Dutch communism in transition

The CPN, the national-front strategy and the political reconstruction of the Netherlands (1944-1948)

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Image on front page: CPN-optocht vanaf Waterlooplein. Wagenaar en de Groot afgebeeld op verkiezingsborden (26 June 1948), http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/IISG02:30051000704897

Introduction

> "Ik had de handen vrij, er viel nog zo ontzaglijk veel te doen. Steeds weer herhaalde ik voor mezelf en anderen: Wij hebben een enorme goodwill gekweekt, een groot deel van het volk heeft vertrouwen in ons gekregen – we mogen straks bij de bevrijding niet falen. De mantel der verantwoordelijkheid, die ons straks bij de bevrijding om de schouders zou vallen, leek mij zwaarder te dragen dan alle gevaren van het verzet."[1]

This quote by Antoon Koejemans, prominent member of the *Communistische Partij Nederland* (CPN) and chief editor of its newspaper *De Waarheid*, exemplifies the mindset of Dutch communists at the end of the Second World War. They felt that the war and the role of the communists in the resistance against the German occupier had changed everything. They were sure that the future lay in the hands of the left-wing, and they were eager to accept the responsibility for reconstructing the Netherlands and decisively transform the country along progressive lines. The communists should be the leaders of a 'national front' of progressives in order to achieve radical change and make communism finally an accepted force in the Dutch political arena. What were the consequences of this strategy? And why were communists completely marginalized and regarded as a threat to the nation only a few years later?

The CPN and the politics of reconstruction in literature

The CPN may never have yielded tangible influence in Dutch politics, but given its long-term presence as a revolutionary movement in a bourgeois society, it has attracted the attention of many scholars. In recent years, Ger Verrips' party history and Jan-Willem Stutje's biography of Paul de Groot, leader of the party during much of its existence, have given us a broad overview of the CPN's development, but they lack precise analytical questions due to their wide scope.[2] The period we are concerned with – the phase of 'political reconstruction' (1944-1948) – deserves such analytical questions, because the circumstances for a communist breakthrough never seemed so bright as at this point in the CPN's history, which makes the total isolation of the party through much of the fifties all the more striking. What factors made the party transform from a well-respected resistance movement to a political pariah? According to A.A. de Jonge, guidelines from Moscow are to blame: the CPN would have

[1] Antoon Koejemans, *Van 'ja' tot 'amen'* (Amsterdam, 1961) 117.
[2] Ger Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend. De geschiedenis van de CPN 1938-1991* (Amsterdam, 1995); Jan Willem Stutje, *De man die de weg wees. Leven en werk van Paul de Groot 1899-1986* (Amsterdam, 2000).

defended Soviet interests from 1946 onwards, instead of Dutch interests.[3] Other scholars, less influenced by a Cold War-mindset, have pointed out that non-communist politicians were influenced by a historical distrust by the CPN; the traditional polarization of the Dutch political system proved too strong for them to fully accept the communists' post-war non-revolutionary, 'national' outlook.[4]

With this mantra of the 'return of old divisions'[5] CPN-historians echo the decades-old 'renewal-restoration' discourse which has dominated Dutch scholarship on the reconstruction period. The recurring themes in this discourse are the 'failure' of the political breakthrough which had captured the imagination of many progressive intellectuals and politicians since the 1930s, and the durability of old structures.[6] Hans Blom thinks these phenomena signify that continuities between the pre- and post-war eras are more important than changes.[7] Others argue that the reasons for the return of the pre-war party system and the emerging consensus on stability instead of far-ranging reform are to be found in the particular circumstances of the reconstruction phase: the pressing need for material and institutional reconstruction which left little time for experiments[8] or the failure of the elitist intellectuals to persuade the people of the need for renewal.[9] In the same vein, the growth of anticommunism around 1947/1948 has been treated as a return to pre-war hostility towards communists.[10] According to Herman de Liagre Böhl, elites deliberately isolated the communists, because of an enduring attachment to fundamental capitalist-bourgeois values and political points of view, but he does not specify who these anti-radical elites were, how they attempted to isolate the communists, and on the

[3] A.A. de Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland. De geschiedenis van een politieke partij* (Den Haag, 1972).
[4] Ger Harmsen, 'Stalinisme en Koude Oorlog in Nederland', in: idem, *Nederlands kommunisme. Gebundelde opstellen* (Nijmegen, 1982) 21-23; Gerrit Voerman, 'A drama in three acts: the relations between communism and social democracy in the Netherlands since 1945', *Journal of communist studies* 6, 4 (1990) 106.
[5] Ger Verrips, 'Desillusies en dossiers – PvdA en CPN na de bevrijding', in: *Jaarboek voor democratisch socialisme* 13 (Amsterdam, 1992) 110; Hansje Galesloot, Susan Legêne, *Partij in het verzet. De CPN in de tweede wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 1986) 302.
[6] Lou de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* Deel 12, Epiloog (Leiden, 1988) 240-241; Doeko Bosscher, 'Waar is deze strijd om gestreden? De Nederlandse politieke partijen en de Nieuwe Democratie rond 1945, in: R.A. Koole (ed.), *Van Bastille tot Binnenhof* (Houten, 1989) 90-91.
[7] J.C.H. Blom, 'De Tweede Wereldoorlog en de Nederlandse samenleving: continuïteit en verandering', in: idem, *Crisis, bezetting en herstel* (Rotterdam, 1989) 164-183.
[8] Henk Termeer, 'Erop of eronder! Beschouwing over de vertegenwoordiging van het Nederlandse volk en het voortbestaan van zijn nationale staat vóór, tijdens en na de Tweede Wereldoorlog, in: *Jaarboek voor parlementaire geschiedenis* (Nijmegen, 2004) 62.
[9] Tity de Vries, *Complexe Consensus. Amerikaanse en Nederlandse intellectuelen in debat over politiek en cultuur 1945-1960* (Hilversum, 1996) 207.
[10] Paul Koedijk, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and anticommunism during the early Cold War', in: Hans Krabbendam et al. (eds.), *Four centuries of Dutch-American relations* (Albany, 2009) 597.

basis of what ideas they feared communist agitation.[11] The journalists Anet Bleich and Max van Weezel emphasize the imposition of a Cold War mindset on the Dutch political-intellectual scene instead.[12] M.D. Bogaarts' analysis of the relation between post-war anticommunism, the Czechoslovakian coup and the general elections in 1948 suggests that there is more going on than either a 'return' to a status quo or the 'imposition' of international polarization, but this has not been analyzed extensively.[13]

Besides the lack of an adequate conceptualization of anticommunism, at a more fundamental level the renewal-restoration debate obscures the highly contingent nature of the period of political reconstruction. The characteristics of Dutch post-war democracy were not the result of a clear choice for reconstituting the old order, but the outcome of a process of competition and negotiation between various domestic political actors, influenced by the rapidly changing political context in Western Europe. The recovery of stability in West-European societies after 1945 was, as Charles Maier argues, an achievement in itself. Moreover, stabilization is not incompatible with social and political change; it often requires it.[14] Perhaps Dutch scholars should take more note of Ido de Haan's argument that political history is a 'permanent work of reconstruction', which is made explicit during transition periods.[15] Nele Beyens was the first to explicitly investigate the remaking of Dutch democracy around 1945 as such a work of reconstruction and as a reformulation of the political rules. I agree with her that to study the political reconstruction after the Second World War you need to take a process-centered approach instead of concentrating on the results – which is how the historiography has generally approached the issue. Beyens looked at how the power vacuum was filled, how actors prepared for that situation and at the forms that the political reconstruction eventually took.[16] I intend to analyze the CPN as one of the political actors attempting to take part in the political reconstruction of the Netherlands.

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[11] Herman de Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder – Het ontstaan van de Koude Oorlog in Nederland', in: Joost Divendal et al. (eds.)., *Nederland, links en de koude oorlog: breuken en bruggen.* (Amsterdam, 1982) 11-37.

[12] Anet Bleich, Max van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië! Linkse intellectuelen en de Koude Oorlog* (Amsterdam, 1978) 170-173. The overall sentiment of this book is one of a deep longing for leftist unity, which makes the authors sometimes overstate the prospects of cooperation between communists and non-communist intellectuals.

[13] M.D. Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties op Praag 1948', in: Bob de Graaff, Cees Wiebes (eds.), *Hun crisis was de onze niet. Internationale crises en binnenlandse veiligheid 1945-1960* (Den Haag, 1994) 83-99.

[14] Charles Maier, 'The two postwar eras and the conditions for stability in twentieth-century Europe', *American Historical Review* 86, 2 (1981) 327.

[15] Ido de Haan, *Politieke reconstructie. Een nieuw begin in de politieke geschiedenis. Oratie.* (Utrecht, 2004) 24-25.

[16] Nele Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek. De strijd om de macht in Nederland en Frankrijk na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 2009) 12-14, 290-291.

The period after the Nazi occupation of Europe forms an especially interesting field of research, since this period entailed both turning points and underlying continuities with the pre-war era. Moreover, domestic reconstruction and the formation of an international settlement took place simultaneously.[17] Still, in Cold War historiography, post-war reconstruction efforts have been generally neglected.[18] The dominant question has been: what are the origins of the Cold War? For a long time, the answer has been found either in Soviet expansionism (the orthodox school) or in American economic imperialism (the revisionist school).[19] Since the 1990s more international and less superpower-focused approaches have enriched our understanding of the Cold War.[20] Nevertheless, Federico Romero urges scholars to re-emphasize the role of Europe, where the Cold War acquired "much of its long-lasting structure and grammar." Romero holds that research to the interconnection between the domestic and international sphere in particular can provide more insight into the beginnings of the Cold War.[21] For my research, I am to recover this interconnection by tracing the emergence of the notion of a 'Cold War' in the Netherlands. However, I approach the 'Dutch Cold War' not as an inevitable outcome, but I am interested in how it was created by politicians, intellectuals and union leaders (communist and non-communist alike) and how the image of two irreconcilable camps could become such a durable and widely held belief.

Until now, Dutch scholars have paid insufficiently attention to the European dimension of the reconstruction of Dutch politics. The development of the CPN and Dutch politics in general around 1945 has often been treated as isolated phenomena, without connecting the subject to international Cold War historiography or works of European political history, which has in recent years witnessed an increased interest in the remarkable similarities between the post-war Western European democracies.[22] The discussion about why this

[17] Carl Levy, '1918-1945-1989: the making and unmaking of stable societies in Western Europe', in: Carl Levy, Mark Roseman (eds.), *Three postwar eras in comparison: Western Europe 1918-1945-1989* (New York, 2002) 1-38, 5, 33.

[18] Mark Mazower, 'Reconstruction: the historiographical issues', in: D. Feldman et al. (eds.), *Postwar reconstruction in Europe: international perspectives 1945-1949* (Oxford, 2011) 17-29, 17.

[19] 'Orthodox' works include John Lewis Gaddis – *We know now. Rethinking Cold War history* (Oxford, 1997) and Gerhard Wettig – *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe. The emergence and development of East-West conflict, 1939-1953* (Lanham, 2008). An important example of 'revisionism' is Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the soul of mankind. The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York, 2007).

[20] Odd Arne Westad, 'The Cold War and the international history of the twentieth century', in: Melvyn P. Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the Cold War* Volume 1: Origins (Cambridge, 2012), 5-6.

[21] Federico Romero, 'Cold War historiography at the crossroads', *Cold War History* 14, 4 (2014) 697.

[22] Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting democracy. Political ideas in twentieth-century Europe* (New Haven, London, 2011) 125-157; Martin Conway, 'Democracy in postwar Western Europe: the triumph of a political model', *European History Quarterly* 32, 1 (2002) 59-84. Conway has also published an excellent book about the reconstruction of Belgian politics in 1944-1947, which contains many observations that are relevant for the

particular form of Western European democracy – with its emphasis on consensus, stability and planning, distrust of popular mobilization, and exclusion of communist parties – was so successful, echoes the renewal-restoration debate of Dutch historiography. Martin Conway and Charles Maier argue in different ways that the shape of postwar democracy must be understood as the outcome of a longer process.[23] Others interpret the first postwar years as a period in which the future seemed fundamentally open; strike movements, electoral struggles and initiatives of parties and personalities mattered.[24] According to Geoff Eley, Cold War imperatives – mainly American pressure on Western non-communist politicians - put an end to this short period of openness.[25]

A related discussion, in which Dutch scholars have scarcely participated, concerns the role of Moscow in dictating the future of Western European communist parties. Historians agree that the Soviet Union's acceptance of the 'two camps thesis' in 1947 and its tightening grip on international communism effectively signified the end of the national-front strategy that Western communist parties followed. Still, challenging the conviction that Soviet interests aborted domestic breakthrough attempts[26], Abraham Boxhoorn maintains that developments within national coalitions themselves contributed to the isolation of the communists, while Charles Maier claims that communist parties themselves deliberately abandoned their collaborative stance.[27] Accordingly, there is still much to be said about the relation between domestic and international developments, and between long-term structures and the contingencies of post-war politics, in the emergence of the various 'national Cold Wars'.

Approach

In short, I intend to analyze the post-war political reconstruction of the Netherlands as a power struggle between various political actors in which the rules of the game were reinvented. I aim to study the CPN as one of the actors participating in the reconstruction. I am interested in the strategies the communists employed to break through their former isolation and in how other political and intellectual actors reacted to it. What options were

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study of post-war Western Europe in general: Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium: liberation and political reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford, 2012).

[23] Conway, 'Democracy in postwar Western Europe'; Maier, 'The two postwar eras'.

[24] Norman M. Naimark, 'Stalin and Europe in the postwar period, 1945-1953; issues and problems', *Journal of Modern European History* 2 (2004) 55.

[25] Geoff Eley, *Forging democracy; the history of the left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford, 2002) 301-304.

[26] Silvio Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists after World War Two', in: D. Feldman et al., *Postwar reconstruction in Europe: international perspectives 1945-1949* (Oxford, 2011) 134-137.

[27] Abraham Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in the governments of national unity: Belgium, France and Italy in the spring of 1947. A Comparison.* (Amsterdam, 1993) 249; Maier, 'The two postwar eras', 346-347.

available for the communists and why were they eventually marginalized? When researching the cooperation attempts and growing hostility between the communists and non-communists, I hope to shed light on the interaction between long-term traditions and particular post-war circumstances. At some points, attention will be devoted to the European context, in order to understand the relation between the emergence of the international Cold War - the geopolitical and ideological clash between the United States and the Soviet Union – and what I call the 'Dutch Cold War', which can be defined as the *idea of an unbridgeable divide between Dutch communists and non-communists, and the cessation of all cooperation attempts between them.* The main story will begin in 1944, when the political reconstruction of the Netherlands really gets under way, and ends in 1948, when the Dutch Cold War had 'solidified'.

Research question

How did non-communists react to the CPN's attempts to break through its former isolation and why were communists eventually marginalized?

Chapters and sources

In order to put the communists' post-war behavior and the reactions of non-communists in its proper context, some knowledge of pre-war circumstances is required. Chapter 1 provides insight in the 'traditional anticommunism' of the Dutch elite and the pre-1941 strategies of the Dutch communists, on the basis of secondary literature. In Chapter 2 I will trace the origins of what is called the 'national-front strategy'[28] of the CPN during the German occupation, mostly on the basis of sources in the CPN-archive and articles which have been published in the communist newspaper *De Waarheid*. A few cases of post-war cooperation between communists and non-communists are treated in Chapter 3, mostly on the basis of research in the archives of the CPN, PvdA, SDAP and VNI-member W.F. Wertheim in the IISH, and in the Amsterdam city archive. These cases – the relation between the CPN and the PvdA, the NVV and the EVC, the *Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië* and local politics in Amsterdam – reveal the practical consequences of the CPN's national-front policy and how the behavior of the communists was perceived by non-communists. Chapter 4, combining insights from

[28] I have borrowed the term 'national-front strategy' from an article of Eduard Mark about Stalin's strategy for post-war Europe. By using this term, we can distinguish the communists' search for allies in the transition period at the end of the Second World War from the 'popular front' of the 1930s, which will be treated in Chapter 1. Read: Eduard Mark, 'Revolution by degrees. Stalin's national-front strategy for Europe, 1941-1947', *Cold War International History Project* Working Paper No. 31 (February 2001) .

secondary literature with primary sources (mainly archives of the major political parties and minutes of parliamentary debates), deals with the emergence and solidification of the idea of a Cold War between two irreconcilable camps, and investigates what factors contributed to this development. Chapter 2 and 4 also concentrate on the Soviet Union's stance towards Western European communism and the fate of the communist national-front strategies elsewhere in Europe.

Chapter 1: Communism, anticommunism and popular fronts, 1917-1941

According to Herman de Liagre Böhl, a deep aversion to communism and the Soviet Union was one of the hallmarks of postwar Dutch politics. This aversion had a lot to do with the experiences of the war and its aftermath, but it was also based on 'old tradition' of anticommunism.[29] In the literature on the reconstruction period, this 'old tradition' is usually taken for granted, but it is hardly ever explained which groups disliked communism for what reason, and how pre-war anticommunism resonated in postwar politics. Nonetheless, in order to understand Dutch communism around 1945 you have to take the position of the communists in the political system during the 1930s into consideration. This chapter will explain how mainstream political actors perceived the CPN and how the party defined its own position before wartime conditions made the CPN enter the national resistance movement.

Communism and social democracy

Before the outbreak of World War I, a wide range of socialist parties cooperated in the Second International. Within this organization, a tension between reformism and revolutionism had always existed, but the International could handle its programmatic diversity due to a loose organizational structure.[30] However, the disagreements raised by the war – with some parties defending the war in the name of patriotism, while others remaining deeply pacifist or revolutionary – marked the first ruptures in leftist unity. The Bolshevik seize of power in 1917 and the revolutionary tide that swept Europe in the following years sealed the permanent division of the European left. While reformists aimed to make use of the democratic support for gradual reforms that the war and the extension of suffrage had created, impatient revolutionaries wanted to follow the Russian model of a top-down coup. In most European countries, communist factions parted from the socialist mother party to form their own parties and to join the Comintern. This Soviet-dominated organization tried to impose international conformity by laying down twenty one conditions of membership, which effectively made the national parties dependent on the Soviet rulers, who were perceived to be infallible due to their revolutionary experience.[31] The *Communistische Partij Holland* (CPH) joined the Comintern in 1920. In contrast to other European communist parties, the CPH was a continuation of a movement that had already parted ways with social democracy in 1909.

[29] De Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder', 17.
[30] Donald Sassoon, *One hundred years of socialism. The West European left in the twentieth century.* (London, 1996) 31.
[31] Eley, *Forging democracy*, 227-228.

Communism was thus born in opposition to social democracy. Throughout their existence, Western European communist parties would continue to define their identities by positioning themselves vis-à-vis the social democrats. International communist politics was characterized by a sequence of phases. In each phase, the Comintern propagated a different tactic that would ultimately bring about the end goal of a socialist revolution. These abrupt changes of strategy were ostensibly brought about by changes in the conditions for a revolution, such as a temporary stabilization of capitalism, but were just as much dictated by the interests of Soviet foreign policy.[32] In 1924, the revolutionary first period made way for the second period, in which the member parties were told to hold back while the Russian Bolsheviks attempted to build 'socialism in one country'. In 1928, the Comintern proclaimed the Third Period, in which it was believed that the capitalist system was nearing total collapse. Accordingly, the communist parties had to follow a sectarian, ultra-left line. Hence, in the first half of the 1930s the CPH took a defiant position towards parliamentary democracy, religion and the nation. Moreover, it attempted to take over the trade union from within through the building of cells. However, the communists reserved their most aggressive vitriol for the social democrats. In line with Comintern doctrine, the social democrats were denounced as social-fascists, due to their willingness to use the methods of parliamentary democracy in order to achieve reforms.

Outside of the Soviet Union, no communist movement led a successful revolution. Most communist parties operated at the margins of the political system. Although the CPH experienced some growth throughout the 1930s, before 1940 it never occupied more than four seats in parliament (3,4% in 1937). In contrast, the social democrats participated in the centre of politics throughout Europe. The *Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij* (SDAP) was the second most popular party in the interwar period (21,9% in 1937). Still, confessional and liberal politicians, who had not forgotten Troelstra's ill-conceived proclamation of revolution in 1918, made sure that the social democrats were kept from governing. The SDAP gradually realized that in order to persuade the establishment that social democrats could bear the responsibility of governance, the party should unequivocally embrace parliamentary democracy and shed all its revolutionary ambitions. Around 1936-1937, the SDAP started with a profound revision of its principles, centering around 'democratic socialism', an acceptance of the need for national defense and an embrace of national symbols, such as the

[32] On the relation between Comintern doctrine and Soviet foreign policy, read: Jonathan Haslam, 'Comintern and Soviet foreign policy, 1919-1941', in: Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russia* (Cambridge, 2006).

monarchy.[33] Influenced by the ideas of Keynes, Roosevelt's New Deal and more in particular the Belgian socialist Hendrik De Man's *Plan van de Arbeid*, the SDAP also adopted neo-socialist planning and a mixed economy as a method of reorganizing the economy in a period of deep crisis.

In short, while the CPH was extremely hostile towards the dominant system during the first half of the 1930s, the SDAP preached moderation and adjustment. The relation between the two representatives of the Dutch working class could not be worse. As said, the communists denounced the SDAP as a party of social-fascists. The SDAP felt the need to lambast its rivals too, in order to persuade the other parties of its democratic credentials, and to win the working class vote in an atmosphere of rising radicalism due to economic misery. The SDAP criticized the CPN for its support of Stalin's dictatorship and the terror the Soviets unleashed upon their own citizens. Tellingly, the subtitle of *Vrijheid, Arbeid, Brood,* a magazine published by the SDAP and the socialist trade union NVV, read '*tegen fascisme en communisme'.* Fascism and communism were understood as two anti-democratic ideologies that made each other stronger, and therefore as being part of the same problem.[34]

Conservatism and pillarization

The social democrats did not enter government until 1939; in the interwar period the cabinet was made up of the three confessional parties (RKSP, ARP, CHU) with the support of liberal parties from 1933 onwards. During the first two decades of the twentieth century Dutch politics was dominated by the battle for denominational emancipation and universal suffrage. The Catholic and Protestant parties were allies in the fight for the right to establish schools and other organizations on a confessional basis. After these matters had been settled around 1919, they continued to enter governments together, firmly believing in the 'antithesis' between confessional and non-confessional parties. However, programmatic differences began to erode the cooperation between Catholics and Protestants: politics in the interwar period was a matter of recurring government crises and rather uninspired compromises.[35] Notwithstanding the governmental difficulties, election results mostly showed only minor shifts compared to the previous ones. The paradoxical coexistence of political stability and instability that characterized the interwar period can partly be explained by the 'pillarization' of Dutch society. Catholics, protestants, socialists and liberals all had their own political

[33] Peter Jan Knegtmans, *Socialisme en democratie: de SDAP tussen klasse en natie, 1929-1939* (Amsterdam, 1989) 251-255.
[34] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 26-27.
[35] Friso Wielenga, *Nederland in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2008) 89-95.

parties, trade unions and press organs. Moreover, in the interwar period society itself became increasingly divided in 'moral communities', with separate identities, traditions and codes.[36] For the majority of the electorate, it was unthinkable to vote for a party outside the own 'pillar', which explains why the confessional parties could continuously count on a reassuring majority position.

In political scientist Arend Lijphart's famous conception of pillarization, the stability of the Dutch political system was made possible by the 'pacification politics' of the elites. Divisive issues were brought back to technical questions and compromises were sought in private consultations of the elites, without interference from parliament or society.[37] Other historians argue that on certain issues – such diplomatic relations with the Vatican – unbridgeable differences existed, which ultimately led to government crises.[38] Yet on a deeper level the Catholics, Protestants and right-wing Liberals fundamentally shared the same outlook. Preservation of the existing social and economic structures stood at the core of their world view. Although no party prided itself on its 'conservatism', this is exactly what bound the parties, according to Herman von der Dunk.[39] Dutch elites feared the consequences of modernization, and wanted to protect religion, nation and community against the godless forces of mass culture, be it individualism, fascism or communism. In a similar vein, historian Hans Blom concentrates on the centrality of 'bourgeois values': a capitalist mode of production, parliamentary democracy, respect for order and authority and a celebration of the nation and the monarchy.[40] We can add a distinctively Christian value pattern, which was even held dear by the liberals.[41] This bourgeois-conservative consensus can perhaps be interpreted as the Dutch version of the need of European elites to re-establish the contested legitimacy of their leadership in the wake of war and revolution – with the caveat that due to the neutrality of the Netherlands during the First World War the political system was not nearly as tarnished as in many other countries.[42] In any case, the consequence of this pillar-overarching consensus is that the Dutch political elite harbored a deep suspicion of political movements whose ideologies centered around decidedly anti-bourgeois values. The

[36] Piet de Rooy, 'Een zoekende tijd. De ongemakkelijke democratie 1913-1949', in Remieg Aerts e.a., *Land van kleine gebaren. Een politieke geschiedenis van Nederland 1780-1990* (Nijmegen, 1999) 199.
[37] Arend Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (Amsterdam, 1968).
[38] De Rooy, 'Een zoekende tijd', 205.
[39] H.W. von der Dunk, 'Conservatisme in Nederland', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 90 (1975) 28-31.
[40] J.C.H. Blom, 'Nederland in de jaren dertig. Een 'burgerlijk-verzuilde' maatschappij in een crisisperiode', in: Blom, *, Bezetting en Herstel: Tien studies over Nederland 1930-1950* (Rotterdam, 1989) 15-17.
[41] Von der Dunk, 'Conservatisme', 30.
[42] The European elites' quest for post-war stabilization has been masterfully analyzed by Charles Maier. Read: Maier, 'The two postwar eras'.

confessionals – foremost the Catholics – declined to govern with the social democrats until 1939, because of the SDAP's criticism of capitalism, the monarchy and of colonial rule in the West Indies. Even worse in the eyes of the elites were the communists, who did not even bother to appease the ruling class. The historian Paul Koedijk is probably right when he states that "regardless of its different sources, anticommunism was one of the few ideological common denominators among the different pillars in Dutch society."[43] The Catholic priest Jacobus Jacobs argued that Christianity and communism were just as irreconcilable as a circle and a square, and not many would have disagreed with him.[44] Anticommunism was widespread not only among conservative politicians, but among progressively inclined thinkers – who were often unsatisfied with the political status quo – as well. On the eve of the Second World War, Willem Banning and Pieter Oud, who both would play a major role in the founding of the PvdA six years later, drew a stark contrast between Marx' theory of class struggle and a liberal Christianity based on social equality.[45]

Left-wing radicalism was being regarded with suspicion not only because of its atheist and anti-capitalist principles, but also for its perceived ability to make use of the crisis mood and turn the working class against the system. The response to the mutiny at the ship *De Zeven Provinciën* in the waters of the Indies in 1933 revealed that in times of emergency, the government was prepared to use authoritarian methods against the Left. A bomber aircraft swiftly crushed the spontaneous insurrection by a part of the crew and left 19 men dead. The SDAP and the CPH sympathized with the rebels and condemned the bloodshed. The other parties and the dominant media outlets understood the mutiny as a deed of revolution and sympathy for the mutiny as treason. The SDAP was punished for its 'anti-democratic' stance: socialist newspapers and other publications were banned from military buildings and soldiers were forbidden to be members of the SDAP and the NVV. Not much later, a law made it possible to fire civil servants if they belonged to the SDAP, CPH or some other leftist organization. The SDAP, fearing an anti-socialist front, understood that it had to reinvent itself as an avid defender of the parliamentary democracy.[46] When riots arose in the Jordaan in 1934 against a cut in income supplements, the social democrats immediately condemned the demonstrations and blamed the communists for the violent escalation. Prime minister Colijn obviously agreed, because he ordered to seize the buildings and the presses of the communist newspaper *De Tribune*. Colijn feared that the workers' unrest that was happening

[43] Koedijk, 'The Netherlands, the US', 597.
[44] Jac. Jacobs, *Het communisme* (Hilversum, 1938) 11-12.
[45] W. Banning, H.D. Louwes, P. Oud, *Politiek en moraal* (Zeist, 1940) 46.
[46] Knegtmans, *Socialisme en democratie,* 77-81.

in France could spread to the Netherlands, so he was determined to stamp out every spark of rebelliousness.[47]

Besides the bourgeois-conservative consensus and a fear of workers' unrest, a third source of anticommunism was the deep distrust of the Soviet Union shared by many Dutchmen. The existence of such an openly atheist power was regarded with abhorrence by Dutch Christians. Moreover, savers and investors had seen their money disappear due to the Russian Revolution. There was also the fear that the Soviet Union would sponsor anti-authoritarian activity in the Netherlands. When the Soviet Union aimed to join the League of Nations in 1934, the Dutch government voted against it, under heavy pressure from the confessional parties. Similarly, the Netherlands refused to establish diplomatic relations until 1942. In the words of historian Lou de Jong, exchanging ambassadors would equal a betrayal of the most holy principles of Christianity.[48] Although the CPH could profit from the admiration of some progressives for the perceived economic and social successes of the Soviet Union, the majority's distrust of the socialist motherland had a negative effect on the popularity of the Dutch communists.

