



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

Children of the Red Flag
Growing Up in a Communist Family During the Cold War:
A Comparative Analysis of the British and Dutch Communist
Movement

Elke Marloes Weesjes

Dphil

University of Sussex

September 2010

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

Abstract

This thesis assesses the extent of social isolation experienced by Dutch and British ‘children of the red flag’, i.e. people who grew up in communist families during the Cold War. This study is a comparative research and focuses on the political and non-political aspects of the communist movement. By collating the existing body of biographical research and prosopographical literature with oral testimonies this thesis sets out to build a balanced picture of the British and Dutch communist movement.

The study is divided into two parts. *Part I* discusses the political life of communists within the wider context of the history of British and Dutch communist organizations (i.e. both communist parties and their youth organizations) from 1901-1970. *Part II* discusses the private and public life of British and Dutch communists in the period 1940-1970. The latter draws upon oral testimonies and questions if non-political aspects of communist life were based on a Soviet model. The experiences of communist children are explored into detail within the context of the following topics; political and cultural upbringing, prescription and aspirations, neighbourhood, school & education, work & employment, money & poverty and friendships & relationships. The interviews are being used as a means of testing the accuracy of two authors in particular; Jolande Withuis and Raphael Samuel, who both published pioneering works on communist mentality.

The originality of this project rests in its approach; it is a comparative research inspired by both oral history and memory studies. Instead of emphasizing the idea of a unified and centralized (international) communist movement, this thesis argues that cultural, social and political differences between Britain and the Netherlands fundamentally influenced the nature and form of their respective communist movement and explain the discrepancy between the Dutch and British respondents’ experiences. Applying the comparative approach this study challenges the existing definitions of communist identity and as such it contributes to recent comparative studies of the communist movement as well as studies of communist mentality.

Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Sources and methodology	15
Arguments and structure	21
 Part I - Communist Organisations	
 Chapter One - The Founding History of the Dutch and British Communist Party	
Introduction	28
Pillarisation	29
The origins of the British and Dutch Communist Party	30
WWI and the Russian Revolution	34
British and Dutch Trade Unions	36
CPGB and the CPN in the 1920s and 1930s	40
WWII 1939-1945	49
The Cold War	60
Conclusion	76
 Chapter Two - Communist Youth Organizations, 1901-1970	
Introduction	78
History of the Dutch and British Communist Youth Movement; Founding to 1945	80
The ANJV and YCL 1945-1948	90
The Cold War: Isolation 1948-1958	93
Détente and Cooperation 1958-1970	99
Conclusion	125
 Part II - Communist Identity	
Introduction	127
Family Tradition?	128
 Chapter Three - WWII & The Year 1956: Impact and Aftermath	
Introduction	133
WWII	133
'1956'	143
Conclusion	149

Chapter Four - Private Spheres: Communist Homelife

Introduction	151
Politics at home	152
Cultural upbringing	159
Prescriptions & aspirations	163
Spock vs. Makarenko	166
Conclusion	172

Chapter Five - Public Spheres: Neighbourhood, School and Work

Introduction	174
Neighbourhood	175
School and education	183
Work and employment	193
Money and poverty	205
Friendships and relationships	209
Conclusion	212

Epilogue: Looking back	214
-------------------------------	-----

Conclusion	220
-------------------	-----

Bibliography	224
---------------------	-----

Appendix I List of abbreviations	232
---	-----

Appendix II Membership CPN/CPGB and General elections results	234
--	-----

Appendix III List of respondents	238
---	-----

Appendix IV List of interview questions	240
--	-----

Acknowledgments

In the course of preparing and writing this thesis I have incurred many debts to members of the history department, colleagues, friends and family. I register here my grateful thanks to my supervisors, Alun Howkins and Ian Gazeley, who have supported and guided me in the past four years. A very special thanks goes out to Lucy Robinson and Andy Durr; I would not have embarked upon a research degree, if they wouldn't have encouraged me to do so four years ago. I am grateful to the Sussex history department for awarding me with a postgraduate bursary, which enabled me to complete this research.

I am also very grateful to all those people who agreed to be interviewed for this research project. Furthermore I want to thank a number of people who provided practical help and support; Margreet Schrevel, Ian Bullock, Kevin Morgan, Ben Jones, Paul Betts, Eugene Michail, Claire Langhamer, Nick Funke, Ruth Charnock and Pol Side, Mark Fonseca Rendeiro.

I was fortunate to have the support and assistance of the Labour History Study and Archive Centre, the Working Class Movement Library and the International Institute for Social History.

Lastly I want to thank my friends and family for inspiring and motivating me whenever I needed it most. I particularly want to thank my parents Sietze and Janny Weesjes and my siblings: Marie-Jose, Siebrand, Maaïke, my friends Lennart Post, Nine Ludwig, Rachel McHale & Mike Ott, Tom Akehurst, Chris Kempshall, Becca Searle, Kevin Reynolds, Shad Khan, Raphael Hallett, Roger Johnson and Amanda McKeever.

Introduction

*To be a communist was to have a complete social identity, one which transcended the limits of class, gender and nationality. Like practicing Catholics or orthodox Jews, we lived in a little private world of our own, or, like some of the large or extended families of the period, 'a tight....self-referential group'.*¹ (Raphael Samuel)

Raphael Samuel (1934-1996), historian, socialist and 'child of the red flag', published three individual essays on British communism in *New Left Review* in the mid 1980s, which were later brought together in *The Lost World of British Communism* to mark the tenth anniversary of his death. The essays, which give an illuminating insight on many aspects of the British communist movement, are a captivating mixture of personal experiences, observations and archival research. Samuel gives a very personal history of the CPGB, but also describes the construction of a communist mentality around certain values and practices. This history of British communism 'from below' is also based on interviews with members of the author's own family.

In the Netherlands a study similar to that of Samuel was published in 1990. In that year the sociologist Jolande Withuis, also a 'child of the red flag' published *Opoffering en Heroiek. De mentale wereld van een communistische vrouwenorganisatie in naoorlogs Nederland 1946-1976* (Sacrifice and heroism. The mental world of a communist women's organisation in the post-war Netherlands 1946-1976)², which is an extensive work on the Dutch communist women's movement in the post war period based on archival research as well as life histories and other biographical sources. Withuis, who soon became (and still is) a leading authority in her field, focused on a generation of women born around 1920 who became active in the *Nederlandse Vrouwenbeweging* (Dutch Women Movement NVB) after the war. Her subjects were women who started families during and after WWII and who tried to give their children a communist upbringing. Her book, which describes the history of the NVB, is not about the political significance of this organization, but about

¹ R. Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, London: Verso 2006, p. 13.

² J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek. De Mentale Wereld van een Communistische Vrouwenorganisatie in Naoorlogs Nederland 1946-1976*, Amsterdam: Boom, 1990.

what politics meant in its members' lives. Her research results in an interesting picture of the mentality and culture of Dutch communists in the Cold War period. Withuis, who was inspired by a number of foreign authors who did similar studies, notes in her introduction that her observations are very similar to those of Samuel, albeit less nostalgic.³

Samuel's essays and Withuis' *Opoffering en Heroiek* were in many ways the missing link between 'traditional' communist party histories and the numerous autobiographical narratives from ex-communists and communist activists. Unlike Withuis and Samuel authors of these 'traditional' party histories generally underplayed the social and cultural aspects of the communist movement by solely focusing on the political aspects.⁴ Withuis and Samuel are different because they both explore what politics meant in party members' lives. By discussing political, cultural and social aspects, they built up a more complete yet personal picture of the communist movement.

In Britain there are many political histories of the communist party. In their article on the historiography of the British Communist Party, John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, explore contributions to party history by CPGB cadres and their political antagonists and several academic contributions.⁵ McIlroy and Campbell discuss the work of cadres like Tom Bell, who wrote the first extended history of the CPGB in 1937⁶, and journalists Allen Hutt⁷ and Robin Page Arnot⁸. Histories of the British Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s were influenced by the debate about the extent of 'Britishness' of the party. Henry Pelling, in his study *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile*, which was published in 1958 rejects the party's official view that the CPGB was part of the British

³ J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek*, p. 30.

⁴ It should be noted that K. Newton's *The Sociology of British Communism*, Penguin Press, 1969, which goes beyond politics and is a study of membership trends in the British CP from 1922 to 1966, but because of the sociological method used by the author this research does not give any insight into the cultural or social aspects of the Party. S. Macintyre's pioneering work *Little Moscows, Communism and Working-class Militancy in Interwar Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1980 is an early example of a cultural history into the Communist movement. Although extremely lively and stimulating Macintyre's chosen subjects, Vale of Leven, Mardy and Lumphinnans are not representative for the wider Communist movement. In these villages, none of which are English, communists were not an isolated minority and therefore Macintyre's findings are not representative for the wider British communist movement.

⁵ J. McIlroy and A. Campbell, 'Histories of the British Communist Party: a User's Guide' in *Labour History Review special issue – International Communism*, Volume 68, Nr 1 April 2003, pp. 33-59.

⁶ T. Bell, *The British Communist Party. A Short History*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937.

⁷ A. Hutt, *The Post-War History of the British Working Class*, London: Gollancz, 1937.

⁸ R. Page Arnot, *Twenty Years. The Policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain From Its Foundation*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1940.

Labour movement. Pelling describes it as an alien organization, controlled and financed by the Soviet Union. James Klugmann⁹ on the other hand, who was Arnot's successor and published the official CPGB history in 1968, does not even discuss the claims that the CPGB was Moscow's puppet. He was subsequently highly criticized by historians; Hobsbawm remarked about Klugmann that he was 'paralysed by the impossibility of being both a good historian and a loyal functionary'.¹⁰ McIlroy and Campbell agree with this statement adding that (until) the 1980s 'Party history lacked historical integrity and was a reflex of party policies'.¹¹ In their article they heavily criticize the apologetic literature published by party historians like Klugmann and Arnot although they are slightly more positive about the two volumes on the history of the CPGB written by Noreen Branson.¹² A similar approach, albeit from a different perspective was taken by Trotskyist historians, most notably the work of Michael Woodhouse and Brian Pearce, whose study of the party is dominated by the all over and onnipotent influence of Moscow.¹³

There are also a large number of autobiographical accounts written by CPGB members however these are generally quite difficult to value because of the primary purpose they served. Pennetier and Pudal who analysed autobiographies of members of the French Communist Party (PCF) describe how the communist movement considered autobiographies as a way to legitimize the Soviet system. In this context the authors refer to Jacques Lagroye who defined this legitimisation as; 'a series of processes that make the existence of a coercive power tolerable, if not desirable, that is to say, that lead to it being seen as a total necessity, if not as an advantage'.¹⁴ Pennetier and Pudal also explore the questionnaires that were used as a guideline by party cadres when writing their autobiographies. In their autobiographies authors had to incorporate these questions:

⁹ J. Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968.

¹⁰ E. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973, p. 10.

¹¹ John McIlroy & Alan Campbell, 'Histories of the British Communist Party: a user's guide', p. 38.

¹² N. Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941*, London: Lawrence and Wishart 1985; *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

¹³ M. Woodhouse and B. Pearce, *Essays on the History of Communism in Britain*, London: New Park Publications, 1975.

¹⁴ C. Pennetier and B. Pudal, 'Communist Prosopography in France', in *Agents of the Revolution. New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Bern: European Academic Publishers, 2005, p. 23.

covering all aspects of social, cultural, political, professional, and ideological life and shaping the autobiographical narrative in the highly specific context of a total institution demanding from its cadres a measure of self commitment all the more easily conceded since it was often only one dimension of a revolutionary commitment of global horizons implying discipline and self-dedication.¹⁵

Therefore these by the party supervised and sanitized autobiographies can not be considered as honest accounts of activists' lives. They were meant to 'encourage' fellow communists and were often not much more than propaganda. Kevin Morgan has termed autobiographical writing of communists 'personalised forms of official party history'.¹⁶ A fine example of such an autobiography is that of Ernie Trory who wrote three volumes on his life as a communist organizer.¹⁷ More revealing are the autobiographies written by ex-CPGB members, although like the autobiographies written by communists, they are not always reliable. Generally these memoirs are influenced by the author's feelings of disillusionment, frustration and sometimes anger with the communist party. Douglas Hyde's *I Believed* and Bob Darke's *The Communist Technique in Britain* both published in 1952, are two well known examples.¹⁸

Like in Britain, histories of the Dutch Communist Party were predominantly written by party members. Generally the CPN's histories were particularly political and primarily meant for schooling or propaganda purposes and authors did not intend to start a debate or discussion about the party and its policies. It wasn't until the 1970s that academic interest developed into the history of communism in the Netherlands, but even then most academic authors were still affiliated with the party. The authors of the official bibliography of the historiography of Dutch communism note that general histories of the CPN are scarce.¹⁹ Before the fall of communism only one author published a general history; A.A. de Jonge, who is also called 'the Dutch Raphael Samuel', wrote his book on the history of the CPN in

¹⁵ Ibid. p 24.

¹⁶ *Socialist History 34: Biography and the Political uses of Memory*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 2009, p. vi.

¹⁷ E. Trory, *Between the wars. Recollections of a Communist Organizer*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1974; *The imperialist war. Further Recollections of a Communist Organizer*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1977; *War of Liberation. Recollections of a Communist Activist*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1987.

¹⁸ D. Hyde, *I Believed. The Autobiography of a Former British Communist*, London: The Reprint Society, 1950; B. Darke, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, London: Penguin Books LTD, 1952.

¹⁹ M. Kropman, *Van bron tot boek: Apparaat voor de Geschiedschrijving van het Communisme in Nederland*, Amsterdam: IPSO, 1986.

1972.²⁰ He is the only author who has written a history of the CPN which starts at the party's foundation and discusses both wars as well as the post-war period.

A vast amount of brochures and articles about the history of the party was published to mark anniversaries. These accounts, written by party cadres like Annie Averink and Paul de Groot, were always buoyant about the past and optimistic about the future without having any real historical value. The subject of the CPN during WWII has received relatively more attention. H. Galesloot & S. Legêne's *Partij in het verzet. De CPN in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* is especially worth mentioning as well as Pelt's extensive work on the CPN during the years of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.²¹ A multitude of (auto)biographies of resistance fighters and communist war victims were published in the period after 1945, which were often not that different from those described by Pudal and Penner. These (auto) biographies were generally heroic accounts which were meant to legitimize and extol the CPN's role during the war and to give strength to fellow communists during the difficult Cold War period. Two unusually frank and very different books were published by Dunya Breur. The first one, published in 1983, is dedicated to her mother's artwork, mostly produced in Ravensbrück concentration camp where her mother, a communist resistance fighter, was imprisoned for almost two years during WWII. In this book Breur describes the impact of her mother's war experiences on her childhood. Seventeen years later Breur also published a book about her father who was also active in the communist resistance and who was arrested and shot by the Nazis.²² These two books underline the value of the 'child's perspective' and appear moving and honest accounts of a communist life and apparently free of a hidden agenda or propaganda, unlike the aforementioned communist autobiographies.

With the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the partial opening of the Comintern archives, a new international historiographical trend can be observed. A shift occurred and academics developed an interest in the culture of communism and 'history

²⁰ A.A. de Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland: de Geschiedenis van een Politieke Partij*, Den Haag: Kruseman, 1972.

²¹ H. Galesloot and S. Legêne, *Partij in Verzet. De CPN in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Pegasus, 1986; W.F.S. Pelt, *Vrede door Revolutie: de CPN Tijdens het Molotov Ribbentrop pact 1939-1941*, Den Haag: SDU, 1990.

²² D. Breur, *Een Verborgene Herinnering*, Amsterdam: Tiebosch, 1983; *Een Gesprek Met Mijn Vader*, Nijmegen: Sun, 2000.

from below'. Historians have not necessarily moved away from political history of the communist movement, but combine 'traditional' political histories with new cultural approaches and make use of new knowledge obtained from previously closed party archives. Both in the Netherlands and in Britain new general histories of the communist party were published. Willie Thompson's *The good old cause*²³ Francis Beckett's *The Enemy within*²⁴, Andrew Thorpe's account of the CPGB's formation *The British Communist Party and Moscow*²⁵, Matthew Worley's *Class against Class*²⁶ which discusses the period of the Nazi-Soviet pact, John Callaghan's *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict*²⁷ and Geoff Andrews book on the final years of British communism are particularly relevant²⁸. Other important works on the history of the CPGB, published in the same period, are two studies of Britain's best-known communists. Kevin Morgan's book on Harry Pollitt and John Callaghan's work on Rajani Palme Dutt provide fascinating insights into the workings of the CPGB in the years 1920-1960.²⁹ In the Netherlands, works relevant to this thesis and published after the collapse of communism, are Ger Verrips' *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend* by Ger Verrips³⁰, Gerrit Voerman's work on the CPN's relationship with Moscow in the 1930s³¹ and Arthur Stam's book on proletarian internationalism in the Netherlands, which was published in 2004.³²

This shift in communist historiography was accompanied by an interest in 'life history', the use of biography, but also a new look at communism and gender relations. In

²³ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause, British Communism 1920-1991*, London: Pluto Press, 1992.

²⁴ F. Beckett, *Enemy within, the Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party*, London: Merlin Press, 1995.

²⁵ A. Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow 1920-1943*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

²⁶ M. Worley, *Class Against Class. The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars*, London: Tauris and Co Ltd, 2002. Also see: F. King and G. Matthews, *About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Second World War: The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings of 25 September and 2-3 October 1939*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

²⁷ J. Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis & Conflict: the CPGB 1951-1968*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2003.

²⁸ G. Andrews, *Endgames and New Times: the Final Years of British Communism 1964-1991*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2004.

²⁹ K. Morgan, *Harry Pollitt*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

³⁰ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend: de Geschiedenis van de CPN 1938-1991*, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1995.

³¹ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou. De CPN en de Communistische Internationale 1919-1930*, Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 2001.

³² A. Stam, *De CPN en Haar Buitenlandse Kameraden. Proletarisch Internationalisme in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Aspect, 2004.

1999 a group of British academics, started a project on British communist biography based at the University of Manchester. They applied a prosopographical approach;³³ drawing on a collection of over 3000 autobiographical questionnaires and over 100 recorded interviews with former communist party members, they explored who joined the communist party and why and above all what significance this commitment had. The first book that arose from this project was *Party People Communist Lives. Explorations in Biography* which was published in 2001 and is a collection of studies of communist lives and focuses on the period 1920-1940.³⁴ A second book based on the findings of this project was published in 2007. In this book *Communists and British Society 1920-1991* which is regarded as one of the fullest accounts of the British communist movement, Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn integrate the private and the political, depicting the lives of 'ordinary' members of the CPGB.³⁵

Two years earlier Morgan, Cohen and Flinn had been involved in the editing of *Agents of the Revolution. New biographical approaches to the history of international communism in the age of Lenin and Stalin*. This book is a collection of essays which goes 'beyond the concerns with party elites or functionaries of some existing studies, and to mix oral, literary and documentary sources as well as both qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis'.³⁶ According to the editors, these essays are meant to encourage a cross fertilization between the historians of communist parties in different countries, although they acknowledge the fact that actual comparative studies are still quite rare.³⁷ The essays are derived from the 'People of a Special Mould?' conference on communist biography and prosopography held in Manchester in April 2001, which brought together historians of the communist movement from nearly twenty countries. From the same conference a collection of articles was brought together in *Socialist History 21 Red Lives*. One of its contributors, Margreet Schrevel, who is a research officer at the International Institute for Social History

³³ Prosopography is an independent science of social history embracing, genealogy, onomastics and demography.

³⁴ J. McIlroy, K. Morgan, A. Campbell (ed), *Party People, Communist Lives. Explorations in Biography*, Amsterdam: Lawrence and Wishart, 2001.

³⁵ K. Morgan, G. Cohen, A. Flinn, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991*, Amsterdam: Rivers Oram Press, 2007.

³⁶ K. Morgan, G. Cohen, A. Flinn, *Agents of the Revolution, New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Bern: Lang, 2005, p.15.

³⁷ Ibid. p.13.

in Amsterdam, wrote her article 'A Dutch Mix of Scouts and Pioneers' on the Dutch communist youth organisation *Uilenspiegelclub*. A year after the aforementioned conference, Schrevel and I started a project about communist family life in the Netherlands.³⁸ Together we interviewed 25 people who grew up in communist families in Cold War Holland. Drawing on respondents' recollections of their communist childhood and the CPN archive we built up a picture of what it was like to grow up in the communist left. Schrevel wrote an article based upon our research in *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift*,³⁹ an academic periodical. These interviews were used for my Masters dissertation.⁴⁰ The project was inspired by two works on the lives of communist children. In 1997 Phil Cohen published *Children of the Revolution. Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain*,⁴¹ and Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro published a similar book in 1998 in the United States called *Red Diapers. Growing up in the Communist Left*.⁴² Both books are collections of interviews conducted by the editors who themselves grew up in communist families and provide new insights into the real life of the party in the Cold War period.

Compared to Britain, histories of Dutch communism 'from below' are thinly sown and the prosopographical approach to the subject of communism is in its infancy. Nevertheless Withuis has been using this methodology for her thesis *Opoffering en Heroiek*, and also for her later works on communist mentality and WWII.⁴³ Schrevel, who published several articles on communist youth organizations, also applied this

³⁸ I was working as an intern at the International Institute of Social History.

³⁹ M. Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands Fabrikaat. Communistische Gezinnen in de Jaren Vijftig', in *Holland Historisch Tijdschrift* nr. 4, vol. 36, 2004, pp. 327-52.

⁴⁰ E. Weesjes, *De Communistische Beweging in Nederland. Isolement en Samenwerking 1945-1975*, 2004. For this dissertation I choose the period 1945-1970 and map out the changes between the silent and protest generation. Drawing on Mannheim's theories on generations this dissertation argues that in the late 1950s adolescent Dutch Communists could be considered as the precursors of the Protest Generation.

⁴¹ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution, Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

⁴² J. Kaplan and L. Shapiro, *Red Diapers. Growing up in the Communist Left*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press Urbana, 1998.

⁴³ J. Withuis, *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute: Over Politiek, Cultuur en Psyche*, Boom, 1995; *Erkenning, Van Oorlogstrauma naar Klaagcultuur*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2002; *Na het Kamp, Vriendschap en Politieke Strijd*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2005.

methodology.⁴⁴

Another recent trend within communist historiography is the comparative approach. At the 'People of a special mould' conference the editors of *Socialist History* observed 'how often the discussions consisted of making connections, drawing parallels, suggesting differences'.⁴⁵ They also noted that 'in the context of communist history, it is certainly true that the focus of the conference on lives and sub-cultures produced a richer and more generous exchange of ideas than some of the arid exchanges of the (ongoing) past'.⁴⁶ This is where the study I have carried out for this DPhil thesis fits in. It is a comparative research and focuses on the political and non-political aspects of the British and Dutch communist movement. Besides carrying out an interview project in Britain which draws on the findings of the project on Dutch communist family life, I have also compared both countries' communist organizations. By collating the histories of the Dutch and British movement and the lives of their members, I aim to gain a better understanding of communist mentality and the problem of social isolation.

Sources and methodology

This thesis is primarily based on oral testimonies of British⁴⁷ and Dutch 'children of the red flag' i.e. people who grew up in communist families during the Cold War period. The majority of the respondents grew up in cities with relatively large concentrations of communists: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, London, Liverpool and Manchester.⁴⁸ Two respondents come from Yorkshire, one from Limburg and one from the island of Texel. Amsterdam and to a lesser extent Rotterdam and Den Haag were traditional communist bulwarks. Based on industry and composition of the workforce British equivalents of these Dutch cities are London, Liverpool and Manchester. Most of the

⁴⁴ M. Schrevel, 'Romy Schneider' en 'Stalina' Samen in een Club: de Communistische Kinderorganisatie Uilenspiegelclub 1953-1964', in *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 25, 1999; 'Ballerina's voor de vrede. De Vereniging Nederland-USSR Importeert Sovjetcultuur 1947-1967', in *Bijdragen en medelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 116, 2001.

⁴⁵ *Socialist History 21 Red Lives*, 2002, London: Rivers Oram Press, introduction.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ After careful consideration I have decided to define my respondents as British rather than English. My respondents grew up in England, nevertheless my secondary sources as well as all CPGB literature and general statistics do not make a clear distinction between English and British communism and communists, therefore to avoid any confusion I will use the term 'British' as well.

⁴⁸ See appendix III for the full list of respondents.

respondents' parents were part-time communist activists or organizers, although a few fathers held full time positions within the party. The parents, who generally belonged to the working or lower middle classes⁴⁹, considered themselves representatives of the working class despite the fact they were often much more culturally and politically educated than an average member of the working class.⁵⁰ The initial criteria for this project were rather strict, originally I was looking for people born between 1937-1952⁵¹, who were raised in a communist family where both parents were members of the party, without excluding parents who joined or lapsed while the children were growing up. I was forced to relax my criteria to find enough respondents. I decided to 'allow' respondents who had only one parent with a CP membership. In these cases the other parent was a sympathizer. I also included respondents who were born just before or after my initial age criteria.

The membership figures of the CPGB in England between 1948 and 1970 fluctuated between 25,313 and 43,000 (population of England was 40 million in 1951 and 45 million in 1971). Besides the fact that CPGB membership figures are inaccurate and give no indication of trends, it is also hard to establish how many of these members had families; based on these figures I can only guess that there were not more than a few thousand families where both parents were active in the communist party. This made my search for respondents in England rather difficult. It was easier to find respondents in the Netherlands because the CPN was relatively larger than the CPGB in the post-war years. The figures fluctuated between 12,000 and 53,000 in the period 1948-1970 (the population of the Netherlands was eight million in 1948 and 13 million in 1970).⁵²

In total 23 Dutch and 12 British representatives of the second and third generation communists participated in this project. To make up for the numbers, besides interpreting my respondents' oral testimonies, I have also analyzed seven interviews from the book

⁴⁹ A few respondents come from a (poor) intellectual background.

⁵⁰ In this context I would like to refer to Raphael Samuel who notes; 'Class in its Leninist appropriation was a moral rather than a social signifier. It was a metaphor of action rather than, in a sociological sense, of belonging. It was measured not by occupation or income but by allegiance. It was an objective correlative of politics rather than – or as well as – economics. It was a psychic as much as a social state, an ideological complex rather than a simple matter of identity'. (R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 171.) This attitude towards class (i.e. considering oneself to be a representative of the working class whilst economically and socially belonging to the (lower) middle class) is more visible among British respondents and their parents than Dutch respondents whose parents were indeed, based on income and occupation, working class.

⁵¹ Member of the Silent Generation and the Protest Generation.

⁵² See appendix II for CPGB/CPN membership and election results.

Children of the Revolution. I have selected Cohen's interviews with; Alexei Sayle, Michael Rosen, Jude Bloomfield, Ann Kane, Nina Temple, Mike Power and Martin Kettle because they all fit my criteria. These people and my respondents are all born between 1934 and 1956, which means their formative years coincided with the Cold War.⁵³ I asked my respondents about their youth, family life, school years, friendships, love, holidays and hobbies in order to find answers to questions like; 'were non-political aspects of communist life based on a Soviet model?' and 'Was the communist community a little world within a world?' And if so: 'Where there any contradictions between these two worlds?'⁵⁴

The Dutch interviews were conducted in 2002 and the British interviews in 2008/2009 and lasted on average for about two hours. All of the respondents signed consent forms, some of them imposed various degrees of restriction on the use of the transcripts; others requested to remain anonymous for reasons of privacy. The atmosphere during the interviews was often relaxed although many things remained unsaid. Margreet Schrevel notes in her article on communist families that respondents' memory was not always sufficient and that they undoubtedly chose not to talk about certain things. She also argues that people who tell their life story, tend to aim for a certain justification and try to make their own history acceptable. Many respondents figured that although their experiences weren't always positive their parents must have done a good job since they grew up to be independent, well rounded and intelligent individuals.⁵⁵ Whereas the respondents over the years have become more forgiving about their upbringing and the relationship with their parents, they have become more critical of the party and the communist ideology in general. Morgan, Cohen and Flinn suggest that this is related to timing. It has been almost two decades since the collapse of communism and respondents often feel 'less constrained by a shared party loyalty and sense of discipline and more reflective about what the commitment to communism had meant in their lives'.⁵⁶ What is interesting in this context is that respondents whose parents are still alive find it harder to criticize the communist party, especially in those cases where parents never left the party and who would still

⁵³ Both relaxing my criteria as well as using testimonies collected and edited by a third party introduce a certain bias. I kept this in mind when I interpreted and compared my sources.

⁵⁴ See appendix IV for the full list of questions.

⁵⁵ M. Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands fabrikkat', p. 330.

⁵⁶ K.Morgan *et al*, *Communists and British Society 1920-199*, p. 272.

identify themselves as communist. For these children it does not matter that the party ceased to exist, because their parents are the party; they embody communism.

The use of oral testimonies provoke many questions and difficulties; the researcher who uses this method has to be very careful and needs to keep in mind that part of respondents' recollections are untrue, some of them are partially true and some are fully accurate. There are scholars who feel recollections only reveal the respondents' self-image at the time of the interview, others are convinced that one can reconstruct the historical reality through memory.⁵⁷ In Schrevel's project as well as my own I aimed to find a happy medium between both schools. In this context I draw on Paul Thompson who notes in his book *The Voice of the Past* that 'the nature of memory brings many traps for the unwary, which often explains the cynicism of those less well informed about oral sources'.⁵⁸ Yet they also bring unexpected rewards to a historian who is prepared to appreciate the complexity with which reality and myth, 'objective' and 'subjective', are inextricably mixed in all human perception of the world, both individual and collective'.⁵⁹ Thompson advises the historian to ask very detailed questions, because general questions will 'encourage subjective and collective myths and impressions'.⁶⁰ This is exactly what Schrevel had in mind when she formulated the questions we used during our interviews. The majority of questions are short and to the point, but because impressions are just as valuable for this kind of research, some questions are broader and demand a certain self-reflection by the interviewee.

Agreeing with Thompson, who acknowledges that it is not feasible for most oral historians to practice psychoanalysis,⁶¹ I feel it is important to make a distinction between psychoanalysis and oral history. Both disciplines use retrospective memory, but the psychoanalyst's approach differs greatly from that of the historian in that each is using oral testimony for a different purpose. In this thesis, rather than interpreting childhood memories in a way that could relate them to the psyche that has come to be shaped by these

⁵⁷ M. Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands fabriek', p. 330.

⁵⁸ This thesis also draws on V. R. Yow's book *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, London: Sage Publications Inc., 1994. and K. Davis and C. Brinkgreve's article 'Levensverhalen Als Sociaal Verschijnsel', *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 2, jrg. 29, afl. 1, 2002.

⁵⁹ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past. Oral history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 2nd ed, p. 135.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 156.

experiences, I want to use memories to gain a greater understanding of people's childhood experiences in order to construct a communist mentality. My own account makes no claim to be definitive, partly because of all the problems surrounding the use and interpretation of oral testimonies. Although I have tested the validity of the oral evidence by matching it to other secondary sources wherever possible, we can never say for sure that what people say is true. I agree with Ronald Fraser who notes; 'Oral history is not a substitute for, but an adjunct of, traditional historiography; it functions within the interstices of the latter. The sum of micro experiences does not, of itself make up an objective macro totality'.⁶² Despite many variables that influence the interviews, most obviously gender, class, social attitudes and parents' party loyalty, the individual accounts are connected and there are numerous similarities, some subtle while others are obvious. When the testimonies are closely analyzed characteristic patterns can be detected, not only when it comes to 'hard data', but also respondents' personal interpretations, without taking away the uniqueness of each and every story.

For this project I have not only collected individual accounts, I also interpreted these accounts within a larger frame in order to construct a collective past and as such, this project has been inspired by both oral history and memory studies. In their book *Oral history and Public Memories*, Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes discuss oral history and the construction of social and cultural memory. They note that there are many examples that the latter does not engage with the first. The following explanation is given for this phenomenon;

Oral history emerged as a widespread practice in relation to the democratizing of history in the 1960s, fueled by decolonization and the feminist civil rights movements. In contrast, the "memory turn" in scholarship usually cites as its catalysts the Jewish Holocaust memory 'industry' and twentieth-century wars, as well as the end of Communism in Eastern Europe, so that is often associated with trauma. As a result, much of this work moves beyond the local focus of oral histories to the national stage, played out on a rather larger range of sites than can be encompassed by the memories of individuals⁶³.

⁶² R. Fraser, *Blood of Spain. The Experience of Civil War 1936-1939*, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 30.

⁶³ P. Hamilton and L. Shopes (ed), *Oral History and Public Memories*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008, p. x.

Furthermore the editors note that historians who work within memory studies ask questions about the broader social and cultural processes at work in remembrance and are equally concerned with other (auto) biographical sources, whereas ‘oral historians privilege the individual respondent and focus necessarily on his/her agency in the world’, an approach which according to Hamilton and Shopes too often ‘fetishizes the interview process and fails to understand the interview as but one form of memory-making’.⁶⁴ In this thesis I have tried to integrate oral history and the use of interviews into the wider context of memory studies. Respondents’ testimonies in combination with archival research and the use of (auto) biographical sources are used to portray collective experiences, without losing the uniqueness of individuals’ experiences.

This thesis focuses on the Cold War years, a period which has been underplayed in the current communist historiography. Especially in the case of British historians of the communist movement who mainly focus on the period from the party’s formation in 1920 to the early 1940s and have largely ignored the post war period. This is perhaps related to fact that the CPGB archive for the inter-war period, which became available in 1991, is so extensive that it even dwarfs those of the Labour and Conservative parties. Unfortunately for historians of the British communist movement, there are significantly less sources available for the post-war period.

