

## The Communist Party of the Netherlands and the Comintern

### 1. The SDP

In the Netherlands, as in other countries, the Russian October-Revolution aroused a great deal of enthusiasm among the left-wing Social Democrats, most of whom were members of the small Social Democrat Party (*Sociaal-Democratische Partij*; SDP).<sup>1</sup> During its party congress of November 16th and 17th, 1918, the SDP demonstrated its solidarity with the Bolsheviks by changing its name to The Communist Party in the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij in Nederland*; CPN).<sup>2</sup> The CPN, which later changed its name in Communist Party Holland (*Communistische Partij Holland*; CPH), decided to participate in the First Congress of the Communist International.

The founding of the SDP was the result of years of conflict within the Social Democrat Labour Party (*Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij*; SDAP) between revolutionary Marxists and those who supported a revisionist course.<sup>3</sup> In 1907, the Marxists David Wijnkoop, Willem van Ravesteyn, and Jan Ceton started the weekly *De Tribune* (The Tribune). Even though in the first issue the editors stated that *De Tribune* was not meant to be a polemic against party organs, the paper was soon full of criticism of SDAP policy.<sup>4</sup> This led to the convocation of a special congress in Deventer, in February 1909. The editors' refusal to follow up on the congress decision to discontinue *De Tribune* brought about their expulsion. On March 14, 1909, with 400 voluntarily seceded party members, they founded the SDP. The SDP took over the SDAP's initial program unchanged.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the SDAP's opposition, the SDP succeeded in being admitted to the Second International. Lenin, whom Wijnkoop

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<sup>1</sup> Cor Boet, et al., *Van bron tot boek. Apparaat voor de geschiedschrijving van het communisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1986), lists all the communist sources and literature relating to the history of Dutch Communism up to 1985. These sources consist primarily of printed material such as periodicals and pamphlets. Only little archive material has been saved covering the period up to 1945. Much more material on the CPN can be found among the archives of the Dutch and German police, of state departments and departments of defence, of employers, and of other Dutch labour movement organizations. This material is not included in *Van bron tot boek*. As for the Comintern archive, only material found in The Netherlands is included. The CPN hopes to obtain photocopies or microfilms of all pertinent sources from the Comintern archive. Joop Moriën, "Telegrammen uit Tweede Wereldoorlog in Cominternarchieff", *Politiek en Cultuur*, October 1990, pp. 247-254. For the literature up to 1986, see Joost Wormer, Ger Harmsen, "Bibliografie van de geschiedschrijving over het Nederlandse communisme", *ibid.*, pp. 133-173. This nearly complete bibliography also contains titles of articles from the party organs, though these will not be considered in this paper. I will limit myself to the most important references.

<sup>2</sup> German Bauman, *De Tribunisten - de revolutionaire marxisten van Nederland* (Moscow, 1988), p. 199; Corrie Berghuis, Wera de Lange, Joost Wormer, "Van SDP tot CPN", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 2 (1979), pp. 7-36.

<sup>3</sup> David Wijnkoop, *De SDP, haar geschiedenis en beginselen* (Amsterdam, 1918); J. Knuttel, "De geschiedenis der CPH" (1926), *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 4 (1980), pp. 28-50; Henriette Roland Holst, *Kapitaal en arbeid in Nederland*, 2 vols. (s.l., 1932), 2, pp. 87-92; Willem van Ravesteyn, *De wording van het communisme in Nederland 1907-1925* (Amsterdam, 1948); Antoon de Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland. De geschiedenis van een politiek partij* (The Hague, 1972); Baumann, *De Tribunisten*; Henny Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd in de SDAP. Het ontstaan van de Sociaal-Democratische Partij in Nederland (SDP)* (Amsterdam, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, p. 13; Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd in de SDAP*, pp. 443-445, 449.

<sup>5</sup> For the membership count of the SDP and the CPN, refer to Joost Wormer, "De CPJ in cijfers", *Van bron tot boek*, pp. 180-181; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 103-104; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 17; Anton Koejemans, *David Wijnkoop. Een mens in de strijd voor het socialisme* (Amsterdam, 1967), p. 121.

had met in 1907 at the International Congress in Stuttgart, was among those who had supported the SDP in this effort.<sup>6</sup>

A global stratification of professions within the SDP shows that, at its inception, the proportion of intellectuals (including the large group of teachers) came to about 30%. The middle class - made up of small businessmen, functionaries, employees and service professionals - represented an estimated 25% of the membership. Highly-skilled workers such as diamond cutters represented 25%, trained workers 5%, factory workers together with unskilled workers 10%, and farm workers 5%. In the beginning the SDP included a high percentage of female members: as many as 37% up to 1912, dropping to 29% in 1913.<sup>7</sup> Up to the First World War the membership count of the SDAP remained at about 500.<sup>8</sup> The SDP turned to the labour movement's extreme left wing when both the SDAP and its allied Dutch Association of Trade Unions (*Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen*; NVV) broke off all contact with the SDP and steered towards a more revisionist course.<sup>9</sup> Starting in August 1914, with the slogan "War on the War", the SDP collaborated with anti-militarist groups in the Committee of Cooperating Labour Associations (*Comité van Samenwerkende Arbeidsverenigingen*). This is how the SDP, the trade-unionist National Labour Secretariat (*Het Nationale Arbeids Secretariat*; NAS), Social Anarchists under the leadership of Domela Nieuwenhuis, and Henriëtte Roland Horst's Revolutionary Socialist Association (*Revolutionair Socialistisch Verbond*; RSV) found themselves campaigning together for demobilization and against the government food distribution and export policies.<sup>10</sup> In 1916 the RSV and the SDP merged, and in that same year they developed a working relationship with the Union of Christian Socialists (*Bond van Christen-Socialisten*). Partly due to these developments, *De Tribune* was able to appear daily.<sup>11</sup>

It was mainly through Herman Gorter that the SDP earned any international recognition at all. The brochure he wrote shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, *Het Imperialisme, de Wereldoorlog en de Sociaal-democratie* (Imperialism, World War and Social Democracy), was acclaimed by revolutionary Socialists both at home and abroad. It was distributed in several languages. Lenin suggested the SDP work together with his party. His urgent request to send a delegate to the Zimmerwald conference was to no avail, however. Wijnkoop rescinded his initial approval when it became clear that Socialist leaders who had voted in favour of the War credits would also be attending. Henriëtte Roland Holst did go to Zimmerwald, but at that time she still represented the RSV. Neither did the SDP collaborate on the manifesto of this Lenin-organized "Zimmerwald Left", published afterwards.<sup>12</sup> In the spring of 1917, Gorter pleaded unsuccessfully for participation in the Stockholm Conference where he believed the SDP should contribute to the cooperation among leftist radical groups.

The SDP leadership's international policy as well as its relationship with other political groups at home caused a great deal of resentment within the party. The trio was accused of being pro-Entente. Indeed, articles by Van Ravesteyn appeared in *De Tribune*, openly expressing the hope for a German defeat. The trio expected

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<sup>6</sup> Van Ravesteyn, *De Wording*, p. 125; Bauman, *De Tribunisten*, p. 31; Hans van Dijk, "De SDP en de Tweede Internationale", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 4 (1980), pp. 59-85.

<sup>7</sup> Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, pp. 816-818.

<sup>8</sup> Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Joop Scheerman; "Van NVV-georganiseerd tot NAS-georiënteerd", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 9 (1983), pp. 86-122.

<sup>10</sup> Jan Erik Burger, *Linkse frontvorming. Samenwerking van revolutionaire socialisten 1914-1918* (Amsterdam, 1983); Herman de Liagre Böhl, *Herman Gorter. Zijn politieke activiteiten van 1909 tot 1920 in de opkomende kommunistische beweging in Nederland* (Nijmegen, 1973), pp. 139-145.

<sup>11</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 27; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 143-145; Els Pelt-Offermans, *De Bond van Christen-Socialisten gedurende de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1982); Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 142-146, 156. A detailed description of this collaboration is given by Burger, *Linkse frontvorming*.

