

INTERNATIONALE VAN OORLOGSTEGENSTANDERS (I.O.T.)

Vlaamse afdeling van de War Resisters' International

(Opnieuw) opgericht in 1965



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Longa vis est veritatis.

IOT : HOW IT CAME TO BE

During decades the full-timers, working in the Van Elewijckstraat no. 35 in Brussels, who at the end of the seventies had usurped our section (and all its means) in an intolerable and invalid way, systematically spread the flagrant lie (1) that the IOT did not exist before 1971.

As to this I refer to the many reports -hundreds of pages- I have been writing about the question. I also refer to the archives of about one hundred and fifty thousand pages in Hove, more particularly to a file of about five thousand pages. The latter I made at the time (1995) when Sam Biesemans, Jan Rutgeers and Patrik Lasure, in the name also of the so called vzw IOT (2) (a vzw being a legal non-profit organisation) and the vzw Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd = Civil Service for Youth, having lost their sense of truth and justice, threatened the undersigned to deprive him of the financial minimum and to repetitively imprison him (see e.g. the letter of their lawyer dated July 14, 1995).

I do not want to write a long report again now. I just mention a few documents proving what happened before 1971 and in 1971 :

Letter written by me the 21st of September 1963 to Jean Van Lierde and his reply of the 24th of September

In 1961/1962 a Committee for non-Violent Peace Action, particularly at the initiative of Lea Provo but also of e.g. Maurice Cosyn, secretary of the Federal Union, a world federalist movement, (3) came into existence. Shortly after that, in 1963, some members suggested that we could better adhere to the Belgian section of the War Resisters'

(1), (2) and (3) : see last page.

International. This was discussed in the course of several months (to which Patrik Lasure, who in the nineties became the -farcical- "chairman" of the so called vzw IOT did not participate).

On the 21st of September 1963 I wrote about our discussions to Jean Van Lierde, secretary of the Belgian WRI-section and in his letter of the 24th of September 1963 he welcomed the idea that we would form a Dutch (Flemish) speaking wing of his section. He also stressed that you could not sign the WRI-declaration unless you had declared yourself a conscientious objector. This implied that Lasure could not take part in our project -- but as he always stayed absent during our discussions, nobody thought of him.

Bilingual bulletin of the CGVA/CANVP (= Committee for Non-Violent Peace Action) of December 1963

This bulletin contained an invitation to the committee's meeting of the 8th of February 1964. On the agenda stood the question of our possible adherence to the Belgian section of the WRI. (At the time, we called the Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders Internationale van Oorlogsbestrijders.) It appeared, however, that Lea Provo, who again assumed her task of secretary/coordinator from that moment on, felt unconditionally opposed to our being part of the Belgian WRI.

My letter of the 1st of November 1965 to Jean Van Lierde

In late summer of 1965 the newsletter of the CGVA was changed into a collective bulletin of a few groups. On the meeting of the 26th of October I proposed to add the IOT. This was accepted, and on the 1st of November I wrote about this to Jean Van Lierde. He immediately agreed, but for the time being I don't find back his written reply : all the same, from that moment on the IOT (actually the IOB) took part in the collective bulletin called "Geweldloze Weerbaarheid" (Non-Violent Resistance). Regularly it also published in the periodical "Regenboog" (Rainbow) as well, the periodical of the Federale Unie, the Dutch speaking wing of the Union Fédérale.

Letter of mine to the International Civil Service of the 29th of March 1970

To some of the conscientious objectors asking us (BDJ or IOT) for information in Hove, I proposed to find an association where they could do there civil service whilst discretely working half time for the working group around Protest. (Protest was founded in the late summer of 1969, as a collective paper of independent peace groups : the IOT was

among them). Willy Bruijneel and Gibert Hubert agreed to this idea. However, when their civil service had started, Willy completely broke his word, whereas -as I told in many reports- Gilbert (after spring of 1971) -“forgot” all that had been agreed to (which had been prepared in the course of almost two years) and behaved as if the IOT were a personal possession of him.

Letter of mine to Jean Van Lierde of the ?? and his reply of 2nd February 1971 + my letters to the WRI of the 10th of February and the 20th of May

During months the possibility was discussed to make of Protest the periodical of the IOT only (Lasure never took part in them). This proposal was finally accepted on the meeting of the end of January of 1971, which took place in Hove. I don't find back notes about that meeting, nor of the letter I wrote about this to Jean Van Lierde. However, I found back his reply of the 2nd of February, in which he agreed to the idea.

Introducing article in the issue of Protest of March/April 1971

In an introducing article to the above issue I explained the fusion into the IOT, as decided by the meeting of January. I also reminded a few principles of self management, as agreed to by the group. Unlike in later months and years I did not propose a charter or articles of associations, as we remained part of the Belgian Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre (IRG) / Internationale van Oorlogstegenstanders (IOT).

Letter from the WRI secretariat of the 7th of July 1971

However, some persons, particularly in French speaking Belgium, preferred to make of the IOT a section separate from the IRG (= Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre). I corresponded about this with the international secretariat and on the 7th of July Devi Prasad wrote to me that this idea would be welcomed.

Letter of the International Council of Lübeck of the 28th July 1971

On the 28th of July 1971 the International Council of Lübeck wrote to the IOT in Hove that the IOT now was considered to be a section separate from the IRG.

I lost that document in a copy centre, where I had made a (bad) copy. Hence, I can only copy that bad copy.

J..V.

P.S. I send the mentioned documents to those who transfer 5 euro to the account of Jean Verstraeten, BE85 0001 0565 3006.

(1) A comparable lie was spread by Sam Biesemans about the Burgerdienst voor de Jeugd. This, a cooperation of movements at its beginning, was founded the 11th of May 1964, at the moment CO-status was voted in Belgium (practically, at least in the seventies, it was like an ad hoc commission of the IOT). In the later seventies, and during decades, Biesemans said and wrote everywhere he could that it had been created at the end 1969, at his initiative.

(2) They also called it “Volksbeweging voor de Vrede” = “Popular Movement for Peace”, confirming thus that they did not know what the WRI stands for. In previous years already, Gilbert Hubert, a conscientious objector who had asked information to the IOT in Hove and who would discretely work half time for it during his civil service, had -behind our back, according to a practice that then started- equalled a subscription to the paper to membership. Such was the superficiality, the unawareness coming up in the seventies.

(3) I myself played temporarily a coordinating role after an accident of Lea’s husband André on the 30th of June of 1962. Lea then gave to me the papers from before 1962. After that a secretariat was opened in Schoten near Antwerp. This explains why the central papers of the said committee, from its beginning till February 1964, when Lea again assumed her task as secretary/coordinator, are stocked in Hove.