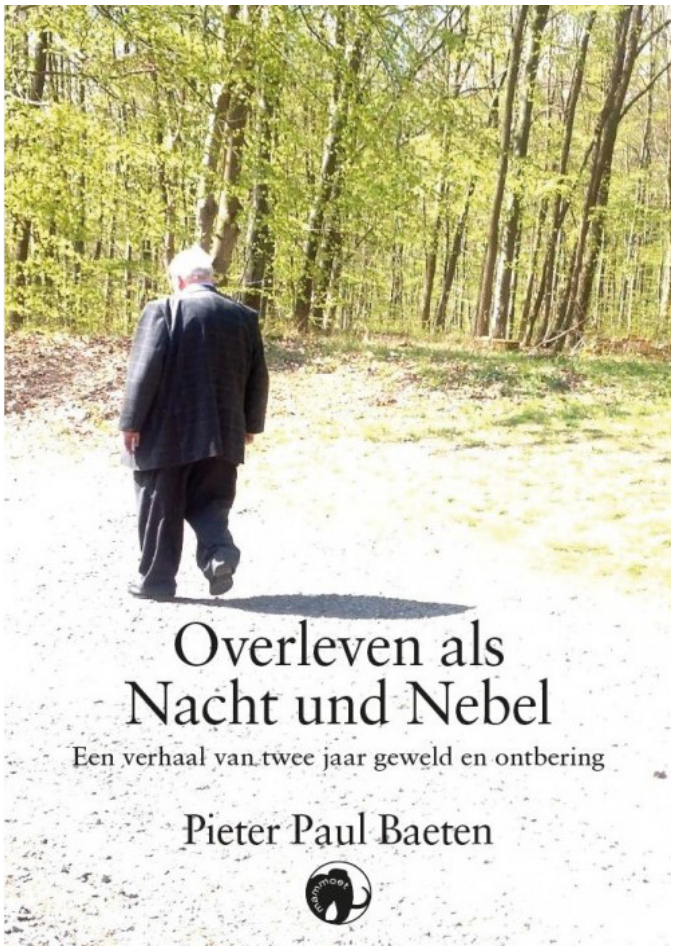
He took over the “Groupe Mémoire-Herinnering Groep” after the death of Dr André Wynen and did not hesitate to intervene in public debate whenever he deemed it necessary. With the “Groupe mémoire”, he closely followed the preparation by the President of the Government of the French Community‘s decree concerning sharing and passing on Remembrance. He was also National President of the Association “Les Amis de Buchenwald” and guided young Belgians during pilgrimages organized in the former concentration camps.

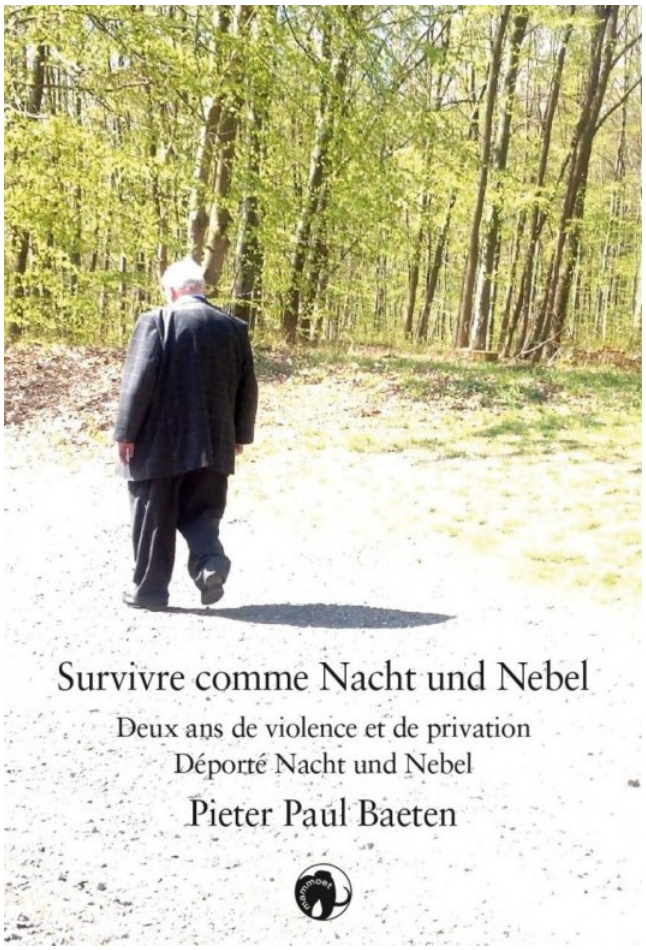
He was also one of the promoters of a manifesto resolutely hostile to any form of amnesty. He said, “We cannot accept steps that, under the pretext of social reconciliation, lead to a denial of the values of democracy. Today, voices are being heard advocating extinguishing the duty of Remembrance to freedom fighters. They demand forgetfulness for the benefit of collaborators. They propose a general amnesty measure that would seek to deny wrongdoing, erase convictions, and treat as victims those who have engaged in collaboration.”