The popular front

Historians agree that the sectarianism of the Comintern's third period did most communist parties more harm than good. It effectively sealed the isolation of the communists in their political systems and it brought no upsurge in revolutionary sentiments.[49] Moreover, the strategy could not prevent the Nazi accession to power which brought about the near destruction of one of the most important communist parties – the German KPD. The failure of the sectarian line, combined with the Soviet fear of being isolated in European diplomacy, which led to a rapprochement with France, persuaded Stalin around 1934 that a different tactic was required. He appointed Georgi Dimitrov, an experienced Bulgarian revolutionary, as the new head of the Comintern. Dimitrov was a proponent of a 'united front' of anti-fascist forces. In his view, communist parties were the decisive forces in the fight against fascism, but the communists had to adapt inter-party collaboration in fulfilling that role.[50] Dimitrov gradually managed to reorient the Comintern towards abandonment of go-it-alone

[47] Herman Langeveld, *Hendrikus Colijn 1869-1944, dl 2: Schipper naast God* (Amsterdam, 2004) 436-437.
[48] Lou de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog 1939-1945* Deel 1: Voorspel (Den Haag, 1969) 88.
[49] Jonathan Haslam, 'The Comintern and the origins of the Popular Front 1934-1935*, The Historical Journal* 22, 3 (1979) 674; Alexander Dallin, F.I Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin 1934-1943. Letters from the Soviet Archive* (New Haven, London, 2000) 8.
[50] Haslam, 'The Comintern and the origins', 684.

sectarianism. Instead, the 'united front' of working class parties – which meant communists and social democrats - was officially adopted at the Seventh World Congress in 1935. Regarding the social democrats, Dimitrov wrote to Stalin:

> "rather than using united front tactics exclusively as a maneuver to expose social democracy without seriously attempting to forge a real workers' unity through struggle, we must turn them into an effective factor in developing the mass struggle against the offensive of fascism."[51]

Gradually, the united front became a 'popular front', when communists began to seek cooperation with anti-fascist centre parties too. Central to the new tactic was that communist parties should rebrand themselves as defenders of the nation and parliamentary democracy.

The popular front was especially welcomed with enthusiasm in France. The communist party adopted the language of the long-standing patriotic revolutionary tradition and changed its name from Parti Communiste de France to Parti Communiste Français. In the elections of 1936 the PCF got nearly twice as much votes as in 1932. It gave tacit support to a government of socialists and radicals whose accession had mobilized an unprecedented amount of popular enthusiasm. Still, within two years the popularity of the government had vanished, when it substituted its reformist agenda for fiscal conservatism. The other country in which the popular front played a significant role was Spain. The civil war that grew out of a nationalist uprising against the popular front-government captured the minds of progressives all over Europe. However, the right-wing nationalists carried the day, partly due to internal strife on the republican side.

The CPH began to change its course at the end of 1934, first with some hesitation, and then more forcefully from the party congress in December 1935 onwards. A.A. de Jonge has distinguished five main changes in communist politics compared to the previous period.[52] First, the CPH decreased its hostility towards the social democrats, and forwarded the SDAP various proposals of practical political cooperation. Second, the communist cells in the NVV were disbanded in favor of loyal communist participation. Third, the CPH began to stress national independence in face of the fascist threat as the main political issue. The nation was something worth defending; this is a marked departure from the internationalist, Soviet-

[51] 'Letter Dimitrov to Stalin' (I July 1934), in: Dallin, Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 14.

[52] De Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland,* 61-64. De Jonge was a communist in his younger days, but later became a staunch anticommunist. His history of Dutch communism is somewhat coloured by his political views, but some of the analytical parts are still useful.

oriented spirit that had hitherto characterized the CPH. Fourth, parliamentary democracy was accepted as the appropriate state form of government under capitalism, and as superior to the fascist state. Fifth, the communists ceased their vicious attacks on religion in order to be able to win democratic Christians over to the popular front. In 1935, as a symbolic conclusion to the party's transformation, the CPH changed its name to *Communistische Partij van Nederland* (CPN). Similarly, *De Tribune* became *Het Volksdagblad* in 1937. The major proponent of the new direction within the party was Paul de Groot. The former diamant cutter from Antwerpen with a Jewish background had made a name for himself through his energetic actions in the trade unions. During the 1930s, he managed to gain rapid accession in the party leadership. With the support from Moscow, where Soviet and Comintern bureaucrats valued his uncompromising loyalty, De Groot led the transformation of the party. His competitors and old guard critics were removed from the leadership one by one. For we must keep in mind that while the international communist movement adopted a friendly face towards the outside world, it mercilessly purged its own ranks. 'Trotskyite' elements were removed all over Europe; nearly a million communist party members were killed in the Soviet Union, including high-ranking officials from Poland, Germany, Finland and other countries in which the communist party was illegal and where communists hence could not find protection from Stalinist paranoia.[53] In 1938, De Groot was made political secretary of the CPN and chief-editor of *Het Volksdagblad.* At the Easter party congress in 1938 it had become clear that De Groot was in charge. His speech was simultaneously one of the most unambiguous adoptions of nationalism in the history of Dutch communism and an unscrupulous attack against Trotskyite conspirators within the party; the latest would remain a hallmark of Paul de Groot's style of leadership.[54]

Results of the popular front

The popular front of democrats against the fascist threat did hardly yield any result in the Netherlands. Concerning social democracy, the CPN proposed to submit shared SDAP-CPN candidate lists for the 1937 elections, and to join the management of the modern workers organization dominated by the SDAP and NVV. Both proposals were immediately rejected. Social democrats continued to compare communism to fascism, not in the least because Stalin at that time had rounded up more opponents than Hitler. As we have established before, the

[53] For an analysis of research on the relation between the Comintern and the Terror, read: Kevin McDermott, 'Stalinist terror in the Comintern: New Perspectives', *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, 1 (1995) 111-130.
[54] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 51-53.

SDAP was in the process of becoming a more respectable, patriotic party, and cooperation with the communists would certainly have damaged the SDAP's image in the eyes of non-socialists. In the words of party chairman Koos Vorrink, "the only service that communism could render to democracy is its liquidation."[55] Confessional politicians and trade unions were even less inclined to mitigate their anticommunism. In the Catholic newspaper *De Volkskrant* it was stated that "geen enkele katholiek is zo simpel dat hij aan communistische beloften in deze richting geloof hecht en zijn organisaties en zijn godsdienst veilig acht waar de communist in het bezit van de macht is geraakt."[56] Here is the core of the CPN's problem: the party could easily proclaim that it aimed to defend democracy, the nation and its freedoms, but making others believe these statements were genuine was a different thing. The popular front was a failure simply because no potential ally accepted the communists' promises. Social democrats did not forget the damage done in the period before 1935, when they were condemned as social fascists and when communist cells disrupted the progress of the trade unions. Moreover, the CPN continued to criticize the SDAP during the popular front-era. Next to that, the party did not relinquish its uncritical adulation of the Soviet Union, nor did it embrace the monarchy as a national symbol, which meant that it remained an unattractive partner for the bourgeois elite. Progressive intellectuals generally remained anticommunist too. The mass organization *Eenheid door Democratie*, in which the postwar prime minister Willem Schermerhorn played a prominent role, aimed to unite the pillars to bring about social justice, but warned above all for the dangers of fascism ànd communism.[57] Radical thinker – and future PvdA-ideologue – Jacques de Kadt anticipated the theory of totalitarianism which would become en vogue after the Second World War when he stated that Germany, Italy and Russia belonged to the same authoritarian type of state.[58] In his book *Rood fascisme* the leftist free-thinker Anton Constandse eloquently gave voice to the widespread distrust of communist strategies: "when people change so fast from being communists to bourgeois democrats, can't they transform just as quick from democrats to fascists?"[59]

Although politicians at the top did not cooperate with the CPN, there were some successes on other fronts. The communist presence in the NVV was tacitly accepted. The number of readers of *De Volksdagblad* increased, although the number of CPN-voters did not. A group

[55] Frits Rovers, 'Eenheid door Democratie: een analyse van een burgerlijk-democratische volksbeweging in de jaren dertig', *Utrechtse historische cahiers* 7, 4 (1986) 17.
[56] *De Volkskrant* (28 February 1938), as cited in: Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 13.
[57] Rovers, *Eenheid door Democratie,* 14-16.
[58] Jacques de Kadt, *Het fascisme en de nieuwe vrijheid* (Amsterdam, 1939) 327.
[59] A.L. Constandse, *Rood fascisme* (Den Haag, 1937) 6.

of intellectuals, artists and students accepted the CPN's logic that all progressive forces had to be bundled in order to resists the fascist threat. Such a 'negative unity' formed the basis of the *Comité van Waakzaamheid,* a "centrum van alle intellectuelen, die zich het gevaar van het nationaal-socialisme bewust zijn en het willen bestrijden".[60] The board of the *Comité,* consisting of people like writer Menno Ter Braak, Marxist historian Jan Romein, philosopher Henk Pos and the later resistance figher Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart tolerated the presence of communists, and resisted the equation of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the *Comité* was constantly branded by the Catholic and social democratic press as a 'communist front organization'.[61] While some of the *Comité*-members only tolerated the communists for sake of the anti-fascist cause, others shared with the CPN a deep admiration for the Soviet Union. These 'fellow travellers' were usually neither CPN-members, nor orthodox Marxists, but they did commit to the Soviet cause 'from a distance'.[62] They were disillusioned with Western society, and regarded the Soviet Union as a great experiment bent on solving social problems through scientific advances.[63] In the Netherlands, the 'fellow travellers' were organized in organizations like the *Vrienden van de Sovjet-Unie* (VVSU). *Comité van Waakzaamheid*-founder Jan Romein and his wife Annie Romein-Verschoor were two of the most active Dutch fellow travellers. They were drawn to the cause of the Revolution through dissatisfaction with Dutch politics, and went to great lengths to defend the Soviet Union in the face of a broad anticommunist consensus.[64] As we will see, they would continue their 'distanced commitment' with renewed energy during the first post-war years. In addition, other *Comité*-members like Van Heuven Goedhart and the socialist preacher J.J. Buskes maintained their toleration of communism during and after the war. So this small circle of intellectuals provided a basis for cooperation between communists and non-communists in the reconstruction period.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact and the Second World War

By 1939, it had become clear that the strategy of the popular front and the Soviet search for 'collective security' had failed. Popular fronts had broken down in Spain and France, an effective ring around Germany could not be formed and trust between the Soviet Union and

[60] L.R. Wiersma, 'Het Comité van Waakzaamheid van anti-nationaal-socialistische intellectuelen', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 86, 1 (1971) 131-133.
[61] Wiersma, 'Het Comité van Waakzaamheid', 131-133.
[62] David Caute, *The fellow-travellers: intellectual friends of communism* (New Haven, 1988) 3-4.
[63] Caute, *The fellow-travellers,* 270-272.
[64] André Otto, *Het ruisen van de tijd: over de theoretische geschiedenis van Jan Romein* (Amsterdam, 1998) 142.

the Western democratic powers was low.[65] In the wake of the Munich agreement, the CPN accused the Western powers of weakness and intensified its criticism of the Dutch government, which included the SDAP from August 1939 onwards. According to historian Geoff Eley, the Nazi-Soviet pact was 'less apocalyptic' than as portrayed by many observers, because the hopes for a united anti-fascist front were already in shreds.[66] Still, it must have come as a shock to communists all over Europe that the socialist motherland suddenly decided to forge a deal with Nazi Germany, the home of fascism and virulent anticommunism. Communist leaders had not been notified of Soviet-German negotiations. In the first weeks after the treaty of 23 August 1939, confused communist parties scrambled to find a justification for the pact; the Comintern did not issue any directives until mid-September. Acceptance of the pact, while upholding patriotism and anti-fascism was how Communist parties tried to make sense of the events in late August in the absence of Soviet guidance. Criticism of the Soviet Union was unthinkable for the parties' top brass, although local communists might have condemned the pact for what it was, a cynical step of *realpolitik.*

Paul de Groot's silence during the first week after 23 August revealed the confusion the pact had sown among communist leaders. Other CPN-leaders hailed the pact as a victory of Stalin, that had to be complemented by an agreement with Britain and France. They did not understand that the path of collective security had been closed. When Britain and France declared war at 3 September, the CPN still foremost blamed Hitler. At 8 September, the party received a telegram from the Comintern which revealed that the Soviet Union had changed its course much more drastically than had been assumed. Now it was stated that France and Britain had betrayed the politics of collective security. After Munich these countries had wanted to direct Germany's aggression towards the Soviet Union and the pact had prevented this. The subsequent war was one between two imperialist camps, and communist parties now had to defend neutrality and battle the bourgeois warmongers and their social democratic accomplices.[67] The CPN conformed to the Moscow-dictated course. In the words of party secretary Jan Dieters:

> "De verantwoordelijkheid voor de oorlog berust bij de imperialisten van alle oorlogsvoerende staten (…) De strijd tegen de imperialistische oorlog en voor wat

[65] Haslam, 'The Comintern and Soviet foreign policy', 654-555.
[66] Eley, *Forging democracy,* 278-279.
[67] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 146; W.F.S Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie: de CPN tijdens het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact* (Den Haag, 1990) 302.

> Nederland betreft, de strijd om buiten deze oorlog te blijven is in de huidige omstandigheden de centrale taak van de Nederlandse arbeidersklasse en van de Communistische Partij."[68]

The obvious result of the CPN's embrace of the pact was the abandonment of efforts to forge a united anti-fascist front. The old hostility between social democrats and communists re-emerged. The SDAP saw the pact as a justification of its conviction that the CPN would slavishly follow every Russian move, and that communism would have to be battled with just as much energy as fascism. Koos Vorrink remarked: "in het bondgenootschap der dictators is de waan ondergegaan, als zou er toch sprake kunnen zijn van een bekering van het communisme tot de beschavingsnormen der democratie."[69] The CPN's support of the Soviet Union's war effort against Finland in the winter of 1939-1940 made the NVV begin with expelling communists from their organization. CPN-members were also dismissed from the *Comité van Waakzaamheid*. Although the government did not ban the communist party, as happened in France, it did attempt to make the CPN's work more difficult, especially in the last months before the German invasion. The government declared the state of emergency and forbade public communist meetings, confiscated pamphlets and arrested some communists. The high degree to which the Dutch elite distrusted the communists was demonstrated when not only NSB-leaders, but CPN-officials as well were interned after war with Germany broke out. They were released when the Netherlands capitulated.

The German occupation forced the CPN into an even more difficult position. After all, if the war was between two imperialist sides and if the Dutch bourgeoisie had betrayed the country by bringing it into war on the side of the allies, then having the country ruled by Germans would not be worse than the situation before. Paul de Groot wrote in June 1940 that the Dutch population should not support the war effort, but maintain its neutrality towards Germany. He asked the workers to take up a 'correct' position towards the German occupier, an expression for which the CPN would by criticized by social democrats and other resistance fighters during the entire war.[70] For a short while, the party continued to operate legally. The German authorities allowed the publication of *Het Volksdagblad* and the magazine *Politiek en Cultuur*. The CPN was eventually banned on 20 July. The communists had already begun with preparing for an illegal existence. The party swiftly transformed itself into a

[68] *Politiek en Cultuur* (1939) 518-519, as cited in: Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 67-68.
[69] As cited in: Verrips, 'Desillusies en dossiers', 91.
[70] Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet,* 40.

hierarchically organized, smaller cadre movement with Paul de Groot, Lou Jansen and Jan Dieters as its illegal leadership. While the CPN still characterized the war as imperialist, it began to espouse a clearer anti-German message. De Groot wrote in the first edition of the illegal newspaper *De Waarheid*: "Allereerst moeten wij de geestelijke weerstand tegen de vreemde nazi-invloeden sterk en steeds sterker maken! Geen fascisme in Nederland!"[71]

The relation between the German occupier and the communists remained unclear until the beginning of 1941. The German authorities allowed workers' demonstrations and sometimes gave in to demands for higher wages. This began to change when Dutch national-socialist terrorized Jewish neighborhoods in Amsterdam with German police support. Outrage over anti-Semitism and police violence led to the *Februaristaking*, a broadly supported strike in Amsterdam and other places. Local communists initially took the lead, but lost control over the demonstrations because of the unexpected high turnout. Still, the CPN was the only organization that played a part in the strike. This was a source of pride, but the leadership also understood that such a defiant position against the Nazi's Jewish policies was not compatible with the Comintern-line of neutralism and anti-imperialism.[72] In the following month, *De Waarheid* framed the event as a disciplined mass action for the cause of higher wages and against the imperialist war and the possibility of a Mussert-government. No attention was paid to anti-Semitism.[73] Gradually, the German occupier became the principal enemy. The CPN hailed the increased opposition against German imperialist rule in a 'political letter' of February 1941. The leadership declared that the struggle for national independence should be combined with class struggle for revolution. Communists should cooperate with other forces in this struggle, but the 'Oranje-imperialisten' and their social democratic 'lackeys' were explicitly excluded.[74] Relations with other emerging resistance movements were not ideal. Magazines like *Vrij Nederland* and *Het Parool* denied the communist contribution to the organization of the Februaristaking, rather interpreting it as a spontaneous movement. *De Waarheid* attacked other illegal movements – chiefly the social democrats – as well. Even a year after the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the allies, Koos Vorrink, the most important SDAP-figure in the resistance, distributed a book with the title *De oorlog en het gevaar van het bolsjewisme*, in which he welcomed the Soviet contribution to the war effort, but warned for the consequences of a re-energized communism.[75]

[71] 'De weg naar vrede en vrijheid', *De Waarheid* (23 November 1940).
[72] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 123.
[73] Annet Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking* (Amsterdam, 2006) 15-16.
[74] Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet,* 75-76.
[75] Koos Vorrink, *De oorlog en het gevaar van het bolsjewisme* (Nijkerk, 1942).

Conclusion

The behavior of the communists between 1939 and 1941 did only strengthen anticommunist attitudes that pervaded Dutch politics and society. The popular front-tactic of the late 1930s had not been a major success, because it was not picked up by major political actors. The internal party development of the SDAP, the CPN's most logical ally, forestalled any left-wing cooperation. The political elites continued to stress the incompatibility of communism and Christian-bourgeois values, distrusted left-wing radicalism and despised the Soviet Union. Only a small cultural-intellectual undercurrent acknowledged the benefits of working with the communists in the anti-fascist struggle, and some of the intellectuals involved would put this conviction into practice during the post-war transition period. When the CPN conformed to the Soviet line in 1939, this revealed to many observers the 'true nature' of the party. The CPN's double shift – from sectarianism to anti-fascist patriotism to anti-imperialist neutralism – put the credibility of the party into question. In 1941, most non-communists must have had troubles to figure out what Dutch communism really stood for and to where its loyalty ultimately belonged.

Chapter 2: The Second World War and the national-front strategy

"En wat zou er in ons land niet kunnen gebeuren, wanneer de democraten samen een volkspartij zouden bouwen van, zeggen wij, een kwart miljoen of meer leden (…)?"[76] Five years before Paul de Groot asked this question, his optimism would have seemed totally unfounded; the communist party had zero political friends and could probably not count on much electoral support due its dogmatic understanding of the Nazi-Soviet pact. Between 1941 and 1945, communists all over Europe reinvented their political identities. Echoing the Soviet Union's partnership with the Anglo-Saxons, they called for broad anti-fascist fronts. Democracy and the nation were suddenly worth fighting for. In 1945, this strategy seemed to have paid off: communism had mobilized millions of Europeans around its cause. In the Netherlands, radical left-wing politics appeared to stand on the verge of its breakthrough too. This chapter will zoom in on the development of Dutch communism's national-front strategy during the Second World War, which would dominate the CPN's political outlook until 1947. Furthermore, attention will be devoted to the place of the Dutch case in the broader context of the international communist movement's national-front strategy.

Origins of the national front 1941-1943

On the day Germany invaded the Soviet Union, 22 June 1941, Dimitrov was called to the Kremlin. There, Stalin told him:

> "For now the Comintern must not appear openly. The parties everywhere will develop a movement in defense of the USSR. Not raise the question of a socialist revolution. The Soviet people are waging a patriotic war against fascist Germany. The task is to crush fascism, which has enslaved a number of peoples and is striving to enslave additional ones as well."[77]

Dimitrov reported to the Executive Committee of the Comintern what this meant for the member parties: a return to the broadest possible united fronts and alliances and the downplaying of all explicitly Communist and revolutionary goals.[78] Now, the defense of the socialist motherland and anti-fascism were to be interpreted as part of the same struggle, which freed Dutch communists from espousing a seemingly unpatriotic, at times almost pro-

[76] 'Politieke wils- en partijvorming', *De Waarheid* (7 June 1945).
[77] 'Remarks Dimitrov in his diary', as quoted in: Dallin, Firsov (eds.) – *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 189.
[78] Ibidem, 189.

German message. Paul de Groot promptly found an entirely new kind of terminology in the first edition of *De Waarheid* after the German invasion: "De oorlog die op 22 juni begonnen is, is EEN VRIJHEIDSOORLOG OM DE WERELD VAN HET MONSTERACHTIGE FASCISME TE BEVRIJDEN!!".[79] De Groot instinctively knew the implications of the Soviet participation in the war before the Comintern instructed the Dutch, Belgian and French communists to make the people revolt against the German oppressor by organizing demonstrations, strikes and sabotage actions.[80] For the latter strategy, the leadership established a *Militaire Commissie* (MC). This group began to carry out attacks on railroads, factories, as well as on *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD)-employees and collaborators.

According to the CPN, the participation of the Soviet Union had fundamentally changed the character of the war. Instead of an imperialist conflict in which the working class had nothing to gain, a battle for freedom had arisen in which the victory of the Soviet Union would simultaneously mean the independence of the Dutch people. The alliance of the Soviet Union with the United Kingdom meant that the CPN began to look more positively to the English war effort, and to the English-oriented Dutch government-in-exile as well. The party leadership also tried to accommodate to pro-monarchical sentiments that were widespread among Dutch society.[81] The anti-fascist struggle called for a national resistance movement, and if we have to believe the telegrams Daan Goulooze – who administered the contact between the Comintern headquarters and the CPN leadership – sent to Moscow in 1941 and early 1942, the party had already achieved much. Goulooze wrote about contacts with the government-in-exile through the newspaper *Vrij Nederland* (VN), with such enthusiasm that Dimitrov felt the need to instruct the CPN to keep its distance and its political independence.[82] In reality, there was no communication with London, nor was the resistance mood among the population so widespread as Goulooze portrayed it in his telegrams.[83] The CPN had enough troubles to coordinate its own resistance effort, due to intensified repression by the German authorities.

Paul de Groot– who was editor of *De Waarheid* and main party leader – was markedly optimistic in his writings as well. He spurred the Dutch people to gain courage with what he

[79] 'Samen met de Sovjet-Unie voor de verplettering van den Nazi-macht', *De Waarheid* (26 June 1941).
[80] This hand-written directive is undated (Directive, *Archief CPN,* 1735), but can probably not have arrived before Daan Goulooze telegraphed Moscow that he was waiting for instructions on 29 June (Telegram 29 June, *Archief CPN,* 1735).
[81] 'Eenheid van actie', *De Waarheid* (15 August 1941).
[82] 'Telegram Goulooze to ECCI Secretariat 24 July', 'Telegram ECCI Secretariat to Goulooze 29 July', *Archief CPN* 1735.
[83] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 135; 'Telegram 13 August', *Archief CPN* 1735.

thought would be a rapid victory in mind, and contribute to the allied war effort with uncompromising resistance: "Wij moeten de vijand haten en vernietigen. Geen valse sentimentaliteit, geen zogenaamde ethische overwegingen (overblijfsel van geweldloze theorieën, die voornamelijk of lafheid berusten), geen dogmatisch geredeneer, mogen onze strijdkracht en beslistheid remmen."[84] In a *Waarheid*-article of January 1942, and a 'political letter' of a month later, De Groot explained his ideas about the 'national front' of anti-fascist resistance forces. Dutch society had to strengthen the external war effort with internal resistance through a front of bourgeois-democratic groups and communists. Ideological differences should not hamper practical unity, so De Groot proposed to unite forces under the banner of removing the German occupiers and destroying the collaborators plus *restoration* of the Dutch Kingdom, with its state institutions and democratic constitution. The battle was not about communism.[85] De Groot understood that some party members would not understand the abandonment of socialist goals. Therefore, he focused on the need to overcome 'old sectarianism' in order to forge the necessary coalition of workers, farmers and the middle class that would rise up against the Nazis, the NSB, the 'great capitalists' and the 'old SDAP-clique' with its defeatist attitude.[86]

Goulooze's telegrams may have given the impression that there was already intensive contact between resistance groups, but in reality the CPN did not succeed in establishing meaningful relations.[87] Attempts to get in contact with other resistance forces led to nothing. At the end of 1942 it had become clear that there would be no second front before the winter – which led *De Waarheid* to denounce the English and American as parasites[88], and that a major resistance front had not materialized. Many communists felt isolated, not in the least because the *SD* had achieved great successes in arresting and executing members of the illegal CPN. The leadership appeared to feel despondent too, because it instructed Goulooze twice to ask the Comintern secretariat for political guidelines, but there was no answer.[89] The leadership – which had gone into hiding in the East – decided to appoint a substitution leadership on the ground. However, the SD managed to arrest one of the new leaders, and his information led to the arrest of Lou Jansen, Jan Dieters and another of the new leaders. Paul de Groot, now the only one left of the original triumvirate, barely escaped arrest and broke off all contact for the

[84] 'Stalin geeft het signaal!', *De Waarheid* (5 June 1942).
[85] 'Nationale eenheid voor nationale bevrijding', *De Waarheid* (8 January 1942).
[86] 'Politieke brief over de nationale eenheid voor de nationale bevrijding', *Archief CPN* 5 (February 1942).
[87] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 105-108.
[88] 'Overzicht van de vrijheidsstrijd tegen het fascisme', *De Waarheid* (2 January 1943).
[89] 'Telegram 2 October 1942', 'Telegram 24 October 1942', *Archief CPN* 1736.

remainder of the war. In the summer of 1943, a new leadership was formed around Jan Postma, commander of the Amsterdam division.

Moscow and Western European communist parties

On 10 June 1943, the Comintern was dissolved. Stalin and Comintern leaders publically explained that, taking into account the growth and maturity of individual communist parties, it was unnecessary to have one directing center. There were specific tasks and paths for each country and party, and it was up to the parties themselves to continue to organize anti-fascist coalitions and make use of the extraordinary chances the war would provide for socialism.[90] However, many historians believe that Stalin took this step mainly in the interest of the Grand Alliance; the existence of a transnational communist communication network had for a long time been a source of frustration for the British and Americans.[91] In a meeting of the Politburo, Stalin remarked that by dissolving the Comintern, bourgeois forces could not accuse communist parties of being agents of a foreign state anymore.[92] The fact that Comintern activities were not absolved, but rather assigned to a new department within the Central Committee of the Soviet communist party, led one historian to qualify the dissolution as a 'deception'.[93] However, some sources tell us that Stalin already toyed with the idea as early as in 1940, which suggests that he deemed the organizational overhaul necessary on other grounds than accommodating his allies.[94] Specifically, he might have aimed to make Soviet leadership of international communism more effective by ending the dual institutional nature of Soviet foreign policy: hitherto, the goals of the Comintern and the Soviet state department had often appeared at odds.[95]

In any case, the dissolution of the Comintern was a component of the coalition strategy against fascism that Stalin envisaged between countries and within countries. The question how this coalition strategy fitted into Stalin's post-war plans for Europe has been hotly debated. On the one hand, historian Norman Naimark denies that Stalin possessed some kind of a road map for a socialist Europe. He maintains that Stalin spurred the communists to enter coalitions between the left and the center that would stabilize and rebuild their countries after the war, and that might become more socialist-oriented in the future. A total communist take-

[90] 'Resolution of the presidium of the ECCI' (11 May 1943), in: Dallin, Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 230-232.
[91] Eley, *Forging democracy,* 284.
[92] 'Remarks Dimitrov in his diary', as quoted in: Dallin, Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 238.
[93] Mark, 'Revolution by degrees', 6.
[94] 'Remarks Dimitrov in his diary', as quoted in: Dallin, Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 226-227.
[95] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 123.

over was not on the agenda, according to Naimark.[96] On the other end of the scholarly spectrum there is Eduard Mark, who argues that Stalin initiated the national-front strategy in countries beyond the reach of the Soviet army to consolidate the popularity communist parties had build up during the war, thereby laying the basis for exploiting any future opportunity to bring about a socialist revolution.[97] In a similar vein, Gerhard Wettig – in a typical 'orthodox' interpretation of the origins of the Cold War – argues that Stalin's ultimate goal was to initiate a continent-wide socialist transformation directed against Western democracy. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Saxon presence in the West forced communist parties to cooperate with bourgeois forces. By joining government coalitions, the communists still could form a barrier against their respective countries following a pro-Western course.[98] What the discussion in the end boils down to is to what extent Stalin already envisaged East-West conflict when he espoused the national-front strategy during the war. In the remainder of this section, I aim to make clear on the basis of a comparison between the Netherlands and other Western European countries that Stalin attempted to keep his options open by preserving the Grand Alliance, while gradually accepting a geopolitical division of Europe which led Western communist parties to adopt a moderate approach during and after the war.

