

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS (I.O.T.)

Vlaamse afdeling van de War Resisters' International

(Opnieuw) opgericht in 1965



*Bankrekening IBAN
BE85.0001.0565.3006
van Jean Verstraeten*

*2540 Hove (Belgium), 2003 / 2015
Vredestraat 65*

Tél. 00.32.(0)3.4557763

Email: verstraeten.jean@belgacom.net

Longa vis est veritatis

A FEW DATES

(I here try to write an English version of "Enkele Data", a text in Dutch from Dec. of 2003.)

- November 23, 1945 : foundation of the Union Fédérale/Federale Unie/ Federal Union (a Belgian world federalist movement).

- 1949 (?) : the Federal Union takes the Belgian Centre of the Registry of World Citizens on its address.

- December of 1960 : meeting at the secretariat of the Federal Union, on which it is decided to form a committee that would receive in Belgium the Peace March from San-Francisco to Moscow (this committee took the name of *Comité voor Geweldloze Vredesactie (CGVA)/Comité d'action non-violente pour la paix (CANVP)/Committee For Non-Violent Peace Action*).

- Spring and summer of 1962 : the said committee takes a more steady form : eighteen persons (1) sign statutes (?) or articles of association (?) and form the working members of the committee.

(1) **Patrik Lasure** did not belong to them, neither did he later on sign the statutes and become a working member. This constitutes one of the innumerable refutations of the assertion published in *Magazine voor Vredesactie* no. 143 that "Patrik stood at the cradle of *Forum voor Vredesactie*". (The *Comité voor geweldloze Vredesactie -CGVA-* in January of 1971 fused into a unified *Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders*, of which the so called *Forum voor Vredesactie* claims to be a successor.)

- 30th of June, 1962 : a tragic accident, occurred to André Provo, husband of Lea Provo-Eggermont, forces the latter to largely interrupt her role as a secretary of the CGVA/CANVP; a new secretariat is situated in Schoten near Antwerp, Bredabaan 1149. (2)

(2) Besides the secretariat in Schoten (Antwerp), there was a secretariat for the French speaking region in Marcinelle near Charleroi and one for international contacts in Brussels. Schoten, where thanks to the patronage of our colleague (and board member) Michel De Meulemeester a paid administrative secretary (not a member) could work half time, also functioned as an administrative secretariat for the whole of Belgium. Hence, we had letter heads, presentation texts and some bulletins published in Antwerp in French as well.

Lasure by no means took part in all this work, which demanded very much time and energy. Nevertheless, at a meeting in 1977, in a low and belittling spirit towards the undersigned, he claimed to know what had happened at the time and that only others, not the undersigned,

had been involved... He did so *avec toute l'assurance de la crasse ignorance* (x) rooted in bad faith. So much contempt of truth and so much lack of righteousness I had never seen in my whole life. It makes me dumfounded till today -- this I must say.

(x) "The whole self-assurance of the radical ignorance." (In French it is riming.)

- 4th of October 1962 : the statutes (?) of a vzw/asbl (= legal non-profit organisation) *Comité voor geweldloze Vredesactie /Comité d'action non-violente pour la paix* are published in the Belgian State Paper. (2)

(2) **Lasure**, the man "who stood at the cradle", did not belong to the founders, nor did he ever join the vzw/asbl.

- 11th of May 1964 : creation of the *Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd (BDJ) / Service Civil pour la Jeunesse(SCJ)* = Civil Service For Youth on the occasion of the adoption by Belgian parliament of CO-status.

As far as I know, **Lasure** was not involved in this creation. Maybe, however, he was somehow in the framework of the Berten Fermont Herdenkingscomité (Commemorative Committee of Robert Fermont) that was one of the founding associations of *Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd*, which at its beginnings was a concertation of movements indeed.

- 26th of October 1965 : in summer of 1965 the bulletin of the *Comité voor geweldloze Vredesactie (Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action)* takes the form of a collective bulletin of a few small peace groups. On the meeting of the 26th of October I propose to add the *Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders (IOT)* as well, which together with the *Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre (IRG)* would form the Belgian WRI-section. This proposal was accepted, first at the said meeting, a few days later by the secretariat of the *Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre* (more particularly by its secretary Jean Van Lierde). (3)

(3) In this (modest) reintroduction of the *Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders* in our region, which we first called *Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders*, **Lasure** played no role whatsoever.

- End of September 1969 : in summer of 1969 Andre Van Langenhoven, Etienne Van Den Brande and Sam Biesemans took the initiative to create *Protest*, conceived to be a bulletin for/of the objectors in the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. Etienne, on the 5th of August, wrote to me asking for addresses. I then proposed to avoid more fragmentation and to make of *Protest* a collective periodical of the non-aligned peace *groupuscules*. This proposal was accepted at a meeting of the 22nd (?) of September at Etienne's address. (4)

(4) **Lasure**, of whom nobody knew anything either, had ever since stayed absent of gatherings of working committees. Hence, he did not assist this meeting. However, aspiring to see all conscientious objectors, war resisters and world federalists united, I proposed to ask Patrik Lasure as well to join the working group and the redaction around the paper *Protest*. Via Gustaaf Schmidt Lasure let us know that he agreed. Hence, as a (provisory) redaction secretary, I mentioned his name among the members in the paper, but in the course of the following eighteen months he never assisted to a meeting, never asked to be excused and never wrote one single word for the paper.

This being so, it is quite logical that questions were put about him. I myself, in spite of all, had typed **Lasure's** name time and time again in the paper. In March/April of 1971 Gilbert Hubert, as I had proposed, took over the redaction address from me. He wondered what to do with Patrik Lasure. I then met the latter on the train. With utter disdain he told me that he did not want anything to do with the formation of all those small groups, all those

meetings, the edition of all those small papers... Hence, Gilbert did no longer mention him in Protest's issue of March/April (which actually appeared in April).

So far all seemed to be arranged as to Lasure. However, he then he started secretly slandering against me behind my back. Doing so, he could convince more or less one or two accomplices, and when I found myself so to say "imprisoned" in a car (so that I could not go out in the middle of the motorway) he attacked me, as if I had done something very evil to him. In that way I, who had worked so hard in previous months for Protest and for the unification of IOT, learned that bad faith does not know limits when distorting truth.

This being said, I committed an error as to Lasure indeed. In September of 1969 it had been clearly agreed that he or she who three times would not come to a meeting without asking to be excused, would be supposed to have left the working group. Hence, instead of waiting till Gilbert Hubert did so in March/April of 1971, I should have scratched Lasure a year earlier myself. This is what I have to conclude *en mon âme et conscience*.

- September of 1969 : Gilbert Hubert, who as a conscientious objector had contacted the IOT in Hove at the end of 1968, adheres, as I had proposed, to the working group around Protest. It is agreed to in the course of later months that during his civil service he discretely would work halftime in the framework of our group.

- January of 1971 : the group around Protest, according to what I had proposed, decides to fuse into the IOT, with the exception, of course, of the ad hoc committee that *the Berten Fermont Commemorative Committee* was. (5)

(5) This fusion, ultimately, was decided at a meeting in Hove at the end of January. Lasure, of course, was absent and took no part in this decision. He did not take anything upon his shoulders of all the worries inherent to this delicate operation.

- February / March of 1971 : Gilbert Hubert starts his civil service at the secretariat of the local section of *Internationale Vrijwillige Hulpdienst* = International Civil Service in the Hoofdkerkstraat in Antwerpen. According to what had been agreed to, he would unofficially work halftime for the Working Group Protest, which had just become the *Internationale van Oorlogstegegensanders* (IOT) only. Due to the unofficial character of his halftime work, I proposed that he would take at his private address the administration and the redaction. I also proposed that he would use his private postal account, as nobody, at the time, seemed to be aware that a factual association could obtain an account as well.