A convinced patriot, he systematically refused to participate in commemorations in which members of the separatist party of the NVA were present. He justified this way of doing things because it was for Belgium that the Resistance fought.

At the end of his life, Pieter Paul Baeten wanted to bequeath an honest testimony to some of his experiences recorded in the book “Survive as Nacht und Nebel”, written in both national languages.

He passed away on November 20, 2017.





The book «Survive as Night and Fog», moral testament of the witness Pieter-Paul Baeten

25 April 2022: ANZAC Day - New Zealand

In New Zealand, April 25 is a day dedicated to commemorating all New Zealand fighters who died on the battlefields of the two world wars. Far from home, these soldiers lost their lives defending our Freedom and Democracy.

This year again, Davis Cole, our friend from Hunterville, New Zealand, laid a wreath on our behalf at the city's Cenotaph in recognition of Memoir's work on behalf of its 114 fellow countrymen who fell in Belgium while fighting the enemy while flying in Royal Air Force aircraft.

For our part, we also laid wreaths in remembrance of the sacrifice of New Zealand airmen who died in action over Belgian soil during the Second World War.

At left, the wreath laid at Huntville, NZ and at right, the one laid to the Rebecq's Memorial

7 May 2022: Tribute to the Soviet Armed Partisans killed in action in support of Belgium

On the occasion of the celebrations of the Allied Victory, we wanted to remember the Soviet Armed Partisans who fought alongside the Belgian Resistance, whilst bearing in mind the context of the international situation prevailing at the time.

In Rebecq, we also laid a wreath on behalf of the VVN-BdA, the largest anti-fascist association in Germany, at the Memorial of the Soviet Armed Partisans who fell in Belgium

It was in Hoves that we remembered Karl Kontradiev, killed while fighting with the Belgians against the Nazis in September 1944.

Wilfred Burie flowers the Memorial to the Soviet Armed Partisans in Rebecq and the tomb of the Armed Partisan Karl Kontradiev in Hoves, Belgium

8 May 2022: Commemoration of the Allied Victory

On Sunday, May 8, we participated in the commemoration of the Allied Victory over Nazi Germany. The ceremony was held in front of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Brussels in the presence of the Representative of His Majesty the King and leading dignitaries of the country, including Mrs Ludivine De Donder, Minister of Defense.

Most of the ambassadors in Belgium laid wreaths on behalf of their respective countries.

The Representative of HM the King laid the royal wreath

The Canadian Ambassador and his colleagues laid their wreath.

18 May 2022: Solemn act of Remembrance at Rebecq

It was under a radiant, even scorching sun that we commemorated the sacrifice of the Royal Air Force Airmen who fell in Belgium during the Second World War, as well as the Resistance Fighters who helped the survivors of RAF aircraft crashes to evade capture by the enemy.

This ceremony took place in the presence of the Representative of His Majesty the King. It is an honour for us to know that our Sovereign is interested in our work of Remembrance, and this encourages us to continue the mission we have set for ourselves:- never forget!

Arrival of the King's Representative

At 10:00, the escort arrives, followed by the King's Representative's car.

