



THE BELGIANS REMEMBER THEM

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Silly, December 15th, 2021

Concern: The controversial monument erected in Belgium in September 2018, in memory of Latvian Waffen SS

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

As part of my struggle against the existence of the monument called "the Latvian Hive", erected in Zedelgem, West Flanders, I am pleased to announce a first victory.

On the recommendation of an international college of expert historians⁽¹⁾, the authorities decided to remove this controversial monument from its location.

The Mayor writes to me⁽²⁾:

"As advised by the experts and after coordination with the Latvian partners, the hive will be removed from its current place and a phase of reflection, in which the experts will continue to support the municipality, will be introduced. »

It is already a big step towards the dismantling that I, and with combat companions, have been calling for for a year now. But if we read the sentence that directly follows the statement of the Mayor, it seems that things are unfortunately not as clear as hoped:

"During this period, the municipality will take the initiative to consult all parties involved in order to propose a sustained and thoughtful solution of a permanent place for the Latvian hive."

I have learned to know that the devil hides in the details and I notice that the administration of Zedelgem does not show any desire to get rid of the monument but will try to find a more suitable place for it. I therefore replied to the Mayor that, taking note of her intention to have the monument removed from where it stands, I hope that it will disappear from the Belgian public space⁽³⁾:

"For if, so far, you have been able to assert his good faith, which we welcome, to maintain this edifice, wherever it may be, would be to persist in error at the risk of contravening the law of 23 June 1995 tending to repress the denial, minimization, justification or approval of the genocide committed by the German National Socialist regime during the Second World War. On this point historians are formal; this monument incites revisionism and negationism, in defiance of the memory of all those who were murdered by the Nazis and their accomplices.

On the contrary, the European context to which you rightly refer commits us to combating these dangerous political excesses, which are instrumentalising history, as the report demonstrates.

As mayor, it is up to you to wash the reputation of your municipality and to demonstrate that the communal power will choose to honor democratic values unequivocally, by breaking all ties with this building.

At a time when the extreme right is on the rise, present on the benches of the national parliaments of 25 out of 27 countries, the democratic forces must come together and refuse any participation in these attempts to gangrene our minds and, in this case, public spaces.

Therefore, we hope that you and your College will make the only decision that isnecessary: to return this monument to the artist to whom it was commissioned. This epilogue, far from being a setback, will be a strong democratic gesture and will more than certainly be welcomed at the international level. »

If the current result of a year of fighting for the dismantling of the controversial monument of Zedelgem has generated this "semi-victory", know that with my friends of struggle, that I will not cease to oppose that this Latvian Hive be erected in the Belgian public space, even if it is the toilets of the municipality where it will eventually be reinstalled.

This building was deliberately designed in 2018 by the project's sponsors and authors to pay tribute to real members of the Waffen SS who committed war crimes and crimes against Humanity. And if these individuals have managed to escape the courts, they remain guilty of the acts they have committed. This monument that honors them will remain forever an insult to the Victims of Nazism and will throw shame and dishonor on my Homeland, Belgium.

By persisting, with my combat companions, I sign:

Wilfred Burie, President of "The Belgians Remember Them"

(1) See the recommendations of the International College of Historians (1/12/2021), <http://www.belgians-remember-them.eu/zd/zd80en.pdf>

(2) See the letter from Mrs. Annick Vermeulen, Mayor of Zedelgem (3/12/2021), <http://www.belgians-remember-them.eu/zd/zd82a.pdf>

(3) See my reply to the Mayor of Zedelgem (14/12/2021), <http://www.belgians-remember-them.eu/zd/zd82.pdf>

All episodes of this case are published as and when on the site <http://www.belgians-remember-them.eu/zedelgem.php>