<sup>12</sup> Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 134-138; Van Ravesteyn, *De Wording*, p. 152.

that a German defeat would bring on revolutionary developments in that country.<sup>13</sup>

This taking sides in the War also led the trio to approve of Kerensky's government. On September 18, 1917, Gorter predicted in *De Tribune* that the Bolsheviks would secure state power, after which they would make an all-out effort to revolutionize all of Europe. According to Gorter, the spread of the Bolshevik revolution from Germany to the rest of Europe was a real possibility. Without attacking Wijnkoop and Van Ravesteyn personally, Gorter argued for complete impartiality in relation to the warring factions.<sup>14</sup>

The euphoria felt by the editors of *De Tribune* after the Russian October Revolution was not shared by the SDP leadership. Indeed, Lenin's peace offensive was sharply criticized. Van Ravesteyn, in a letter to Wijnkoop, even accused the Bolshevik government of being at the service of the German emperor. Pannekoek, who defended the Bolshevik government in *De Tribune*, pointed out that the latter had no alternative. This was also Gorter's opinion, although he sided with the trio against Lenin's peace policy. A revolutionary war against Germany was deemed necessary in order to bring about the German revolution, which would expand from there to all of Western Europe.<sup>15</sup> Gorter actually did show more sympathy for the Bolshevik position at Brest-Litovsk, thereby rekindling the controversy with the trio.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he did remain critical towards the Bolsheviks on two other points: he was against land division among the farmers and against the right to autonomy for all nationalities.<sup>17</sup> Gorter's break with the trio had become inevitable, and his absence from the November 1918 SDP congress sealed his political isolation.<sup>18</sup>

During the War years, the SDP had secured a solid base in Amsterdam. In the July 1918 parliamentary elections - the first elections with universal suffrage for men and proportional representation - Wijnkoop and Van Ravesteyn won two seats. By now membership had increased to over a thousand.<sup>19</sup>

The early November 1918 revolutionary developments in Germany found a strong repercussion in The Netherlands. Even SDAP leader Pieter Jelles Troelstra seemed not yet entirely free of revolutionary romanticism: on November 11 he declared that a proletarian revolution was essential, and the next day he demanded that power be handed over to the SDAP.<sup>20</sup> The Revolutionary Socialist Committee (*Revolutionair-Socialistisch Comité*; RSC) - the name used by the SDP and other radical groups for their joint group - had worked out a programme that demanded, among other things, a people's government dependent on workers' and soldiers' councils; the abolition of private ownership of the means of production; the introduction of an eight-hour work day; demobilization, allowing soldiers to keep their weapons; and the introduction of women's suffrage.<sup>21</sup> At a meeting called by the RSC, Wijnkoop called for the formation of councils, for the take-over of the means of production, and for the arming of workers. He spoke of a mass strike, the uprising of the proletariat, the commune of Amsterdam, and the Federal Socialist Republic of The Netherlands. *De Tribune* called this meeting "the

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<sup>13</sup> The trio's position was also challenged by Gorter and Pannekoek. See: Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, pp. 188-193; B.A. Sijes, "Anton Pannekoek, 1873-1960", in Anton Pannekoek, *Herinneringen uit de arbeidersbeweging. Sierrenkundige herinneringen* (Amsterdam, 1982), pp. 42-43; Anton Pannekoek, "Herinneringen uit de arbeidersbeweging", *ibid.*, p. 189; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 145-159.

<sup>14</sup> Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 162-167.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-183.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-190.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 195-200.

<sup>18</sup> Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 188-193; Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, pp. 188-189; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 204-205, 211-214.

<sup>19</sup> Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, p. 187; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> H.J. Scheffer, *November 1918* (Amsterdam, 1969), pp. 100-102.

<sup>21</sup> Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, p. 193.

first mobilization of the core of revolutionary forces in the capital."<sup>22</sup> On November 13 the government issued a proclamation which, pointing to Russia as an alarming example, announced demobilization, the increase of bread rations, and the importation of staples.<sup>23</sup> The government spoke of its willingness to introduce women's suffrage. That day, in parliament, Wijnkoop demanded the abolition of the monarchy and the formation of a people's government based on councils of industrial and rural workers and soldiers. Soldiers should keep their weapons, and The Netherlands should grant Indonesia its independence.<sup>24</sup> In Amsterdam, on the same day, the RSC called a meeting at which Wijnkoop, Roland Holst, and Nieuwenhuis spoke. Afterwards, a group of demonstrators advanced to the garrison on the Mauritskade where the secretary of the soldiers' council was said to have been arrested. The demonstrators called on the soldiers to join them. They received bullets in reply: five were killed and some twenty injured. The demonstration continued past the Oranje Nassau garrison towards the stock exchange. From the steps of the stock exchange Wijnkoop called on the demonstrators to establish the commune of Amsterdam on the following day. But the climax had already been reached: that same evening, at a number of meetings, the SDAP leadership urged calmness and cancelled demonstrations.<sup>25</sup> On November 14 in parliament, Troelstra, having been called to order by his own party leadership, spoke out against any revolutionary endeavour.

## 2. Party Struggle and Stagnation (1922-1929)

At the First Comintern Congress, Sebald Rutgers represented both the CPH and the Socialist Party of America. After the Congress, the Executive Committee (ECCI) appointed Rutgers, Wijnkoop, Van Ravesteyn, Roland Holst, Gorter, and Pannekoek to form the Third International's Provisional Amsterdam Bureau. The Amsterdam Bureau was told to develop a programme and to convene an international conference, among other things. In early February 1920, delegates of Bolshevik-sympathizing groups came to Amsterdam from the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Belgium. During the conference Wijnkoop and Van Ravesteyn explained they could no longer work together with Gorter, and at their suggestion, only Wijnkoop, Rutgers, and Roland Holst were admitted to the Amsterdam Bureau. The German Communist Klara Zetkin was arrested by the Amsterdam police. To keep the remaining foreigners out of the hands of the police, the conference was cancelled. The newspaper *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* (The General Trade Journal) reported that these Comintern activities were financed by the Russian crown jewels, supposedly smuggled in by Bartha Rutgers.<sup>26</sup> Poor organization and negative publicity must also have contributed to the Amsterdam Bureau's short life-span.

An equally important reason seems to have been Lenin's lack of enthusiasm for the Dutch contributions to the programme. Lenin was ill-informed of Pannekoek's and Gorter's positions within the CPN, and Pannekoek was one of the first Western Marxists to criticize Lenin's concept of the party. Pannekoek was also involved in the German Communist party's internal conflicts. He became the self-appointed leftist Communists' theoretician. He advocated a more federalist party structure. Party dictatorship was perhaps unavoidable in an agrarian country such as Russia, but in the capitalist West this "Blanquist conspiracy tactic" was intolerable. Here, the revolution could only originate from the masses. Parliamentary government and trade-union struggles were outmoded. A new tactic was needed: the organization of workers' councils. Moreover, Pannekoek believed that Moscow should transfer the Comintern's leadership to Western European workers. One of the ways he expounded his views was with the pamphlet *Weltrevolution und kommunistische Taktik* (World Revolution and the Communist

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>23</sup> Scheffer, *November 1918*, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> Bauman, *De Tribunisten*, p. 194. For the collaboration of the SDP/CPN with the PKI, see Joop Morriën's contribution in this book. For the development of the Dutch Communist position in relation to Indonesia, see Joop Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland. De CPN en de PKI in hun strijd tegen het Nederlandse kolonialisme* (Amsterdam, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>26</sup> Koejemans, *David Winkoop*, pp. 196-197; Pannekoek, "Herinneringen", pp. 196-198; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 226-231; Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, pp. 204-207.

Tactic), published in the spring of 1920.<sup>27</sup>

Lenin thought opinions such as those held by Pannekoek were "an infantile disorder of Communism". To him these "strange delusions" came about because of the Dutch Communists' confusion resulting from their bad luck of having been born "in a small country with traditions and conditions of highly privileged and highly stable legality".<sup>28</sup> Gorter reacted to Lenin's attack with an "Open letter to comrade Lenin", highlighting the purely proletarian character of the international revolutionary struggle. Whereas Russia's poor peasants were willing to support the Bolsheviks, in the West, the proletariat would have to do it alone. Gorter joined Pannekoek in opposing Lenin's appeals to work within revisionist trade unions and make use of parliamentary procedures. He also argued for the establishment of workers' councils following the Russian example.<sup>29</sup>

The German left-wing Communists' resistance to Lenin's Bolshevization of the Comintern led to the establishment of the Communist Workers Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands*; KAPD) in April. Pannekoek and Gorter acted as the primary publicists for this new party.<sup>30</sup> Late 1920 Gorter traveled to Moscow with a KADP delegation hoping that a tête-à-tête could still dissuade Lenin. He was also given the opportunity to expound his views at an ECCI plenary session, but there he was put in his place by Trotsky. The latter impressed on the ECCI that Gorter's theories would lead to powerless sectarianism. Indeed, following the German example, a separate organization of left-wing Communists, the KAPN, was established in the Netherlands. Lacking any kind of mass support, this small party collapsed into small groups.<sup>31</sup>

When, in June 1920, Wijnkoop, together with Willem van Leuven and the Rev. John William Kruyt of the Union of Christian Socialists arrived in Moscow for the Second Comintern Congress, Lenin gave him his "Left-Wing" Communism to read. A few days later Wijnkoop handed Lenin a letter in which he dissociated himself from the denounced CPH members and their ideas. The English edition of "Leftist Stream" included Wijnkoop's letter, accompanied by an endorsement from Lenin. Even so, Lenin lamented that Wijnkoop shared the deviation of his comrade Pannekoek. This was because of Wijnkoop's fierce resistance to the participation of the French Socialists and the German Independent Social Democrats in the Congress. Wijnkoop's rebuff of German Social Democrats like Wilhelm Dittman led to a sharp interchange with Zinoviev and Radek.<sup>32</sup> After he was elected to the ECCI, Wijnkoop maintained his critical attitude on this issue. When he returned to The Netherlands, however, he defended the Comintern's policies.

The 1920 CPH congress adopted the Comintern policies with hardly a discussion.<sup>33</sup> The CPH's relief campaigns for "hungering Russia" provided a practical framework for its strong feeling of solidarity with the Russian revolution.<sup>34</sup>

The CPH grew relatively rapidly, especially in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Groningen, and Twente. However, after having reached a membership of 2,400 or more in 1921, a decline in membership started

<sup>27</sup> Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 246-248; Sijes, "Pannekoek", pp. 52-54.

