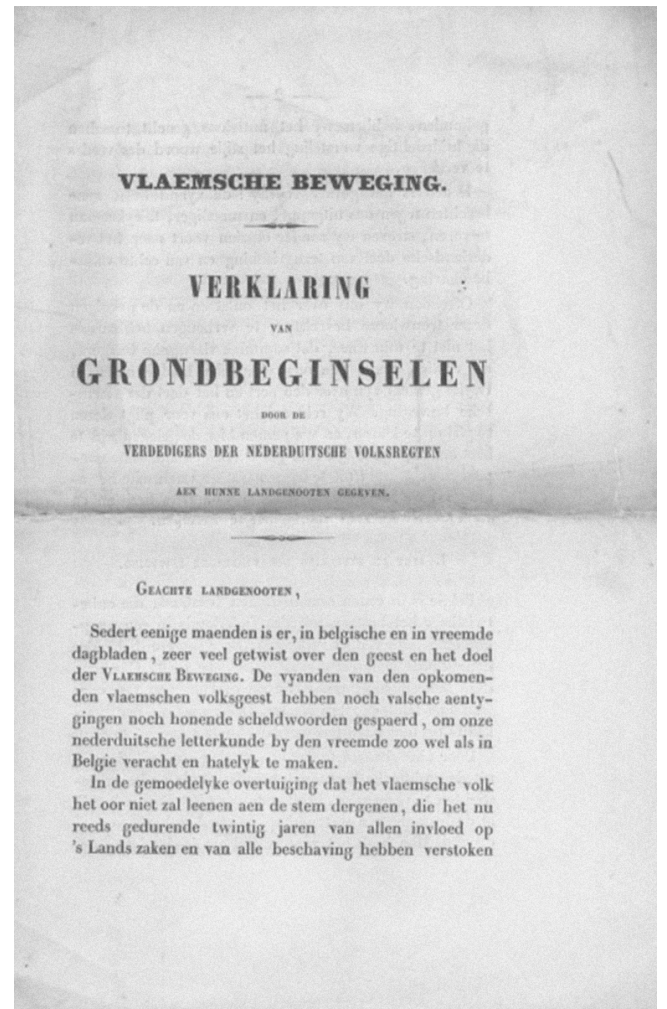


# Flemish Movement. Declaration on the principles, proclaimed to their countrymen by the defenders of the Nether-German rights

Flanders  
1847



# Cataloguing data

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Flemish Movement. Declaration on the principles, proclaimed to their countrymen by the defenders of the Nether-German rights

**Title (original language)**

Vlaemsche beweging. Verklaring van grondbeginselen, door de verdedigers der nederduitsche volksregten aen hunne landgenooten gegeven

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Dear Compatriots,

For some months now, there has been a lot of controversy in Belgian and foreign newspapers about the spirit and purpose of the Flemish Movement. The enemies of the rising Flemish national spirit have spared neither false allegations nor insults, to make our Dutch literature despised and hated by foreigners as well as in Belgium. In the mindful conviction that the Flemish people will not lend their ears to the voices of those who have deprived them of all influence on the country's affairs and civilisation for twenty year now, we have deemed it useless to raise the quiet word of peace amidst this noisy struggle. Today the battle is over: the enemy has exhausted his forces against us, and more courageously, more numerous than before, we are striving without hesitation towards the patriotic goal of restoration and genuine civilisation.

Although we have to rejoice at the emergence and the consequences of this faithless fight, it is nonetheless true that some Flemish citizens, and probably most of our fellow countrymen, are in doubt about the purpose of the Flemish movement. We consider it our duty to clear up this doubt, and we take the opportunity here to explain at the same time to the whole of Belgium in an uncomplicated and straightforward way what the Flemish movement is, what feelings its supporters are inspired by and what goal they propose to achieve.

Belgium is in an unnatural situation, which undoubtedly puts the very existence of the Fatherland in an unremitting state of flux. The larger half of the nation is controlled by the other half. Although this control by the government and our fanatical compatriots may not be seen as a calculated goal, it does exist.

By making everything French, and banning the Dutch language from the civil service and even from the educational institutions, they have dried up all the sources of science and civilisation for the Flemish people. They have condemned it to remain backward in the course of the centuries, and consequently they have used the most evil means to make the Flemish remain as innocent children under the moral guardianship of the peoples of Romanian origin; so much so that in this respect the human right has been trampled underfoot, that a Flemish citizen can be heard accusing, defending and condemning himself before the court in a language he does not understand - something that could not be done in any country in the world towards such a considerable part of the population without causing immediate rifts.

We want to put an end to this state of humiliation, of offence against our national dignity, of corruption of our ancestral morals, of hostility to our mother tongue, and of danger to the existence of our country, or at least fight the evil that arises from it, with the hope that the high government will one day be courageous enough to do away with all valid reasons for popular hatred and discord in Belgium.