- 28th of July of 1971 : The International Council of the WRI, gathered in Lübeck, writes to us in Hove, informing us that the IOT was now to be considered a section independent from the *Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre* (IRG).

- July of 1972 in Sheffield : for the first time we participate in a triennial congress of the WRI as a section entitled to vote separately from the *Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre* (the section in the French speaking region of Belgium).

- End 1971 / beginning of 1972 : in the paper Protest we read that... the account of the IOT had been changed and was no longer that of a physical person.

This astonishing fact announces a period in which Gilbert Hubert no longer cares about what had been agreed to, starts acting as if nothing had been agreed to (though we had prepared things during a year and a half) and with astounding arbitrary treats the IOT as a private possession of him. (See about this e.g. my report of 19 pages of October 1975 and that of 51 pages *de dato* August 1994.)

It is to be noted that only ten years later I learnt that the person collaborating with Gilbert Hubert on the occasion of this financial usurpation, was Gustaaf Schmidt. This is all the more astounding, as Schmidt had stayed away from all IOT-meetings after January of 1971.

However, what is the meaning of a signature for financial transactions? On a principle it is just an administrative question. It certainly should not grant more power to the persons concerned. This is obvious for those having a righteous way of feeling as to those things. However, newcomers of the seventies obviously started having another opinion. For them the possession of a signature for the finances constituted a means of power and they showed very keen to acquire it.

In doing so, a Sam Biesemans for example, showed an extreme disdain for truth and human persons. This appeared on several occasions, e.g. on a meeting of the BDJ(= Civil Service for Youth) in 1975 (?). For some reason I reminded that since Autumn of 1962 I had had a signature for the CGVA/CANVP = Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action, which may be considered the main predecessor of the unified IOT of January of 1971. This committee also participated in the creation of the BDJ in 1964, so that, in a way, I had had a signature for the latter as well.

Biesemans, to this, reacted in an utterly vulgar and ridiculing way. Being driven by an egotistical spirit, he considered odious inequality to be the right thing and he denied what I had reminded, namely that I had had the said signature. That I did so, of course, had only to do with practical, administrative measures. Nevertheless, it had been decided *unanimously* by the active members of the CGVA/CANVP, that is to say not in the manipulative way of Biesemans, Hubert and company (they decided about finances above our heads, even behind our backs).

As to me, however, I have always preferred to spend as little time as possible to finances. Nevertheless, together with our half time paid administrative helper of that time, in Autumn of 1962, I started writing receipts and expenditures in a notebook(?)/a booklet (?). The latter and its successors, containing since 1973 the "book-keeping" of the Registry of World Citizens for the Dutch speaking region, have been used in the whole period going from 1962 till today (2015).

- January of 1973 : a local address of the International Registry of World Citizens is situated in Hove. This, unfortunately, was decided at a moment that my health trouble, which had already been live ruining since the end of 1957, worsened dramatically.

- December of 1977 : a few newcomers working full time at the secretariat in the Van Elewyckstraat in Brussels and who, except Sam Biesemans, never had been active as volunteers, -stirred up also by a Lasure- usurp our WRI section and all its means, above all the subventions granted by the state. Here, I will not treat this question again. I refer to the reports I have been writing about it since 1978, particularly to :

- 1) my report of 51 pages, dated May of 1994;
- 2) idem of 8 pages, of April 1996;
- 3) idem of 6 pages, written in May of 1997;
- 4) a note of 13 pages, written in February of 1998;
- 5) a file of 39 pages, dated June of 2002.

I furthermore limit myself to add to this report a short trilingual note as well as the invitation to the meeting of the 12th December 1977, on which a vzw (= a non-profit organization) IOT would have been created. This, as one can see, was not mentioned in the invitation, which moreover was sent to us a month after the meeting took place and to which no project of statutes were joined.

How then did my name erroneously appear among the subscribers of the statutes in the State Paper? This I explained more fully among others in my above mentioned reaction of February of 1998.

Furthermore, tens of thousands of pages confirm what I reported on. More particularly a file of about five thousand photocopies does so : it can be consulted when my health allows it.

Also the addresses stocked in Hove prove a lot. Personally, I desired addresses to be out here. Indeed, possibilities on a private address, even abstraction made from health trouble of the inhabitant, remain limited inevitably.

When the secretariat of *Geweldloze Weerbaarheid* = Non-Violent Resistance, which after the departure of Lea Provo to India at the end of 1966 had remained in Mortsel, was closed at the end of 1967 or the beginning of 1968, fortunately, Gustaaf Schmidt showed disposed to stock the addresses. I myself, in 1968 or the beginning of 1969, brought them to him (in a green bag in which I often had carried boxes with addresses).

Later on, in Autumn of 1969, when he took the administration address of Protest at his home, I also brought to him the box containing the addresses of 1) the members in our region of the Federal Union, 2) the subscribers of *Regenboog* (Rainbow), one of the two periodicals of the said movement, 3) the registered world citizens of our region.

At the end of 1972 I learnt that all those cards had disappeared in a mysterious way. In 1981, almost ten years later, the box was found back : empty. Probably the catastrophic fact that our addresses had been thrown away, was already due to a mentality that had come up in the seventies : years of profound commitment and work of others were all of a sudden treated as being equal to nothing.

In 1973, fortunately, not without a lot of trouble, I succeeded in at least finding back the addresses of the registered world citizens of our region, be it without all the details concerning their registration.

In 1980, using to that aim old archives, I also put onto cards about a thousand addresses. They were those of a part of the persons or associations that had, in the sixties or the seventies, contacted *Comité voor geweldloze Vredesactie/ Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd/ Internationale van oorlogstegenstanders/* the periodical *Regenboog/* the periodical *Protest* : as I mentioned above, the addresses of the *Register van Wereldburgers* = Registry of World Citizens had been found back already.

I made cards of all those addresses in the framework of a project (which did not succeed) to form a democratic, legitimate continuation of the *Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders*, in which -like previously- a world federalist tendency would have a place.

As a rule those addresses were in possession of the of the secretariat in the *Van Elewyckstraat* in Brussels as well. However, the fulltime usurpers of our movements there had stolen them like all our other means : therefore I saw myself forced to this monk's work. (1)

It is to be said furthermore that the majority of all those addresses are no more valid, certainly not in 2015. Even the number of persons still alive has become quite limited. However, that more than two thousand cards with addresses can be found here (1) proves that the addresses in the Van Elewystraat in Brussels were ours as well.

(1) I did not write on cards the addresses of about 500 persons in the French speaking region of this country who had contacted us in one way or another as *Comité d'action non-violente pour la paix*. The addresses of the French speaking members of the previous *Union Fédérale* are not listed here either, whereas those of the Dutch speaking world citizens were found back in 1973, as I mentioned above.

It is to be noted also that the addresses in Hove (700 of which are those of world citizens registered by the local centre/contact address of the International Registry of World Citizens) by far exceed the mentioned numbers if one counts those -more than 3,000- on the computer.

Furthermore, about 500 cards with addresses of world citizens registered by a previous registration centre in Holland were in our possession in the nineties. In 1995 I lent them to the WFBN (World Federalist Movement of the Netherlands) without receiving them back.

Jean Verstraeten

STILL A WORD ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE BDJ/SCJ = CIVIL SERVICE FOR YOUTH

Personally, in the beginning of 1964, I did not feel in favour of creating more peace committees. I rather would have preferred to see their number reduced. Indeed, in my opinion, the War Resisters' International (and possibly the International Fellowship of Reconciliation) together with the world federalist movement, offered a sufficient framework to anti-war inspired persons.