Historians interested in the non-political aspects of the lives of rank-and-file communists, have based their research on interviews with ex-party members, like Withuis, Morgan, Cohen and Flinn. I have chosen a different approach; my research project draws on interviews with the children of ex-party members. But whereas Cohen, Shapiro and Kaplan, whose collections of accounts in *Children of the Revolution* and *Red Diapers* were meant to give a flavour of what a CP upbringing was like, but were not necessarily interested in an academic study, I on the other hand have used the respondents’ testimonies to create a more complete picture of what it was like to be part of the communist movement. Unlike Cohen, Shapiro and Kaplan, I have unravelled and analyzed the individual interviews.

This ‘child’ perspective sheds a very different light on the matter and it will add nuance to the picture put forward by academics like Withuis and Samuel. Deborah Dwork who interviewed a large number of Holocaust survivors who were children at the time of

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. xi.

WWII, emphasizes the importance of children's perspective. She notes: 'the accounts surviving children have within them, their own personal memoirs and oral histories, complement and enrich the records left by adults about children and by children about themselves.'⁶⁵ In search for the communist identity, I too feel that children's testimonies are very revealing. They were born into a life rather than choosing it and, as such, are often less defensive in their responses than their parents and their testimonies are a valuable addition to the existing literature on communist mentality.

Arguments and structure

This thesis assesses the extent of social isolation experienced by members of the communist movement and traces how it manifested itself. Its arguments seek to contribute to the existing historiography of the British and Dutch communist movement, namely the social histories on communist mentality. By collating the existing body of biographical research and prosopographical literature with my own interviews I want to reconstruct but also compare the British and Dutch communist identity. Within this context this thesis will discuss the findings and observations of both Samuel and Withuis. Samuel in a sometimes rather romantic manner, describes the communist community as 'a tight self-referential group', a little world within a bigger world.⁶⁶ Withuis goes a step further and argues that the communist community was an island, isolated and removed from the rest of society and responsible for their own vilification. According to her, key terms in communist culture are; sacrifice, optimism, heroism, perseverance, self-assurance and a sense of duty. She concludes that communist family life was completely dominated by politics and that members of the communist community were expected to sacrifice a great deal in order to belong to the 'communist family'. In her book she calls the Marxist world view a doctrinal regime; 'an all encompassing story'.⁶⁷ Whilst Withuis and to a lesser extent Samuel build up a picture of a very isolated group with rigid moral codes and values, this thesis attempts to build up a more refined and nuanced picture of communist life. Instead of deliberately isolating themselves, as Withuis suggests, communists were also isolated and marginalized

⁶⁵ D. Dwork, *Children With a Star, Jewish Youth in Nazi-Europe*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, p. xxxiii.

⁶⁶ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 13.

⁶⁷ J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroïek*, p. 337.

by society. *Political* isolation was often caused by communist parties themselves mainly when they implemented Comintern directives that didn't apply to British and Dutch circumstances, nevertheless individual communists were generally not to blame for being *socially* isolated. Communists and their families made many attempts to break through this social isolation and tried very hard to integrate into society. Communist parents wanted their children to fit in and have a 'normal' childhood and in doing so they mixed Soviet ideology with western values and culture. From the respondents' testimonies the conclusion can be drawn that communist life and in particular communist childhood was not as black and white as Withuis and Samuel imply. As noted by Alison Light in the preface to *The Lost World of British Communism*, some people insisted Samuel did not describe the world of communism but that of Stalinism.⁶⁸ The same can be said about Withuis, who more so than Samuel, describes a Stalinist mentality rather than a communist mentality. Within this context I think it is important to consider the three schools of thought within the communist historiography discussed by Andrew Thorpe in his article on the Comintern control of the CPGB. He notes that the first school of thought argues that after a brief period of semi-independence, communist parties and their members became the slaves of Moscow. This view was mostly expressed by communists' political opponents and was popular during the Cold War. A second view emerged in the 1960s and emphasizes what communists did on the ground; 'the books they read, the people with whom they worked, the campaigns which they ran, and the impact they made upon local communities'.⁶⁹ Writers inspired by this school of thought were not interested in what happened within a party top, but focused on the wider membership instead. A third school 'rejects the view that communists were marionettes being manipulated by a Kremlin puppet-master, but argues that it is equally unrealistic to see communists as acting totally within the context of their own labour movements, utterly unaffected by the Comintern and the leaders of their national parties'.⁷⁰ I feel that Withuis and at times Samuel were inspired by the first school of thought, which explains their very black and white portrayals of the Dutch and British communist movement. On the contrary I share the third (post-revisionist) view, which was a reaction to

⁶⁸ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. x.

⁶⁹ A. Thorpe, 'Comintern 'Control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1943', in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 452, 1998, p. 638.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pp 638-39.

the first two schools. I agree with Maurice Isserman who concluded his article on the American Communist Party *Three Generations: Historians View American Communism* with the following words:

It would be a mistake to regard the communist party at any point in its history as if it had been simply a collection of autonomous, overlapping sub-groupings of Jews, Finns, blacks, women, longshoremen, East Bronx tenants and baseball fans who were free to set their own political agenda without reference to Soviet priorities. But it would be a mistake of equal magnitude to revert to the older tradition in which party members were so many 'Men (and Women) Without Faces', completely subject to foreign direction and without any claim to their own place in American history'.⁷¹

Based on my own research I feel that both Withuis and Samuel's findings are quite distinctive and not always typical for the Dutch and British communist community as a whole. In particular Withuis portrays members of the communist community as 'Men and Women without Faces'; people who were slavishly obedient to their parties and the Comintern. I don't want to argue that these people, who can be defined as Stalinists, did not exist within the movement, but I do think they were a minority. Therefore I suggest making a distinction between Stalinists, communists and bohemian communists. This distinction will be further explained and discussed in the introduction to *Part II*.

In the following section I will outline my arguments and the structure of the thesis. This thesis is divided into two parts. *Part I* 'Communist organisations' explores the political life of communists within the wider context of the history of the British and Dutch communist organisations from 1901-1970.⁷² In *Part II* 'Communist Identity' I will discuss the private and public life of British and Dutch Communists in the period 1940-1970. Chapter one, 'The founding history of the Dutch and British Communist Party', is primarily meant to give the necessary background information for the remaining four chapters and it gives a short history of the CPN and the CPGB. This chapter, which draws on the existing communist party historiography, highlights the parties' history of isolation and cooperation

⁷¹ Maurice Isserman, 'Three Generations: Historians View American Communism', in *Labor History*, 26, 1985, pp. 544-55.

⁷² To understand the development of both countries' communist movement in the period 1945-1970 (formative years of the respondents) I decided to start with the founding history of the CPN and CPGB.

from the foundation years to 1970. Within the context of isolation and cooperation, I explore the differences and similarities between the two parties and their policies. I also explore social and cultural differences between Britain and the Netherlands which influenced the extent of isolation experienced by the parties and their members. This chapter starts with an analysis of the origins of the CPGB and CPN and argues that the first fundamental difference between the two is that the Netherlands had a homegrown Marxist tradition which predated the Russian Revolution, whilst in Britain communism was considered a foreign ideology inspired by the events in the Soviet Union. The extent of political and social isolation experienced by the parties and their members was directly linked to the relationship between the communist movement and the social democrats. In the Netherlands this relationship was particularly hostile and except for a brief armistice during the German occupation, it was not until the second half of the 1960s that some forms of cooperation were established. This change is related to the depillarisation of Dutch society. The effects of pillarisation and de-pillarisation on the CPN and individual communists will be discussed in both parts of this thesis.

The CPGB on the contrary, was overall much more successful in developing a working relationship with Labour. Both the CPGB and the CPN were confined to the margins of the labour movement, but unlike CPN members who were only active in their own union, individual British communists successfully infiltrated several trade unions and councils. Besides discussing the history of British and Dutch trade unions and the role communists played in these organizations, I also closely analyze the impact of WWII on the communist movement in Britain and the Netherlands. I argue that the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and the role communists played in the resistance had a lasting impact on the post war history of the Dutch communist movement. Furthermore I discuss the impact of the Cold War and the anti-communist measures that were taken in both countries. Finally, I map the effects of the cultural and political changes of the 1960s on the popularity of the CPGB and CPN.

Chapter two 'Communist youth organizations 1901-1970' discusses the history of both parties' youth organizations and is unlike chapter one which is primarily based on secondary literature, based on respondents' testimonies, archival research and the analysis of newspapers, ANJV and YCL periodicals and (auto) biographical sources. Surprisingly a

full history of both these youth organizations, the Young Communist League (YCL) and the *Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond* (ANJV), have not yet been published.⁷³ A large number of respondents were active in the YCL or ANJV, explaining the need for a closer study of the history of these organisations. Communist youth organisations contributed to the upbringing of their members and therefore these organisations' histories combined with members' experiences give us illuminating insides into certain aspects of a communist childhood. Communist children were members of these organisations in the formative stage of their lives between the age of 14 and 25, which is a period highly valued by sociologists like Karl Mannheim and Henk Becker for the fact that children develop their worldview in this age group.

Besides discussing these organisations' periods of cooperation and isolation, I will also explore what the effect of this isolation was on individual members. The focus of this chapter is on the years 1945-1970; it explores the 'ban the bomb' movement, the events of 1968, student radicalism, the renewed interest in Marxism and the Vietnam War protest. It highlights the debate within the ANJV and YCL, whether and how communists should cooperate with non-communist radical left youth organisations or not, which dominated the best part of the period 1965-1975 and contributed eventually to the downfall of both organisations. Furthermore I argue that because of the experienced isolation the ANJV grew towards the CPN, whereas the YCL freed itself from the CPGB in the period 1956-1970.

Part II 'Communist Identity' aims to reconstruct the communist identity through testimonies of men and women who grew up in communist families in Britain and the Netherlands during the Cold War years. The respondents, who were born between 1934 and 1956, belonged to the last generation of children who grew up with communism and were in their teens during the Cold War years. *Part II* explores how these 'children of the red flag' or 'cradle-communists' experienced their childhood and investigates if we can see the communist ideology in the respondents upbringing, at school, at work, in their relationships

⁷³ Mike Waite has done a considerable amount of research into the YCL in the 1960s; M. Waite, 'Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s', in *Opening the Books Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*, London: Pluto Press, 1995 and *Young People and Formal Political Activity. A Case Study: Young People and Communist Politics in Britain 1920-1991 Aspects of the History of the YCL*. (Mphil thesis July 1992 available at the British Communist Party archive CP/Hist/5)

with others; in sum all the non-political aspects of life. This section is divided into four chapters. Chapter three ‘WWII and 1956: Impact & Aftermath’ is solely focused on the two very important formative events in the respondents’ lives; WWII and ‘1956’, the year of Krushchev’s secret speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary. I discuss the contrast between ‘communists as national resistance heroes’ and ‘communists as the enemies of the state’. Britain was not invaded by the Germans and communists were not part of the resistance like they were in the Netherlands, nor did the events of 1956 spark physical violence against British communists like it did in the Netherlands. Therefore the contrast between the communist movements’ zenith during WWII and its nadir in 1956 was not as sharp in Britain as it was in the Netherlands. I argue that this severe contrast contributed to the feeling of social isolation experienced by Dutch respondents and had an enormous impact on their childhood.

Chapter four ‘The private sphere’ explores communist home life and focuses on the respondents’ political and cultural upbringing. I investigate the more practical ways in which family time was structured, before discussing prescription and aspiration – what sort of parents did CP members want to be and were they inspired by Soviet ideology? Were these aspirations fundamentally different from those of non-communist working class parents? I map the theory and practice of a communist upbringing and examine the considerable contrast between the communist theory stressed by the party and the actual practice within the communist home. The party had a huge influence on the political aspects of communist lives, but I argue it had little influence on certain very private aspects of their lives, like the upbringing of their children. Parents themselves and not the party decided which elements of the communist ideology they wanted to blend into the upbringing of their children. Whereas Jolande Withuis emphasizes how one sided and restricted a communist upbringing was, in this chapter I argue it was very varied. Two different worlds came together within the communist home; the Soviet culture and communist ideology blended in with the British and Dutch culture.

Chapter five ‘Public spheres’ deals with respondents’ experiences in non-communist surroundings like their neighbourhood, in school and at work, as well as friendships and other relationships they maintained. Like chapter four this chapter is anchored in the wider history of the working class. I compare the Dutch and English

respondents' testimonies and explore the extent of social isolation experienced by these respondents. Communist families were connected with the 'outside world' in many ways; they were confronted with non-communists at work, school, in their neighbourhood, through friends and extended family, therefore the communist community could not be an isolated island like Withuis argues. She also states that they were responsible for their own vilification. I on the other hand argue that communists tried very hard to integrate into society and instructed their children to be 'normal' and do whatever non-communist working class children would do.

Part II is brought to a close with an retrospective epilogue titled 'Looking Back' in which the respondents look back on their childhood and value their upbringing, but also discuss their adulthood and how they 'used' their political upbringing in their adult life. This epilogue focuses in particular on the respondents' feelings and thoughts on the years around the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Some respondents feel they grew up with a lie and subsequently look back in anger, others managed to find peace with their parents' choices and look back positively.

As a whole this thesis aims to build a balanced picture of the communist movement, it explores the political and the non-political aspects of communist lives in order to reconstruct a communist identity. It also maps the differences and similarities between the communist movements in two countries and can therefore be seen as a (modest) contribution to recent comparative studies of the communist movement as well as studies of communist mentality.

Part I Communist Organisations

Chapter One

The Founding History of the Dutch and British Communist Party

This chapter discusses and compares the (short) histories of the Dutch and British communist parties. It is meant to give the necessary background information for the following chapters and is primarily based on existing national historiographies. But unlike previously written individual histories of these parties which often emphasize the idea of a unified and centralized communist movement, this chapter, besides exploring similarities focuses in particular on the differences between these two parties. The comparative approach is particularly suitable because it highlights differences and national peculiarities which would go undetected when writing an individual party history. I argue that the cultural and political differences between Britain and the Netherlands fundamentally influenced the nature and form of their respective communist movement. The ideological struggle was one and the same in both countries but the circumstances under which communists challenged the established ideas as well as the outcome of this struggle were very different. In their introduction of *Communism, National & International*, the editors note that the characters of national communisms and the diversity of their relationship with the international communist movement is due to amongst other things; ‘their opportunity to be involved in the politics of their own nations’, ‘the strength of previous working-class cultures’, ‘their status’ and ‘their conditions of birth’.⁷⁴

This chapter will employ these variables to trace the differences between the history of the Dutch and British Communist Party. They form the backbone of this chapter; they do not only affect both parties’ characters, these variables are also essential to trace explanations for the extent of the political and social isolation experienced by these parties and their members (and their children). In the context of the CPN and CPGB’s history of isolation and cooperation I discuss: both parties’ origins, their relationship with non-communist sections of the working class (in particular the social-democrats), the role communists played in the trade unions, the impact of WWII and the effects of the Cold War

⁷⁴ T. Saarela, K. Rentola (ed.), *Communism. National & International*, Helsinki: SHS, 1998, p. 9.

on both parties. Before discussing these different topics it is important to further explain a peculiar characteristic of Dutch society which is known as pillarisation. I argue that this aspect of Dutch society, which is absent in Great Britain, has profoundly affected the character of the Dutch communist movement.

Pillarisation

The Netherlands is a nation characterized by segmentation. This segmentation is the result of pillarisation, which is a term used to describe the denominational segregation of Dutch society. Society is not only divided in horizontal classes, but also vertically; in several smaller segments, or pillars (*zuilen*), according to different religions or ideologies, which operate separately from each other. From the birth of the Dutch state and nation in the 16th century, society was divided in three different blocs. The Catholic bloc, which consists of formal members of the Catholic church, the orthodox Calvinist bloc which made up of members of several orthodox Protestant churches, the third bloc was a more secular bloc which included the majority of the Dutch Reformed (a liberal protestant doctrine) and a small group of liberal and non-practicing Roman Catholics. In addition to these pillars, there was the socialist pillar, which appeared at the end of the 19th century. These four pillars had their own institutions; their own newspapers, broadcasting organisations, political parties, trade unions, schools, hospitals, building societies, universities, orchestras, choirs, sports clubs etc. Every pillar amounted to a, sometimes isolated, subculture within society.⁷⁵

Consequently Dutch politics are also characterized by segmentation. This is exacerbated by a voting system based on proportional representation and a ‘party list’. From the introduction of universal suffrage to the present, no political party has ever succeeded in winning an electoral, or even a parliamentary majority. The Dutch political landscape is made up of minority parties, something to keep in mind when studying the Dutch Communist Party. In British politics it was, and is, much harder to survive as a small party because of the two party system which is based on a disproportionate representation.

⁷⁵ A. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation, Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975, pp 17-8.

This crucial difference between both countries contributed to the fact that the CPGB was not considered as big a threat as the CPN, although both parties were relatively small.⁷⁶ In the Netherlands the process of depillarisation started in the late 1960s and early 1970s; people no longer complied with the requirements of their own ideological group and started participating in organisations outside their own column. One of the biggest causes of depillarisation was the influence of television and other mass media which broke down invisible barriers and introduced (young) people to values and customs outside of their own pillar.

The origins of the British and Dutch Communist Party

The end of the 19th century was characterized by a rising political consciousness among Dutch and British working class. Although the Netherlands lacked a large industrial proletariat, caused by late industrialization, there was support for working class movements among artisans, urban skilled workers, canal- and peat-diggers and agricultural labourers. The first socialist party in the Netherlands, founded in 1881, was called *Sociaal Democratische Bond* (Social Democratic League) in 1881. Its leader, former Lutheran minister Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, was extremely popular and influenced the working class movement for over two decades.⁷⁷ The party adopted a program that was modeled on the Gotha program⁷⁸ but radicalized over the years and moved towards anarchism. In 1893, during a party conference in Groningen, a small majority voted to stop participating in elections and against parliamentary democracy. A small group of members, led by Pieter Jelles Troelstra, left the party in order to create a new party.⁷⁹ The *Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij* (Social Democratic Workers Party SDAP) was founded in 1894 and was ideologically inspired by the *Erfurt Program*.⁸⁰ The SDAP saw parliamentary work as a means to help the workers prior to the onset of the revolution

⁷⁶ It needs to be noted that in terms of percentage the CPN was bigger than the CPGB.

⁷⁷ H. Lademacher, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1993, pp. 319-21.

⁷⁸ Gotha program discusses the dictatorship of the proletariat, the period of transition from capitalism to communism, proletarian internationalism and the party of the working class. Based on a letter by Karl Marx written in 1875.

⁷⁹ H. Lademacher, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, pp 319-21.

⁸⁰ Like the Gotha program, this reform program, enacted at an Erfurt assembly in 1891, continues to call for revolution, but it also provides evidence of a new practical orientation within the Socialist Party. It encourages its members to work through existing political institutions.

itself. The party therefore acknowledged that it could fight for social and political change within the context of the Dutch political system.⁸¹

In Britain a similar process took place. The Social-Democratic Federation (SDF), founded in 1881 by, amongst others, Henry Mayers Hyndman, became the first Marxist organisation in Britain. Nine years after its founding the SDF attended Labour's Founding Conference out of which the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was created. The LRC was not a (traditional) party and had no individual members; it was a federation of mainly the Independent Labour Party (ILP)⁸², the SDF and some trade unions. Whilst the ILP remained, the SDF withdrew from the LRC in 1901 'almost immediately, correctly perceiving that this was no socialist party'.⁸³ Indeed the formation of the LRC, which was renamed the Labour Party in 1906, was not lead by socialists. Andrew Thorpe notes that:

On the whole, the formation of the LRC in 1900 was not the uprising of a class, or the ineluctable and inevitable result of changing production relations or the product of the work of socialists more 'realistic' than Hyndman. It was, primarily, a new chapter in the struggle of the trade union movement for the right to be left alone to negotiate on equal terms with employers and to apply sanctions, such as strike action, where this was deemed necessary.⁸⁴

Furthermore he states that the decision to call the party 'Labour' was significant because it 'lacked foreign and sectarian connotations of 'social democracy'; it appealed to all workers, manual or not'.⁸⁵ The conference did not want to recognize class war, nor did it commit itself to another form of socialism.⁸⁶

In 1911 the SDF (now called the Social Democratic Party SDP) organised a Socialist Unity Conference which was attended by among others the ILP, Fabian Society and Clarion groups. The decision was made to form a united revolutionary socialist party.

⁸¹ D. Orlow, *Common Destiny, a Comparative History of the Dutch, French and German Social Democratic Parties 1945-1969*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000, p. 11.

⁸² The ILP was founded by, amongst others, James Keir Hardie in 1893.

⁸³ P. Clarke, *Hope and Glory Britain 1900-1990*, London: Penguin Press, 1996, p. 29.

⁸⁴ A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 19-20.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 13.

The result of this initiative was the foundation of the British Socialist Party which was essentially the SDF and a small number of ILP branches and Clarion groups.⁸⁷

In the Netherlands, a 10 year battle within the SDAP between intellectuals who were orientated towards orthodox Marxism on one side, and revisionists who were orientated towards a parliamentary and reformist political strategy on the other side, caused a split within the party.⁸⁸ The driving force behind this orthodox Marxist group within the SDAP was the intellectual trio Herman Gorter, Henriette Roland Holst and Anton Pannekoek, who published the magazine *De Nieuwe Tijd* (The New Times).⁸⁹ They were initially in close contact with the orthodox Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky who propagated the strict organisation of the working class in order to overthrow the bourgeoisie in a deliberate fight. But gradually and under influence of Rosa Luxembourg's ideas about spontaneous mass strikes, these three intellectuals became ideologically removed from their teacher. They were less patient than Kautsky and came up with their own Marxist interpretation, which was later known as the *Hollandse School*.⁹⁰ The American historian Gerber in his book on the political life of Anton Pannekoek noted; 'During the first two decades of the 20th century, this "school" of Marxism exercised – through countless articles, books, pamphlets, speeches, and political contacts – an influence on European social democracy that extended well beyond the boundaries of Holland'.⁹¹ The *Hollandse School* marks the start of Dutch orthodox Marxism.

On 19 October 1907 the first issue of *De Tribune, Sociaal-Democratisch Weekblad* (The Tribune, Social-Democratic Weekly Magazine) came out. This magazine, founded by three orthodox Marxists; David Wijnkoop, Willem Van Ravesteijn and Jan Ceton, who were inspired by Gorter Pannekoek and Roland-Holst albeit more radical, regularly published articles which criticised the SDAP leadership. The leadership demanded an immediate discontinuing of the magazine, threatening the editors with expulsion from the party if they wouldn't. The editors did refuse and they, together with about 400 SDAP members, left the party and founded the *Sociaal Democratische Partij* (Social Democratic

⁸⁷ R. Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, London: Croom Helm, 1977, p. 121.

⁸⁸ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 32.

⁸⁹ This group of orthodox Marxists was also referred to as *De Nieuwe Tijd* group.

⁹⁰ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*. pp. 25-6.

⁹¹ J.J. Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation, 1873-1960*, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer, 1989, pp. 32.

Party SDP) in 1909.⁹² Because the SDP was very radical many of the older Marxists decided against leaving the SDAP. The majority of the group around *De Nieuwe Tijd* including Roland Holst did not join the new party, although Pannekoek and Gorter did.⁹³ The Netherlands is, besides Russia and Bulgaria, the only European country where this conflict between Marxists and revisionists resulted in a split within the socialist party, before WWI. In Germany, for example, the split happened during and as a result of the war and in Italy and France, the socialist party split over the question whether to join the Third Communist International (Comintern). The foundation of the SDP had nothing to do with international developments like WWI or the foundation of the Comintern; the origins of Dutch communism lies in the aforementioned Dutch trend, which is orthodox Marxism. The three founders of the SDP did not see the Russian communist leaders as examples, but as equals and from the first moment of the foundation of the SDP, Lenin and other important Bolsheviks, kept in close touch with Wijnkoop, van Ravesteijn and Ceton. Voerman emphasizes the SDP's unique position when he notes; 'in the period 1907-1917 the SDP was the Bolsheviks' only partner on the isolated left wing of European Social Democracy'.⁹⁴ This special relationship with (Soviet) Russia in the first two decades of the 20th century and the unique history of the communist movement in the Netherlands proved to become an obstacle in subjugating the Dutch CP to the Comintern at a later stage.⁹⁵ The SDP started with about 400 members and did not really gain any more members in the first five years of its existence; in 1914 it only had 525 members. The percentage of intellectuals within the party was high and the non-intellectual part lacked factory workers and consisted mainly of artisans and what Marx would call the 'lumpenproletariat'; the unemployed underclass, the lowest segment of the working class. The last group of SDP members, the unskilled, often came from anarchist or syndicalist backgrounds.⁹⁶

⁹² A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 17.

⁹³ Roland-Holst founded her own party with those who initially chose to stay within the SDAP. This Party *Revolutionair Socialistische Vereniging* (Revolutionary Socialist Society RSV) eventually merged with the SDP in 1916, which was applauded by Lenin. See; Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, chapter 1.

⁹⁴ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 47.

⁹⁵ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 33. Within this context it is important to note that nationally the SDP's main ally was a group of Anarcho-Syndicalists (organised within the NAS).

WWI and the Russian Revolution

The outbreak of WWI provided a fantastic opportunity for the SDP to change from an orthodox Marxist sect into a mass party. The party did not support the Entente and was against the war altogether. The Dutch government chose neutrality and the SDAP declared a political armistice and postponed the class struggle. The party gave parliamentary support to national defence and mobilisation expenditures. The SDP, who considered the social-democrats as traitors, was far from willing to bury the political hatchet and campaigned against the war together with syndicalists, anarchists, pacifists and Christian socialists.⁹⁷ In Britain the outbreak of the war divided the BSP and a pro-war or nationalist group left the party in 1916. Opposition to the war grew steadily which moved the BSP to focus on unification of all socialist organisations in Britain. This resulted in the foundation of the United Socialist Council of the ILP and the BSP in 1917. This council was brought into action during the February Revolution in Russia; a convention was called in Leeds in June 1917 where the differences between the ILP and the BSP already started to show. Whilst the BSP welcomed the Russian Revolution and was convinced a social revolution in Britain was imminent, the ILP soon lost its initial enthusiasm for extra-parliamentary action. The Council was disbanded even before the October Revolution took place.⁹⁸

At a national party conference in November 1918 the Dutch SDP decided to change its name to *Communistische Partij in Nederland* (CPN)⁹⁹ out of solidarity with the Bolsheviks, who founded the Russian Communist Party earlier that year and subsequently the CPN also joined the Comintern, which was established in March 1919. Around the same time in Britain, the BSP together with the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF)¹⁰⁰, the South Wales Socialist Society (SWSS)¹⁰¹ and a few other radical groups were brought together by Lenin to form one united communist party. Views differ on the matter what role

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 37.

⁹⁸ L.J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party. Its Origins and Development Until 1929*, London: MacGibbon and Kee 1966, pp. 20-1.

⁹⁹ The Dutch communist party was initially called the CPN, a few years later it was renamed into the CPH (communist party Holland) and its name was changed again into CPN in 1938. In this thesis, to avoid confusion, the party will be called CPN.

¹⁰⁰ The Workers Socialist Federation was led by Sylvia Pankhurst and originated in the in 1913 formed East London Federation of Suffragettes.

¹⁰¹ The South Wales Socialist Society; federation of socialist groups in Wales, initially formed in 1911 as the Rhonda Socialist society.

the BSP played, which was the largest party with about 5000 members, in the formation of the CPGB. J. Macfarlane, describes in his book *The Communist Party*, how the BSP was the predecessor of the CPGB and in some ways an embryo communist party,¹⁰² whilst Woodhouse and Thompson emphasize that without the pressure exercised by the Comintern the CPGB would have never been formed.¹⁰³ James Eaden and David Renton, too are convinced that Lenin's actions were decisive in this context. 'Whereas the largest communist parties began as major factions within reformist parties, in Britain unity was only achieved by Lenin who brought together the fragments of an already-divided left.'¹⁰⁴ Whatever the exact role was the BSP played in the formations of the CPGB, it is safe to say the BSP was less of an embryo communist party than the Dutch SDP. It lacked revolutionary temper, and unlike the *Sociaal Democratische Partij* it was reluctant to break away from the Labour Party.

The first negotiations between the BSP, SWSS and WSF, were difficult. The four organisations could not decide on several tactical questions like; what is the new party's attitude toward parliamentary action and 'what should be the attitude to the Labour Party?'¹⁰⁵ The SWSS and the WSF were against parliamentary action. Both of these organisations and the SLP were against affiliation with the Labour Party, but the BSP was very much in favour and since they outweighed all other groups in voting strength, the BSP did not accept the rejection of the Labour Party affiliation. After endless meetings with no progress, Lenin's advice to participate in parliamentary elections and to affiliate with the Labour Party broke the deadlock. In his pamphlet, *Left Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder* (1920) he argued that 'revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class, and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses, and never by propaganda alone'. From this viewpoint Lenin was convinced that the party should support Labour in its context with the Tories and Liberals. Once Labour was elected, the CPGB would be able to show to a majority of workers why

¹⁰² L.J. Macfarlane, *The British Communist Party*, p. 23.

¹⁰³ M. Woodhouse, 'A History of Communism in Britain, Marxism and Stalinism in Britain' in *Essays of the History of Communism in Britain*, London: New Park Publications Ltd, 1975, p. 25 and W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ J. Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume one*, p. 31.

Labour was not enough.¹⁰⁶ At the founding conference of the CPGB in the summer of 1920, an application for affiliation was agreed to by 100 votes to 85. It is important to note that Britain wasn't the only country where the Comintern experienced difficulties to establish an influential communist party; it experienced similar difficulties in other heavily industrialised countries with a large working class like Belgium, the United States and -to a certain extent- in Germany. Voerman explains this paradox; 'because of their early industrialisation these countries had firmly established socialist parties and trade unions. By the time communists entered the field a substantial part of the working class already belonged to the socialist tradition. The Comintern was generally unable to ease these workers away from socialism.'¹⁰⁷ The Comintern viewed the British CP as one of its most important sections after the Russian party, according to Voerman.¹⁰⁸ Eaden and Renton observe the same, stating 'the CPGB was situated at the heart of the British Empire and therefore at the centre of world imperialism. It was to play a key role in the strategic thinking of Comintern officials throughout the 1920s and 1930s.'¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless the Comintern was also aware that in Britain the working class' faith in the existing reformist Labour and socialist organisations was too strong for a revolutionary movement to gain a serious foothold and therefore from 1921 onwards it proposed a united front instead, which postponed the revolutionary perspective.

British and Dutch trade unions

Lenin regarded the (social democratic) trade unions in Europe as important class organisations for the proletariat. At the Comintern's Second World Congress, which met in the summer of 1920, one of the 21 conditions to join the Comintern was:

Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International must systematically and persistently develop communist activities within the trade unions, workers' and work councils, the consumer co-operatives and other mass workers' organisations. Within these organisations it is necessary to organize communist cells the aim of which is to win the trade unions, etc. for the cause of communism by incessant and persistent work. In their daily work the cells have the obligation to

¹⁰⁶ J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920*, p. xi.

expose everywhere the treachery of the social patriot and the vacillations of the 'centrists'. The communist cells must be completely subordinated to the party as a whole.¹¹⁰

In the theses for work in the trade unions adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern it further states that:

Communists in all countries must join the unions in order to develop them into bodies consciously struggling for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of communism. They must take the initiative in creating trade unions where none exists. Voluntary withdrawals from the union movement represent great danger to the communist movement.¹¹¹

Naturally both the CPN and the CPGB tried to meet these conditions, but the CPN failed miserably whilst the CPGB met them with some success. The CPGB successfully achieved influence in the British labour movement by infiltrating rank and file movements in the unions and on trade councils. In the Netherlands on the other hand, for long periods at the time, communists were banned from joining the mainstream unions and had therefore no significant influence in the labour movement. The position of communists within trade unions and councils was vital to the development of national communist movements. To understand why Dutch communists failed and the British succeeded in meeting Lenin's conditions it is important to explore and compare the history of British and Dutch trade unions.

Britain had a long and diverse history of craft trades unions. After early initiatives in workplace combination and trade organisation during the first phase of industrialisation in the late 18th century, a new kind of trade unionism emerged as a result of the second phase of industrialisation in the period 1840-1870. These unions were organised nationally and had relatively high dues which enabled them to employ full time officials and offered a general scale of sickness, superannuation and funeral benefits.¹¹² Subsequently trade councils were formed in larger cities like Manchester and London which brought together the leaders of these new unions. The Manchester and Salford Trades Council convened the

¹¹⁰ A. Adler (ed), *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, Pluto, 1983, p. 95.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 108.