National fronts around Europe

Italy was one of the first testcases of European communism's newfound enthusiasm for united fronts. While the allied forces approached from the South in 1943, the *Partita Communista Italiano* (PCI) formed the Committee of National Liberation (CLN) with socialists and some leftist liberals and Catholics. In the winter of 1943-1944, serious conflict arose between the CLN and the government led by General Badoglio, which had ousted Mussolini. Civil war looked like a possibility, but the conflict was defused when party leader Palmiro Togliatti committed the PCI to Badoglio and said that Italy's institutional future could only be decided after the Germans would be defeated.[99] Togliatti had just returned from Moscow in March 1944, where he spent his five years in exile working for the Comintern. On the very eve of his departure, Togliatti had a conversation with Stalin. The Soviets had hitherto taken a hard line against the Badoglio government, but they began to change their mind. Stalin told Togliatti that a policy of 'national unity' would serve to avoid civil war and

[96] Naimark, 'Stalin and Europe', 36.
[97] Mark, 'Revolution by degrees', 7.
[98] Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe,* 27-32.
[99] Silvio Pons, 'Stalin, Togliatti and the origins of the Cold War in Europe', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3,2 (2001) 4. This 'turn' became known as the 'Svolta di Salerno'.

consolidate the PCI's position of prestige, thereby preserving the balance of power between the Soviet Union and Great Britain and laying the basis for communist influence in the long run.[100] According to Silvio Pons, a specialist on the international communist movement, a precedent was set for other European parties, based on the rejection of a civil war as a political prospect and the choice to take part in governments of national coalitions.[101]

After the Soviets entered the war, the PCF swiftly committed itself to resistance against the German occupier in **France** with the establishment of a *Front National*, which stood open for non-communists as well. Its military branch – the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans* – probably consisted of over 100.000 fighters in 1943/1944.[102] The PCF wanted to establish the broadest possible coalition, so it shied away from any discussion on radical change. This eased its cooperation with Charles de Gaulle, the resistance leader overseas, who also emphasized that the main thing was to get on with the war.[103] Similar to Togliatti, the PCF's leader Maurice Thorez spent the war in Moscow, and he too was pressed by Stalin to build political alliances and prevent communist isolation.[104] Stalin seemed to think that the attitude of the PCF was still too confrontational towards potential allies, exemplified by its insistence on maintaining partisan formations under arms.[105] Indeed, although De Gaulle appointed communists in his first government, there remained tensions, because De Gaulle aimed to neutralize the former resistance groups, while the PCF wanted to preserve their influence in order to maintain broadly supported leftist pressure on the government.[106]

The communists were the major force in the prime resistance movement in **Belgium,** the *Onafhankelijkheidsfront* (OF). Like the PCF, the Belgian *Kommunistische Partij België (KPB/PCB)* focused on the direct battle and the preservation of a united resistance front, and did not engage in much post-war planning.[107] The party survived the decapitation of most of its leaders, mainly through the rebuilding efforts of Andor Bereï, a Hungarian-born former contact person of the Comintern. Pre-war suspicions died hard in Belgium, and the government-in-exile did everything it could to neutralize the post-war political ambitions of

[100] Ibidem, 9; Donald Sassoon, 'The rise and fall of West European communism 1939-48', *Contemporary European History* 1, 2 (1992) 145.
[101] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 124.
[102] Edward Mortimer, *The rise of the French Communist Party 1920-1947* (London, 1984) 308-309.
[103] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 147-148.
[104] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 124.
[105] Mark, 'Revolution by degrees', 35.
[106] Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 130-132, 136-137.
[107] José Gotovitch, Marcel Liebman, Rudi van Doorslaer, *Een geschiedenis van het Belgisch kommunisme, 1921-1945* (Gent, 1980) 74.

the communist-led resistance movement.[108] The rapidity of the liberation forestalled any communist ambition to organize a popular uprising. Therefore, the KPB/PCB chose to influence the political order from within, by forming alliances with progressive forces.[109] The communists entered the first post-war government of Pierlot, mainly because the social democrats demanded their presence, partly in order to neutralize the KPB's radical potential. Disagreements about the issue of resistance demobilization – which the KPB could not accept – led to the resignation of the communists. In late 1944, the demobilization question had created a tense and uncertain atmosphere.

The CPN and Moscow

In contrast to Thorez and Togliatti, the Dutch leadership spent the war in its home country. The leaders did send a request to send De Groot and a few others to Moscow, but the Comintern denied them this privilege.[110] So, while the Soviets could groom French, Italian, German and Eastern European leaders for their post-war task, Dutch (and Belgian) communists did not receive face-to-face instructions. Communication with the CPN was arranged via the telegraph line of Daan Goulooze, who worked for the OMS, the department for international communications of the Comintern. Goulooze did not only transmit information from the CPN-leadership to the Comintern and vice versa, but also provided the Comintern with critical information on military and political issues. The relation between the triumvirate and Goulooze was one of distrust: De Groot viewed Goulooze's work for the OMS as of a merely 'technical' character, while Goulooze sometimes felt the need to 'instruct' the leadership on the basis of the Comintern instructions.[111] The damaged relation between Goulooze and the leadership partly explains why the significance of the communication apparatus of the OMS for the communist resistance gradually declined.[112] More importantly, the Comintern appeared to value Goulooze's work more for his information on the locations of German bases, troop movements, the mood among the German soldiers and the Dutch population etc., than for his ability to instruct the leadership. The telegrams, stored in the CPN-archive, show that communication was mainly a one-way affair. Only rarely did Dimitrov sent political guidelines, and often in rather imprecise terms,

[108] Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium,* 36-38.
[109] Ibidem, 73-76.
[110] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 97-98, 102-103.
[111] Ibidem, 96.
[112] Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie,* 129-130.

which did not have much practical significance.[113] He approved the CPN's 'national unity' offensive of early 1942 only after Goulooze had sent him excerpts from *De Waarheid.*[114] What he did do was spur Goulooze to continue providing him information on the situation in the Netherlands, with as much detail as possible.[115] The Comintern did not sent any meaningful directives after its dissolution, and contact stopped altogether after the Germans arrested many of the OMS' employees in July 1943.

A strategy for Western Europe?

When an allied victory seemed forthcoming in the winter of 1943-1944, with the Red Army achieving victories on the Eastern front and British troops marching through Italy, Stalin and Dimitrov's national-front strategy was adjusted to the realities of geopolitics. National fronts were to be established in Eastern and Western Europe to ensure the influence of communism over the entire continent – Stalin was not a priori interested in a divided continent, since he thought that the Americans would retreat from Europe after the war and that American-British rivalry would undermine the effectiveness of their geopolitical strategy.[116] Still, he realized that in the imminent future, countries like Italy and France were likely to stay within the Western sphere of influence. In order not to provoke the hostility of his allies – which he deemed necessary to achieve 'security' at Russia's Western border – he instructed that the first priority of Western communist parties was to avoid insurrection and to concentrate on widening their base of support by forming blocs with other left-wing forces and taking part in coalition governments.[117] The presence of Togliatti and Thorez in Moscow made it possible to instruct them to take up this strategy of moderation: this does somewhat contradict the idea that Togliatti followed an 'independent' line in the mid-1940s, which is a story Italian communists have held dear.[118] On the other hand, Soviet interference with Western communist parties was not that intense in the sense that we can say that Stalin 'micromanaged' the parties or 'dictated'[119] exactly what they should do. Wartime conditions and the fluidity of transition politics made that impossible. In the case of the CPN, there was

[113] For example, 'Telegram 2 June 1942', *Archief CPN* 1736.
[114] 'Telegram 30 January 1942', *Archief CPN* 1736.
[115] 'Telegram 14 August 1941', 'Telegram 11 September 1941', *Archief CPN* 1735, 'Telegram 30 July 1942', *Archief CPN* 1736, 'Telegram 25 January 1943', *Archief CPN* 1737.
[116] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 124; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, 'The Soviet Union and the world 1944-1953', in: Melvyn P. Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the Cold War* Volume 1: Origins (Cambridge, 2012) 93.
[117] Elena Aga-Rossi, Victor Zaslavsky, 'The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party, 1944-1948', in: Francesca Gori, Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War* (New York, 1996) 162-163.
[118] Aga-Rossi, Zaslavsky, 'The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party', 162.
[119] Mark, 'Revolution by degrees', 33-34.

hardly any effort on the side of Moscow to exert influence. Between mid-1943 and mid-1945 there was no contact at all. The Netherlands must have had even less geopolitical significance than Italy and France in the eyes of Stalin. He left it to the Dutch communists themselves to build up the national front. So, the national-front turn of the CPN was largely worked out with regard to the Dutch context of the anti-German resistance.

First cooperation efforts 1943-1944

In the spring of 1943, when there was a serious leadership crisis in the CPN because of a series of arrests, other resistance groups approached the communists. There was contact with the *Raad van Verzet* (RVV), which aimed to unite several resistance forces, and with the illegal papers *VN* and *Het Parool* about the idea of joint publications. Goulooze and Postma wanted Moscow to give advice, but no instructions were received before Goulooze had to dismantle his communication apparatus. Dimitrov had another thing to worry about – the dissolution of the Comintern. This decision came as a surprise to many communists. Some interpreted as a mere tactical maneuver.[120] However, the CPN-leadership interpreted it as a genuine attempt to remove an obstacle in the quest for national and international unity. It was also a signal that the CPN should break with its old sectarianism and to invent new forms of political activity:[121] The dissolution of the Comintern and the heightened resistance activity in the summer of 1943 encouraged various progressives to think of post-war issues. *Het Parool,* which had begun to write markedly more positive about the Soviet Union, published articles by Jan Romein and Gerard van het Reve – two former CPN-members – who argued that the end of the Comintern should mark the beginning of a truly independent communist movement, freed from dogmas and uncritical implementation of Soviet-dictated political about-faces.[122] *De Waarheid* responded not too kindly by denouncing Romein and Reve as two 'renegades' of the party. The writer did not interpret the dissolution of the Comintern as a new start, but as a continuation of the national orientation the CPN had followed for a longer time. Maybe, he proposed, it would be necessary to dissolve the party and establish one united workers party to maintain national unity in peacetime.[123]

These kinds of considerations were elaborated upon in Jan Postma's contribution to *Om Neêrlands Toekomst*, a booklet in which representatives from different political dispositions explained their plans for the Netherlands after the liberation. Postma's article was

[120] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 145.
[121] 'Naar nieuwe vormen', *De Waarheid* (17 July 1943).
[122] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 174-176.
[123] 'Het Parool en de opheffing van de Comintern', *De Waarheid* (20 August 1943).

unmistakably based on a Marxist analysis of society and economy. A 'front of capital' and a 'front of labor' confronted each other. The economic and political crises could only be resolved by the establishment of a truly socialist society. Such ideas or ominous plans like 'dissolving the contradiction between the individual and the community in a higher entity' could hardly have assured skeptics of the communists' non-revolutionary intentions. On the other hand, Postma did come out in favor of the restoration of the queen and the government, as well as unequivocal freedom of conscience.[124] Postma continued the national-front line De Groot had begun; the main novelty was that the Postma-leadership formulated its preference for one united workers' party and one united trade union.[125] The CPN began to follow what Hansje Galesloot and Susan Legêne call a two-track-policy: the formation of united organizations in the workers' movement combined with broad collaboration in the anti-fascist resistance.[126]

The communist resistance movement slowly recovered from the 'disaster year' of 1943.[127] In early 1944, a new leadership was forged after Postma had been arrested as well, which included Antoon Koejemans and Gerben Wagenaar, who would become prominent communists in the first post-war years. The leadership had to recover the ties between the center and small, regional communist groups. A new organizational and distributional structure was slowly build up, mainly functioning around *De Waarheid.* Throughout 1944 and early 1945, circulation numbers increased, due to an increased pro-resistance attitude among the people.[128] It is estimated that around 300.000 people subscribed to *De Waarheid* in 1946.[129] As we will see, contact with other resistance groups was conducted in the name of *De Waarheid* and not the CPN. *De Waarheid* was perceived to be a more appropriate medium to bond as many as possible anti-fascists and (mainly young) progressives who were not communists per se to the movement.

De Waarheid and the 'united' resistance 1944-1945

[124] 'Opvattingen van de communistische partij in Nederland', *Om Neêrlands Toekomst* (1943), http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/NIOD02:047832835 (1 April 2015).
[125] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 177-178.
[126] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 159-160.
[127] This is the title of a chapter in Verrips – *Dwars, duivels en dromend*, which deals with the many arrests.
[128] Jan-Willem Stutje denotes the spring of 1943 as a turning point, with the victory of the Red Army at Stalingrad and the massive demonstrations against imprisonment of Dutch soldiers in April and May. Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 222.
[129] G. Voerman, J. Wormer, 'De CPN in cijfers, 1909-1991', in: Margreet Schrevel; Gerrit Voerman (eds.), *De communistische erfenis. Bibliografie en bronnen betreffende de CPN* (Amsterdam, 1997) 164.

De Waarheid propagated the restoration of parliament and monarchy after the liberation, but also argued that a far-ranging renewal of the political system and the economy was required. It was not the only illegal newspaper that espoused this view. *Vrij Nederland,* a Christian-humanist inspired paper led by Henk van Randwijk, also wanted to break with liberal capitalism in order to achieve a more socially harmonious society. *Het Parool* maintained that there should be a break with the disastrous policies of the 1930s, and thought that a broadly-oriented progressive party, on the basis of a rational kind of socialism, could take the lead. *Je Maintiendrai* (JM) thought that a renewal of the party system was necessary as well. Furthermore, it promulgated a religious, socio-cultural and moral renascence.[130] *JM* would become the mouth-piece of the *Nederlandse Volksbeweging* (NVB), which had its roots in the hostage camp in St. Michielsgestel, where members of the Dutch elite of various political dispositions discussed what the country should look like after the war. When efforts were made to bring the resistance together in 1944, *De Waarheid* thought that cooperation of this 'left section' was the best way to further the cause of renewal. However, programmatic unity was difficult to realize. As Susan Legêne explains, the newspapers used the same terms ('renewal', 'unity', 'economic ordering'), but these could be interpreted very differently. There was a vast divide between the working class-orientation of *De Waarheid* and the more elitist ideas of *JM.*[131] *Het Parool* and *VN* worked most closely together, and issued a joint manifest in which they proclaimed the necessity of "een radicale vernieuwing van het volksleven."[132] *De Waarheid* was enthusiastic about the manifest and said that it would have signed it if circumstances had not made this impossible.[133]

Cooperation with the resistance movement as a whole was even more complicated. Several attempts were made to gather technical organizations and press organs in one representative body throughout 1944, which ultimately led to the formation of a *Grote Advies Commissie* (GAC) and a five-person *Contact Commissie* (CC). Cooperation in these bodies was troubled

[130] Hans van den Heuvel, Gerard Mulder, *Het vrije woord. De illegale pers in Nederland, 1940-1945* (Den Haag, 1990) 140-147.
[131] Susan Legêne, *De CPN en het denken over democratie en socialisme in de illegaliteit 1943-1945* (Amsterdam, 1982) 81-82.
[132] 'Twee conceptteksten van 'Manifest' van VN -Paroolgroep, ter mede-ondertekening aan *De Waarheid* voorgelegd', *Archief CPN* 20.
[133] 'Samenwerking, ook na de bevrijding', *De Waarheid* (8 September 1944). Various authors have put forward explanations for the absence of a *Waarheid*-signature. Madelon de Keizer citates van Randwijk, who maintained that time had ran out due to difficulties in communication between illegal groups. Lou de Jong on the other hand thinks that *Parool* and *VN* did not want the communists to sign the manifest, because their ideology would prevent them to sign such a democratic proclamation in good faith. Similarly, Ger Verrips argues that representatives of *Parool, VN* and *De Waarheid* had met each other, and could not reach consensus on the definition of 'democracy'. Read: Madelon de Keizer, *Het Parool 1940-1945. Verzetsblad in oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam, 1991) 399-400; De Jong, *Koninkrijk* 7b, 1996; Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 190.

because the actors could not agree on the tasks of the resistance. The right-wing section (personified by the anti-revolutionary newspaper *Trouw)* understood the resistance as a temporary organ bent on the immediate goal of fighting the Germans. When this would be achieved, the resistance would dissolve, leaving the Netherlands in the hands of democratically chosen politicians. The left-wing section, which included *De Waarheid,* thought that the resistance should take the lead in renewing the country, both in and after the war, preventing the return of the out-dated structures of the 1930s.[134] This disagreement led to a power struggle in the GAC and CC. The right-wing section ultimately succeeded in confining the influence of the left. This led *De Waarheid* to complain about the systematic exclusion of communists in representative organs.[135]

A striking example of the fragmentation of the Dutch resistance formed the CC's failure to appoint a five-person delegation to travel to London on the invitation of the queen. Left and right were unable to reach a consensus on the composition of this delegation, so in the end no one left for London. *VN*-editor Van Randwijk, in cooperation with *Het Parool,* wrote a letter to the CC in the midst of the discussion, signed by the entire left section. Van Randwijk argued that the resistance – "het zuurdesem der natie" – had taken the moral and practical lead during the war; why would it not be equipped to think about the situation after the war? The organizations who signed the letter had the common goal of achieving a better world than before 1940, and consensus was achieved on the essential points of renewal, social justice and a controlled economy, Van Randwijk argued.[136]

As this letter suggests, contacts within the left section were generally good. *De Waarheid* was accepted as a legitimate political actor. The left-wing as a whole made efforts to include a communist in the delegation to the queen and in a *Nationale Advies Commissie,* a body which would advise the government in the transition period.[137] Cooperation within the left-wing often led to friendships, like between Henk van Randwijk and Gerben Wagenaar.[138] Koejemans remembered that there was regular contact between the editors of the illegal newspapers.[139] He himself was involved in attempt to issue a joint political program with *Het*

[134] De Keizer, *Het Parool,* 414-415.
[135] 'Aan de CC en College van Vertrouwensmannen', *Archief CPN* 801 (15 September 1944). For example, *De Waarheid* was only represented in the CC through *Parool*-editor Jan Meijer. This meant that of five members, only one represented the left.
[136] 'Brief linkersectie aan alle illegale organisaties' (10 October 1944), *Archief CPN* 801.
[137] De Keizer, *Het Parool,* 433-438.
[138] Gerard Mulder, Paul Koedijk, *H.M. van Randwijk. Een biografie* (Amsterdam, 1988) 333.
[139] Parlementaire Enquete Commissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, *Verslag houdende de uitkomsten van het onderzoek* 7AB (Den Haag, 1949) 205.

Parool and *VN.*[140] The fact that this came to nothing might be explained by the uncertainty of the non-communist left-wing resistance about how the communist movement would develop itself. Encouraged by its journalists Wim van Norden and Jan Meijer, *Het Parool* had begun to write markedly more positive about the Soviet Union and the *Waarheid*-movement from 1942/1943 onwards, after Koos Vorrink left the newspaper and the similarly deeply anticommunist Frans Goedhart was arrested. Still, it criticized *De Waarheid's* 'religious-like' reverence of the Soviet Union, and expressed the hope that the communists would commit to a 'constructive politics', disengaged from the perceived interests of the Soviet Union.[141] *Vrij Nederland* and *Je Maintiendrai* blasted the efforts by *Trouw* and the other right-wing actors to recreate the division between Christian-national forces and left-wing radicals.[142] For these newspapers, there was no need to isolate the communists before they got the chance to prove their worth under peaceful circumstances. But, *Je Maintiendrai* argued, the question the CPN was obliged to answer, was: "voelt de CPN zich een Nederlandse of een Russische partij?".[143] So, the non-communist newspapers of the left-wing did not embrace the communist movement, but accepted its presence in the resistance movement – and perhaps a future progressive bloc – in the hope that *De Waarheid* would continue its national-front policy by disengaging from the Soviet Union and by fully accepting democracy. The stance of the CPN towards the war during the Nazi-Soviet Pact continued to trouble the relations with non-communist forces. Especially *Trouw* and the social democratic paper *Paraat* hammered on the untrustworthiness of the communists, epitomized by their 'switch' in 1939. In response, the CPN continued to stress – in *Waarheid*-articles and special booklets – that the war had changed in character in 1941, from an imperialist to an anti-fascist struggle.[144]

When we analyze communist sources from 1944-1945, we see that the CPN-leadership gradually begins to picture a dichotomy between progressive and conservative forces. According to the communists, capitalism had reached the 'monopolistic' stadium. Capital needed a strong, authoritarian state in order to keep the workers' movement down. Expansion of democracy – giving the workers the chance to raise their voice - would be the tool to break the power of big business. So *De Waarheid* began to understand 'democracy' not only as a

[140] De Keizer, *Het Parool,* 450-451.
[141] 'De communisten en Europa's opbouw', *Het Parool* (3 March 1945).
[142] 'Het christendom en de maatschappelijke vernieuwing', *Vrij Nederland* (27 April 1945); 'Vertroebeling van de politieke atmosfeer' (15 January 1945). Interestingly, the piece of *Vrij Nederland* was a reaction on an article in the Southern edition of *Je Maintiendrai,* which appears to have contained a far more anticommunist tone than the illegal Northern edition.
[143] 'De communisten en de buitenlandse politiek', *Je Maintiendrai* (1 March 1945).
[144] 'Over het karakter van de oorlog en de strijd der arbeiderklasse', *De Waarheid* (3 January 1945); *De communisten en de strijd om de vrijheid* (1944).

matter of individual freedom, but also as a political weapon against 'reaction'.[145] "Deze reële politiek is gebaseerd op het rustige vertrouwen, dat de toepassing van consequente democratie moet leiden tot de overwinning van het socialisme."[146] The leadership deemed it necessary to unite all the workers in one party and one trade union in order to defeat the forces of reaction. The workers party would form the core of a people's movement with farmers, intellectuals and women. *De Waarheid* resisted the NVB-idea of a broad people's movement in which all class contradictions would be dissolved.[147] CPN-theorist Friedel Baruch argued that the NVB's version of 'renewal' may look radical at first glance, but that the language was vague enough to use it for reactionary ends as well.[148]

In November 1944, the CPN published its *Volksprogram*, a detailed program of communist plans for the economy, education, nature and a range of other issues. It continued the political line that *De Waarheid* had put forward. On the one hand, parliamentary democracy was defined as something worthwhile in its own right. For the first time, the communists also professed their willingness to accept governmental responsibility. Furthermore, communists were not expected to act as a revolutionary vanguard, but as part of a broad worker's movement. This was a clear departure from pre-1941 positions. On the other hand, the CPN continued to base its arguments on a Marxist contradiction between capital and labor. In this way, the leadership tried to reconcile basic Marxist-Leninist doctrine with wartime national-front ideas. The *Volksprogram* is conspicuously vague about the precise form of communist political activity compared with communist writings during the 1943 Postma-leadership.[149] The program talks of a 'socialist workers movement', but also about a 'communist party'.[150] The unwillingness of the social democrats – which were singled out to form a united workers party with the communists – to engage in a discussion (more about this in chapter 3) meant that the CPN could only be vague about its future existence.

Communism in the liberated South

The CPN had never attracted much supporters in Southern Netherlands before 1940. During the war, small *Waarheid*-groups sprang up in which communists worked together with

[145] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 170-171.
[146] 'Geen revolutionaire romantiek', *De Waarheid (*2 February 1944).
[147] Geert Ruygers, one of the NVB-founders, had published a brochure about future party formations in 1943. He foresaw that after the war a broad people's party would stand at the core of politics, with only the communists and the conservatives as other remaining groups. Read: Ruygers, *Partijvorming, maar op welken grondslag?* (Amsterdam, 1943).
[148] 'Personalistisch socialisme', *Scholing en Strijd* (7 August 1945).
[149] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 207; Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 231-232.
[150] 'Volksprogram voor een democratisch, vrij en welvarend Nederland' (November 1944), *Archief CPN* 24.

radicalized persons of a non-communist background. These groups argued that there should be one workers party and one trade union after the war. Accordingly, after the liberation of the South in the autumn on 1944, the *Waarheid*-groups of most cities waited with re-establishing CPN-departments. The strategy was not to appear as hard-line communist, but as the left section of the workers' movement, in order to rally as many people as possible around *De Waarheid.*[151] The *Waarheid*-groups were the first political pressure organizations becoming active across the South.[152] In December 1944, *De Waarheid* was published in five regional editions, with a readership of around 25.000. The campaign for a united trade union also seemed to achieve rapid successes. Many new sector-based organizations were erected after the liberation, with some communists, but also many social democrats and Catholics. However, the leaders of the old trade unions were adamant in re-establishing the pillar-based structures. This proved to be important especially because the Catholic union received the influential support of the bishops.[153]

The Dutch government-in-exile had been anxious for the chaotic situation that could arise during and after the liberation. The *Militair Gezag* (MG) was established in order to impose governmental authority on the liberated territories. The MG was a military institution without democratic legitimacy, which had far-ranging powers at its disposal for maintaining order and containing radical activity. There was hardly room for 'normal' politics in the South, because the MG controlled the distribution of paper for the press and forbade most political meetings. Besides, people could not influence state policies due to of the absence of democratic institutions.[154] The omnipotence of the MG was a point of conflict within the government itself. Henk Termeer argues that two camps stood against each other: the (majority of the) former resistance, the MG and the queen wanted to 'renew' politics in the South, while the Gerbrandy-cabinet and other party-bound administrators advocated a swift return of democratic life along pre-war institutional lines.[155] The power struggle was only resolved when the social democratic ministers left the Gerbrandy-II administration in January 1945; Gerbrandy-III included some Southern advocates of 'renewal', which meant that democratic structures would not be reinstated before May 1945. The victory of the MG/'renewal'-camp was not good news for the *Waarheid*-movement, which had been frustrated by the MG from

[151] Pieter van Lierop, *Kommunisten in bevrijd Zuid-Nederland: voor één socialistische partij* (Amsterdam, 1984) 151-153.
[152] Henk Termeer, *Het geweten der natie. De voormalige illegaliteit in het bevrijde Zuiden, september 1944 – mei 1945* (Assen, 1994) 409.
[153] Van Lierop, *Kommunisten in bevrijd Zuid-Nederland,* 57.
[154] Ibidem, 7.
[155] Termeer, *Het geweten der natie,* 681-682.

the start. The MG prevented the publication of *De Waarheid* as one regional newspaper, and refused to appoint communists as employees. Furthermore, although *De Waarheid* also propagated a form of 'renewal', it sharply differed in opinion with the MG-oriented part of the former resistance, which ideas were more elitist and at times semi-authoritarian.[156]

In December 1944, it became clear that the CPN was unable to exert any tangible influence on politics in the South through the *Waarheid*-groups. A combination of factors resulted in the establishment of the *Communistische Partij Bevrijd Gebied* (CPBG) during Christmas. Two developments were decisive. First, the pre-war social democratic cadre – which had not yet resumed political activity – was not willing to engage in talks about a united party. Second, because Wim van Exter, CPN-instructor for Noord-Brabant and Limburg, was unable to reach the leadership in the still occupied North, he travelled to Brussels in November 1944, where he met Edgar Lalmand, who was to become the general secretary of the KPB-PCB and Andor Bereï, who was perceived as the 'numéro 1' inside the party.[157] They disapproved the decision to wait with re-establishing the party and spurred Van Exter to follow the Belgian communists' strategy of pursuing a progressive national front on the basis of a strong party with an own sharp profile.[158] So, the failure to find allies in the resistance movement and the social democratic camp, and pressure by the Belgian party, persuaded Van Exter that another tactic was needed to foster the communist cause. The campaign for one socialist party was continued, but it was now believed that this was possible only if a strong communist party would strive for it.

The establishment of the CPBG came together with a sharper tone in communist agitation. The *Manifest aan het Nederlandse Volk*, which was accepted at the Christmas conference, can be interpreted as a plea for the need for a communist party that would lead the working class in the fight for socialist unity. At the same time it is an attack on the 'enemies of democracy', who had led themselves known in the South by restoring age-old conservatism.[159] Van Exter went so far as accusing the government of being dictated by 'neo-fascist influences'.[160] *De Waarheid* regularly engaged in polemics with other press organs and former resistance

[156] This part of the resistance, organized around the *Gemeenschap van Oud-Illegale Werkers Nederland* (GOIWN) and the BS – and supported by *Je Maintiendrai* - advocated a 'strong state' and a corporatist socio-economic system. Some of its leaders, like Jan de Quay, were tied to the NVB, which was not active in the South, in order not to endanger its success after the liberation of the entire country. Van Lierop, *Kommunisten in het bevrijde Zuiden,* 161-163; Termeer, *Het geweten der natie,* 682.
[157] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 219.
[158] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 232.
[159] 'Manifest aan het Nederlandse volk, voor een vrij en welvarend Nederland' (December 1944), *Archief CPN* 78.
[160] Termeer, *Het geweten der natie,* 653-654

figures, which increased the isolation of the CPBG. After the CPGB was established, other political parties followed. Contacts with the *Sociaal-Democratische Vereniging* (SDV) remained fruitless. The SDV wanted to wait until the liberation of the North, but also professed its doubt about the CPBG's interpretation of 'democracy'.[161] This social democratic rejection foreshadowed the stance of the national SDAP after the war. However, the national communist leadership seems not to have had much eye for what had happened in the South.[162]

Around the liberation

In 1944-1945, Stalin seems to have accepted that the reconstruction of Europe would be based on a geopolitical division between the Soviet Union and Great Britain – he predicted that the US would return to its traditional isolationism. On both sides of the divide, communists were encouraged to follow the line of national unity and to avoid any revolutionary uprising.[163] Within the Soviet sphere of influence, the Soviet authorities began a process of 'revolution from above', centering around the formation of a new ruling class. In Western Europe, radicalism was reigned in as well. Stalin rejected the 'Greek model' of total communist opposition to the bourgeois government and the British authorities.[164] Events like the November Crisis in Belgium had to be prevented. There, the communist party, which had just resigned from the government coalition, organized nationwide demonstrations. The authorities were convinced they faced a potential communist-directed uprising; miscalculations on both sides led to a bloody confrontation in Brussels on 25 November. This turned out to be a political disaster for the communist party, because it lost the goodwill of many progressive non-communists.[165] While Soviet authorities disapproved of these kind of confrontational tactics, they also set another kind of boundary. In April 1945, an article was published in the *Cahiers du Communisme,* which attacked the American party leader Earl Browder and his 'Browderism'. This was a short-hand for the American party's strategy of dissolving the party in favor of a 'political association'. The article was written under the name of Jacques Duclos, one of the leading men of the PCF. In reality however, it was prepared by the international communications department of the Soviet communist party,

[161] Ibidem, 662-663.
[162] De Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland,* 82-83.
[163] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 121.
[164] Ibidem, 127-128. In December 1944, the Greek army opened fire on a communist demonstrations in Athens, killing 28 demonstrators and injuring many more. Stalin remained passive, because he had conceded Greece to the British sphere of influence and did not want to antagonize his allies.
[165] Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium,* 104-113.

which had taken over the Comintern apparatus. The article was a clear sign of Soviet disapproval of this kind of 'dangerous opportunism'.[166]

At the eve of the liberation, it was highly unclear what the future of Dutch communism would look like. The pre-war CPN had mostly disappeared; of the leadership, only De Groot and Jaap Brandenburg were alive, while more than half of the party's active cadre had died.[167] A movement around *De Waarheid* had emerged, but the relation between the newspaper and the CPN was not well-defined. Paul de Groot, who had rushed to Amsterdam after allied troops liberated Northern Netherlands in early May, seemed to have the most articulate vision. He reasserted his leadership with astounding ease, as his biographer Stutje rightly notes.[168] De Groot's ideas seemed to square with those that the interim-leadership had advocated in 1944-1945, but they went even further in the direction of dissolving the CPN. During May and June, De Groot argued that a 'democratic people's government' should come about, with a 'democratic people's party' or a 'people's union' at its centre. This party was to be a cooperation between communists and all democratic, progressive forces, maybe as an alternative to the NVB.[169] De Groot did not refer to communism, socialism or the worker's movement once.[170] In order to prevent communist isolation, it was imperative to use the mass base built around *De Waarheid* to achieve a breakthrough in the heart of the party system. De Groot managed to persuade the other leaders of his plans. On 12 May the leadership announced that the CPN would not return. Instead, a *Vereniging vrienden van de Waarheid* would work to bring about a "politieke partij, die alle vooruitstrevende en democratische krachten verenigt en ernaar streeft met de kerken in vrede te leven. Zulk een nieuwe politieke formatie kan de kern vormen van een volksregering."[171] From May to July, De Groot continued to espouse ideas far removed from Marxist-Leninist class theory and from the line the CPN had followed until the liberation. He disapproved of a united socialist party, because the breakthrough could not be attained on the basis of one world view.[172] De Groot's bravura was not matched by practical achievements. In the months after the liberation, *De Waarheid* was kept out of the Schermerhorn-government and did not attain much influence in the MG

[166] Dallin, Firsov (eds.), *Dimitrov and Stalin,* 257-258.
[167] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 204.
[168] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 246-247. After all, De Groot had been out of the picture for two years, in which communist activity had changed fundamentally. Furthermore, no one exactly knew the reasons behind De Groot's absence.
[169] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 253.
[170] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 209.
[171] 'Opheffingsverklaring CPN' (12 May 1945), in: Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 362-363.
[172] 'Over de vernieuwing van het politieke leven', *Scholing en Strijd* 4 (Juni 1945).

and the 'purge commissions' that were to appoint new members of parliament and other politicians (more about this in chapter 3).[173]

De Groot's moderatism and the way he managed to retake a nr.1-role within the movement was bound to invoke criticism. His most vocal opponent was Wim van Exter, who not only comdemned De Groot's apparent willingness to leave Marxism behind, but also accused him of desertion, because of his internal exile in 1943-1945. Van Exter felt strengthened in his opposition by the conversations he conducted in May and June with Lalmand, Bereï and a PCF-representative in Brussels. They accused De Groot of 'Browderism' and argued that the CPN should be re-established as soon as possible – after all, communist parties had returned in almost all European countries.[174] Ultimately, a concerted effort between Van Exter and Belgian-French leaders during conversations in Brussels and Paris made Paul de Groot leave his 'Browderism' behind.[175] The leadership decided to transform a planned conference of *Waarheid*-groups into one with the re-establishment of the party as central issue. At the conference of 21-23 July, De Groot admitted that dissolving the party had been a mistake. However, he warned for the kind of pre-war sectarianism that the opposition seemed to embody. After vicious personal attacks were launched by both the pro- and contra-De Groot camps (the latter one led by Van Exter and Goulooze), a compromise prevented a party split: the establishment of the CPN was to be viewed as the crowning of the *Waarheid*-movement and the CPN would gradually return during the following months.[176] A new party council was chosen, which included De Groot, but not Goulooze and Van Exter; the July-opposition had lost.