However, Lea Provo, who at the time had just assumed her task of secretary of the CGVA/CANVP (Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action) again, explained to me that the BDJ/SCJ would be conceived as an coordination of associations which, without necessarily sharing the point of view of objectors, would be willing to give information about the law that was to be adopted a few weeks later.

I could hardly object to this and, as a working member of the CGVA/CANVP (and a council member of the legal non-profit organisation), I was somehow involved in the creation of the BDJ/SCJ on the 11th of May 1964.

However, in the following years, at least in our (linguistic) region, it appeared that what I had feared became true to a large extent : the BDJ hardly offered supplementary possibilities to the existing peace committees.

All the same, some persons, among whom I was, gave information to conscientious objectors about the legal status. This in the sixties may be considered really meaningful work, as the law of 1964 remained largely unknown by all sorts of institutions.

Did I use the letter head of BDJ in the correspondence with CO's? Yes, regularly. However, according to the case and the period, I also used letter heads of the CGVA, the IOT, our paper Regenboog and our paper Protest.

This more or less unnecessary existence of the BDJ, did it imply that Biesemans, suffering from egotistical representations, had a right to invent a BDJ created at the end of 1969? Certainly not! His assertion as to this remains a flagrant lie typical for the way he started showing disturbances of the sense of reality when in the seventies he got installed in the Van Elewyckstraat as a little potentate.

Indeed, be it BDJ or something else, this does not change anything to the commitment of conscientious objectors from before the time of the law, who had asked for an alternative civil service and who later on gave information about it. Biesemans to this will reply that not earlier than in the seventies serious work was done, so that all that had happened previously may be considered nothing. However, this again is an untruth inspired by egotistical megalomania, as on the contrary the most meaningful period for CO's to inform other CO's can be situated before circa 1971.

Essentially it can even be situated before the time of Biesemans, although he had already written to us (as BDJ or IOT) in September of 1968, when he had just become eighteen years old and started giving information to objectors in the framework of CISCOD (an organisation of students at the university of Brussels).

"We now work with a staff of thirteen people," he bluffed in 1975/76. The question is, however, whether all this work or energy could not have been better used. Indeed, as there had come more and more objectors, public institutions for whom the law of 1964 no longer had remained unknown, could have given the information. Also associations like *Milac* and *Solac* (whose task was to inform and assist conscripts) could have done so.

Moreover, who were the CO's asking the later BDJ for information? Out of the twenty thousand who did so, less than two hundred permanently adhered to the WRI-section. How meaningful then was all this work from a point of view of war resisters?

To this it will be objected that the BDJ of the seventies, who became millions (in Belgian francs) from the state, could obtain improvements of CO-law. However, the last real improvement, as to matters of principle, came with the amendments of January 1969 already. From that moment on indeed conscripts having accomplished military service already could get CO-status. The same applies to the so called *cooperants*, conscripts who had, under conditions specified by law, worked three years in certain developing countries and therefore after that remained exempt from military service in peace time or periods considered equivalent. Moreover, it became possible to be detached from the *Civiele Bescherming/Protection Civile* = Civil Protection and being employed by a social or cultural association, viz. a welfare institution (?). This certainly must be considered a positive point. Nevertheless, it remained a pseudo-victory for those wanting to be detached from the Civil Protection because they considered it to be too paramilitary. Indeed, they formally remained part of the P.C. and were obliged to join it in war time or similar periods.

Whatever may be, we always had suggested : "Instead of military service, accomplish a meaningful humanitarian or cultural service, unless your conscience compels you to join the armed forces." This, from 1969 on, really became possible. However, who actually benefitted from the work of CO's in civil service? Since the seventies they were often associations that never had moved one finger in view of the adoption of legal CO-status and in view of the creation of a civil service detached from the Civil Protection. In how far, under those conditions, did they possess a moral right of obtaining objectors? But such questions did not worry the BDJ-clique in Brussels, whose actual members (in the sense of the non-profit organization) were utterly small in number. They got money for each placed objector and no further questions were welcome.

Whatever may be, let me still take a short look at the law of 1975. In it was written down more clearly what already had been stipulated in 1969. Nonetheless, Biesemans, being caught in self glorifying megalomania, could not avoid saying : "Ik ben het die deze wet heb geschreven." "I am the one who wrote this law." Doing so, he imitated Jean Van Lierde, who had had an "imago effect" on the young man and who had said about the law of 1964 : "C'est moi qui l'ai écrite."

However, already article 1 of the law of 1975 shows no amelioration in comparison to what was written in 1964. In the latter it ran as follows : (I try to translate into English) :

"The conscript convinced for religious, philosophical or ethical reasons that men ought not to kill men, not even in the framework of the defence of the country or of society, can send a registered letter to the Interior Minister asking on the ground of his conscientious objections to be exempted from all military service or from armed military service only (...)."

This in 1975 was replaced by : (I try to translate)

"The conscript who for compelling reasons according to his own conscience, and provided that these reasons do not aim merely at questioning fundamental state institutions, is convinced that men ought not to kill men, not either (?) in the framework of the defence of the country or society, can send a registered letter to the Interior Minister asking to be exempted from all military service or from armed military service only (...)."

The text from 1964 I copied out of the State Paper, the one from 1975 out of a stencil of the BDJ. What strikes in the latter is that the passage "for religious, philosophical or ethical reasons" had been replaced by "for compelling reasons according to his own conscience, and provided that these reasons do no aim merely at questioning fundamental state institutions..."

Did this mean a real improvement? Several objectors, desiring that political motives be recognised, had expressed objections to the stipulation of 1974. Many talks about this had followed and had demanded much energy. However, what came out finally looks like linguistic acrobatics that cannot be called a real amelioration as to the possibilities offered in 1964.

Hence, article 1 could have remained like it was. Another thing is the stipulation "not even in the framework of the defence of the country or of society". According to the stencil of the BDJ "not even" (zelfs niet) had been replaced by "ook niet" (not either(?)) This could be called an improvement indeed, but the whole remains a militaristic point of view, which can be right or not, but which ought not to be written in a law about conscientious objection. "Not even" etc." should be replaced by "not either in the framework of compulsory military service".

However, it was no longer possible to talk about this to a Biesemans : he lived in his egotistical clouds.

AGAIN SOMETHING ABOUT THE BDJ AND ABOUT FLAGRANT LIES

In spring of 1964 I very much doubted the usefulness of the BDJ. Nevertheless, it started at that moment. The flagrant lies of Biesemans as to this are to be considered the result of a bad mentality, according to which the commitment and the work of those (partly) previous to

him, who had devoted an essential part of their live to the sake of conscientious objection, is to be considered equal to nothing.

Such mentality apparently bears a contagious character. How else could one explain that "historian" Etienne Van Neyghen, in his book "Wegbereiders" (± "Those who prepared the road"), published in 1990, came to write that the IOT existed since 1971 only. Van Neyghen had asked me for old publications and he himself had sent to me a presentation text of the IOT from the end of 1965 of which I had lost the last specimen. How then could he...?

And yes, the lie about the non-existing IOT from before 1971 continued spreading. Even after 1990 it could be read in a flyer of those calling themselves *Forum voor Vredesactie* (Forum For Peace Action). (a) Doing so, they systematically kept silent what really had happened in 1971 :

1) Fusion of the little groups around the periodical Protest into the IOT, decided at the end of January of 1971 at a meeting in Hove (where since the end of 1965 there had been the contact address for so called Flanders of the IOT).