Wilfred Burie welcomes the King's Representative and introduces him to Mr. Eric Verly, Vice-President of the Association, Mrs. Patricia Venturelli, Mayor of Rebecq and Colonel Philippe Ramaeckers, Military Commander of the Province of Walloon Brabant. After he had saluted the Memorial, the Representiative of the King salutes the assistance.

Address to the King's Representative

After the King's Representative had taken his place, Wilfred Burie welcomed him with these words:

«*Representative of His Majesty the King, Sir*

On behalf of the Association I have the honour of chairing, I would like to welcome you here to Rebecq where, once again today, we will join together in an act of solemn Remembrance.

This commemoration is jointly organized by the Military Command of the Province of Walloon Brabant and the Association «The Belgians Remember Them».

The guard of honour is made up of a detachment of 1 Wing de Beauvechain, commanded by Warrant Officer Lebrun.

The musical part of the ceremony is provided by the Royal Band of the Air Component, led by Chief Music Warrant Officer Demolin

Finally, pupils from the 6th grade classes of Rebecq Community School are with us to remember what happened here in Rebecq 78 years ago.

On behalf of the Members of the Association «The Belgians Remember Them», I welcome you to Rebecq».

He then invited the Mayor of Rebecq to give her speech.

Address by Patricia Venturelli, Mayor of Rebecq

Greetings,

As I usually say on these occasions, patriotic commemorations are important moments because they allow us to pay tribute to all those men and women who signed up and fought at the front or in the Resistance to defend peace and our freedoms, but also to remember these pages of our history, which are not just stories in our history books but real facts that took place just 80 years ago.

This duty to remember is particularly important because it is fundamental to know one's history in order to be able to build the future by learning the lessons of the dramatic events that have marked our past. This duty to remember and a Remembrance event like this are, perhaps, even more important today than in the past, in a world where a war is taking place in Europe a few hundred kilometers away from us and where extremism continues to advance in various parts of our world, as shown by the recent presidential elections among our French neighbors and when some, in our country, advocate separatism while forgetting that our country's motto is "unity is strength".

More than ever, we must remain vigilant in the face of all these demonstrations of intolerance, of withdrawal and of rejection of the other person. We must not allow populism and the easy clichés conveyed by some and especially through social networks to take precedence over the fundamental values of our society: freedom, brotherhood, solidarity, tolerance.

Today, more than ever, it is necessary to call to mind and to reflect especially on these dark pages of our history, to talk about them with the youngest and especially with the children in our schools, some of whom are present with us.

As I did last year, here in the same place, I would like to address them in particular. Children, you are our future, you are and will be the ambassadors and builders of tomorrow's society and world.

In our world and in our society, we have so much more to learn and gain by reaching out to each other, by getting to know each other. When we reach out to each other and get to know each other, we realize that in the end, there are so many more things that unite us and bring us together than things that differentiate between us and that these differences are, in themselves, real riches on which we can, we must support each other in building the world of tomorrow because that is the way we will build, that you will build a world that is more just, more supportive and more tolerant.

In honour of all these men and women, in recognition and in memory of their sacrifices and struggles for our freedom, we have a duty to act together to build a better world.

Address by André Flahaut, Minister of State

Greetings

I would like to pay tribute to the work done by the Association which has been organizing this event for a number of years now and especially to M Burie's work.

He works in a determined and constant way here in Rebecq and elsewhere to keep memories alive through events like this one.

But he is not limited to that: he is very gifted in promoting democracy and, as the Mayor has pointed out, he has a special gift for passing these memories on and keeping them alive in the minds of current and future generations.

He is also a coworker in the struggle against the resurgence of Nazism and xenophobia in our country, as demonstrated in particular by the construction of the monument of shame in Zedelgem. We will win these battles, rest assured.

I also think it's important to include teachers, parents, and students in what we're doing today. The educational community as a whole should be increasingly associated with moments such as those we are experiencing today, which are not only moments of Remembrance, but times of democratic vigilance.

Today, the world is in a state of uncertainty, created by the Covid crisis and the painful events taking place on Europe's borders. In this regard, we cannot tolerate the aggression of one country against another, we cannot tolerate the questioning of multi-lateralism.In this context, we must remind ourselves that through wars, soldiers suffer and so do populations. It must be repeated that wars bring face to face people who do not know each other on behalf of people who speak to each other.