¹¹² H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1992, p. 42.

first Trade Union Congress in 1868 and the forerunner of the General Council; the TUC's Parliamentary Committee, was founded in 1871. The TUC became the central body of the organised Labour Movement in Britain and would initiate the Labour Representation Committee in 1900.¹¹³

The number of trade unions grew rapidly in the period 1888-1918 and membership figures increased from roughly 750,000 in the beginning of this period to six and a half million in 1918.¹¹⁴ Among the leaders and members of these new unions, a small but important group was influenced by the ideas of socialism, Marxism and the Second International. This group initiated a wave of strikes in the period of social unrest leading up to WWI and there was a real sense of militancy among workers. Strike leaders became increasingly frustrated and hostile to the leadership of the industrial and political wings of the labour movement. This militant minority within the labour movement was inspired by syndicalism instead of trade unionism;¹¹⁵ nevertheless syndicalism would never be more than a minor current in the British labour movement.¹¹⁶

In contrast in the Netherlands syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism were not minor currents in the labour movement. The first trade union federation, the *Nationaal Arbeidssecretariaat* (National Labour Secretariat, NAS) which was founded in 1893, was - unlike the TUC- heavily influenced by anarcho-syndicalism. The foundation of the NAS was an initiative of the SDB, but instigated by the Second International. Several trade unions, labour organisations, the SDB and SDAP joined the NAS¹¹⁷, which was a trade union federation for skilled labourers.¹¹⁸ Like the orthodox Marxist SDB, the NAS was against parliamentary action on the grounds that reform of capitalism was impossible. Its aim was to prepare for the future revolutionary general strike which was supposed to

¹¹³ Ibid, pp 115.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.unionhistory.info/timeline>.

¹¹⁵ Syndicalists rejected the state and believed that by fully organising the workforce and amalgamation of the unions would lead to a revolutionary general strike to overthrow capitalism.

¹¹⁶ H. Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 Volume II 1911-1933*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, pp. 24-5.

¹¹⁷ The SDB and SDAP were forced to leave the NAS when the latter in 1896 introduced a ban for political parties from joining the federation; this decision was brought on by the ongoing arguments between both parties.

¹¹⁸ G. Harmsen and B. Reinalda, *Voor de Bevrijding van de Arbeid. Beknopte Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Vakbeweging*, Nijmegen: Socialistiese Uitgeverij, 1975, p. 66.

destroy capitalism. In preparation for this strike, the NAS instructed workers to organise as many small strikes as possible.¹¹⁹

A more moderate trade union, inspired by the modern British trade unions and councils rather than French syndicalism, was founded in 1894 by Henri Polak. This union, the *Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkerbond* (General Dutch Diamond workers' union ANDB) soon became very successful and attracted mainly SDAP members and as such, the labour movement was polarised and became separated in two camps; the free socialists around Domela Nieuwenhuis on one side and the social democrats around Troelstra on the other.¹²⁰ The hostility between the two camps came to a head during the great railway strike of 1904 in which the workers lost. Both camps blamed each other for the defeat. After the strike the NAS radicalised and renounced every political action; even the fight for social legislation. Its membership decreased whilst unions that weren't affiliated to the NAS were growing fast. For a number of years, these unions had discussed the possibilities of creating a new trade union federation; this process was sped up by the NAS' destructive policies and the foundation of the *Nederlandse Verbond van Vakbewegingen* (Dutch League of Trade Unions NVV) in 1906. The NVV had the same principles as the ANDB and aimed to unite the affiliated unions and organisations in order to promote and advance their social and economic interests.¹²¹ Under influence of the worsening social-economic situation during WWI, the revolutionary movement (among others the SDP and the NAS) got a firmer grip on the unskilled and poor sections of the working class, which was reflected by a significant membership increase of the NAS which went from 8000 in 1913 to 23,000 in 1918.¹²²

It was around this time that confessional trade union leaders started to set up their own trade union federations. Harmsen and Reinalda note that these federations were founded relatively late because they were mainly meant to be an answer to socialism.¹²³ The *Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond* (the Christian National Trade union federation CNV) was founded in 1909 and was initially for Roman Catholics and Protestants. Its

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 69.

¹²⁰ Ibid, pp. 74-7.

¹²¹ Ibid, pp. 91-5.

¹²² A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd 1997, p. 34.

¹²³ G. Harmsen and Bob Reinalda, *Voor de Bevrijding van de Arbeid*, p. 101.

statutes were based on Christian principles and rejected class struggle. The cooperation between Catholics and Protestants did not last; a national bureau for Catholic trade unions was already established in 1909 and the official Catholic trade union federation *Rooms Katholieke Werkliedenverbond* (Roman Catholic Trade Union League RKWV) was founded in 1935. Like the CNV, the RKWV was against class struggle and was instead mainly focused on arbitration. According to Harmsen and Reinalda the confessional labour organisations thwarted the establishment of a strong and well organised working class in the Netherlands because both the CNV and the RKWV were based on the principle that the differences between rich and poor were created by God and that one had to be obedient to the government.¹²⁴ In addition to the three largest unions, NVV, CNV and the RKWV there was the small *Nederlandse Vakcentrale* (Dutch Trade Union Federation NVC), which was founded in 1930 and ideologically oriented towards the Liberals.¹²⁵

CPGB and the CPN in the 1920s and 1930s

Soon after the CPGB founding conference it became clear that the Labour Party had no intention to work with a party controlled by Moscow, that differed from its own aims so fundamentally. The 1920 application for affiliation to the Labour Party which was followed by another in 1921 were both rejected. Nevertheless, the communists were difficult to shake off. Thorpe notes that the 1922 Labour Party conference's decision to bar communists as delegates fell on deaf ears (38 communists attended the 1923 conference) and that a CPGB member, Shapurji Saklatvala, was elected as Labour MP for North Battersea. As a reaction to this communist 'infiltration', the 1924 conference decided that communists were no longer allowed to become members of the Labour Party nor were they eligible to be candidates. Between 1926 and 1928, 26 constituency or borough Labour Parties who refused to expel communists were disbanded by Labour headquarters and were reconstituted as anti-communists.¹²⁶ Communist attempts to promote a united front as well as the dispute within the Labour Party about the position of communists came to an end when the CPGB moved to 'Class against Class' in 1928 which will be discussed below.

¹²⁴ Ibid, pp 158.

¹²⁵ H. Lademacher, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, p. 388.

¹²⁶ A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, p. 63.

In the first 10 years of its existence, the CPGB failed to become a significant political force. It followed directives issued from Moscow which generally did not apply to British circumstances and instead of attracting potential recruits the party drove them away with their politics. In the period 1920-1926 the party's membership fluctuated between 2500 and 5000; it wasn't until 1926 that the party started to recruit extensively and began to grow.¹²⁷ By contrast, the Dutch Communist Party did make a political breakthrough in this period. The successful anti-war activities resulted in an increase in membership, which did not stop when the war ended. Others supported the communist party because they were disappointed in the social democrats and some were attracted to communism because of their admiration for the Soviet Union. CPN membership multiplied by five between 1919 and 1925. These new members can be divided into two main groups; syndicalists (and anarchists), most of whom were NAS members, and the other group was made up out of intellectuals and students. This second group formed 'the new opposition'. These young members were in particular not content with the leadership and they were not the only ones; since the early days, the Comintern leaders Zinowjew and Radek had a tense relationship with Wijnkoop, Ravesteyn and Ceton. These men were proud to lead the third oldest communist party and considered themselves better Marxists than most Comintern officials. This arrogance caused friction between the Dutch leadership and the Comintern.¹²⁸ After Lenin's death in 1924, under the influence of Stalin, the Comintern started to 'Bolshevisé' the foreign communist parties with the aim to make them obedient instruments of the Soviet politics. The opposition within the CPN made use of these new developments and asked Moscow for help to get rid of Wijnkoop, Ravesteyn and Ceton. On 18 May 1925, the three men resigned their posts as party leaders, but remained party members until they were expelled in 1926 after a heated debate about finances. A few months after their expulsion the old leaders founded a new party; *Communistische Partij Holland Centraal Comité* (CPH-CC).¹²⁹ This strange name which translates into Communist Party Holland Central Committee, implied that this new party was basically the continuation of the 'old' party and that the newly appointed CPN leader, De Visser and his party were illegitimate.

¹²⁷ See appendix II .

¹²⁸ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, pp. 36-7.

¹²⁹ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, pp. 355.

In Britain the party saw a major increase in membership as a result of the 1926 General Strike. The CPGB played an important role in solidarity with the miners throughout the struggle. Thousands of miners felt betrayed by the TUC and the Labour Party who had been, in their eyes, too eager to settle the dispute and had not supported the unofficial miner strike which continued after the General Strike had ended. These miners joined the CPGB; who's eighth congress met in October 1926 representing a membership of 10,730 compared with 5000 at the seventh congress in May 1925.¹³⁰ Even though the party grew very rapidly, the CPGB could not sustain its popularity. By the end of 1927, 30 percent of its membership gains had already been lost and this significant decline in membership was going to continue until 1931.¹³¹

During and after the strike the relationship between the Labour Party and the CPGB had deteriorated further; in 1928 communists were no longer allowed to attend the Labour Party conference as trade union delegates.¹³² The immediate result was isolation, which was made worse by the CPGB's politics about membership; the party decided to follow the Leninist doctrine that communist parties should be run by a small revolutionary elite (vanguard) instead of aiming to become a mass party.¹³³ The period 1925-1929 marked a low point for the Dutch Communist movement, as the rivalry between the CPH-CC and the CPN weakened both parties. The CPN's leadership was weak and ineffective; the overall organisation of the party was inadequate and little activities were undertaken in this period. During the elections in 1929 the CPN beat the CPH-CC and received 1.1 percent of the votes (37,622). The CPH-CC received 0.8 percent, or 29,860 votes.¹³⁴

At the sixth world congress of the Comintern in 1928 Stalin decided that the main enemy of the working class was the 'social-democracy'; the social-democrats, according to the Comintern paved the way for fascism (hence they were called social-fascists). The CPGB pursued the new line, also called 'Class against Class', in February 1928. Adopting this new policy marked the end of the strategies which were in place since the foundation of the party in 1920. It entailed the dismissal of the established labour bureaucracy as an ally

¹³⁰ L.J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party, Its Origins and Development Until 1929*, pp. 163-76 also see; Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, volume 2, The General Strike*.

¹³¹ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 41.

¹³² A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, p. 63.

¹³³ W. Thompson, p. 32.

¹³⁴ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, pp. 37-49.

of capital and as such the party aligned itself not only against the conservative and liberal Parties, but also in direct opposition to the Labour Party, the TUC but also 'the "sham left wing' within the British labour movement, whose commitment to reformism - the CPGB reasoned - obstructed the workers' march to freedom.'¹³⁵ In this period the party isolated itself from its closest allies, nevertheless recent research has shown that the impact of 'Class against Class' was less severe as previously assumed. Matthew Worley notes: 'although many of the channels through which the party carved out a political influence were obstructed during these years, the CPGB continued to exert authority among sections of the British working class. Most obviously, the NUWCM consolidated its position as the undisputed leader of the unemployed in the early 1930s, leading national hunger marches and helping thousands of workers to negotiate the trauma of unemployment at a local level. Also "on the ground" the CPGB organised social and political events such as football leagues, campaigns for free school meals and aid for striking workers.'¹³⁶

When it comes to membership, it was during this period that the party hit its lowest point, with membership dropping to 2,641, but again, caution needs to be taken in ascribing this decline solely in terms of the impact of the Third Period. Andrew Thorpe points out that reasons for the fall in membership after the end of the mining lockout given by for example Branson are misleading:

Typically the argument has been that apart from a 'natural' wasting away of membership due to the end of the lockout and the victimization and demoralisation that followed it, members left the party because of the new combative and sectarian line of 'class-against-class', which replaced during 1928-1929 the previous policy of trying to unite with other working-class organisations in a 'united front'.¹³⁷

By using new figures and reinterpreting old ones; Thorpe comes to the conclusion that party membership was already back to pre-General Strike levels 'even before the promulgation of 'Class against Class', and still more so before the British party began to

¹³⁵ M. Worley, *Class Against Class*, p.11.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.12.

¹³⁷ A. Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945', in *The Historical Journal*, 43, 3, 2000, p. 782.

operate it fully during 1929'.¹³⁸ Furthermore he concludes that 'this would tend to lend support to the view that the impact of the introduction of the new line on the party membership was by no means as disastrous as has often been alleged'.¹³⁹ Mike Squires agrees and notes that the decline before the adoption of the new line, reflected a general trend towards reduced membership across the labour movement in this period, as demoralisation and unemployment took their toll.¹⁴⁰ In addition the party had mounted a significant recovery by January 1932¹⁴¹, by which time membership had grown to 7300.

The damage of the new party line was even less severe in the Netherlands. The reason for the CPN membership drop from 1400 in 1928 to 1146 in 1929, had nothing to do with the implementation of 'Class against Class', but was linked to the rivalry between the CPN and CPH-CC which reached a low point in 1929.¹⁴² In Britain too, communists felt that it was not the new line which was responsible for the serious membership loss, it was the CPGB leadership who were responsible. Leading figures in the party; Tom Bell, Albert Inkpin, Willie Gallacher, Johnny Campbell and Andrew Rothstein were judged to represent the 'right danger'.¹⁴³ The Comintern instructed the CPGB to hold a Congress to expose 'the opportunist elements in the party leadership'.¹⁴⁴ Several people were removed from the Central Committee and the Comintern chose Rajani Palme Dutt and Harry Pollitt as the CPGB's new leadership.¹⁴⁵ During the party conference of February 1930 the CPN also decided, pressured by the Comintern, to replace its leadership; the Central Committee's new members were Daan Goulooze, Alexander De Leeuw, Nicolaas Beuzemaker, Cees Schalker, Paul de Groot and Piet Kuiper whilst Louis De Visser remained general secretary. This replacement caused the CPH-CC to dissolve itself in June 1930 and most of its members rejoined the CPN.¹⁴⁶ As in Britain the Comintern wanted to install a party

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ M. Squires, 'CPGB Membership During the Class Against Class Years', *Socialist History* 3, 1993, pp. 4-13.

¹⁴¹ The Third Period lasted from 1928-1935. If the implementation of this line was so disastrous it doesn't make much sense that membership increased in 1932.

¹⁴² G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 420.

¹⁴³ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.45.

¹⁴⁵ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁶ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 53.

leadership who would carry out the new Comintern line without the slightest hesitation. The year 1930 marks the end of 'Dutch communism'; from this moment onwards on the party was shaped and ruled by Soviet Russia.

After the small dip in the period 1928-1930, the period 1931-1935 was characterized by a significant growth of the CPN. During the 1933 general elections the party received 3.18 percent of the votes, most of which came from former SDAP supporters. In Amsterdam the CPN received more than 10 percent of the votes (38.307). Considering the party's politics, this electoral improvement was remarkable. Not only did the CPN refuse any cooperation with the social-democrats, it also completely rejected parliamentary democracy. On top of this the party actively opposed Christianity; following Soviet example, the communist newspaper *De Tribune* published several cartoons ridiculing God, Jesus and Peter, which resulted in a ban on the newspaper in public places like libraries.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless the CPN blossomed and gained popularity in these years.¹⁴⁸ Membership went from 1100 in 1930 to 5500 in 1932 and besides increasing membership, there was a growing network of 'umbrella organisations'; organisations, under communist leadership, which also attracted non-communists. The *Vereniging van Vrienden van Vrienden van de Sowjet-Unie* (Society of Friends of the Soviet Union VVSU) founded in 1931, published a weekly magazine called *Rusland van heden* (Russia Today) with a circulation of 25,000.¹⁴⁹ The question arises; how was it possible for a party with such an extreme views, to win over so many new members, sympathisers and voters? According to De Jonge there are two main explanations. Firstly the conditions of the 1930s turned out to be quite positive for the CPN. The Netherlands was hit hard by the crisis of the 1930s and the growing unemployed masses lost their faith in parliamentary democracy. Some (mainly middle class) turned to fascism, but unemployed workers turned increasingly to communism. Secondly the SDAP politics were confusing; the party leadership could not make up its mind; the SDAP supported the parliamentary democracy, whilst 'understanding and respecting the 'revolutionary mood of the masses'.¹⁵⁰ Many SDAP members found

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 55.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 56.

¹⁴⁹ M. Schrevel and G.Voerman, *De Communistische Erfenis. Bibliografie en Bronnen Betreffende de CPN*, Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1997, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 58.

their party too hesitant which moved them to join the CPN instead. The British economic situation was just as disastrous as the Dutch; unemployment rates soared in the period throughout the 1930s and peaked in 1934.¹⁵¹ Similar to the Dutch situation, CPGB membership increased rapidly and went up from 2724 in 1931 to 9000 in 1932. Both the Dutch and the British CP were involved in organisations for the unemployed and gained a lot of support and sympathy through their efforts. In Amsterdam, individual ‘agitation committees’ were active from 1919 onwards, which were brought together by the CPN in 1929 into one strong national organisation for the unemployed.¹⁵² The CPGB played an active role in the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement (NUWCM), which was launched in April 1921 but reached its zenith in the thirties.¹⁵³

In 1934 the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations, began to fight for collective security against the fascist states and entered into an alliance with France in 1935, which formed the backdrop of the ‘United Front’ strategy. The seventh congress of the Comintern, held in July 1935, decided on the strategy to ‘establish a united front on a national as well as international scale, and to overcome the survivals of sectarian traditions which have hindered them in finding a way of approach to the social-democratic workers’.¹⁵⁴ The objective to regard socialists and the trade unions as allies in a joint working class opposition to fascism was widened into a Popular Front which would include liberal and radical parties and any other group or organisation which was prepared to join communists in their fight.¹⁵⁵

This new strategy meant a reversal of policy for the Dutch Communist Party; instead of constantly opposing the social democrats, now the party was eager to work together with the SDAP. In 1937 the CPN tried to convince the SDAP to have a joint list of candidates for the general elections of that year. Many other propositions were made, but the SDAP was not interested in any kind of cooperation and the party compared communism to fascism. The only result of the new strategy in the Netherlands was that the relation between communists and social democrats became slightly less tense. For example,

¹⁵¹ H. Dewar, *Communist Politics in Britain*, p. 79.

¹⁵² P. de Rooy, *Crisis in Nederland. Beelden en Interviews uit de Jaren Dertig*, Rijswijk: Elmar, 1981, p. 22.

¹⁵³ H. Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 Volume II 1911-1933*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁵⁴ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 53.

¹⁵⁵ H. Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 Volume II 1911-1933*, p. 146.

until 1937 it was impossible for a CP member to become a NVV member. From 1936 onwards, communists became loyal and active supporters of trade unions, and as a result the social-democrats changed their attitude towards communists and lifted the ban on communist trade union membership a year later.¹⁵⁶ Besides its changed attitude towards social-democrats, the CPN also changed its position towards religion and the state. Christianity was not longer ridiculed by the party and its attitude towards the state became fundamentally more positive than in the first 30 years of the party's existence.¹⁵⁷

In Britain the Popular Front strategy meant an end to a period of isolation from the rest of the labour movement. The initial approaches made to the Labour Party and Congress were rejected by the National Executive and the General Council. In 1933 the National Joint Council (NJC), which represented both TUC and Labour Party, published a manifesto *Democracy versus Dictatorship* which declared its opposition to fascism, Nazism as well as communism.¹⁵⁸ The Labour Party Conference passed a resolution in 1934 which decided that 'united action with the communist party or ancillary organisations without the sanction of the national Executive Committee was incompatible with membership of the Labour Party'.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore in that same year the TUC General Council followed up the NJC manifesto with the so called 'Black Circular' which recommended all trade unions exclude communists and fascists from responsible posts; any trade council which wanted to be formally recognised by the Congress had to exclude communist and fascist delegates.¹⁶⁰ On the contrary the ILP was keen to form a united front which was established in 1933. Three years later, under influence of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the electoral victory of popular front alliances in France, an increasing number of people within the Labour Party too wanted to join this united or popular front.¹⁶¹

The Popular Front strategy's main objective was the defeat of fascism. On a local level the CPGB concentrated on the British Union of Fascists (BUF), whilst the CPN focussed on the fight against the *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging* (National Socialist Movement, NSB). On an international level, the communist fight against fascism was

¹⁵⁶ H. Galesloot en S. Legêne, *Partij in het Verzet*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁷ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁸ A.Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, p. 92.

¹⁵⁹ H. Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889 Volume III 1934-1951*, p. 146.

¹⁶⁰ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 108. Also see: www.tuc.org.uk.

¹⁶¹ H. Armstorng Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889 Volume III 1934-1951*, pp. 146-47.

fought in Spain where in 1936 the civil war had begun. Socialists and communists from all over Europe formed the International Brigades and went to Spain to protect its Popular Front Government. A total of 59,380 volunteers from 55 countries served during the war. 2000 British and 600 Dutch volunteers fought in the International Brigades. The majority of these volunteers were communists, but there were also social-democrats, socialists, anarchists and trotskysts.¹⁶² Interestingly within this context the British Labour Party didn't know what to do in practical terms. In theory, most members were fully behind the Spanish government in its fight against fascism, but at the same time Labourites realised that many people weren't interested in Spain. Therefore they didn't want to get involved into radical causes which did not immediately concern the British working class. Secondly the Labour Party feared losing the Catholic vote, since Franco called himself 'the defender of Catholicism against the "godless" Spanish republic'.¹⁶³

The SDAP did not actively join the fight against fascism either. The party had adopted a new program in 1937 which, according to Orlow, represented a dramatic shift in the party's ideological position. Its new program 'abandoned Marxist determinism and materialism, denied the inevitability of class struggle, and stated that the party's aims were social reformism and the preservation of democracy'.¹⁶⁴ With the adoption of its new revisionist program, the SDAP became very much like the Labour Party and thought it was more important to become a mass party (it had 90,000 members in 1937) than to join a small revolutionary group in their quest to defend the Spanish republic.

Directly after the outbreak of the war relief actions were organised and often instigated by the *International Red Aid* which was an international social service organisation founded by the Comintern.¹⁶⁵ The Dutch section of the *International Red Aid* organised its first appeal to raise money for Spain on 24 July 1936. Similar initiatives were taken by the British section of this organisation but soon *Aid for Spain* movements were founded who took over from national Red Aid groups, because the latter were hindered by their communist roots. Non-communist aid organisations were not willing to work together

¹⁶² H. Hermans, J. Carlos Mainer en Jose van Tol-Kamerman, *Een Nederlandse Blik op de Spaanse Burgeroorlog*, Utrecht: Insituto Cervantes, 2006, p. 13.

¹⁶³ A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁴ D. Orlow, *Common Destiny*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁵ The aim of this organisation which was founded in 1922 was to provide moral and material aid to victims of capitalism.

within the framework of the *International Red Aid* hence the foundation of independent humanitarian *Aid for Spain* committees. Nevertheless through the support for Spain within several organisations communists forged new friendships and working relationships with non-communists.¹⁶⁶

WWII 1939-1945

The nonaggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany of August 1939 took the majority of non-Russian communists by surprise and once more communist parties were forced to make a total reversal in their policies. Whereas most communist parties hailed the pact as Stalin's strategic master plan, the CPGB together with the communist parties of France, Belgium and the USA openly hesitated. In Britain the pact caused a rift in the CPGB leadership. Willie Thompson argues that:

The British (communist) party leaders failed to appreciate the direction in which the Soviet wind was shifting. They saw in the Pact the Soviet Union safeguarding its own position but did not realize that this had serious implications for the anti-fascist struggle and did not see why it should have any basic effect upon what foreign communists were doing.¹⁶⁷

The *Daily Worker* spoke about the pact as a 'dramatic peace move to halt the aggressors', but the official party theoreticians Rajane Palme Dutt and Emile Burns approached the new line with care and needed a good few days of consultation before announcing the 'correct interpretation of the pact', which would later turn out to be incorrect on the question whether the CPGB should support the British war effort or not.¹⁶⁸ The pact did not change the party's willingness to fight fascism and the Central Committee of the party announced on the day of the German invasion of Poland that: 'We are in support of all necessary measures to secure the victory of democracy over fascism'.¹⁶⁹ The following day on 2 September 1939, which was a day before Britain declared the war on Nazi-Germany, the GPGB issued a manifesto, urging a struggle on two fronts; a military victory over fascism

¹⁶⁶ T. Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 138-39 and pp. 147-49.

¹⁶⁷ W.Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁸ H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party* p. 109.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid* p. 110.

and for the removal of the Chamberlain government which was accused of a fascist disposition.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, until the secret agreements between Hitler and Stalin became public, British public opinion did not necessarily condemn the pact. Winston Churchill even said in a broadcast:

We could have wished that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as friends and allies of Poland, instead of as invaders. But that the Russian armies should stand on this line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace. At any rate the line is there, and an Eastern Front has been created which Nazi Germany does not dare assail. When Herr von Ribbentrop was summoned to Moscow last week it was to learn the fact, and to accept the fact, that the Nazi designs upon the Baltic States and upon the Ukraine must come to a dead stop.¹⁷¹

David Childs points out that in this early stage the communist party was not alone in its criticism of Chamberlain, nor was it isolated in its support for the Soviets. After all the party was at this stage still behind the war efforts.¹⁷² The situation was going to change drastically during the next month. On 14 September General Secretary Harry Pollitt published a pamphlet titled *How to Win the War*. On that same day the *Daily Worker* had received a telegram from Moscow stating that the war should be dismissed as a battle between imperialists and that the official CPGB line should propagate neutrality and not war. Pollitt who did not want to change the line of 2 September suppressed this telegram.¹⁷³ Three days after the publication of Pollitt's pamphlet and 16 days after the German invasion of Poland, Soviet troops also invaded Poland. Stalin and Hitler had secretly agreed a 'Treaty of Friendship and the Delimitation of Borders' which resulted in the division and annexing of Poland. Besides carving up Poland, the Soviet Union and Germany also called on Britain and France to make peace with Germany.

¹⁷⁰ J. Attfield and S. Williams, *The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1984, pp. 147-52. According to Kevin Morgan the CPGB saw the military preparations of the National Government as the foundation for a British Fascist State that would aid the Axis powers on a march through a succession of little countries on the way to the Soviet Union. Within this context, then, the 1938 Munich pact provided a clear confirmation that Chamberlain's objective was that of a reactionary alliance with Hitler. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 1939 challenged the credibility of the party line, see: K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-41*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, p.73.

¹⁷¹ D. Childs, 'The British Communist Party and the war, 1939-1941: Old Slogans revived', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12, 1977, p. 239.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ F.Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 90.

After his initial incorrect interpretation Rajani Palme Dutt desperately wanted to promote the Comintern's official line.¹⁷⁴ Dutt together with Rust and Springhall, who had taken over Pollitt's responsibilities when he decided he could not accept the new line, wanted to issue a statement calling for peace.¹⁷⁵ Against this Pollitt, Gallacher and Campbell did not want to give up the party's former position that military resistance to fascist aggression was the only means of maintaining peace. Nevertheless after an intense debate in the party's Central Committee, Moscow's line was finally adopted and published in the October Manifesto on the fourth of that month. Dutt's new pamphlet '*Why this war?*' replaced Pollitt's '*How to Win the War*' and furthermore Dutt took over from Pollitt, although without being given the title of general secretary. Rust became the new editor of the *Daily Worker*, replacing Campbell. Campbell and Pollitt were not only excluded from the Politbureau, they were also forced to write a statement in which they admitted they had been entirely wrong and now supported the new line.¹⁷⁶ The CPGB's credibility was severely damaged by this period of confusion and fence-sitting even amongst its own members. A period of public hostility followed and intensified after the Russian invasion of Finland in November 1939 which was generally condemned by non-communists, but heralded by the CPGB (and other CP's) as 'the liberation of the Finn's'.¹⁷⁷ Two weeks after the pact was signed, Britain found itself engaged in military resistance to fascist aggression and many who had flirted with the CPGB now saw a party that was not dedicated to the British worker, but was nothing more than a tool of Stalinist Russia.¹⁷⁸ On 21 January 1941 Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, decided to ban the publication of the *Daily Worker* and another communist publication called *The Week*. Childs points out that it is remarkable under the circumstances, i.e. the bleak looking situation in 1941 with the ongoing bombing raids and the threat of invasion, that the communists had enjoyed so much freedom.¹⁷⁹ Childs refers in this context to Morrisson's memorandum to the War cabinet: 'As a memorandum by Morrisson put it "this step (banning the two communist publications)

¹⁷⁴ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁵ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, pp 96-7. Also see: F. King, *About Turn The Communist Party & The Outbreak of the Second World War*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*, p. 300.

¹⁷⁹ D. Childs, 'The British Communist Party and the War', p. 247.

should not be regarded as a prelude to general action against communist propaganda. Action against the party itself, or individual leaders”, he regarded as “undesirable at the present time”¹⁸⁰ Furthermore a Committee (consisting of, among others, the Minister of Labour and National Service, Home Secretary and the Minister of Home Security) whose brief was to investigate if any action had to be taken in regard to the communist party, concluded ‘it is not necessary at present time to contemplate any general action against the communist party’, and ‘There is no definite evidence that communist activity has so far had a serious effect on the output of war industry.’¹⁸¹ In the Netherlands the CPN’s general secretary Louis de Visser objected strongly to the pact. Wim van Exter among others responded in a similar manner and some Jewish party members went a step further and tore up their membership cards. A significant number of people followed and left the party.¹⁸² But Paul de Groot who had been appointed as the party’s political secretary in 1938, was less reluctant to change the CPN’s official line. After clear instructions from Comintern leader Dimitrov on 8 September, the CPN unanimously left the Popular Front policy behind. The CPN defended the pact and became the biggest champion of neutrality and pronounced the war to be undertaken at the expense of the working class on both sides.¹⁸³ At the end of 1939 the CPN even adopted the stance, following the Soviet Union, that Britain and France were more belligerent than Germany. Dutch communists were instructed not to fight the NSB (National Socialists) anymore but the supporters of the British-French warfare. So after four years of cooperation, the CPN began to oppose the SDAP who supported the Allied forces and went back to the same anti-war campaign it had used in the period 1914-1918. The fight against the SDAP was revived and social-democrats were branded renegades and warmongers.¹⁸⁴ Consequently the SDAP took anti-communist measures in particular within the trade unions. A new ban on communist membership of the NVV was (re)introduced and the CPN became increasingly isolated in this period. Pelt notes that whereas the CPN changed its position after the pact, the SDAP did not change its attitude towards the CPN, because even before the 1939 the SDAP had felt a huge aversion

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. It needs to be noted that Morrisson, according to Beckett, itched to imprison communist leaders, but Churchill restrained him (in: F. Beckett, *The Enemy Within* p. 97).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² J. Stutje, *De Man Die de Weg Wees. Leven en Werk van Paul de Groot 1899-1986*, p. 145.

¹⁸³ W.F.S. Pelt, *Vrede door Revolutie*, p.27.

¹⁸⁴ H. Galesloot and S. Legêne, *Partij in Verzet* p. 21.

towards communists and the pact only reinforced these feelings.¹⁸⁵ The CPN's position resulted in unbounded confusion among its own following and a loss of all the alliances with non-communists which were so carefully forged in the Popular Front years.

After the German invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 the Dutch Communist Party leadership found it difficult to defend the pact between the Soviet Union and Germany and their stance that France and Britain were the real 'warmongers'. The question whether communists should defend their country and fight the occupier caused a rift within the party. Even though there were members of the party executive who were of the opinion communists should indeed fight the German occupiers, the official party line was that the two imperialist camps must be left to wear each other out. Nonetheless many Dutch rank-and-file communists disregarded this line and continued their fight against fascism.¹⁸⁶ When a five day war between the Netherlands and Germany broke out on 10 May 1940, several communists (sometimes together with NSB members) were imprisoned by the Dutch authorities on charges of collaboration with the enemy. After the Dutch capitulation most communists were released, but some were directly handed over to the Gestapo because the nonaggression pact did not safeguard the CPN's existence.¹⁸⁷ The CPN leadership, which since 15 May 1940 consisted out of Paul de Groot, Jan Dieters and Lou Jansen, decided to go underground after the occupiers had banned the CPN and its umbrella organisations on 20 July.¹⁸⁸ The CPN's leadership dispersed over the country to continue to work for the (underground) party from their hiding places. De Groot went to the South, Dieters to the East and Jansen to the North of the Netherlands.¹⁸⁹

The first communist initiatives to form an organised resistance were taken in November 1940, but it was not (yet) a national resistance because of the party's sectarian political orientation. Nevertheless communist activists showed a lot of courage in their efforts to organise actions against the Nazi occupier and overall the communist resistance was extremely effective and well organised. Unlike the CPN the SDAP played a disappointing role in the resistance. Orlow notes that 'there were individual Dutch socialists

¹⁸⁵ W.F.S. Pelt, *Vrede door Revolutie*, pp. 37-9.

¹⁸⁶ H. Galesloot and S. Legêne, *Partij in Verzet*, pp. 22-32.

¹⁸⁷ J. Stutje, *De Man Die de Weg Wees*, pp. 163-4.

¹⁸⁸ The NAS was also liquidated by the German occupation in 1940.

¹⁸⁹ J. Stutje, *De Man Die de Weg Wees*, pp. 167-8.

who were resisters from the first hours, but as a party the SDAP was more interested in cultivating contacts for political life after the liberation than in active resistance'.¹⁹⁰ The pinnacle of the communist resistance was without a doubt the February Strike of 1941 which was a protest against the raids held by the Nazis in Amsterdam's Jewish neighbourhood. This general strike held on 25 and 26 February, in which tens of thousands of people participated, was one of the first direct actions undertaken by non-Jewish citizens against anti-Jewish measures of the Nazis in occupied Europe. Hundreds of people, organisers as well as participants, were arrested, deported and executed in the months following the strike. What is particularly important about this rebellion against the occupier led by communists and followed by thousands is that it happened during the Molotov Ribbentrop pact; whilst the Soviet Union was still Germany's ally.¹⁹¹ The Soviet Union condemned the strike and other actions against the German occupier; Verrips notes that it took 47 years before a CPN executive (Joop Wolff in *Woprosy Istorii KPSS*; a Soviet magazine) dared to mention the fact that the February Strike was actually organised out of protest against the persecutions of the Jews and was not a political strike of the Dutch working class.¹⁹²

Many communists felt relieved when Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the Comintern urged the European communist parties to back up their government and fight German National Socialism. The CPGB completely reversed its line and the party announced full support for the war and brought Pollitt back from Wales who was reinstated as general secretary.¹⁹³ The ease of the change was mainly due to new Prime Minister Winston Churchill's prompt declaration of support for the Soviet Union. On 22 June, Churchill announced 'any man or state who fights on against Nazism will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe.'¹⁹⁴ The Red Army enjoyed a

¹⁹⁰ D. Orlow, *Common Destiny*, p. 27.