2) Recognition by the WRI-Council, gathered in Lübeck, of the IOT as a separate section (beneath, no longer with the -also Belgian- *Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre*). The said Council announced this in its letter of the 28th July 1971 addressed to Hove.

What can be done against such systematic distortions of truth? It did not help sending rights to answering (?? = rechten van antwoord). Indeed, such was the ethical degeneration of the usurpers of the IOT that they did not allow us to publish any rectification in the paper they had stolen from us. Even worse : subscriptions we took they ignored. We were forbidden to read what they wrote, a fact of which we thought that it could happen only in totalitarian regimes.

However, I have deviated somewhat from the question about the sense of the BDJ. What can I shortly say further?

To give information to CO's, in the first years after the adoption of the law, was inspired by the profound commitment of anti-war feeling persons. This, at least on the "Flemish" side, could have been done also without BDJ. Indeed, the organisations forming theoretically the coordination of organisations the BDJ was intended to be, soon became almost inert. Practically, in the sixties in this region, only a few persons gave information to objectors : Lea Provo till 1966, Gustaaf Schmidt, myself, Albert Eyckerman (among other things secretary of the Robert Fermont Commemorative Committee), in one way or the other also his employee Patrick Lasure (his address was not mentioned in flyers, so that we do not know too well what he actually did in that sense in those years -- but he really did help objectors, be it during his working hours),

(a) The *Forum voor Vredesactie* (like previously "*Volksbeweging voor de Vrede*" = Popular Movement for Peace") is a name invented by a few newcomers working fulltime in the Van Elewyckstraat in Brussels, who in that far ignored what the WRI stands for and who never would have become active in its framework would they not first have had subventions and jobs in view. (Biesemans ought to be called an exception, but he was not too much involved in the creation of the Popular Movement etc. In this context I refer to people like Jan Rutgeers, Eric/Ludo Van Thienen, to some extent Franca Poelman, just a teacher detached from education for health reasons, not a WRI-member.)

Personally, I more or less regularly gave information in the period going from 1963 to 1973. In the latter year the last objectors came to see me in Hove : a young gifted musician and a clergyman who later became rector (?) of The Faculty of Comparative Religious Sciences at the University of Antwerp.

In the years afterwards I was written to by several objectors still, but gradually there came an end to a task that had lasted more than ten years. Indeed, in the beginning of 1972, Gilbert Hubert suddenly, without any consultation, had scraped addresses, among which mine, in the periodical *Protest*. He wanted to centralise all at the secretariat where he did his civil service (which had become that of *Centrum Elcker-Ick* meanwhile). What did this lead to? We received letters from CO's who reported that nobody could be found at the remaining address...

This arbitrary decision to centralise it all (as far as IOT was concerned) brought about e.g. an impossible situation for Jan Veny. He had joined the redaction in September of 1972 and about January of 1973 started his civil service at the secretariat where also an address of the IOT was situated. He in the course of his service dedicated himself largely to giving information to CO's. However, doing so he got totally submerged. I still see him showing lots of letters and explaining that it could not go on that way. I then surely sympathised with him, but having been scraped arbitrarily by Hubert, I did not want to take care of a part of that correspondence, the more as my health made me suffer in an unbelievable way and that I had other things to write...

Only, speaking about the above, I again deviated from what I still very shortly wanted to say about the BDJ.

In 1969 (and possibly already in 1968) several meetings of the BDJ/SCJ were organized. One of the constant participants to those meetings -it is to be said- was eighteen years old Sam Biesemans. The latter's way of conceiving the role of the BDJ at the time largely corresponded to ours. If it made sense to have the BDJ existed beneath all the other, rather ghostly little groups (of which, whatever may be, I was not so convinced as Biesemans) it was to be a more neutral organisation. In that way it could possibly later obtain subventions and discretely make free working force for the group around *Protest* (i.e. only the IOT from January 1971 on). Indeed, nobody in the sixties or the beginning of the seventies considered it to be realistic to believe that also the latter could obtain state subventions and CO's in civil service.

Nevertheless the question of the utility of the existence of the BDJ sometimes was risen again. Thus it was on the foundation meeting of January 1971 of the "unified IOT" in Hove. Of about a dozen participants maybe a majority felt in favour of having the BDJ fused as well into the IOT. Only Sam Biesemans's vehement opposition could avoid this. Hence, the BDJ as such survived the fusion, according also to the wishes of colleagues in the French speaking region, of whom Biesemans to a large extend acted as a spokesman.

Less than two years later, in September 1972, a vzw BDJ (a legal non-profit organisation) was founded, i.e. that the statutes were then published in the State Paper. *Lasure* did not belong to the members of this vzw.

At the end of 1976, however, he suddenly was imposed to us as a council member and a so-called "vice-chairman". On a following meeting he then once spoke about his demand to obtain legal CO-status. He reminded that the latter had been granted to him on the first session of the Dutch speaking chamber of the Council On Conscientious Objection. Doing so, with his typical patronizing attitude towards me, he as a passing reference mentioned

that I had been there also. Hearing this, you could almost believe that I had to feel thankful to him because he had said that.

However, which were the real backgrounds at the time of the said session? Since February of 1962 I had confidentially spoken to Lea Provo, secretary of the CGVA/CNVP, about the possibility to proceed to some sort of collective conscientious objection. In my view, through declarations of solidarity, this could include persons who had no (more) military obligations.

Several months then passed and no candidate appeared among the members of the Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action... Everybody found a pretext and everybody had the question wiped out of his or her consciousness. This being the case, on the 14th of July 1962, in a registered letter to the minister of defence, I declared my conscientious objection and my intention not to obey anymore any order to join the armed forces. However, I cannot relate all this in these short notes. I just remind still that, exception made for the student Paul Provo, I believed that nobody among the members of the CGVA = Committee For Non-Violent Peace Action had anymore military obligations in war time or equivalent periods.

As to *Lasure*, who in 1963 started to appear here and there on public meetings and of whom we knew he was an employee of Albert Eyckerman (who had been a conscientious objector in the late thirties) I thought he had not kept any military status either. However, on the first session ever of the Council On Conscientious Objection, on the 24th of March 1965, I understood that he still had a military status. I remember that this discovery made me feel deeply uneasy but that after a while I put up with my usual thought : "Let people do".

The reason to do so was all the more valid as *Lasure*, no subscriber of the statutes of the said committee, no working or active member of it hence (nor of the vzw), had not participated in our discussions since 1963 about the possibility to adhere to the Belgian WRI-section (which, after the war, practically had existed only in the French speaking region). At the time of those discussions we already were reminded that only CO's could subscribe the WRI-declaration (see about this e.g. the letter that Jean Van Lierde, secretary of the Belgian section, wrote to me on the 24th of September 1963). Hence, if our adhesion to that section would have been decided at the time *Lasure* could not have been a member of it. However, nobody worried about his military situation, as he did not take part in our discussions of 1963/64 about what we called *Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders (IOB)*, a name that had been used in Holland.

Those discussions at the time lasted about six months. They came to an end at the meeting of the CGVA/CANVP = Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action of the 14th of February 1964 in the Peace House (Auberge de la Paix - Vredestehuis), Aarlenstraat, Brussels.

On that occasion it appeared that Lea Provo, who from then took up again her task of (general) secretary of the CGVA/CANVP, unconditionally refused the committee to become part of the Belgian WRI-section. This is just the truth and it is all the more astonishing that about 1980/81 the usurpers of the IOT published that Lea had been the initiator of the IOT. This was done by people who, driven by bad faith, asserted whatsoever of which they thought it would serve their cause. And "rights to reply" (?? = rechten van antwoord) were radically ignored : sitting on their piles of millions that they had appropriated beneath an impressing number of full time working forces, pampered by high levels in their political parties (that we had known as those who found it normal to imprison CO's), they thought they stood above truth and justice.

