

Position of Leuven Flemish

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The Academic Council and the Curatorium of Leuven-Dutch have so far avoided taking positions of a political nature. They have always been and still are primarily concerned that the expansion of K.U.L. [Catholic University of Leuven] in its entirety and of Leuven-Dutch should be able to take place unhindered. However, they believe that the events of the last few days call for clarification in their turn.

The autonomy of both sections at Louvain has grown in a year and a half to such an extent that only legal independence remains.

The position of the French Academic Council and the self-affirmation it expresses shows how far this autonomy already extends in its eyes.

In the light of recent events, the question arises more strongly than ever: can two institutions, each of which - it must be repeated - is the most important in this country in terms of student numbers, continue to seek spatial expansion through each other in a conurbation of limited size, without this perpetually leading to conflict situations?

From both sides, arguments for and against geographic unity have piled up. There is no need to repeat them here. Worse is the observation that dialogue is in danger of becoming impossible. This fact alone, more than all the rest, gradually raises more doubts about the desirability and universality of a geographical status quo.

Regardless of the cultural and social motives, which are extremely important for Flanders, the question we are now faced with is: Which solution for the scientific activity of the Catholic University will create the clearest situation: either an immobilism with the permanent threat of conflicts, or two spatially separated campuses, each of which, moreover, aims for maximum inclusion in its own cultural community? In the latter case, contacts and cooperation will certainly not become less important than they are today. One further wonders, why the Catholic University should cease to exist if it were composed of two campuses, a few tens of kilometres apart? This is already, for the sake of the expansion of the University, an urgent and practical necessity.

Furthermore, is it so difficult to accept that, in the ongoing process of cultural autonomy in this country and within the framework of a real social concern, the Flemish people in fact wish nothing else than that in a few years' time, education, from top to bottom, in Flanders would be in their own language? This does not exclude an openness to other cultures and languages; it only entails an aspiration to one's own cultural and social development.

Every realistic Fleming is aware that there is an important financial problem here, which in turn is political. Only a medium-term expansion plan, with solid guarantees for the French section, is justified.

Within the framework of this problem, the Academic Council and the Curatorium of Leuven-Dutch define their position as follows:

1) The expansion program, as announced by the French Academic Council, is totally unacceptable: it offers no solution to the technical-university, social and cultural problems concerning the University. Equally unacceptable is the fact that this program was made public - against the December 20 decision of the Board of Governors - without prior notification to the Board of Governors nor to the Auditor General.

2) The only responsible solution to the Leuven expansion problem lies in the establishment, with planned gradualism, of a university campus in the French-speaking region, in a way that will safeguard for the French department, even during the transition period, a full-fledged teaching and research activity.

3) The members of the Academic Council and the Leuven-Dutch Curatorium appeal to the political authorities to make this expansion program possible. Recent events warrant the fear that an agreement cannot be reached at the level of the Board of Governors that will provide guarantees for the future. Nevertheless, the Academic Council and the Leuven-Dutch Curatorium remain ready for dialogue and request the immediate convening of the Board of Governors.

4) The Academic Council and the Leuven-Dutch Curatorium understand the indignation that has seized the Flemish university community because of the content and tone of the position taken by the French-speaking Academic Council. They are opposed to any assault on persons and damage to buildings. They call on everyone to devote their best efforts to the expansion of their University and to resume normal academic life.

Members of the Academic Council

Prof. P. DE SOMER Prof. A. DERUYTTERE
 Prof. A. VAN WINDEKENS Prof. A. DONDEYNE
 Dhr. G. DECLERCQ Prof. A. GYSELEN
 Mgr. G. MAERTENS Prof. J. HEUTS
 Prof. F. GULLENTOPS Prof. J. NUTTIN
 Prof. A. DE BOCK Mgr. W. ONCLIN
 Prof. E. DE JONGHE Prof. Z. VAN HEE

Note: At the request of the Academic Council, the representatives of the Ecclesiastical Faculties did not participate in the vote

Trustees

Dhr. A. COOL Dhr. A. DEQUAE
 Dhr. F. COLLIN Dhr. L. ROPPE

Academic Council 19.1.1968.

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