



# THE BELGIANS REMEMBER THEM

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Silly, le 19 décembre 2021

Concerning: Monument "The Latvian Hive" of Zedelgem

Dear Prime Minister,  
Honourable Ministers

On 6 March 2021, I sent you a letter entitled "*Alert concerning a monument dedicated to Latvian legionnaires, members of the 15th and 19th divisions of the Waffen Einsatzgruppen SS in Zedelgem (West Flanders).*" in which I expressed my concern about this controversial building.

I regret that my communication did not elicit any response from you.

Since then, I have never ceased to fight by all the honourable means at my disposal for the definitive removal of this monument from the Belgian public space. The shame it represents and the dishonour into which it has plunged our country since its construction, three years ago, requires that measures to that effect be taken urgently.

The municipal authorities of Zedelgem, after months of controversy, finally decided to convene an international group of historians who by their expertise were to give opinions and recommendations regarding the justifications of the monument. They unanimously concluded that the "Latvian hive" should be removed.

In a recent letter, Mrs. Annick Vermeulen, Mayor of the commune informed me that the Municipal Council had taken the decision to proceed with the removal of the monument and that a reflection would be made as to the follow-up to be given to the sculpture. In my reply to the Mayor, I expressed my wish to see us rid once and for all of this controversial subject: "*It is up to you alone, elected municipal officials, to take this political decision, which involves not only your municipality, but also the democratic parties you represent.*"

*For if, so far, you have been able to assert its 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 aimed at repressing 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... »*

Since then, however, the Latvian authorities have been upset that the monument honouring their soldiers has been removed from its location. According to the press, several members of the Government have been contacted in this regard.

Can I express my feelings in this regard?

In the first place, the individuals to whom the Zedelgem monument refers had been captured by the Allies while fighting in the ranks of the Waffen SS, an organization condemned by the Nuremberg Tribunal. We took the time to provide evidence of the acts committed by the Latvian soldiers who were imprisoned in Zedelgem after the war. It then became clear that the "Latvian hive" could not be erected on the national territory.

Secondly, regardless of any considerations of international policy, I believe that this matter is the responsibility of Belgium and, in particular, of the authorities of the municipality of Zedelgem, which I hope will be keen to take the necessary decisions. The reaction and recent arrests of the Latvian authorities therefore represent a marked interference in our internal affairs.

Finally, I hope that, as a Government, you will be able to encourage everyone to find an honourable solution to this matter by returning the sculpture to its author or sponsors.

When you had the honour of assuming your high office, you had to pronounce the Constitutional Oath which states: *"I swear to observe the Constitution and the laws of the Belgian people, to maintain national independence and the integrity of the territory"* (article 91 of the Constitution). This implies de facto that the moral integrity of the nation and its territory must also be preserved by all possible means.

As a citizen of a democratic nation, I naturally commit myself to abide by the terms of the Oath you had to pronounce. The same goes for all the people who joined me in the fight for the dismantling of the Zedelgem monument during this year 2021.

Dear Prime Minister,  
Honourable Ministers,  
together with my compatriots, I expect an appropriate response from the Government of my country.

Please accept my sincere greetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Burie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Wilfred Burie,  
President "The Belgians Remember Them"