But coming back to the meeting of the 14th of February 1964, I still mention that at the level of the said committee unanimity was required for principle decisions. Partly therefore we for the time being abandoned the idea that we could form a wing of the Belgian WRI- section.

Meanwhile, as I wrote, we were clearly reminded that if you subscribed the WRI-Declaration you were supposed to have declared yourself a conscientious objector. How then is the situation to be evaluated of conscripts having made the choice to keep their military status until the possible adoption of a law recognizing conscientious objection? Could they sign the Declaration once they had obtained legal CO-status? Since 1964 I had not weight that question too much : in practice it was hardly put. Not earlier than in 1990 (or 1991), when Lasure dropped by here did I remember that he had not been a conscientious objector in the sense of the WRI. In other words : he should not have become a member of the IOT.

Could he then have become a member of the BDJ? The latter in the seventies was no longer conceived as a coordination of organisations. Also, in art. 3 of the statutes of 1972 of the vzw, it was clearly stipulated that members entitled to vote were to be personally conscientious objectors. This being the case, I felt obliged to remind this in my report of September 1994, in which I summarised the manipulations that took place in 1977/78 (they culminated in what happened at the meeting of the 18th of January 1978) :

“At the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978 evictions took place in the BDJ which could not not be called... illegitimate end scandalous.

The two main responsible persons for this were Patrick Lasure and Louis Fleurbay, both men who as non-objectors could not join the organisation as members entitled to vote. Moreover, at the end of 1976 the former had been admitted to the vzw in a way one could hardly call regular (in fact : it was all decided in advance, behind our backs). Hence, the BDJ ought to publish in the State Paper 1)that the exclusions of January 1978 were unjustified, 2)that Lasure and Fleurbay never could have been members entitled to vote.”

Besides Fleurbay and Lasure hardly three other members were part of the BDJ, of whom two worked as full timers on the secretariat in the Van Elewyckstraat : Sam Biesemans and Jean-Louis Van Der Heyden. How then, on which legitimate grounds could they have refused the convocation of a (new) general assembly demanded by Luc Calbrecht and JV? Such a refusal was not only quite unethical but also contrary to the law concerning non-profit organisations.

Later on, in his letter dated 13th of May 1981 to AVL, Rutgeers wrote that several persons got lost for the IOT due to me. However, in 1969, at a time there were utterly few conscientious objectors in this country, we succeeded in forming a working group of seventeen persons around the paper Protest. On the contrary, although thousands of conscripts had then declared themselves conscientious objectors, did the BDJ in 1981 count seven members only (among whom were several full-timers in the Van Elewyckstraat) : see the publication in the State Paper of the 2nd of July 1981. From this fact one can learn that it is easy to spread odious ideas but that realities are something else. The latter were systematically shunned by those who, caught into some sort of totalitarian self-conceit, which partly could be conceived as the conceit of a socio-generational caste (1), believed that they could arbitrarily depreciate and eliminate other persons and treat as nothing their commitment as well as their work.

(1) The usurpers of the IOT and the BDJ, still in the eighties, published clichés about the “grass-roots movements” they were supposed to belong to. In reality, practically all decision making had been usurped by young newcomers with a degree in human sciences. On the contrary, (if one wants to use such words) a real “grass-roots group” had been the Committee For Non-Violent Peace Action, or the beginning group around Protest. Not long ago I still sent a list of persons assisting a meeting of that group at the end of 1969 : all ages, all professions, all degrees or absences of degrees were represented.

Rutgeers in the said letter also asserted that those forming the “middle-generation” (sic) had themselves wanted me to be expelled from the “directing policy” (?? sic again = *directiebeleid*) of the IOT. Doing so, Rutgeers, for obvious reasons, kept silent about what the notions of “middle-generation” and “*directiebeleid*” could be applied to. Certainly, however, in the (later) seventies there were manipulating and excluding forces at work in the dark. Rutgeers, who according to his own utterances, did not belong to that ghostly “middle-generation”, was himself part of those forces. That appeared univocally at the time of the manipulations surrounding the alleged foundation of a vzw IOT the 12th of December 1977.

However, does what precedes imply that the handful usurpers of the BDJ/IOT got along well with each other? By no means! Already between Sam Biesemans and Gilbert Hubert a spirit of rivalry and conflict set the tone during years. In this relation the contemptuous role was rather played by Hubert, to whom Biesemans, still a student (till 1975), looked up as to one who had obtained a degree already : such immature situations we saw ourselves faced with.

Further did it openly come to a breaking point between Biesemans and Ludo/Eric Van Thienen, who worked as a CO in civil service at the BDJ in 1977/78. The conflict became so bad that Van Thienen after his civil service did not join the BDJ as a volunteer.

As to Lasure, only a few months after his joining the BDJ as a so called council member and a so called “vice-chairman”, Biesemans preferred him to go away. Lasure, indeed, had uttered criticism because in his opinion Van Thienen and Rutgeers in reality were hardly working for the BDJ (as they were supposed to do). Biesemans could not accept this interference in the work of the office and, whilst he was absent at a meeting, proposed that Lasure would quit. He also added that the undersigned could do so, as Lasure “was very much against him”. (Council members who could not get along with each other, would better leave both, he argued.)

A few months later it also came to a dramatic rupture between Biesemans and Luc Calbrecht. The latter then suddenly got eliminated.

As to Biesemans, at the IOT-meeting of the 7th of October 1977, his collaborators -Rutgeers, Van Thienen + “Kika”- complained about him (whilst he was still absent). They claimed that he came bossing around at the office but did hardly work.

What do I think myself about this? Biesemans, from the beginning on, managed to attune to a political party, to the political establishment; he soonest discovered the ways leading to state subventions, to all sorts of advantages and contacts with VIP's : maybe he considers his supper with Minister Harmegnies of the end of 1969 as the moment his imaginary BDJ was created...

Nevertheless, as a young man he was driven by an unmistakable profound conviction, and on the basis of the latter during several years he really did a lot of work as a volunteer. What had remained of this in the second half of the seventies? I cannot too well evaluate this, but maybe the said full-timers in the Van Elecykstraat were too severe in judging him.

Whatever may be, however, the said hostile relations cannot be considered as hardly existent. Later on they were suppressed from the consciousness of the persons concerned, but they really characterized that small jungle the BDJ had become. In fifteen years time I had never seen anything the like.

Coming back a moment to my standpoint as to CO-law, I still mention that I did not solely worry about the fundamental side of the question. Still before the moment the law was adopted in 1964, I belonged to those who thought that the foreseen duration of the alternative civil service was too long and that the procedures could take too much time. (1) Hence, we believed it to make sense to strive for shortening time and to make material conditions better for those working at the *Civiele Bescherming/Protection Civile* = Civil Protection (where the conditions, it is to be said, were not a priori less good or worse than in the army). The latter, at least since the seventies, was to be in the first place a task for the objectors in civil service themselves there : they could best evaluate things. However, of them nobody belonged to the small clique the BDJ had become.

Whatever may be, still in May of 1971 I proposed to the first version the *Overlegcentrum voor de Vrede* (= ± Centre For Dialogue About Peace) -a coordination of delegates of movements, initiated by the crypto-communist peace movement- to spread a petition in which it was demanded to shorten the civil service by six months. I wrote the text of that petition and about seventy associations signed it. However, meanwhile Gilbert Hubert was undergoing a whole metamorphosis. Partly due to this the document remained *in aeternum* unused at the secretariat where he was doing civil service...

