



VRE

## FRONT FIGHTERS

Standing up for Christian values and norms in a secular environment.  
Part 2. Henk Jan van Schothorst lobbies behind the scenes on the world stage.

# EDGE *Peace* *For the City*

Before he leaves for the enormous UN building on Hudson Bay in New York, Henk Jan van Schothorst falls to his knees in his budget -“it must all be as cheap as possible”- hostel. He does not know what to do. What should happen next with his lobby organization? When he gets up, he is a burden lighter. “It was no longer my business.” He talks about his top-level fight for 'peace for the city'.

*Text C.J. DE LEEUW | Images HANNO DE VRIES*

An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, featuring a large body of water in the foreground and a dense cluster of skyscrapers. A prominent building in the center is under construction, with a tall crane extending from its top. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing text.

HENK JAN VAN SCHO THORST

“The progressive movement has a sinister agenda that is being sold as something wonderful”

He travels all over the world. In the past few months alone, Henk Jan van Schothorst flew to Canada, Poland, Finland, Hungary and South Africa with one goal: To influence policy at the top level. His work in the corridors of power takes him to the highest level of decision making. Sometimes Van Schothorst sits at the table with presidents. Or he accidentally ends up in the chair of a Swedish Minister. Van Schothorst, with a grin: "He told me to just stay seated. Fortunately, he was able to put himself into perspective – people who derive their identity from their title are often the most unpleasant types." Minister Kaag's mobile number is in his contact list. "We once sat next to each other on the plane and had a good, in-depth conversation." Closer friendships developed with others. "The Hungarian ambassador is a good friend. Pete Hoekstra, the former ambassador of the United States, has become a personal friend."

#### PLAY THE BALL

The origins of that personal friendship are a story in themselves. Van Schothorst tells it nicely. When Hoekstra gives his first press conference in the Netherlands in early 2018, it is as if he steps into a bay full of hungry sharks. "The atmosphere was electric. The journalists poured out all their pent-up anger about Trump on Hoekstra. It looked like someone opened a Pandora box. At the end I stood up and said: 'Mr. Hoekstra, we warmly welcome you, we pray for you and we will support you in executing your duties.' Within two weeks I had lunch at the residence." Not everyone appreciates him for it. "Hoekstra worked for Trump and some of my supporters therefore thought I should not be close to him. Even my main donor left me for this reason. However, I was not in favor of Trump, because I am not in favor of specific people, I am in favor of certain policies (policies that support life, family and freedom). I play on the ball and not on the man. My only goal is that the ball goes into the other goal and not into ours. And in areas such as family politics, the Trump diplomats were a breath of fresh air in comparison to the Obama administration."



**Henk Jan van Schothorst is founder and director of Christian Council International (CCI). This organization focuses on influencing policy at an international level. For example, he may speak at the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) and in member states. He previously worked as a staff member in the European Parliament for the SGP (Reformed Political Party).**

#### UNDEMOCRATIC

In 2013, he stepped onto the playing field by founding the Transatlantic Christian Council, which is now called Christian Council International (CCI) – "because the African countries asked whether they are also counted in goal." With this foundation he wants to make a Biblical voice heard in the wings of power. Influencing policy from the perspective of the position of families, the protection of life and freedom of religion and education. When he was still a policy officer in the European Parliament, he saw that this was not an unnecessary luxury. "It is quite a job to slow down and re-direct such a huge institution as the European Commission from within Parliament. As a result, there is insufficient control over what is happening. The liberal, progressive agenda is being pushed through from every direction." Things are not always democratic. This certainly applies in the United Nations (UN), says Van Schothorst. "For example, in 2016 they appointed a so-called 'Independent Expert' to monitor how countries operate in the field of 'Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)'. Strictly speaking, there was not even a majority in favor of the establishment of this position as quite a few countries abstained from voting. Yet this expert is now installed and visiting the countries. This is how they want to impose and enforce this agenda, while LGBT rights are not even a category in human rights. There is no legal basis for SOGI."

#### EU, NOT OUR FRIEND

The EU is also making a fool of democracy, Van Schothorst believes. "The EU is currently working on a new treaty with the so-called ACP countries, a group of 79 states from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean. All kinds of conditions have been incorporated in a concealed manner. For example, these countries must establish abortion clinics, provide comprehensive sex education according to liberal principles and regulate LGBT rights. And yet those countries now have legislation that is at odds with it."

# “The EU is increasingly becoming an organization that one should fear and to be wary of”

They often do not know that the treaty has these fundamental implications. The EU negotiated with the headquarters of the ACP countries, which, strangely enough, is located in Brussels (instead of being located in one of the ACP countries) and is also paid for by the EU. We try to make these countries aware of the conditions attached to the treaty, because it is binding. This means that, once it is signed, they must implement the progressive agenda pushed by the EU. And the EU has the means to strangle many of the ACP countries. If they do not want to sign? Fine, then they do not get any financial aid and trade support either. Just sickening. The EU says it defends democracy, but how do they reconcile that? No, the EU is not our friend. Definitely not. It is increasingly becoming an organization to be reckoned with, and that one should be wary of.”