¹⁹¹ H. Galesloot and S. Legene, *Partij in Verzet*, p.78-79.

¹⁹² Until this publication in *Woprosy Istorii KPSS*; in the Soviet Union the February strike was portrayed as a political strike of the Dutch working class; the persecution of the Jews was not even mentioned which astounded many Dutch communists. The official position of the Soviet Union on the strike became painfully clear when the wife of Anton Struik (CP cadre) who worked for the Soviet diplomatic mission in Amsterdam was fired on the first day of the strike because her Soviet employers did not want to have anything to do with this rebellion against the German occupiers. (in: G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 124)

¹⁹³ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 98.

¹⁹⁴ A. Roberts, *Hitler & Churchill, Secrets of Leadership*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003, p. 107.

huge boost in popularity and consequently the CPGB's party membership increased by 111 percent and amounted to 56,000 by 1942. The Dutch government on the other hand acted with great caution towards the Soviet Union, which became clear in its refusal to recognize the Soviet Union. It wasn't until 1942 that the Netherlands, as one of last countries in the world, finally decided to officially recognize the Soviet state.¹⁹⁵

In the meantime the Dutch communist resistance intensified as did the ferocity of German repression. Many communists were deported to camps like Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück and Natsweiler, some returned after the war, but the majority did not. Throughout the period 1940-1945 the Dutch Communist Party lost 75 percent of its executives and thousands of its members. Because of its role in the resistance and admiration for the Red Army, a tremendous sympathy for the Dutch Communist Party had grown and after the war, just like the CPGB, the CP emerged as a respectable party with more than 50,000 members and 300,000 communist newspaper subscribers.¹⁹⁶ It should be noted that, although the CPN was extremely popular among the Dutch people in the immediate post war years, the Dutch government was very anti-communist and anti-Soviet Union which is illustrated by the aforementioned refusal to recognize the Soviet State. Duco Hellema argues that compared to other Western European countries, the Netherlands had the reputation of being particularly anti-communist. According to Hellema these sentiments were notably visible within the newly founded United Nations where 'Dutch representatives tried to stimulate a more hostile western attitude, going beyond most other countries.'¹⁹⁷ This Dutch anti-communism was almost as old as communism itself and had first surfaced around 1918 but surged during the late 1920s, which was the result of the introduction of the Class against Class line. Communists were followed and watched closely by the Central Intelligence Service which was established in 1919. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s they had to endure police brutality, lengthy prison sentences and

¹⁹⁵ D. Hellema, 'The Relevance and Irrelevance of Dutch Anti-Communism: The Netherlands and the Hungarian Revolution, 1956-1957', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30:1, 1995, p.170; G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 57.

¹⁹⁶ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 551.

¹⁹⁷ D. Hellema, 'The Relevance and Irrelevance of Dutch Anti-Communism', p.169.

sometimes even death.¹⁹⁸ Many mayors banned showings of Soviet films and communist gatherings. Communist property was regularly damaged and communists were also discriminated in the workplace and regularly fired.¹⁹⁹ This virulent tradition of anti-communism, which wasn't common in Britain, will be further discussed within the context of the Hungarian uprising in 1956.

During WWII, Dutch cultural and political leaders were imprisoned by the Nazis in a camp called Sint Michelsgestel. It was in this camp that the liberal, socialist, Protestant and Catholic prisoners developed the idea to form a people's movement which would unite progressives of all pillars. This 'project' resulted in the foundation of the *Nederlandse Volksbeweging* (Dutch Peoples Movement NVB) in 1945. The NVB never became the mass movement its founders had hoped it to be; it was rather a platform for intellectuals from different pillars. Its main aim was to establish a broad progressive political party which would rid society of ideologies like communism and fascism. The initiative was thwarted by the 'early' liberation of the Southern Netherlands in 1944. The South is predominately Catholic and by the time the rest of the country was liberated (in May 1945) the Catholic pillar was already firmly re-established. The idea to break through (*De Doorbraak*) the barriers separating the secular bloc from the Catholic and Calvinist blocs and to become a broadly progressive party never became reality; the NVB was disbanded in 1951 and only a few parties (Liberal VDB, Protestant CDU and the Socialist SDAP) joined in 1946 to found the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour party, PvdA). The pillarisation was ingrained in Dutch society and proved to be stronger than ever in the 1940s and 1950s.²⁰⁰ Although the PvdA was only a little more than a successor to the SDAP, it was not nothing like the pre-war socialist party. Its program completely rejected Marxism and any form of anticlericalism²⁰¹, which is why the new party was called 'Labour' rather than the 'Socialist Party'.

¹⁹⁸ In November 1918 a communist demonstration was violently dispersed when soldiers started to fire into the crowd which killed three people. In January 1930, a CPN open air meeting in Rotterdam ended in a blood bath when the police used extreme force to disperse the crowd. (see G.Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 468.)

¹⁹⁹ G.Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, pp. 467-68.

²⁰⁰ Prof. Dr. J. Bosmans, *Staatkundige Vormgeving in Nederland, de Tijd Na 1940*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999, p. 9.

²⁰¹ D. Orlow, *Common Destiny*, p. 49.

In the liberated South the CPN was re-founded by former party leader Willem van Exter on Christmas day 1944. The party focussed on the reconstruction of Dutch democracy which was in line with Stalin's political instructions for Western communist parties.²⁰² He had instructed communist parties to refrain from taking full power, but instead to restore parliamentary democracy and to aim for a powerful position within this framework. Furthermore he wanted communist parties to be part of national governments in order to promote a friendship with the Soviet Union.²⁰³

In Britain the CPGB, under the influence of their newly acquired respectability and prosperity felt it was time to propose a coalition with Labour. To stimulate a coalition and to retain its newly gained membership, the party had started a process to 'Anglicize' its organization. A new system was introduced in 1945, 'which virtually abandoned the attempt to make the factory group the primary unit, and now instead played emphasis on the branch which coordinated members' activities on the basis of their places of residence'.²⁰⁴ Unfortunately for the CPGB it was losing members rapidly which made the Labour Party decide that it did not need the communist party to win the elections. The Labour Party did indeed sweep the country in the 1945 elections whilst the CP only won a disappointing two seats in Parliament. Thompson points out that 'the outcome underlined all the disadvantages under the British electoral system of being a marginal party, even a temporarily well regarded one, at a point when enormous popular expectations were pinned upon the large and governmentally effective representative of labour and radical aspirations'.²⁰⁵ This is ultimately a very crucial difference between Great Britain and the Netherlands, where there was a multitude of small parties and a voting system based on proportional representation. Because of the country's political system, the CPN could enjoy its sudden popularity.

After the re-foundation of the CPN in the South of the Netherlands, Van Exter started to concentrate on the formation of a new union federation. Many communists felt that that the big unions and in particular the NVV had compromised themselves during the

²⁰² Although the Comintern had been dissolved in May 1943, communist parties still followed Soviet directives.

²⁰³ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 80.

²⁰⁴ H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, p. 129.

²⁰⁵ W.Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 73.

war²⁰⁶, which caused Van Exter to form the *Eenheidsvakbeweging* (United Trade Union EVB) in which communists would take key positions. Unfortunately in most Southern industries the EVB was a non-starter. In the time the NVV was re-established and it became clear that it hadn't lost the support of its members. De Jonge points out that communists missed out on a chance to obtain strong positions within the NVV (which was actually possible because in this period the NVV did not exclude communists), because they were too preoccupied with forming their own trade union federation.²⁰⁷

The CPGB on the other hand, whilst having to deal with many setbacks politically, was making significant progress in its trade union activities. Although the CPGB's membership peaked in 1942, the growth of the communist influence within the unions continued until 1948.²⁰⁸ Clegg notes that in the thirties and during the war, the number of communists elected to the Engineers' national committee and to their delegations to the Trade Union Congress 'had been rising year by year and they had begun to win elections for full time-officers' post.²⁰⁹ Communists were well represented in the Transport and General Workers' Union; Bert Papworth who was one of four communists on this union's executive council, became the first communist on the TUC's general council.²¹⁰ Arthur Horner was elected general secretary of the miners' union and according to Beckett the party also had full control of the Fire Brigades Union, the foundry workers and the Electrical Trades Union.²¹¹

When the rest of the Netherlands was also liberated in May 1945, Paul de Groot, who had been living in hiding in Zwolle reclaimed his role as the party's general secretary and traveled back to Amsterdam to join the other former party leaders. De Groot convinced the Party's Central Committee that the CPN should not return as a national party. Instead he urged them to form a new political party in which communists would work together with

²⁰⁶ The NVV was brought in line with national socialism by the German occupier and merged into the *Nederlandse Arbeidsfront* (Dutch Labour Front) on 1 May 1942; see; H. Galesloot and S. Legêne, *Partij in het Verzet*, pp. 176-77.

²⁰⁷ De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 84.

²⁰⁸ The TUC withdrew the Black Circular in 1945.

²⁰⁹ H. Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889 vol. III*, p. 307.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 308.

²¹¹ F. Beckett, *The Enemy Within*, p. 109.

society's progressive organizations and churches.²¹² Thus he announced the foundation conference of the *Vereniging van Vrienden van De Waarheid* (Society of Friends of the Waarheid) which was going to replace the CPN. A short period of confusion followed this meeting; communists in the South and in the West as well as the French and Belgian sister parties objected to De Groot's proposition. This criticism of former party executives together with De Groot's realization that the Dutch political situation was actually quite different than expected, i.e. the *Doorbraak* had failed, moved him to change his mind. The planned founding conference of the *Vereniging van Vrienden van de Waarheid* became a party conference and consequently the CPN was re-established on 12 May, 1945. Surprisingly, De Groot was voted general chairman.²¹³

Like the British party which tried to form a coalition with Labour, on 1 September 1945 the Dutch Communist Party's Central Committee approached the SDAP leadership with a proposal for the two parties to work and maybe even merge together. The SDAP completely rejected the proposal mainly on the grounds of their objection to the CPN's uncritical stance towards the Soviet Union. As we have seen a few months later the SDAP merged together with, among others, the CDU and the VDB which resulted in the PvdA.²¹⁴ The *Eenheidsvakbeweging*, now renamed the *Eenheidsvakcentrale* EVC, was doing a little better since the liberation of the whole of the Netherlands in May 1945. Its members worked predominantly on the docks, in construction or in the metal industry. On 1 January 1946 the EVC had 176.000 members against 242.000 NVV and 180.000 KAB members, although this number declined rapidly over the following years which moved the EVC to start to negotiate with the NVV about a possible amalgamation between the two. The NVV leadership soon realized that it did not need the EVC for its members and broke off all negotiations in 1947. De Jonge remarks that the EVC became a virtual fourth pillar in the labour movement (beside the Catholic KAB, the social-democratic NVV and the Protestant CNV). Instead of being a broad progressive trade union federation, it was small, insignificant and isolated its members (mostly communists) from the non-communist

²¹² A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 85.

²¹³ H. Galesloot & S. Legêne, *Partij in het Verzet*, p. 251-60.

²¹⁴ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 88.

workforce. De Jonge sums it up when he states that ‘the EVC was a millstone round the neck of the CPN’.²¹⁵

Despite the aforementioned setbacks and unlike the CPGB, the CPN continued to do very well in elections. The CPN won 10.57 percent of the votes in the 1946 parliamentary elections, which resulted in ten seats in *De Tweede Kamer* (Second Chamber; Dutch House of Commons). Both the provincial elections and the local council elections all held in 1946 were also a triumph for the CPN. In the provincial elections it received a total of 11.41 percent of the votes, which meant that for the first (and last) time communists were represented in every Dutch province. The party won many seats on local councils and became the biggest party in the capital city. The communist newspaper *De Waarheid* had 200,000 subscribers, making it one of the biggest and most popular Dutch newspapers. While communist and non-communists continued to work closely together in several organizations like *Comité Vrij Spanje* (Committee Free Spain) and *De Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië* (the society the Netherlands-Indonesia). This constructive and prosperous period was characterized by the cultural and political expansion of the Dutch communist movement, which came to an end when the Cold War started in 1947.²¹⁶

The Cold War

Internationally the initiation of the Marshall Plan in 1947 generally marks the beginning of the Cold War. Communists in Western democracies found themselves increasingly isolated and were considered the ‘enemy within’ because of their rejection of the Marshall Aid and their pro-Soviet Union stance. Established in 1947, the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) which was in effect the successor of the Comintern, instructed communist parties to ‘disrupt the operation of the Marshall Plan and Western rearmament. Each party was to assume the role of defender of its country’s independence against the encroachments of the United States’.²¹⁷ After a very successful period of critical support for the social democratic parties, once again the CPN and the CPGB started to oppose the PvdA and the Labour Party calling its leadership and members reactionaries. In this context De Jonge draws parallels between the period 1946-1954 and the ‘Class against Class’ period of the

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 89.

²¹⁶ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, pp. 89-90.

²¹⁷ H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, p. 143.

early 1930s. He points out that the extent of isolation experienced by Dutch communists was far greater in the years between 1946 and 1954 than it was in the 'Class against Class' period. The party's slogans were also very different; unlike in the thirties, in the post-war period the CPN supported the parliamentary democracy, did not condemn religion and made several offers to cooperate with non-communist organizations. The similarity between both periods of isolation is the vigorous fight the CPN put up against the social democrats. The differences between the two periods is that the CPN did not find itself completely isolated in the early thirties because its extreme viewpoints corresponded with the needs of the unemployed and other crisis victims, which resulted in a sudden growth in membership. The period 1946-1954 on the other hand was characterized by a yawning gap between the party's political slogans and people's needs and interests.²¹⁸

It needs to be noted that in this period the communist support for the Indonesian struggle for independence and its condemnation of the Dutch invasion of this country isolated the party and its members even further. During Indonesia's struggle for independence the Dutch army invaded the country twice. The first invasion in 1947 was to occupy the economically vital areas in East- and West-Java, but the situation got out of hand and the result was the occupation of Java and Sumatra. The United Nations intervened and demanded a cease fire. During the second invasion in 1948, president Soekarno was captured by the Dutch army in order to destroy the Republic of Indonesia. The Dutch government failed again because the United Nations (i.e. the United States) intervened a second time and pressured the Dutch government to recognize the independence of Indonesia. The CPN and the Pacifist Party were the only two parties who opposed the Dutch politics in Indonesia and were politically and socially isolated as a result of a national consensus on the topic of Indonesia.²¹⁹

In Britain the fall of India as a colony was not felt like a loss. Charles More notes that: 'The lynchpin of Empire fell – and few in Britain really cared; the Empire's popular

²¹⁸ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, pp. 93-4.

²¹⁹ It wasn't until 1956 that the first crack in the almost unanimous support for the government's policy in Asia occurred when the Dutch Reformed Church started to object and called for 'reflection'. But the cabinet and most of the non-socialist factions in parliament were not willing to allow any changes in its policy. See; C. Lambert and M. Penders, *The West New Guinea Debacle: Dutch Decolonization and Indonesia, 1945-1962*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002.

appeal had long been diminishing.²²⁰ Therefore the CPGB, which like the rest of the international communist movement condemned (European) colonization, was in tune with the British public opinion on this subject. On the contrary, Dutch communists were condemned for their deviating opinion on decolonization. As we will see in chapter two, communists who refused to serve in Indonesia received lengthy prison sentences, sometimes even longer than the sentences people had received who had collaborated with the German occupiers during the WWII, which communists experienced as a stab in the back. In Britain these frenetic efforts to maintain its empire were absent and the period 1946-1950 was relatively less turbulent. Therefore the CPGB was not as politically or socially isolated as its Dutch counterpart.

Besides the absence of problems surrounding decolonization the CPGB did not experience isolation like the Dutch communist movement because the disproportioned degree of communist influence in the British trade union movement. This is not to say that British communists were not attacked or discriminated against during the intensification of the Cold War, because there are certainly some isolated cases of political discrimination. British communists who were active in the trade unions were mobilized to discredit the Marshall plan and to hinder rearmament which made non-communist union officials painfully aware of the communist infiltration inside British unions. In 1949 the TUC issued the following statement:

Statements made officially by the communist party in Britain prove beyond question that sabotage of the European Recovery Programme is its present aim. Communist influences are everywhere at work to frame industrial demands for purposes of political agitation; to magnify industrial grievances; and to bring about stoppages in industry.²²¹

The TUC wanted to prevent communists from occupying key position within unions, but the way unions responded to the TUC's request to introduce a ban on communist office-holders, varied. In some unions, like the Electrical Trades Union, the Fire Brigades union and the Amalgamated Engineering union the communist influence was so firm the TUC's appeal was instantly rejected. Other unions like the Transport and General Workers Union

²²⁰ C. More, *Britain in the Twentieth Century*, p. 208.

²²¹ TUC report 1949 p. 274.

did endorse the TUC's policy statement and consequently nine full time officials were dismissed for having communist sympathies.²²² Besides the TUC's purge of communists, civil servants who were believed to be communists were also fired or reassigned. This purge was initiated by Prime Minister Clement Attlee under pressure of the Conservatives and the United States. Conservative MP Sir Waldron Smithers urged Attlee in 1947 to set up a Committee of the House of Commons on Un-British Activities, after the American example. Attlee was not interested and told Sir Waldron no several times. After the arrest of British Scientist Igor Gouzenko, who had spied for Russia whilst working on the joint US-UK-Canada atomic project during WWII, Attlee decided to install a commission which would investigate the communist threat. This commission was led by the head of Civil Service Sir Edward Bridges and director-general of MI5 Sir Percy Sillitoe. On recommendation of this committee Attlee decided to introduce negative vetting in 1949, but under pressure of the US they introduced positive vetting in 1951.²²³ Attlee agreed, hoping it would induce the US to be more cooperative in atomic information, but made it very clear he wasn't pleased; 'We are pardonably annoyed at being instructed by a beginner like McCarthy. The British Labour Party has had nearly 40 years of fighting communism in Britain, and, in spite of war and economic depression, the communists have utterly failed.'²²⁴ It is important to note that in the period 1948-1982 only 25 British officials have been dismissed for security reasons, 25 resigned and 88 were transferred to non-sensitive work. No one was named.²²⁵

In the Netherlands on the other hand, the 'communist treat' was considered as something very realistic and the Soviet Union and their allies (all members and sympathisers of the Dutch communist movement) were feared. Mark Traa has thoroughly studied the classified documents drawn up by the Dutch Secret service (BVD) and the Dutch government, which have been available for research since 1989, for his book *The Russians are coming, the Netherlands and the Cold War*. From his research the conclusion can be drawn that the Dutch government was actually expecting a third world war; a

²²² H. Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, p. 155.

²²³ P. Hennessy and G. Brownfeld, 'Britain's Cold War Security Purges: The Origins of Positive Vetting', in *The Historical Journal* vol. 25, no 4, December, 1982, pp. 965-74.

²²⁴ Ibid, 970.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Ministry of Defence report published in April 1948 concluded that the Russians were more than capable of invading the Netherlands and overthrowing society assisted by their national allies in order to establish a Soviet state.²²⁶ Following this report the BVD designed *Operatie Diepvries* (operation freezer), which would come into force in case of a Soviet invasion. In preparation of *Operatie Diepvries* a law was promulgated in 1952 which allowed the government to arrest all subversive elements in society. A list of these 'subversive elements in society' was drawn up by the BVD and initially consisted out of 8000 names but dropped in the following years to around 1500 names.²²⁷ Altogether it is interesting that compared to Great Britain, the 'Red Scare' was much more alive in the Netherlands and the virulent communist witch hunt which followed, lasted until 1987, and was in many ways only comparable to the extreme situation in the United States. The CPN heard rumours about the existence of this list of subversive elements and took steps of its own. It was not only preparing itself to go underground; according to the BVC it had also moved all printing presses, administrative paper work and other documents from CPN offices to the homes of trustworthy non-communists.²²⁸

Like De Jonge, Pelling also draws parallels between the period after 1947 and that of the 20 years before. He notes that there was 'the same cutting of ties with the Labour Left and the same direct clash with TUC policy which resulted in the union purges'.²²⁹ Although it seemed that the CPGB had returned to the sectarianism of the 1930s, Pelling emphasizes that the 'position of the party was in many ways less difficult than in 1929-1932. It was about 10 times as large as it had been then, it had obtained an almost unshakeable grip on the management of several trade unions and a considerable influence in others'.²³⁰

In contrast the CPN did not have any influence in trade unions; the EVC had shrunk to a very small inactive organisation and in 1948, in response to the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the NVV had reintroduced its ban on communist trade union membership. Besides the NVV's anti-communist measures, communists were also expelled from local

²²⁶ M. Traa, *De Russen Komen! Nederland in de Koude Oorlog*, Athenaeum Polak & Van Genneep 2009, pp. 13-4.

²²⁷ This list of subversive Dutch people was updated until 1987, (M. Traa, *De Russen Komen!* pp. 25-7)

²²⁸ Ibid, pp. 27-8.

²²⁹ F. Beckett, *The Enemy Within*, p.160.

²³⁰ Ibid.

councils in Amsterdam and Rotterdam and in 1951 a law was introduced which banned communists from being civil servants.²³¹ Other organizations followed suit; a particularly painful example for communists of an organisation which started to expel CPN members was the *Vereniging van Ex-Politieke Gevangenen* (organisation of Ex-political prisoners). Compared to the quite extreme anti-communist measures taken in the Netherlands, the CPGB was being dealt with very mildly. Even after the outbreak of the war in Korea, which could easily be a reason to suppress the party since British troops were also involved, there was no widespread persecution of communists.²³²

The CPN and its members reacted to their isolation and persecution in a peculiar but nevertheless understandable manner. They became even more fanatic in their views which consequently isolated them even more and caused a significant drop in membership. The CPN went from 53,000 members in 1948 to 17,000 in 1953, whereas in the same period the CPGB went from 43,000 to 33,963 members, which suggests that the impact of the Cold War was much more severe in the Netherlands.

Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 did not have an immediate impact on communist parties' ins and outs of politics. However internationally major changes occurred during the three years after Stalin's death. The Korean War ended, China came out of its isolation and started to play a mayor diplomatic role in Asia and the USSR's new leaders- first Malenkov soon followed by Khrushchev, showed courage and initiative in their aim to improve their relationship with the USA. Two international conferences were organised; representatives from 29 Asian and African countries came together in Bandoeng and representatives from the USA, USSR, China, UK and France came together in Geneva to discuss the possibilities of a peaceful coexistence. The end of the Cold War seemed near.²³³

This (short-lived) *détente* constituted a great opportunity for communist parties in Western democracies to break out of their isolation. The CPN came up with a new and practical approach which was meant to establish some sort of influence in the trade union movement. The CPN urged the NVV to lift its ban on communist trade union membership and sought a general rapprochement with the social democrats. The CPN also admitted that the party had

²³¹ Members of the CPN or any umbrella organizations like the ANJV, EVC and NVB.

²³² W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 88.

²³³ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 312.

to free itself from sectarianism in order to attract more members.²³⁴ The CPGB had already issued a new programme in 1951 called *The British Road to Socialism* which was a party strategy to develop as a growing political force, while striving for left unity by using parliamentary tactics. These attempts of the CPGB and the CPN to establish a left coalition and break out of their isolation were thwarted by the events of 1956. On 25 February of that year, Khrushchev made a secret speech to the twentieth congress of the CPSU, which openly revealed the criminal activities of the Stalin regime and denounced Stalin's cult of personality. The initial reaction of the CPN and CPGB was similar; both were stunned and had no idea how to respond to the speech and how to deliver its content to the parties' rank-and-file. After three days the CPN's Central Committee issued an official statement which hailed the CPSU's Congress' decisions whilst acknowledging that mistakes were made by Stalin. Communists all over the world would, according to this statement, learn from these 'mistakes'. Furthermore it explained that Stalin would still go into the history books as one of the most competent and successful leaders of the Marxist-Leninist Movement.²³⁵ In Britain Palme Dutt wrote a very similar piece which was a reaction to people's concerns about these revelations; 'That there should be spots on the sun would only startle an inveterate Mithras-worshipper. To imagine that a great revolution can develop without a million cross-currents, hardships, injustices and excesses would be a delusion fit only for ivory-tower dwellers in fairyland'.²³⁶ The CPGB's Central Committee forced Dutt to withdraw his piece.

Even before both thoroughly shaken parties could recover from the revelations which caused confusion and disarray among its members, Russian tanks rolled into Hungary on 4 November 1956 to crush a large demonstration held in Budapest. In the Netherlands the CPN, even before instructions from Moscow how to interpret the Hungarian developments, described the situation in Budapest as a counter-revolutionary coup stirred up by foreign agents. This resolution published on 29 October totally condemned the Hungarian protesters and CPN members felt a sense of relief when the Soviet Union intervened.²³⁷ What followed in the Netherlands in the days after the Soviet

²³⁴ J. Stam, *De CPN en Haar Buitenlandse Kameraden*, pp. 34-5.

²³⁵ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 319.

²³⁶ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p.131.

²³⁷ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 128.

invasion was unparalleled. Dutch public opinion responded in an exceptionally fierce way; throughout the country demonstrations were organised, communist party offices were attacked and it came to violent altercations between communists and non-communists. Hellema adds that the international press observed that the Dutch reaction was more extreme than anywhere else which was the product of a long tradition of Dutch anti-communism.²³⁸ The Dutch government had viewed the process of peaceful coexistence in the years 1953-1956 with great suspicion and caution. The Hungarian uprising and Soviet intervention had proved the Dutch government right; peaceful coexistence was indeed a 'dangerous illusion'.²³⁹ A prime example of this anti-Soviet attitude is the Dutch Cabinet's decision on 19 November 1956 to freeze cultural and sporting relations with the SU which resulted in the Dutch Olympic committee's refusal to participate in the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Hellema points out that this was a 'remarkable gesture, since as far as western countries are concerned only Spain took a similar stand'.²⁴⁰

British public opinion hardly responded to the Soviet intervention in Hungary. Overall the British government and the British public were much more engrossed in the Suez crisis than the events in Hungary. British diplomat James Cable notes in his article on Britain and the Hungarian revolution: 'neither the Cabinet nor the Chiefs of Staff discussed Hungary between 23 October and 30 November 1956. Both were endlessly chewing the Suez cud'.²⁴¹ Nevertheless the events in Hungary did have a huge impact on the CPGB. Just like the CPN (and other 'western' communist parties) the CPGB officially declared its full support for the intervention, 'considering that the new Hungarian government and the action of the Soviet Forces in Hungary should be supported by communists and socialists everywhere'.²⁴² However this public statement concealed fierce internal debate that began following the 'Secret Speech'. Most famously John Saville and Edward Thompson produced *The Reasoner*²⁴³, as an inner party discussion document and as a result were

²³⁸ D. Hellema, 'The Relevance and Irrelevance of Dutch Anti-Communism', p. 182.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 176.

²⁴¹ Sir J. Cable, 'Britain and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', in: *International Relations*, 1988, 9, p. 323.

²⁴² Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p.104.

²⁴³ The first copy of *the Reasoner* was published at the end of July 1956 and was meant to encourage an honesty of discussion and was a direct attack on Stalinist Communism.

forced out of the party. They were the tip of the iceberg; the *Daily Worker* lost a third of its journalists and the party lost many working class militants as well as intellectuals.²⁴⁴ The people who decided to stay in the CPGB placed their hopes on a new leadership, which was about to be elected at the 1957 Congress. Harry Pollitt had resigned as General Secretary in 1956, due to ill health and general disillusionment with the state of international communism at the time. At this Congress a Minority Report, as well as a Majority Report, of the Commission on Inner Party Democracy were presented. The Minority report, composed by an intellectual opposition, wanted a federalised Executive and factional rights so the Party could become 'fully independent...fully democratic in its inner party life, standing for the development of a democratic Socialism' and thus able 'to exert political influence in the British Labour movement...'²⁴⁵ The Majority Report, on the other hand maintained that democratic centralism was still appropriate for the party even though it was no longer a revolutionary organisation. At the 1957 congress held at Easter 1957, the Minority Report was heavily defeated.²⁴⁶ This resulted in a true exodus: thousands of people left the party. Eaden and Renton note that the haemorrhaging of membership had started in 1956, but after the 1957 conference many of those who had argued to stay in the party and fight, now left the party. Loyalists at the time had argued that it was overwhelmingly the middle-class intellectuals who left and the working class who stayed loyal. Closer inspection suggests this wasn't true: 'Overall membership fell by a third between February 1956 and February 1958. Although no direct statistical evidence of who was leaving is available, there was no notable shift in occupations of delegates attending national Congresses in years to come, which one would expect if those who had left had been predominantly middle-class intellectuals.'²⁴⁷

After the anti-communist terror in the Netherlands had died down in mid-November, it was time to assess the damage. The most visible effect of the events of 1956 was the loss of one-fifth of *Waarheid* subscribers.²⁴⁸ The party also lost some of its

²⁴⁴ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 135.

²⁴⁵ J. Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict. The CPGB 1951-68*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2003, p. 73.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid* pp. 69-73.

²⁴⁷ J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920*, pp. 120-1.

²⁴⁸ Fear was the motivation of most of these lapsed subscribers; Communists and sympathizers were actively (and in hindsight successfully) intimidated in the weeks after the Soviet invasion.

members, but these were often relatively new members who had joined the party in the period 1955-1956. De Jonge argues that, besides a few negative consequences, the anti-communist violence overall had a positive effect on the party's 'core' members; there was a sense of unity against the aggressor and communists felt proud they had (often successfully) defended their properties. De Jonge concludes that because of this new sense of unity among CPN members, the party structure stayed intact. This is why, in the Netherlands case, the events in Hungary did not trigger the formation of an opposition group within the communist party demanding fundamental changes like in Britain; or for example in Italy and France.²⁴⁹

An opposition within the CPN did become visible a year later in 1957. A group had formed around six prominent members of the party's Central Committee²⁵⁰; Bertus Brandsen, Cor Geugjes, Gerben Wagenaar, Fris Reuter, Henk Gortzak and Rie Lips-Odinot. In parliament this group of opponents outnumbered the rest of the party because, of the seven seats the CPN had in parliament, four were held by Wagenaar, Reuter, Gortzak and Lips-Odinot. The immediate cause to form this opposition was a debate about the communist trade union federation the EVC. De Groot wanted to get rid of the EVC which he viewed as a bothersome and useless. Brandsen, the EVC secretary, did not want to dissolve because he had observed a slight increase in membership and therefore urged De Groot to give the EVC the opportunity to voice its own opinion especially when it came to the appointment of new EVC officials. De Groot, who was often called the Dutch Stalin because he ruled the CPN like a dictator, was furious and a fierce debate in the Central Committee meeting followed. Eventually a compromise was reached in which both parties admitted they had made mistakes. But the peace did not return since anonymous circulars titled 'Opposition letters' began to surface in 1957 and 1958, which were published by non-communist newspapers which were keen to blacken the CPN and especially its leader De Groot. The circulars dealt with the cult of personality De Groot had and the rejection of democratic centralism as inappropriate for present conditions in the Netherlands. The objections were very similar to those made in the British Minority Report. The third circular which appeared in April 1957 actually quoted extensively from *The Reasoner*. The

²⁴⁹ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 129.

²⁵⁰ The CPN's Central Committee consisted of 24 members at the time, so 1 in 4 were part of the opposition.

anonymous writers of this circular agreed with Thompson and Saville that honesty of discussion within the party should be encouraged without being accused of revisionism; 'Lately there is yet again a tendency within our party (CPN) to brand certain opinions as revisionism. De Groot's inclination to condemn any opinion that doesn't support his own as "hostile to communism", kills any discussion.'²⁵¹

In the mean time the opposition within the party became stronger; the last straw for Brandsen en Geugjes was the removal of Adri Verreyt. Verreyt who was a member of the Party's Central Committee, was accused of slander against De Groot. Consequently Brandsen en Geugjes left their positions on the Central Committee. Together with Wagenaar and Gortzak, Brandsen and Geugjes were officially removed from party by the Central Committee. After making a statement on behalf of the opposition Lips-Odinot was also removed from the party. This group of dissidents who refused to give up their seats in parliament were called *De Brug groep* (the Bridge group) and decided to take part in the General Elections of 1959.²⁵² They lost all their seats and only received 35,000 (0.58 percent) of the votes.²⁵³ The CPN did not do well either and lost almost half of its votes and four of its seven seats in parliament.²⁵⁴

A similar situation occurred in the EVC where an ongoing debate about the role of the CPN in the trade union federation resulted in a schism in 1958. Between 15000 and 18000 members joined the EVC'58 (which was loyal to the CPN) and 2000 to 3000 members stayed in the traditional EVC.²⁵⁵ After the split within the trade union federation the CPN leadership continued in its quest to forge some sort of working relationship between the EVC'58 and the NVV. By January 1960 the dissolution of the EVC'58 was already in the cards, but the EVC'58 leadership proclaimed it wanted to make sure all its members would be accepted into the NVV. These intentions were completely illusory; the NVV leadership did not want to have anything to do with the EVC'58 or its members. NVV leader Van Wingerden took things even further when he said: 'We will be extra

²⁵¹ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 343.