That same co-objector, according to what had been prepared during a year and a half, would be enabled to work half time during his service for the group around Protest. This group had just fused into the IOT, so that Gilbert would work in the framework of the latter.

May it be called evident that a "unified IOT" only would be mentioned in the paper? Certainly not. Even on its foundation meeting, which -as I told- took place in Hove at the end of January 1971, this remained uncertain. Indeed, Staf Schmidt, all of a sudden, expressed the desire that the group would fuse into the CGVA (= Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action) and not into the IOT. To this I replied that in this case I would not longer remain an executive member but a sympathizing member only. Indeed, I could not bring it into accordance with my conscience and my sense of realities that non-violence would so explicitly be mentioned in the name. Moreover, things were technically difficult : how could the vzw CGVA, alias the *asbl Comité d'action non-violente pour la paix* become a "Flemish" wing of the Belgian section of the WRI?

Anyway, the group at that time did not want me to go away, wich I bitterly regretted later on. I don't doubt the choice for the IOT was the best one, but if it had become CGVA, this - as I said- would have constituted a solid reason for me to retire, so that I would not have had to live the nightmare of the IOT/BDJ-question.

Could I then not have retired -say- since 1973 when health got worse? Maybe, but the question was never quite clear. I was not a full-timer (who could not partly be disabled indeed) and I saw reasons to remain a critical member of the associations which in the framework of our commitment we had co-founded or introduced again in our region.

Did I say : a critical member? In the course of the seventies I saw myself faced with unfavourable factors : a spirit of odious inequality largely rooted in a socio-generational caste mentality; arbitrary decision making above our heads; the usurpation of the finances by a small clique; useless visits to the minister of the interior, particularly by Fleurbay & Lasure.

(1) One of the first objectors doing civil service reported that it had taken four years of his life and that, under those conditions, he would have preferred to be imprisoned, which would have taken much less time.

But I will not dwell on this point here. I will limit myself to a word about the ... awful metamorphosis Gilbert Hubert started to undergo since the time he got installed on his little secretariat typical for upcoming alternative movements in the seventies.

First, his change in attitude did not become obvious. Collaboration with him in February and March 1971 went on in a satisfactory way, like in 1969 and 1970. This I may say, although before the beginning of 1971 -the other extreme of his later way of behaving- he had shown too much disposition to easily accept proposals of ours...

This completely changed in the following months and years. I give few examples of his unacceptable ways of proceeding :

1) At a meeting in March/April of 1971 at the Centre Puttenhof, which had been initiated by Hugo Ongena and Flor Fisher (Jesuits having left their monastery) it was decided to change the name *burgerdienst* (civil service) into *sociale dienst* (social service). We had struggled many years in order to obtain a civil service (like it was also called in the law), now newcomers wanted to call it differently, and Gilbert enthusiastically stuck to that fantasy (that would last only a short time). This, of course, he had a right to do, but he changed the name without consulting us.

2) On the said meeting it was also decided to make a new flyer about CO-status. G. in April 1971 wrote a concept that could not possibly be called usable. I then proposed a counter-concept. But it then appeared that our colleague and previous friend was undergoing a metamorphosis, was caught by a spirit of bad faith, so that he disapproved every word in my text. (Both concepts can still be compared.)

3) In early summer of 1970 I wrote an essay entitled *Korte formulering van onze maatschappijvisie* = Short Formulation Of Our View On Society. This text was discussed on several meetings of the group around Protest. In spring of 1971 G. made a stencil of it so badly typewritten that it became completely spoiled, totally unusable. Of course, I told him that, but he refused to do the work again. This was the beginning of a custom to regularly more or less spoil the texts I sent to the paper : such appeared to be the mentality of Hubert and other newcomers of the seventies. Still in spring of 1976 Biesemans, who would be in charge of an issue of Protest, spoiled an article of mine completely. The same is to be said of a short essay of mine that Jan Rutgeers and or Eric Van Thienen published in December of 1977 as what they called "a reader's letter"(!). The same applies to an appeal of the Registry of World Citizens, that was published in the beginning of 1978.

In spite of all this, I can say that I more or less regularly wrote in Protest, as I mentioned in a report entitled *Note sur mon rôle dans nos mouvements pour la paix*, which can be found on www.jeanverstraeten.be , under the title "War Resistance".

4) As the year 1971 went on, he started to decide about all himself alone. In that way a letter head of 1971 or 1972 was not, as usual, presented and discussed at the meetings. The result can be seen below : we saw ourselves faced with persons who knew it all better but who could not even properly spell the name of the association.

5) Suddenly, without proposing it first at a meeting, i.e. without working on a legitimate basis, he decided that taking a subscription to the paper would imply membership. Such a sign of superficiality characterised the mentality of a few newcomers in the seventies, who claimed that all decision power belonged to them.

6) When, in spring of 1971, the Overlegcentrum voor de Vrede nr. 1 (Centre for Dialogue About Peace nr. 1) was about to be founded, I reminded Gilbert that the international

communist movement -- that, to be precise, the Stalinist rulers after 1945 had initiated the World Peace Council. I explained to him that all national communist parties had become the instruction to create national sections of it. In our (part of the) country this section dominated by the Communist Party called itself *Belgische Unie ter Verdediging van de Vrede* (BUVV = Belgian Union For The Defence Of Peace). It was this movement that in spring of 1971 (as it had done before) proposed to form a cooperative structure of movements concerned about peace. This being the case, one could expect the BUVV would come across with clearly Moscow-aligned ideas, i.e. ideas coming from the champions of the arms race on the other side. Hubert, however, after the incident of the flyer in April 1971, wanted to be the only one to know it all and to decide it all. Hence, he did not listen to what I reported.

7) Somewhat later, in May or June, 1971, behind our back, he signed the (Moscow-aligned) Declaration of the OCV in the name of the IOT. We learned it through the publication in the paper *Protest*, and to our utter astonishment Hubert did no more understand that such was inadmissible.

8) In 1975, when a second version of OCV started, things went even worse. Hubert, totally behind the back and the knowledge of the IOT, had the IOT adhered to it. For a long time we did not know at all he had made us part of it!

9) In October 1973, the flight and the stay being paid by unknown persons (but who undoubtedly had links to the Communist Party), he went to Moscow in order to represent the IOT on a big international meeting of the so called "peace forces". Only when he came back were we allowed to know that we had been "represented" there. But to our protest Hubert replied : "THEY had told me : it's you or nobody". This is to say that THEY decided if the IOT had to be represented and by whom!!!

10) In October (?) 1973 as well, two staff members of the international secretariat first interviewed Gilbert Hubert and then visited the secretariat in Antwerp. On that occasion one of them read to us a report out of which it appeared how Hubert had had written about himself : we learnt that the IOT had sunk into inertia but that thanks to "his leadership" things were recovering. However, after the recognition of the IOT in July 1971 as a separate Belgian section, no charter or statutes had been adopted and Hubert had thwarted those I had proposed. Moreover, it had become unclear who were the IOT-members. There was hardly still a group of permanent members and those from before the time of Hubert had almost all disappeared. How could he then utter that nonsense about "his leadership"?

11) Since about May or June 1971, I believe, he and Patrik Lasure started regularly giving lectures about CO-status in different parts of the region. They did so in the name of the IOT but behind the back of the IOT. We were not allowed to know what was done in our name. We learnt it when Hubert brought to us a report addressed to the Triennial Conference in Sheffield of July/August 1972. He did so the night before our departure : we (a) got hardly the time to read it and certainly had no time to add our own comments.