<sup>28</sup> V.I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Communism - an Infantile Disorder" [1920], in id., *Collected Works*, Vol. 31 (Moscow, 1966), p. 42. A more detailed description of Lenin's critique can be found in Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, pp. 208-210.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 250-254.

<sup>30</sup> Pannekoek, "Herinneringen", pp. 209-210.

<sup>31</sup> Pannekoek, "Herinneringen", pp. 203-204; Sijes, "Pannekoek", pp. 59-60; Böhl, *Herman Gorter*, pp. 258-260.

<sup>32</sup> Koejemans, *David Wijnkoop*, pp. 199-201; Baumann, *De Tribunisten*, pp. 210-211, Ger Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij 1926-1930. Voorspel, ontstaan en verloop van het schisma in het nederlandse kommunisme; de geschiedenis van de CPH-CC", in Ger Harmsen, *Nederlands kommunisme. Gebundelde opstellen* (Nijmegen, 1982), pp. 69-70.

<sup>33</sup> Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35; A.J. Koejemans, *David Wijnkoop. Een mens in de strijd voor het socialisme* (Amsterdam, 1967), p. 195.

and continued until 1930.<sup>35</sup> The growth of the party displeased the various opposition groups. The most important difference of opinion concerned trade-union policies. A preference had developed for the NAS. This had become an official party position by the time of the 1918 congress, though it was reversed by the 1921 congress. The new congress resolution came out in favour of working as much with the NAS as with the NVV towards organizational unity in trade-unionism. This resolution was rejected by those Communists working within the NAS. The NAS was on the verge of joining the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU). This alliance was now being jeopardized.<sup>36</sup>

After the January 1923 party congress, the opposition turned to the ECCI with its grievances, with Roland Holst and Henk Sneevliet among its prominent spokesmen. The party leaders were accused of cloaking reformist practices with revolutionary slogans, of combining benefices, and of wielding the hatchet of expulsion. They were blamed for the party's declining influence, for the lack of democracy in the party, and for the organizational chaos.<sup>37</sup> Representatives of both the party leadership and opposition were summoned to Moscow, and afterwards an ECCI "Dutch Commission" with Radek as a commission member, put forward a compromise proposal. The opposition was to dissolve its Committee for the Third International (*Comité voor de Derde Internationale*), and the party leadership was to countermand the expulsions. In addition, *De Tribune* was to allow space for critical discussions. The party Executive Committee decided, under protest, to comply with the request, and in a memorandum to the ECCI it made a stand for "a certain measure of independence... within the framework of the decisions made by the international Congresses".<sup>38</sup> No one was satisfied. Once again the party leadership and the opposition traveled to Moscow. The trio's scepticism about revolutionary efforts in Germany fuelled existing criticism. This attitude also annoyed the Comintern leadership. Nevertheless, the trio stayed in control, even at the 1924 congress at which the Swiss Jules Humbert Droz represented the ECCI and which was harassed by the opposition.<sup>39</sup>

Eventually, the ECCI honoured the demands of the opposition: to be given positions on the party Executive Committee, on *De Tribune's* editorial staff, and in parliament. This proposal was rejected by the 1925 party congress. By telegram, the ECCI accused the party Executive Committee of a disciplinary breakdown. Earlier, Wijnkoop had declared that if a congress resolution was vetoed by the Comintern, the re-elected party leaders and the parliamentary party members would not take up their posts. Together with Wijnkoop, almost the entire party Executive Committee resigned. Just fourteen days after the congress, a party conference was convoked. A new party Executive Committee, appointed by the Comintern leadership, not elected, included Sneevliet, Richard van Riel, Alex de Leeuw, and Louis de Visser - the only member of parliament still in the party after the 1925 elections - as chairman. The majority from the last congress was not represented proportionally in this new Executive.<sup>40</sup> Wijnkoop and his followers were forced into the opposition. The conflicts escalated to such a degree that the May 1926 congress expelled Wijnkoop and all those who had resigned with him.

In October 1926, the trio founded the Communist Party of Holland Central Committee (*Communistische Partij Holland-Centraal Comité*; CPH-CC).<sup>41</sup> Wijnkoop's exodus from the party did not entail a break with Moscow. Through people active in the International Worker's Aid, like Kruyt, Wijnkoop kept contact with the higher ranks of the Comintern.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Wim Pelt, "De CPN en het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1982), p. 17; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, p. 204.

<sup>36</sup> Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 70-71; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 212, 214, 216-217, 222.

<sup>37</sup> Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", p. 73; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 73-74; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>39</sup> Van Ravenesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 227, 231; Koejemans, *David Wijnkoop*, pp. 203-205.

<sup>40</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp.45-48. For a more detailed discussion, see: Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 74-77; Koejemans, *David Wijnkoop*, p. 212; Van Ravesteyn, *De wording*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>41</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 46; Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 81-83.

<sup>42</sup> Harmsen "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 84-85.

At the time of the 1926 congress, the CPH had only 1,000 members left. How many left with Wijnkoop is unknown, but at its 1929 congress the CPH-CC counted at least 1,300 members.

After Wijnkoop's exodus a number of expelled members returned, as did others from the Union of Communist Struggle and Propaganda Clubs (*Bond van Kommunistische Strijd- en Propaganda Clubs*), founded by former party members. The party also acquired some new members from Anarchist groups, such as Daan Goulooze and Jan Postma. Moreover, new members came from the NAS, but these left again in 1927. The fact was that the ECCI and part of the party leadership hoped for the dissolution of the small non-viable NAS trade unions. In 1927 Trotsky's banishment led Roland Holst to leave the party.<sup>43</sup>

### 3. Bolshevization and Growth (1929-1939)

At the time of the Sixth Comintern Congress, the party found itself struggling for survival. The policies taken up by the Congress were not well received by the Dutch Communists. A part of the party Executive Committee gave no credence to the predicted crisis and revolution, and besides, there was disagreement on the extent to which the Comintern's mandated fight against Social Democracy should be carried out. At the 1929 Easter conference, the implementation of the Sixth Comintern Congress resolutions appeared on the agenda.<sup>44</sup> When it became clear that the directives were not being carried out, the ECCI intervened again. The ECCI demanded that a congress be convoked as soon as possible to elect a new party leadership. De Leeuw and Ko Beuzemaker headed a minority within the party Executive Committee and felt certain the Comintern supported their attacks on Van Riel, Piet Bergsma, and Leen Seegers.<sup>45</sup> When the party leadership kept procrastinating on convening a congress, the West-European Bureau of the Comintern (WEB) fixed a date: February 15th to 17th, 1930. The WEB placed the congress organization in the hands of an appointed commission. Next, the ECCI published a letter in *De Tribune*, reporting the names of those who were to make up the nucleus of the new leadership: Cees Schalker, De Leeuw, and Paul de Groot. The German Wilhelm Florin and the Brit Aitken Ferguson, representatives of the ECCI, addressed the congress. In addition to the above mentioned trio, the new party Executive Committee included Beuzemaker, Anton Struik, Chris Smit, De Visser, and Goulooze. De Visser remained chairman and Schalker became secretary-general. The congress adopted the Comintern policies without reservations. Until the summer of 1934, the party followed an ultra-leftist course, in opposition to Social Democrats who were labelled "Social Fascists".<sup>46</sup>

The Bolshevization of the party, begun by the former party leadership, was now implemented rigorously. Bolshevization meant, among other things, that works cells should be given a higher position in the party organization than the street cells. These works cells were to be secret, so that employers would have no occasion to dismiss any Communists.<sup>47</sup> For the CPH, this Bolshevization coincided with the organization of the Red Trade Union Opposition (*Rode Vakbewegings Oppositie*; RVO). In 1928 the RILU congress had decided to consolidate the workers who belonged to the trade unions and those who did not into an RVO that would act independently against the trade-union leaders.<sup>48</sup> The RVO was viewed as a broadly-based mass movement with the Communist works cells as the driving force. In the CPH, De Groot had the leadership of the RVO.

Even though the RVO and the CPH did not have the hoped-for influence in the work places, the party

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<sup>43</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp. 46-47; Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp. 83-84.

<sup>44</sup> Dik Verhaar, "De Paasconferentie van 1929", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no.2 (1979), pp. 37-58.

<sup>45</sup> Ger Harmsen, "Leven en werk van mr. Alex S. de Leeuw", *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van socialisme en arbeidersbeweging in Nederland 1977* (Nijmegen, 1977), pp. 69-70.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp. 51-52; Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie. De CPN tijdens het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939-1941)* (The Hague, 1990), p. 336, note 153.

<sup>47</sup> Osip Arnovič Pjatnickij, *De bolsjewisering van de communistische partij* (Amsterdam, 1932).

