

# What is and what does the People's Union want?

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# Context

Following the collaboration with the German occupier during World War II by an extensive section of the Flemish movement, endeavours to found new Flemish national political parties proved troublesome. The first party which would ultimately succeed in maintaining a durable position in the Belgian landscape was the Volksunie, which would come to include notable members such as Maurits Coppieters. This document is one of the first times the political party made its political demands explicit, including its demand for a reform of the Belgian state structure into a federal state (see earlier attempts by the Congrès National Wallon), ultimately resulting in the foundation of Belgian federalism in 1970.

On the eve of the 1954 general elections, an electoral coalition emerged under the name Christian Flemish People's Union (C.V.V.), which submitted lists in all the districts of the Flemish country and obtained 113,632 votes.

At the end of 1954, a Flemish-national political party, the Volksunie [People's Union], was definitively founded. This initiative was taken by a number of people who were firmly convinced of the need to regain Flemish political power through an independent and autonomous Flemish party, in defense of Flemish popular interests. The Volksunie is the only Flemish-national party and is open to all who wish to subscribe to its program.

The main program points of the Volksunie, in brief, are:

## Federalism

Transformation of the existing unitary state into a bipartite federal state, in which Flemings and Walloons represent the strictly Flemish and Walloon interests independently and the common Belgian interests equally among themselves.

As immediate and partial objectives: cultural autonomy - separation of the Ministry of Public Education - demarcation of the linguistic border and the borders of the Brussels agglomeration - special language status for Brussels and the Belgian Congo - legal Dutchification of business and of French special and official education in Flanders - strict equality of Flemings and Walloons in all state services and parastatal institutions.

## Amnesty

### **- In the social sphere:**

Recognition of the personal and family interests of the worker. Elimination of structural unemployment through protection of existing and creation of new industries in Flanders. Eradication of the cancer of "mobility" through the provision of work locally to the Flemish worker.

### **- In the field of the middle class:**

Safeguarding the interests of the middle class in the widest sense by taking the necessary social and economic measures to guarantee its existence and traditional independence.

**- On agriculture:**

Promotion of agriculture as the main branch of our national production and recognition of the peasantry as a close guarantor of the survival and development of our people.

**- In the financial field:**

Sanitization of the national finances. Reform of the fiscal system, more equitable distribution of the fiscal burden, elimination of the present system of fiscal arbitrariness and inquisition. Combating the abuses and unhealthy influences of big business, capital concentrations and monopolies. Eradication of the undemocratic influence on state policy by the national and international money powers.

**- In the field of education:**

General legal equality of special or free education with official education. Expansion of technical education.

**- In the foreign and military fields:**

Promotion on sound and economic bases of the Union of the Low Countries in the Benelux context. Promotion of an independent Belgian policy towards the problems of European political, economic and military integration. Adaptation of military charges and service to the country's financial possibilities.

This program was presented, discussed and approved in detail at two congresses. We cannot include the detailed congress resolutions here, but refer interested parties to our magazine.

Since January 1955, the Volksunie has published its own magazine, entitled "De Volksunie". Initially a monthly magazine, since January 1956 it is published twice a month. All those who have any sympathy or interest in the working of the Volksunie should read this magazine to stay informed.

The organizational expansion across the whole of Flanders is being systematically pursued, while the dissemination of our views through our magazine, through leaflets, posters, public meetings, etc. is being achieved with all available forces and means. The tactic of systematic silence applied to us by our political opponents will not prevent us from finally penetrating the broad Flemish masses. Moreover, we hope to have our say in the free political gallery of the N.I.R. [National Broadcasting Corporation], where the communists, who have much less to do with the Flemish country than we do, regularly speak on Flemish broadcasts. We eagerly await the answer to our request.

We appeal to all conscious Flemish people to join us, to support us under the slogan:

**"FLANDERS FIRST!"**

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