12) On the triennial of Sheffield, in August of, 1972 Jean van Lierde reminded me -Hubert had failed to do so, on purpose I think- that each section had a right to nominate a delegate to the International Council. He suggested that I would be a candidate. Therefore I introduced a demand signed by all the present Belgian members : Jean Van Lierde, Andre

(a) Andre Van Langenhoven, Theo Smets, Jean Verstraeten + Sam Biesemans. The latter, however, left before the closed session on which for the first time we were allowed to vote as a separate Belgian section.

Van Langenhoven, Theo Smets, Abbé Paul Carrette, Jean-François Lecocq, Myriam Lecocq + myself. They all had been active war resisters for many years, not members of the vague, evanescent group around Hubert. Nevertheless, the latter criticized my nomination. A spirit of odious inequality or odious discrimination became characteristic for him who had been a loyal fellow war resister from 1969 till the beginning of 1971, and even a friend from 1970 on.

13) When I still proposed or coordinated some activity, Hubert used to react in a grinning or ridiculing way. It happened a few times, however, that he came to a place where an activity proposed by me took place, but immediately after coming he would leave ostentatiously. Such he did e.g. when in Autumn of 1971 Prof. Leo Michielsen, theorist of the Communist Party, came to a meeting in order to commentate my "Short Formulation of Our View On Society". The same happened in 1974 on a meeting tending to become a study group about non-violent resistance.

14) When I told him that not only health trouble limited me enormously but also the fact that I was overwhelmed by my full time work at the office, he retorted promptly : "One does not work at the offices " (= *Op de kantoren wordt niet gewerkt*). Such was *toute l'assurance de la crasse ignorance* (all the assurance of the radical ignorance) of our sociologist. He also spoke with utterly stupid contempt about his predecessors : "Sunday pacifists organising coffee circles (?) / gatherings (?)".

15) When I reminded him what had been agreed to in 1969/1971, he retorted : "I don't agree it happened like that". Apparently, like in the later seventies, radical distortions of truth uttered in a spirit of depreciation and occultation of others had become normal...

16) In January 1973, whilst my health -that has worsened dramatically from that time on- kept me in bed, Hubert suddenly decided to create an executive committee of which I would be excluded. I suppose he had in mind once more a manipulation against me. Furthermore, nothing happened, as the said committee never really came into existence. The same applies to his sudden and arbitrary decision, taken behind our backs of course, to "nominate" a redaction secretary : we did not know that fellow and we never came to know him, as he never appeared...

17) The fusion into the IOT was explained in some sort of editorial in Protest of March/April, actually of April 1971. It was written by me, in execution of what had been decided at the last meeting. However, I only did so, because Gilbert preferred me to do it instead of him : initially it had been agreed to that he would explain the fusion in an article in the paper, in which case contents of the text would have been the same (in the beginning of 1971 the relation between Gilbert and me was still good).

A few weeks after that publication, I may remind that, Lasure behaved in the way I reported in preceding pages. Moreover, after having absolutely not participated in all the work of the group around Protest and of the work done in view of the fusion into the IOT, he suddenly started claiming that what had been written in the editorial was of no value, was to be considered nothing. He did so with unconditional contempt and he did not listen to any truthful argument. Moreover, he never spoke about it at a meeting nor did he write anything about it. Like previously, he just manipulated in the dark, behind our back, before suddenly attacking me. This once more proved how totally impossible it was to work with somebody behaving in that way.

18) In Autumn of 1972, I asked Gilbert, who wanted to centralize it all on the place where he did his civil service, to take there (the *Centrum Elcker-Ick*) a local centre for registration of the

International Registry of World Citizens. He nor the Centrum Elcker-Ick did object to that, but Hubert added that he was not disposed to do anything in the framework of the Registry. Hence, it came to Hove, though I wanted to avoid working with private addresses.

(I may remind here that Protest had been the collective paper of small peace groups and also a continuation of the collective bulletin *Geweldloze Weerbaarheid* (Non-Violent-Resistance) + of the world federalist paper *Regenboog* (Rainbow), in which the IOT had written as well. One of the small groups editing Protest had been the Committee of World Federalists, which had come out of the previous Federal Union and of the redaction of *Regenboog*. This committee logically supported the Registry of World Citizens and continued to do so as a world federalist tendency after having fused into the IOT.

19) Hubert, in about 1972/73, had the fantasy to separate in his card-system the conscientious objectors from the other members/subscribers. He regarded me as belonging to the latter. Such was his mentality after his awful metamorphosis that he considered to be non-objectors those from before the law who had asked for a law and had been legally recognised at the first session of the Council On Conscientious Objection. And that same fellow had addressed me (as IOT) since the end of 1968 as a conscientious objector asking for information and as a student preparing a thesis about conscientious objection, Moreover, during almost two years I had been helping him to prepare his civil service and his discrete halftime work for the IOT.

20) In October of 1973 we, as IOT, would distribute a flyer on a musical feast organised in Berchem-near-Antwerpen by the military. When we gathered at the secretariat in Antwerpen, it appeared that a concept of a flyer had not been written yet. Hubert then proclaimed : "In : due time, I'll still write a text. WE can do that, it's our profession". In his tone appeared an unbearable arrogance, and when the text was finally written, we were faced with the fact that he did not consider it to be a concept : he just wanted us to distribute a text of him without granting us any possibility to discuss its contents and to possibly amend it. Without having been consulted, we were supposed to take part in an action that could endanger our jobs, our income, our security.

21) It is to be said that unlike Jan Rutgeers or Eric Van Thienen (a) Gilbert Hubert started working for the IOT when in civil service. However, "under his leadership" almost everybody from before his time, if not everybody except me, disappeared from the IOT-scene...

(a) Correction : Van Thienen, became active during his civil service already, but hardly before he got in view the possibility to obtain subventions for the IOT specifically and also a fulltime job.

22) From 1969 till the beginning of 1971 I would have been disposed to propose that after his service Gibert would assume the task of secretary, provided he would no longer be working full time at the place where the secretariat was situated. I got no occasion to do that, as behind our backs, he nominated himself a secretary, as we could read in the Housmans Peace Diary (of which he had been given the address by me, which also applied to most addresses).

* * *

Were there exclusions on the level of the "Flemish" WRI-section? Who excluded whom? Who was entitled to exclude others? On which grounds? According to which legitimate procedure?

I submitted those questions to everybody, even to the subscribers of the statutes of the alleged vzw IOT. Nobody, however, could name excluded members. Even Biesemans, Rutgeers and Lasure did not claim they were able to do so. What the latter three did, nonetheless, was to threaten the undersigned to deprive him of the financial minimum and to repetitively have him imprisoned. As at that time they had cumulated the titles of chairman, secretary and treasurer of both the *Internationale van Oorlogsgtegenstanders (IOT)* and the *Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd (BDJ)* they also in the name of those associations expressed their criminal intentions... This was the way they treated objectors from before the law who had asked for a law and had been e.g. initiators of the IOT.

Jean Verstraeten, www.jeanverstraeten.be

Enclosures (see below) :

- 1) "About the use of this letter head" (in three languages)
- 2) Invitation to the so called foundation meeting of the 12th of December 1977 of a vzw IOT. (This invitation on purpose was sent to us a month too late. Nothing was mentioned about a foundation meeting and no concept of statutes was added.)
- 3) Letter-head from 1971 : we saw ourselves, for the first time since 1962, faced with people -newcomers- who had such documents printed without previously talking about it and who, claiming to know it all better, could not even properly spell the name of the association.