In communist writings during the period around the conference, the brief *Vrienden van de Waarheid*-period was condemned as a consequence of having lost sight of Marxist-Leninist theory.[177] The goal was still to unite the progressive forces that had come to the forefront during the war, but "zonder te beschikken over een doelbewuste partij met een principieel programma, met een welgedisciplineerde organisatie, is dit onmogelijk."[178] The CPN also reinvoked the class orientation De Groot had abandoned: unity of the worker's movement was

[173] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 253.
[174] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 247-251.
[175] In the car on the way back from Brussels, De Groot would have remarked: "Nou hier hebben jullie dan de partij, kunnen jullie zien wat je ervan maakt." Ibidem, 251.
[176] Jan-Willem Stutje thinks that the woman behind the compromise, Annie Averink, was assisted by a Dutch-speaking foreign person. Stutje has had access to Averink's files and found a scribble which contained mistakes in articles and spelling. Ibidem, 255.
[177] 'Leidraaid voor de discussie op de partijconferentie van 21,22 en 23 juli 1945, uitgegeven door het illegale partijbestuur' (July 1945), *Archief CPN* 26.
[178] 'Manifest over de heroprichting van de CPN' (August 1945), in: Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 364-367.

required in order to make the democratic groups attain power at the expense of the forces of reaction.[179]

Conclusion

The Soviet Union's participation in the Second World War was a defining moment in the CPN's history. It allowed the party to combine loyalty to Moscow with participation in the national resistance movement. Dutch communists had a lot of freedom in creating and implementing their national-front strategy, due to problems with communication and to the low geopolitical significance of the Netherlands in Stalin's world view. Although Paul de Groot had already embraced parliamentary democracy and national symbols in 1942, the strategy shifted from words to action around 1943-1944. The *Waarheid*-movement was gradually accepted as a legitimate participant within the left section of the resistance. The resistance credentials of the *Waarheid*-movement and the wartime cooperation between the superpowers convinced a part of the left-wing that the communists could potentially contribute to a progressive renewal of Dutch society. Still, the non-communist left-wing remained uncertain about the communists' conception of democracy and its relation to the Soviet Union. Although the communists already had experienced some blows in the South, the leadership continued to search for forms of political activity in which progressive forces would be united. In its most extreme form, espoused by Paul de Groot around May 1945, socialism even seemed to have vanished as a useful ideology. This was a step too far in the eyes of the French and Belgian communists, who apparently had enough leverage to turn De Groot around. These developments set the stage for the kind of CPN that would enter the political arena in the following years: a party bent on left-wing cooperation, both loyal to the government and attacking the forces of reaction.

[179] Ibidem, 364-367.

Chapter 3: Chances and limitations of cooperation attempts

Introduction

In May 1945, Willem Schermerhorn (NVB) and Willem Drees (SDAP) spoke with Gerben Wagenaar and Paul de Groot about the possibility of a communist presence in the first post-war government. This was the first and last time that the Dutch communist movement would ever receive an offer to enter the government. The willingness of Drees and Schermerhorn to engage with the *Waarheid*-representatives reflected the enhanced prestige that the communists had gained on the ground of their resistance efforts. Drees would later explain that he had invited the communists because of their leading role in the resistance and the need to let them take part in deliberation in a period without a fully functioning parliament. Still, Drees and Schermerhorn did not plan to grant the communists major influence in the new cabinet, because they were unsure about their future political behavior and ties to Russia, and about the expedience of their men for specific ministerial positions.[180] According to Drees, the talks were unsuccessful because the communists refused to accept only a minister position without portfolio for Wagenaar; De Groot wanted to become minister of food supply, which the Drees and Schermerhorn could not accept.[181] De Groot added that he could not agree on the foundations of the governments program, such as the postponement of the elections for 1,5 year and the release of most collaborators from custody.[182]

In much literature, this event has been analyzed as a factual episode in the formation period, with too little regard for the deduction that the elites evidently acknowledged that Dutch communism was a force to be reckoned with.[183] Scholarship of the early Dutch Cold War has often treated the period immediately after liberation in light of the events of 1947-1948. During these two years the CPN transformed into an isolated movement stressing the danger of American involvement in Europe and the benefits of developments in Eastern Europe. The political and social isolation of the CPN became visible when the CPN applauded the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in early 1948, to the horror of almost every Dutch non-communist. By writing the history of communism in the transition period with

[180] Hans Daalder, *Gedreven en behoedzaam. Willem Drees 1886-1988.* 2: De jaren 1940-1948 (Amsterdam, 2006) 302.
[181] Parlementaire Enquete Commissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, *Verslag houdende de uitkomsten van het onderzoek* 5C (Den Haag, 1949) 474.
[182] 'Leidraad voor de discussie op de partijconferentie van 21, 22 en 23 Juli 1945, uitgegeven door het illegale partijbestuur', *Archief CPN* 26.
[183] For example, F.J.F.M. Duynstee, J. Bosmans, *Het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees, 24 juni 1945 – 3 juli 1946, Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland na 1945; deel 1* (Assen, 1977) 72; Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet,* 254.

1948 as the benchmark, the polarization between communists and non-communists becomes a 'natural' consequence of post-war developments. This negates that in 1945 different courses of action were still open, and that there were various actors that regarded the communist movement as a legitimate participant in the political arena. In other words, notwithstanding its ultimate isolation, there were chances for the CPN to become an accepted force in Dutch politics.

First of all, the relation between the government and the CPN proves that the communists themselves were intent on solidifying communist influence in national politics on the basis of their wartime national-front policy. In 1945-1946 the CPN saw itself as a partner of the progressive elements within the Schermerhorn-Drees government (consisting of social democrats, Catholics and independents). Its position towards the government was one of 'constructive opposition', perhaps taking into account that it at some point would enter a coalition government itself. So while the CPN was continuously pitted against the government on the issues of postponement of the elections, the purge of collaborators and the wages-and-prices policy, it supported the government on other important issues and refrained from radical opposition rhetoric. By rejecting strikes and promoting production increases, the CPN went along with the reconstruction-discourse that permeated Dutch society in the first years after the war. Tellingly, the first point in the 1946 election program is "opbouwen, organiseren, produceren!".[184] It was clear that the CPN did not aim for a direct socialist revolution. The party called for government planning of the economy and nationalization of major industrial sections, but did not propagate large-scale expropriations. Indeed, as De Liagre Böhl, Nekkers and Slot argue, there were many similarities between the CPN's program around 1946 and the ideas of a 'controlled economy' as espoused by the social democrats and the Schermerhorn-Drees government.[185] The CPN would maintain this stance during the first year of the roman-red Beel-government (1946-1948), although Louis Beel (KVP) did not even consult the CPN-leaders during the formation. This slightly embittered the CPN, because the 1946 election result was the best it ever had, with 10,6% of the votes, which led De Groot to state that the party had 'won' the elections, and was now 'one of the Big Four' in the Dutch political party system.[186].

Second, the formation talks between Schemerhorn, Drees and the CPN-leaders proves that there were non-communists who accepted the communists' claim on political influence and

[184] 'Program der CPN (De Waarheid) voor de verkiezingen 1946', *Archief CPN* 360.
[185] Herman de Liagre Böhl, Jan Nekkers, Laurens Slot, *Nederland industrialiseert! Politieke en ideologiese strijd rondom het naoorlogse industrialisatiebeleid 1945-1955* (Nijmegen, 1981) 99
[186] 'Inleiding de Groot op partijbestuursvergadering' (22 May 1946), *Archief CPN* 275.

who were willing to cooperate with them – to a certain extent. In this chapter, I will analyze a few levels of cooperation on the basis of own archival research and secondary literature, and investigate in what ways and on the basis of which ideas communists and non-communists attempted to cooperate, and how successful these attempts were. Two 'obvious' cases are the relation between CPN and social democracy, and the quest for unity in the unions (EVC and NVV), since these were the two levels which the illegal CPN had picked out for realizing workers' unity and the breakthrough of Dutch communism. Still, there were more levels on which the CPN tried to make its national-front policy work, and I will focus on the *Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië*, as an example of the intellectual level, and the municipal government of Amsterdam, as the most important case of communist participation in local politics. The focus lies on relations within the left-wing, because this is where the CPN's national front was mainly supposed to take hold. By taking the remarkable fluidity of the post-war transition period into account, these cases present a richer and more nuanced view of interaction between communists and non-communists than the prevailing 'on its way to polarization'-orthodoxy.

1. CPN and social democracy

At the end of 1930s, the SDAP was in a process of a fundamental reinvention of its political identity. The party leadership aimed to enlarge the electoral base of the party and to make it acceptable as a coalition partner. The SDAP slowly shed its Marxist roots in favor of a more reformist socialism. After the war, social democracy's future looked bright: the economic crisis had largely discredited liberalism, and the war experience all but destroyed support for authoritarian forms of politics. There was wide support for governmental economic planning and expansion of social welfare. Many intellectuals grouped themselves around the cause of 'renewal' in politics, economics and culture. Distrust towards the SDAP had receded, partly because of its participation in the first Gerbrandy-administrations and its uncompromising rejection of the German occupation. Therefore, there seemed to be room for a social democratic party, that would be not so much the voice of the workers' movement, but a broad people's party that would lead the Netherlands into a brighter, postwar age. Still, there was disagreement within the SDAP about the future existence of the party. A left-wing section around the magazine *De Baanbreker* argued for a re-emergence of the SDAP as a truly socialist party based on working class support. At the other end, there were social democrats who were critical about the re-establishment of the SDAP and who favored a progressive

people's movement on the basis of NVB-ideas. The party leadership, around Vorrink and Drees, wanted to continue the transformation of the SDAP as started before the war.[187]

The leadership and the 'renewal'-section swiftly outflanked the left-wing. This is an important development, because these sections were not inclined to seriously take the CPN's efforts to bring about a united workers' party into consideration. The fact that two of the leading men during the pre-war years reconsolidated their power positions – Vorrink as chairman and Drees as political leader – meant that the party was led by people who had been involved in the bitter pre-war propaganda struggle with the CPN, Vorrink especially.[188] In September 1945, the CPN sent the SDAP-leadership a letter, urging the social democrats to take cooperation or even merger into consideration, in order to form a powerful democratic bloc that would liberate the Netherlands from its internal enemies – monopoly capital and its political spokesmen.[189] The SDAP responded negatively, on the basis of the CPN's questionable attitude towards democracy and its institutions and the party's identity as the vassal of Moscow.[190] These two arguments were already used before the war: only the CPN's criticism of the Schermerhorn-Drees government was a new ground for rejecting rapprochement. Another important argument, which was not used in the official answer, was that cooperation with communism would surely endanger the chances of bringing about a 'breakthrough'-party: consultations with the NVB had already started. There was a remarkable consensus on the need to turn down the CPN's offer. *De Baanbreker*, the voice of the marginalized left-wing, agreed as well.[191] Drees was right when he said on the September party conference: "ik geloof niet dat wij hier veel discussie over dit probleem zullen krijgen. Wij kennen de communisten, en wij kennen onszelf, en wij weten dat versmelting in één partij niet mogelijk is."[192] Although the SDAP's refusal to cooperate with the CPN was clear, the latter party sent another proposal in February 1946. The fact that a short elaboration upon the differences between the two parties by Vorrink at the SDAP's liquidation congress was

[187] Jan Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de Nederlandse Volksbeweging* (Deventer, 1978) 103-109.
[188] Annemieke Klijn, *Arbeiders- of volkspartij. Een vergelijkende studie van het Belgisch en Nederlands socialisme, 1933-1946* (Maastricht, 1990) 207-208.
[189] 'Brief aan SDAP' (3 September 1945), *Archief CPN* 270.
[190] 'Het antwoord van het partijbestuur der SDAP', *De Waarheid* (22 September 1945). In the following editions of *De Waarheid,* chief-editor Koejemans attempted counter the objections of the SDAP one at the time. Read: 'Het antwoord 1-4', *De Waarheid* (24-27 September 1945).
[191] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (5 September 1945), *Archief SDAP* 2955. Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de NVB,* 115-116.
[192] 'Verslag partijconferentie' (5-6 September 1945), *Archief SDAP* 2963.

enough to settle the matter proved that the entire idea of working class unity was much more important to the communists than to the social democrats.[193]

Evert Vermeer had already voiced the unwillingness of most social democrats to merge with the communists in a reaction to a unity-proposal of *De Waarheid* in December 1944, on the basis of the CPN's admiration of the dictatorship in the Soviet Union.[194]. Still, wartime cooperation between social democrats and communists did change their interaction in another way. SDAP-leaders noticed that Dutch communism had become more moderate, which led them to adopt a wait-and-see attitude. Johan Scheps thought that social democrats could cooperate with communists if the latter would fundamentally 'turn around' their previous attitudes towards democracy, religion and the Soviet Union.[195] This stance is epitomized by Willem Drees. He maintained that the CPN should not be isolated before it got the chance to prove its democratic credentials. Therefore, local SDAP-departments were instructed to cooperate with communists in city councils if the circumstances demanded it.[196] As we have seen, Drees included the CPN in his formation talks. Drees had already revealed his willingness to engage with the communists in a conversation he had with CPN-leaders Antoon Koejemans and Frits Reuter in the winter of 1944, when the the social democrat informed if the communists were willing to be part of a postwar government. Without making any commitments, Drees said that he did not harbor fundamental arguments against communist participation.[197] Although Drees detested communist methods and the nature of the Soviet dictatorship, he acknowledged the chance that communism could develop itself into a more democratically-oriented force.[198]

On the other hand, sources reveal that Vorrink and Drees already understood the CPN as a threat in 1945, which should not be granted too many platforms to spread its message. This explains why Marinus van der Goes van Naters, the SDAP's parliamentary group leader, had to back down from involvement in the *Comité voor Actieve Democratie*, in which communists were also represented. In the party executive meeting in which this issue was discussed, Vorrink explained that a communist 'infection' was more dangerous than a national-socialist one, because it worked on the sentiments of the working class.[199] The *Comité*, founded by Jan

[193] 'Verslag liquidatiecongres SDAP' (7 February 1946), *Archief PvdA,* 140.
[194] E. Fuut (pseudoniem van Evert Vermeer), 'Waarom niet samen', *Vrije Gedachten* (15 December 1944).
[195] Pieter Boon (pseudoniem van Johan Scheps), *Sociaal democratie en communisme* (Den Dolder, 1945).
[196] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (20 October 1945), *Archief SDAP* 2955.
[197] Frits Reuter, *De CPN in oorlogstijd. Herinneringen* (Amsterdam, 1978) 116-117.
[198] Willem Drees (Hans Daalder, Jelle Gaemers, eds.), *Op de kentering: een sociaal-democratische visie op Nederland en de wereld na de bevrijding* (Amsterdam, 1996; original text, 1945) 65.
[199] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (1 December 1945 + 3 January 1946), *Archief SDAP* 2955.

Romein as a continuation of the pre-war *Comité van Waakzaamheid*, had as its goal to study the ways in which democracy could be enhanced. PvdA-members Van der Goes van Naters and Gerald Slotemaker de Bruïne worked with Romein and leftist resistance figures like Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart *(Het Parool)* and B.W. Schaper (*Vrij Nederland*), as well as CPN-member Petra Eldering. The *Comité* organized study groups and conferences, but its activities decreased due to a lack of financial resources.[200] Perhaps the SDAP-leaders were not pleased with the *Comité*, because earlier in the summer of 1945, a few of the same figures (Romein, *VN* and *Parool*-representatives) had engaged in ultimately fruitless talks with Paul de Groot and Gerben Wagenaar about a new socialist people's party, an idea which the social democrats adamantly rejected.[201]

The main issue that occupied the SDAP-leadership in the first months after the war was the renewal of the Dutch party system. The NVB had decided to bring about this renewal not by establishing a new party but by stimulating existing parties to merge. Talks between the SDAP, the left-liberal VDB and the radical-Christian CDU resulted in the *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA). The character of this new party was very much a result of concessions on both the side of the SDAP – steeped in the tradition of socialism – and on the side of its much more bourgeois-elitist conversation partners. They had to accept many of the 'red' symbols, while the SDAP had to give up far-reaching socialization plans; instead, the PvdA propagated a less radical form of economic planning.[202] With the realization of the PvdA, Dutch social democracy once and for all left its revolutionist ambitions behind. Instead, the goal was to improve the position of the people within the existing system.[203] The PvdA-leadership calculated that the embrace of reformism would alienate a part of the SDAP's hard-line working class' supporters, but this loss was expected to be overshadowed through a surge of popularity among confessional and middle class voters.[204] Thus, while the CPN became less radical in order to bring about unity with social democracy, the SDAP did the same in order to win the middle class vote.

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[200] Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!,* 135-137; Jeroen Corduwener, *Riemen om de kin! Biografie van mr. dr. Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart* (Amsterdam, 2011) 372.

[201] 'Beknopt verslag van bijeenkomst voor politieke contact-mogelijkheden (13 August 1945), *Archief Paul de Groot* 31; Annie Romein-Verschoor, *Omzien in verwondering: herinneringen* (Amsterdam, 1971) 88. Romein-Verschoor notes that the enthusiasm 'receded' after a couple of meetings.

[202] Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de NVB,* 260-261.

[203] De Liagre Böhl, Nekkers, Slot, *Nederland industrialiseert!,* 61.

[204] Jan Bank, 'De theorie van vernieuwing en de praktijk van de wederopbouw. Het Nederlandse socialisme in de tweede helft van de jaren veertig' , in: Jan Bank (ed.), *In dienst van het gehele volk. De West-Europese sociaal-democratie tussen aanpassing en vernieuwing. 1945-1950* (Amsterdam, 1987) 104.

The expectations around the PvdA, which presented itself as the only real 'renewal'-party, were extremely high. Accordingly, the 1946 election result was widely interpreted as a defeat for the 'renewal'-camp.[205] Scholars have suggested many reasons for the 'failure' of the PvdA in 1946.[206] What is important here, is that the party surely lost a part of the old SDAP-backing to the CPN. These voters were unsatisfied with the PvdA's toning down of leftist rhetoric, and the incapacity of the Schemerhorn-Drees government to rapidly improve the standard of living. During a party council meeting shortly after the 1946 elections, the PvdA-leadership acknowledged that the CPN's competition had damaged social democracy.[207] Therefore, the PvdA would have to act in such a way that it could win the CPN-votes back; by improving the standard of living of the masses and showing them that communism was not the answer.[208] Still, for the time being the PvdA could not attack the CPN too vigorously, because the communist vote might be required to pass some controversial legislation, for example regarding Indonesia. Furthermore, the PvdA had troubles differentiating itself from the CPN, because the parties did not differ much in opinion on crucial issues. The PvdA may not have realized radical socio-economic changes while in government, but it continued to contest the capitalist mode of production at least on paper.[209]

We must also bear in mind that the Cold War had not fundamentally taken shape in international diplomacy yet. In 1947, the PvdA-leaders still envisioned Europe to be a 'bridge' between the dictatorial-communist Soviet Union and the hypercapitalist United States.[210] At the party congress of april 1947, Van der Goes van Naters made clear that "een verdelingsverdrag waarin in de hele wereld in twee invloedssferen zou worden verdeeld zou bij ons op groot verzet stuiten!"[211] While social democratic leaders had no qualms attacking communism as an ideology, they did feel that Europe should continue to maintain friendly

[205] The PvdA received 28,3% of the votes, while the KVP became the biggest party with 30,8%. The CPN became the fourth party with 10,6%.
[206] These reasons include: the durability of the pillarized societal structures (Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de NVB,* 260-267); the loss of momentum for the 'renewal'-cause due to the postponement of the elections (Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek* 253-254); the Dutch people's longing for security and restoration after years of wartime disintegration (De Vries, *Complexe Consensus,* 207) and the incapacity of the NVB to reach the electorate because of damaged infrastructure, lack of paper and absence of radios (Bogaarts, *De Periode van het Kabinet-Beel* A, 7).
[207] 'Notulen vergadering partijraad' (5 June 1946), *Archief PvdA* 112.
[208] Verrips, 'Desillusies en dossiers', 92-93; Bogaarts, *De Periode van het Kabinet-Beel* A, 38.
[209] 'Ontwerp-beginselprogram' (April 1947), *Archief PvdA* 141.
[210] Maarten Brinkman, 'De Partij van de Arbeid in de Koude Oorlog 1946-1958: een overzicht', *Groniek* 106 (1989) 11-12.
[211] 'Slotzitting congres der PvdA: van der Goes van Naters over politieke perspectieven', *Het Vrije Volk* (26 April 1947).

relations with the Soviet Union.[212] On the other hand, PvdA-leaders did harbor doubts about the aggressiveness of the Russians in Eastern Europe and the disruptive tactics of the communists in France. It was only in late 1947, after the communist bloc refused the Marshall Plan and the CPN began to campaign against this 'ploy' of 'American imperialism' that the PvdA grudgingly accepted a division between East and West.[213]

We have established that the PvdA-leadership was bent on creating a 'breakthrough' towards the centre and on keeping the coalition with the *Katholieke Volkspartij (KVP)* alive. One could wonder if there might have been a fraction within the party that did see possibilities in cooperating with the communists. There were indeed people who were dissatisfied with the party's toning down of leftist ideals, and with the policies of the Beel-government regarding Indonesia and the purge of collaborators. However, some out the party's most outspoken internal critics were simultaneously deeply anticommunist, like Frans Goedhart, Sal Tas and Jacques de Kadt. The latter one issued a book in 1947 in which he called for a united Western front against the Soviet danger.[214] Other disgruntled social democrats like J.J. Buskes were involved in the *Sociaal Democratisch Centrum*, which argued against the party's Atlanticist outlook and its acceptance of armament politics. However, such deviational opinions were relegated to the margins. Social democracy had acted on the sidelines of Dutch politics for such a long time; now it finally did participate in government, the coalition was deemed crucial enough to make some significant sacrifices, and the leadership did not appreciate too much opposition on these points.[215] Accordingly, crucial for the post-war relation between the CPN and the PvdA is that the social democrats who achieved the greatest influence in the transition period preferred governmental cooperation with the confessionals above a national front with the communists. After it had become clear that wartime idealism on the basis of an independent, revitalized, socialist Europe did not match the reality of the postwar world order, most PvdA-leaders and intellectuals conformed themselves to a more pragmatic kind of socialism based on the protection of freedom and democracy, which easily went along with pro-Atlantic anticommunism.[216]

The need to win back CPN-voters and the gradual triumph of pragmatic pro-Atlanticism over idealist, Europe-as-a-bridge-socialism are two internal reasons for the PvdA's heightened

[212] Frits Rovers, *Voor recht en vrijheid. De Partij van de Arbeid en de Koude Oorlog, 1946-1958* (Amsterdam, 1994) 41.
[213] Rovers, *Voor recht en vrijheid,* 39-42; Verrips, 'Desillusies en dossiers', 92-93.
[214] Jacques de Kadt, *Rusland en wij: hoe redden wij de vrede?* (Amsterdam, 1947).
[215] De Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder', 46-47.
[216] De Vries, *Complexe consensus,* 296-300.

anticommunist activity from late 1947 onwards. Another explanation forms the changing CPN-attitude we have described in the first part of this chapter. In 1947, the CPN unleashed severe criticism on the Beel-government and its acceptance of the Marshall Plan. The prime target in this campaign was the PvdA. In the words of Paul de Groot, this party had 'lost every perspective' and was 'impossible' to work with. The communists had tried to cooperate with the social democratic leaders, but these had let themselves known to be agents of the reaction. The only solution left was to break down the PvdA-following and get the workers behind the communist cause.[217] Significantly, De Groot also denounced cooperation with leftist oppositional groups within the PvdA:

> "Hun critiek tast deze (beginselloze, red.) grondslag niet aan, evenmin als de regerings-coalitie met de katholieke reactie (…) Zo leidt het optreden van Ds. Buskes en de zijnen er toe, dat de leiders van de PvdA die verraad gepleegd hebben, in de gelegenheid worden gesteld dit verraad voort te zetten en de PvdA als steunpunt door de Amerikaans-Engelse reactie in ons land te laten gebruiken."[218]

If 1947 witnessed an increase in hostility between communists and social democrats, the relations within the Left took definite shape during 1948. The reactions to the Czechoslovakian coup and the campaign for the parliamentary elections made the contrasts clear to everyone and sealed the isolation of the communists that would remain in place throughout the 1950s. Although these two interrelated topics – and the anticommunist measures taken by government and parliament – will be treated with more detail in chapter 4, we can conclude this part with a short evaluation of the particular stance of the PvdA. Historian Maarten Brinkman has listed four points of departure to which the PvdA fully committed itself in 1948: the Soviet Union as an imperialist threat to freedom all around the world, the importance of a Western defense system under American leadership, radical-progressive politics as a weapon to win over communist voters, and the CPN as a 'fifth column' serving Soviet interests.[219] These were accepted under the pressure of the rapidly evolving Cold War between the two superpowers. However, they could easily be hooked up to the arguments with which the SDAP had combated the CPN before the war: communism as a dictatorial threat to democratic freedoms, and the CPN as a vassal of Moscow. Moreover,

[217] 'Rede de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering (9 January 1948), *Archief CPN* 276.
[218] 'Verslag van het partijbestuur voor het a.s. partijcongres' (1 Nov 1947), *Archief Paul de Groot* 29.
[219] Brinkman, 'De PvdA in de Koude Oorlog', 12-14.

the war could be used as a propaganda weapon as well: social democratic politicians and journalists regularly referred to the CPN's anti-national behavior between 1939 and 1941 or compared the party's supposed fifth column-activities with those of the NSB.[220] Communism and fascism were again interpreted as two sides of the same totalitarian coin.[221] The war experience proved to be an emotional battle point. The archive of Gerbren Wagenaar contains a letter to the PvdA-executive of Februarty 1944. Wagenaar, tired of the countless accusations of treason that the social democratic press issued against the CPN, proposed a commission to evaluate the role of the CPN and the SDAP during the occupation.[222] Of course, the PvdA ignored this request.