²⁵² The Brug groep's political party had the name *Socialistische Werkerspartij* (Socialist Workers Party) which was founded on 12 June 1959 and was eventually discontinued on 18 December 1965.

²⁵³ The Dutch Secret Service estimates that the CPN lost 500 of its members (20 executives) to the *Bruggroep*.

²⁵⁴ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, pp. 350-57

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 358.

vigilant...I will see to the suppression of Communist as one of my main tasks.’²⁵⁶ The NVV worked closely together with the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (BVD Dutch secret service) to prevent communists from becoming NVV members.

In Britain Khrushchev’s secret speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary marked a turning point for the CPGB. By 1960 the Party with its new General Secretary John Gollan, had recovered from the impact of these events and had consolidated its internal unity after the exodus of many prominent members in 1956. In 1961, after 12 years of decline, there was a slight increase in membership which was going to continue for the next three years.²⁵⁷

Meanwhile a new movement called the New Left had emerged in Britain, which was a reaction the errors of the ‘Old Left’ parties, like the CPGB. An integral part of this movement was the journal *New Left Review*, founded in 1960 by E.P. Thompson, John Saville, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. The journal was ‘an important attempt to fuse Marxist diagnoses of the class structure with libertarian republicanism derived from the Renaissance and to reconcile both with national identity’.²⁵⁸ Instead of focusing on trade union activism like the Old Left, the New Left group emphasized the importance of social activism; it mainly concentrated on the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and global justice.

In the Netherlands the motor behind the ‘ban the bomb’ movement was founded in 1957, the *Pacifistische Socialistisch Partij* (Pacifist Socialist Party PSP), which was closely affiliated to Christian groups like the Quakers, the peace movement, socialist groups and syndicalists; was in many ways the Dutch equivalent of the New Left group. The party’s slogan was ‘socialism without the atomic bomb’ and was founded by people, some of whom were ex-CPN members, who didn’t agree with the pro-Russian stance of the CPN nor agreed with the pro-American line of the PvdA.²⁵⁹ The CPN had not been able to regain its sympathisers who the Party had lost in the years between 1956 and 1958; many ‘extreme-Left’ voters chose PSP instead. Nevertheless, like the CPGB the CPN came out of

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 147.

²⁵⁸ K.O. Morgan, *Britain since 1945, the People’s Peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 140.

²⁵⁹ The New Left Movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament & the Dutch PSP will be discussed within the wider context of the protest movement of the 1960s in Chapter Two.

her isolation and restored the party's political unanimity. After 1958 the CPN became increasingly independent from the CPSU and made it clear on many occasions that the party gave national activities priority over international activities. International activities were only important if it served a national purpose. De Jonge calls this process, which was visible in most CPs after 1958; *de-Bolshevization* or *de-Russification*. Not many CPs took it as far as the CPN, whose quest for independence resulted in an actual split with the USSR and the international communist movement in general.²⁶⁰ The CPGB on the other hand remained a 'pro-Soviet' party although according to Reuben Falber 'British communists too began to look more closely at Soviet policies and were less ready to fall in line with its switches'.²⁶¹

In November 1960 a large conference with representatives of 81 communist parties took place in Moscow to discuss the deteriorating relationship between the CPSU on one side and the Communist Party of China and its ally the Communist Party of Albania on the other. Whilst it became clear the split within the international communist movement was irreversible, the conference succeeded in keeping up an appearance of unity to the outside world.²⁶² This 'unity' came to an end when the Chinese Communist Party in June 1963 declared in a letter to all communist parties that from that moment onwards that China would consider the Soviet Union as its enemy. The Chinese party denounced Khrushchev and the rest of the CPSU leadership as revisionists. This declaration of the Chinese CP marked the beginning of 20 years of hostility between China and the Soviet Union.²⁶³ The CPN's General Secretary De Groot was one of the few communist party leaders who chose a very individual and deviant position; he denounced the Chinese party, but at the same time condemned the Soviet Union's national politics. He went a step further during a speech in May 1965 in which he accused Khrushchev of revisionism and called him a renegade. De Groot also blamed the Soviet Union for the split in the international communist movement and demanded that the CPSU should make the first steps towards

²⁶⁰ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 146.

²⁶¹ R. Falber, *The 1968 Czechoslovak Crisis: Inside the British Communist Party*, Socialist History Occasional Papers Series no 5, Preston: Lancashire Community Press, 1996, p. 4.

²⁶² A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 142.

²⁶³ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 384.

reconciliation with China.²⁶⁴ The CPN wanted to stay neutral in the Sino- Soviet conflict and focus instead on its national activities; consequently the party isolated itself from the rest of the communist movement, whilst still experiencing a degree of isolation in its own country. Nevertheless Stam points out that De Groot's criticism had a liberalising effect on the party; 'The CPN no longer propagated a rigid version of "socialist realism"; i.e the condemnation of "bourgeois-formalism". Furthermore Stam notes that the CPN showed restraint when it came to soviet ideology.²⁶⁵

The CPGB, like the majority of the world's communist parties, backed up the CPSU in the Sino-Soviet conflict. Not everyone within the British party agreed with this stance; a Maoist breakaway initiated by Michael McCreery followed in 1963. Similar breakaways occurred all over the world; Maoism was particularly attractive for young revolutionaries who dismissed communism in the Soviet Union as 'revisionist'.²⁶⁶ The CPGB was not concerned about losing a small group of its members to Maoist splinter groups; the Party was, for the first time in decades, flourishing. The Party had new hopes in the trade union movement; the appointment of more radical leaders ended the right wing control of the big trade unions and the CPGB was eager to cooperate with these new leaders. Within this context, Thompson notes that;

The communist party's essential relationship with trade unionism, more emphatically dominant after '63, was to mobilise its members at large to support action by workers rather than to instigate workers to industrial action in pursuit of its own politicise and aims. In doing so it marked a final break with the traditions of the first 15 years of the party's existence.²⁶⁷

In the Netherlands the labour movement had cooperated with the government in the post war period and promoted its *geleide loonpolitiek* (centrally directed pay policy).²⁶⁸ The CPN, whose members were banned from joining any of the trade union federations,²⁶⁹ had

²⁶⁴ A. Stam, *De CPN en Haar Buitenlandse Kameraden*, pp. 220-21.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁶⁶ W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 131.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 136.

²⁶⁸ After 1945, up till 1963 the government maintained a strong influence over pay trends by imposing binding guidelines in advance of collective bargaining, after or even without consultations with the trade-union confederations and the employers' confederations.

²⁶⁹ The Communist EVC was dissolved in 1964.

focused primarily on radical workers' protest outside of the trade union movement. In the early 1960s, when the PvdA was not represented in parliament, the CPN finally started to gain some control in the unions. Workers who were dissatisfied with years of stagnant wages joined the CPN's protest which resulted in higher wages in several industries.²⁷⁰ Outside of their activities in the trade union movement, the CPGB and the CPN campaigned against the remilitarisation of Germany and later the war in Vietnam²⁷¹; both of these causes were popular and worked in favour of the parties. The CPGB's membership figure increased dramatically and went from 28,000 in 1961 to 34,000 in 1963. The CPN membership did not grow in the period 1961-1976, but the party did well in the elections. In the general elections of 1963 and 1967 it took respectively 2,77 percent and 3,61 percent of the total vote which was a significant growth since the 1959 elections when the party received only 2,41 percent. The CPGB on the other hand had disappointing results in the elections of 1966, which according to Thompson was 'attributed to the conviction of electors that it was essential to vote Labour to ensure the dismissal of the Tories'.²⁷² The CPN's anti-Soviet attitude climaxed during the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, which ended the Czech's Prime Minister Dubcek's initiative to create a more democratic type of socialist government. On 26 August of that year the Central Committee published a manifesto which declared that the Soviet Union caused the crisis in Czechoslovakia because it had supported its leader Novothny through thick and thin. The armed intervention was, according to this manifesto, the Soviet Union's most disgraceful breach of the principals of Leninism.²⁷³

The CPGB was more hesitant to condemn the invasion, which split the party into two camps; one group of hardliners led by Dutt and Sid French who supported the Soviet invasion and objected to the party's growing tendency to distance itself from Moscow and on the other side the majority of the party, who knew full well that 'for the CP to support the invasion would be close to signing its own death warrant'.²⁷⁴ Dutt's group became later known as 'Tankies' who in the eyes of the new and young communist guard embodied

²⁷⁰ G. Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend*, p. 445.

²⁷¹ The protest against the war in Vietnam is discussed in chapter two.

²⁷² W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 134.

²⁷³ A. Stam, *De CPN en Haar Buitenlandse Kameraden*, p. 330-32.

²⁷⁴ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 164.

everything that was wrong about communism. Reuben Falber, who had temporarily replaced Gollan whilst he was on holiday, issued a statement which called for withdrawal of the Soviet troops but carefully spoke of a Soviet intervention and not an invasion. In 1996 Falber published for the Socialist History Society *The 1968 Czechoslovak Crisis: Inside the British Communist Party*, in which he emphasises what was at stake for both sides: ‘on the one side the right of each party to determine its own policy and socialist democracy - on the other loyalty to the Soviet Union and “proletarian internationalism”’.²⁷⁵ ‘Czechoslovakia’ and the two opposing opinions dominated the party’s Congress in 1969 where eventually Dutt’s camp was defeated by 295 votes to 118. Beckett notes that ‘the invasion kept most members loyal – there was nothing like the 1956 exodus. Nonetheless the invasion made it even harder for the party to be centre stage in 1960s radicalism’.²⁷⁶ By 1970 the conclusion can be drawn that the CPGB had failed to become the much needed vehicle for young people’s radicalism. The CPGB’s decline which had set in around 1964 continued throughout the 1970s and by 1979 the party had lost almost one third of its membership.

The CPN fared much better in the same period; its membership continued to grow until 1978 and the Party went from five to seven seats in parliament in the period 1967-1972. This period also marked the end of the Dutch anti-communism; the CPN was finally accepted by fellow parties and became an active part of Dutch politics. This coincided or was partly caused by the depillarisation of Dutch society. In 1966 it was rewarded political broadcasting time and communists were not longer excluded from local councils. More importantly the NVV’s ban on communist trade union membership was lifted in 1971, which really symbolised the end of an era of isolation and the beginning of a period of cooperation.²⁷⁷ The CPN was not able to enjoy its new status for long. Decline set in around 1977 when a very disappointing general election resulted in a loss of half of the party’s seats in Parliament. The CPN eventually lost its last seat in parliament in 1986.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ R. Falber, *The 1968 Czechoslovak Crisis*, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ F. Beckett, *Enemy Within*, p. 166.

²⁷⁷ A.A. De Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland*, p. 160.

²⁷⁸ See appendix II: Communist Party votes/membership.

Conclusion

In the introduction of this chapter I argued, referring to Saarela and Rentola, that certain variables i.e. the conditions of birth, the strength of previous working-class cultures, the opportunity to be involved in politics of its own nation and their status profoundly affected the British and Dutch communist parties' character in general but specifically influenced the extent of political and social isolation experienced by these parties.

We have seen that a fundamental difference between the foundation of the CPN and the CPGB is that Dutch communism originates from a home grown orthodox Marxist tradition, whilst the birth of the CPGB did not come from within and was instigated by Lenin. The birth of the Dutch party, i.e. the split within the SDAP in 1909, resulted in a tensed relationship between the social democrats and communists from the start and remained very difficult. Besides the infamous 'Class against Class' period, the CPGB generally had a better relationship with the Labour Party especially on a local level and was therefore not as isolated from the non-communist working class as the Dutch party and its members. From this chapter, in particular the history of the trade union movement and the foundation of the communist parties, the conclusion can be drawn that compared to the Dutch, the British working class also seems to lack revolutionary temper and did not adopt or become influenced by extreme left ideologies like anarcho-syndicalism and orthodox Marxism on the same scale as the Dutch working class. The early industrialisation of Great Britain is partly responsible for this lack of revolutionary temper; when these aforementioned ideologies became popular amongst the working class in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 20th century, large sections of the British working class were already organised within trade unions and were part of a more moderate socialist tradition. Neither anarcho-syndicalism and Marxism around the turn of the century nor communism in the 1920s were therefore able to get a strong foothold in the British labour movement. The history of the Labour Party compared to that of the SDAP underlines this difference. Whereas the Labour Party did not recognise class war, its Dutch counterpart the SDAP was, until 1937, based on Marxist principles.

Interestingly the next variable, the opportunity to be involved in their own nations' politics, is intrinsically linked to the pillarisation of Dutch society. This chapter has shown that this national characteristic fundamentally shaped the character of the Dutch communist

movement. Pillarisation in combination with a proportional representation system, contributed to the fact that the CPN had more political influence than the CPGB. Nevertheless the CPGB had more influence in the wider labour movement because it had successfully infiltrated rank and file movements in the unions and on trade councils and was therefore less isolated, especially during the Cold War. Pillarisation of Dutch society resulted in the fact that the CPN was not rooted in the wider labour movement; large parts of the working class, even social democratic workers, were closed off in their own pillar and thus out of reach. The drawback of the CPN's high degree of political influence was that the party was perceived as a very potential threat, which was one of the reasons that Dutch communists were unlike British communists, actively persecuted in the Cold War period.

When discussing and comparing the status of the British and Dutch communist parties, within their respective societies, the German occupation of the Netherlands is of great importance and is a vital difference between the two countries. Even though both parties' status rose significantly during and just after WWII, the CPN enjoyed greater respect because of its part in the Dutch national resistance and the personal sacrifices made by the movement as a whole. But this respect turned into hostility with the dawning of the Cold War. This chapter has shown that the existence of a fierce tradition of anti-communism which peaked during the Cold War has fundamentally influenced the history of the Dutch communist movement. The external pressure of anti-communism and its result; the increasing political and social isolation, reinforced centralising forces within the communist community, a process which was absent in Britain. The hostile attitude of the Dutch public and in particular the Dutch government, contributed to the occurrence of a certain ghetto or us-and-them mentality amongst communists which lasted until the 1960s and was a breeding ground for rigid Soviet ideas. The British party was not as isolated nor was it feared like its Dutch counterpart and we will see in the following chapters that this difference is decisive when explaining the discrepancy between the experiences of Dutch and British communists and their children.

Chapter Two

Communist Youth Organisations 1901-1970

This chapter explores what it was like to be a young member of the communist movement and it presents the history of the Young Communist League (YCL), the *Communistische Jeugd Bond* (Communist Youth League, CJB) and the *Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond* (General Dutch Youth League, ANJV) in order to contextualize the accounts of individuals who joined these organizations. A large number of respondents were active in the YCL or ANJV, explaining the need for a closer study of the history of these organisations. They contributed to the upbringing of their members and therefore these organisations' histories in combination with members' experiences give us illuminating insights into certain aspects of a communist childhood. Communist children were members of these organisations in the formative stage of their lives between the age of 14 and 25, which is a period highly valued by sociologists like Karl Mannheim and Henk Becker for the fact that children develop their worldview in this age group.²⁷⁹

Whereas the previous chapter discussed party structures and central committees' political decisions, this chapter focuses predominantly on the experiences of these organizations' wider membership rather than its upper echelons. Besides discussing political aspects, this chapter also highlights social and cultural aspects and is primarily based on archival research, existing (auto) biographical sources and respondents' testimonies. In comparison to the volume of material on the parties themselves, the history of communist youth organizations has received relatively little research. Both the YCL and the ANJV archives are neither complete nor very organised. This is partially related to fear; because of WWII and the Cold War, communists were incredibly careful in disclosing names, numbers or activities. In the Netherlands, most CJB/ANJV records were destroyed during the war by either communists themselves or by the Nazis. Furthermore the archives have been moved often and consequently much material has been lost. To overcome this problem of missing data, in this chapter oral testimonies and other (auto) biographical sources are utilized to fill the gaps left by incomplete documentary sources.

²⁷⁹ H. Becker, *Generaties en Hun Kansen*, Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1992; K. Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generationen' in *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte Für Soziologie*, 7, 1929.

Mike Waite who has done research into the YCL in the 1960s notes that most studies of the British communist movement refer to the YCL only in passing. He finds this a belittling of young people's political activity.²⁸⁰ Following Waite, I argue that the assumption that the YCL and ANJV were just youth sections of their respective communist parties undermines the individual and unique histories of these organizations and the experiences of its members. The ANJV's predecessor the CJB and the YCL were very strictly organised youth versions of their communist parties and were heavily influenced by the Young Communist International in the first two decades of their existence. Nevertheless the histories of these youth organizations did not necessarily run parallel with the histories of their communist parties. Compared to the CPGB and CPN the YCL and CJB membership figures indicate different periods of popularity, which suggests Soviet directives perhaps had a different impact on youth organizations than on political parties. In Britain the YCL's submissive attitude changes in the post war period; the first signs of insubordination came to the surface in 1956 whilst in the same period the ANJV, which had started off as an 'independent' progressive youth organization, grew towards the CPN. I argue that social and political isolation caused by Dutch anti-communism forced the ANJV to become a communist youth organization. Both the YCL and the ANJV had to deal with political and social isolation; although the extent of this isolation experienced by ANJV members was much more extreme than that experienced by their British contemporaries, which is why the YCL had the opportunity to free itself from the CPGB relatively early on. I also argue that the reason that the YCL felt the need to free itself from CPGB control was that, unlike the CPN, the British Communist party was not in tune with 1960s radicalism. Therefore, to gain new members, the YCL had to come up with its own strategy, which at times deviated from the CPGB line.

The main focus of this chapter will be on the immediate post-war period up to 1970; the respondents' formative years.²⁸¹ The backdrop to the history of these organizations was coloured by events like the Hungarian uprising, the 'Ban the Bomb' movement, the

²⁸⁰ M. Waite, 'Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s', p. 210.

²⁸¹ The Sociologist Henk Becker based his generation theory on the works of the German sociologist Karl Mannheim. He distinguished four generations; the two generations I interviewed are the 'Silent' generation (born between 1930-1940) with their formative period between 1945-1960 and the 'Protest' generation (born between 1940-1955) with their formative period between 1960-1970. (H.A. Becker, *Generaties en Hun Kansen*).

Vietnam War, the student movement and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. These political and historical events will be outlined in this chapter and the impact these events had on the YCL and ANJV analysed. To understand the development of both organizations in the period 1945-1970, this chapter starts with the founding history of the YCL and the ANJV's predecessor, the CJB.

History of the Dutch and British Communist youth movement; founding to 1945

The Dutch SDP's youth organisation *De Zaaier* (The Sower)²⁸² followed the SDP's example when it affiliated to the Comintern in 1920 and changed its name into *Communistische Jeugd Bond* (Communist Youth League CJB).²⁸³ Its British counterpart, the Young Communist League (YCL), was founded a year later and consisted of a number of radical left youth organizations who were united with the encouragement of the Young Communist International. The CJB and the YCL were both affiliated to and therefore politically and organizationally dependent from the YCI. The YCI held its first conference on 20 November 1919²⁸⁴ in Berlin and focused on three spheres of activity, firstly the struggle for the improvement of the economic position of the youth, secondly the struggle against militarism and thirdly the campaign for socialist self-education.²⁸⁵ Although affiliated to the Comintern, the YCI initially enjoyed an autonomous position, which was a thorn in Moscow's side. The YCI's second congress in 1921, held in Germany, was disrupted by the Comintern who demanded it should take place in Moscow. The YCI leadership capitulated and became an extension of the Comintern. From this moment onwards the youth organizations attached to the YCI were bound to adopt the political programme of their respective communist party as their own and were only allowed to mobilize youth behind party politics and party inspired initiatives.²⁸⁶

Because they were sections of the YCI (i.e. Comintern) and thus bound by its decisions, the CJB and the YCL were based on the principle of democratic centralism

²⁸² *De Zaaier* was founded in 1901 as a social democratic youth organisation (affiliated to the SDAP) but had radicalized in the first 10 years of its existence and became a youth wing of the SDP.

²⁸³ G. Harmsen, *Blauwe en Rode Jeugd; een Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Jeugdbeweging Tussen 1853 en 1940*, Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. n.v., 1973, p. 214.

²⁸⁴ The YCI was dissolved along with the Comintern in 1943.

²⁸⁵ A short history of the Young Communist International, published by the Young Communist League, 1928, 5-6.

²⁸⁶ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, pp. 155-56.

which gave both organizations a quasi military aspect. Members were urged to join a trade union and, when they turned 21, to become members of the CP.²⁸⁷ The YCL and CJB resembled their CP's; they had the same methods and practices and it was clear from the outset that the principle purpose of a communist youth organisation was to act as an enrollment agency for the CP. As with the CP, most decisions which would determine the form of organisation but also the nature of the CJB and YCL's activities were taken in Moscow. In the first ten years of their existence, the YCL and CJB were mainly concerned with youth unemployment; the life and conditions of the young workers; trade union activities and the fight against militarism.²⁸⁸

The CJB never had enough members to be very influential. Most members lived in Amsterdam and were children of communist party members or sympathizers. This started to change from the second half of the 1920s when the CJB began to actively recruit young workers through distributing pamphlets in factories, workshops and shipbuilding yards.²⁸⁹ The YCL started to consolidate itself as an organisation in the early 1920s and by 1924 the organisation had about 500 members organised into 31 branches and was selling 6500 copies of its publication of the *Young Worker* (the YCL magazine).²⁹⁰ Nevertheless the YCI was not impressed by the YCL's development; it failed to attract new members and build up a mass organization.²⁹¹ The YCI instructed the CPGB to re-organize the League; one of the CP-members, William Rust, was directed into the YCL and became secretary in 1923. Two years later, Rust was imprisoned on a charge of sedition as part of the state's preparations for the General Strike. The strike caused a sudden but very brief increase in YCL membership.²⁹² The League published a bulletin called *The Young Striker* and its members were involved in the strike working on behalf of the miners. In return, many young miners joined the YCL. At the fourth congress in Sheffield in December 1926, Rust

²⁸⁷ CP/YCL/1/1 1926 Statutes and rules of the YCL. Adopted at the 4th National Congress 1926. (CPGB Archive Manchester) pp. 3-5

²⁸⁸ CP/YCL/0102-CPYCL/01/04 Report of fifth/sixth/seventh congress of the YCL 1928-1933. (CPGB archive Manchester) and Harmsen, *Blauwe en rode jeugd*, pp. 224-25.

²⁸⁹ G. Harmsen, *Blauwe en Rode Jeugd*, p. 223.

²⁹⁰ M. Waite, *Young people and Formal Political Activity*, p. 62.

²⁹¹ The fact that the YCI was disappointed with the YCL's progress should be understood within the wider context of the Comintern's high expectations of the British communist movement. Moscow considered Britain to have a high revolutionary potential and the British party was therefore an important section of the Comintern.

²⁹² J. McIlroy *et al* (eds.) *Party People, Communist Lives*, p. 83.

announced that the League's membership had tripled since 1925, from 500 to 1800. The congress report sounded optimistic about the future of the League:

The majority of the delegates were attending a national congress of the League for the first time. Fully half of them were young miners who in most cases had joined the League since the General Strike. The Young Communist League has overcome its infantile weaknesses and is now a real and effective organization, playing its special part in the class struggle. This Congress has proved that the policy and methods of the YCI are correct that the only way to build an effective young workers movement is by active participation in the class struggle. Fight against the capitalist offensive the treachery of the reformists, unemployment, capitalist militarism and colonial oppression.²⁹³

These hopes for a firmly established young workers' mass movement, were soon crushed; by March 1927 the YCL had lost between 75 and 90 percent of the new recruits.²⁹⁴ Both the CJB and the YCL adopted the line of 'Class against Class' in 1928 which meant that their members had to isolate themselves from the non-communist working class youth and consider socialists, anarchists and Trotskyists as enemies and spies. Even before 'Class against Class' the CJB had been very sectarian. Harmsen points out that the organisation was in many ways unique; 'besides the CJB there is no other example of a revolutionary socialist youth movement who stubbornly refused to grow; even in the years of revolutionary boom'.²⁹⁵ He blames the organization's bigheadedness which shows in quotes like; 'We are not an insignificant little organization. We will build a new socialism on the ruins created by the Internationale (1920)'.²⁹⁶ This arrogance was fed by the authorities who considered the organisation to be a real threat and the CJB was dealt with accordingly. Measures taken by the authorities to prevent the CJB gatherings were often overdrawn. On a few occasions the number of police officers who were mobilized to prevent disturbances at these gatherings exceeded the number of CJB members who turned up.²⁹⁷

²⁹³ A Congress of Young Fighters. A report of the 4th Congress of the Communist League of Great Britain, published by the YCL of Great Britain 1926. 3. (Working Class Movement Library)

²⁹⁴ T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939; From the Cradle to the Grave*, p.52.

²⁹⁵ G. Harmsen, *Blauwe en Rode Jeugd*, p. 130.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 131.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Besides bigheadedness, the CJB's small size was caused by its political dogmatism and the organizations' internal divisions.²⁹⁸ Overall it had a serious lack of appeal and was never more than a sect, which is why the introduction of 'Class against Class' had no immediate impact on the CJB.²⁹⁹ On the contrary the introduction of the new line was absolutely disastrous for the YCL and the rapid decline in membership, which had already set in, continued. Around 1930 the League had virtually ceased to exist. In the period 1930-1933, the YCL had to be rebuilt from almost the ground up.³⁰⁰ Fortunately the circumstances of the mid-1930s were favourable for the YCL; under influence of the economic crisis and the Popular Front strategy, YCL membership increased dramatically. In London for example, membership increased from 370 on 26 November 1933, to 540 on 1 May 1934.³⁰¹ Nationally its membership continued to rise to an estimated 1500 members divided over 35 branches in 1936. It developed a sense of its own identity and became more than a youth section of the CPGB, although it was still politically subordinate to the party.³⁰²

In the Netherlands under influence of the Popular Front policy, the CJB tried to form a united front of working youth. This attempt to work together with other youth organizations was unsuccessful; from the early years of its existence the CJB had tried to liquidate and undermine its fellow working class youth organizations, so it was no surprise these organizations were not interested in any kind of collaboration with their former enemy. Subsequently the CJB fizzled out; its last congress was held in May 1936 in Hilversum and it officially dissolved in 1938.³⁰³ The memories of Henk Gortzak sum up what it was like to be a member of the CJB:

Maybe our political activities were not that important, but we felt we were part of the international revolutionary movement, who strived for a new society. We would march through Amsterdam, singing "The march of Millions". And even though we were with only fifty members, it felt like we were millions.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ The organisation was divided about who to support; the CPN or the CPH-CC.

²⁹⁹ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, pp 70 and 156.

³⁰⁰ T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939*, p. 58.

³⁰¹ CP/YCL/19/8 October 1936.

³⁰² CP/YCL/19/8 YCL London.

³⁰³ G. Harmsen, *Blauwe en Rode Jeugd*, p. 328.

³⁰⁴ H. Gortzak, *Hoop Zonder Illusies, Memoires van een Communist*, Bert Bakker, 1985, p. 41.

The YCL proved to be more successful in collaborating with other youth organizations than the CJB. In the early 1930s, the YCL proposed a united front factory activity and formed an alliance with the Co-Operative Youth.³⁰⁵ The new strategy had a very positive effect on the YCL, which began to regard itself as a broad organisation of revolutionary youth instead of a communist youth party. By 1934 the League had achieved fantastic results, the YCL, the Challenge Club and the Youth Front against War & Fascism formed the driving force behind a group of anti-fascists that drove the Blackshirts out of Cheetham, a district in the city of Manchester which was traditionally an area of heavy Jewish settlement from central and Eastern Europe.³⁰⁶ Interestingly, the YCL in Manchester had more members than the local communist party and Manchester was not an exception; during the late 1930s in many places, the League was much bigger and more active than the party.³⁰⁷

In 1934 the London YCL invaded a big BUF meeting at Olympia with the intention to break it up. They were removed from the hall by BUF stewards and beaten outside, which damaged Mosley's image, costing him much support. In 1936 the East London Federation Committee of the YCL organised an intensive campaign against fascism throughout East London. 20,000 leaflets were issued, four 'Mighty Youth Rallies' took place in the centre of London and six mass lectures were held, with speakers like Harry Pollitt and John Gollan. Throughout the 1930s and during the war years, much of the pressure for physical resistance to fascism in the East End came from young communists and one of the highlights of this fight was the League's participation in the battle of Cable Street on 4 October 1936.³⁰⁸

In the Netherlands after the disintegration of the CJB, a new progressive youth movement the *Nederlandse Jeugd Federatie* (Dutch Youth Federation NJF) was established in October 1938. Many ex-CJB members joined the NJF, which was very successful compared to the CJB. Within two years, the Federation had over 3000 members. The communist party was apprehensive about the newly founded NJF, the communist newspaper *Het Volksdagblad* wrote there was a lack of politics and too much emphasis on culture in the organization. What the youth of the day really needed, according to this

³⁰⁵ Congress supplement 7th National Congress YCL July 7th/8th/9th 1933 (CPGB Archive Manchester).

³⁰⁶ K. Morgan, *Against Fascism and War*, p. 39.

³⁰⁷ M. Waite, 'Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s', p. 100.

³⁰⁸ London district committee bulletin no. 3 14th October 1936. CP/YCL/19/8 YCL London.

paper, 'was a united front against fascism and war'.³⁰⁹ The NJF leaders took this criticism on board and established a balance between culture and politics.

From July 1936 onwards the CJB, before the organisation dissolved, as well as the NJF and the YCL all devoted their main work and attention to Spain. The YCL's secretary John Gollan was sent to Spain to investigate the situation and at home the League founded the *Aid for Spain Movement*. Together with members from 30 other organizations in Britain the YCL set up Youth Food-ship committees in cities all over the country sending a number of ships with food and medical supplies to Spain.³¹⁰ The YCL and the CP organised the dispatch of more than 2,000 volunteers to fight in the International Brigades. 126 YCL members died in action and many were injured.³¹¹ The YCL members who fought in Spain were seen as heroes:

They were the best our youth movement has known and it is with the greatest love, pride and grief that we place their work on record. Love and pride at the brave part they have played – grief at the many who have died, and whose graves are scattered all over Spain. Today there is hardly a big branch of our League which does not hold as its proudest possession a memorial banner to one of their numbers who has fallen. We fiercely resolve never to let their memory die, and to live up to the sublime example they have set the democratic youth of Britain.³¹²

In the Netherlands too the people who had fought in Spain³¹³ were seen as heroes and role models for young communists. So much so that, after WWII, the active hardcore of the ANJV was called the *Cristino Garcia Brigade*³¹⁴. Its members, 'brigadeers', were told that the Brigade's main objective was to fight for peace; they were an elite squad within the communist youth movement. Required was stamina, a high level of knowledge of socialist theory and total commitment.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ *Volksdagblad* 20 October 1938, p. 8.

³¹⁰ CP/YCL01/07 We march to victory; report of the National Council to the 9th national Conference YCL 1937 (CPGB Archive Manchester)

³¹¹ T. Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 122.

³¹² CP/YCL/01/07 We March to Victory; Report of the National Council to the 9th National Conference YCL 1937 (CPGB archive Manchester) p. 11.

³¹³ We know that 600 Dutch volunteers fought in the International brigade; it is not clear what percentage was communist let alone which percentage was a young communist.

³¹⁴ Named after Cristino Garcia Granda (1914–1946) who took part in the Spanish Civil War as a member of the *XIV Cuerpo de Ejercito Guerrillero*, a special unit of the Spanish Republican Army, which performed attacks behind the Nationalist lines.

³¹⁵ IISG ZK 66335 Garcia Brigade 1 1948 no 12, 2 1949, no. 3-4.

The popularity of the NJF and the YCL was reflected by a huge influx of new members, unfortunately many of these new members were only communist on paper and left the YCL and the NJF after the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed in August 1939. The NJF dissolved when Germany invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, although some individual branches stayed in tact. These branches had started as working class dance clubs before merging into the NJF; after the disbandment of the Federation they went back to their original form and became again dance clubs which were used as a front for the underground resistance.³¹⁶ NJF member Cor van Dijk who was active in Rotterdam remembers:

I was sent to Amsterdam for a meeting in May (1940) where we discussed the situation of our organisation now that the country was occupied. We were going to try to continue as a cultural organization, whilst preparing the publication of an underground magazine. In the summer of 1940 we published four issues of *De Jonge Werker* (the young worker), but we discontinued our magazine because as a movement we soon started to focus on the underground *Waarheid*..³¹⁷

As discussed in the previous chapter, the most successful attempt to create an organised form of resistance came mainly from members of the communist party, which is why (young) people like Cor Moot joined the communist resistance.³¹⁸ What we know about communist youth, active in the resistance in the years '40-'45 is mainly based on oral testimonies and (auto-) biographies, because unfortunately most archival data was destroyed during the war by either the communists themselves or by the Nazis. In his biography Marcus Bakker who was one of the founding members of the ANJV³¹⁹, describes joining the underground CPN in 1943. He grew up in Zaandam, where his father worked at the local abattoir. He remembers:

³¹⁶ G. Harmsen, *Rode en Blauwe Jeugd*, p. 333.

³¹⁷ Galesloot & Legene, *Partij in het verzet*, p. 37.

³¹⁸ Unfortunately there are no figures available; it is therefore not clear how many young people were active in the Dutch national resistance and it is not known what proportion of its members was communist.

³¹⁹ Marcus Bakker was first the secretary, then the chairman of the ANJV in the period 1947-1953.

