



THE BELGIANS REMEMBER THEM

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Silly, December 14, 2021

Mrs. Annick Vermeulen,

Mayor of and Zedelgem

<annick.vermeulen@zedelgem.be>

Concern: Response to your letter of December 3, 2021

Dear Mrs. the Mayor,

We have received your letter relaying the opinion of the experts of the panel that studied the relevance and future of the monument "the Latvian hive", and we wanted to thank you for the follow-up.

If the municipality never wanted to pay tribute to the Nazi regime, nor to excuse certain war crimes or knowingly hurt the citizens with the creation of the Latvian hive, the fact is that this monument erected by your municipality has caused an awareness. It is summed up by historians in very clear terms: *"It risks becoming a place of pilgrimage for (inter)national militants and a source of inspiration for revisionist accounts of the SS legacy."*

Historians then suggest that a major project for the development and enhancement of the Vloethenweld site should be drawn up, which will undoubtedly prove to be more in line with the framework of your cooperation with the Latvian authorities than this controversial monument. This will take time and will require long-term investments. Today, the urgency is elsewhere.

It lies in the firm attitude that the municipality will take regarding the commission of this hive to the artist Kristaps Gulbis and what to do with it. The initiative of the municipal councillor Vlaams Belang de Zedelgem, Mr Paul Denys, was unanimously approved three years ago by all the local parties in the Municipal Council of Zedelgem, without obviously taking the measure of the scandal to come. It is therefore up to the communal power that you lead to take without delay the only measure that is necessary: to put an end to any link between the municipality and this monument. It is up to you alone, elected municipal representatives, 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.

On the contrary, the European context to which you rightly refer commits us to combating these dangerous political excesses, which are instrumentalizing 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: 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.

Receive, Madam Mayor, our most cordial greetings.

Wilfred Burie,
President "The Belgians Remember Them"

Yves Louis,
President "Groupe Mémoire – Herinnering Groep"

Sylvie Lausberg,
Historian and psychoanalyst

Mario Van Essche,
President "Humanistisch Verbond"