So we have to keep in mind, as Frits Rovers argues, that PvdA-leaders experienced the emerging Cold War as an echo from a not so distant past: again, there was a totalitarian dictatorship trying to expand all over Europe and murder its social democratic opponents with the help of its local sympathizers.[223] Similarly, the behavior of the CPN was colored by the belief that fascism had to be fought in its new form: American imperialism and its Dutch lackeys. The PvdA's 'defense of democratic freedoms'-form of anticommunism, combined with the wish to win over communist voters, made that every form of seemingly innocent cooperation with communists was ruled out. Likewise, 'sympathizing' with the Soviet Union or searching for a 'third way' was deemed impossible by the PvdA-leadership: everyone was bound to choose between East and West.[224]

2. EVC and NVV

The communists' longing for a unified trade union was first proclaimed in late 1943. When the South was liberated in late 1944, local communists and other workers began to form unity-committees in various sectors, which would ultimately result in the *Eenheidsvakcentrale* (EVC).[225] The EVC was not meant to be a fourth trade union (alongside the NVV and the confessional ones), but a movement that would bring about the unity of all the unions. In the EVC's founding statement of June 1945, it was stated that the battle against fascism had torn down the walls between the pillars; re-erecting those walls would be a disaster for the workers

[220] Rovers, *Voor vrede en vrijheid,* 37.
[221] Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!,* 76.
[222] 'Brief van CPN aan partijbestuur PvdA' (5 February 1948), *Archief Gerben Wagenaar,* 26.
[223] Rovers, *Voor vrede en vrijheid,* 301-302.
[224] Ibidem, 69-70; Brinkman, 'De PvdA in de Koude Oorlog', 14.
[225] In the first period, the movements is called the *Eenheidsvakbeweging* (EVB), but it gradually turns into EVC in the summer of 1945, which is the term I will use in this chapter.

and the Dutch people as a whole.[226] The EVC desperately wanted to present itself as a neutral organization, instead of as a communist-led union. Its program of action was leftist, but not overtly communist, and there were many non-communists among its members.[227] On the other hand, the process of organizing the EVC did lay in the hands of communists, and it enjoyed the strong support of the CPN and *De Waarheid.*[228]

The EVC quickly grew to around 170.000 members in December 1945, and it seemed to outstrip the socialist trade union *Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen* (NVV).[229] One of the problems of the NVV was that in the beginning of the war, the Germans had tried to 'nazify' the union and had succeeded in subsuming a part of the old NVV-cadre under the *Nederlandse Arbeidsfront*. This damaged the reputation of the NVV in the eyes of many workers and resistance fighters. The old NVV-board that refused to be 'nazified' engaged in underground consultations with the other trade unions and employer associations. It did not succeed in pressuring the confessional unions to form one union, but the talks did result in the *Raad van Vakcentrales* (RvV) and the *Stichting van de Arbeid* (SvA), which would form the backbone of the postwar workers-employers consultation system.[230] The combination of a damaged reputation with the popularity of the EVC threatened to undermine the NVV's entire strategy of becoming accepted as an equal partner in socioeconomic consultations.[231] Therefore, the NVV questioned the EVC's right to exist and treated the EVC-members as 'wandering brothers' that should return to the NVV. Together with the confessional unions, it also refused to recognize the EVC as a legitimate consultation partner.[232]

On this issue, the NVV was in agreement with the government. In the postwar-mentality of rebuilding the country, there was no place for a union that was unwilling to accept the rules of the game and that was prepared to use strikes as a political weapon.[233] The NVV did not support any strike in this period, while local EVC-members were involved in many of them. Therefore, the EVC was seen by some policymakers as a sort of an anti-government 'agitation

[226] 'Beginselverklaring en program van actie EVB' (June 1945), *Archief CPN* 360.
[227] Ibidem.
[228] Ger Harmsen, Leo Noordegraaf, 'Het ontstaan van de Eenheids Vak Centrale', in: Harmsen, *Gebundelde opstellen,* 165-167; G.T. Witte, 'Bevangen door de eenheidskoorts. De Eenheidsvakcentrale en de binnenlandse veiligheid', in: Bob de Graaff, Cees Wiebes (eds.), *Hun crisis was de onze niet. Internationale crises en binnenlandse veiligheid 1945-1960* (Den Haag, 1994) 17-18.
[229] Harmsen, Noordegraaf, 'Het ontstaan van de EVC', 170-171, 180.
[230] Duynstee, Bosmans, *Het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees,* 54-55.
[231] Ernest Hueting, Frits de Jong Edz., Rob Neij, *Naar groter eenheid: de geschiedenis van het NVV 1906-1981* (Amsterdam, 1983) 156-157.
[232] Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 160-162.
[233] Duynstee, Bosmans, *Het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees,* 444-445.

machine'.[234] As long as the EVC did not want to comply to the 'rules', the government continued to frustrate the recognition of the EVC as a legitimate workers' organization.[235] Moreover, the EVC was not allowed to take part in the RvV and SvA.

Notwithstanding its radical image, the EVC did not unequivocally embrace strikes. Many strikes were not instigated by the leadership, but by local members; at that moment, the leadership supported the strikes – it was often a successful method to rally new people around the organization – and tried to end it in a peaceful manner.[236] However, the CPN went along in the government's focus on reconstruction and production increases and did not want to frustrate its chances to enter a future coalition by provoking the wrath of its potential allies.[237] Therefore, it pressured the EVC to make minimal use of the weapon of strikes.[238] Although the EVC did not encourage the use of strikes, it was not prepared to renounce the right to use them as a condition for the government's recognition; instead, it used strikes, most of all the unrests in the port of Rotterdam in 1945 and in the ports of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Vlissingen in 1946, as a way to pressure the government into acknowledgement. At both moments, the Schermerhorn-Drees government stood firm and managed to defuse the situation without giving in to most of the EVC's demands.[239] EVC-leader Berend Blokzijl remembered the pressure put on him by Paul de Groot in 1946 to end the strike – probably with an eye to the upcoming elections. Blokzijl managed to get to Schermerhorn via F. Kuiper of *Vrij Nederland.* Blokzijl and Schermerhorn came to an agreement, in which the EVC would hardly gain anything, but the prime minister failed to persuade the other consultation partners.[240] What this episode proves is the reluctance of the CPN and the EVC-leadership to support the waves of strikes organized by local workers all over the Netherlands in the first post-war years, because these threatened to undermine the communists' national-front policy.

So, the points of departure of the 'accepted' postwar NVV and the 'shunned' EVC were very different. Moreover, the two unions regularly engaged in attacks on each other: the EVC criticized the NVV's role in the war, while the NVV argued that by founding the EVC, the communists had unnecessarily weakened the workers' unity. Why then did they engage in merger talks in 1946-1947? The most obvious reason for the EVC was that 'unity' was its

[234] Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 164.
[235] Witte, 'Bevangen door de eenheidskoorts', 29-30.
[236] Paul Coomans, Truike de Jonge, Erik Nijhof, *De Eenheidsvakcentrale 1943-1948* (Groningen, 1976) 213-217.
[237] Ibidem, 175-180.
[238] Harmsen, Noordegraaf, 'Het ontstaan van de EVC', 176-178.
[239] Duynstee, Bosmans, *Het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees,* 444-454. Paul de Groot would later say that the 1946 strike was 'provoked by the great capitalists' to give the 'reaction a cause to suppress the worker's movement'. 'Rede Paul de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering' (22 May 1946), *Archief CPN* 275.
[240] Coomans, de Jonge, Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale,* 388; Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 240-241.

very reason to exist. Furthermore, the CPN, whose ties with the EVC became increasingly tight, had understood that its chances to join the government were slim after it had not been consulted in the 1946 formation. Paul de Groot argued: "Onze tactiek moet er thans op gericht zijn, voornamelijk met de vakbeweging samen te werken. De eenheid tussen de twee vakcentrales, NVV en EVC, is daarom ook een eerste noodzakelijkheid."[241] Unity in the trade union was deemed essential to realize the front of democratic forces against the monopoly capital, which the communists had tried to put up since 1943. Therefore, the EVC was prepared to go a long way in accommodating the NVV. It withdrew its support of strikes as long as the negotiations continued, accepted the legitimacy of the SvA and acquiesced to the 'controlled wage politics' of the government.[242] At the same time, the EVC-leadership suppressed criticism from within its own ranks, where the leadership's moderation was interpreted as a willingness to relinquish basic principles.

The motives of the NVV were very different. The socialist trade union had troubles to rebuild its organizational structure after the war, and for a while it seemed that the tides were in favor of the EVC. Therefore, the NVV was not in a position to decline the EVC's overtures. On the other hand, the NVV-leadership wanted to continue its moderate, constructive line it had opted for before the war, in order to keep the option of unity with the confessional unions open. So while cooperation was the *sine qua non* for the EVC's existence, it was not indispensable in the eyes of the NVV-leaders.[243] They engaged in merger talks because they did not want to be blamed for hampering workers' unity, and because they wanted to enlist 'bona fide' EVC-members for their own.[244] Naturally, the motivation for achieving the merger decreased as the number of NVV-members increased – from 150.000 in 1945 to 331.000 in 1948.[245] So the NVV dragged the negotiations along and continued to make new demands which would all but neutralize the EVC's influence in the new organization. In the words of the NVV's historiographers, "fusie was hier een mooi woord voor een poging tot liquidatie."[246]

The two sides did agree on a 'merger report' in April 1946, which sketched the outlines of the proposed new union. As Coomans, de Jonge and Nijhof have noticed, the report resembles more the outlook of the NVV than that of the EVC, with its focus on consultation and

[241] 'Rede Paul de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering: 'De binnen- en buitenlandse toestand' (28 September 1946) *Archief CPN* 271.
[242] Coomans, de Jonge, Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale,* 199-211.
[243] Ibidem, 153-154.
[244] Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 167-168.
[245] Voerman, 'A drama in three acts', 105-106.
[246] Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 168.

economic planning, while direct wage demands are absent. Moreover, the NVV would get six out of nine seats in the new board, and the EVC only three.[247] Still, since the NVV-leadership never really wanted the merger, it searched for arguments to thwart the negotiation process as its membership grew. One argument was the decreasing popularity of the EVC after the 1946 port strikes, coupled with the consistent intransigence of the government and the churches.[248] A more forceful argument was found in the perceived growth of the influence of the CPN within the EVC. The NVV remembered the CPH's building of cells in the early 1930s, and was wary of bringing in a communist front organization.[249] The fact that EVC-leader Berend Blokzijl, who first proclaimed to be independent, demonstratively joined the CPN in October 1946 reinforced this fear. Ironically, the way in which the EVC-leadership managed to strangle the opposition and force a 'yes' in favor of the merger out of its rank and file, led the NVV to distrust the EVC's methods even more.[250] The NVV pulled the plug out of the negotiations in April 1947:

> "door het uitlokken van onverantwoorde stakingen, woordbreuk, valse voorstelling van zaken, het overbieden van door de NVV-organisaties gestelde eisen, het doorkruisen van de NVV-acties en bovenal door de onder invloed van de CPN tot uiting gekomen communistische, ondemocratische houding der EVC-leiders, moest de fusie worden afgewezen."[251]

The end of the merger prospects coincided with the political-tactical reorientation of the CPN in 1947. The philosophy behind the *Nationaal Welvaartsplan* was that unity at the bottom should be substituted for unity at the top. Accordingly, the EVC attempted to organize 'unity committees' that would have to draw as much as possible people to the union, also from within the NVV.[252] Paul de Groot called the communists active in the NVV 'partisans working behind enemy lines'.[253] Moreover, the EVC now unequivocally supported the use of

[247] Coomans, de Jonge, Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale,*154-156.
[248] The Catholic episcopate advised against membership of both the NVV and the EVC. The General Synod discouraged only membership of the EVC. Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 206.
[249] Ibidem, 209.
[250] Coomans, de Jonge, Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale,* 156-159.
[251] Resolutie NVV-hoofdbesturenvergadering, as cited in: Hueting, de Jong Edz., Neij, *Naar groter eenheid,* 211.
[252] Coomans, de Jonge, Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale,* 137-138.
[253] 'Bijeenkomst partijbestuur' (7-8 January 1948), *Archief CPN* 276.

strikes. The NVV took on a Cold War-mentality as well, and interpreted the radicalization of the EVC as a proof of fifth column activity.[254]

So, the SDAP/PvdA felt strong enough to resist the CPN's overtures immediately after the war, but until 1947 it counted on the CPN's 'constructive opposition'. The NVV on the other hand initially lagged behind the EVC's successes, and was forced into merger negotiations to save its reputation. The NVV could only get away with sabotaging these negotiations at the moment its membership clearly began to outstrip the EVC's and the CPN-influence in the EVC could be unambiguously demonstrated. In hindsight, we can easily say that the CPN's attempts to achieve unity with social democracy was a lost cause from the start, as De Liagre Böhl, Nekkers and Slot do[255], but we should remember that in 1946 the CPN 'constructively opposed' a PvdA-dominated government, while the EVC managed to force the NVV into negotiations; reading the 1947-1948 developments into the immediate post-war years distorts these limited results of the CPN's wartime national-front switch.

3. Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië

The *Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië* (VNI) was established in August 1945. It was a result of contacts between Dutch and Indonesian youth during the war and was supposed to function as a pooling of progressive and democratic forces in favor of a peaceful, lasting solution for the Indies question. The goals of the VNI fitted nicely with the ideas that the illegal press developed during the war. In the words of the American historian Jennifer Foray, the press was busy forming an 'imperial consciousness' among its readership.[256] Most newspapers believed that the end of the war should be the beginning of a new and durable bond between the Netherlands and the Indies, based on cooperation, equality and voluntariness. They referred to a speech by Queen Wilhelmina in December 1942, in which she promoted a renewed commonwealth, with the colonies having complete freedom regarding internal affairs, but cooperating with the Dutch government on matters of mutual concern.[257] The speech could be interpreted in many different ways, which is why so many different press organs constantly referred to it.[258] There was consensus as well on the 'military honour' of the Netherlands to liberate the Indies from the Japanese. So, a declaration calling for voluntary

[254] De Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder', 30-31.
[255] De Liagre Böhl, Nekkers, Slot, *Nederland industrialiseert!,* 127-128.
[256] Jennifer Foray, *Visions of empire in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands* (Cambridge, 2012) 2.
[257] Foray, *Visions of empire,* 6.
[258] S. de Blauw, L. Severein, *De Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië, vooruitstrevend Nederland, dekolonisatie en de houding in het konflikt met Indonesië* (1980) 126-127.

enlistment to liberate the colony was published in all leading publications, from *Trouw* to *De Waarheid.* However, the resistance had practically no information about what was actually going on in the Indies, and was caught by surprise when nationalists unilaterally founded the Republic of Indonesia after the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. Swiftly, the Indies question became a source of political conflict in the Netherlands.[259] Right-wing politicians and press organs called for a return of the Indies to the safe protection of Dutch tutelage. The *VNI,* which was neutral in theory, but left-wing in practice, called for the abolishment of Indonesia's colonial status. Here was a chance for left-wing unity: communists, social democrats and independent leftists all believed in some form of sovereignty for the Indonesian people. However, even progressives could not envision a Republic of Indonesia that would stand entirely apart from the Dutch Kingdom.[260] Only in true cooperation could one attain "een toekomst, die grootser, eervoller en belofterijker, dan in welke machtsverhouding ook."[261]

The *VNI* assembled many progressive ex-resistance figures (both Henk van Randwijk and Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart would become chairman), a range of socialists that would become member of the PvdA (Sal Tas, Gerard Slotemaker de Bruïne), some communists (Sebald Rutgers, Antoon Koejemans) and a few non-organised intellectuals (Jan Romein, W.F. Wertheim). The combination of progressive intellectuals with professional politicians, plus the presence of social democrats and communists, favored careful compromises.[262] The organization remained elitist; the membership rate fluctuated between 1000 and 2500.[263] In the first year of its existence, the VNI explored what it could do to exert pressure on the government. It wrote an open letter to the Schermerhorn-Drees administration, issued a manifesto and began to publish its own magazine *De Brug-Djambatan.* The VNI called on the government to open negotiations with the leaders of the Republic, and to acknowledge the Indonesian's right of self-determination. The VNI wanted to counter the conservative mobilization in favor of 'imperial unity' that was building up around the newspaper *Trouw,* former prime minister Gerbandy's *Comité tot Handhaving van Rijkseenheid* and the confessional fractions in parliament. The VNI's most impressive success was a manifestation in the Markthallen in Amsterdam in February 1946, which allegedly drew 20.000 people, who

[259] Foray, *Visions of empire,* 284-290.
[260] Corduwener, *Riemen om de kin!,* 349-350.
[261] Manifest VNI 'Aan het Nederlandse volk, aan het Indonesische volk', *Archief W.F. Wertheim* 172.
[262] Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!,* 138-139.
[263] Harry A. Poeze, *In het land van de overheerser: 1. Indonesiërs in Nederland 1600-1950* (Dordrecht, 1986) 331-332.

could listen to speakers like J.J Buskes, Van Heuven Goedhart and the Indonesian activist Evy Poetiray.[264]

One month earlier, the *Comité Vrij Spanje* had organized a similar mass demonstration in the same venue, with again around 20.000 visitors. Progressives from different backgrounds, such as Van der Goes van Naters (PvdA), Wagenaar (CPN) and Jan Romein, agitated against the dictatorship in Spain.[265] Around 1946, there was a whole range of organizations in which communists, social democrats and unorganized leftists met each other. Some were dominated by CPN-members (*Vereniging Vrienden van de Sovjet-Unie, later: Nederland-USSR),* while others, such as the VNI and the *Comité voor Actieve Democratie,* were intraleftist platforms which the CPN only theoretically envisioned as ways to draw unorganized people to the communist cause.[266] Similarly, there were numerous magazines which provided space for communist and non-communist progressive writers and intellectuals. *De Vrije Katheder* published articles by the likes of Wijnand Romijn (PvdA), communist writer Theun de Vries and the radical minister Krijn Strijd. The more academically-oriented *De Nieuwe Stem* was led by Jan Romein and Henk Pos, who both had been active in the pre-war *Comité van Waakzaamheid.* So the VNI was one of the most active expressions of a broad circle of intellectuals and politicians, who agreed on the need for Indonesian self-determination, an independent Europe and radical socio-economic reforms, and who tolerated or applauded the presence of communists in their organizations and at their manifestations.

In late 1946, the Dutch government began to send troops to Indonesia. This impelled unrest among the Dutch population, and a petition by the VNI calling for an immediate stop of the shipments was offered to prime minister Beel with 230.000 signatures. The VNI did support the negotiations between representatives of the Dutch government and the Indonesian Sjahrir-administration, which led to the Linggadjati Agreement of November 1946. In this agreement, the Dutch government accepted the Republic's authority over some of the major islands, which would be part of a United States of Indonesia. Finally, it seemed that a peaceful solution was within reach. Sal Tas wrote that the Netherlands was on the verge of 'writing world history'.[267] However, the Dutch parliament accepted a motion which 'furnished' the agreement with a number of adjustments that the Indonesians could not accept. The VNI

[264] Poeze argues that the estimation of 20.000 is perhaps too high, because many organizations which had ordered tickets from the VNI would have sent some of them back. Read: Poeze, *In het land van de overheerser,* 352-353.
[265] Romein-Verschoor, *Omzien in verwondering,* 90; 'Grootse manifestatie in de Markthallen', *De Waarheid* (7 January 1946).
[266] 'Notulen partijraad' (2 August 1945), *Archief CPN* 270.
[267] Sal Tas, 'Over Linggadjati', *De Brug-Djambatan* 8 (1946).

noticed that relations deteriorated quickly and sharpened its criticism of the government.[268] "Zulk een koerswijziging vernietigt voor Nederland de laatste mogelijkheid van vruchtbare samenwerking met Indonesië en kan slechts leiden tot bloedvergieten."[269]

The CPN voted in favor of the 'furnished' version of the agreement. The party defended this tactic by arguing that every agreement that would diminish the war threat should be supported. Moreover, the communists desperately tried to fend off isolation, and were not keen on appearing to be anti-patriotic.[270] Before the war, the CPN was deeply anti-imperialist and favored direct independence for the Indonesian people. During the war *De Waarheid* dialed back its anti-imperialist rhetoric in its quest to make communism more palatable for other progressive resistance forces.[271] Between 1945 and 1947, communists propagated the preservation of ties between the Netherlands and Indonesia in a 'Commonwealth' with Indonesia as an independent entity, and backed the government's policies that were perceived to work towards this goal.[272] The CPN supported the VNI in most of its activities, because the VNI harbored a similar vision. *De Waarheid* was one of the few newspapers that regularly published articles written by the VNI.[273] For some people, communist support was reason enough to distrust the organization. For example, the NVB declined to support the manifestation in the Markthallen of early 1946, because demonstrating side-by-side with the CPN would only benefit the 'reaction'.[274] In reality, the influence of the CPN during the first two years of the VNI's existence should not be overestimated. Sebald Rutgers was the only communist involved in the organization on a day-to-day basis. Although he was a widely respected old comrade, he was not very influential in the postwar CPN. Moreover, hardly any communist wrote for *De Brug-Djambatan*, and when Rutgers did, it was a moderate article about future economic possibilities in Indonesia.[275]

In order to understand the relation between the PvdA and the VNI, we have to take into account that the Indies question had been a difficult issue for the party from the very start.

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[268] De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 84-88.
[269] 'Manifest van de Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië', *De Brug-Djambatan 2* (1947).
[270] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 270. According to Stutje, De Groot decided to vote in favor of the 'furnished' agreement on the last moment, while the CPN's parliamentary fraction had originally decided to vote against. Stutje suggests that a message from Moscow may have played a role, but does not provide evidence for this suggestion. Stutje's book is generally quite perceptive, but the writer lapses into unsupported speculation when it comes to the role of the Soviet Union.
[271] Foray, *Visions of empire,* 237-238.
[272] 'Rede Paul de Groot voor de Partijraad betreffende de vraagstukken annexatie en Indonesië' (11 October 1945), *Archief CPN* 273. Bogaarts, *De periode van het kabinet-Beel* A*,* 6.
[273] De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 73.
[274] Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de NVB,* 237.
[275] Sebald Rutgers, 'De economische verhouding', *De Brug-Djambatan* 2 (1946).

During the foundation talks of the PvdA, a compromise had to be sought between the progressive Commonwealth-ideas of the most outspoken SDAP-members and the much more conservative outlook of the VDB; ultimately, the SDAP had to accept some form of 'imperial bond' between the Netherlands and the Indies to keep the VDB satisfied.[276] The next years it remained the most explosive issue within the PvdA-executive. While the PvdA-leadership valued the VNI as an organization to counter conservative propaganda, minutes of executive meetings show that it aimed to keep control over the organization. The leaders were not only worried that the communists could use it as a platform – although the minutes reveal that they knew that communists did not dominate the organization[277] -, but they also had to deal with the presence of a group of social democratic politicians within the VNI, whose careful criticism of the government's Indonesia-policy could potentially endanger the coalition.[278] Until 1947, the VNI indeed shied away from open confrontation with the government, because it needed the support of the PvdA: the organization could only exert real political pressure through this channel. This explains why the PvdA could successfully persuade the board of the VNI that communists and social democrats should not be allowed to speak at the same public meetings, after it became known that the VNI-department in The Hague planned to do so.[279] This decision was criticized by many local departments, where rivalry between communists and social democrats did not play a major role.[280] In any case, chairman Van Randwijk and his successor Van Heuven Goedhart (himself a PvdA-member) ensured the PvdA that they would not oppose the government; they were prepared to sideline the CPN if necessary.[281] Meanwhile, disagreements between communists and social democrats within the VNI became more pronounced, and some social democrats left the organization.[282]

The build-up to the first *politionele actie* in July 1947 proved to be the end of social democratic participation in the VNI. When it became clear that the Linggadjati agreement was a dead letter because of different interpretations, and that the Dutch government considered

[276] Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de NVB,* 261.
[277] 'Notulen partijbestuur' (25 October 1946), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[278] De Blauw and Severein note that Jacques de Kadt and Sal Tas, two of these loyalists, were deemed suspicious by the leadership, because of their defection from the SDAP in the 1930s. De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 130.
[279] 'Notulen dagelijks bestuur (17 October 1946), *Archief PvdA* 1. *De Brug-Djambatan* notified its readers that the meeting in The Hague was cancelled, because the VNI "haar pogen voor vreedzaam overleg met Indonesië niet verward wenst te zien met binnenlandse politieke ontwikkelingen." 'Communiqué', *De Brug-Djambatan* 6 (1946).
[280] De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 82.
[281] Corduwener, *Riemen om de kin!,* 353; Mulder, Koedijk, *H.M. van Randwijk,* 539-541.
[282] De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 82-83.

employing military action, the VNI gradually turned against the Beel-administration.[283] The PvdA refused to participate in a protest meeting in the RAI; the CPN was present, because it was against any employment of violence. The hostility between the two parties increased, which spurred Tas and De Kadt to terminate their VNI-membership. Other PvdA-members left a VNI-protest meeting on 23 July because they did not want to consent to the anti-government tone of a proposed telegram.[284] Meanwhile, the anti-militarism group within the PvdA had been pressured into compliance by the leadership during an emotional meeting of the party council on 19 July.[285] The PvdA-leaders desperately held on to their position in the coalition, because a right-wing government without the PvdA was deemed to become a catastrophe.[286] The consent of the PvdA to the first *politionele actie* did lead to the party resignation of Van Heuven Goedhart, Slotemaker de Bruïne, a few other intellectuals, and maybe 7000 regular members.[287]

During 1947-1948, the VNI continued to attempt to work with the PvdA, but the social democratic leaders saw the organization as a threat and put pressure on the few remaining PvdA-members in the VNI.[288] This development benefited the position of the communists in the organization. Therefore, the VNI-board constantly had to defend itself against accusations of being a communist front organization.[289] The presence of Marxist intellectuals like Romein and Wertheim, castigated as 'fellow travellers', also damaged the reputation of the VNI in the eyes of the ardent anticommunists. Although the VNI never was controlled by the CPN, Paul de Groot did mention in early 1948 that the party could use the VNI to 'bring people together' and mobilize them for the *Nationaal Welvaartsplan.*[290] Part of the CPN's 1947-turnaround in favor of more confrontation with the other parties was a switch in its viewpoints of Indonesia. The CPN now favored direct independence and supported the communist party in Indonesia's internal conflicts. 'Linggadjati' was deemed a mistake.[291] The renewed assertiveness of the communists in the VNI, and the rapidly appearing Cold War-mindset in the political arena as a whole, persuaded many VNI-members to leave the organization, because of the presence of

[283] VNI, 'Waarvoor demonstreren wij?' (June 1947), VNI, 'Proclamatie aan het Nederlandse Volk' (July 1947), *Archief W.F. Wertheim* 172.
[284] Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië,* 139.
[285] 'Notulen vergadering partijraad' (19 July 1947) *Archief PvdA* 112.
[286] Harry A. Poeze, 'De Indonesische kwestie 1945-1950 – Sociaal-democratie in de klem', in: Joost Divendal et al. (eds.)., *Nederland, links en de koude oorlog: breuken en bruggen* (Amsterdam, 1982) 46.
[287] Poeze, 'De Indonesische kwestie', 47-48.
[288] De Blauw, Severein, *De VNI,* 110.
[289] VNI, 'Een zonderlinge kwalificatie' (1948), *Archief W.F. Wertheim* 173.
[290] 'Rede De Groot, partijbestuurszitting' (9 January 1948) *Archief CPN* 276.
[291] 'Resolutie Partijbestuur: Over strijd tegen opportunisme en burgerlijk-nationalisme en de naaste taken der partij' (Dec 1948), *Archief CPN* 277.

communists within it.[292] Frans Goedhart drew his conclusions when he heard that Berend Blokzijl, leader of the EVC and fellow VNI-member, had encouraged Indonesian nationalists to subvert the negotiations with the Dutch governments by provoking a violent incident. When the VNI-executive threatened to launch an investigation which would result in the expulsion of one of the two, Goedhart decided to take the honorable way out.[293] The VNI-board worked hard to keep its 'neutrality' and to remain a platform for all progressives. It was this attitude that ended the CPN's involvement in the organization. In November 1948, the board did not want to take part in the Madiun Affair, a bloody conflict between nationalists and communists. Although Rutgers pressured the board to take a stand for the communists, it stood firm.[294] *De Waarheid* denounced the VNI as an organization with 'principles like those of Pontius Pilate'.[295] Ultimately, the CPN-members left the VNI, and came up with their own *Comité Hulp aan Indonesië.* Still, the fact that a combination of inner party developments, the politics around de *politionele acties* and the growth of the 'two camps'-logic all but destroyed the VNI's influence, should not overshadow that the Indonesia-issue shortly formed the ideal basis for intraleftist cooperation.