<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Abendroth, *Sozialgeschichte der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt/M., 1965) p. 114.

made substantial organizational progress. Moreover, the reorganization of the party leadership resulted in the return of Wijnkoop, re-elected to the Parliament in 1929 along with many of his supporters. The CPH-CC disbanded in June 1930. Party membership increased from 1,100 in 1930 to 6,000 in 1934, while the number of votes increased from 72,000 in 1929 (the CPH plus the CPH-CC together) to 127,577, which came to 3.43% of the votes in 1935.<sup>49</sup> During the thirties there was no significant splintering off. The deposed member of the party Executive Van Riel and others formed the Communist Party Opposition (*Communistische Partij Oppositie*), but that group remained small.<sup>50</sup> Nor did the ECCI take such resolute actions as it had taken in the years 1925-26 and 1920-30.

It is not within the scope of this paper to go into the strikes involving the Communists. The party was most visible during the 1929 farm workers' strike in Groningen, which lasted nearly six months; during the 1931-1932 textile workers' strike in Twente that lasted 20 weeks; during the 1932 dock workers' strikes in Amsterdam and Rotterdam; and during the 1933 plasterers' strike in Amsterdam. During these strikes, the Communists opposed the trade-union leaders just as vehemently as they did the employers.<sup>51</sup> The Communist-led Movement of the Unemployed outweighed the importance of the activities within the work places.<sup>52</sup> In the twenties, Committees of the Unemployed already existed in about a dozen cities. Their most important activities were agitation at the welfare offices, and the organization of petitions, demonstrations, etc. for a better relief plan, higher wages, and better working conditions in the unemployment relief work. In the early thirties, when the crisis made itself felt in The Netherlands, the Committees of the Unemployed grew in number and organization. Under the leadership of Jan Dieters, the movement of the unemployed became the major branch of the RVO. This group was the most important recruiting ground of the party; it provided the new crop of party officials. The struggle of the unemployed was necessarily a defensive one, since the government tried to safeguard the hard currency value of the Dutch guilder by cutting down on, of all things, the already meagre welfare benefits. In July 1934, when the Colijn government announced a drop of 20 to 30% in unemployment benefits, Amsterdam and Rotterdam responded with street gatherings and demonstrations which only brute police force could bring to a halt. In the Amsterdam working-class district the Jordaan and in the Rotterdam district Crooswijk police and army units were deployed against the unemployed. Although *De Tribune* had not called for the use of force, the government took advantage of the paper's agitating tone to seize its printing office. The government justified this action judicially by starting bankruptcy proceedings against *De Tribune*, citing arrears in the purchase of pension coupons for employees. Because of this the newspaper temporarily appeared in mimeographed form.<sup>53</sup>

De Groot returned from the Soviet Union in early July.<sup>54</sup> He probably brought with him the guidelines for the new policy, the so-called popular front tactic. In any case, on July 21, 1934 the CPH addressed a letter to the SDAP and its splintered-off Independent Socialist Party (*Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij*; OSP).

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<sup>49</sup> Harmsen, "De Wijnkoop-partij", pp.89-90; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Huib Riethof, "De Communistische Partij Oppositie (CPO) 1933-1935", *Mededelingenblad*, 38 (1970), pp. 28-46.

<sup>51</sup> Ger Harmsen, Bob Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de Nederlandse vakbeweging* (Nijmegen, 1975), pp. 168-170, 188-190; Ger Harmsen, "Kommunistische vakbewegingspolitiek tussen de wereldoorlogen", in Harmsen, *Nederlands kommunisme*, pp.119-121, 123-125.

<sup>52</sup> Wim Pelt, "Eendracht Maakt Macht. Een belangrijke episode uit de strijd der dertiger jaren", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no.2 (1979), pp. 59-79; id., "Die Erwerblosenbewegung zwischen RGI und IGB", in *Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung. 16. Linzer Konferenz 1980* (Vienna, 1982), pp. 201-217.

<sup>53</sup> Pelt, "Eendracht Maakt Macht", p. 61; J. Bakker, E. Nijhof, "Het 'Jordaan-oproer'- verzet tegen de steunverlaging in juli 1934", *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 10 (1978), pp. 35-69; Raket, *Rood Rotterdam* (Rotterdam, 1984), pp. 101-114.

<sup>54</sup> Paul de Groot, *De dertiger jaren 1930-1935. Herinneringen en overdenkingen* (Amsterdam, 1965), p. 183.

Referring to increased attacks on the working class and the escalating threat of war, for The Netherlands as well, the CPH suggested holding joint meetings and demonstrations on August 1st in commemoration of the start of the World War. The RVO made a similar offer to the NAS and the NVV. The Revolutionary Socialist Party (*Revolutionair Socialistische Partij*; RSP) was not invited to the meeting. The RSP had been founded in 1929 by Sneevliet and his NAS sympathizers who had left the CPH in 1927. During the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky, Sneevliet had sided with the latter, as had the RSP.<sup>55</sup> The CPH conveniently branded the RSP as "Trotskyite". The enmity was mutual.

The SDAP rejected every CPH proposal. The Social Democrat daily *Het Volk* (The People) wrote: "It is not the Dutch Communists who want unity in the struggle, but rather the all-powerful gentlemen in Moscow who manoeuvre this unity stratagem for their own diplomatic ends".<sup>56</sup> This was enough to motivate the CPH to dauntlessly carry on with their attacks on the "Social Fascists". Until 1939 the Communists kept proposing a joint action programme to the Social Democrats, but the answer was always negative.<sup>57</sup> In 1933 the SDAP and the NVV set up the Bureau for Action and Propaganda against Communism and Fascism (*Bureau voor actie en propaganda tegen communisme en fascisme*) which published the propaganda journal *Vrijheid, arbeid, brood* (Freedom, Employment, Bread), with constant attacks on Communists.<sup>58</sup> In that same year the NVV executive board decided to refuse NVV membership not only to members of the National Socialist Movement (*Nationaal Socialistische Beweging*; NSB), but also to Communists.<sup>59</sup> The SDAP forbade any participation in action committees in which Communists were involved. Disobedience was punished by expulsion. Within the Socialist and Labour International (SLI), the SDAP was also dead set against collaboration with the Comintern.<sup>60</sup> The SDAP watched in horror how cooperation between Social Democrats and Communists developed in France and Spain, and among Italian, German, and Austrian emigrants. The SDAP-leader Johan W. Albarda even declared that these "half Communist parties" were no longer part of the SLI. He believed they were dealing with a "concentrated effort on the part of Moscow to destroy the SLI". In the SDAP they discussed the possibility of splitting up the SLI and of forming an "orthodox" Northern European bloc.<sup>61</sup>

The CPH responded to the SDAP's rebuff with renewed attacks on the Social Democracy. Schalker, Secretary General since the 1930 congress, called the Social Democrat leaders "the rehabilitators of the thoroughly corrupt capitalist system" and "the stable social basis for the working-class bourgeoisie." He accused them of wanting to govern together with the bourgeoisie, thus paving the way for Fascism. The Trotskyists did not fare any better. Their most important tasks were to divert the attention of the workers with smear campaigns

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<sup>55</sup> Max Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet. Revolutionair-socialist in Europa en Azië* (Nijmegen, 1976), pp. 329-330, 333.

<sup>56</sup> Wim Pelt, "A holland munkásmozgalom és a Komintern VII. világtalálkozója", in *A Kommunista Internacionálé VII. kongresszusa* (Budapest, 1985), p. 152; Evert van der Wall, "1935: proletarische eenheid in Amsterdam?", in Luuk Brug, *et al.*, *Voor buurt en beweging. Negentig jaar sociaal-democratie tussen IJ en Amstel* (Amsterdam, 1984), pp. 146-147.

<sup>57</sup> See Van der Wall, "1935", in *Voor buurt en beweging*, pp. 140-159.

<sup>58</sup> H. van Hulst, A. Pleysier, A. Scheffer, *Het roode vaandel volgen wij. Geschiedenis van de Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij van 1880 tot 1940* (The Hague, 1969), pp. 266-268.

<sup>59</sup> Harmsen, Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid*, p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> Tineke van Loosbroek, "De SDAP en de Socialistische Arbeiders Internationale", *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van socialisme en arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (1977), pp. 275-315.

<sup>61</sup> Pelt, "A holland munkásmozgalom és a Komintern VII. világtalálkozója", pp. 153, 159.

against the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

In the 1935 Amsterdam municipal elections, the CPH gained 13.6% of the votes, the SDAP lost and ended up with 33.3% of the votes, and the Revolutionary Socialist Labour Party (*Revolutionair-Socialistische Arbeiderspartij*; RSAP) - a fusion of the OSP with the RSP - obtained 3%. In the SDAP, as elsewhere, there were cries that Amsterdam could now be governed by the Reds. The CPH suggested collaboration based on the local SDAP programme, but SDAP-chairman Koos Vorrink immediately declared, in *Het Volk*, that collaboration with enemies of Democracy was unthinkable. Vorrink had this to say about the popular front: "We know of this ignominious tactic from France and we have no desire to put the same rope around our own neck." Of the seventeen SDAP-committee members, seven proved to be in favour of negotiating with the Communists. However, they yielded to the SDAP leadership's furious reaction.<sup>63</sup> In other places and in other organizations, the CPH had as little success.<sup>64</sup>

Even before the CPH delegation left for Moscow to take part in the Comintern's Seventh Congress, it was clear that the popular front tactic was doomed to fail in The Netherlands. The delegation included De Groot, Schalker, De Leeuw, Lou Jansen, Dieters, Wijnkoop, and the Indonesian Roestam Effendi.<sup>65</sup> Most of Schalker and De Groot's reports were optimistic. Only De Leeuw provided any real topics for discussion. According to him, the Dutch bourgeoisie belonged to the defenders of the status quo, as they had nothing to win and much to lose in case of war. Their policy was traditionally one of neutrality: staying out of any conflict as long as possible. Dutch Imperialism, however, was dependent on Great Britain. Without the British fleet and without Singapore as a base, Indonesia would be lost to Dutch Imperialism. The Dutch bourgeoisie was divided on its foreign policy: on one side the British-oriented colonial capital, and on the other side an extreme nationalist group, oriented towards Germany.