It is therefore through dialogue, commitment and the united will of Europe that we must succeed in putting an end to this mad arms race which, in the end, will only benefit arms manufacturers.

But there are many other forgotten conflicts. This morning, the press reported that the refugees from these wars are suffering from the arrival of other refugees from Ukraine. This can lead to other crises that will be added to those we already know about. Current events show us that it is essential to teach others the reasons and causes of events that occur unexpectedly. But it must also push us to explain to them the functioning of our institutions, to teach them the need to engage from an early age in movements for the defense of democracy which, even if it turns out to be a beautiful system, remains nonetheless very fragile. Democracy is probably the best system, but it is the one most threatened by extremes.

Today we are participating in an act of Remembrance. It is necessary to rely on it, as on others that took place elsewhere in Walloon Brabant, to remember that, in other times, men came from the other side of the seas and in particular from the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Congo to fight the enemy for our Freedom. At a time when Europe is retreating and closing its borders, we must never lose sight of the immense sacrifice of these soldiers who camefrom so far away.

It is high time that human beings play their part in all discussions and negotiations to resolve the differences between them. It will become necessary to bring all the protagonists of the conflict in Ukraine back to the table. The international community must be in a position to be an essential element in the dialogue to be established. As individuals, we have a duty to seek solutions for the settlement of conflict and the establishment of peace.

A balanced explanation of the events we are experiencing today must serve to build a better world in which the children here will find their full place as citizens.

Speech by Wilfred Burie, President of The Belgians Remember Them

The Representative of His Majesty the King, Sir
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

78 years ago, in September, Belgium was liberated from four long years of occupation and oppression imposed by an implacable and cruel enemy.

Since that time, how many peoples have experienced the domination of an enemy often more powerful than themselves? What level of despair and bereavement has haunted the minds of thousands of mothers, widows, children and orphans?

Last year, after two years of a pandemic that was hard to control, a window of opportunity to return to a normal situation opened and here in Rebecq, we managed to gather the representatives of 14 nations. Their only common point was to have worked for the return of Peace in Belgium, of the freedoms and independence so violently taken from her.

Since then, in defiance of international conventions, a country has attacked a neighbouring state, plunging its population into chaos and desolation. We cannot tolerate this fact, which we strongly condemn.

But we note that attempts to win the argument about disagreements and points of divergence is uppermost in trying to set up negotiations aimed at helping the warring sides find ways to return to a peaceful situation.

The two sides will have to come to an agreement one day or another. So let us try to support them in this regard. Did we not do that after 1945 with Germany?

Should we not try everything possible to enable the children here today to experience the Peace they are entitled to expect from their elders?

With them, we commemorate the death and sacrifice of those whose names are engraved on this monument. May we strive with them to work for peace!

The Handover

The President announces:

"*Mr Brennet, here today, was a great collector of objects relating to the Second World War. Among these is the one we will display now.*

This is the transmitter/receiver that was on board the Wellington P9296-KO-H of 115 Squadron RAF, which left Marham on 20th May, 1940 to hold back the German advance in the Cambrai region (France).

The plane crashed in Tourpes, near Leuze-en-Hainaut, and the six men of the crew were killed.

With M Germain Brennet, we are proud to return to the British people this testimony to the courage and commitment of the RAF airmen in the fight against Nazism in Europe.

I call on M Germain Brennet, M Erwin Sollie, representing 115 Sqn RAF and Group Captain John Dickson, Military Attaché representing the United Kingdom, to come forward to officially begin the return of this historic item to the British people and in particular to 115 Squadron of the Royal Air Force.

While doing research, we discovered that Aircraftman John Thomas Packer, of Sunderland, Co. Durham, was the Wireless Operator on the Wellington that crashed in Tourpes. So John Thomas Packer was killed alongside this receiver/transmitter. He was then only 19 years old. Belgium had been occupied for only 10 days."