4. Amsterdam

Left-wing radicalism had always found much support in Amsterdam, but the momentum built around progressive politics was especially great at the end of the war. The communists could confidently count on the support of many of the city's inhabitants; *De Waarheid* had a readership of 60.000 in 1945.[296] Herman de Liagre Böhl and Guus Meerhoek argue in *De Bevrijding van Amsterdam* that the political events in the transition period in Amsterdam can be interpreted as a local reflection of the dynamics that occurred on a national scale. Because elections were postponed until July 1946, it was up to a small group of political and economic elites to fill the power vacuum after the Germans retreated, without publically being held responsible. Communists did not participate in these consultations.[297] According to the authors, the elites of Amsterdam reached a durable and moderate interparty compromise on

[292] 'J.H.V. Veenstra aan bestuur VNI' (8 February 1948), 'A. Th. van Leeuwen aan W.F. Wertheim' (17 January 1948), *Archief W.F. Wertheim* 173.
[293] Madelon de Keizer, *Frans Goedhart. Journalist en politicus* (Amsterdam, 2012) 203.
[294] 'Rutgers aan bestuur VNI' (23 December 1948), *Archief W.F. Wertheim* 173
[295] 'De VNI op een dwaalspoor', *De Waarheid* (23 November 1948).
[296] Richter Roegholt, *Amsterdam in de 20e eeuw II 1945-1970* (Utrecht, 1976) 15.
[297] Herman de Liagre Böhl, Guus Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam* (Zwolle, 1989) 25-27, 162-164.

the basis of social reforms around the liberation, which would eventually work against the communists.[298]

The exponent of this compromise was the city's first postwar temporary mayor, Feike de Boer. This liberal shipping entrepreneur had enthusiastically taken part in discussions in Sint-Michielgestel and argued for a fusion of liberalism and socialism. Together with former alderman B.C. Franke he formed a board of aldermen with young, reform-minded politicians. They also agreed that the communists should be present in the board: this position was to be filled by Leen Seegers, the pre-war leader of the CPN in Amsterdam. Seegers was still in Buchenwald, so he would not be appointed before November 1945.[299] The number of seats of the CPN was extended from 7 to 10: the elites acknowledged the growth of communism, without making it threaten the dominance of the SDAP. They probably hoped that by letting the communists participate in policymaking, the CPN would not frustrate the city's reconstruction process. They were right: in its first two years, the Amsterdam CPN did not engage in radical propaganda, nor did it encourage strikes.[300]

The limit to where the social democrats were willing to cooperate with the CPN was demonstrated after the local elections of 1946. The CPN won the elections with 32% of the votes, 4000 votes more than the PvdA. Together they constituted a significant majority, but the PvdA did not want to form a left-wing 'program board'. Instead, it sacrificed one of its own seats in the board so that both the KVP and the *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (CHU) would have one seat. This decision was defended on the grounds that there was not enough conformity in the CPN's and PvdA's foundations.[301] Before the elections, the PvdA had issued a pamphlet in which the 'democracy' of the communists was unmasked as a form of dictatorship.[302] Soon-to-be alderman Albert de Roos had warned a SDAP-congress that *De Waarheid*'s propaganda campaign in Amsterdam was a great danger to the nation.[303] So the PvdA opted for a broad coalition in order to limit the CPN's presence in the board to two out of six members – Seegers and Ben Polak. As De Liagre Böhl and Meershoek describe, the board was not to be a 'red laboratory', but a reflection of moderate reform aspirations, which

[298] De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam,* 165.
[299] Seegers' nomination was approved by the CPN, PvdA and CHU/ARP. The Catholics and Liberals abstained, because they did not want to vote for a communist on principal grounds. See: *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1945*,* Afd. II (21 Nov).
[300] De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam,* 50-54.
[301] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1946*,* Afd. II (2 September).
[302] 'Brochure 'waar het om gaat' PvdA Amsterdam raadsverkiezingen' (1946), *Archief PvdA* 31.
[303] 'Verslag partijconferentie' (5-6 September 1945), *Archief SDAP* 2963.

were also supported by more conservative-oriented parties.[304] As far as the minutes of the board meetings are able to demonstrate, the CPN-members cooperated loyally with the others. Until early 1948, there were no major collisions, apart from a few reminders to Seegers that it would be 'amicable' not to take unilateral decisions without consulting your colleagues.[305] Ideological clashes were reserved for the city council. Both in 1946 and 1947, the *Algemene Beschouwingen* presented the opportunity for all non-communist parties to express their disgust of communism, while the CPN-members ranted about the plans of the 'reaction'.[306] These discussions ended up far away from local issues. Instead, the speakers dwelled on the communists' conception of democracy, events in Eastern Europe and the political system of the Soviet Union. Still, in his memoirs Henk Gortzak, fraction leader of the CPN, mainly remembers the agreeable atmosphere in the council, and the cordial consultations between the mayor and the fraction leaders.[307] The interaction between communists and non-communists in Amsterdam was a rare, but nevertheless important example of loyal intraleftist cooperation in policymaking.

Besides these ideological clashes, minutes of council meetings show that were three issues that constantly pitted communists against non-communists. First, the CPN was unsatisfied with the slow tempo and limited magnitude of the purge of collaborators in public and private institutions. Directly after the war, there was discontent with the MG's refusal to begin a systematic purge of the police and economic elites, and with its attempts to obstruct the former resistance's purging organizations.[308] Indeed, in the haste to reconstruct the city, judging the past was not the first priority for most local elites and politicians.[309] Only the CPN reminded the council again and again of the need to start taking the purges seriously.[310]

Second, similar to the disagreement between the national government and the EVC, there were differences in opinion about the position of the EVC and the right of workers to strike. Directly after the liberation, the EVC was the biggest union in Amsterdam and it often managed to make employers comply to the workers demands by mediating in spontaneous strikes, at least until the union overplayed its hand during the port strikes of 1946.[311] Still, the workers' use of strikes annoyed the non-communist unions and parties. This became visible

[304] De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam,* 155.
[305] 'Notulen van de vergadering van B&W' (1 February 1946), *Archief College van Burgemeester en Wethouders, Deliberatieboeken* 566.
[306] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1946*,* Afd. II (30 July); *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1947*,* Afd. II (6-8 May).
[307] Henk Gortzak, *Hoop zonder illusies. Memoires van een communist* (Amsterdam, 1985) 232, 274.
[308] De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam,* 65-69.
[309] Roegholt, *Amsterdam in de 20e eeuw,* 111.
[310] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1946*,* Afd. II (13 March, 5 June, 31 July).
[311] De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam,* 129-130.

when tens of thousands of workers, including those of municipal concerns, refused to work on 24 September 1946 because of the Beel-administration's plan to send conscripts to Indonesia. The general strike was highly encouraged by the CPN. CHU-alderman member Schokking sarcastically asked his CPN-colleagues if they should not be striking as well. Polak and Seegers declared not to have known that a strike would occur, but refused to reject it.[312] In the debate in the city council, KVP-councilman Steinmetz meant that the CPN had "op misdadige wijze het volk opgehitst", while the liberal politician Le Cavalier called the strikes "een demonstratie van de ondemocratie."[313] To the dismay of the communists, the council decided to transmit an admonition to the striking municipal workers. Dissimilar to the national government, the Amsterdam council ultimately admitted the EVC to the *Georganiseerd Overleg* between workers, employers and government. After it had long been frustrated on formal grounds, the council voted in favor of the admission of the EVC in July 1947.[314] The councilmen understood the absurdity – and perhaps the danger – of excluding the biggest union in the city. The national government was not pleased with this decision. Prime minister Beel told D'Ailly to immediately cease consulting the EVC in case of another strike of municipal workers.[315]

Third, different interpretations of the resistance experience made the remembrance of the *Februaristaking* a thorny issue. The fundamental issue at stake was that the communists remembered the *Februaristaking* as a strike instigated and led by them, on the basis of direct political, anti-fascist ideas. Many non-communists understood the strike as a spontaneous deed of the people and as an expression of 'humanity'. They were annoyed by the attempts of the communists to 'monopolize' the strike and use its legacy for partisan purposes.[316] The social democratic press continuously reminded its readers that the CPN still defended the Nazi-Soviet pact in Febuary 1941, which spurred *De Waarheid* to bring the accommodating terminology of *Het Vrije Volk* after the German invasion into the spotlight.[317] These conflicting visions troubled the organization of an annual collective memorial ceremony in Amsterdam from the start. Although speakers the ceremonies often hailed the unity of the wartime resistance, the communist and social democratic press organs sharply criticized the

[312] 'Notulen van de vergadering van B&W' (20 September 1946), *Archief College van Burgemeester en Wethouders, Deliberatieboeken* 573.
[313] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1946*,* Afd. II (23 October).
[314] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1947*,* Afd. II (9 July). Only Le Cavalier voted against, but in many ways he seemed to be a liberal voice crying in the Keynesian wilderness of the 1940s.
[315] Witte, 'Bevangen door de eenheidskoorts', 30.
[316] Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking,* 20-25.
[317] 'Smakeloos', *De Waarheid* (1 March 1946).

past and contemporary demeanor of the other side. Around the 1948 memorial ceremony, the CPN aroused the anger of *Het Vrije Volk* and *Het Parool* to relate the fight against the Nazis to the fight against new threats (American imperialism and the colonial war in Indonesia).[318] In turn, the CPN criticized the PvdA-politician's Suurhoff's speech, which contained an implicit attack on the Soviet Union, in the context of its involvement in the Czechoslovakian coup.[319] These conflicts reflected the entry of the Cold War into the remembrance of the war, which would split the movement of former resistance fighters for decades to come.[320]

Until 1948, these differences were not that important that they were perceived to threaten the coalition. After all, the local PvdA-department often sided with the communists against the right too. We have seen with the admission of the EVC into the official consultation organs that the Amsterdam council was at times prepared to swim against the dominant stream. So, in contrast to De Liagre Böhl and Meershoek's argument that postwar politics in Amsterdam reflected national politics, I would suggest that during the first three years after the war there was more room for loyal – not enthusiastic – cooperation between non-communists and communists in Amsterdam than in The Hague.

Amsterdam's intransigence received national attention with regard to the issue of the appointment of professors for the new political-social 'Seventh Faculty' of the *Gemeente Universiteit* (GU). The board of mayor and aldermen wanted to appoint Jacques Presser, Jef Suys and Salomon Kleerekoper, against the wishes of the right-wing who found that this would give the faculty a one-sided, 'leftist' character.[321] The minister of education, Jos Gielen (KVP), refused to accept the appointments, on the formal grounds that there should be more than one nomination for a professorial post. However, another professor had been hired in the same way without any objection. The problem with the three others was that, although they denounced the Czechoslovakian coup, they argued that freedom had to be defended at other places as well – for example, Greece, Argentine and Spain – and that they refused to see Soviet aggressiveness as the only evil.[322] The national PvdA-leadership grew critical about the course of the Amsterdam PvdA-fraction, perhaps persuaded by angry messages of Frans Goedhart and Jacques de Kadt and by the opposition of Sal Tas within the Amsterdam-

[318] Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking,* 30-31. 'Herdenking februari-staking', *De Waarheid* (26 February 1948).
[319] Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking,* 31. 'Herdenking februari-staking', *De Waarheid* (26 February 1948).
[320] Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking,* 33.
[321] 'Notulen van de besloten vergadering' (6 November 1947), *Archief van de Gemeenteraad* 295.
[322] Rovers, *Voor recht en vrijheid,* 65-66.

fraction.[323] For yet unspecified reasons and to the dismay of the CPN, the local PvdA suddenly decided to drop Jef Suys, whose pacifism and Cold War-neutralism was interpreted as an inadmissible form of fellow travelling.[324] Instead, it reached a compromise with the right-wing on the much more politically reliable social democrat Jan Barents. After a lengthy process, Presser and Kleerekoper did become appointed.

But at the moment the Amsterdam PvdA-department temporarily went its own way regarding the Seventh Faculty, it did support a much more drastic utterance of anticommunism: the political liquidation of the CPN-aldermen. We have seen that in 1947 the CPN began to campaign for its *Nationaal Welvaartsplan* as an alternative for the Marshall Plan. On 17 February 1948, the *Voorlopig Welvaart-Comité Amsterdam* was founded, which aimed to organize broader agitation against the Marshall Plan. Meanwhile, on 25 February, the Czechoslovakian communists took over all government positions after they had put pressure on President Beneš with the help of strikes, occupations, militias and 'action committees'. The Czechoslovakian coup was viewed with horror by most Dutch commentators and politicians, who quickly denounced the CPN's *Welvaartsplan*-agitation as a first step on the way to a communist coup, and the *Comité* as similar to the Czechoslovakian action committees.[325] The Amsterdam CPN attempted to ignore the outrage, and continued its actions: on 11 March, it distributed an *Oproep aan de Amsterdamse bevolking*, which involved a critique of the Beel-government and a few political demands on the basis of the *Welvaartsplan.* This heavily annoyed the other parties in the council, partly because the *Oproep* was signed by Seegers and Polak. When asked by mayor D'Ailly, who found the publication either 'provocative' or 'stupid', Seegers said that there were no similarities between the Czechoslovakian action committees and the *Welvaartscomités*, and emphasized that the CPN would not try to subvert the rules of the game. The other aldermen were not reassured, and wondered if they could continue to cooperate with the CPN.[326] The council fractions certainly did not think so – perhaps influenced by a not-too-subtle CPN-leaflet called *Praag…en Den Haag* – because they jointly put up a motion of no confidence, asking Seegers

[323] Ibidem, 66-67. 'Brief Goedhart aan partijbestuur' (24 May 1948), 'Brief partijbestuur aan Wethouder De Roos' (25 June 1948), 'Jacques de Kadt over zevende faculteit' (21 July 1948), *Archief PvdA* 32.
[324] 'Notulen van de besloten vergadering' (28 July 1948), *Archief van de Gemeenteraad* 295. De Vries, *Complexe consensus,* 262-266; Rovers, *Voor recht en vrijheid,* 65-67. Rovers maintains that although there are signs that the national leadership put pressure on the PvdA-fraction in Amsterdam, it cannot be proven that this 'disciplining' was the decisive factor for the fraction's turnaround.
[325] Herman de Liagre Böhl, 'Koude Oorlog in Amsterdam. De wethoudersaffaire van 1948', *De Gids 1*47 (1984) 45.
[326] 'Notulen van de vergadering van B&W' (12 March 1948), *Archief College van Burgemeester en Wethouders, Deliberatieboeken* 591.

and Polak to leave their position. In the marathon council session that followed, the fraction leaders declared that although they did not have problems with Seegers and Polak personally, the behavior of the CPN was too much at odds with the principles of democracy for further cooperation in Amsterdam to be possible. According to the speakers, the CPN could not remove the suspicion that it was preparing a coup, or that it acted as a 'fifth column' in the service of the Soviet Union. During the debate, references to the war were continuously made: "het zou een misdaad zijn, het Nederlandse volk ten tweede male naar de slachtbank te laten leiden" (Steinmetz, KVP), "alleen de communistische partij heeft sinds 1940 de democratie verdedigd" (Gortzak, CPN).[327] Seegers and Polak refused to step down, although the motion was accepted by all non-communist fractions.[328] As an interim-solution, the council appointed a seventh alderman, and stripped Seegers and Polak of their tasks.[329] Still, the two CPN-aldermen continued to participate in board meetings until 17 September: five days later they were fired on the basis of a new constitutional revision, which made it possible to fire aldermen in the midst of their term, if 'serious grounds' could be presented. In the case of Amsterdam, the 'serious ground' was the CPN's 'revolutionary' strategy of the *Welvaartscomités*.[330] In chapter 4, it will be argued that other motives might have played a role as well. In any case, the discharge of the CPN-aldermen signified that the political relations in Amsterdam were at last synchronized with the communist vs. non-communist divide that had already taken hold on a national level.

Conclusion

We can establish that between 1945 and 1948, there have been some fronts on which communists and non-communists cooperated. In political pressure groups (like the VNI), and on a local political level (Amsterdam), communists were accepted as legitimate participants in political deliberation. However, the CPN had set its eyes on more. From 1943 onwards, its goal had been unity of the workers' movement. But not only the CPN wanted to break through its pre-war boundaries; the SDAP and the NVV had the same goal. The social democrats put their hope on the renewal-movement and on the position of the PvdA within

[327] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1948*,* Afd. II (24-25, 31 March 1948). Steinmetz also mentioned that Seegers had allegedly applauded the execution of a few revolutionary-socialist detainees in Kamp Vught. Seegers answered that this story contained "geen letter waarheid". (Steinmetz on 24 March, Seegers on 31 March).
[328] According to Rovers, the local PvdA-leaders Faber and Franke were initially not too enthusiastic about the campaign for the removal of Seegers and Polak, in which Sal Tas was one of the most active participators. Apparently, the demeanor of the CPN-fraction during the debate persuaded Faber that removal was the best decision. Rovers, *Voor recht en vrijheid,* 55. *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1948*,* Afd. II (31 March 1948).
[329] *Amsterdams Gemeenteblad* 1948*,* Afd. II (7, 21 April, 5 May).
[330] De Liagre Böhl, 'Koude Oorlog in Amsterdam', 48-49.

the government coalition. This strategy entailed retaining distance from the communists, whom most social democrats had never really began to trust anyway. So left-wing unity in parliament and in the unions was an illusion, because both the social democrats and the communists came out of the war with the plan to widen their popular appeal. Both the inner party development of the CPN, which replaced its constructive, 'responsible' stance for a more confrontational outlook in 1947, and the PvdA's gradual acceptance of a pragmatic, pro-Atlanticist kind of socialism reinforced the interleftist hostility.

We have seen that this 'two camps'-logic ultimately crept into the VNI and the Amsterdam council, which signaled the end for cooperation between communists and non-communists on these fronts. However, this does not negate the observation that in the first years after the liberation, there were numerous non-communist progressives who were prepared to find common ground with communists, or at least tolerated their presence in organizations, magazines and at manifestations. Many progressives hoped that the wartime alliance between the US and the Soviet Union would continue, and that the national-front policy of the communists would entail a genuine acceptance of the democratic rules of the game. The CPN's national-front yielded more response than its 'popular front' of the 1930s, because during the German occupation the communists' words had been accompanied by the actual deed of resistance within a national resistance movement. We can speak of a sliding-scale of progressive non-communists' acceptance of communism: from social democrats who had not lost their suspicion, but were prepared to tolerate the communists as long as they behaved within the 'democratic' limits (Drees, the Amsterdam PvdA-department), via people who to a certain extent went along with the CPN's national-front-logic, because they saw the benefits of a progressive bloc, and who focused on the need for peaceful cooperation between the two superpowers (Buskes, Van Randwijk, Van Heuven Goedhart) to the intellectuals who were not CPN-members, but yet possessed a deep-seated admiration for the Soviet Union (Romein, Wertheim). The latest group would soon be branded as 'fellow travellers', while the first conformed to the anticommunist camp as soon as they detected radical tendencies within the CPN. The solidification of the Dutch Cold War, which will be described in the next chapter, proved to be specifically hard to swallow for the middle group; the people who made no secrets of their distaste of communism, but who warned against a one-sided-view of the Soviet Union and who expressed their willingness to remain 'in conversation' with the communists. This proved to be nearly impossible, since their intraleftist platforms were – similarly to the *Comité van Waakzaamheid* before the war – bound to choose for or against communism; the alternative was to disintegrate. The voices of men like Buskes, Van

Randwijk and Jef Suys – the victim of the 'Seventh faculty'-debate – became marginalized; they were deemed too weak-kneed 'pseudo-leftists' by the communists, and too much communist-like by ardent anticommunists. The next chapter reveals that the dynamics of Dutch transition politics forms a more relevant explanation for this development than Bleich and Van Weezel's 'reproduction' of the East-West division in the worker's movement.[331]

[331] Bleich, Van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!,* 172.

Chapter 4: The solidification of the Dutch Cold War

The previous chapter has revealed some of the domains in which communists and non-communists cooperated. In each one of them, cooperation was suspended between 1946 and 1948. Attempts to find common ground among progressives made way for a growing belief in the irreconcilable contradiction between two camps, both at home and globally. In this chapter I will evaluate how the idea of a Cold War could take hold. First, the international contours will be sketched, with special focus on the developments within the communist camp. But, rather than interpreting events in the Netherlands as a 'natural' reflection of the emerging Cold War between the two superpowers, five factors will be listed that helped to solidify the idea of a Dutch Cold War: 1) the normalization of politics and the fear of radicalism, 2) the historical anticommunism of the KVP and other parties, 3) the Dutch government's Atlanticist outlook, 4) the consequences of the Czechoslovakian coup and the fear of fifth columns, and 5) the CPN's sectarianism.

International contours: changes in Soviet strategy

In chapter 2, we have seen that the Soviet Union encouraged communist parties to form national fronts and enter coalition governments. Wartime politics was to be continued into peacetime; the Communist Party was to be permanently accepted as a legitimate political participant.[332] But as Western European communist parties attempted to broaden their support, and entered coalition governments in some countries, they faced problems on two fronts. First, although they cooperated with communists in various degrees, social democratic parties all over Europe resisted the communists' most radical proposals of merger or bloc-building. Although deprived of left-wing unity, the communists still had to contain powerful elements of radical workers' agitation for the sake of the stability of the governments they were in or which they tacitly supported. By early 1947, it was clear that this tactic had failed, because the parties were neither able to forcefully influence government policies, nor could they rally the opposition.[333] Second, the strategy of national fronts was initially designed as a domestic equivalent of the Grand Alliance, which Stalin aimed to preserve after the end of the war. However, when cracks began to appear in the Alliance because of disagreement about the demarcation of the superpowers' spheres of influence, and the position of Germany above all, Stalin began to question the wisdom of the national-front strategy. There were obviously tensions between the 'nationalization' of communist parties, which involved cooperation with

[332] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 155-156.
[333] Ibidem, 168.

increasingly pro-Atlanticist mainstream parties, and Soviet foreign policy, which gradually began to interpret the Western bloc as a threat to Soviet interests.[334]

1947 witnessed a fundamental reversal of communist strategy in Europe. First, the Belgian, French and Italian communist parties left or were kicked out of government. Soviet leaders were already frustrated by the ineffectiveness of these parties, which were to a great extent independent from Soviet control. The failure of the coalition governments persuaded them that a tighter grip on European communism was required.[335] This objective, coupled with the increasing fear of Western aggressiveness – which preceded, but was reinforced by, the Marshall Plan – formed the basis for the establishment of the Cominform in September 1947. At the first meeting of the Cominform, to which all Eastern European communist parties were invited, plus the French and Italian ones, Soviet Central Committee Secretary Andrei Zhdanov began his famous 'two camps speech' with:

> "A new alignment of political forces has arisen. The more the war recedes into the past, the more distinct become two major trends in post-war international policy, corresponding to the division of the political forces operating in the international arena into two major camps: the imperialist and anti-democratic camp, on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist and democratic camp, on the other."[336]

It was clear that all communist parties belonged to the second camp, and their corresponding duty was to strengthen the Soviet camp and weaken the American-led bloc. The French and Italians were castigated for their earlier strategy of 'bourgeois opportunism'[337]. Western European parties now had to abandon collaboration with bourgeois forces and oppose American hegemony and the Marshall Plan by extra-parliamentary and extra-legal means.[338]

Still, Stalin remained cautious. Although the parties were instructed to mobilize against the Marshall Plan, the Italians were advised not to provoke civil conflict. The defeat of the PCI in the Italian elections of 1948 signalled the definitive end of the communist advance in Western

[334] Pons, 'Stalin, Togliatti', 12-13; Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet insecurity: the Stalin years* (New York, 1996) 25-27.
[335] Pons, 'Stalin, Togliatti', 15-16; Nataliia I. Egorova, 'Stalin's foreign policy and the Cominform, 1947-1953', in: Francesca Gori, Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War* (New York, 1996) 197-198.
[336] 'Speech by Andrei Zhdanov at the founding of the Cominform' (September 1947), http://educ.jmu.edu/~vannorwc/assets/ghist%20102-150/pages/readings/zhdanovspeech.html (18 May 2015).
[337] Wettig, *Stalin and the Cold War in Europe,* 144-145.
[338] Pons, 'Stalin and the European communists', 133-134; Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet insecurity,* 30-31.

Europe, and of the Soviet efforts to prevent the formation of a Western bloc.[339] The Soviet strategic switch in 1947-1948 proved that Stalin valued Soviet state interests over those of national parties, because these were now pressured into the role of systemic opposition, without receiving meaningful support from the Soviet Union, which concentrated on the German issue and the sovietisation of Eastern Europe. This weak position left the parties vulnerable to ideological attacks from bourgeois forces, who denounced them as tools or 'fifth columns' of Soviet aggressiveness and as threats to the democratic order. Anticommunism reigned in much of Western Europe during the late 1940s and 1950s, making communism, in the words of Charles Maier, something 'inherently pathological'.[340] Within five years after the end of the war, the communist heroes of the anti-fascist resistance found themselves in complete isolation again.

International contours: the end of the coalition governments in 1947

It is obvious that Soviet strategy played a major role in the 'victory' of anticommunism in 1947-1948, but it cannot form an explanation on its own. After all, communist parties may have continued their cooperation efforts if domestic considerations had compelled them to do so. However, in most Western European cases this did not happen, because there were powerful developments that led to a range of 'domestic Cold Wars', as demonstrated by the fact that the fall of the coalition governments in Italy, France and Belgium preceded Zhdanov's proclamation of the two camps. These cases will be further explored, in order to shed light on the particular national factors underlying the isolation of the communists.

In **Italy**, the PCI came out of the war with great confidence. The party wanted to preserve the anti-fascist unity and maintain communist influence in an Italy of which it was hoped that it would not have to choose between East and West. In the general elections of 1946, the PCI got 18,9% of the votes, and 40% combined with the socialists. However, in contrast to the CPN and the KPB, the Italian communists did not focus on merging with the socialists, but staked everything on cooperation with the Christian-Democrats of prime minister Alcide De Gasperi, with which they formed a government between 1945 and 1947. Under the leadership of Palmiro Togliatti, the PCI wanted to show that it could be a responsible political actor, in order to appease the Christian Democrats and the middle class voters. Therefore, strikes and

[339] Pons, 'Stalin, Togliatti', 18-21; Pechatnov, 'The Soviet Union and the world', 105.
[340] Maier, 'The two postwar eras', 147.

wage demands were discouraged, and far-reaching economic reforms were discarded.[341] Still, disagreements continuously destabilized the coalition, not in the least because the socialist party of Pietro Nenni tried to outflank the PCI from the left.[342] In early 1947, De Gasperi grew confident that he could do away with the left-wing, partly because it became clear that the Soviet Union did not assign much geopolitical significance to Italy.[343] So De Gasperi deliberately steered to a confrontation in May 1947, when he announced that he wanted to broaden his coalition with non-political people to give business sources a larger role. This went obviously against the wishes of the socialist and communists, and De Gasperi swiftly formed a coalition without them.[344] The PCI would never return in government, but it managed to maintain formidable electoral support in spite of the exclusionary tactics of the deeply anticommunist Christian Democratic elite.

The communists in **France** claimed that the moral leadership they had showed in the resistance should enable them to take the lead in the reconstruction of post-war France. In the 1945-1946 election results, the PCF was repeatedly voted the largest or second largest party with around 25% of the votes. Like its Italian counterpart, the PCF aimed to demonstrate its statesmanlike, responsible qualities. It limited the use of strikes and proclaimed the gospel of producing instead. Unlike the PCI, the PCF aimed to court the socialists (SFIO) to form a left-wing bloc in order to isolate the Christian-Democratic MRP.[345] However, the SFIO resisted unification, and refused to participate in a government without the MRP. The PCF was unable to implement an original political program in the four tripartite governments that followed De Gaulle's departure from politics, partly because of the unwillingness of the political establishment and a growing rivalry with the socialists.[346] In early 1947, the coalition, already marred by disagreements on political appointments and the new constitution, experienced serious arguments on colonial policy and wage freezes. The heightened assertiveness of the communists on these issues compelled prime minister Paul Ramadier (SFIO) to dismiss them from the cabinet in May.[347] Like the PCI, the PCF hoped that it could re-enter the government soon, but this would never happen again, notwithstanding the durability of the party's

[341] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 159-160. In the direct aftermath of the fall of the fascist regime, Togliatti had played an important role in preventing civil war, which was a distinct possibility given the chaotic situation of post-fascist Italy. Read: Aga-Rossi, Zaslavsky, 'The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party', 164.
[342] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 145.
[343] Aga-Rossi, Zaslavsky, 'The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party',
[344] Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in governments,* 221-226.
[345] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 159-162.
[346] Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in governments,* 148-152. De Gaulle faced a broad left-wing opposition against his platform of a presidential republic, and was unable to dominate the political scene as he did before the 1945 elections. Read: Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 262-268.
[347] Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in governments,* 154-159.

electoral strength. Communism would continue to attract a number of influential French intellectuals until well into the 1950s, and thus exercised a much more important role in the political-philosophical debate than in the Low Countries.[348]

The communist party of **Belgium** (KPB-PCB) obtained 12,5% of the votes in the first post-war elections in 1945. Its electoral strength lies therefore closer to that of the CPN than to the PCF and PCI. Still, the KPB managed to participate in government coalitions between 1944 and 1947, which is due to the stance of the Belgian social democrats (BSP). The BSP felt threatened by the KPB, and feared that the communists would exploit their wartime surge in popularity, but simultaneously saw the advantages of a left-wing bloc pressuring the Catholic party.[349] So, the BSP demanded the presence of the communists in the coalition, in the expectation that it could better control them by holding out the carrot of cooperation.[350] Indeed, the KPB clung to government participation no matter what the cost, although it brought them few rewards. It seems that by early 1947, the communists understood that they could not expect much from the coalition with socialists and liberals. Their radicalization in tone and intransigence on the issue of coal prices led to the fall of the Huysmans government in March 1947; a new coalition without the communists was formed within eight days.[351] This formed the beginning of the KPB's decades-long marginalization, which according to Martin Conway was to be expected, because of the particular tenacity of anticommunism in Belgium's political culture and absence of communist mass support.[352]

In the last paragraphs, no particular attention has been diverted to the role of Moscow in the end of the communist participation in West European governments. This is an under-researched field, so I would have to resort to unsupported speculation. What we can hypothesize is that Soviet influence was probably not large enough to be the main reason for the communists to provoke government crises. After all, one of the reasons for establishing the Cominform was to exert greater control over individual communist parties. Antagonism between communists and non-communists was already growing before the summer of 1947, and had its roots partly in domestic circumstances. Still, the similarities between Western European countries are striking: in each of the three there were communist parties who clung to their positions in the coalitions, although they were unable to implement much of their

[348] For the relation between French intellectuals and communism, read: Tony Judt, *Past imperfect: French intellectuals 1944-1956* (Berkeley, 1992).
[349] Klijn, *Arbeiders- of volkspartij,* 192.
[350] Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium,* 198-200.
[351] Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in governments,* 90-92.
[352] Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium,* 233.

political program. The communist parties, especially the PCF and the KPB, became more assertive in early 1947, but this strategy backfired when it turned out that their former coalition partners were confident enough to exclude the communists. Hostility between communists and non-communists took definite shape in late 1947-1948, when the communist parties conformed themselves more openly to Soviet doctrine. Interestingly, much of this story resembles the development of the CPN from a moderate, loyal party into an isolated opposition movement.

Rather than interpreting these similarities as part of an overall Cold War narrative, they reflect a congruence in the roots of the Western European 'national Cold Wars' and the local victories of anticommunism. Although the next part of this chapter will mainly focus on the Dutch case, there are reasons to assume that the factors underlying the solidification of the *idea* of a Cold War in the Netherlands were present in other European countries to various degrees. The factors considered in this chapter are : 1) the 'normalization' of politics and the fear of radicalism, 2) the 'historical' anticommunism of non-communist ideologies, 3) the Atlanticist outlook of the government, 4) the dynamics of 1948 and the fear of 'fifth columns', and 5) the sectarianism of the communist party.