The Verdonks were our neighbours; they were communists. The majority of the staff at the abattoir was 'left', but the butchers were well known communists. They always made sure there was a copy of *De Waarheid* at work.³²⁰

Through his communist neighbours, Marcus Bakker, whose parents were socialists, became involved in the resistance. He started with small illegal activities, like the theft and distribution of food coupons. After he officially joined the party, he became a 'cell leader' and was involved in more dangerous activities in the Zaanstreek:

My table in front of the window was a sort of look-out. I would often see a skinny guy entering the house of our neighbours. I understood he was of the underground CPN. It was Piet van Bremen, the 'cell leader'. A while later, after he was arrested in the autumn of 1943, I would take his place.³²¹

Describing his experiences in the resistance, Bakker also commented:

Being part of the resistance wasn't easy. Whoever joined was likely to die. I wasn't thinking about that though. I was twenty years old and for me the resistance was something quite romantic, something exciting. When Klaas Grootes, my first 'contact person' gave me my brief he told me to make myself less recognizable. He knew this optician who would be willing to give me some fake glasses to disguise myself. I was also given a hat for the same reason. Within an hour being in 'disguise' someone came up to me and said; "Hey Marcus, since when are you wearing glasses?"³²²

Gerhard Böver (born 1927), whose father joined the communist party in 1924, lived in Amsterdam during the war:

Our family was involved in resistance work from 1940 onwards. When the first illegal *Waarheid* came out, it was me who had a bundle of newspapers in my schoolbag. I had to drop them off at this man's house, who took them to his work. The underground CPN was popular in my neighbourhood and because people knew I was involved in resistance work, I was visited by someone from the communist resistance (this was in 1944) who asked me to assist him and some other people in setting up an underground youth group. This initiative was necessary to recruit more young people into the resistance. Our activities were the distribution of illegal papers and collecting money for the

³²⁰ M. Bakker, *Wissels, Bespiegelingen Zonder Berouw*, Amsterdam: De Haan, 1983, p. 11.

³²¹ Ibid, p. 12.

³²² Ibid, p. 25.

solidarity fund 't Sol. At night we would bill-post news bulletins, which were especially focused on youth. These bulletins would, for example, advise young people not to work in Germany.³²³

In Britain the *Daily Worker* was banned from publication and its premises were seized in January 1941, but the YCL paper *Challenge* didn't suffer the same fate and appeared throughout WWII. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, the communist party announced full support for the war. Many CPGB/YCL members served in the army and the communist movement became, yet again, popular and respectable. The YCL's drastic turnaround paid off; its membership had risen from 2000 in 1935, to 4,600 in 1938³²⁴ and after a small dip during the period of the pact, it peaked in 1943 with 16,000 members.³²⁵

The fascist threat was cleverly used for propaganda purposes. The following two fragments were printed in a brochure used for recruitment. Whilst warning about fascism, these two fragments try to convince teenagers that the only answer to this evil fascism is communism:

I am an ordinary sort of chap. I left school at 14, did a dead end job on a delivery round, and now I am working in an arms factory down south. I am a member of the YCL. Why did I join? I've read a lot about fascism, and, like you, I have seen it spread all over Europe. And I have seen what sort of life it holds out for young people like you and me. Hitler and his crowd smashed up the workers' organizations. It was good-bye to any chance of better wages and conditions for them. I have got ideas of what I want for myself and the world. I want the chance of a decent education and prospects. I am not selfish, though. I am prepared to carry out my duties and responsibilities to the nation. I know there isn't any guess work about it; socialism is at work in Russia and it has given the people everything and more than it promised. How the people fulfill their side of the contract is seen in their wonderful fight against Hitler's hordes. I saw those two lives in front of me, the sort of life I'd get if fascism won and the sort I'd get if the people won, I knew which one I wanted, and I decided to fight for it.³²⁶

³²³ A lot of young people were lured into hard work in Germany during the 'hunger winter' of 1944 for some extra food for their family in: N. van Aalderen, *Wij Hebben Er Geen Spijt Van. 50 jaar Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond*, Amsterdam, 1995, p.18.

³²⁴ T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939*, p. 60.

³²⁵ Peter Barberis, John McHugh, Mike Tylsesly, *Encyclopedia of British and Irish Political Organisations*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003, p. 172.

³²⁶ G. Jones, *We Young Communists*, London: Caledonian Press Ltd, (available at the Working Class Library) pp. 2-4

You'll hate being a girl if you let Hitler win. Women aren't even to have their homes anymore. Their children are taken away to be trained in killing. Under fascism, women and girls are degraded, treated like slaves. I don't want that life. I want to have the same chances as a man to get the same pay if I do a job well. That's the life I am going to fight for. That's why I joined the YCL.³²⁷

Under the influence of the Popular Front strategy the YCL became more approachable for youth. Compared to 1922 the organization's new rules and statutes of 1942 were less formal and more flexible. Membership for instance, was open to all young people who wanted to play their part in ridding the world of fascism, not only for young workers. Besides activities like public speaking and efforts to foster and bring out latent powers of leadership, new members found plenty of fun, like cycle runs, hikes, picnics, film shows and amateur dramatics.³²⁸ The YCL became much more in tune with other socialist youth organizations. Within the Labour League of Youth, for example, time was divided equally between recreation and education. Several branches had their own buildings with sport grounds, dance floors etc. Propaganda was joined with pleasure and amusement was combined with discussion on party policy.³²⁹ The YCL too, began to see the importance of the combination of politics and fresh air.

In the second half of 1944, the underground CPN decided to add a special supplement for youth to *De Waarheid*. Within a few months, due to its huge success, this supplement became an independent paper especially for communist youth. The paper, called *Jeugd* (Youth), was intended to encourage young people to join the fight against fascism. Soon after the first publication, youth groups were active all over the country. These groups helped people in hiding, distributed food, collected money and assisted the armed resistance.³³⁰ After the war these groups were going to merge into the ANJV, a new progressive youth organisation whose members would continue the fight against fascism in the post war period.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid, 11.

³²⁹ M. Webb, 'The Rise and Fall of the Labour League of Youth', in *Socialist History* 26, 2004, pp. 51-2.

³³⁰ A. Bakker and Jan Brassers, *De CPN in het Verzet*, Zaandam: Uitgave CPN District Zaandam, 1975, p. 10.

The ANJV and YCL 1945-1948

As the war came to an end, following Dutch Communist Party leaders, communist youth came up with their own *Doorbraak* idea; one progressive united youth movement similar to that of the NJF to prevent the re-formation of the pre-war youth organisations. In 1945, *Jeugd* made an appeal to young socialists and communists to unite in one organisation; a left movement which would be concerned with issues like work, the right to proper wages, culture, leisure time and education.

Although this new movement's motto was 'Unity and Cooperation' the two major camps within the movement; social democrats and communists, could not come to any agreements; communists wanted a militant anti-fascist and anti-capitalist youth organisation, whilst social democratic youth preferred a more cultural organisation. They didn't reach a compromise; nevertheless the ANJV was founded on 15 June 1945. Its manifesto contained the following statement: 'The ANJV wants to organise Dutch progressive youth and fight for democracy, equal opportunities for everyone and against demoralisation (through physical and mental exercise and the development of one's free personality).'³³¹ Later that year the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) was founded in London, which was an international umbrella organisation for left-wing, anti-imperialist youth. The ANJV and the YCL both became members of the WFDY whose principles were very similar to those of the ANJV. Like the latter the WFDY wanted to unite youth who were willing to fight for freedom and democracy and against war and fascism. Over 30 million youth from 63 countries joined this initiative.

Like the WFDY, the ANJV was very successful in the first three years of its existence and had about 15,000 members (between 16 and 30 years of age), but was under fire from the start. During an ANJV congress in October 1945 one of the speakers, Joop Jansma, said to the crowd; 'We'll fight against capitalism and for democracy and 15,000 youth will open their mouths and rip the reactionaries' ear drums to bits'.³³² The Protestant newspaper *Trouw* wrote the next day; 'The ANJV, who up to now denied being

³³¹ ANJV Voorlopige Lijst van het Archief van het ANJV 1945-ca1982, M. Koole, M. Schrevel, Amsterdam 1988 (Available at the International Institute of Social History).

³³² T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden, een Geschiedenis van het Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond 1945-1985*, 1985, p. 16.

communist, showed its true colours and hopefully its misguided members will draw their conclusions.’³³³ Marcus Bakker, communist youth organizer, was outraged:

The ANJV aimed to be an organisation that united anti-fascist youth from all different backgrounds, we wanted to keep the group of young people who were active in the resistance during the war intact. They came from all different political backgrounds, but the fight against fascism united them.³³⁴

It soon became apparent that the organisation’s aims were not achievable. The ANJV wanted to be part of the Nederlandse Jeugd Gemeenschap (Dutch Youth Community NJG)³³⁵, which was an umbrella federation of youth organisations from different pillars. The NJG was indisposed towards the ANJV joining, because the two organizations did not share the same views and ideas; the ANJV wanted to change the balance of power in Dutch society, the NJG wanted to protect and strengthen this balance. The internal structure of both organizations were completely different; the ANJV was a direct-democratic youth organisation in which young people themselves were in charge, the NJG was of the opinion that youth was not capable of this kind of responsibility and consequently adults were in charge.³³⁶ One of the most important reasons for the NJG not to accept the ANJV within its ranks, was the fact that the ANJV did not approve of the passage ‘for Queen and country’ in the memorandum of association of the NJG. The ANJV also objected to the orange circle (referring to the royal family) which was the NJG logo.³³⁷ Looking back Joop Wolff, who was an ANJV member at the time, notes; ‘That whole thing with the NJG was absolutely ridiculous. I still don’t know if that orange circle around the name NJG, was the real reason. I had no problem with orange circles, nor did anyone else I knew’.³³⁸ Others too were convinced that the organization's issues with the monarchy were not the reason the ANJV’s request to join the NJG was declined. The real reason was, according to Marcus

³³³ *Trouw*, October 10, 1945 p. 4.

³³⁴ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 16.

³³⁵ The *Nederlandse Jeugd Gemeenschap* was founded in 1946 with the objective to re-educate youth. A lot of people felt that standards dropped during the war and especially youth was a victim of this decline of public morals.

³³⁶ The ANJV was not like its predecessor based on the principle of Democratic Centralism, whilst the YCL still was.

³³⁷ J. Poortstra, ‘Jeugd en Zedelijkheid na de oorlog’ in *In Fatsoen Hersteld, Zedelijkheid en Wederopbouw na de Oorlog*, Amsterdam: SUA, 1987, pp. 40-45.

³³⁸ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 16.

Bakker that the anti-communist sentiments alive in most of the political parties and consequently in their youth organizations.³³⁹ This ingrained anti-communism caused non-communist youth to doubt their ANJV membership. And the truth was that even though the ANJV tried to be a mass organization; in reality it was the CPN who was in charge. All the important positions within the ANJV were taken by CPN-youth.³⁴⁰ The WFDY went through a similar process and became in many ways the YCI's successor. It had started as a broad umbrella organisation for democratic youth but lost most of its non-communist members during the Cold War.

In Britain the YCL also enjoyed a lot of popularity in the immediate post war years. Membership doubled in the period 1946-1948³⁴¹; *Challenge* sales rose from 11,500 a week to a steady 16,000. The League was fighting for wage increases for all young workers, better working conditions, training schemes for every industry, a 40 hour week, 100 percent trade unionism, the housing programme, raising the school leaving age to 16, adequate provision of gymnasiums and sports fields, voting rights at 18 and cutting the armed forces to 500,000.³⁴² Throughout the war years *Challenge* magazine had encouraged its readers to stand up against fascism and reported on the efforts of European youth in the resistance movement. After the war the fight against fascism within and outside of Britain continued; progressive youth was called upon to 'raise their voices to demand the end of Franco's reign of terror in Spain',³⁴³ and closer to home YCL members were actively opposing Mosley and his followers. In 1948 a fascist demonstration took place in London where Mosley gave his first open air speech since WWII. This demonstration coincided with a May Day march and a clash between anti-fascists and the police followed which resulted in the arrest of YCL members.³⁴⁴ All over the country similar clashes between YCL members (often together with Jewish groups like the 43 group) and fascists occurred. Heather who was born in 1932 remembers:

³³⁹ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 18.

³⁴¹ This membership increase is quite interesting because it doesn't reflect the situation in the CPGB; the party's membership started to drop after 1943, whilst the YCL continued to grow after the war.

³⁴² B. Brooks, *For Peace & Socialism*. Pamphlet speech made by Bill Brooks to the 15th National Congress of the Young Communist League, March, 1948 (available at Sussex Library) pp. 5-6.

³⁴³ *Britain's Fighting Youth Weekly*, February 10, 1945, vol 11, no 6.

³⁴⁴ *Challenge*, 1948, vol. 16, no 19.

I was 14 when I joined the YCL in Bradford. I remember we all went to a fascist meeting; they gathered at a place which was like Hyde Park corner. I am quite sure it was Mosley who spoke. A group of Jewish people came from Leeds and they together with YCL members stopped the fascists from speaking. (Heather Chapman)

The Cold War: Isolation 1948-1958

By the end of the 1940s the ANJV was shrinking; reflecting a more general situation in which communists were being marginalized. The events of 1948; the communist assumption of power in Prague and the second Dutch invasion in Indonesia were among the reasons that many non-communists left the ANJV en masse and a long period of isolation followed. A speech given in 1948 at the third ANJV congress illustrates their situation which was so very different from 1946 and is an example of Cold War rhetoric, with very cryptic language written in the third person. Topics like Czechoslovakia, Indonesia, the Marshall plan and the 'corrupt' Dutch government were discussed as well as the changing atmosphere in the Netherlands:

We, the ANJV; a democratic organization, allow our members who are communists freedom of speech, they (ANJV members who hold a CP membership card) should have the right to express there feelings and thoughts. So why are we accused of being a satellite of the fifth column? Why are people so scared for these organizations (democratic organizations like the ANJV)? Why does the NJG demand that the ANJV should to be banned? And why do the gentlemen of the Amsterdam Youth Action call our Lord as their witness that these evil groups (like the ANJV) should disappear from our society? It is obvious that they try to make our work suspicious, and all we do is fight for happiness and an acceptable standard of living. They try, by spreading political lies, to distract people from what is really important, which is the fight, democratic organizations like ours, fight for the youth of today. These youth who can't find a home to live in, who waste valuable time serving in the army are being blinded by the fantasized events that are supposed to have happened in Czechoslovakia.³⁴⁵

Both the ANJV and the YCL opposed conscription which was not only linked to their opposition to the Cold War and to Dutch and British military interventions around the world but was also an expression of the fact that young men in the age range most

³⁴⁵ ANJV archive Congresses '45,'46,'48,'50,'52, '54. Diversen nr. 12.

predominant in both organizations would be the ones who had to serve. Many young ANJV members refused to fight in Indonesia, which was classified as desertion and soldiers who deserted were not only despised by society; they also risked imprisonment; 'I refused to serve in Indonesia. Our unit was supposed to embark on 16 September 1946, but many soldiers didn't return to the barracks from their embarking leave. I was one of them and was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison.'³⁴⁶ Others who did serve were instructed by the ANJV to be active within the army. Brochures informing fellow soldiers that the Dutch invasion of Indonesia was fundamentally wrong were distributed by ANJV members, who, if they got caught, were severely punished:

In 1946, ANJV member Ratio Koster became one of the first to be arrested after the organization's magazine *Een* was found in his locker. The magazine, which had an article on its front page with the headline 'Don't turn our boys into SS members', had been distributed among soldiers in the barracks. Ratio had left copies of *Een* (which at the time wasn't banned yet) in toilets and other public places. After being remanded in custody for three months, Ratio was sentenced to three years imprisonment.³⁴⁷

The ANJV's unconventional stance and activities caused further isolation which forced the organisation to strengthen its ties with the CPN; the ANJV became an extension of the communist party.³⁴⁸ Marcus Bakker recalls the severity of the ANJV's isolation:

We were completely isolated during the Cold War, there was no interaction with non-communists. In that situation some of us (ANJV members) logically felt we should make the ANJV into a real communist youth organization. But that would have been such a step back; we always resisted. It was clear to every one else the ANJV was indeed a communist youth organization; new ANJV branches were always set up by communists; an ANJV member (Fred Schoonenberg) was a candidate on the CPN list and a CPN representative was present on every ANJV meeting.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ N. Aalderen, *Wij Hebben Er Geen Spijt Van*, p. 16.

³⁴⁷ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, pp. 41-42.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 42-43.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 16-18.

The beginning of the Cold War certainly had a harmful effect on the YCL too; the League was excluded from the Youth Service³⁵⁰ now being provided through local authorities and was increasingly stigmatised as ‘the domestic agent of an enemy power’.³⁵¹ As the polarities of the Cold War began to develop, both the YCL and the ANJV adopted a stance of uncritical solidarity with the government of the SU. This pro-Soviet stance coincided with a very negative attitude towards all of the established political parties. Both organisations were, besides condemning the right wing conservative parties, also highly suspicious of the political left. The report of the 17th Congress of the YCL illustrates this attitude:

This 17th Congress of the YCL realises the serious and immediate danger of a Third World War, the preparations for which are being sped up every day by the American and British warmongers. At this congress we pledge that we will strive to become the best fighters for peace in all of Britain, understanding that only through building unity among young people in the winning of thousands of collectors of signatures can we ensure that Britain’s youth contributes fully to the millions of signatures needed for the British Peace Petitions. We will co-operate with all individuals and organisations, irrespective of their political religious or other beliefs, who will associate themselves with the demands of the Peace Petition. Britain is threatened not by the Soviet Union but by the traitor Tory class and their friends, the Labour leaders. How dare these people talk of patriotism and loyalty to Britain when they attack every vital interest in our country? It is their policy that has led us to the edge of war. To fight for peace is to fight against slavery to American imperialism. To stand for peace and friendship with the Land of Socialism, is real patriotism.’³⁵²

About the Soviet Union, the report notes:

The very existence of the of the Soviet Union which daily grows stronger, is a beacon light guiding the working people of the world, showing that it is possible to overthrow capitalism, and that once power rests in the hands of the workers, society can advance prosperity and happiness can be assured.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Youth groups or organisations which had any political connections were not permitted to take part in the Youth Service. This is why ‘progressive’ youth organisations like the YCL were isolated from the main youth movement.

³⁵¹ M. Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity*. p. 119.

³⁵² *We Fight For Peace*, report of the 17th Congress of the YCL May 1950, pp 1 (available at: Working Class Movement Library).

³⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 9.

This call for unity in the fight for peace was not answered by any youth organisations because they considered the YCL's view of the Cold War distorted and one-sided. In this period of extreme isolation, both the ANJV and YCL continued to fight, with unflagging zeal, for several, often unpopular, causes. They focused on; support and campaigns for the rights of young workers, opposition to fascist activities, support of North Korea in the Korean War (1950-1953), demilitarization and the decolonization of colonies (Malaya, New Guinea) and opposition to the Marshall Plan.³⁵⁴ The 1951 law which banned communists from becoming civil servants also affected ANJV members. They experienced great difficulties when trying to find a job in the public, but also the private sector. Communists, young and old, were kept out of many organizations during the 1950s and were subjected to constant monitoring by the Dutch secret service.

In Britain there was no significant outbreak of anti-communism, although there are a few examples of organizations who excluded communist youth.³⁵⁵ Furthermore YCL members were also subject to the previously discussed vetting, but there aren't any examples available of people who were either fired or not hired for being a YCL member. It is striking that overall the treatment of British communists was not as harsh as it was in the Netherlands which is reflected by the number of bans introduced by the Dutch government and institutions. Nevertheless British and Dutch communists were both isolated by society and to a certain degree isolated themselves in this period; it was a 'catch 22': because the YCL and the ANJV were extremely pro-Soviet Union in the early 1950s, the two organisations isolated themselves from the rest of society. Anti-communist measures and pressure from the government followed, which resulted in the previously discussed us-and-them mentality. The collective experience of society's rejection reinforced this mentality which caused further isolation.³⁵⁶

The Cold War came to a head in 1956. Khrushchev's 'revelations' about Stalin and the Soviet intervention in Hungary had a huge impact on the communist movement. The ANJV's official statement about Hungary, in line with that of the CPN, emphasises that the Soviet army was not only entitled but also correct to invade Hungary to end the terror in the

³⁵⁴ *Challenge*, vol 18, no. 15, April 1953; T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden* p. 43.

³⁵⁵ In the early 1950s a Bristol scout was removed for holding an YCL membership.

³⁵⁶ G. Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou*, p. 468.

streets of Budapest. This terror, according to this statement, 'was caused by foreign intervention by imperialist powers (mainly Germany and the US) who tried to reinstate capitalism in Hungary. The Soviet army acted on behalf of the Hungarian government and was obliged to intervene according to the agreements of the Warsaw Pact and thus prevented a 'horrible' third world war'.³⁵⁷ The events of 1956 sparked a series of violent acts against communists. In the early hours of 5 November a mob destroyed the main ANJV office (among many other CPN buildings) in Amsterdam. All the windows were smashed; typewriters, printers, musical instruments, flags, banners and furniture were thrown on the streets and set on fire. ANJV members were far from passive though; they tried to defend their building with baseball bats and metal bars.³⁵⁸

ANJV member Jan Lensen remembers:

On Sunday 4 November 1956; during a CPN film morning in Cinema Royal, people asked me to go to the head office. Together with 30 other people we defended our building. I was asked because they knew I was a strong man from a good communist family. I was there when this mob attacked us. (Jan Lensen)

The Central Committee was convinced that these attacks on the ANJV and the communist movement in general were an attempt by Britain and France to distract the world and cover up the invasion of Egypt culminating in the Suez crisis.³⁵⁹ This is of course a prime example of a conspiracy theory that communists created to find explanations for and deal with their victimization.

Within three weeks after the attacks, the ANJV collected over 4000 guilders, enough to repair the damage.³⁶⁰ A similar eruption of violence and hatred against communists never occurred again in the Netherlands. It had two effects on the ANJV, on the one hand a lot of people left the organisation (mostly those who weren't longstanding members); on the other, the members who decided to stay became very close; internal quarrels and

³⁵⁷ ANJV archive 13, 7th ANJV congress discussion material.

³⁵⁸ *Jeugd*, November/December, 1956, 12e Jrg. no. 10.

³⁵⁹ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 47.

³⁶⁰ *Jeugd*, December/January, 1956, 12e Jrg. no. 11.

disagreements were put aside.³⁶¹ Solidarity was very important; it was a way to survive in a hostile environment, says Cor Moot:

In the ANJV there was a sense of security, the feeling of belonging, being surrounded by like minded people. They had the arguments and explanations, and helped me through this very difficult time. I felt secure. There was a common good of justice. But yes, the SU invaded Hungary which made me responsible, guilty and above all an accessory.³⁶²

Although it did not spark physical violence, the Soviet intervention in Hungary caused large numbers of people to drop out of the YCL. Some of these dropouts joined Trotskyist organisations, others moved towards the New Left. The majority of the YCL leadership agreed with the CPGB's line on the Soviet invasion, but a minority opposed this and won out when a majority vote, whilst approving the second intervention, condemned the first intervention.³⁶³ This remarkable outcome was inconsistent with the official CP line, which condoned and even supported both interventions. For many YCL members the events of 1956, meant the end of an uncritical solidarity with the government of the SU. The YCL went further in attacking Stalinism than the party itself.³⁶⁴ So whereas the ANJV was internally united and had strong ties with the CPN, the YCL became internally divided, differences between the CPGB and the YCL started to develop and from the late 1950s onwards the League began to move away from the CPGB.

Détente and cooperation 1958-1970

After the disastrous impact of the events of 1956, YCL membership stabilised during the late 1950s and from 1961 moved sharply upwards; it grew from 1,387 in 1958 to 4,019 in 1962.³⁶⁵ In the Netherlands the ANJV was also hopeful about the future; a 1958 congress report notes a significant rise in membership:

³⁶¹ A.A. De Jonge, *Stalinistische Herinneringen*, Den Haag: Kruseman, 1984, p. 98.

³⁶² N. Van Aalderen, *Wij Hebben Er Geen Spijt Van*, p. 167.

³⁶³ The Soviets had invaded Hungary twice; the first invasion was on 24 October and then a second time on 4 November (after a ceasefire which lasted from the 28 October until the 4 November).

³⁶⁴ M. Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity*, p. 300.

³⁶⁵ K. Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism*, p. 161.

The last three years have been extremely hard on our organisation, but we have shown great initiatives and successfully organised many events like “the summer of friendship”, “the World youth festival” and “ANJV campaign for peace”. We recruited 700 new members in the last three months and the *Jeugd* sales rose by 716, which proves we are a powerful and active organisation of working class youth.³⁶⁶

1958 was also the year of the launch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Founded by, among others, Kingsley Martin, J.B. Priestley and Bertrand Russell, the campaign had the objective of persuading society to support British unilateral nuclear disarmament. The CND was a coalition of four political traditions; pacifism, liberal internationalism, international socialism and non-violent direct action.³⁶⁷ Combining these different political elements within one organisation resulted in some difficulty. The CND’s Central Committee found it difficult to agree on the organisation’s policies and tactics.³⁶⁸ Internal cohesion was eventually achieved when the pacifist, liberal and socialist wings within CND decided to rely on a moralistic rhetoric. In the first two years of its existence, CND mainly depended on the strength of the Labour Party. Its strategy was based on the idea that instead of urging Britain to withdraw from NATO, CND should wait until the Labour Party won the elections and influence NATO from within.³⁶⁹ This was the chosen strategy to achieve their ultimate goal; British unilateralism.

Even though the CPGB was against this concept of British nuclear weapons, it did not declare its support for unilateral disarmament until May 1960. Nonetheless a minority of people in the YCL welcomed the formation of CND and joined its activities, like the first Aldermaston March in 1958. This caused friction within the YCL; the members who made it clear they would be supporting the march were condemned by John Moss (YCL’s National Secretary). Moss said if YCL members joined the march it should only be to sell *Challenge*.³⁷⁰ His words did not stop YCL members to participate. The editors of

³⁶⁶ ANJV archive, 13, 7th congress, 1958.

³⁶⁷ F. E. Myer, ‘Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement since World War II’ in *Journal of Peace Research* vol 10, no.1/2, 1973, p. 81.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 83.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ M. Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity*, p. 301.

Challenge seemed also unconcerned by Moss' criticism; they decided to put a large picture of the Aldermaston March on the cover of the May issue in 1958.³⁷¹

The CPGB had been initially opposed to CND because it viewed the movement as a rival to its own peace organisation (British Peace Committee and the Youth Peace Committee), Furthermore CND was in the eyes of the CP 'a distraction from what was really important; disarmament negotiations between the Great Powers'.³⁷² The YCL had been campaigning against the H-bomb from as early as 1957; when it had organised a petition, collected 50,000 signatures, and called a meeting as a first step in a campaign to get young people all over the country mobilised to stop US H-Bomb patrols flying over Britain and prevent U.S. rocket bases being built within their borders.³⁷³ Campaigns like this were one sided and focused solely on the 'capitalist' countries as nuclear powers. After the CPGB declared its support for the unilateral disarmament and became active within the CND, some CND supporters felt that there was a certain contradiction in support for British nuclear disarmament coming from an organisation like the CPGB which firmly identified with a nuclear power, the USSR. However, as Willie Thompson points out; 'CND was mostly made up of people whose political memories did not go back beyond 1957 and for them, raking over the past of such a helpful organisation (the CPGB) composed of estimable and impressive individuals seemed irrelevant and mean spirited'.³⁷⁴ The fact that the majority of non-communist CND members, did not have a problem with communists in their organisation, did not take away a certain embarrassment experienced by communist CND members. One YCL member, who was active in CND at the time recalled later:

There was a strange strain of pacifism and it seemed contradictory. This was expressed when they (fellow YCL members) were in CND because they thought it was all right for the Russians to have the bomb because it was the People's Bomb as opposed to the American or British bomb. They were vaguely pacifist. They didn't want us to have guns or things like that and yet they were perfectly happy with the Russians stomping all over Hungary.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ *Challenge*, May 1958, vol. 3, no. 5.

³⁷² W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 116.

³⁷³ *Challenge*, June 1957, vol. 2 no. 6, *Challenge*, March 1958, vol 3 no. 3.

³⁷⁴ W.Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*, p. 118.

³⁷⁵ Interview Alexei Sayle, in P.Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 45.

Contradictory or not; communists, especially YCL members, played a key role in CND and in Young CND and many young communists remember going to CND rallies, although they (and their parents) found it difficult to combine being a communist with being a member of CND:

From 1961 onwards I went to all the CND demonstrations and I was very much aware of debates whether my father could be a public communist in CND. There was this fear by CND members who weren't communists but were accused of being so by outsiders to actually have communists in CND. I sensed it was better to keep quiet about being communist. (Dorothy Sheridan)

YCL members organised many activities, demonstrations and meetings and made quite an impression on non-communist CND supporters. As noted already, CND was convinced that the Labour Party stood a good chance of electoral success. However, the Labour Party was defeated in the 1959 elections, which meant CND had to revise its strategy.³⁷⁶ From 1960 onwards CND focused on NATO, but the internal quarrels and problems between the different wings continued; a reoccurring problem was the absence of theory and lack of strategic vision in CND. Nigel Young, in his book on the crisis and decline of New Left, links this lack of ideology and policy with weakness of the New Left. He argues: 'Though it did not owe its birth to the NL theorists, there were too few others in CND ready "with the will and capacity to transform the movement into a different and more political entity"'.³⁷⁷ Organisations like the YCL took advantage of this situation; many CND members turned to the YCL 'to put their emotions into political perspective'.³⁷⁸ This development provided an excellent opportunity for the YCL to rebuild their membership base that had been so badly damaged by Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin and the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956.

Soon after its entry in 1960, the CP began to dominate the CND which resulted in the adoption of a 'Moscow-leaning formulae', which seriously damaged the initial integrity of CND protest.³⁷⁹ After 30 October 1961, when Russia exploded the world's largest nuclear

³⁷⁶ F. E. Myer, 'Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement since World War II', p. 83.

³⁷⁷ N. Young, *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 141.

³⁷⁸ F.E. Myer, 'Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement Since World War II' p. 84.

³⁷⁹ N. Young, *An Infantile Disorder?* p. 156.

device to date over the Arctic island of Novaya Zemlya, CND membership became even more contradictory for communists. Many young communists did not condone these tests and some YCL members took part in a sit-down protest against the bomb at the Soviet Embassy in London, organised by CND.³⁸⁰ Others left the YCL over this matter; the Hampstead YCL for example resigned en masse when Khrushchev announced the nuclear tests.³⁸¹ Through their CND activities, an increasing number of YCL members started to realize that they differed politically from the CP and this realization would only grow stronger over the subsequent years.

After 1963, the CP was the only political institution which continued to support CND. Other groups like the anarchists and Trotskyists had left and the movement had shrunk to a few thousand by 1965. Young is convinced that the CP was partly to blame for CND's decline. According to him the CP undermined the moral idealism of nuclear pacifism; by 'encouraging a return to pre-Aldermaston reformism and a generalized 'peace' appeal',³⁸² thus destroying the very substantial movement that still remained in 1963. Besides the negative influence of the communist party on the movement's identity and integrity, there are a multitude of reasons why CND was only successful for such a short period. The failure to produce a coalition based on one coherent ideology has already been noted; the movement was just too heterogeneous. Another reason was CND's political weakness, which can be explained by its failure to attract support within the working class. The majority of CND members came from middle class backgrounds. According to Myers, these middle class members:

showed greater support for humanitarian and moral policy issues, than class issues. The issue of nuclear disarmament was seen primarily in a moral context, a context not likely to attract the continuous and lasting working class support that was necessary to have a lasting impact on British politics.³⁸³

Besides these internal factors, there were external factors which contributed to the end of CND as a mass movement. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 made people aware of the

³⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 157.

³⁸¹ M. Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity*, p. 302.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ F. E. Myer, 'Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement Since World War II' pp. 86-7.

potential reality of a nuclear war, but at the same time convinced people that the superpowers' leaders would never let a disaster like that happen. This, together with the Test Ban Treaty of 1963, which banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, undermined the position of CND. After Cuba, CND demonstrations and marches became more ritualistic, the movement disappeared and left 'a political vacuum, that was crucial to the renewed growth of all Old Left groupings in the later 1960s, including the CP' (and YCL).³⁸⁴ In the Netherlands the impetus behind the 'ban the bomb' movement came from the PSP who, inspired by CND, founded the *Comite 1961 voor de vrede* (Committee 1961 for Peace) on New Years Day of 1961. The Committee was a collaboration of 10 organisations and stood for unconditional rejection of nuclear armament (East and West) and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons in the Netherlands.

The ANJV had already formed its own anti-nuclear campaign in 1960 when it became public knowledge that nuclear weapons were stored on the American section of the Soesterberg military airbase. On 16 December 1960, following the Aldermaston's example, eight ANJV members embarked on a symbolic bicycle ride from Volkel via Soesterberg to Amsterdam, to protest against nuclear weapons. They did not get far; they were arrested in Arnhem, charged and found guilty, with 'organising a protest march' and 'displaying slogans' like: *Breng de regering aan het verstand, geen atoomkoppen in ons land* (Get this into the government's thick skull, no nuclear warheads in our country). After their ordeal, the eight boys and girls founded the Volkel committee and together with 130 ANJV members, another bicycle ride was organised. In the spring of 1961, hundreds of young people gathered in Volkel to cycle to Amsterdam, where they protested against nuclear weapons for three days.³⁸⁵ In 1962, the number of participants doubled and each year afterwards the protest cycle ride expanded. Co-operation with other youth organisations proved difficult in the first few years. Many pacifists and social democrats had the same reservations about working together with a communist youth organisation and some CND supporters; they found it a contradiction to co-operate with an organisation which was affiliated with a country like the USSR. However, some Christian youth organisations were willing to co-operate and the first discussions about Christianity and socialism were

³⁸⁴ N. Young, *An Infantile Disorder?* p. 157.