In anticipation of the new day of unity and equality for all Belgians, we will in time and gradually, without wanting to harm anyone's acquired rights, try to obtain the following repairs, whether they are granted to us by the state government as

recognition of rights, or whether we have to obtain them through the direction of the public spirit. - And it should be noted that we do not want any retrogression where persons are concerned:

1. Teaching of the Dutch language in all high schools and secondary schools on the same footing as for the other national languages, and consequently the obligation to provide proof of knowledge of that language in all examinations.
2. Use of the Low German language in the national institutions within the Flemish regions, for the teaching of the languages related to it, and in particular of High German and English.
3. The publishing, by order of the state government, of Dutch textbooks, in order to be able to refer to the previous repairs.
4. The publication, with the strong support of the State Treasury, of popular books on agriculture, innovation and other useful sciences, in one word of such works that can contribute to the civilisation and industrial education of the Flemish people, in the cities and on the countryside.
5. Encouragement of the Flemish writers, on the same footing as the Belgians who practise the other dialects.
6. Vigorous encouragement for the development and flourishing of Flemish theatre.
7. Use of the Dutch language before and in the courts, when the accused belongs to the Flemish population.
8. Use of the Dutch language in the administrations and councils of the Flemish provinces and cities.
9. Use of the Dutch language in the Flemish provinces, with regard to everything for which the law prescribes publicity.
10. Use of the two national languages for all documents, announcements, notices, etc. emanating from the State Treasury, intended to be brought to the knowledge of the inhabitants of both parts of the country.
11. Obligation for all civil servants to be proficient in the Flemish language, and consequently incapable of obtaining public office in the Flemish regions, if one does not understand and speak the vernacular.
12. Obligation for army officers to give proof of knowledge of the Dutch language at their examination.

## II. POLITICAL THOUGHTS.

The advocates of the Flemish movement are convinced that the achievement of the above can only lead to the development of the true nationality; that if the present unfruitful direction of the mind continues, we will not have taken a single step towards the establishment of that nationality within fifty years; Meanwhile, patriotism weakens, confidence in the future fades, the national character disappears and all the noblest forces of the nation are wasted in useless struggles. As such, the advocates of the Flemish movement do not belong to one or the other staet party; they consider their own patriotic mission to be high enough, their intended work heavy enough, their goal comprehensive enough to be sufficient for their part in the society. The Flemish movement is completely independent and will always be on the side of those who, by their deeds or in their insights, seek the essential emancipation of the country, genuinely want to give justice to the Flemish people, promote nationality, maintain peace, preserve the national character and ancestral customs, and try to protect us from the harmful effects of foreign influence.

## III. RELATIONSHIP TO THE CENTRAL PART OF THE COUNTRY.

The enemies of the Flemish movement talk about us as if we wanted to cause a schism in Belgium. Nothing is further from the truth. Since 1830 we have proved that the denial of rights and the oppression itself have never driven us to unrest or popular unrest. We conduct a peaceful battle of minds; and if we want to maintain the country's institutions and set an example of respect for law and order, we even more want to leave the country as it was after the state events. True, we do speak of a Dutch Nationality; but by this we only mean the validity and the self-sufficiency of the Flemish, as a part of the Belgians, and the turning of the Flemish popular forces until the time that we, as Dutch speakers, will have regained our denied rights and see our grievances restored.

Our greatest wish is that one day we will be able to live in full harmony and close fraternity with our different countrymen; because only from that moment on will Belgium rest on firm foundations. But it is not our fault that the impossibility of doing so continues. Give us, as the larger half of the nation, half of the burdens and duties, half of the rights and advantages; open to the Flemish people the same sources of civilisation and influence on the country's affairs: in a word, make all parts of the nation equal in Belgium, and the complaints and the enmity will change by themselves into songs of praise in honour of the common fatherland, in friendship and in fraternisation.

If the only existing means are not used for this, the goal cannot be achieved; and the responsibility rests, not on those who suffer crime, but on those who commit crime.

So far removed are we from the idea of a separate nationality, that we declare here that we are prepared to put all our efforts in the service of a truly national disposition, if such a disposition were to come into being in Belgium, even if it had its origin and its first development exclusively among the wealthy part of the Belgian population. It is even a hope that we have cherished for a long time, that the infertility of today's spirituality will give rise to a patriotic disposition, based on feelings of fairness towards all Belgians, which will favour the restoration of Flemish grievances and will try to base the general nationality on unity and equality. In such a spirit, which would also be the guardian of the character of the Belgians and the protector of their dignity and rights against foreign influence, all the main political elements of the Flemish movement would melt together, and it would take on an exclusively literary scope and form, to work by peaceful labour towards the further elevation of the Fatherland and the civilisation of the Flemish people. The defenders of Dutch national law hope that the above statement will convince their fellow countrymen and all who read it of their complete independence and the purity of their truly patriotic views. Many will probably find our demands excessive, and perhaps regard all their fulfilment as impossible. This feeling may be well-founded to some extent - we ourselves do not hide it; but we also know that our forefathers laid the first stone of their proud memorial buildings, even though their children had to see the end of it only after fifty years of labour. Thus we also count with time, and we hope that, stone by stone, the building of the People's Republic will be completed by us or our sons.

Ghent, 6 November 1847.

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