The transmitter of the Wellington fallen at Tourpes is officially returned to 115 Squadron Royal Air Force

Heroes Roll Call

We will remember them!
Roll Call of the airmen of Lancaster 550 Squadron North Killingholme killed in action over Rebecq on May 28th 1944:

ELVIN CURTIS, PURNEY, Pilot Officer, Royal Canadian Air Force, killed in action:
THOMAS EDWARD, FLANAGAN, Pilot Officer, Royal Canadian Air Force, killed in action:
JOHN LEONARD, SHEAHAN, Sergeant, RAF, killed in action:
KENNETH HAROLD DE LENGERKE, Sergeant, RAF, killed in action:
PETER CHARLES, KING, Sergeant, RAF, killed in action:

They are buried in the Brussels War Cemetery at Evere.

ELI, MOLNAR Sergeant, Royal Canadian Air Force, avoided capture. He was rescued and hidden by Belgian Resistance in the village of Rebecq.
DAVID, YARDLEY, Sergeant, Royal Air Force. Wounded, he was taken Prisoner of War after having been cared for by Doctor Robert Dupureur

HELVARD, ARNE RHOAR, Flying Officer, 218 sqn, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, killed in action aboard Stirling BK712-HA-G shot down over Aarschot on 22/06/1943. He is buried with his seven fellow crewmen in LANGDORP CHURCHYARD.

Taking into account his Danish nationality, the number of nations that have given their citizens for freedom now stands at fifteen.

And through them, we remember all the Airmen of Royal Air Force and Commonwealth Air Forces who fell in Belgium during World War 2.

The death knell is sounded by a student at the call of the names of the Heroes

We will remember them!

Roll Call of those Rebecq civilians involved in the rescue of the airmen of the Lancaster JA712-BQ-H which crashed on May 28, 1944 and who were arrested by occupying forces during the round-up of May 28, 1944:

Louis Deneyer, died during deportation:
Giovanni Vecchiato died during deportation:
Giuseppe Vecchiato, died during deportation:

Arthur De Braeckeleer, Deportee, Georges De Braeckeleer, Deportee, Louis De Braeckeleer, Deportee, Joseph Mahy, Deportee:

They were imprisoned in Saint-Gilles, sent to Breendonk and deported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The four survivors were released in May 1945.

Guerino Bacci, Antonio Caliman, Raoul Debilde, Emile Derycke, Emile Hanon, Maurice Hulin, Olivier Janin, Emile Marit, Louis Marit, Frans Snoeck, Rino Vecchiato,

They were sent to Bourg-Léopold for deportation to Buchenwald. They were released on September 5, 1944.

Caroline Caliman, Robert Dupureur, Léontine Marsille, Géry Piérard

Incarcerated in Saint-Gilles prison, they were put on the “Ghost Train” in order to be deported to Dachau. They were released on September 3, 1944.

Finally, we also pay tribute to the Memory of **Vladimir Talda**, a Soviet Army soldier who was captured and put to work in La Louvière collieries, from where he escaped with about fifteen of his compatriots. Having joined the group of Rebecq’s Resistance Armed Partisans 023, he was killed in the Liberation fighting on September 3rd, 1944. He and his brothers-in-arms helped rescue, among others, the survivors of the RAF Lancaster shot down over Rebecq on 28 May 1944 and the USAAF Liberator shot down over Hennuyères on the same day.

Through them all, we remember the Resistance fighters who paid with their freedom and their lives for having rescued the survivors of the allied aircraft crashes

The standing audience listens to the names quoted by the President

The laying of wreaths

The Representative of His Majesty the King lays the wreath on behalf of His Majesty.