³⁸⁵ Archive ANJV, 98.

initiated and as such the Volkel bicycle rides paved the way for co-operative relationships between communist and non-communist youth.³⁸⁶ The PSP, which dominated the *Comité 1961*, stood for incidental cooperation with the ANJV and other communist umbrella organisations. In 1964 the ANJV took part in an Easter Demonstration organised by the *Comité 1961* which protested against all nuclear weapons. Thanks to communist participation the demonstration attracted 5000 people, twice the previous number of protesters, which motivated the *Comité* to keep up its collaboration with the ANJV. The success of this cooperation should be understood within the context of the in chapter one discussed change in the CPN's international position. The impact of the party's new autonomous position within the international communist movement was visible in the CPN's stance on nuclear weapons; whereas the CPN was only against the British and American bomb in 1959, by 1963 it condemned all nuclear weapons. Consequently the reservations many organisations had about working together with communists disappeared, which briefly strengthened the 'Ban the Bomb' movement before its decline set in during the second half of the 1960s. It struggled with the same problems as CND; its limited objective did not provide enough basis for further activities especially when people became increasingly concerned with the Vietnam War.³⁸⁷ The ANJV organised its last Volkel protest ride in 1964 and the *Comité 1961* was officially dissolved in 1969.³⁸⁸

The 1960s were characterized by an economic boom which brought along higher wages, increased standards of living and more leisure time. The increase in juvenile wages contributed to the creation of youth or teenage culture, which had an overall equalizing effect. Social and cultural differences faded into the background; being a teenager was not about class, it was about the clothes you wore and the music you listened to. Youth culture was, in the period 1955-1965 not about being politically organised; even the people who supported CND and *Comité 1961 voor vrede* were often not very political, with both movements having a predominately pacifist orientation.

During the second half of the 1960s, this quite innocent apolitical teenage culture began to wane and a counter culture emerged, although it is important to acknowledge that

³⁸⁶ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 28.

³⁸⁷ International Institute of Social History; summary of archive *Comité 1961 voor de Vrede*.
<http://www.iisg.nl/archives>.

³⁸⁸ N. Van Aalderen, *Wij Hebben Er Geen Spijt Van*, p. 149.

even though the radicalisation and politicization of youth did not occur until the mid-sixties, certain developments which paved the way for the cultural revolution had already started in the 1950s. In this context, Arthur Marwick mentions the following developments: existentialism, the renewal of Marxism, the joining of Marxism to ideas of sexual liberation; the Dada-esque and revolutionary views of the Situationists; the 'Beat' philosophy and the advent of Marxist structuralism.³⁸⁹

In Amsterdam, a new movement was founded around the charismatic artist-bohemian Robert Jasper Grootveld, who was inspired by the American art movement Fluxus. This movement was opposed to elitism in art and its main objective was 'action art'; blending different artistic media and disciplines. Fluxus was also called 'neo Dadaism' and its practitioners valued simplicity over complexity. In 1959, Allan Kaprow initiated the first so called artistic 'happening' in New York. The first Dutch 'happening' followed in 1962 and took place in Amsterdam.³⁹⁰ One of its originators was Grootveld; an anarchist who, after the initial success of the first happening, instigated weekly 'anti-smoking happenings',³⁹¹ in the centre of Amsterdam. One of the spectators was Roel van Duijn who had been active in nuclear disarmament movement. He was amazed by these happenings; he found them stimulating and unusual, although he admitted Grootveld was a bit of a charlatan. Grootveld's appearances were theatrical, humorous with a social critical undercurrent, media attractive, which elevated ordinary daily matters into art.³⁹² Many of Grootveld's followers were apolitical. Harry Mulish, famous Dutch novelist writes about Grootveld's clique; 'Politics meant nonsense, it had something to do with things like "C.A.O (collective labour agreement) and A.O.W (old age pension acts), they preferred Gnot (made up word; combination of God and pleasure) and Image'.³⁹³ The pacifist Roel van Duijn, in contrast to Grootveld, was more politically orientated and a product of the newly founded student movement. Prior to this point, universities were breeding grounds

³⁸⁹ A. Marwick, *The Sixties, Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 24.

³⁹⁰ H. Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig, Geschiedenis van een Generatieconflict*, Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1995 pp. 189-91.

³⁹¹ Nicotine addiction was, according to Grootveld, the symbol of compulsive consumerism; Grootveld (who was a heavy smoker himself), started a anti-advertisement campaign (he plastered tobacco ads with 'K's for cancer), he was arrested and kidnapped for 60 days by Publex (a cigarette advertisement agency).

³⁹² H. Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig*, p. 196.

³⁹³ Ibid, p. 199.

for the future elite who were protected from any changes in society. Very slowly, universities became more accessible for lower middle and working class youth. The total number of students rose throughout the sixties and so did the percentage of students subsidised by the government; a development which resulted in social mobility.³⁹⁴ This new breed of students was going to change the very nature of universities. Van Duijn and Grootveld crossed paths again in 1965, the result of which was the establishment of Provo on 25 May of that same year. Its manifesto declared its foundation was a ‘desperate’ attempt to change society. The movement’s suicide was already predicted; ‘even though Provo is aware it will be defeated, it will nevertheless take every opportunity to provoke society’.³⁹⁵

The ANJV, which was a rather old fashioned and pragmatic organisation, did not really understand Provo’s tactics: ‘Their (Provo’s) campaigns were absurd; I remember they handed out currants against capitalism. “Currants against capitalism: how ridiculous is that?” We, at the ANJV, could not help but jeer them’.³⁹⁶ It took many other ANJV members some convincing too, before they would see the importance of developing some sort of a working relationship with Provo, and vice versa. It was not until both organisations were active within the Vietnam movement, that a mutual understanding was forged.

Provo seized its first chance to provoke during the wedding of Princess Beatrix to Claus von Amstel, a German who was a member of the Hitlerjugend before he was conscripted to the Wehrmacht in 1944, which understandably caused a lot of anger among Dutch people.³⁹⁷ On the day of the wedding, 10 March 1966, a demonstration took place at the *Dokwerker*, a statue in the old Jewish neighbourhood in commemoration of the February Strike. This demonstration grew quickly in numbers; people from different backgrounds gathered together to protest the wedding. Some of them wore white stars of David with the number six million; others carried banners with ‘Long live the Republic’. The demonstration moved towards the inner city and when the royal gilded carriage passed

³⁹⁴ J.C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw. Nederland in de Jaren Zestig*, Amsterdam: Boom, 1995, p. 168.

³⁹⁵ H. Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig*, p. 199.

³⁹⁶ Interview Bob Albrecht 20/03/2002.

³⁹⁷ J.C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw*, p. 155.

by, smoke bombs exploded; Provos threw a white chicken in front of the carriage and fights between police and demonstrators followed until deep into the night.³⁹⁸ Nine days later, this time unprovoked, there was another confrontation between the Amsterdam police and Provos. The police disrupted a Provo-organised exhibition of images of police violence during the royal wedding, which resulted in a mini riot. It soon became clear these riots were only a build-up to something much bigger.

On 13, 14 and 15 June of that same year builders, many of whom were CPN members, were in Amsterdam protesting against the proposition of the *Sociaal Fonds Bouwnijverheid* (Social Fund for the Building Industry) to introduce two percent administrative charges on holiday pay for builders who were not organised in a union. Communists were not allowed to join any unions and were thus considered unorganised. They would consequently lose two percent of their pay, which explains the large number of protesting communists. On 13 June, disturbances took place inside of the building where builders collected their holiday pay in the centre of Amsterdam. There was chaos and fighting inside and outside of the building. Around 2000 builders gathered outside, police showed up and a true battle followed. The bricklayer Jan Weggelaar died during the riots which agitated the builders even more. The police force was blamed for Weggelaar's death and riots continued throughout the night. In the early morning, an article about the death of Weggelaar appeared in the right wing newspaper *De Telegraaf*, which stated that he died of a heart attack; this was an account many builders refused to believe, as eyewitnesses saw the police hitting Weggelaar just before he collapsed. That same morning a demonstration organised by communist union man Klaas Staphorst against police violence took place in the old Jewish quarter. The builders aimed their anger at *De Telegraaf* and the author of the article on the death of Weggelaar. This newspaper had never been popular among the working class, because it was renowned for always choosing the employers' side during disputes.³⁹⁹ A large group of angry builders attacked the *Telegraaf* building and caused considerable damage because the police did not show up until much later. The riots moved from the *Telegraaf* building to the inner city, where Provo's and other angry youth joined the fight. Shops were damaged, windows broken and cars set on fire. Two people were shot

³⁹⁸ H. Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig*, p. 218-19.

³⁹⁹ *De Telegraaf* had also 'collaborated' with the Germans during the occupation.

by the police. These were not the only casualties; over 80 people were wounded during three days of anarchy.⁴⁰⁰ The ANJV signed, together with a large number of progressive student- and youth organisations among others Provo and the PvdA student organisation *Politeia*, a petition in protest against the police actions. The organisations declared their solidarity with the builders' protest, and called upon Amsterdam youth to sign the petition and to support Weggelaar's family by attending his funeral en masse.⁴⁰¹ The funeral took place on 16 June, after which peace and quiet eventually returned.

In Britain it was relatively quiet in the first half of the 1960s. Like in the Netherlands, most new radical ideas came out of the art movement; art colleges were 'centres of discussions of existentialism, Beat philosophy and the deficiencies of the Establishment'.⁴⁰² Another breeding ground for new ideas were universities, but this was only after 1962 and in moderation. Compared to other countries British students radicalised late. Small groups of (ultra) left students were organised within universities; but they did not have a great deal of influence and only voiced their ideas through student newspaper articles or student union speeches and did not manage to reach broader audiences. In contrast to countries like the US, Germany, France and Italy, there was no direct cause for British students to radicalize. Eventually, it was the war in Vietnam and indirectly the position of the Labour Party on the war which would provide students with a motive and consequently a broad and strong student/youth movement developed around the protest against the war.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Cold War tensions began to ease, opening up potential political space. In Britain, the Labour Party won election in 1964 and Harold Wilson became Prime Minister. Many people, especially young people, believed Wilson and his government were going to make a difference; that they would produce change in politics and society. These hopes faded rapidly when Labour was re-elected in 1966 and none of its promises were made reality. Tariq Ali recalled: 'The first sign was Vietnam.

⁴⁰⁰ <http://reload1.geschiedenis.vpro.nl/programmas/2899536/afleveringen/28362485/items/28453541/>
Article based on 8 interviews and official police reports.

⁴⁰¹ *Jeugd*, June 1966, vol./no. unknown, ZK 30491.

⁴⁰² A. Marwick, *The Sixties* p. 57.

During his electoral campaign Wilson had said that Labour wouldn't back the Americans in Indochina. But as soon the US escalated the war, Wilson wholeheartedly backed them'.⁴⁰³ Another issue that youth felt angry about was the refusal of the Labour Party to intervene militarily in Rhodesia, when Ian Smith's minority Rhodesian Front government declared independence.⁴⁰⁴ Youth (students as well as working youth) radicalized against the government and unlike the more moderate Marxist orientated New Left, radical youth turned to revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin for inspiration.⁴⁰⁵ This meant a renewed interest in old left organisations like the YCL. In return, the YCL made a significant effort to associate their politics with rebellious youth culture.

A first mass protest took place in 1967, following the Government's decision to increase the foreign students' fees in 1966. Over 100,000 students mobilized all over the country to partake in strikes and marches. One of the organizers of this student protest was the Radical Student Alliance (RSA), which was formed in 1966 by the CP student organizer Fergus Nicholson and existed out of among others; the YCL, young liberals and a Trotskyist group.⁴⁰⁶

In March 1967, students occupied the London School of Economics, as a reaction to the university's decision to ban a protest meeting brought on by the appointment of Sir Walter Adams as director earlier that year.⁴⁰⁷ The occupation, which was a general protest against the lack of democracy within the university, ended after nine days when the police ejected the students.⁴⁰⁸ It was widely held that there was a mood of social and political change afoot; Martin Jacques who joined the CP aged 18 and was affiliated to the YCL, was a student at Manchester University in 1967, described this feeling of social and political change:

I felt something really big was happening, suddenly there was a New Left emerging which was not defined by the old traditions or the old issues – it was thinking in a new way and bringing in people

⁴⁰³ R. Fraser, *A Student Generation in Revolt*, Chatto Windus, 1988, p. 108.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 109-10.

⁴⁰⁶ A. Travis, 'Student Rebels Were 'Frighteningly Radical'', in *The Guardian*, May 31, 2000 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2000/may/31/freedomofinformation.politics>).

⁴⁰⁷ Adams was the principal of the Univeristy College of Rhodesia from 1955-1967; many students felt he represented the evils of Ian Smith's government.

⁴⁰⁸ A. Marwick, *The Sixties*, p. 563.

who had all these new ideas. In the past I'd been the initiator, now I felt I had to stand back and learn.⁴⁰⁹

The YCL saw the importance of supporting the student initiatives and related the students' demands for academic freedom and democracy to the movement for political change within society as a whole;

Indeed the political progress towards socialism is necessary to fully satisfy these students' demands. Therefore a closer relationship between the progressive sections of the Labour movement and the working class with students and other groups in society would enable both workers and students to combine their own campaigns more tightly into a common struggle.⁴¹⁰

To the YCL the struggle in universities became part of the general struggle for socialism. A wave of sit-ins followed the events at LSE; in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol, Keele and Leicester University. Wherever possible the YCL supported the protesting students by reporting the students' demands in detail. The *Red Flag*, the Merseyside YCL magazine, published lengthy articles on the sit-ins at Liverpool and Warwick, calling its readers to support the students in their fight for progressive politics and democratic universities.⁴¹¹ Nick Thomas author of an article challenging the myths of the 1960s and focusing on the student protest in Britain, describes sit-ins at British universities as follows;

A small group of radical students prompted a reaction from university authorities after an earlier protest action. When that reaction was also perceived as undemocratic and unjust, this small group was able to command the support of large numbers of students who were normally politically apathetic and moderate.⁴¹²

Thomas points out that very few students were actually politically active, something which is often overlooked when discussing the 1960s. Naturally this does not take anything away from the YCL's efforts to support and join in the student protest; because it was a great way

⁴⁰⁹ R. Fraser, *A Student Generation in Revolt*, p. 143.

⁴¹⁰ CP/YCL/9/12 *Red Flag*, Merseyside YCL Magazine, vol. 2, no. 1.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² N. Thomas, 'Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain' in *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2002, p. 286.

to recruit new members, since those few politically active students, who were often affiliated to the YCL, were able to mobilize so many. The RSA was disbanded after just 18 months; unable to maintain its initial success. It suffered similar problems as CND; too many different far left organisations were trying to co-operate in one broad alliance. The ideological differences between these different groups within the RSA became more significant than its common ground, which caused its collapse.⁴¹³

In the Netherlands students radicalized even later than their British contemporaries. In 1969, students occupied the *Hogeschool* of Tilburg and the University of Amsterdam. Like in Britain, the Netherlands lacked strong politicising and radicalising factors such as the Vietnam War and civil rights movement in the US, De Gaulle's administration in France or the fascist past of Italy and Germany. The immediate cause of the occupation of the *Katholieke Hogeschool* (Catholic Polytechnic) in Tilburg was the refusal to implement a proposal to democratize the school's management. The proposal which was written by four professors, five assistants and 12 students, was refused by the school's director, a decision which led to the occupation of the director's office on 28 April 1969. The board closed the school and the students re-christened the *Hogeschool* into 'Karl Marx University'. The occupation did not last long; after seven days the school's board gave in without any reservations and accepted the proposal. The occupation of the University of Amsterdam, which started on 16 May, proceeded less smoothly. After its director had made a statement in which he ridiculed the students' demands to participate in the university's management, about 600 students and non-students occupied the university. Via an unstable airlift, called 'Ho Chi Minh Bridge', communist builders supplied the occupants with sustenance. The university was renamed into 'Domela Nieuwenhuis University', after the anarchist/socialist leader. A film about the German occupation and the Dutch resistance was shown to emphasize the unity between young intellectuals i.e. students and the revolutionary proletariat i.e. communist builders. All political parties except for the CPN and PSP condemned the students' actions. On the fifth day of the occupation riots broke out in the inner city, which made the mayor of Amsterdam decide to clear the university. The occupation ended without any direct results. The board of the university and the occupants had not reached an agreement on democratisation. The lack of results did not mean the

⁴¹³ R. Fraser, *A Student Generation in Revolt*, p. 111.

students had not influenced the decision making process. The government objected to the students' method of protest, but not to the cause. Participation of students in universities' management was introduced in 1970, when the Dutch House of Commons passed the bill on this subject; *Wet Universitaire Bestuurshervorming* (WUB), which compared to any other country, gave students a huge amount of managerial responsibilities within universities.⁴¹⁴

In Britain, after the disbandment of the RSA, a second attempt to create a left wing student organization, was the single issue Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC). It was founded in 1966 by a small group of Trotskyists, 'in order to promote a public resistance to Wilson's policies and mobilize support for the Vietnamese struggle'.⁴¹⁵ Until the launch of the VSC, CND together with the British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam (BCPV), which was the CP's front organisation, dominated the organised protest against the war.⁴¹⁶ Besides being active in the BCPV, the YCL was well represented in the 'Youth for Peace in Vietnam Movement (YPVM)', founded in 1966, which united 14 organisations.⁴¹⁷ The BCPV was not particularly happy with the formation of the VSC and was of the opinion that this new organisation would narrow the base of opposition to the war because of its pro-NLF stance. The VSC's approach was completely the opposite of that of the BCPV. According to Tariq Ali, one of the founders of VSC:

The BCPV believed in discreet pressure politics. Those who pulled the strings inside the organisation supported the Vietnamese, but secretly and in whispers. In public they were simply for peace. We wanted a lasting peace and felt that this could only come about through a Vietnamese victory. We therefore stressed our solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle and planned a series of demonstrations to emphasize our way of doing things.⁴¹⁸

In contrast to the BCPV (and CND) who preferred the slogan 'Peace in Vietnam', the VSC's banners stated; 'Victory to the Vietnamese'. The 'Youth for Peace in Vietnam Movement' (YPVM) was less diplomatic than the BCPV and very clear about where their

⁴¹⁴ J.C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw*, p. 168-73.

⁴¹⁵ T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years, an Autobiography of the Sixties*, London: Verso, 2005, p. 187.

⁴¹⁶ N.Young, *An Infantile Disorder?*, p.179.

⁴¹⁷ Report of the National Council to the 26th National Congress and Festival of Socialism 1967, CP/YCL/04/06 .

⁴¹⁸ T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, p. 199.

sympathies lay. On 3 July 1966, 4000 people, including 2000 YPVM members, demonstrated outside of the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square. A resolution demanding an end to US bombings and the withdrawal of US ground troops from Vietnam was presented to Embassy officials. The YPVM had joined the rally after handing a letter to the Prime Minister calling for the UK to disassociate itself from US policy in Vietnam. They had marched to Downing Street, through the West End, chanting “Victory to the Vietcong” and other slogans. The demonstration on Grosvenor Square ended in a confrontation with the police. The crowd became agitated after John Gollan, General Secretary of the CP had urged people to disperse. Scuffles followed which caused the police to intervene and 31 arrests were made.⁴¹⁹

The first demonstration organised by the VSC took place in London on 22 October 1967. Despite the fact that organisations like the BCPV and CND had not supported VSC’s call for a demonstration, about 10,000 people had gathered that day to march to the American Embassy. It was incredibly successful, although the demonstration ended in small riots with the police. Another VSC demonstration on 17 March ended again in a confrontation with the police. Around 25,000 people were present, who marched from Trafalgar Square to the American Embassy. The crowd broke through police lines and occupied the area in front of the Embassy. Mounted police arrived soon after and a two hour fight followed which was ended by the VSC leadership’s decision to evacuate the square.⁴²⁰ The next day the Guardian reported 300 arrests and 86 injured.⁴²¹

After the successful albeit violent demonstration, VSC founder Ali, who had previously not been affiliated to any political organisation, notified two Trotskyist comrades that he wanted to join the Fourth International. Whilst waiting for acceptance he read Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*:

This had remained the most riveting account of any revolution that I have ever read. This was not simply a historical but also a literary masterpiece. The quality of the prose was devastating and I remember that after I had finished his history I felt extremely sad at the thought that because this

⁴¹⁹ BBC on this day 3/07/1966: ‘1966 Arrests in London after Vietnam rally’ & *The Daily Mirror* 4/07/1966: ‘31 held in embassy clash’.

⁴²⁰ T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, pp. 230-60.

⁴²¹ *The Guardian* March 18, 1968.

man had been anathematized by Stalinism, his writings had not been read by millions of people who had been under the influence of Moscow.⁴²²

‘Trotsky’ and ‘Trotskyism’ were indeed considered dirty words among orthodox communists; ‘Trots’ were traitors in league with fascists, and blamed for anything that undermined the Soviet regime. When Phil Cohen confessed to his mother, a devout communist, that he was reading a biography of Trotsky by Isaac Deutscher (who himself was a Trotskyist from 1933-1938); ‘she almost spat out the words, ‘not that dirty Trot?’’. Cohen remembers being angry about this reaction and felt that ‘the CP seemed incapable of having a dialogue with ideas different to its own’.⁴²³ Within the YCL, this negative attitude towards Trotskyism started to change in the 1960s. In 1968, the theoretical and discussion journal of the YCL, *Cogito* published a study of Trotsky and Trotskyism. The editors noted in the introduction to this issue: ‘such is the neglect of the subject of Trotsky by the communist movement that Monty Johnstone (author of the article) has had to start from scratch’.⁴²⁴ This particular issue of *Cogito*, which was solely devoted to Trotsky, was of significant importance. It showed willingness on behalf of the YCL to leave sectarian differences behind and to start focusing on common ground. This common ground was the protest against the war in Vietnam; the CPGB and YCL decided to support the next VSC demonstration, which took place on 27 October 1968. In his autobiography Tariq Ali describes the moment he realized the party had decided to support the VSC:

As we were about to start (the demonstration), a few extremely tough-looking and burly men came to the front and linked arms with me on both sides. I was slightly nervous and a number of IS and IMG comrades were also close by to prevent a mishap. But these were London dockers and had been sent by the communist party to stay close to me throughout the long march to Hyde Park. I was extremely moved by their protective presence and made a mental note to thank the old party.⁴²⁵

The fact that the CPGB recommended that its members should support the VSC did not mean it gave up on its own Vietnam initiatives, the YCL would for example continue its

⁴²² T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, p. 261.

⁴²³ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, pp. 28-9.

⁴²⁴ *Cogito* 1968 (available at Working Class Movement Library F66 Box 2).

⁴²⁵ T. Ali, *Street Fighting Years*, p. 305.

very fruitful initiative ‘Medical Aid for Vietnam’ as well as its activities within the World Youth Campaign of Action for the Victory of the Vietnamese People.⁴²⁶ Vietnam was also the focal point at the YCL’s 26th National Congress and Festival of Socialism in May 1967, which according to the League’s leadership, was a triumph. Many young people went on this ‘holiday with a difference’, where several events of solidarity and support for the Vietnamese people took place. Besides discussions and lectures on Vietnam, communism, socialism and Trotskyism, there was also a lot of ‘lighter’ entertainment. The Kinks performed at the Saturday dance, there was an ‘International Folk Concert’ and on site facilities like a swimming pool, nightclub, roller skating rink, bars and a cinema to keep people occupied.⁴²⁷ This festival was the product of the YCL campaign *The Trend ‘67*, which focused on the marriage of politics with wider cultural trends in society and aimed to make left-wing politics fashionable. Within the context of this campaign the YCL organised the mass distribution of leaflets in schools and youth clubs in a bid to win recruits, among increasingly radicalizing and politicizing youth. It was incredibly successful in doing so and the YCL was growing rapidly.⁴²⁸

In the Netherlands the equivalent of the YPVM was founded by the ANJV in 1965. The ANJV had been in touch with revolutionary Vietnamese youth from 1947 onwards and when the conflict in Vietnam intensified in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the first initiatives were taken to start a solidarity campaign to support the Vietnamese in their struggle. Not many Dutch people were willing to join this initiative against the American invasion of Vietnam; after all if it wasn’t for the United States the Netherlands would still be occupied by the Germans. This sentiment was obviously much stronger in the Netherlands than in Britain. The British did not feel this unquestionable loyalty towards the United States. The Dutch generation born during or just after the German occupation did not feel this moral obligation to support the US and it was precisely this generation who were willing to join the Dutch Vietnam Solidarity movement. The first youth manifestation of a cooperative initiative against the war in Vietnam was on 25 September 1965, when the inaugural meeting of the *Jongeren Komitee voor Vrede en Zelfbeschikking voor Vietnam* (Youth Committee for Peace and independence for Vietnam JKVZV) took place in Hotel

⁴²⁶ CP/YCL/17/04.

⁴²⁷ CP/YCL/04/06.

⁴²⁸ M. Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity*, p. 131.

Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam. 800 people from 15 different left wing youth organisations attended this meeting. Its first activity was organizing a picket line outside of the American consulate on Museum Square in Amsterdam, which lasted nine days and nights; ‘one minute for every 10 American soldiers in Vietnam’.⁴²⁹ On 29 October a teach-in was organised by, among others, ASVA (student union) and PSP to educate people about the situation in Vietnam and two weeks later a demonstration, organised by the JKVZV, took place. The first protest actions against the war in Vietnam were small-scaled and did not attract huge amounts of interest; nonetheless the JKVZV was closely monitored by the Dutch Secret Service (BVD), solely because communists were active within the organisation. BVD reports about the organisations’ activities, which were frequently send to the Prime Minister, did not lead to any major discussion within the council of ministers, probably because the JKVZV focused on humanitarian aid and was initially not overtly political.⁴³⁰ One of the organised actions was ‘Plastic Contra Napalm’; plastic was collected for the Vietnamese people to protect themselves against napalm attacks⁴³¹, Mario recollects:

I remember we collected 10,000 meters of plastic for the Vietnamese. This was of course a symbolic gesture, we presented this to a delegation of the Vietnamese Liberation Front in Paris. The Vietnamese gave us a token of their appreciation; rings made from the wreckage of US planes that were shot down. This gave us an enormous buzz, I thought it was fantastic. (Mario Blokzijl)

The organisation experienced the same problems as the BCPV; the ANJV wanted to unite the widest political support and was cautious with their slogans. They had just come out of a long period of isolation, and were afraid to lose their newly founded popularity by chanting ‘Johnson is a Murderer’ a slogan preferred by the Provos and the *Socialistische Jeugd* (Socialist Youth SJ)⁴³², who were both part of the JKVZV. The organisation’s leadership tried to do things by the book when organising demonstrations. They applied for

⁴²⁹ *Jeugd* October 1965 ZK 30491.

⁴³⁰ R. van der Maar, *Welterusten Mijnheer de President, Nederland en de Vietnam Oorlog 1965-1973*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2007, p. 48.

⁴³¹ ANJV archive, 97.

⁴³² Socialist Youth, founded in 1960, very disciplined and radical socialist organisation, whose goal it was to keep the traditional symbols and ideals of the working class alive.

permits whenever possible and tried to avoid confrontations with the police. Chanting 'Johnson is a Murderer' was enough reason for the police to break up a demonstration. Article 17 of the Dutch penal code stated it was an offence to insult a befriended head of state. People who violated this law could be penalized and sent to prison for up to four years. When demonstrators began to shout 'Johnson is a Murderer' during demonstrations, the police were compelled to make arrests. Many people received fines and in some cases, ended up in prison for a few days. This only aggravated the crowd, who often turned their anger towards the police and called them 'SSers' and 'fascists'.⁴³³ Despite the ANJV's objections to the slogan 'Johnson is a Murderer', it was not cautious in expressing whose side it was on. In the ANJV's 1966 brochure *Ons Werk* (Our Work) it was made very clear that calling for peace in Vietnam was not enough and called upon the youth to support the Vietnamese Liberation Front:

We have to fight against those people who, in the name of pacifism, object to both the actions of the American army as well as those of the Vietnamese liberation fighters. These people (pacifists) discredit the Vietnamese struggle for independence. We (ANJV) are of the opinion, there is only one enemy and that is the US.⁴³⁴

The war in Vietnam intensified throughout 1966 and an increasing number of people began to criticize the American intervention. Vietnam became the most discussed topic in the Dutch media and protest groups mushroomed which had a negative impact on the JKVZV. Provo, SJ and several radical pacifist-Christian and anarchist activists left the JKVZV and formed *Aktiegroep Vietnam* on 21 April 1966. The ANJV withdrew a year later, meaning the end of the JKVZV with the organisation dissolving in 1967. The intensification of the war caused a significant radicalization, but also a broadening of the Vietnam movement. *Aktiegroep Vietnam* was an example of this radicalization, which called for more rebellious protests. They were certainly successful and their initiatives received a lot of media attention mostly because demonstrations organised by the *Aktiegroep Vietnam* often ended in clashes with the police.

⁴³³ J.C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw*, p. 158.

⁴³⁴ ANJV brochure *Ons Werk*, 1966/1967 Bro 500/5 fol. (IISG).

The American invasion of Laos and Cambodia and the fierce bombing of North Vietnam in 1971 encouraged the ANJV to organize, together with the FJG, ARJOS and JOVD⁴³⁵ a *Popnacht voor Vietnam* (pop music night for Vietnam) where 18 Dutch pop groups performed free of charge which raised fl. 35,000. After this successful campaign the aforementioned groups formed another broad youth alliance in 1971, called *Komité Jongeren voor Vietnam* (Committee Youth for Vietnam). The following year the Committee coordinated a Vietnam rally where, among others, both the leader of the CPN and the leader of the PvdA spoke to the crowd. This was the first time since WWII that social democrats and communists worked together.

At this time the *Komité Jongeren voor Vietnam* had grown in size and now included 27 different youth and student organizations.⁴³⁶ However this collaboration was not without its difficulties; the ANJV was accused by the FJG of controlling the Committee. An article appeared in a newsmagazine called *Vrij Nederland*, which claimed the ANJV had a certain strategy which made sure people from other youth organisations were officially in charge and ANJV members would take the position of secretary; which according to the author of this article meant communists had the monopoly on the incoming information.⁴³⁷ Besides showing a certain ‘Cold War mentality’ in accusing communist youth of ruling the movement this article also implied that the other youth groups involved were just obedient followers of the ANJV. The FJG left the Committee but the accusations did not affect the unity between the remaining youth organisations. A mass demonstration in Utrecht on 6 January 1973, which was a reaction to the Christmas bombings of North Vietnam, was the pinnacle of the Dutch Vietnam solidarity movement. With more than 100,000 people demonstrating, this was the biggest protest gathering of people since WWII.⁴³⁸ With a few exceptions like the *Medisch Comité Vietnam* (Medical Committee Vietnam) most Vietnam solidarity organisations were disbanded after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on 26 January 1973. Through its activities in the Vietnam movement, the ANJV became a respected youth organization; respected not only by the supporters of the *Komité Jongeren*

⁴³⁵ FJG; Federatie van Jeugd Groepen (federation of youth groups), ARJOS; youth organisation of the protestant ARP (Anti-Revolutionary party) JOVD; youth group of the VVD (liberal party).

⁴³⁶ ANJV archive 98.

⁴³⁷ *Vrij Nederland*, April 1972.

⁴³⁸ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, pp 55-7.

voor Vietnam but also by the authorities, which made the council of Amsterdam and *Landsmeer* decide to stop excluding the ANJV from subsidy. This was a real victory for the ANJV; after 20 years of exclusion it was finally recognized in 1969 as a bonafide youth organisation.⁴³⁹ The ANJV experienced a steady growth throughout the sixties and early seventies, which was reflected by a rise in membership and growing number of branches. In the period 1960-1972, the ANJV opened six new branches.⁴⁴⁰ Without mentioning the total amount of members, all the annual congress reports throughout the sixties until 1974, speak of a growing membership.⁴⁴¹ In *De Duizend Daden*, a book written by former ANJV members for the organisation's 40th anniversary (1985), the editors note that the ANJV hardly ever published any membership figures. The only two figures ever revealed were; 'the magical number 15,000' in 1945 and a very rough estimate of 10,000 members in 1975.⁴⁴² Whereas the majority of ANJV members in the forties and fifties were 'working youth', in the sixties and seventies new members were often students, either in secondary or further education. Many of these new recruits came from non-communist middle class backgrounds, which in some cases caused friction with the 'old' members who came from working class communist families:

I could not help but being a little annoyed when people from 'higher' classes decided to become communists to rebel against their conservative right winged parents or just because it was a fashionable thing to do and consequently I became less active. I thought to myself; if they like canvassing and bill posting so much, be my guest. (Els Wagenaar)

I despised those students who all of a sudden pretended to be 'working class'. (Bob Albrecht)

Despite the negative feelings that some traditional young communists had, the ANJV urged its members to include the new recruits and make sure they would feel at home within the organisation.

⁴³⁹ Archive ANJV 16 12th Congress 1969.

⁴⁴⁰ Archive ANJV 7th congress 1960 & 13th congress 1972.

