



## Uncle Miele's Pepper Box (9): Latvian Waffen-SS

vrt

writer's blog in Uncle Miele's pepper box

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A history committee concludes after extensive investigation that a monument "Latvian Bijenkorf for Freedom" in Zedelgem in honor of the Latvian Waffen-SS is inappropriate. It must be demolished. The local CD&V municipal council follows this conclusion, also under pressure from many Flemish organizations (photo vrtNWS).

In Europe, Nazi ideas have crept back from under the stones. Groups are also active in Flanders. In some Eastern European countries, including the Baltic states such as Latvia, Nazi militias are once again marching through the streets. In some countries, collaborators are officially celebrated as heroes. Even parts of the Nazi ideology are present in official state policy. All this is happening in EU-NATO countries and is tolerated or even actively supported by Brussels and Washington.

Fortunately, there is increasing resistance against justifying Nazism. Since the foundation of the monument in Zedelgem in 2018, the monument "Latvian Bijenkorf for Freedom" has caused controversy. It is no coincidence that this was founded in West Flanders. Think of the West Flemish priest Cyriel Verschaveva Nazi follower in black cassock. He called on young Catholic boys to fight on the Eastern Front in freezing cold, snow and mud. The rural, clerical West Flanders was one of the important recruitment fields for Eastern Fronters. In total, about ten thousand Flemings were part of the Waffen-SS and another ten thousand in all kinds of paramilitary Nazi organizations and logistics networks of the German Wehrmacht (Organisation Todt). If you look around Flanders today, you often come across families that were connected with the collaboration and/or eastern frontiers. According to historian Frank Sebrechts (from Flemish-oriented, non-collaboration circles) in his book "Drang naar het Oosten"(324 p., 2019), collaboration is still being condoned in three European countries: the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Croatia and Flanders. According to F.Sebrechts, the Eastern Fronters were not misguided idealists. The majority of the Flemish eastern frontiers knowingly and willfully committed war crimes. Since the right-wing coup d'état in Ukraine (2014), Nazism has also been glorified there, even in the highest circles of the state, without any form of protest from friendly EU countries.

In West Flanders, Zedelgem, a Latvian sculptor, Kristaps Gulbis, was asked to design a monument, mentioned above. The initiative came from the Latvian Museum of the Occupation . It does not regard the Waffen-SS as war criminals, but as anti-communist patriots. The municipal council of Zedelgem contributed to the costs of the monument and the Latvian Museum. The Museum responsible found in local historian and Vlaams Belang councilor Pol Denysa reliable mouthpiece to positively interpret the war crimes of the Latvian Waffen-SS. The monument represents a beehive and is dedicated to the approximately 12,000 Latvians who were imprisoned by the Allies between 1945 and 1946 in a prison camp in Zedelgem. Flemish resistance fighters in the world war eighty years ago (Louis Van Brussel, Albert De Coninck, Marcel Louette, etc.) and the protest today against the monument in Zedelgem, show that there is a democratic, progressive Flanders (we also refer to the beautiful VRT -report series from 2019 including ' Children of the resistance'). The demand to demolish the monstrosity in Zedelgem was supported by Jewish organizations, various media, historians and democratic parties. Why the demolition requirement? Because archive material has shown that most Latvian soldiers imprisoned in Zedelgem were part of the German Waffen-SS (the history committee was composed of Belgian, Latvian and international experts). She concluded after thorough investigation that the monument was a glorification of Nazism and the war crimes of the Waffen-SS. Think of the murder of tens of thousands of Baltic Jews, civilians and the resistance of the partisans in the Baltic and the ex-Soviet Union. The CD&V municipality of Zedelgem, which co-founded the monument, stated that it was not the aim to glorify Nazism. They should have known better. A monument in honor of the Latvian Waffen-SS cannot possibly answer this. The board will follow the conclusions of the historical committee and demolish the monument.

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