The solidification of the Dutch Cold War

1. The normalization of politics and the fear of radicalism

Although many intellectuals and resistance leaders assumed that the war had cleared the ground for a radically new and progressive form of politics, pre-war structures swiftly returned in Western Europe. Pragmatic politicians realized that although people had indeed become more susceptible to radical ideas, their main preoccupation was making life 'normal' again after years of economic and social disintegration. This paved the way for Christian and social democratic parties, which promised reforms but not revolution, and which had converged around the causes of economic reconstruction, technocratic planning, the welfare estate and the obsolescence of class conflict.[353] 'Consensus', 'stability', and 'moderation' became the virtues of the postwar era.[354] Although communist parties made efforts to abide to those virtues, many non-communist politicians could not shed their distrust and interpreted every example of left-wing radicalism – strikes, use of class theory, support of political developments in Eastern Europe – as an attack on the very principles of the democratic and social order. The quest of politicians to 'normalize' the political scene also entailed

[353] Müller, *Contesting democracy,* 143-145.
[354] Mark Mazower, *Dark continent: Europe's twentieth century* (London, 1998) 194, 291-292.

disbanding the organs of the resistance, which were suspected to be hotbeds of radicalism and viewed to be ill-equipped to handle the demands of day-to-day politics.[355] Across Western Europe, the heroes of the resistance were either sidelined or adopted in political party structures.[356]

In chapter 1, we have established that the Dutch political elite of the 1930s possessed a deeply engrained fear of left-wing radicalism and social unrest. Confessional and liberal politicians sometimes used repressive measures to suppress radical activity, such as firing civil servants on the grounds of their left-wing party membership. When the government-in-exile began to prepare for the transition period that would accompany the allied victory, this fear of radicalism continued to influence its policies. The government did not expect that its authority would simply 'return'. Instead, policymakers were afraid that the disintegration of German authority would leave a power vacuum and that extremist groups would exploit this situation to expand their own influence.[357] The government was especially worried about the presence of weapons among various resistance groups. In order to avoid such a power vacuum, the government installed the *Militair Gezag (MG)*, which had far-reaching powers at its disposal to contain rebellious activity.[358] Just as during the 1930s, governmental fear of radicalism proved to be a source of anticommunism, because no group was distrusted more than the communist resistance movement. Sparks of communist unrest in Belgium and France could hit the Netherlands as well, so it was thought.[359] The refusal of the left-wing section of the organized resistance in late 1944 to make promises about the handing over of weapons exacerbated this distrust.[360] So as we have seen in chapter 2, governmental bodies frustrated the communists in a number of ways during the transition period. The *MG* limited the ability of the *Waarheid*-movement to hold political meetings and distribute propaganda in the South. Moreover, communist presence in resistance organizations and other consultative bodies was limited, and communists were rarely appointed on important political or administrative positions.[361] Although the CPN did complain about these policies, its agitation was not forceful enough to alter the situation.[362] Distrust of the communists was felt by some

[355] Eley, *Forging democracy,* 297.
[356] For Belgium, read: Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium,* 223-226. For France: Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 127-139, 200-201.
[357] Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 130.
[358] De Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder', 33-34.
[359] Witte, 'Bevangen door de eenheidskoorts', 15-16.
[360] De Jong, *Koninkrijk* 10b, 991.
[361] Galesloot, Legêne, *De CPN in de oorlog,* 253-254.
[362] 'Aan de CC en College van Vertrouwensmannen', *Archief CPN* 801 (15 September 1944); 'Naar aanleiding van een verbod van de vrije Waarheid', *De Waarheid* (26 April 1945)

resistance actors as well. Herman Langeveld notes in his biography of Wim Schermerhorn that during 1944-1945 there was contact between the right-wing *Landelijke Knokploegen* and a few resistance figures from various backgrounds (Schermerhorn of the NVB, Sieuwert Bruins Slot of *Trouw*, Jacob Oranje of the *College van Vertrouwensmannen*), who agreed to organize a broad front in the case of an armed communist coup.[363] In the post-war atmosphere of 'reconstruction', and 'consensus', governmental authorities continued to interpret every sign of radicalism as a threat to the stability of the political and social system. Communism formed the largest threat to the democratic order in the eyes of the main security agencies too, notwithstanding the CPN's newfound moderation and enthusiasm for parliament and national traditions.[364]

Although the post-war government paid particular attention to the neutralization of communist resistance actors, it also aimed to limit the role of the former resistance as a whole. During the war, the government-in-exile had brought different military resistance groups, among which the *Raad van Verzet*, which the communists' *Militaire Commissie* had joined earlier, under the umbrella of the *Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten.* The goals of this organization were to coordinate resistance activities, but also to increase governmental control over various armed paramilitary groups, in order to prevent chaos after the liberation. Recent studies have shown that the government deliberately 'normalized' the political scene by limiting the role of resistance bodies like the *Grote Advies Commissie.*[365] Similarly, they employed the 'synthesis concept' as the guideline for the restoration of national and local legislatures; this meant that all representatives from before the war would return to their positions, and that vacancies would be filled by the respective parties – only the NSB-seats were to be filled by non-organized resistance figures. This decision favored continuity and party-based representation at the expense of independent activity of ex-resistance fighters.[366] The behavior of the resistance movement itself favored a 'normalization' of politics as well. At no point did resistance leaders demand an autonomous position of power, because they accepted the government-in-exile as the constitutional regime.[367] Moreover, resistance fighters hoped that they would be able to play a role in the interim government, which propelled many to return to or join a political party (Wagenaar, Bruins Slot, Goedhart, De Quay). As Pieter Lagrou

[363] Herman Langeveld, *De man die in de put sprong: Willem Schermerhorn 1894-1977* (Amsterdam, 2014) 188.
[364] Dirk Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (Den Haag, 1995) 164.
[365] Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 134-139; Pieter Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation. Patriotic memory and national recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge, 2000) 63-68.
[366] Peter Romijn, 'The synthesis of the political order and the resistance movement in the Netherlands in 1945', in: Gill Bennett (ed.), *The end of the war in Europe, 1945* (Londen, 1996) 144-145.
[367] Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 137-139.

explains in his insightful book about the legacy of Nazi occupation in Europe, the restraint of the Dutch resistance movement formed a source of self-satisfaction, because it had contributed to an orderly transition.[368]

2. The historical anticommunism of the KVP and other parties

The KVP was the main anticommunist crusader in parliament and government during the reconstruction period, as we will see later in this chapter. There is no source-based evidence that Catholic politicians fundamentally altered their view of communism as a godless enemy of Christianity on the basis of the CPN's national-front policy. It has even been argued that the decision to re-establish a Catholic party, instead of taking the 'breakthrough'-route, had partly been taken because it was believed that the spread of Catholic influence would make the position of Dutch society against the communist advance stronger.[369] Indeed, the KVP frequently presented itself as the most reliable bulwark against communism in its election propaganda.[370] The KVP kept a close eye to the behavior of communists in Europe, given the large amount of newspapers articles, brochures and essays it collected about the Soviet-zone of Germany, the establishment of the Cominform, the Vatican's view and other topics.[371] Still, communism was not the KVP's main preoccupation until 1947. Discussions about the Dutch communists were purely practical: should we cooperate with them? There was wide agreement that the answer should in principle be no. So Louis Beel did not contemplate consulting the CPN during the formation of his government in 1946, because he thought that the CPN missed "de hoge waarde van geestelijke normen, die aan onze beschaving ten grondslag liggen."[372] On the other hand, the KVP-leaders understood that cooperation with communists could be required on a local level, if the Catholics would otherwise lose their influence.[373] This was the argument for the KVP's participation in the Amsterdam board. It was a controversial decision, given that Amsterdam fraction leader Steinmetz went to great lengths to defend his choice in a party council meeting in November 1946.[374]

The main force behind the KVP's anticommunism was its political leader Carl Romme. When he advised the queen in the first stages of the 1946 government formation, he told her that the CPN was a party which before, during and after the war, had been guided by motives

[368] Lagrou, *The legacy of Nazi occupation,* 65.
[369] Bosscher, ''Waar is deze strijd om gestreden", 101.
[370] J.A. Bornewasser, *De Katholieke Volkspartij 1945-1980, 1. Herkomst en groei* (Nijmegen, 1995) 200-201.
[371] 'Stukken betreffende het communisme', *Archief KVP* 4216.
[372] *Handelingen Tweede Kamer (HTK) I* 1946 (9 July) 68.
[373] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur', *Archief KVP* 146 (2 August 1946).
[374] 'Notulen vergadering partijraad', *Archief KVP* 39 (9 November 1946).

which did not include the country's well-being.[375] Romme essentially argued that the CPN's national-front policy was a deception, because the consequence of communist rule would be devastating as he explained in parliament in a debate on the strike against the sending of troops in September 1946: "De niet-communist is voor hem een vogelvrije, is voor hem een rechtelooze, is voor hem een vijand ter meedogenloze vernietiging (….) Daarom valt het practisch politiek (…) met de communisten niet te discussieeren door niet-communisten, evenmin als er politiek viel te discussieeren met de nationaal-socialisten."[376] From late 1946 onwards, Romme would repeatedly ask the government to initiate a revision of the constitution in order to combat abuses of the democratic order, which would effectively limit the CPN's basic freedoms.[377] Romme found a useful ally in his anticommunist quest in the leadership of the Dutch Catholic episcopate. In 1946, it forbade churchgoers to join the EVC and the NVV. The Catholic bishops issued a *Vastenbrief* concerning the communist danger in February 1947. Communism was described as a movement which "met alle middelen, met list en bedrog en geweld een strijd op leven op dood voert tegen God."[378]. The Catholic pillar had thus laid the polemic basis for an anticommunist crusade during the Beel-period: but an open confrontation with the communists would only occur in 1948.[379]

During the *Algemene Beschouwingen* of 1946 it became clear that all parties, except the CPN itself, agreed on the necessity of keeping the communists from governing. Jan Schouten (ARP) noted that there was a "afstand in principieel inzicht en praktische gedragingen."[380] Marinus van der Goes van Naters (PvdA) argued: "samenwerking tussen democraten en anti-democraten kan nooit vruchtbaar zijn."[381] Still, there were differences in the background and intensity of the parties' anticommunism. In the eyes of Catholic politicians, the impossibility of cooperation with communists – other than when local circumstances left no choice – was obvious, even before the Cold War had taken shape: ominous references to communism's wish to destroy religion and stamp out difference settled the matter. As we will see, the KVP essentially supported all measures intended to quell communist activity. For the PvdA, anticommunism was a more difficult matter. As we have seen in chapter 3, between 1945 and 1947 the social democrats' balanced their traditional anticommunism with the advantages of limited cooperation with communists. When hostility towards communism got the upper hand

[375] Bogaarts, *De periode van het kabinet-Beel* A*,* 55.
[376] *HTK* 1946-1947 (25 September 1946) 49.
[377] *HTK* 1947-1948 (11 November 1947) 251; Bogaarts, *De periode van het kabinet-Beel* C*,* 1913-1914.
[378] 'Vastenbrief' (16 February 1947), as cited in: Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 237-238.
[379] Bogaarts, *De periode van het kabinet-Beel* C*,* 1914.
[380] *HTK* 1 1946 (10 July) 73.
[381] *HTK* 1 1946 (9 July) 59.

in 1947-1948, the PvdA attacked communism on the grounds that democracy was in danger. The emerging cleavage between East and West was one between dictatorship and democracy. So the PvdA understood that measures had to be taken in order to defend democracy, but at the same time it did not want to become part of a 'negative anticommunist bloc', which perhaps could be explained by the memory of the pre-war era, when the SDAP faced a united anti-socialist bloc.[382]

The minutes of executive meetings reveal that, similarly to the KVP, communism was not a pressing political issue for the liberal and protestant parties in the first post-war years.[383] The only question that stood on the agenda was if the parties should support the inclusion of communists in national and local governments; the answer was a resolute 'no'.[384] But, the liberals and protestants also had a far more marginal role in the 1947-1948 anticommunist campaign compared to the KVP and the PvdA. Their ideologies were as far removed from communism as the KVP's, but they had a different position in the political arena. First, the *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP)*, the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)* and the CHU did not electorally compete with the CPN, in the sense that they focused on different segments of society. In contrast, it was one of the PvdA's clear objectives to win CPN-voters for the social democratic cause and the KVP initially worried that Catholic workers would feel drawn to the CPN's anti-establishment terminology. Second, the protestants and liberals did not participate in government before 1948. Therefore, they reserved their main venom for the Beel-government and its policies regarding Indonesia and state intervention in the economy. According to ARP-leader Jan Schouten, the sudden haste of the KVP and the PvdA to start an anticommunist campaign was meant as a deflection of their own weaknesses.[385] Similarly, when Dirk Stikker described the new liberal movement VVD as a party of "bouwers aan de afsluitdijk tegen steeds hogere rode golven", he meant the influence of the PvdA's socialism.[386] For this reason, both the VVD and the ARP declined to contribute to

[382] 'Verklaring behorende bij de notulen van de vergadering van het Partijbestuur' (15 March 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[383] Before 1948, the Central Committee of the ARP briefly spoke about the party's relation to communism once. The executive of the PvdV mentioned the impossibility of cooperating with the communists only shortly in relationship to the government formation or overall political guidelines. See: *Archief ARP* 1-3*, Archief VVD* 1080.
[384] The behavior of the Amsterdam ARP/CHU-department in 1946 was seen as a mistake by the ARP's Central Committee. 'Notulen vergadering Centraal Comité' (23 March 1948), *Archief ARP* 4.
[385] Ibidem.
[386] 'Dirk Stikker op eerste openbare vergadering VVD 1948', as cited in: De Liagre Böhl, Nekkers Slot, *Nederland industrialiseert!,* 86.

joint anticommunist publications and manifestations with the government parties in the wake of the Czechoslovakian coup.[387]

Meanwhile, the protestant pillar fought its own little war with the communists about their respective resistance records. This discussion had started in the columns of the illegal *De Waarheid* and *Trouw*.[388] The polemic between communists and anti-revolutionaries reflects the ambiguous legacy of the CPN's war experience. The party often appealed to its resistance record for propaganda purposes and as legitimation for continued communist participation in politics. During the election period in 1946, the CPN used the slogan "voorwaarts met de partij van de Februaristaking!"[389] Moreover, for the Dutch communists the battle had not stopped with the liberation, for they were to continue their resistance, this time against the forces of reaction and the monopoly capital:

> "De daden, door de illegale strijders verricht, zijn lichtende voorbeelden van energie, zelfverloochening en gezond politiek bewustzijn. Zij zijn als zovele middelen om ons in de toekomstige strijd aan te bezielen en aan te sporen, om de arbeidersklasse en het werkende volk op te voeden in den geest, zoals die bij de illegale strijders heerste en daardoor sterk te maken in de vele beproevingen die hen nog wachten."[390]

Accordingly, communist representatives interpreted their exclusion from government as an insult to their wartime victims[391] and branded anticommunist measures as signs of proto-fascism.[392] The Dutch elite widely recognized the communist role in the resistance. However, most non-communist were displeased by the 'monopoly' that the CPN seemed to claim on the memory of the resistance. Drees told an SDAP-congress that although he had much respect for the communists' wartime sacrifices, he was annoyed that the CPN attempted to use these for political gain by acting if others had not suffered.[393] In response to the CPN's resistance-based claim of legitimacy, others often pointed towards the party's stance before June 1941. The Nazi-Soviet Pact remained an open wound, which anticommunist could easily use, especially at the moment the CPN reoriented itself to the doctrines of Moscow in 1947-1948.

[387] 'Notulen vergadering Centraal Comité' (23 March 1948), *Archief ARP* 4: 'Notulen vergadering hoofdbestuur' (20 March 1948), *Archief VVD* 1080.
[388] 'Over het karakter van de oorlog en de strijd der arbeidersklasse', *De Waarheid* (3 January 1945); *HTK* 1947-1948 (19 March 1948) 1590.
[389] Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking,* 25.
[390] 'Inleiding Paul de Groot, partijcongres' (7 January 1946), *Archief Paul de Groot* 29.
[391] Gerben Wagenaar, *HTK* 1 1946 (10 July) 83.
[392] Gerben Wagenaar, *HTK* 1947-1948 (14 May 1948) 1731.
[393] Verslag partijconferentie' (5-6 September 1945), *Archief SDAP* 2963.

During the debate on the Czechoslovakian coup, Bruins Slot (ARP) argued that the CPN had in fact never fought for the service of the fatherland, but only for a communist ideal.[394] So, although the CPN's resistance record bought the party a significant amount of goodwill in the immediate post-war period, the way the war figured in the party's identity also contained the seeds of the resistance movement's polarization. As we have seen with the PvdA in Chapter 3, communists, social democrats and Christians alike began to interpret the Cold War as the 'continuation of the Second World War with other means'.[395]

3. The Dutch government's Atlanticist outlook

We have seen that the Soviet Union interpreted the international situation as being divided in two irreconcilable camps from 1947 onwards. At the same time, the idea that the Soviet Union was an imperialist power intent on expanding its sphere of influence had taken hold in the minds of American policymakers. Europeans still faced severe economic troubles, and the Americans feared that this would make them more vulnerable for communist 'infection'. The Marshall Plan was designed as a method of reviving Europe economically and draw it closer to the Atlantic alliance. Although scholars do not agree on the economic impact of the Plan, it is clear that it helped Western Europe to choose for the 'West': all major parties, besides the communists, accepted the Plan, while the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe were instructed to refuse.[396] The US succeeded in splitting the European Left, through actively supporting social democratic parties and social democratic elements in trade unions. In a more crude way, American funding of anticommunist parties has probably contributed to the defeat of the Italian communists in the 1948 elections.[397] More importantly, Western European governments committed themselves to the idea of an American-led Western security bloc around 1947-1948, and gave up their attempts to maintain friendly bilateral relations with the Soviet Union.[398]

We have established before that for a few years after the war, the PvdA hoped that Europe could form a 'bridge' between the two superpowers. According to Paul Koedijk, this holds true for the Dutch government and public opinion as a whole: until 1947, it was thought that the Netherlands should avoid making a choice between the United States and the Soviet

[394] *HTK* 1947-1948 (19 March 1948) 1590.
[395] Jolande Withuis, *Na het kamp: vriendschap en politieke strijd* (Amsterdam, 2005) 415.
[396] William I. Hitchock, 'The Marshall Plan and the creation of the West', in: Melvyn P. Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the Cold War* Volume 1: Origins (Cambridge, 2012) 168.
[397] Hitchcock, 'The Marshall Plan', 170.
[398] For France and Italy, see: Boxhoorn, *The Cold War and the rift in governments,* 136, 200-201.

Union.[399] This conviction faded away during 1947, when the Marshall Plan and especially the communist response to the Plan persuaded many politicians and opinion leaders to take the side of the 'West'. When the perception that the Soviet Union formed an aggressive threat grew during 1947-1948, the Dutch government realized that the security of the Netherlands could best be safeguarded by Western European cooperation under the umbrella of American leadership. Perhaps British and American anticommunist propaganda[400] and American funding of the NVV[401] have played an encouraging role. But, as Duco Hellema has rightly pointed out, the Netherlands at the end of the 1940s was not the 'loyal ally' as it has often been portrayed, given that it desperately clung to its status as a colonial middle power. In Hellema's opinion, anticommunism compensated the loss of the Indies and justified the joining of the Atlantic bloc.[402] Similarly, it has been argued that widespread skepticism of American leadership and the existence of an 'Atlantic community' was only assuaged when people came to view the Cold War through the lens of human rights, as a battle between slavery and freedom.[403] So, in the Dutch case a morally laden anticommunism was used to overcome the reluctance to accept an Atlanticist outlook. An example of this fusion of ideological anticommunism, European collective-security thinking and Atlanticism was given by Van Der Goes van Naters, when he set out his view of the Treaty of Brussels, one month after the Czechoslovakian coup. Interestingly enough, the PvdA-spokesman argued that such a military treaty could only make sense if accompanied by ideological warfare

> "Het gaat thans Amerika maar om één ding, (...) het ijzeren gordijn mag niet de kust van de Oceaan bereiken! In belangrijke mate zal de strijd met ideologische wapens moeten worden gestreden. Aan de sociaal-zwakkeren zal blijvend iets beters moeten worden geboden dan het verstikkende totalitaire communisme. Dat 'iets', dat ik wil aanduiden als op de Christelijke cultuur geënte sociale of progressieve democratie, zal de geest van het verdrag van Brussel moeten stempelen, anders blijf het een dood ding."[404]

4. A) The consequences of the Czechoslovakian coup and the fear of fifth columns

[399] Koedijk, 'The Netherlands, the US', 598.
[400] Ger Verrips, 'De BVD en de CPN in de jaren 1948-1960', in: : Bob de Graaff, Cees Wiebes (eds.), *Hun crisis was de onze niet. Internationale crises en binnenlandse veiligheid 1945-1960* (Den Haag, 1994) 34.
[401] Koedijk, 'The Netherlands, the US', 600-601.
[402] Duco Hellema, *1956: de Nederlandse houding ten aanzien van de Hongaarse revolutie en de Suezcrisis* (Amsterdam 1990) 55-61, 85.
[403] Floribert Baudet, 'The ideological equivalent of the Atomic bomb. The Netherlands, Atlanticism and human rights in the early Cold War', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, 4 (2011) 277-278.
[404] *HTK* 1947-1948 (18 March 1948) 1561.

Dutch politicians reacted to the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, which was finalized on 25 February 1948, with great horror, as did a significant part of civil society. Before, the Soviet Union and local communists had already established rigidly Stalinist 'people's democracies' in Eastern European satellite states. The Czechoslovakian coup proved that a communist take-over could also occur in a country with a rich democratic tradition, and for some commentators the event was the definitive proof of a division between democrats and non-democrats, both in Europe and in the Netherlands.[405] Before the coup, the CPN had set the economic and social policies of Eastern European countries as an example for the Netherlands. Moreover, it had increasingly conformed to the anti-Marshall Plan line of the Soviet Union and the Cominform.[406] The events in Czechoslovakia were interpreted by Dutch communists as a victory of democracy at the expense of reactionary forces. Paul de Groot argued that "de kleur grijs is die van ezels", and supported the coup wholeheartedly.[407] Before, the CPN had maintained that each country possessed its own roadmap to socialism, in order to persuade others that it would not resort to revolutionary methods. However, the CPN's reaction to the coup seemed to imply that it saw the Czechoslovakian way as an example to follow in the Netherlands: "De mannen en vrouwen van Praag strijden ook voor onze vrijheid, hun vijanden zijn onze vijanden, hun overwinning is ook een overwinning van het Nederlandse werkende volk."[408]

The outburst of anticommunist anger that followed the Czechoslovakian coup changed the tone of the debate on communism in the Netherlands. More than before, politicians and commentators emphasized that Dutch communists could possibly be employed as a 'fifth column' by the Soviet Union. These communists were thought to be prepared to leak classified information to Moscow, to promote social unrest among the working class in order to destabilize Dutch society and economy, and to act as a front line in the case of a world conflict. The security agencies had already concluded that Dutch communists worked for the services of the Soviet Union by 1946.[409] In reality, the agencies constantly overestimated the post-war CPN's espionage activities; although the party received Soviet funding, this was mainly used to compensate for the deficits of *De Waarheid.*[410] Three days after the coup, and one day after the CPN had applauded the coup in the same venue, Koos Vorrink held a speech

[405] Koedijk, 'The Netherlands, the US', 599; Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties of Praag 1948', 48.
[406] Engelen, *De geschiedenis van de BVD,* 177.
[407] As cited in: Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties of Praag 1948', 57.
[408] 'Overwinning der democratie', *De Waarheid* (26 February 1948).
[409] Engelen, *De geschiedenis van de BVD,* 176.
[410] Ibidem, 267.

in the Concertgebouw, in which he called the CPN "de gedweeë napraters van Moskou, de vijfde colonne van het Bolsjewisme."[411] On 18 and 19 March, a debate in parliament on the Treaty of Brussels provided the chance for non-communist politicians to sketch the contours of the communist danger. Van der Goes van Naters said that the fifth-column activities of the CPN reminded him of those of the NSB.[412] Kortenhorst (KVP) branded the position of the CPN towards the Marshall Plan as 'treason'.[413] His Catholic colleague Sassen believed that Dutch communists would copy the Czechoslovakian method if they got the chance.[414] The CPN met a unified front of anticommunism, in spite of Wagenaar's and Jan Hoogcarspel's references to the party's resistance performance.[415] The non-communist bloc decided to remove communist representatives from the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, a feat it would later repeat for the defense, Indonesian affairs and trade committees. The non-communist fractions felt that by doing so they made sure that the Soviet Union would not be able to acquire sensitive information about these subjects.

B) Anticommunist measures and the general elections

The PvdA and the KVP discussed in their own ranks what measures could be taken against the Dutch communists in the wake of the Czech coup. It was clear to the social democrats that the communists formed a fifth column and that a sharp demarcation from them was required. The leadership especially worried about the communist use of 'front organizations', so it should be made clear that cooperation with these organizations was out of the question.[416] The PvdA-executive agreed that the communists should be isolated as much as possible in representative bodies. There was also agreement on the undesirability of a party ban.[417] Still, some board members indicated that they were prepared to take far-ranging measures against the communists. Johan Scheps proposed to place everyone outside of the law who refused to commit to a 'democratic point of view.'[418] De Kadt and Goedhart agreed, for in the atmosphere of a coming world conflict one should not be 'too correct'.[419] Vorrink spurred these men to maintain their calm, because "zo lang men een partij niet verbiedt, moet men

[411] 'Alarm in Praag. Redevoeringen gehouden te Amsterdam' (28 February 1948), *Archief KVP* 4216.
[412] *HTK* 1947-1948 (18 March 1948) 1558.
[413] *HTK* 1947-1948 (19 March 1948) 1587.
[414] *HTK* 1947-1948 (19 March 1948) 1577.
[415] *HTK* 1947-1948 (19 March 1948) 1575, 1580.
[416] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (28 February 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[417] Ibidem.
[418] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (15 March 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[419] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (21 May 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.

met open vizier blijven strijden."[420] Vorrink's influence is reflected in the party's resolution issued shortly after the Czech coup, which stated that measures aimed at limiting the communists' influence should not violate the existing rules.[421] The PvdA seems to have struggled more than any other party with the dilemma that belongs to the 'aggressive democracy' that Scheps, De Kadt and Goedhart advocated; that by erecting measures to defend democracy against perceived anti-democrats, one threatens to undermine the basic freedoms that form the very cornerstones of the democratic order.[422]

In late February and March 1948, the KVP-board received piles of letters of their local rank and file asking the government to initiate anticommunist measures.[423] Apparently, many of the local KVP-departments agreed with party chairman Jan Andriessen, who said that the danger of communism in the Netherlands could be compared to the danger of communism in the East.[424] A resolution was accepted at party council meeting on 13 March, which called on the government to "door wettelijke maatregelen de openbare veiligheid ook verder te waarborgen, met kracht te waken tegen elke intimidatie en terreur en te komen tot afdoende veiligstelling der democratische orde en vrijheden.*"*[425] Romme repeated to Beel his idea of a constitutional revision that would limit freedom of speech and organization, and proposed a range of other anticommunist measures, including the extension of the police corps, a civil servant ban, and a ban on public CPN-propaganda.[426]

The government refused to go along with most of the wild policies that Romme advocated. It did not want to give anticommunist policy priority, possibly influenced by a secret service-report that argued that the CPN did not pose a clear threat to the political stability of the Dutch state.[427] Moreover, disagreements between ministers in the Beel- and Drees I (1948-1951)-administrations about specific measures hampered a clear governmental point of view on the fight against communism.[428] Still, at some points the government did yield for the

[420] Ibidem.
[421] 'Verklaring behorende bij de notulen van de vergadering van het Partijbestuur' (15 March 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[422] For more on 'agressive', or 'militant' democracy read: Jan-Werner Müller, 'Militant Democracy', in: Michel Rosenfeld, András Sajó (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Constitutional Law* (Nov 2012), http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199578610.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199578610-e-62; Markus Thiel, 'Comparative Aspects', in: Markus Thiel (ed.), *The 'Militant Democracy' Principle in Modern Democracies* (Farnham, Burlington, 2009) 379-424.
[423] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (19 March 1948), *Archief KVP* 148.
[424] 'Notulen vergadering partijraad' (13 March 1948), *Archief KVP* 43.
[425] 'Resolutie vergadering partijraad' (13 March 1948), *Archief KVP* 43.
[426] Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties of Praag 1948', 58.
[427] Ibidem, 56-59.
[428] Hans Daalder, Jelle Gaemers, *Gedreven en behoedzaam. Willem Drees 1886-1988.* 4: Premier en elder statesman. De jaren 1948-1988 (Amsterdam 2014) 168.

pressure of its political supporters, as happened when prime minister Beel offered parliament the opportunity to propose the implementation of the 'civil state of emergency' in the constitution. The defendants of this bill argued that it was as a general provision in the case of major threats, but the CPN ànd VVD-representative Vonk interpreted it as a 'law of convenience', directed against the communists.[429] Although Vonk unsuccessfully submitted an amendment in order to endow the law revision with more guarantees against arbitrary will, the VVD did eventually support the measure, because it agreed with the law's intention.[430] The tension between anticommunist 'law of convenience' and impartial law favoring the common good remained unresolved when the possibility of interim discharging communist aldermen was debated. The opposition argued against this plan of the KVP and the PvdA, because it was deemed a ploy to rapidly get rid of some communist aldermen in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and various Northern towns. CHU-representative Krol even argued that it opposed his democratic convictions.[431] The opposition's proposal to introduce the criterion of 'revolutionary conviction' as a ground for discharging aldermen was rejected by PvdA-representatives, who feared, with the 1930s in the back of their heads, that this potentially might be used against social democrats.[432] So, the law passed and was put in practice in Amsterdam as we have seen in chapter 3, but not with the support of a broad anticommunist bloc. We can infer from the liberals' and protestants' intransigence that although they agreed with the government parties on the irreconcilability of communism with national values, they did not feel the sudden need for carelessly prepared, law-based repression of the CPN.