According to De Leeuw, The Netherlands had been able to retain its position of neutrality in the preceding World War because the eastern border of Belgium had not yet been reinforced. But now it was, and the German army would march across The Netherlands in order to reach the North Sea. The Netherlands was an imperialist power with a vast colonial possession, yet it was also one of those weaker European states whose independence was threatened by German Fascism. De Leeuw pointed out that the draft resolution defined by Togliatti, on the weak states whose independence was being threatened, had taken no notice of this problem. Because the Dutch bourgeoisie was a colonial one, its politics tended to be reactionary. It would be greatly inclined to peddle the national interests in defence of its share of the colonial spoils. Indeed, it approved of the German Fascists' policy of an offensive against the Soviet Union.

If the Dutch bourgeoisie did resist an attack by the German Fascists, it would, at the same time, be defending its imperialist and colonial interests. It would introduce a severe regimen for the working class and, appealing to the state of war, would try to abolish all democratic rights and freedoms. That is why De Leeuw insisted that the resolution should contain an addendum stating that the Communists would fight just as much for the independence of colonized people. In his response to the discussion, Togliatti gave considerable attention to De Leeuw's arguments. He did not share De Leeuw's scepticism towards a national defence which would include the bourgeoisie, but he did admit that this struggle should never be separated from the colonized people's liberation struggle. Even though De Leeuw had brought up a major problem, Togliatti insisted that this issue only concerned the tactic's "concrete sub-problems". In spite of this, the final resolution did include a few sentences supporting colonized people's struggle for liberation. In the new ECCI, the CPH was represented by Visser, Schalker being a candidate.<sup>66</sup>

When the NVV's weekly *De Strijd* (The Struggle) reported favourably on the merge between the Communist CGTU and France's revisionist trade-unionist CGT the NVV executive again announced that they

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155; Van der Wall, "1935", in Brug, *et al.*, *Voor buurt en beweging*, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Pelt, "A holland munkásmozgalom és a Komintern VII. világtkongresszusa", p. 155.

<sup>65</sup> Harmsen, "Leven en werk van mr. Alex S. de Leeuw", p. 107; De Groot, *De dertiger jaren 1930-1935*, p. 213.

<sup>66</sup> Pelt, "A holland munkásmozgalom és a Komintern VII. világtkongresszusa", pp. 156-157; Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie*, p. 312.

would have no dealings with the CPH. However, the CPH could certainly join the NVV if it abolished the RVO, broke its ties with the RVI, renounced dictatorship, accepted democracy as guideline and admitted to the perniciousness of its trade-union policies. Even though this commentary could not exactly be construed as an invitation, the CPH immediately took it seriously. The CPH promised to abolish the RVO if the NVV agreed to accept Communists as members and guaranteed freedom of speech. The NVV's failure to react did not stop the CPH from implementing the Comintern's altered trade-union tactics: the RVO was abolished in early November 1935. From that moment, Communists were quietly accepted to NVV-affiliated trade unions.<sup>67</sup>

The implementation of the Seventh Congress decisions met with great resistance within the CPH. The national defence policy, with its recommended revaluation of national holidays and symbols, went against the grain for many members. At the 1935 Christmas congress, the Dutch details of the new Comintern strategy were presented. The congress changed the party's name to The Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij van Nederland*; CPN). The name "Communist Party of Holland", currently used by the Comintern, was indeed less appropriate: Holland is strictly speaking only a part of The Netherlands. More importantly, the name change symbolized the party's new start. The congress took a special interest in the NSB which, as the largest German National Socialist-oriented group (at the provincial council elections the NSB won 8% of the votes), would prepare The Netherlands' surrender to Germany. The government was said to be using the NSB as a pawn against the working class.<sup>68</sup>

The CPN declared that it would defend bourgeois democracy against Fascism. The Party was convinced that Hitler's Germany was a threat to The Netherlands because of the latter's strategic position in any war against Great Britain and France. In case of a German attack the war could take on the aspect of a national liberation war for the Netherlands. In such a case the Communists would also defend the political and economic interests of the working class and at the same time intensify the struggle for Indonesia's immediate independence. In other words, the Communists promised to fight on two fronts: against the German aggressor, and against its own bourgeoisie. The war against its own bourgeoisie was underscored with the adoption of the Comintern resolution which stated that if an imperialist war broke out, it should be ended as soon as possible, and that the present political and economic crisis should be used to precipitate the fall of the capitalist system. The CPN demanded democratization of the armed forces, removal of fascist military officers, higher wages and better care for the soldiers. The CPN's altered attitude towards Social Democracy was exemplified by its promise of active support for the Social Democratic "Work Plan" (*Plan van de Arbeid*).<sup>69</sup>

The CPN made the most of every propaganda means available to pass itself off as the champion of anti-Fascism and working class solidarity. To this end, the name of the Party paper *De Tribune*, too closely associated with the fight against Social Democracy, was changed to *Het Volksdagblad* (The People's Daily).<sup>70</sup>

During those years, party membership increased steadily to around 10,000 in 1939, and "mass organizations" affiliated with the party flourished. Ever since 1933, the International Red Help had been busy with the relief of German Communists who had fled to the Netherlands. The Organization of Friends of the Soviet Union (*Vereeniging Vrienden der Sowjet-Unie*) had reached its prime during the second half of the thirties. Its weekly *Rusland van Heden* (Russia Today) reached a circulation of 25,000.<sup>71</sup>

The party owed this growth in the thirties mainly to its activities in the Movement of the Unemployed.

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<sup>67</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp. 62-63; Pelt, "A holland munkásmozgalom és a Komintern VII. világtalálkozása", p. 157.

<sup>68</sup> Pelt, "De CPN en het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt", p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>70</sup> Pelt, "De communistische pers tussen twee wereldoorlogen", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 5 (1980), pp. 59-60; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> De Jonge, *Het communisme*, p. 57; *Rode Hulp. De opvang van Duitse vluchtelingen in Groningerland (1933-1940)*, ed. by Ruud Weijdeveld (Groningen, 1986); André Gerrits, "Solidariteit zonder eenheidsfront. De Internationale Rode Hulp in Nederland (1925-1938)", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 10 (....), pp. 55-79; Beatrix Herlemann, "Exil als operatiebasis. De Duitse communistische emigratie in Nederland, 1935-1945", in Kathinka Dittrich, Hans Würzner (eds.), *Nederland en het Duitse Exil 1933-1940* (Amsterdam, 1982), pp. 127-143.

In 1937 about 60% of the party members were unemployed.

Little is known of the social composition of the CPN members, but it is definitely the case that intellectuals only formed a very small group. The number of middle-class members, comprising shop keepers, civil servants, and employees, must have still been quite large. The number of highly-skilled labourers was negligible. The group of skilled workers was larger. Of those, the most were construction workers, followed by community labourers and metal workers. The membership of factory workers was only significant in Amsterdam and the surrounding area. The party counted several dozen members among the Twente textile workers and the Limburg miners. The group of unschooled members was apparently sizeable. In addition, the party had some following among dock workers in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and among agricultural workers in the north-eastern part of the country.<sup>72</sup> Despite the party membership increase, the growth of the electorate stagnated. The disappointing results of the May 1937 parliamentary elections, accompanied by a temporary decline in membership, convinced the ECCI to summon the CPN leadership to Moscow. Even though the Comintern had appointed this party leadership itself, it was not happy with it.

The atmosphere existing among the Dutch party leaders was anything but friendly at that time. De Groot and De Leeuw were each other's opposites.<sup>73</sup> Already in 1930 the latter had written a letter to the ECCI objecting to De Groot's election to the party secretariat. He thought De Groot was not to be considered a completely trustworthy comrade in view of his ultra-leftist inclinations. De Leeuw was greatly supported by Schalker who had also been writing letters to Moscow. Goulooze, freed of his party responsibilities in the mid-thirties in order to lead the OMS (the Comintern's contact organization), disliked De Groot. Beuzemaker and Struik did not get along with De Groot either. But there were not only differences of opinion with De Groot; according to the minutes taken at the politburo's meetings, the other party leaders were not on the best terms either.<sup>74</sup>

In late 1937 the talks in Moscow between the party leadership and Comintern secretariat revolved around the planning of the 1938 party congress. The delegation of about a dozen men included at least De Groot, Beuzemaker, Dieters, and probably also Schalker, Struik, De Visser, and Effendi. According to Dimitrov's diagnosis, the CPN leadership suffered from a "serious affliction" caused by "sectarian self-satisfaction and an overestimation of its own strength." *Het Volksdagblad* was hopeless as well: it was not militant enough. Dimitrov's remedy: the politburo should take over the newspaper and use it as its mouthpiece, as a whip against its adversaries.