## NOT ALONE

The extent to which the European Union embraces the progressive agenda is evident when Hungary adopts a law in 2019 to protect children against LGBT propaganda. “I thought that the Hungarian law was an extremely healthy and sensible law. But European leaders responded with disproportionate anger, (Dutch Prime Minister Rutte in the lead), while this is not the mandate of the EU. “Beyond crazy,” Mark Rutte said in anger. The Prime Minister is a fantastic guy as a person, but he has been converted to this agenda.” The commotion surrounding the law earned Van Schothorst a Hungarian Golden Cross of Merit. “Because of this enormous indignation, I drew up a Certificate of Appreciation on beautifully made paper and presented it in Budapest to Katalin Novák, who was the Hungarian Minister for Families at the time.”

## **Proponents of progressive values do this from their own perspective with positive intentions. How do you view that?**

“Somehow I appreciate their efforts. I also have nothing against those people. I have good friends sitting in D66 and in other parties. We are all equal before God. We have enough for ourselves and we all have to live by grace. Before you leave in the morning, look in the mirror for thirty seconds and think about who you have in front of you. That helps. Then you have a lot less to complain about others. Still, when it comes to substance, opinions clash fiercely.”

## **Can you imagine them finding your views objectionable?**

“Oh, sure. Especially when it comes to the topics such as LGBT. They often play the hate card, because, according to them, what I say is considered hate speech. And in their view that is about as bad as terrorism. They accuse me of hatred, but the hatred shines in their eyes. In fact, they themselves propagate a kind of religious view. They present their views as indisputable facts, but they are assumptions.”

## **What is their creed?**

“They believe in an unlimited right to self-determination that must be respected by everyone. I see it as a comprehensive, methodical, institutional rebellion of the creature against its Creator. Man has become god. He will decide for himself. I compare it to a glass. It has been worked on, it has been polished: that is what you call a civilization. But the liberal, progressive movement takes the glass and smashes it against the wall. Then they pick up the pieces and say, this is diversity, you have to embrace this. If you do not accept it, we will sue you and if you do not agree with it, then you discriminate others. Liberal parties have totalitarian views.”

They do not want freedom of religion, but subordination to this ideology. If you think differently, you no longer belong. What we think should actually be gradually banned. You now see values around sexual orientation and gender identity being implemented in the constitution. How long will this be in a balanced relationship with freedom of religion? It's a sinister agenda sold as something wonderful. People now want abortion to become an international human right. Killing unborn life as a human right. That's something to cry about. It has become a cold world."

**Are we not aware enough of what is going on?**

"I think so. You can draw the curtains and lock the door and think: that's happening outside. But this really does enter your home. It has become a mess. As CCI we try to protect society against this."

**How is this going to affect our lives?**

"It is still tolerated in the Netherlands to be against abortion and LGBTI promotion, but it is coming under more pressure. We have a tax deductible (ANBI) status, but for how long? In a letter to Parliament from Minister Dijkgraaf about emancipation policy, CCI is indirectly portrayed as a religious extremist organization. We are seen as a danger, an undermining force. And this while CDA and CU were in the cabinet. Can you believe that?" If it were up to the Tax Authorities, Van Schothorst would not even have received that ANBI status. "One of the grounds on which ANBI status is granted is to promote the democratic legal order. When I started the foundation, I applied for the ANBI status on that ground. The tax authorities did not go along with it. I appealed and won. But the Tax Authorities did not leave it at that. This is how I ended up in a strangling process that lasted two and a half years." The legal fight also has its advantages. "Not only did the foundation become better known through the lawsuits, I also had to actually implement my objectives in order to win the cases. That's how I was drawn into the working field."

UNITED NATIONS

One of the steps he takes to this end is to apply for a consultative status at the United Nations. "Then you can enter their buildings, you can lobby and you can make a verbal or written contribution during meetings." A Biblical voice is also desperately needed there, says Van Schothorst. "UN organizations provide a lot of development aid, but it is infested and poisoned with feminist policies. For women and girls, they say. Who can be against that? But in the same breath LGBT rights are promoted. It is a cover to push that liberal agenda through." Obtaining such a status is not easy. Van Schothorst discovered that when he attends the processing of the applications in New York in 2016. "They were treated in two days. Each organization was given five minutes. My turn was almost last. The first day was particularly discouraging. One Christian organization after another was thrown aside. Tap-tap-tap. I'm very optimistic, but at the end of the day I went to my budget hostel feeling desperate and sad. That night I did not sleep well. The next morning I fell to my knees at my wits' end. "Lord," I prayed, "why is everything, everything going wrong now? I have no income, the lawsuit has been going on for so long and now all those Christian organizations are also being thrown out. Who am I actually doing this for?' Then it was as if the whole burden had been lifted from my shoulders. It was not my business anymore. It was taken from me. Relieved and cheerful, I stepped outside. I decided not to give up and visited all the ambassadors of the decision-making committee. Because if one votes against, you don't get any status. I received support from almost all of them."