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS

Vlaamse afdeling van de War Resisters' International

2540 Hove (Belgium), datum postmerk
Vredestraat 65

Over het gebruik van dit briefhoofd (BIJLAGE 1)

Op 26 oktober 1965, op een vergadering van ons gezamenlijk berichtenblad Geweldloze Weerbaarheid, besloten we ook aan de Belgische maar eigenlijk alleen Franstalige WRI-afdeling een nieuwe opening op Vlaanderen te verschaffen. Zo ontstond de Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders, een naam die we overnamen van een Nederlandse groep en die we enige tijd later wijzigden in INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGS TEGENSTANDERS. Die niet erg gelukkige naamkeuze wilde een precieze tegenhanger vormen van Internationale des Résistants á la Guerre, toen immers dezelfde WRI-afdeling.

In september 1969, op een vergadering te Antwerpen, besloot de INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS deel te nemen aan de oprichting van PROTEST als gezamenlijk tijdschrift van de onafhankelijke Vlaamse "vredesgroepjes".

Die groepjes, waaronder zich ook een Comité van Wereldfederalisten bevond, beslisten eind januari 1971, op een vergadering in Hove, samen te smelten in de

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS, die zes maand later als een aparte Belgische afdeling, naast de I.R.G., erkend werd.

Vanaf december 1977 legden vier voltijdse personeelsleden van de Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd -nl. Biesemans, Van Thienen, Rutgeers en Poelman- van wie de laatste drie zich nooit als vrijwilliger actief hadden getoond in 't kader van de I.O.T., achter onze rug, door

de oprichting van een v.z.w., beslag op onze vereniging en al haar middelen, in de eerste plaats op alle door de staat geleverde werkkrachten en verleende toelagen.

In een geest van doelbewuste bedriegerij, stuurden ze ons geen ontwerp van hun "statuten" en ook de uitnodiging op hun zogenaamde "stichtingsvergadering" van 12 december zonden ze ons opzettelijk met een maand vertraging.

Sindsdien vraagt onze WRI-afdeling om een hervorming die rekening houdt met wat waar en rechtschapen is, met de tussenmenselijke eerlijkheid, de grondbeginselen van de democratie of het zelfbeheer, de elementaire ledenrechten en het bestaansrecht van menselijke personen.

Sur l'usage de cette en-tête

Le 26 octobre 1965, á une réunion de notre bulletin collectif Geweldloze Weerbaarheid (= Résistance non-violente) nous décidâmes d'offrir une nouvelle ouverture sur la Flandre à la section belge de la War Resisters' International, restée uniquement francophone ou presque dans l'après-guerre. Ainsi l'Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders vint à naître, nom que nous empruntâmes à une section de Hollande et que nous changeâmes quelque temps après en INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS (I.O.T.).

En septembre 1969, l'I.O.T. prit part à la création de PROTEST en tant que périodique collectif des groupuscules indépendants pour la paix en Belgique néerlandophone.

En janvier 1971, comme nous l'avions proposé, ces groupuscules fusionnèrent dans l'I.O.T. et celle-ci, cette même année encore, s'est vue reconnue par la War

Resisters'International comme section à part entière, indépendante de l'Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre, soit la section en Belgique francophone.

Depuis décembre 1977, avec la complicité morale d'un Lasure, quatre membres du personnel du B.D.J. (= Service Civil pour la Jeunesse) -soit Biesemans, Van Thienen, Rutgeers et Poelman- qui hormis le premier ne s'étaient jamais montrés actifs en tant que bénévoles au sein de notre mouvement, accaparèrent, par la création d'une association sans but lucratif, toute l'I.O.T. et tous ses moyens, surtout le personnel et l'argent fournis par l'état.

Dans un esprit de tromperie calculée, ils omirent de nous faire parvenir un projet de leurs soi-disant statuts. En plus, ils nous envoyèrent avec un mois de retard -et sans y joindre les "statuts"- leur invitation à la soi-disant réunion fondatrice du 12 décembre 1977.

Depuis lors, notre association demande à être réformée dans un esprit désireux de respecter l'honnêteté interhumaine, les principes de base de la démocratie ou de l'autogestion, les droits fondamentaux des membres et le droit à l'existence de personnes humaines.

On the use of this letter-head

On the 26th October 1965, at a meeting of our collective bulletin Geweldloze Weerbaarheid = Non-violent Resistance, the Belgian WRI-section, which in the post-war period had stayed almost French speaking only, decided to start the Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders (I.O.B.). In the course of the next few months we changed that name, which we had taken over from a section in Holland into INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS. That name was intended to be a precise equivalent of Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre, at that time the same Belgian WRI-section.

In September 1969, at a meeting in Antwerp, the INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS (I.O.T.) decided to take part in the creation of PROTEST as a collective bulletin of the independent small peace groups in the Dutch speaking part of this country.

At the end of January 1971, at a meeting in Hove, these small groups, as we had proposed, decided to fuse into the I.O.T., which that same year was recognised by the W.R.I. as a section separate from the Internationale des Résistants la Guerre, the section for

French speaking Belgium.

From December 1977 on, four persons who were working full time at the secretariate of B.D.J. = Civil Service for Youth -Biesemans, Rutgeers, Van Thienen and Poelman- who with the exception of Biesemans had never been active as volunteers within the framework of the I.O.T., by the creation behind our back of a v.z.w. = a non-profit form of legal association, seized our WRI-section and all its means, above all the personal and the subsidies given by the state. Whilst doing so, in a spirit of calculated imposture, they omitted to send us a project of their articles of association and they posted the invitation to their so-called foundation meeting of the 12th December 1977 a month too late. Moreover, in that invitation, to which they omitted to join the articles of association, they did not say anything about the 12th December as being the foundation date of a v.z.w. I.O.T.

Since that time our WRI-section ought to be reformed according to the principles of inter-human honesty, democracy or self-management and the members' fundamental rights.

Jean Verstraeten

P.S. As to the fusion of the groups into the I.O.T. in 1971, I remind that the BFHC = Robert Fermont's Commemorative Committee, due to its specific raison d'être, continued to exist separately.

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS
VLAAMSE TAK VAN DE WAR RESISTERS' INTERNATIONAL

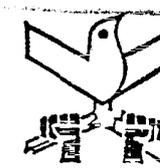
xxx.xx1.ssa=xxxxx Van Elewycckstraat 35
 maxxameaxxxx 1050 Brussel

Aan de leden van de . Werkgroep I.O.T. (BIJLAGE 2)

Geachte

1977

We zijn zo vrij U uit te nodigen op de volgende IOT-vergadering, die zal doorgaan op maandag 12 december, om 19u, in de Van Elewvckstraat 35, 1050 Brussel. Tot onze spijt zullen voortaan de vergaderingen van de IOT-werkgroep moeilijk nog bij Oxfam-Antwerpen kunnen plaatsvinden, daar er in het lokaal alleen nog vergaderingen waar Oxfamensen bij aanwezig zijn kunnen doorgaan.



Wij hopen dat U zult aanwezig zult zijn op deze vergadering, gezien het belang van de agenda-punten die moeten besproken worden :

- 1 . Mogelijkheden tot subsidiering IOT (noodzaak, opportuniteit, ...)
- 2 . Voorbereiding Algemene Vergadering I.O.T. (definitieve datum, agenda, mogelijke jaarprojecten)

In de hoop U te mogen begroeten op deze vergadering, teken ik met radikaal-pacifistische groeten,

voor de I.O.T. : Erik Van Thienen

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS (I could not scan it properly.)

VLAAMSE TAK VAN DE "WAR RESISTERS" INTERNATIONAL CONSCIENCESTRAAT 46 - 2000
ANTWERPEN - 03/39.38.68 - PR 10560.57 (BIJLAGE 3)