To what extent possible personal consequences were thought through in Moscow is not known, but around the time of the 1939 Easter party congress the party secretariat was changed. The secretariat was expanded to include Dieters and Jansen. Beuzemaker was named chairman and De Groot general secretary. Schalker was sent to Rotterdam as district secretary. In addition, shortly after the congress, De Leeuw was replaced by De Groot as editor-in-chief of *Het Volksdagblad*.<sup>75</sup>

For the rest, this Easter congress can be said to have stressed the Comintern's line somewhat more strongly. The party would support any measure leading to an actual national defence against Hitler's Germany, even if these measures were taken by then government which was at that time of right-wing Christian persuasion. With respect to Indonesia, the congress - mindful of the Japanese threat - dropped its old war-cry "Indonesia free from Holland, now!" Instead, the congress demanded emancipation and democratic rights for the people of Indonesia as imperative prerequisites for a successful defence against Japanese Fascism. Against its better judgment, the CPN kept on courting the SDAP, at the same time that the political "pranks" of this recalcitrant bride were being denounced, in particular the Social Democrats' smear campaign against the Soviet Union. The fight against Trotskyism also received renewed impetus. In the Soviet Union, Schalker had witnessed the trials against alleged Trotskyists. In his statement to the congress he seemed quite convinced of the criminal nature of this "fifth column of Fascism", and accused Sneefliet, among others, of being a police accomplice.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie*, pp. 73, 367

<sup>73</sup> Harmsen, "Leven en werk van mr. Alex S. de Leeuw", pp. 72, 111-112, 125, 145.

<sup>74</sup> Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie*, pp. 120-121; Ger Harmsen, *Rondom Daan Goulooze. Uit het leven van kommunisten* (Nijmegen, 1980).

<sup>75</sup> Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie*, p. 121.

<sup>76</sup> Pelt, "De CPN en het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt", pp. 26-28.

The CPN leadership's calls to unity were not the end of the matter. In the years between the 1935 and 1938 congresses, many party members had been able to join an NVV union. Moreover, in 1936 the NVV incorporated the Communist-led organization of the unemployed: Unity Makes Power (*Eendracht Maakt Macht*; EMM). All in all there was reason enough to urge the party members to work within the NVV towards a popular front, and to try to join in with the local workers' councils. At the same time, the Communists advocated a bloc formation of the modern trade-union federation together with the Protestant, Catholic, and non-denominational federations. Despite these attempts by the Communists, there cannot be said to have been any real collaboration. When in 1939 it became clear that the NVV was unable to counteract the Communist influence, the EMM was expelled from this trade union federation.<sup>77</sup>

The popular front remained equally unsuccessful. For individual Social Democrats, involvement took the shape of "Help for Spain" (*Hulp aan Spanje*) committees, while other Social Democrats and non-aligned persons worked for the Vigilance of Dutch Intellectuals against the National-Socialism Committee (*Het Comité van Waakzaamheid van Nederlands intellectuelen tegen het nationaal-socialisme*), and for the Federation of Artists for the Defence of Cultural Rights (*Bond van Kunstenaars ter Verdediging van de Kulturele Rechten*).<sup>78</sup>

During its struggle for unity, the CPN had been relentless in its criticism towards the Social Democrat leaders, and after the Munich accord its criticism became even sharper. A clear example of this is the CPN manifesto published before August 1st, 1939. It denounced both Chamberlain, with his appeasement policy, and the Dutch government, which would commit itself neither to an appeasement nor to a collective defence policy, preferring non-involvement as the basis for its foreign policy. The Social Democrat leaders had in fact expressed their confidence in the defence policy of Colijn's reactionary government, thereby supporting a policy that had delivered Austria and Czechoslovakia over to Fascism.

Aside from making the SDAP co-responsible for the appeasement policy, the CPN was not that far off. In early August the SDAP, for the first time in its history, was admitted into the government. Two SDAP ministers joined the De Geer right-wing cabinet. This gave De Groot occasion to claim, in the Communist monthly *Politiek en cultuur* (Politics and Culture), that in previous years the SDAP had pursued a policy of "simulated opposition". According to him, the SDAP had now gone one step further in the wrong direction: it had dropped collective safety in favour of the government's spurious policy of non-alignment. Nonetheless the Social Democrat ministers had the benefit of the doubt.<sup>79</sup>

Even before the Social Democrat ministers could be judged by their deeds, Stalin's foreign policy change put a definite end to the CPN's relatively moderate attitude towards Social Democracy.

#### 4. The War Years

For the CPN, news of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact came as a bolt from the blue.<sup>80</sup> De Groot had not been back three weeks from a visit to the Soviet Union when all the directives he had brought back turned out to be suddenly worthless. He decided to hold off: he called in sick and had Dieters write an article for *Het Volksdagblad*. Undoubtedly De Groot was hoping that Beuzemaker or Goulooze, in Moscow at that time and about to return, would bring back guidelines. This was not to be the case. According to Dieters's article, the Pact marked a defeat for Hitler who had to yield to Soviet power and, simultaneously, it was a setback for Chamberlain and

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<sup>77</sup> Pelt, "Eendracht Maakt Macht", pp. 59-79; De Jonge, *Het communisme*, pp. 62-63; Harmsen, "Kommunistische vakbewegingspolitiek", p. 132.

<sup>78</sup> Pelt, "De CPN en het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt", pp. 20-21; Albert Mellink, "Het Comité van Waakzaamheid na veertig jaar", *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van socialisme en arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (1977), pp. 247-274; ; Jaap-Jan Flinterman, "De CPN en de solidariteitsbeweging met de Spaanse republiek in Nederland (1936-1939)", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 10 (1985), pp. 9-54; H. Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting. Een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930-1945* (Utrecht, 1980), p. 128.

<sup>79</sup> Pelt, "De CPN en het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt", pp. 48-49.

<sup>80</sup> Unless otherwise noted the description of the CPN history up to June 22, 1941, is based on Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie*.

Daladier, who had kept trying to veer the German aggression towards the Soviet Union. In contrast to the French and British Communists' first reaction, Dieters's article lacked any reference to a struggle for collective safety.

It was only after Beuzemaker and Goulouze returned empty-handed from Moscow that De Groot gave his view on the international situation. In *Het Volksdagblad* of August 29th, he seemed to assume that the Communists, acting on the latest Comintern Congress resolutions, would join forces against the threatening imperialist war by laying the groundwork for the proletariat revolution. He could already envision revolutionary developments where there were none, namely in Germany. The Pact would be even more effective than had been the peace of Brest-Litovsk, which in his view had given birth to the 1918 German revolution. For De Groot the continuation of a collective defence policy was illusory: there was only one road to peace - the revolution. It was in this light that he viewed the national defence. The working class had to be prepared to resist any Nazi attack, yet at the same time wage the fight against its own bourgeoisie, the Social Democrat leaders, Fascists, and Trotskyists.

National defence by a grass-roots popular front was also the essence of the declaration published by the party leadership on September 3. According to the party leadership, the struggle against a German invasion would be a justified defensive war, with Communists on the front line.

Because Comintern directives failed to appear, the CPN leadership remained indecisive. Around September 12th, the CPN received directives from the Comintern leadership, probably telegraphed through the OMS. From then on, the CPN considered the War merely an imperialist one in which the working class should not take part. Both imperialist camps were responsible for the outbreak of the War, and the struggle should be directed against its own bourgeoisie with its "lackeys", the Social Democrat leaders. The Comintern directives were brief, yet the apparent margin for individual interpretation was quickly dissipated by Molotov's speeches, which were characterized by an emphatically pro-German attitude. Shortly before the Soviet invasion of Poland, Great Britain and France were already branded as the major war instigators. Neither a sharpened criticism against the British and French governments nor the fight against the Dutch bourgeoisie presented a problem to the CPN, yet a sympathetic attitude towards the Hitler regime demanded great effort. The Comintern leadership thought it necessary to take a stand, sent through the OMS system, against the party leadership's inclination to look upon the Pact as a tactical manoeuvre. The CPN leadership continued to testify that Hitler was to be regarded as the greatest enemy up to the time of Stalin's infamous statement that France and England had started the War. From then on, and this happened shortly before the Soviet invasion of Finland, the CPN again conscientiously followed the Comintern course.

Meanwhile, the Dutch Communists had intensified their attacks on Social Democrat and trade-union leaders. From September to November 1939, they succeeded in playing a leading roll in strikes involving Amsterdam construction workers, and seamen and dock workers from Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The Communists thought the SDAP and NVV leadership had let themselves be drawn into the truce movement, while the general public was confronted with price increases and unemployment on the docks as a result of the War. In fact the CPN turned back to the RVO tactic for its trade-union and work-place activities. Action committees were being formed without involving trade-union leadership. This CPN tactic was the same as the one followed by the NAS. Collaboration between the CPN and the NAS presented no special problems during the construction strike. However, on the Amsterdam docks, where the NAS had more supporters than the Communists, the strike failed due to "Stalinist" and "Trotskyist" infighting.