**Also from the progressive countries?**

"It was exciting in a few countries. Israel, for example, is very progressive. But when I told the ambassador that I had worked in the European Parliament with MEP Bas Belder and was in the Israel delegation, he said: "You have my vote!"

I immediately received support from the Chinese ambassador, even though they know that I am a Christian. Just for the fact that I'm fighting the progressive agenda. A country like China is conservative on this point. Only the ambassador of South Africa – dubbed by some as the 'anti-God man' – objected. I spoke to him three times, but he did not give a definitive answer. We were scheduled for 5 p.m. A minute before five, the ambassador walked out of the room. We raised the issue and there were no objections. The moment the chairman had hammered away, the South African ran back in and pressed the button. He wanted to ask some critical questions about us. Too late. Shortly afterwards it turned out that I had also won the tax authorities' substantive proceedings and that we were given ANBI status retroactively."

#### STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

Van Schothorst is now a regular at various United Nations bodies. It is a rush hour. "I have to operate very strategically. When opponents see what I do, they try to smear you or prevent you from achieving what you want. I have to be careful what I say anyway. It can easily lead to an indictment, as happened in Finland with politician Päivi Räsänen. We do not have to be afraid of that. Guido de Brès did not write the Belgic Confession of Faith from his armchair, but at the risk of persecution. From prison he wrote to his wife: 'This is the best school I have ever had'. We too must confess our faith. We are called to do this. I try to communicate carefully and still say what I really think. We must make a balanced, but clear sound. That is what I try to do when I can speak at the United Nations. In such contributions I increasingly return to the real Biblical data. I tell them that we have fallen into sin, that we are in need of redemption and that this is also possible because the Son of God has come into the world. I can simply deliver the message of salvation."

#### How is the response to this?

"They look strange at it. In a round of consultations with the UN expert on gender identity at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, I pointed out that the Bible teaches that man was created as male and female. There were about a hundred LGBTI organizations and twenty representatives of predominantly progressive member states. I was the only one who stood up for a Biblical view. It became completely silent in the room. You could hear a pin drop during my contribution. Yet I do not feel lonely." With a laugh, paraphrasing Queen Wilhelmina: "I am lonely, but not alone. For there is a strong Hero with us, Who has promised us help."

#### THE WORLD

Standing alone is relative. The West may be predominantly progressive, but this certainly does not apply to all continents. "In Africa and Asia they think very differently about these themes. But the US and the EU have money and they abuse this to force their progressive values down the throats of developing countries." You also hear different voices at the Budapest Demographic Summit that Van Schothorst recently attended. "There were all kinds of political leaders who came together to think about the demographic crisis in Europe due to the low birth rate. There were family-friendly voices there. Truly a bright spot in a darkening Europe. There are also organizations we work with, such as Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), who strive for the same thing as us. However, there are an enormous number of progressive organizations and they are often heavily subsidized. Billions are involved."

#### SUPPORT

In this way, Van Schothorst continues to seek peace for the city, as Jeremiah 29:7 says. Persistent and optimistic. Despite his optimistic nature, worry about the future can overwhelm him.




"We could use some reinforcements. Also in a financial sense. Resources are limited to keep the business running. Sometimes I think, how do I get it all done? I lack time, money and employees. It requires a lot of attention to raise enough money." He puts as much money as possible into the organization that comes in. "Only after five years did I carefully transfer some salary to myself on the last day of the year."

#### LIVE IN THIS CONFIDENCE

More important is "Strength from above", as Van Schothorst calls it. "You can not do this work without it. And thus far the Lord has helped each time. We must live in that trust. That is what I also do. Although it is not something what you have, it is a daily practice. Sometimes you lose and then I feel very disappointed. Then I think: why don't You do it this way or that way? Yet that is not my responsibility. However, I believe that my job is to work as hard as I can, but He is above it. He sees the front of the embroidery, we only see the back. No matter how it turns out, it always goes well."

**"What I say is considered hate speech. In their view that is about as bad as terrorism"**



An aerial, black and white photograph of the New York City skyline, showing numerous skyscrapers and a body of water in the foreground. A large, semi-transparent white oval is superimposed over the center of the image, containing a quote in black serif font.

“There are an enormous number of progressive organizations and they are often heavily subsidized. The opposing forces are enormous”

HENK JAN VAN SCHOTHORST

**Left: the building  
of the United  
Nations in New  
York.**