The decision to ban the communists from broadcasting on public radio was also accepted with criticism, especially from Van Der Goes van Naters. A proposal that would have made it possible to forbid certain movies from being broadcasted in private gatherings, did not pass; again, it was primarily the PvdA that joined the communists in opposing the proposal.[433] The social democrats generally supported measures that hit the communists specifically, but were wary of restrictions on general freedoms of expression. Other measures were more important as a proof of the governments' anticommunist stance than because of their practical implications. In 1948, the Beel-administration announced it would revive the civil servant ban, but it took until 1952 for the plan to pass parliament.[434] The establishment of a reserve

[429] *HTK* 1947-1948 (14 May 1948) 1727.
[430] *HTK* 1947-1948 (14 May 1948) 1726.
[431] *HTK* 1947-1948 (10 June 1948) 1874.
[432] De Liagre Böhl, 'Koude Oorlog in Amsterdam', 49-50.
[433] Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties of Praag 1948', 61, 78.
[434] Engelen, *De geschiedenis van de BVD,* 183-204.

police corps was a way of neutralizing right-wing anticommunists and former resistance fighters, because they were not given sufficient resources to give the corps any meaningful function.[435]

So the anticommunist hysteria of early 1948 did eventually not propel the Beel-government to dramatically curb the communists' freedom by legal measures. The CPN was allowed to continue its political existence, although its activities were frustrated by more informal measures, like local propaganda bans, exclusion from various parliamentary committees, and infiltration by the secret services. The noise that the KVP and the PvdA made during 1948 can, as M.D. Boogaarts has noted, better be explained with regard to the general election of 1948, and the objective of both parties to diminish the CPN's popularity among the working class.[436] Anticommunism pervaded the electoral campaign of both parties. The PvdA preached the irreconcilable contradiction between democracy and dictatorship, and praised itself as the foremost defender of the first.[437] "Daarom ook wil de Partij van de Arbeid, dat een actieve Nederlandse democratie de invloed der agenten van Moskou te niet doet, allereerst door een radicale politiek van zichzelf uitbreidende welvaart voor alle bevolkingsgroepen."[438] The first point of the KPV's election program was to defend Western Europe against every internal or external attack.[439] The party presented itself as the most consistent combatant of communism: "de KVP bestrijdt het communisme niet, omdat het haar bestrijdt. Maar zij bestrijdt de mensonwaardige vergissing van het Communisme, om de Communisten er zelf van te bevrijden."[440] In contrast, there was hardly any sign of Cold War-rhetoric in the election programs of the VVD, ARP and CHU.[441] Overall, it seems that the events of early 1948 did not change the position of the right-wing towards the CPN, because it had always practiced politics on the belief that communism was irreconcilable with Christian-national values, and that communists should therefore be excluded from governance. As Jan Schouten (ARP) said in March 1948: "Ons standpunt was steeds duidelijk (…) Wij behoeven ons volk niet duidelijk te maken, dat we tegen het communisme gekant zijn."[442] Ultimately,

[435] Bogaarts, 'De Nederlandse reacties of Praag 1948', 65-70.
[436] Bogaarts, *De periode van het kabinet-Beel* C*,* 1921.
[437] Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!,* 76.
[438] 'Verkiezingsprogram PvdA' (1948), http://dnpp.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/root/programmas/Verkiezingsprogramma/1948/ (10 June 2015).
[439] 'Verkiezingsmanifest KVP' (1948), http://dnpp.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/root/programmas/Verkiezingsprogramma/1948/ (10 June 2015).
[440] 'Election pamphlet (1948)', as cited in: Bornewasser, *De Katholieke Volkspartij,* 200.
[441] 'Program van actie voor de verkiezingen ARP', 'Urgentieprogram CHU', 'Urgentieprogram VVD', http://dnpp.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/root/programmas/Verkiezingsprogramma/1948/ (10 June 2015).
[442] 'Notulen vergadering Centraal Comité' (23 March 1948), *Archief ARP* 4.

the CPN lost two seats in the elections (7,7% of the votes). This was felt by the non-communist parties as a great relief.[443]

Accordingly, the importance of the reactions to the Czech coup and the election-influenced wave of anticommunism in early 1948 lies in the fact that it solidified the existence of 'two camps' in the discourse of Dutch politics. The Netherlands was now divided in 'us' (democrats/Christians/patriots) and 'them' (anti-democrats/atheists/traitors). The major parties disagreed on what could be done to contain the danger of 'them', apart from making sure that they could not pass state secrets to the Soviet Union, but the existence of a 'them' alone allowed that the idea of a 'Dutch Cold War' could take hold. As we have seen, the Dutch Cold War was more a matter of an anticommunist political culture and societal isolation than of political repression. Carl Romme has given the most eloquent example of this kind of divisionary rhetoric:

> "In het Nederlandse volk gaapt één onoverbrugbare kloof: tussen de belijders van het communisme enerzijds en de gehele overige bevolking aan de andere kant. Wij hebben geen enkele behoefte, deze kloof niet zo onoverbrugbaar te houden als zij thans is. Integendeel, hoe dieper en hoe wijder zij in alle naaktheid en duidelijkheid gaapt, hoe liever het ons is, met, zo voeg ik er aan toe, een bruggetje voor éénrichtingsverkeer voor dolende lieden van de overkant, voor wie de ogen opengaan, dat de natie zich alleen aan deze zijde bevindt."[444]

5. *The CPN's sectarianism*

In the previous section we have seen how the idea of a Cold War took hold in the minds of non-communist politicians. But how did this work for the communists? Although the chances for a communist breakthrough seemed to become smaller after the CPN's exclusion from government in 1946 and the end of coalition governments all over Europe in 1947, Paul de Groot continued to harbor illusions about an impending economic crisis that would radicalize the Dutch working class and lead to a communist assumption of power 'within ten years'.[445] Meanwhile, the number of party members stabilized around 50.000, half of what De Groot had envisioned. The number of Waarheid-readers declined while the paper increasingly

[443] 'Notulen vergadering partijbestuur' (10 July 1948), *Archief PvdA* 22.
[444] 'Notulen vergadering partijraad' (13 March 1948), *Archief KVP* 43.
[445] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 285.

became a CPN-mouthpiece, from 300.000 to around 159.000 in 1948.[446] These disappointing developments were already known to the party leadership at the end of 1946, but it continued to espouse enthusiastic messages about the future of communism in the Netherlands.[447]

Crucial is that in 1947, disappointment with the meager results of the CPN's national-front strategy fell together with a change in the Soviet Union's strategy. In late 1947, the CPN unmistakably chose to give up its national-front attempts and adopt the vocabulary of the Cominform. Paul de Groot told his audience at the Christmas party congress "Als gevolg van deze naoorlogse politiek van het Amerikaanse financierskapitaal is thans de wereld in twee kampen verdeeld".[448] The communist, 'democratic' camp, with the Soviet Union as its leader, had to pick up the battle against capitalism by confronting 'power' with 'power'.[449] In this way, the CPN and the international communist movement returned to the traditional Marxist-Leninist world view of irreconcilable conflict between the forces of reaction and progress, which would inevitably result in the victory of world communism.[450] The role of the CPN in this fight was to prevent America from making the Netherlands a bulwark in its imperialist quest.[451] Although the party still claimed to defend the independence of the Netherlands, its outlook became more internationalist, exemplified by the common statement condemning the Treaty of Brussels, that the CPN had drafted with the communist parties of the Benelux, France and Britain.[452] De Groot told the CPN-board revealingly: "Er moet een eind komen aan de wanordelijke toestand, dat iedere communistische partij op zijn eigen houtje opereert."[453]

At the moment that a communist party adopts a new course, it usually involves a round of self-criticism and condemnation of past mistakes. This holds true for the CPN in 1947-1948 as well. Under the leadership of Paul de Groot, the CPN began to argue that its former ideas about a peaceful, national road to socialism on the basis of cooperation with progressive bourgeois forces had been an illusion.[454] De Groot traced the roots of this illusion to the relation between communists and non-communists in the left section of the resistance. The CPN had not understood that "hun samenwerking met de Communisten had dan ook

[446] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 231-234; G. Voerman, J. Wormer, 'De CPN in cijfers', 164.
[447] 'Verslag partijwerk door Jan Schalker op partijconferentie' (23-25 November 1946), *Archief CPN* 805.
[448] Paul de Groot, *Voor een zelfstandig, democratisch en welvarend Nederland. Rede uitgesproken op het Kerstcongres 1947* (Amsterdam 1947) 5.
[449] 'Rede de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering' (20 May 1948), *Archief CPN* 277.
[450] Verrips, *Dwars, duivels en dromend,* 258.
[451] 'Rede de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering' (20 May 1948), *Archief CPN* 277.
[452] 'Verklaring van de communistische partijen van Frankrijk, Groot-Brittannië, België, Nederland en Luxemburg (1948), *Archief CPN* 361.
[453] 'Rede de Groot, partijbestuursvergadering (9 January 1948), *Archief CPN* 276.
[454] 'Resolutie partijbestuur (aangenomen na juliverkiezingen in 1948)', *Archief CPN* 277.

voornamelijk ten doel deze op het ogenblik der bevrijding de handen te binden, en de plaats warm te houden waar de vertegenwoordigers van de Koninklijke, Unilever, Philips en andere geldmachten, weer op konden gaan zitten."[455] De Groot feared that non-communist contacts from the resistance were actually spying on the CPN, and urged his party to "relaties uit de illegaliteit met personen, waarvan de trouw niet volledig is gebleken, te verbreken."[456] Similarly, De Groot campaigned against 'pseudo-leftist figures' and bridge-building intellectuals, both non-communists (Buskes, Van Heuven Goedhart) and Marxists (Romein, the editors of *De Vrije Katheder* and *De Vlam).* The background for this campaign might, as Ger Harmsen, a Marxist specialist on the workers' movement, explains, be found in De Groot's Stalinist paranoia of Trotskyite opposition.[457]

The CPN's heightened sectarianism caused victims within its highest ranks. De Groot had neutralized the influence of Van Exter and Goulooze in the aftermath of the 1945 July Conference, but the other opposition leader Antoon Koejemans had managed to retain his position in the party board and as main editor of *De Waarheid.* Koejemans was the symbol of the CPN's cooperative attitude. During the war, Koejemans had decided that it would be his mission to establish a conversation between communism and other ideologies. "Want verder, verder, over de grenzen van rivieren en inundaties heen, over de grenzen heen van politiek en geloof, naar protestantse, katholieke en sociaal-democratische handen tast je, om ze te grijpen, en met elkaar in vaste greep voorwaarts te gaan."[458] Although he did not prevent *De Waarheid* from becoming a CPN-mouthpiece, Koejemans prided himself on the recurring section 'Het gesprek', in which *De Waarheid* tried to find common ground with non-communist ideologies.[459] He also enjoyed personal contact with non-communists, as during a trip with the federation of Dutch journalists to the US, where he was the room-mate of Henk van Randwijk.[460] On 28 May 1947, Koejemans held a discussion with J.J. Buskes in the Concertgebouw for a large audience. While Buskes focused on the incompatability of Christianity and communism due to the latter's all-encompassing Marxist-Leninist view or

[455] De Groot, *Voor een zelfstandig, democratisch en welvarend Nederland,* 20.
[456] 'Verslag partijbestuur voor partijcongres' (1 November 1947), *Archief Paul de Groot* 29.
[457] Harmsen, *Nederlands kommunisme,* 31.
[458] Koejemans, *Van 'ja' tot 'amen',* 97.
[459] Ibidem, 152. As an example serves the article 'Het gesprek voortgezet' (8 November 1945), in which Koejemans encouraged the social democratic newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* to "de ramen open te zetten zodat veel oud zeer kan wegtrekken, om voor een frissere atmosfeer plaats te maken. Men kan beginnen het wantrouwen, dat wederzijds bestaat, te verminderen, door de polemiek op een hoger plan van wederzijds begrip en waardering te brengen."
[460] Koejemans, *Van 'ja' tot 'amen',* 141-144, 156-158

life, Koejemans asserted that communists and Christians shared many values and goals.[461] In fact, while Buskes saw more in the PvdA's socialism, there were a few Christian preachers who agreed with Koejemans, like dr. J.L Snethlage, who argued that Christians could learn from Soviet-style socialism how a new, better world could be achieved through human efforts.[462] De Groot decided to put an end to Koejemans' idiosyncratic behavior in November 1947; first, he appointed a new main editor and made sure that Koejemans' was not re-elected as CPN-board member. Then, Koejemans was fired at *De Waarheid.* According to the argumentation of the CPN-leadership, Koejemans had been to responsive to persons like Buskes and Van Randwijk, and had deviated from the editorial guidelines the leadership had set.[463]

We have to remember that party discipline and hierarchical organization had always been central to the CPN's mode of operation. When the party was rebuilt after the war, the leadership immediately focused on ideological unity and 'democratic centralism'. A 1945 guideline for the organisation of the party said: "De Communistische Partij, die zich ten doel stelt de arbeidersklasse naar een overwinning (…) te voeren, kan beschouwd worden als een leger en zoals in een leger de discipline de voorwaarde is om een slag te winnen, is ook in de partij discipline het hoogste gebod."[464] During 1947-1948, a heightened sense of paranoia was added to this focus on party discipline, which resulted in a quite intense form of sectarianism. The rise of anticommunism played a significant role in this development. The CPN-leadership began to see Trotskyite conspirators everywhere; in the PvdA, *Het Parool*, *De Vlam* and within the trade unions.[465] Moreover, it suspected – not without justification – that the security agencies continuously attempted to infiltrate the party.[466] The CPN began to prepare for a possible illegal existence from 1947 onwards, and especially after the 'anticommunist pogrom spirit' (term of the CPN[467]) erupted in early 1948. The party attempted to keep its member administration at private homes, burned archival material and preserved the anonymity of members who were not yet publically known.[468] Apparently, the anticommunist measures of the government were interpreted as indications of an upcoming party ban. The combination of a heightened anticommunist attitude among the general population, the

[461] *Christendom en communisme, gesprek tussen Ds. J.J. Buskes en A.J. Koejemans* (Amsterdam, 1947).
[462] J.L. Snethlage, *Christendom en de nieuwe wereld* (Amsterdam, 1946) 23.
[463] Stutje, *De man die de weg wees,* 286.
[464] 'Handleiding voor de organisatie, bestemd voor een zitting van de partijraad' (1945), *Archief CPN* 271.
[465] 'Resolutie van het Partijbestuur der CPN (De Waarheid) (December 1948), *Archief CPN* 277.
[466] Engelen, *De geschiedenis van de BVD,* 177.
[467] 'Brief van Partijbestuur aan besturen, leden en vrienden der partij' (26 July 1948), *Archief CPN* 277.
[468] Engelen, *De geschiedenis van de BVD*, 253-254.

difficulties of acquiring a job in government or business, and the increasing sectarianism of the CPN led to the social isolation of many Dutch communists. The party lost touch with the people it claimed to represent, and its politics became increasingly detached from social reality.[469]

Conclusion

The Cold War was not simply an international phenomena that was 'imposed' on the Netherlands. Of course, the growth of hostility between the two superpowers and the belief of both sides that the world was to be divided in two camps forms the core of the conflict between Dutch communists and non-communists. But in contrast to Donald Sassoon's argument that communists experienced the start of the Cold War as 'events imposed on them from the outside'[470], the Dutch Cold War was to a high degree the result of domestic processes. The post-war normalization of politics, the fear of left-wing radicalism and the historical anticommunism of the major parties formed the necessary basis, because these factors determined that the communist movement, notwithstanding its national-front strategy, was viewed with suspicion by the majority of the Dutch elite, just as during the 1930s. Still, the idea of Dutch society being divided in two irreconcilable camps could only take hold because of the government's Atlanticist outlook and the CPN's sectarianism. The dynamics of 1948, with the anticommunist hysteria and fear of fifth columns during an election period, accelerated the process and solidified the Dutch Cold War. Attempts of cooperation between communists and non-communists died out, and only a small part of the intellectual elite without political influence remained committed to find a 'Third Way' between the two camps. So, the marginalization of Dutch communism was not a 'natural' process, but for a great part the result of political parties' strategies, the dynamics of elections, and the power struggles inherent to transition politics.

[469] Verrips, 'De BVD en de CPN', 45.
[470] Sassoon, 'The rise and fall', 168.

Conclusion

Researching the story of post-war Dutch communism can make one feel a bit melancholic. After all, it took only a couple of years for the CPN to transform from a hopeful resistance force, bent on decisively changing Dutch society, into the isolated political movement that we know from the 1950s, seemingly having lost touch with social reality, and its activities hampered by bitter party splits and excommunications. Still, for a historian it is mostly a fascinating subject, for there we multiple processes simultaneously going on; the development of this movement was influenced by the interplay of decades-long continuities, wartime changes and the dynamics of transition politics, and by the connection between national and international events. In this conclusion I will evaluate the key factors that determined the results of the CPN's national-front strategy and the communists' ultimate marginalization.

Pre-war legacies

Although scholars who have solely zoomed in on the transition period have authored some very interesting monographs[471], it is not very useful to interpret 1945 as some kind of a 'year zero', or only as an outcome of wartime developments.[472] In the context of Dutch communism, two 'legacies' of its pre-1941 position troubled the reception of the CPN's national-front strategy in the reconstruction period. First, the fundaments of the political elites' widespread anticommunism remained in place: a belief that communism was the antipode of bourgeois-conservative or Christian-national values, a fear of left-wing radicalism and a distrust of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's war contribution and the CPN's 'national turn' may have shortly quieted these fears, but they were still existed in the background. Second, non-communists had already experienced a communist 'double shift' from the sectarian third period, to the anti-fascist popular-front era, to the anti-imperialist support of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. In these different periods, the CPN espoused different messages about how it thought about the nation, the Soviet Union, parliamentary democracy and the possibilities for cooperation with non-communists. So, before 1941 the position of communism within the Dutch political system was already severely troubled by doubts about the CPN's loyalty and the real motives behind the party's rhetoric. Especially the relationship

[471] In the Dutch context, read: Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek;* De Liagre Böhl, Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam.* For Belgium, Conway, *The sorrows of Belgium* is very insightful. For a more anecdote-wise, international approach, see: Keith Lowe, *Savage continent: Europe in the aftermath of World War II* (London, 2012) and Ian Buruma, *Year zero: a history of 1945* (London, 2013).

[472] For the same point, read: Tony Judt, 'Preface', in: István Deák, Jan T. Gross, Tony Judt (eds.), *The politics of retribution in Europe: World War II and its aftermath* (New Jersey, 2000) xi.

with the social democrats and the NVV never really gained ground in the post-war period, because of the deep suspicion the CPN's behavior during the 1930s had created and the particular development of the SDAP towards moderatism, with the 'people's party' PvdA as ultimate achievement. Here and elsewhere the CPN's 'national turn' was often answered with a 'wait and see'-attitude. Only a minority of intellectuals and political commentators took the communists' words for granted; some of these simply continued their belief in a bundling of progressives they had espoused in the *Comité van Waakzaamheid* before the war. Here was a small, but nevertheless existing, basis for post-war cooperation between communists and non-communists.

Wartime relations and transition politics

If we only add up the 'restoration' of the old political divisions after 1945 to the pre-war anticommunist legacy, we could arrive at a similar conclusion as Gerrit Voerman, who argued that the efforts of the CPN to avert a return to its isolated position had run aground, because "the traditional polarization of the Dutch political system had proved to be too tough and the traditional anticommunism too strong."[473] But in this thesis, I have attempted to prove that there was more going on. In 1945, no one could foresee the future domestic and international power relations, and this is the basic reason why the exclusion of the communists was not a foregone conclusion. The CPN's resistance record and its moderate and 'national' reconstruction-rhetoric could very well be interpreted as indications of a new kind of communist politics, and the impressive support around the *Waarheid*-movement as a presage of durable electoral strength. On these grounds, some politicians and intellectuals gave the CPN the benefit of the doubt, or they were at least willing to profess moderate cooperation for pragmatic reasons. Moreover, the Cold War had not taken shape yet; Western countries attempted to maintain friendly relations with the Soviet Union, so the 'agents of Moscow'-argument against the CPN was not yet en vogue.

For the 1944-1948 reconstruction period, we can distinguish four different levels of interaction with communists by non-communists. First, there were politicians and intellectuals whose firm anticommunist outlook had not changed on the grounds of of the CPN's national-front strategy, and who intended to finish all attempts of cooperation if they got the means to do so. This kind of interaction can be found in the KVP, and among PvdA-members like Frans Goedhart, Sal Tas and Jacques de Kadt. In a much less virulent way, liberal and

[473] Voerman, 'A drama in three acts', 106.

protestant party leaders belonged to this group as well, because they continued to base their politics on the fundamental irreconcilability of communism with Christian-national values. The second group consists of those who tolerated limited cooperation with the communists, as long as it benefited their own goals. Here we can think of the PvdA-leadership, with Drees as an excellent example, the Amsterdam board of aldermen and the NVV-leaders. Third, there were intellectuals and some PvdA-politicans who were convinced that the times had changed, that communism was here to stay and that the CPN might become a truly 'national' political force. They saw the benefits of a progressive bloc in order to achieve wartime ideals of an independent Indonesia, an expansion of democracy and radical economic reforms based on social justice. Moreover, they placed their hopes on a continued global cooperation with an increasingly democratic Soviet Union. Most of the people involved in the VNI and in the broader scene of left-wing intellectuals belonged to this group, among which Henk van Randwijk, Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart and Gerald Slotemaker de Bruïne. Fourth, there were the true fellow-travellers, who believed that progress lay in the hands of the Soviet Union, and who were therefore inclined to cooperate with CPN-members, although they were usually no party members themselves. Here we can think of Jan and Annie Romein, or people involved in the VVSU.

The CPN did not succeed in attaining many influential political and administrative posts in the transition period, partly through efforts of the government-in-exile, the MG and other political parties before and right after the liberation, partly because of tactical mistakes of their own. During the period of political reconstruction, it seems that the groups and persons who 'won' the power struggle akin to transition politics, mostly belonged to the first two camps we analyzed in the previous section. They were the ones who obtained government positions and could set the political agenda, not in the least because they neutralized the resistance as a political force. We could interpret this as a first defeat of the CPN, because it largely based its power claims on the communist movement's resistance credentials. Still, until 1947-1948, the most ardent anticommunists did not deem the circumstances favorable enough to unleash a campaign against the legitimacy of communist political participation. As a result, the political elites mainly acted on the basis of a logic of pragmatic toleration. The CPN was accepted as a legitimate participant as long as it behaved within two broad limits. First, the party was pressured to accept the consequence of going 'national'; the CPN would have to practice politics independent from the instructions of interests of Moscow. This limit got more important at the moment the international Cold War began to took hold. Second, the CPN was told to accept the 'democratic rules of play'. In the particular context of the mid-

1940s, this meant that it should conform to the 'reconstruction logic' and refrain from supporting workers' unrest, and that it would explicitly put the value of Western European parliamentarism above Eastern-style dictatorships, or Indonesian revolutionary methods. Between 1945 and 1947, the CPN largely conformed to these limits. Accordingly, there were chances for communist participation in national politics, but these chances were limited: left-wing unity in politics and the trade unions was an illusion, and government participation was out of the question from 1946 onwards. Moreover, the ardent anticommunist camp gained influence at every moment the communists seemed to transgress the limits; every incident was seen as an attack on the social and political order.

Solidification

In 1947, the CPN-leadership came to realize that the 'pragmatic toleration' the communist movement had achieved on the basis of its national-front strategy did not give the party as much influence it had long hoped for – and maybe even expected. Although the CPN had earned some successes at the 'middle level' of municipalities and intellectual organizations, it was shunned from participating at the 'high level' of the national government, it had failed to bring about a united worker's party and a united trade union, and had not rallied enough people around its cause to be able to enforce changes on its own. In the same year, coalition governments broke down in Western Europe and due to growing disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union a 'two camps'-mindset gradually began to take hold on both sides. So the deterioration of the international atmosphere and the new 'two camps'-strategy of the Soviet Union fell together with the CPN's disillusionment; this was the context for the CPN's embrace of the Cominform's 'two camps'-thesis. In 1947-1948, the CPN willingly began to override all of the limits the elites had set, by unequivocally conforming to the Moscow line, supporting undemocratic coups in Eastern Europe and revolutionary movements in Indonesia, and instigating strikes and – in the eyes of other parties – Trojan horse-like *Welvaartscomités.* This development also involved the deliberate cessation of all cooperation with critical PvdA-members and former resistance figures and the neutralization of CPN-members who gave a platform to these 'Trotskyite conspirators'.

In sum, the CPN significantly contributed to the emergence of the Dutch Cold War and its own marginalization. For the other camp, the main responsibility has to be accorded to the KVP and the PvdA and the governments these parties dominated. Under the pressure of a swiftly growing superpower-rivalry and war experience-based disgust of the repressive Eastern European state systems, the government had already came to accept by 1947 that a

Western European-American alliance would be the best guarantee for Dutch national security against the perceived threat from the East. At the moment the political elite saw the CPN ostensibly overriding the 'democratic' limits, the stage was set for the unrestrained release of historical anticommunism, and Catholic and social democratic politicians found the right trigger in the context of the Czechoslovakian coup and the 1948 general elections. The widespread anger and suspicion that erupted during early 1948 meant that the CPN was not perceived as a legitimate political participant anymore, but as a 'pathological' outlier and a possible fifth column in the service of the Soviet enemy. As a consequence, the importance of the anticommunist campaign of 1948 lies not in the actual measures taken against the communists, but in the communist-unfriendly political culture it reinforced.

Relevance for academic debate

So, in essence, the CPN's national-front policy and wartime developments had shaped an environment which was conducive to the pragmatic acceptance of the CPN in the political arena, although the result of the Dutch transition power struggles limited the party's influence and possibility to maneuver. However, the swift changes in international diplomacy, the CPN's and the government's acceptance of 'two camps'-logic, and the dynamics of 1948 triggered pre-war suspicions of communism and benefited those politicians and intellectuals who preached marginalization of the communists above those who favored cooperation. Therefore, the fate of the Dutch communists was not simply a result of the 'restoration' of pre-war political divisions and anticommunism[474], or of the 'imposition' of the international Cold War on the Dutch politics[475], which have been two of the most common interpretations in the academic debate; instead, the Dutch Cold War was to a high degree made in the context of transition politics and power struggles. In this way, my thesis works as an extension of Nele Beyens' focus on the contingencies in the power struggles in the period around the liberation[476], and as a confirmation of Norman M. Naimark's argument that "strike movements, electoral struggles, street clashes, and the initiatives of political parties, personalities and diplomats (…) have to be figured into the calculus of postwar European

[474] This kind of reasoning can be found in Voerman, 'A drama in three acts'; De Liagre Böhl, 'De rode beer in de polder' (although the same author directs more attention to the dynamics of transition politics in later works, most notably *De bevrijding van Amsterdam).* For the Belgian case, read: Els Witte, 'Aspecten van naoorlogse politiek', in: Els Witte, Jean-Claude Burgelman, Patrick Stouthuysen, *Tussen restauratie en vernieuwing: aspecten van de Belgische naoorlogse politiek (1944-1950)* 33-35, 51-52.

[475] This is a simplified version of the arguments used by Bleich, van Weezel, *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië!*; Sassoon, 'The rise and fall'.

[476] Beyens, *Overgangspolitiek,* 12-14.

developments."[477] The outcome of the particular power struggle researched for this thesis – the marginalization of the CPN – was in no way already determined in 1945; especially between 1945 and 1947 there was a remarkable openness in the political and intellectual arena, which offered genuine chances for communist participation. Romme, De Kadt and others who aimed for the isolation of the communists had to undertake great efforts to achieve this, and could only succeed at the moment the Dutch communists began to disregard the particular limits of post-war Dutch democracy.

Tentative comparative conclusions

Although the fate of the communist' parties in other Western European countries, and the role of the Soviet Union in determining the course of international communism, have in this thesis mainly been analyzed to sketch the context of Dutch events, some tentative comparative conclusions can be drawn. First, it seems that the role of the Soviet Union in the construction of the communist parties' national-front strategy has been greater in France and Italy than in Belgium in the Netherlands, because of the greater geopolitical significance of the former countries and because the leaders of the PCF and PCI had spent the war in Moscow, where they had direct contact with Stalin and Dimitrov. Similarly, the French and Italian communist parties were, via their involvement in the Cominform, more explicitly pressured to conform to Zhdanov 'two camps'-reasoning. Still, as a second conclusion, the influence of the Soviet Union on Western communist parties in the transition period should not be overestimated. It seems that between 1944 and 1947, Western European communists acted relatively independent from Moscow guidelines, having the freedom to implement the national-front strategy on the basis of their own insights. The breakdown of the coalition governments in early 1947, and the communist parties' increasing assertiveness and disillusionment with the results of the national-front strategy were not so much a *consequence* of a return to the Soviet-line, as they were a *reason* to give up the 'national' line and place Soviet interests first. Here was again a 'turn' of the international communist movement on the basis of disillusionment with the former strategy and the emergence of a new foe (in this case the US), just like with the multiple turns during the 1930s. Third, it appears that the elites of Belgium, Italy and France went further in accepting the communists than the Dutch elite, by admitting them to the national government. In the case of France and Italy the obvious explanation is the greater popularity of the communist parties among the electorate, but in general it might be related to

[477] Naimark, 'Stalin and Europe', 55.

the way transition politics played out in those countries, because there are no signs that historical anticommunism was less widespread in Belgium, Italy and France compared to the Netherlands. Specifically, there might be a connection to the greater troubles these countries experienced with neutralizing the resistance movement, or with the realization of the French and Belgian social democratic parties that the communists could better be contained if they were in the government.[478] More research needs to be done to the international communist movement in the period of European political reconstruction, and to comparative aspects of post-war European political systems in order to assess these tentative conclusions on the basis of substantial source material.

[478] The Italian social democrats were hardly less radical than the PCI and had a very different past compared to other Western European social democratic parties, because it was had been banned for around 20 years.

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