The Pact itself did not bother the CPN so much. Of course public opinion became more hostile, *Het Volksdagblad* lost subscribers, and members on the party's periphery were leaving, not including any well-known dissidents.

Nothing came out concerning possible differences of opinion within the party Executive Committee. However, the contradictory first reactions appearing at the conclusion of the Pact make it seem likely that these differences indeed existed. In early November 1939 in an article which appeared in the Comintern press, Dimitrov called upon the Communist parties to get rid of opportunistic members. Under the slogan, "the struggle against opportunism" measures were taken in various districts to end abuses within the organization, and to purge the party of the most degraded lumpenproletarian elements. This struggle also took place in the party leadership: it cost Beuzemaker his chairmanship. Beuzemaker and Schalker were expelled from the secretariat which now still included De Groot, Jansen, and Dieters. As far as is known, neither Beuzemaker nor any other victim of the "struggle against opportunism" could be reproached for not approving the Pact.

The party organization was not disrupted by the Pact nor by the ensuing Comintern policies. The consequences of mobilization were much more disastrous. Even before the outbreak of the War, the party lost a large number of its activists to the army. It is remarkable that the CPN developed hardly any activities among the mobilized. Any such activity never got beyond small informational meetings of mobilized party members.

In imitation of the Comintern, yet in more careful terms, the CPN had renounced the national defence. It was deemed too dangerous to express this standpoint within the army. Nor was there any evidence of actions in the weapon industry, which may have been because it had too few party members. It was evident that the party was treading carefully, because although there was only a slight increase in government repression - as compared to France or even Belgium - the CPN leadership assumed the party would be banned. Following the example of the Comintern press, the CPN reduced its agitation against Hitler's Germany. Internally, however, the party leadership pointed out that its opinion on National Socialism remained unchanged. Due to the agitation directed almost exclusively against the British and French governments, the party leadership was inclined to judge the threat to Dutch independence from that source to be as great as the German threat. This belief was strengthened by the Comintern's position towards Scandinavia: the German invasion was depicted as a reaction to the allied violation of Norwegian sovereignty.

Before the occupation, the CPN did noticeably little to prepare for an underground existence. As far as is known, in the summer of 1939, the party leadership organized contact addresses for the party districts, keeping in mind that the party could be banned by the Dutch government. After a few weeks these activities were discontinued. Even so, the CPN had already gained some experience in the underground movement before the War: out of sheer necessity its assistance to the Indonesian Communists had always been an underground one. In order to provide for the needs of German Communist immigrants, the Dutch Red Help had built up an underground network because, in the Netherlands, the rights of asylum did not apply to foreign Communists, and illegal immigrants were deported without mercy. Since party membership had become grounds for dismissal, CPN members in work places were organized in underground groups. Furthermore, since 1933 an injunction was in force preventing civil servants from becoming members of the CPN.

Under occupation, the best organized underground movement was the Dutch OMS section under Goulouze's leadership.<sup>81</sup> Until 1943 the OMS had at its disposal transmitters that maintained contact with Moscow. This OMS system also took care of courier services between Moscow, Stockholm, Brussels, Paris, Basel, several German cities, and - occasionally - even Prague. Supporting the German Communist party was the OMS's major task. The OMS also couriered money for the German party and the CPN. How much money the CPN received from Moscow is impossible to estimate even roughly, but it is not an obvious conclusion that the Comintern leadership really wished to invest vast sums of money into this small and, for its purposes, insignificant party.

It is remarkable that the Dutch Communists, already partly an underground organization, did not work out a plan for an underground system in case of occupation. The most obvious explanation for this is that the leadership assumed it could simply carry on its activities under a possible German occupation. In any case, this seems to also have been the impression given by discussions in the Comintern press on the Communist parties' position in Norway and Denmark. In these countries, the Communists moved around legally during the first few months after the German invasion: they published their paper legally and tried to fulfil various public positions. There is yet another reason why the party leadership assumed a cautious attitude: De Groot hoped to be able to flee to Moscow with several other party executives. There, after consultation with the Comintern secretariat, he would be able to decide on the right tactic and to steer the CPN indirectly, by way of the OMS. Initially the Comintern leadership approved of this plan, but after the German invasion of The Netherlands, it informed the Dutch party leadership that no one was to leave.<sup>82</sup> Repeated requests on the part of De Groot to be allowed to travel to Moscow anyway could not sway the Comintern.

During the hostilities, which in The Netherlands only lasted five days, the party did not hold public meetings. Many Communists were busy safeguarding party possessions, yet there was no sign of party-led agitation nor of any kind of campaign. Moreover, mobilized party members were generally indistinguishable from other soldiers. On May 15 the secretariat met with several party executives. Far-reaching decisions were made. The meeting approved that the party should be led by a trio, that the party Executive Committee should be abolished, and that no stone should be left unturned to get *Het Volksdagblad* published again legally. The paper had been banned by the Dutch authorities on May 10. The trio, whose names were not reported at the meeting, consisted of De Groot, Jansen, and Dieters. Party executives like Beuzemaker, Schalker, De Leeuw, Wijnkoop

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<sup>81</sup> See Harmsen, *Rondom Daan Goulouze*.

<sup>82</sup> Morriën, "Telegrammen uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog", pp. 248-249.

and De Visser were "put on reserve", being supposedly too well-known.<sup>83</sup>

Party officials were sent out to the districts to give instructions on organizing the underground, and to request the parties to await further orders. In various districts the underground organization had already begun with the formation of groups of five members who kept in touch with the leadership by way of intermediaries. Meanwhile, Struik and other party officials represented the party leadership in negotiations with the occupying force about *Het Volksdagblad's* legal publication. Although Pressedezernent Janke seemed to have few objections, official permission was a long time coming. In early June the party publishing house *Pegasus* issued the monthly *Politiek en Cultuur* with an unsigned article by De Groot on the political situation. He viewed the German invasion as comparable to the invasion of Scandinavia. No criticism of Germany was included at all: worse still; the Dutch were called upon to adopt a "correct behaviour" towards the occupying force. Goulooze, who had seen the proofs of this article, disagreed with its standpoint. He suggested consulting Clément, the Comintern instructor to the French party who stayed in Brussels. According to Goulooze's colleague Co Dankkaart, Clément sought the Comintern leadership's opinion through the transmitter and the article was rejected. However, by the time Goulooze returned to Amsterdam, *Politiek en Cultuur* had been printed and distributed. De Groot's article, especially the passage on the "correct behaviour", caused great confusion and irritation within the party.<sup>84</sup>

The lifting of the injunction against the NSB-newspaper *Volk en Vaderland* (The People and the Fatherland) formally implied revocation of the ban on *Het Volksdagblad*. The party tried to take advantage of this by publishing its newspaper on June 27. The very next day, however, the Dutch authorities again banned the paper, apparently with the approval of the occupying force. *Politiek en Cultuur* was also banned. On July 20, 1940 the CPN and its allied organizations were outlawed, and shortly afterwards Communists were expelled from city councils whose meetings they had continued to attend even after the party had been banned. Now that the party was driven completely underground, the organization of the movement progressed slowly. At the most one fourth, about 2,400 members, of the pre-War party membership became part of the underground CPN.

The most significant delaying factor was much more political than organizational. How could the Pact's Comintern policies be implemented under German occupation? In Scandinavia, the Comintern policies seemed to offer possibilities for legally functioning Communist parties, but for an underground struggle against the occupying force these policies seemed less appropriate. Completely in keeping with the Scandinavian example, De Groot, in the legally published *Politiek en Cultuur* and *Het Volksdagblad*, had criticized only the allies. The resulting indignation made it clear that an alternative interpretation of the political situation was needed. Specifically, a more resolute attitude towards the occupying force was necessary if party members were to be incited to continue their operations under these dangerous conditions. It would not take much for such an alternative interpretation to exceed the confines of the Comintern policies which, above all else, were aimed at preventing any damage to Soviet-German relations. Moreover, it was unclear what the party could do at this point, deprived now of its customary means of expression. The CPN leadership was not used to formulating its own policies, and the guidelines from Moscow were either too abstract or too arbitrary. The Comintern leadership, with Goulooze as intermediary, had often had to encourage activities. The German occupation of The Netherlands had been in effect for six months before the CPN came out publicly with a precise stance against the occupying force. Probably the views of the German Communists in Amsterdam, under Wilhelm Knöchel's leadership, served the CPN as a model for this statement. Late November 1940, the party published an underground newspaper: *De Waarheid* (The Truth), in which Anglo-American Imperialism was ranked on a par with the Hitler regime. The latter, however, was implicitly designated as the primary enemy, since its aim was to annex The Netherlands to the German Reich by helping the NSB into power. Consequently, agitation against Hitler's Germany could be found again in the CPN propaganda, and in this the Dutch Communists went further than their Belgian or French comrades. For some even this was not going far enough. De Leeuw believed that the Communists, together with all who opposed the German occupation - including therefore the British-oriented section of the Dutch bourgeoisie -, should take part in the struggle for the reestablishment of national independence. His views were debated among former Party executives. In early 1941 the trio denounced this position,

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<sup>83</sup> See Hansje Galesloot, Susan Legêne, *Partij in het verzet. De CPN in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 25-28.

