

Municipality of Zedelgem removes controversial war monument after international advice

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Historians examined a controversial war memorial in Zedelgem. 'Inappropriate', they think. The municipality takes the criticism to heart and removes 'The Latvian Bijenkorf'.

The [municipal council announced this on Friday](#) . As concluded by the experts, it was never the intention of the municipality with the creation of this work of art to pay tribute to the Nazi regime, to justify certain war crimes or to deliberately hurt people.

Zedelgem in West Flanders was met with a wave of protest this summer, when international media and historians took offense at a monument that has been in a square since 2018 to commemorate the POW camp that the British army had established in the municipality after World War II. . That monument represents a beehive and only draws attention to prisoners from Latvia, collaborators who served in the Waffen-SS during the war ([DS 21 June](#)) .

The symbolism of the hive uses the language of right-wing nationalism in Latvia, which sees members of the SS Legion as patriotic heroes who fought against the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union. The initiative also gave rise to the option of opening the way for a tribute to Flemish collaborators, as 'recognition of the Flemish soldiers who also fought against communism on the eastern front'.

The protest inspired Zedelgem to ask an international panel of fifteen historians, including several Latvians, for advice. That [advice](#) will be published today. It is clear in his view: 'The memory of

the prisoners of the camp deserves recognition, but not tribute.' As for the 'Latvian Bijenkorf', it is 'inappropriate', as is the name of the square where it is located and which is named after it. If the image is given a new purpose, whether or not as a work of art, it is necessary to interpret its history critically, especially in order to 'do justice to the complexity of the historical context'.

The Vloethemveld, where the camp was at the time, was given an analogous advice: with a multidimensional framework, the site could even become 'an innovative memorial project of European significance'.

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