H.E. Alain Gendron, Ambassador of Canada, Colonel Marc La Fortune, Defence Attaché to the Embassy of Canada and ***Group Captain John Dickson***, Defence Attaché to the Embassy of the United Kingdom, representing the United Kingdom

Mr André Flahaut, Minister of State, Honorary President of the House of Representatives and ***Colonel Philippe Ramaekers***, Military Commander of the Province of Walloon Brabant

Mrs Patricia Venturelli, Mayor of Rebecq, ***Mrs Sophie Keymolen***, Deputy of the Provincial Assembly of Walloon Brabant and Mr ***Roger Vindts***, representing the municipality of Westerlo

Mr Eric Verly, Vice-President of the Belgians Remember Them Association, representing 550 Squadron R.A.F. North Killingholme and ***M Erwin Sollie***, representing 115 Squadron Royal Air Force

Mr Willy Sonk, President of the Fédération Royale et Nationale des Invalides et Mutilés de Guerre and ***Mr Jean-Marie Michel***, representing the « Souvenir Français »

After laying the wreath of the Association «The Belgians Remember Them», President Wilfred Burie recites with two pupils the poems «Exhortation» and «Ko-Hima», followed by One Minute of Silence.

All present unanimously agreed that these Heroes were commemorated with dignity. Their memory was honoured, so that we will never forget.

Departure of the Representative of His Majesty the King

Following the playing of the British, Canadian, European and Belgian national anthems, the Royal Representative was escorted to his car.

22 May 2022: act of Remembrance in Westerlo

The Sunday following the act of Remebfrance in Rebecq, we went to Westerlo to attend the ceremonies commemorating the crash of the Lancaster DV909-BQ-S of 550 Squadron North Killingholme on May 22, 1944.

To refresh your memory - on the evening of May 21, 1944, 510 Lancaster aircraft had taken off from several British aerodromes to bomb the industrial area of Duisburg, in the Ruhr.

German anti-aircraft defenses machine-gunned the British bombers and several were hit and had to turn back, not having been able to drop their bombs. In addition to that, the DV309 of 550 Squadron based in North Killingholme was intercepted by German night fighters flying from St-Trond. The aircraft was hit hard as it flew over the Westerlo area. It crashed into the hamlet of Schobbroek, exploding into a huge fireball caused by the load of bombs still on board. The damage was considerable, nothing remained intact, and several nearby farms were destroyed. Luckily, no people were caught up in the aftermath of the crash, they had all gone to a party in the nearby village.

On the other hand, the entire crew died immediately and so strong was the explosion that the bodies of three of them were not found.

Of the 510 aircraft engaged in this mission that night, 31 did not return to their base. Three of them belonged to 550 Sqn: the DV309, the LL851 which was shot down in Heimolen, near St-Nicolas and the LM319 which was probably shot down over Germany.

This year, the Schobbroek Committee of Remembrance organized a ceremony in memory of the 7 men of the crew. The first part took place in the church OLV Ten Hemel.

In front of the monument, the representative of the committee gave a speech, followed by those of the Echevin de Voortkapel, Paul Helsen and Wilfred Burie, representing 550 Squadron. Wreaths were then laid, and national anthems played.

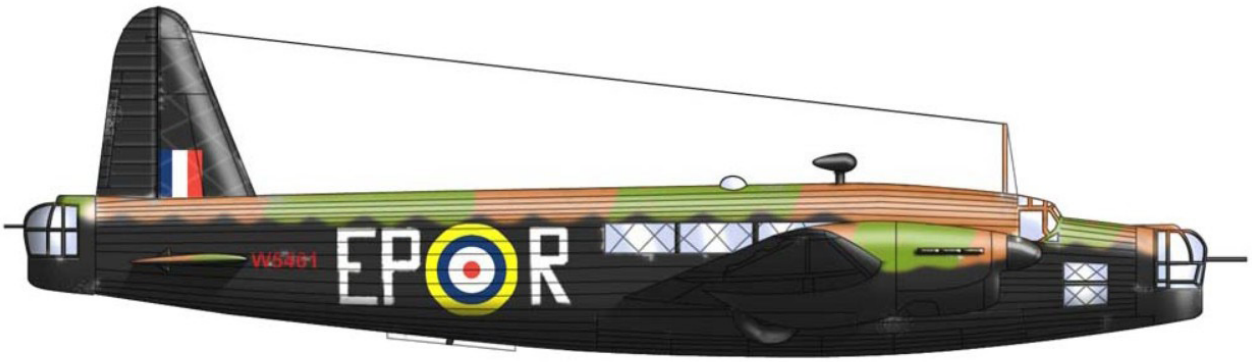
During the service at the church of Vortkapel, Westerlo