<sup>84</sup> See Harmsen, *Rondom Daan Goulooze*, pp. 137-139.

and De Leeuw was expelled.<sup>85</sup>

Not all party members had been waiting patiently for instructions. After the German invasion, the Organization of the Unemployed had continued its activities as much as possible. Many unemployed Communists were sent on unemployment relief assignments. There they resumed their tried and tested methods of agitation and pre-War demands for better wages and working conditions.<sup>86</sup> Late October 1940 a strike broke out among unemployment relief workers against an increase of working hours. This was accompanied by demonstrations in the centre of Amsterdam. By mid-November these campaigns came to a successful resolution. Just before Christmas, demonstrations were initiated by Amsterdam unemployment relief workers demanding higher unemployment benefits, since freezing weather had made work impossible. Up to mid-February large demonstrations regularly moved through the city. Despite harsh confrontations with the Dutch police, the occupying force did not interfere, and these campaigns were also successful. In mid-February the Amsterdam metal workers went on strike against being forcefully sent to Germany. Again, the demands of the strikers were met. These results could only have been achieved because of the occupying regime's relatively moderate attitude which, at least up to February 1941, was due to the illusion of winning the Dutch people over to National Socialism.

Meanwhile, political campaigns against the occupation's anti-semitic policies continued. In November 1940 students from Delft and Leiden went on strike against the dismissal of Jewish professors. In the cities, workers fought in ever-increasing numbers against the Defence Unit (*Weer Afdeling*; WA) of the NSB which, following the German example, tried to dominate the streets. When a WA man was killed in a street fight in the Jewish neighbourhood of Amsterdam, the occupying force used the incident as a pretext for shutting off that neighbourhood on February 12, making it a ghetto. Several days later, a Jewish ice cream parlour owner from South Amsterdam resisted a German attack. As a reprisal the occupying forces, on February 22 and 23, carried out razzia's in the Jewish neighbourhood, resulting in 425 Jewish young men being rounded up.

In early February, at the height of the unemployed and unemployment relief workers' successful campaigns, the underground party leadership decided to aim for a mass protest, highlighted by a general strike. The purpose was to stop the occupying force's further food rationing, the forceful dispatches to Germany, and anti-Jewish measures. At the same time, this protest action would stop the NSB's advance. With the metal workers' strike this goal was almost achieved, but because the occupying force gave in to this strike after one day, the general strike was postponed. The Amsterdam district leadership decided the time was right for a general strike. Party groups received the directive to organize a strike for the 25th of February, and Jansen drafted a summon for a strike that would be directed almost exclusively against the occupying forces and the NSB's anti-Semitic terror. In this manifesto not a word came up about British imperialism. While this proclamation was itself a definite break with the Pact's policies, the proposed strike went far beyond all the bounds established by the Comintern policies: hundreds of thousands of strikers turned against the German occupation. Public transportation was paralysed, and there were violent confrontations between Dutch and German police. The occupying force sent SS-troops to Amsterdam, resulting in at least thirteen killed and many dozens wounded. The strike, which spread to the cities around Amsterdam, was ended two days later.<sup>87</sup>

The occupying force's response to the strike was a massive rounding up of strikers and Communists. Due to these massive arrests, the CPN - who up to this time had only been watched carefully by the occupying force - had to rebuild the Amsterdam party organization and restore broken contacts with various districts. This unprecedented heavy repression marked an abrupt end of public activities. From now on the party concentrated on underground agitation.

Only once more did the party expose itself to the light of day: it was for Wijnkoop's cremation. Wijnkoop died on May 7, 1941. Several hundred people paid their last respects and De Visser, who was not involved with the underground, gave a eulogy that was published in the middle-class *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* (The New Rotterdam Paper).

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<sup>85</sup> See Harmsen, "Leven en werk van mr. Alex S. de Leeuw", pp. 146-147, 151-152.

<sup>86</sup> For more information on the campaigns up to the February strike, see: Ben A. Sijes, *De Februari-staking. 25-26 februari 1941* (Amsterdam, s.a.); Gerard Maas, *Kroniek van de Februari-staking 1941* (Amsterdam, 1961); Galesloot, Legène, *Partij in het verzet*, pp. 53-56, 73-91.

<sup>87</sup> In January 1941, Klemens Gottwald had already forbidden the underground Tchech party to take part in such campaigns. The reticent attitude of the Comintern press was a further indication that the February strike distressed the Comintern leadership. See Pelt, *Vrede door Revolutie*, p. 277.

When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the party was in dire straits. After the strike, the party leadership had again taken up the Pact policies, which meant that attacks on Anglo-American and German Imperialism were divided equally. This changed after June 22, 1941, when the War suddenly became a national liberation war with the Allied forces and Soviet Union as allies.<sup>88</sup> Shortly after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Dutch police, by order of the Germans, arrested 600 CPN members whose membership dated from before the War. Two hundred were released because they could make a plausible case for not belonging to the underground CPN. Of those sent to a concentration camp, an estimated one-third survived. Pre-War party executives like De Leeuw, De Visser, and Struik would not return. Of the 2,000 members with whom the underground CPN started its campaigns in 1940, at least a thousand were arrested in the summer of 1942.<sup>89</sup>

Ever since the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the CPN had called for a national popular front. It was taken for granted that neither the underground movements of the former RSAP nor the section of the SDAP leadership, collaborating with the Germans, would be included. For the time being, the Party was unable to even establish regular contact with other resistance movements. SDAP leaders like Vorrink, who were active in the resistance, did not want anything to do with the Communists.<sup>90</sup>

After June 22, 1941, armed party groups, recruited from ex-Spanish Civil War combatants, and party members with military training came into action. The ex-Spanish Civil War fighter Jan Hendrik van Gilse became the leader of these "Mil-groups" in which an estimated two hundred Communists participated. Initially they were primarily involved in sabotage, then increasingly with attacks on traitors. In May 1941 the Mil-groups, together with civil members of the resistance, set up the Council of Resistance (*Raad van Verzet*).<sup>91</sup>

The CPN's most important projects were working for the paper *De Waarheid* and collecting money for the Solidarity Fund (*Solidariteitsfonds*) that supported those who had gone underground and those workers who refused to work in Germany. The Solidarity Fund was able to distribute more relief aid each year, but *De Waarheid*, because of arrests, suffered a loss in circulation: from 11,000 at the beginning of 1941 to around 6,000 in 1943.<sup>92</sup>

In October 1942 De Groot was able to elude arrest, but his wife and daughter were taken away and deported to Auschwitz. In early April 1943 the occupying force succeeded in arresting Jansen and Dieters. De Groot now withdrew from all party activities.<sup>93</sup> This meant that Goulooze, who still had transmitter-contact with the Comintern leadership, set up a new leadership with Postma, who at that time headed the Amsterdam CPN together with Frits Reuter and Wim Puister. When Beuzemaker was caught in November 1943, the German SD could also arrest Postma, Goulooze and Schlaker.<sup>94</sup> Shortly before, the OMS-organization had also been terminated. One of the last messages Goulooze and his partners could pass on from Moscow was of the dissolution of the Comintern.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet*, pp. 93-96.

<sup>89</sup> Lou de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Vol. 5 (The Hague, 1974), pp. 101, 826.

<sup>90</sup> Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet*, pp. 101-108.

<sup>91</sup> De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Vol. 5, pp. 823-825; Galesloot, Legêne, *Partij in het verzet*, pp. 108-121; Harmsen, *Rondom Daan Goulooze*, p. 212.

<sup>92</sup> De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Vol. 5, pp. 828, 829.

<sup>93</sup> Lou de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Vol. 6 (The Hague, 1975), pp. 176-180.

<sup>94</sup> Frits Reuter, *De Communistische Partij van Nederland in oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam, 1978), p. 71; Harmsen, *Rondom Daan Goulooze*, pp. 211, 217.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

## *Conclusion*

I am aware that the above summary of the CPN's history contains certain imbalances. Much emphasis has come to be placed on the party's first years, on the first years after the October Revolution, on the second half of the thirties, and on the first year of the occupation. Apart from this last episode, my personal preference is not involved. These are the time periods which up to 1943 are most prevalent in the literature, and also that is not just a matter of chance. From an international perspective, the most interesting aspects are the party's formation, the adjustment to working on a line with the Comintern, and possibly also the time period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In the second half of the thirties the party reached its pre-War prime. In addition, there is evidently a relatively great interest in the last few pre-War years in relation to the history of the labour movement.

Except for the years 1943-1948, the CPN has always remained a small party. The CPN played a meaningful role only during the occupation when, because of its tight organization and the great personal commitment of a few thousand members, it was the only organized underground party that contributed disproportionately to the Resistance. The first objective of any Communist party, namely the establishment of Socialism in the party's own country, was, during those years as well, far beyond its scope. In the above I have shown that the CPN's history has known moments in which its own beliefs clashed with those of the Comintern leadership. Nevertheless, we must conclude that submissiveness predominated during those years. For the Dutch Communists the international alliance with the Soviet Union and the Comintern was an invaluable source of inspiration to persevere in its struggle, even in times when the party seemed a shambles and society hostile.

Translated by Bernadette van Houten