The Mayor Guy Van Hirtum and the Alderman Paul Helsen

The Memorial dedicated to the Airmen killed in action at Westerlo on May 22, 1944

History of the Wellington P9296-KO-H of the 115 Squadron RAF fallen in Tourpes, Hainaut

Mr. Germain Brennet, a retired Tournai doctor, contacted us in April 2022 to entrust us with a World War II transmitter/receiver he had held for years. He wanted to give it to our Association knowing that we would make something interesting out of it. A card was attached to the package. It bore the stamp of the Resistance network «Group G, Sector 31» and the information - « Radio transmitter from a Lancaster shot down over Tourpes (Leuze) in 1941».



The Wellington

After examining the item and doing some research on it, we were able to determine exactly where it came from, and the story that flows from it.

This is the transmitter/receiver that was on board the Wellington P9296-KO-H of 115 Squadron RAF which left Marham on 20 May 1940 to hold back the German advance in the region of Cambrai (France).

The aircraft was hit by German Flak while flying over the Leuze-en-Hainaut region. It crashed over the village of Tourpes and exploded. The bombs were still on board. All six crew members were killed in the accident. The explosion must have been terrible, judging by the fact that the unfortunate victims were buried in a common grave and it was not possible to find enough human remains to reconstruct even one whole body! The only consolation we can take from this is that they were killed instantly.

The Association «The Belgians Remember Them» has decided that this testimony to the sacrifice of the 155 Sqn airmen, is to be officially handed over to the British people and to 115 Squadron Association during the ceremony of Remembrance on May 18, 2022 in Rebecq and this has been done (see above, chapter “handover”).

The crew of Wellington P9626-KO-H

DUGGAN DOUGLAS
Aircraftman 2nd Class, 611247, Air Gunner, 18
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

FLANIGAN, GERARD EDWARD
Aircraftman 1st Class, 552105, Air Gunner, 19
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

HOPPER ALFRED H
Sergeant, 700445, Pilot, 26
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

HUGHES, KENNETH WILLIAM
Sergeant, 581182, Observer
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

MOORES, LEONARD GEORGE
Flight Sergeant, 563572, pilot, age 27
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

PACKER, JOHN THOMAS
Aircraftman 1st class, 621150, Wireless Operator, age 19
Killed in action - Buried: Coll. grave IV. E. 12, SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

We will remember them!

We won the fight against the Zedelgem monument!
It was recently removed!

Almost two years ago, I discovered that a monument had been erected in memory of the members of the Waffen SS of Latvia. They were part of the 15th and 19th Latische Waffen SS Grenadier Divisions which were operational in the Baltic States and Russia (former USSR) from 1941 to 1945. Thus, the men who composed these units were guilty of war crimes, mass massacres, including mass shootings etc.

Taken prisoner on the Eastern Front after the surrender of Germany, they had been brought to Belgium as prisoners by the Allies. Circumstances have allowed these war criminals to escape trial or conviction.

This monument was therefore an insult to the victims of the Nazis and brought shame on Belgium.

With Minister of State André Flahaut and my friends from the Groupe Mémoire-Groep Herinnering Association, I worked to have this symbol of revisionism and neo-Nazism in Europe dismantled.

During the months of actions taken against the existence of this monument of shame, we had to fight against the inactivity and deafening silence of the Belgian and European political authorities and against the numerous complaints and appeals filed by the Latvian authorities for the maintenance of the monument.

Finally, the Zedelgem Community College, headed by Mayor Annick Vermeulen, on the advice of a group of international experts, took the decision to remove the controversial monument and temporarily place it in a municipal depot. I salute the courage of this decision and hope that the «Latvian hive» will no longer be exhibited in Belgium.

Since then, the Latvian authorities have been constantly working with the Belgians and the Flemish regional government to restore the monument of shame.

We are always vigilant that this monument no longer appears in any Belgian public space. It will be the same for all other demonstrations honoring in one way or another totalitarianism, the denial of democracy and xenophobia.

Wilfred Burie
President

The «Latvian beehive», monument of shame finally removed from the public space

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Cockpit of Lancaster (Picture: All World's Aircraft

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