⁴⁴¹ Archive ANJV 13th Congress 1972. The annual report of 1967 proudly mentions that the Deventer branch recruited 30 new members during a Vietnam rally, and Amsterdam gained 55 new members in two weeks. In 1972 the ANJV attracted 580 new members and in 1974 it recruited 750 new members. Unfortunately the annual reports do not reveal anything about members leaving the organisation.

⁴⁴² T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 73.

In Britain the YCL also experienced a clear growth and reached its peak in 1967 with 6,031 members, but dropped dramatically to 4,651 in 1968.⁴⁴³ Mike Waite relates this sudden decline to the organisation's lack of internal cohesion. Following traditionalists within the party, hardliners within the League were against *The Trend* which they considered to be 'an abandonment of concern with the real questions of politics'.⁴⁴⁴ They also objected to the revamping of *Challenge*; which was transformed into a trendy magazine with psychedelic fonts and famous bands on the cover.⁴⁴⁵ A split occurred between a group of Stalinists who wanted a small but effective organisation focusing on political education and trade union activism, and another more moderate group who wanted to make the YCL into a mass organisation for ordinary young people.⁴⁴⁶ Nina Temple who was brought up in a communist family and became very active in the YCL remembers the polarizing effect of this split:

I had joined the YCL in my neighbourhood; it had about 35 members including some nice young men and it was very much a social activity. I became the Westminster YCL social organiser and started running a disco on the estate above the laundry which was quite successful, with about 200 people coming along. It was all going swimmingly – this was the late 1960s – but disaster struck when the branch was taken over by Stalinists. This new group got rid of the branch secretary by saying he was a pofter. The whole thing changed completely. I was at a YCL disco on the estate with a lot of my friends and suddenly the music went off and Fergus Nicholson gave a speech about why Russia was right to invade Czechoslovakia. I was mortified and embarrassed, so that was the end of the YCL disco.⁴⁴⁷

Nicholson belonged to a small but influential group within the YCL who defended the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia on 20 August 1968 to halt Alexander Dubcek's Prague Spring. The CPGB expressed reservations about the Soviet actions, but the YCL's official stand on this went much further. This stand was one of solidarity with the Czechoslovak

⁴⁴³ G. Stevenson, *The YCL 1966-1980 Anatomy of Decline*, 2005, http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=692&Itemid=53.

⁴⁴⁴ M. Waite, 'Sex 'n' drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s', p. 219.

⁴⁴⁵ The ANJV magazine *Jeugd* underwent a similar transformation and became just as *Challenge* more accessible to many young people and succeeded in reaching a broader audience.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 219-21.

⁴⁴⁷ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 95.

Communist Party and Government and rejected the invasion.⁴⁴⁸ In October 1968 *Cogito* dedicated a special supplement to the situation in Czechoslovakia which, as noted before, not only condemned the invasion and called for an immediate unconditional withdrawal, but was also very self critical:

Too often we have presented only the positive and not developed our own view of what is negative. Too often we have kept our private doubts and reservations to ourselves and have for the sake of diplomacy and solidarity, not expressed our full views to our comrades working in socialist countries. This is a lesson then for us in the YCL to learn and the leadership is generally more guilty than ordinary members. Never again must we keep our private criticism to ourselves because this is perhaps our greatest disservice to our to our friends, and our contribution to the tragic events 21 August.⁴⁴⁹

Independently from their communist parties, who were considered too hesitant in taking a clear stance, all over the world communist youth organisations issued statements condemning the Soviet invasion and expressing deep dismay and protest against this act which, according to these organisations, seriously violated the norms for the relations between sovereign states and socialist countries. Interestingly, the ANJV did not publish a similar separate statement.⁴⁵⁰ Perhaps the ANJV did not feel the need to distance itself from the party, since the CPN, which had been exceptionally hostile to the Soviet Union at the time, had already published a manifesto which declared that the armed invasion of Czechoslovakia was the Soviet Union's most disgraceful breach of the principals of Leninism.⁴⁵¹

Two years earlier in 1966, under influence of the politicization and radicalization of youth, Provo had decided to stand as a candidate for the local elections in Amsterdam under the slogan 'Have a laugh, Vote Provo'. 13,105 citizens of Amsterdam were 'having a laugh' and voted Provo, which resulted in one seat on the city council. Four Provo members, one of them Roel van Duijn, took this seat in turns. Provo as a political party was far ahead of its time; it focused mainly on environmental issues and wanted to improve the

⁴⁴⁸ The YCL speaks of an invasion, whilst the CPGB calls it an intervention.

⁴⁴⁹ CP/YCL/21/1 *Cogito* supplement 4, 1968.

⁴⁵⁰ ANJV archive 35, Correspondence 1967-1968.

city's inhabitability, questioning pollution and criticizing mass consumerism (using cars and television as negative symbols of consumerism). They came up with frivolous but sometimes potential 'white plans', like the 'white bicycle plan' which proposed the purchase of 3000 white bicycles that could be used by anyone who needed transport. The 'white women plan' promoted free love, the 'white chicken plan' contained the idea to re-school police officers into social-workers, who could provide the public with useful things like matches, contraceptives and band aids and the 'white children plan' which involved child care. Provo's playfulness and tongue-in-cheek campaigns did not translate into politics. The decision to become a party was the beginning of the end. As Hans Righart points out, Provo was an exponent of the youth revolution and could not politically express itself without renouncing its origins. Whilst on the council, Provo did not want to compromise, nor did it want to take small steps to achieve its goals, which is key to any council's policy.⁴⁵² Provo split up on 15 May 1967. A year later, Roel van Duijn, together with other *Kabouters*⁴⁵³ proclaimed the foundation of the *Oranje Vrijstaat*, a free society within Dutch society. A lengthy but condescending article about Roel van Duijn and his ideas appeared in the ANJV magazine *Jeugd* in October 1970. The author of the article accused Van Duijn of being solely focused on publicity and not on solutions for the problems that needed addressing. 'Van Duijn's only concern is to keep his precious seat on the council'. The author took the *Kabouters*' policy on housing shortage as an example to show how ridiculous Van Duijn's movement really was:

Instead of campaigning against the minister of public housing's policy of ever increasing rent and submissive obedience to the demands of real estate agents, the *Kabouters* think the answer to this problem is squatting the few empty houses around. It seems to be, by ignoring political roots of the problem, Van Duijn has no intention to change the situation. But what can one expect from someone who first lived in a villa in Buitenveldert (posh area in the south of Amsterdam), before buying a canal side house in the center of Amsterdam. Roel van Duijn misleads his followers who critical about society and want change and pushes them into a direction which can only lead to illusion, only because he wants to keep his seat in the council.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² H. Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig*, pp. 236-39.

⁴⁵³ *Kabouter beweging* (pixie movement) founded by Robert Jaspers Grootveld and Roel van Duijn in 1970, protest organisation against pollution and consumerism. A pixie was chosen as a symbol for this movement because it represents a little human being, who respects nature and its surroundings.

⁴⁵⁴ *Jeugd* October, 1970.

The author did not stand alone in his judgment; this article represented the feelings of the ANJV as a whole. Even though the organisation experienced a period of popularity it was not in sync with the cultural changes of the time and could therefore not understand people like Roel van Duijn whose ideas were a product of 1960s counter culture.

As noted already, in the period 1960-1975 the ANJV gained many new members from non-communist backgrounds. The ANJV found it hard to cater to these new members and to adjust to the new situation. Part of the ANJV was very committed to youth culture and most members have pleasant memories of the camping trips, festivals and other activities organised by the ANJV, but part of the ANJV still saw the organisation as a youth wing of the CPN. From the founding years until the end of the organisation in 1985, the ANJV had always pressured its members to vote communist. Around election times the support for the CPN was a priority:

Again, the ANJV will be supporting the CPN in its fight to win the elections. The CPN is the only party which gives the people of our country a clear alternative. Not only does the party give youth a clear perspective for the future, e.g. the establishing of a socialist society, it is also realistic and fights for workers rights, peace and against monopolies.⁴⁵⁵

The YCL, which wanted to be more than an enrollment agency for the CPGB, was more subtle in its usage of propaganda in order to convince youth to vote communist. On the contrary the ANJV was at times quite blunt and almost bullied its members into joining the party; which was not always what the new members from non-communist families wanted. As previously discussed, one of the ANJV downfalls was its failure to understand new forms of youth culture and a tendency to over-politicise new youth interests. In the 1960s and 1970s the use of soft drugs was quite common in the Netherlands, as it was in many other countries. In an article about smoking marijuana, it is once more Roel van Duijn who was being scapegoated. The article quotes van Duijn; 'He (Van Duijn) mentioned in an interview that the revolutionary class exists mainly out of people who like to smoke a bit of dope every now and then'. The author was disgusted by this statement, writing:

⁴⁵⁵ ANJV Archive, 20.

Comments like these are clear attempts to convince people, that using drugs is something progressive. Which is of course utter nonsense. It was always authoritative people like for example the Colonial oppressors who were actively smoking opium.⁴⁵⁶

The YCL had a very different approach to the same subject. Mike Waite mentions a illustrative anecdote about the League and drugs, which not only shows an element of progressiveness within the League but also the relationship it had with the party, which were both in sharp contrast to the ANJV;

The three leaders of the YCL decided to hold a meeting on the question, 'Should drugs be legalised?' Gollan (John) heard of this, and summoned the YCLers. They had made an agreement to enter his room in an exaggerated parody of a military march, and then to salute in mock subordination. Gollan went into spluttering apoplexy, telling his deputy to 'deal with them'. The YCLers were told that if they went ahead and held the meeting they would be expelled. In spite of being omniously reminded that 'the party could close down the League', they left the King Street offices in the same ridiculous march, and decided to call the party leadership's bluff. No action was taken.⁴⁵⁷

Even though there were some very traditional hardliners within its ranks, overall, the YCL was capable of capturing the imagination of young people. The ANJV found this extremely difficult, and one can wonder if the organisation actually ever had that element of attraction. Whereas the YCL, as illustrated by the anecdote about drugs, became independent from the CPGB over the course of the 1960s and 70s, the ANJV was still very much an extension of the CPN. ANJV member Bart Luirink recalls; 'We were so uptight about the relationship with the CPN. Bizarrely, it was the party who summoned us to become more laid back in our policies and the organisation of the ANJV'.⁴⁵⁸ Especially after the end of the Vietnam War, the ANJV found it difficult to redirect its focus and, consequently, the ANJV disintegrated in the late 1970s. Bart Luirink remembers:

It felt like the ANJV became redundant; there were all sorts of organisations and pressure groups fighting for what used to be traditional 'ANJV' causes, we weren't needed any longer. We kept on

⁴⁵⁶ *Jeugd* November 1970.

⁴⁵⁷ M. Waite, 'Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s', p. 217.

⁴⁵⁸ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, p. 37.

saying how unique we were, because we combined social and political campaigns with 'club life'. That we were a 'complete' organisation. But often we only came together to collect subscription fees. Many new ideas and organisations passed us by; the squatters movement, the anti nuclear energy movement etc. We were strictly hierarchically organised and had no appeal at all. We lost vision. There was a secret longing for a 'second Vietnam', a cause which would enable us to mobilize youth; to form another broad alliance.⁴⁵⁹

Conclusion

This chapter's aim was twofold; it has compared the history of the YCL to that of the ANJV but it has also compared the histories of these organizations to their respective communist parties. We have seen that through the influence of the YCI and Comintern, the histories of the CJB and YCL in the period 1920-1938 are very similar, although not identical. The CJB was very sectarian, obstinate and like the early CPN- quite arrogant, which was perhaps a result of their unique position within the international communist movement. Unlike the YCL whose formation was instigated by the YCI in 1921, the CJB, albeit under the name *De Zaaier*, had already been a revolutionary socialist youth organisation since the turn of the century. We have seen that the CJB's sectarianism and big-headedness contributed to its decline during a time most other revolutionary organizations like the YCL grew significantly.

After the war the newly founded ANJV started off as a broad progressive youth organisation based on direct democratic principles and was therefore very different from the YCL which was still a communist organisation based on the principle of democratic centralism. These differences were soon smoothed out; under the influence of the Cold War the ANJV became yet again like its British counterpart: a communist organization, although it did maintain its direct democratic principles.

The histories of both organizations run parallel in the period 1948-1956 and are, like the histories of the CPN and CPGB, characterized by political and social isolation. Nonetheless this chapter has shown that the existence of virulent anti-communism in the Netherlands further isolated the ANJV in the period up to 1962 which made the organisation decide to move closer towards the CPN. On the contrary the YCL, whose members weren't persecuted on the same scale as their Dutch contemporaries, started to ease itself away from

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

the CPGB from 1956 onwards and began to realize that it differed politically from the party. This realization marked the beginning of a new era in which the YCL was going to grow in membership and in popularity.

In the early 1960s the ANJV also began to prosper, but the organisation and its members were in many ways traumatized by the Cold War years and were extremely careful not to jeopardize their new status. They were therefore, especially compared to the YCL, much more cautious when affiliating to new radical youth movements and stayed safely under the wings of the CPN. The YCL had to distance itself further from the CPGB throughout the 1960s to become more approachable for youth, because the CPGB wasn't able to capture radical youth's imaginations. On the contrary, the CPN was much more in tune with the radical tendencies and cultural changes of the 1960s. We have seen that CPN rank-and-file worked closely together with radical youth and visa versa. Because of the party's autonomous position from 1963 onwards, Dutch communists and their organizations gained credibility and trust within society, which encouraged cooperation with non-communists and opened the movement to new members. The ANJV benefited from this and developed solid working relationships with non-communist youth. The YCL achieved the same but at the expense of their internal cohesion and their relationship with the CPGB. Its troublesome relationship with the CPGB translated into tensions within the League itself, which caused it to disintegrate at the end of the 1960s when the ANJV was still flourishing. But the latter's popularity did not last either; ten years later the ANJV also fell victim to fragmentation and internal quarrels about new organizational structures and its relationship with the CPN, which ultimately led to its disbandment in 1985.

Part II Communist Identity

Part 2 ‘Communist identity’ explores the private and public life of Dutch and British communists in the period 1940-1970 and is primarily based on oral testimonies of ‘children of the red flag’ i.e. people who grew up in British and Dutch communist families during the Cold War period.⁴⁶⁰ The following three chapters discuss the formative events in the respondents’ lives, their cultural and political upbringing as well as their experiences in school and at work. It will map the differences as well as the similarities between the Dutch and British respondents’ experiences, before assessing the extent of social isolation experienced by the subjects.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis the majority of the respondents come from working class and lower middle class backgrounds and their parents’ level of political activity varied. When looking at the testimonies there are roughly three different categories of communists; there is a small minority of parents who can be labeled as Stalinist, a few parents were intellectual bohemian communists who unlike Stalinists had a much looser interpretation of the communist ideology and thirdly the vast majority of parents were communists who weren’t as rigid as Stalinists but certainly more loyal to their party and the communist ideology than bohemian communists. This last group is mainly made up of (working class) parents who were trade unionists or shop floor activists; people who were generally rooted in the wider labour movement and who were politically active on a local level (at work or in their neighbourhood) rather than being involved on a more theoretical level.⁴⁶¹ The focus of the following chapters will be on the experiences of the latter category without ignoring the exceptional experiences of respondents who grew up with bohemian or Stalinist parents. In this thesis’ introduction I discussed three different schools

⁴⁶⁰ The following chapters are based on 23 Dutch and twelve British representatives and to make up the numbers, besides interpreting my respondent’s oral testimonies, I have also analyzed seven interviews from the book *Children of the Revolution*.

⁴⁶¹ This distinction is often made or recognized by respondents. Dorothy Sheridan for example would class her parents as bohemian libertarian communists, whereas Els Wagenaar noticed the difference between her parents’ communist values (her father was a communist shop floor activist) and those of her boyfriend whose parents were more bohemian and had a looser interpretation of the Communist ideology. Her boyfriend’s parents would for example make fun of articles in the Communist newspaper, something her parents, who were not unquestionable followers but were serious about their politics, would never do. Nevertheless there are a few examples of parents (Harriet Naden, Frank Birch and Alexei Sayle) who were extremely loyal to the Soviet Union and Stalin but lived a bohemian lifestyle.

of thought within the communist historiography. In line with the third school, the previous chapters have shown that without denying that individual CP members were indeed affected by the Comintern and the leaders of their national parties, that communists were not necessarily ‘marionettes manipulated by a Kremlin puppet-master’.⁴⁶² The following chapters aim to show that the same is true on a more personal level; communists were influenced by Soviet ideology but did not follow their parties’ directives blindly and decided for themselves which elements of this ideology they implemented in their social lives.

Before exploring the respondents’ lives in chapters four, five and six, it is necessary to discuss their families’ political history. Within this context a far-reaching difference occurs between the Dutch and British situation. Unlike Britain, communism in the Netherlands was a hereditary affair and I argue that because of this Dutch communist mentality and identity were fundamentally different from that of British communists. The following section discusses the political background of the respondents’ families: the differences between the Dutch and British situation and the impact these had on the development of the communist movement in both countries as well as tentative explanations for these differences.

‘Family Tradition?’

When looking at the political background of respondents’ families, it is striking that most of the Dutch respondents come from long lines of socialists, anarchists, syndicalists and communists. Communism was in their blood, so to speak. Unlike the majority of Dutch respondents who have at least one communist grandparent, the British respondents are often only second generation communists. Their parents were generally the first in their families to join the party.⁴⁶³ The majority of British parents came from a non-political or religious background; only a very small minority was raised in socialist families. Only two British respondents’ parents have ‘radical roots’ themselves. An explanation for this can be found in the fact the CPGB was a much younger party than the CPN (The SDB, the CPN’s predecessor was founded in 1908, twelve years before the foundation of the CPGB) and as

⁴⁶² A. Thorpe, ‘Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1943’, pp. 638-39.

⁴⁶³ Parents often joined together with other siblings. There are many examples of British respondents who have a communist uncle or aunt.

we saw in chapter one there seemed to be a more powerful and influential orthodox Marxist tradition in the Netherlands than in Britain. Dutch respondents' leftist roots can be traced back as far as 1880 with grandparents who supported the Anarchist Domela Nieuwenhuis. Nevertheless this does not explain the fact that compared to Dutch respondents, a much smaller percentage of the British respondents joined the communist party or any other communist organizations. Referring to Raphael Samuel's observation that communism in Britain 'seemed to run in families, though laterally, within a single age band, rather than, as in Labour homes, as a hereditary affair,'⁴⁶⁴, Morgan, Flinn and Cohen state: 'the relatively brief appearance of communism in British political life does suggest, either that not too much should be made of its hereditary aspects, or that what was inherited was not necessarily a party affiliation, but a looser package of values, cultural reference points and political practices which in a longer perspective were not coterminous with any single institution.'⁴⁶⁵

From the Dutch situation the conclusion can be drawn that communism does have strong hereditary aspects, but it is interesting that in Britain the most common line of succession was not within the family. Figures show that only a quarter of all British communists had parents who themselves were party members or active in other labour movement organizations, whereas for example in France two-thirds of party members came from left wing families and half had at least one family member in the French Communist Party.⁴⁶⁶ Morgan, Cohen and Flinn find an explanation in the 'relatively modest proportions and weak sub-cultural characteristics of the CPGB and Britain's wider activist left'⁴⁶⁷ for the small number of 'cradle communists' in Britain. This explanation is not fully satisfactory because the Dutch Communist Party was not that different from the CPGB. Both parties were rather small⁴⁶⁸ and had very little influence, but there was a much higher degree of continuity within the Dutch communist movement. Interestingly the Dutch situation also shows that modest proportions and weak sub-cultural characteristics are not necessarily linked.

⁴⁶⁴ R. Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, p. 63.

⁴⁶⁵ K. Morgan *et al*, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991*, p. 261.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 250.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 250-1.

⁴⁶⁸ It has to be said that although both parties were indeed very small and insignificant, in terms of percentage the CPN was bigger than the British party especially in the period 1945-1948.

In spite of its size the communist movement in the Netherlands was more evolved and enjoyed a rich and varied cultural tradition, much more so than its British counterpart. Communism was a way of living in the Netherlands; there were separate communist organizations for small children (Uilenspiegelclub), students (OPSJ), working youth (ANJV) and women (NVB). There was a communist union (until 1964), travel agency, a publishing house and book club as well as a communist choir. Dutch communists had their own newspapers, family magazines and every communist organisation had its own bulletin. Many communists were also members of the VVSU, which was an organisation of friends of the Soviet Union. This organisation focused on communists' cultural needs and introduced Soviet films, books, theater, ballet and music.

Although the CPGB did have a newspaper, several magazines, a small women's movement, a publishing house, the British-Soviet Friendship Society and a youth organization, culturally it did not have as much to offer as the CPN. In this context it should be noted that the contrast between the period 1920-1939 and the post war period is remarkable. In his book *Communism in Britain 1920-1939. From the Cradle to the grave* Thomas Linehan states that 'For those who opted to commit fully to the communist way of life it would offer a complete identity and reach into virtually all aspects of life and personal development'.⁴⁶⁹ In post-war Britain, the communist movement did no longer offer a complete identity; unlike in the Netherlands communism 'from the cradle to the grave' was, even for its most faithful followers, not longer possible, simply because many cultural organizations had ceased to exist. In the first 20 years of its existence the CPGB catered for the whole family; at the age of 8, children could join the Young Pioneers⁴⁷⁰, magazines like *The Young Worker* were especially issued for communist youth and parents could read about rearing a healthy 'child of the red flag' in *The Worker's Child*. After the war these magazines together with the Young Pioneers were discontinued and the CPGB became less family orientated. The majority of Dutch respondents read *De Uilenspiegel*,

⁴⁶⁹ T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939, From the Cradle to the Grave*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁰ In 1925, inspired by the Pioneers movement in the Soviet Union, the British YCL created communist children's sections alongside YCL branches which were named the Young Pioneers League (renamed the Young Comrades League in 1926) It is unclear when the Young Comrades League were disbanded, but there is no evidence of its existence after WWII.

which was a communist weekly magazine for the whole family. On the contrary, *The Daily Worker's* and *Country Standard's* children's corners were limited to a small paragraph. Chapter one discussed the pillarisation of Dutch society and although not officially, the Dutch communist movement was in many ways a pillar like the Catholic, Protestant, social democratic and liberal pillars, but as noted before without any schools and after 1964, without a union. There was not much traffic between these pillars. Like in communist homes, Protestantism, Catholicism, democratic socialism and liberalism were hereditary affairs. Until the 1970s, pillars were static and catered to people's needs from the cradle to the grave, communism was no exception. British society was less static and there was more interaction between people from different political or religious persuasions, for example within the unions and councils.

I argue that the pillarisation of Dutch society made it, on the one hand, more likely that communists in the Netherlands experienced a higher degree of isolation than their British counterparts. On the other hand it meant that compared to the British, Dutch communists had to establish their own cultural umbrella organizations because like social democrats they could not or would not join Catholic organizations. Therefore the Dutch communist movement was extended even when the member figures dropped under influence of the Cold War. The situation was quite different in Britain; communists were more likely to associate with social democrats or religious groups. Nor were British communist excluded from cultural organizations like Dutch communists.⁴⁷¹ Another plausible explanation for the fact communism was a hereditary affair in the Netherlands was that Dutch respondents could join a communist club as young as eight. The discontinuation of the Young Comrades League in the 1930s meant that British respondents had to wait until they turned 14 before they could enter the first level of party structure (YCL). Once in a communist youth organisation it was a natural step to join the party without this being a conscious decision. The majority of respondents who joined a communist youth organization, joined the party when they turned 18, but again there were

⁴⁷¹ A good example of the communist membership of a non-communist organizations is the Woodcraft Folk. Especially after the discontinuation of the Young Comrades League, many young communist joined the Woodcraft Folk.

significantly less British respondents who joined the YCL⁴⁷², which resulted in a smaller number of respondents who joined the CPGB.

Dutch respondents, and to a lesser extent British respondents followed in their parents footsteps. They grew into their political role because family life and politics were intertwined. Sometimes children felt pressurized, by their parents and by events, to join the party which will be discussed in chapter three *WWII and the year 1956; impact and aftermath*. In this chapter I argue that the role the CPN played in the resistance in general and their parents' war trauma in particular, together with a strong tradition of anti-communism which was most visible in 1956, motivated Dutch respondents to be politically active, a motivation which was absent in Britain. Together, these five circumstances, i.e. a powerful and homegrown Marxist tradition, pillarisation of society, the existence of cultural organizations for different age groups, the role Dutch communists played in the resistance and a strong tradition of anti-communism can be seen as important explanations as to why there were relatively many 'cradle communists' in the Netherlands.

These circumstances were absent in Britain, where communism was considered by many to be a foreign ideology and the CPGB was founded relatively late. British communists fraternized with non-communists and were accepted in non-communist organizations and because the British communist movement didn't make the same huge sacrifices in WWII, individual communists didn't feel morally obligated to join or stay in the CPGB. Therefore what British respondents inherited, as Morgan, Cohen and Flinn observed, was a 'looser package of values and political practices'⁴⁷³ and not a party affiliation, like the Dutch respondents.

⁴⁷² Subsequently the YCL was very small in many places; most branches found it difficult to maintain a separate YCL so youth were allowed to join adult meetings.

⁴⁷³ K. Morgan *et al*, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991*, p. 261.

Chapter Three

WWII & The Year 1956 - Impact and Aftermath

Chapter one and chapter two discussed the impact of WWII and the events of the year 1956 on the history of communist organisations. Although huge sacrifices were made by communists, the period 1941-1948 was the movement's zenith, whilst the combination of Khrushchev's revelations regarding Stalin in his 'secret speech' and the Soviet invasion of Hungary marked its nadir. This chapter investigates how these important events affected the respondents' childhood. Because WWII and the events of 1956, in particular the aftermath of the invasion of Hungary, were more traumatic for Dutch communists than for British communists, the focus of this chapter will primarily be on the experiences of the Dutch respondents, with parallels drawn between the Dutch and British situation wherever possible.

WW II

Like other communist children in postwar Holland, the Dutch respondents grew up with the stories of the communist resistance and the liberation of occupied countries by the Red Army. As described in chapter one, within three years after the war communist resistance fighters went from heroic citizens to the fifth column. Dutch communists found themselves completely isolated and one of their survival mechanisms in these difficult times was reminding each other about the movement's heroic past. As one can imagine, these recollections or references to the war had an almost soothing and comforting effect. They gave strength and hope and in times of doubt communists were reassured that they were on the right side by these stories. They were also reassured that communism was worth fighting for even though times had changed so drastically. Resistance fighters, brave men and women who sacrificed their lives, were considered role models:

I felt left out, all the time. I experienced hostility. I remember that one day I came home really upset and crying my eyes out, because I was called a dirty communist. That is a horrible feeling for child. I was born in 1943, I was between 7 and 10 when this happened. It was one of the only times my mother was really nice to me. She took me on her lap and pointed at a picture of Hannie Schaft on

the sideboard. She said 'You should be proud of that, because you are part of what she stood for.
(Loes Narings)

Hannie Schaft was a law student who became active in the armed communist resistance and was executed in the dunes near Overveen three weeks before the liberation. She was reburied on the Honorary Cemetery of the Resistance in November 1945 in the presence of Queen Wilhelmina. She received posthumous decorations from the Queen and General Eisenhower, but under influence of the Cold War the government decided to close the cemetery to prevent communist organisations to commemorate her heroism. Non-communist ex-resistance fighters were irritated that Schaft had become a symbol of the communist contribution to the anti-fascist resistance and finally banned the commemoration all together. It even came to a clash with the police in 1951 when communist youth groups tried to commemorate Schaft where she was shot in the dunes. Schaft was a victim of the Cold war; she had sacrificed her life for her country and was degraded from national heroin into controversial communist.⁴⁷⁴ The respondents' stories suggest that women were just as active in the resistance as men. Secondary literature and other (auto) biographical sources confirm this; the examples of heroic female resistance fighters, like Hannie Schaft, are plentiful:

My mum was a courier for 'Witte Ko'.⁴⁷⁵ She transported munitions and weapons and was also involved in the sabotage of railroad lines. She was a brave human being. After the war she was decorated by Prince Bernard for her war efforts. (Henk Hulst)

War time memories had a different place within the home. When it came to personal war experiences parents were often silent. Whenever this was the case children were aware that something terrible had happened, but they could only guess about how and why. The following story illustrates this uncertainty. Dunya Breur was born in 1942 and only four and a half months old when she and her parents were arrested by the Nazis. Her parents, both communists, had been very active in the armed resistance. Her father was executed in February 1943 and her mother was deported to Ravensbrück, after spending seven months

⁴⁷⁴ T. Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden*, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷⁵ Witte Ko was a pseudonym for Jan Brasser, who was a famous Dutch resistance fighter. Jan Brasser is Anja Brassers' father.

in prison together with her daughter. Dunya was not deported; her grandparents picked her up just before her first birthday. Her mother survived. Dunya recalls from her youth:

Growing up, I constantly encountered a 'wall of silence', 'It does not concern you' was often said to me; there was so much pain. I only experienced the consequences of my mother's ordeal without knowing what had happened to her. And every now and then, I found a tiny piece of the jigsaw of my past, of everything what happened before I was born. But these pieces often did not fit: what I⁴⁷⁶ heard and read did not match up with what I saw and sensed.

Not knowing had just as much of an impact on these children as knowing what had happened. Parents only shared the minimum amount of information with their children, like their stay in a concentration camp or the death of their father, auntie or uncle. 16 out of 21 Dutch respondents have one or two parents who were active in the resistance, many of whom were arrested and deported. Some of these parents had lost their parents, sisters or brothers. Some parents had met each other in a concentration camp:

My mum joined the resistance and distributed, among other things, the underground *Waarheid*. I am not sure what she did exactly; we didn't talk much about the war, it was always a difficult subject. I do know both my parents were deported and spent time in a concentration camp. That's where they met and fell in love. My dad was further deported from Vught to Dachau and my mother spent two years in several German prisons. After the war they met again. I never asked them about their experiences; it wasn't a taboo, but I knew my questions would bring back painful memories. (Els Wagenaar)

Other parents named their child after a loved one who was killed fighting against fascism and for socialism. Joop's parents were both active in the resistance. During the war Joop's father formed a resistance group, together with two other men, which was quite influential in *Amsterdam-Noord*. Joop's grandfather made all the drawings for the underground newspaper *De Waarheid*, which his mother distributed:

My parents were never arrested, but my dad's oldest brother (my dad convinced him to become a CP member in the 1930s) was not as lucky; he was arrested in September 1941 because he was involved

⁴⁷⁶ D. Breur, *Een Verborgene Herinnering*, p. 7.

in the organisation of the February Strike. He was executed in 1942. My dad has always felt responsible for his death. It had a massive impact on my father's further life; he had told his brother to go into hiding, but my uncle didn't listen. I was born a couple of months after his death and I was named after him, which was remarkable because my parents had agreed not to name any children after relatives. (Joop Ijlsberg)

Sally Klomp was named after Sally de Groot who was the daughter of (Jewish) CPN leader Paul de Groot. Sally Klomp's father befriended the De Groot family before the war; both Paul's wife Rosa and his daughter Sally were deported to Auschwitz. They never returned. Just like Dunya Breur, the majority of the respondents remember how difficult it was to approach the subject 'war' and 'concentration camp', although there are two exceptions of respondents whose parents were very open and honest about their war experiences. Els felt it was inappropriate to talk about the war, because she knew it would bring back painful memories. Jan was under the impression that not talking about war experiences was typical for 'real resistance fighters'. Although unaware, Jan, who was only a toddler at the time, was involved in the resistance himself:

My father was in the second line of the February Strike in Amsterdam-Noord. He did other things as well, but he never spoke about the war and the resistance. The few things I know, I was told by his old comrades. Real resistance fighters didn't talk about their experiences. What I gather, he played a big role though. He was part of the armed resistance. I am an only child, and my parents kept me small; they walked me around in a pram until I was 4, because in the pram I was lying on top of a pile of communist newspapers, which made it easier and safer to distribute them. (Jan Lensen)

Jan's statement that 'real resistance fighters didn't talk about their experiences' is very telling and is illustrative of a more general attitude, that wasn't only shared by fellow communist resistance fighters but also by non-communist resistance fighters. In an illuminating documentary on children of resistance fighters, three people - Janna de Vries, Wil Bender and Gerard Rozemeyer - whose parents were active in the resistance, talk about their childhood. All three were recently receiving treatment for war trauma in the treatment centre *Centrum 1945* which opened in 1971. Wil Bender's parents were in the communist resistance, but Gerard Rozemeyer's father and Janna de Vries' parents were active in the non-communist resistance. Despite this, they have very similar recollections of growing up

in the shadow of WWII. Wil's father died in Bergen Belsen, Gerard's father who was a policeman died in Buchenwald, whilst Janna's parents survived the war without being arrested. Just like my respondents, they grew up with the aforementioned silence and they were instructed to 'put a brave face on'. Like Carla van Buuren, whose mother prepared her for a third world war, Wil, Janna and Gerard grew up with a profound distrust of people and mankind in general. They were brought up with the notion that they always had to be on their guard. This feeling of not being able to trust anyone is shared by quite a few Dutch respondents. People, who were deported to the camps, were often betrayed by those they had trusted. Gerard's father, Johannes Rozenmeijer, worked as officer for the police force in Leiden. He refused to sign a document which stated he wasn't Jewish which resulted in degradation to a lower position within the force. Subsequently his colleagues found out that he had warned the director of the Jewish orphanage in Amsterdam about a plan to deport all the children. They reported Johannes, who was then arrested by the SA and deported to Buchenwald where he died. This betrayal caused Gerard and his mother never to trust anyone again besides their immediate family.⁴⁷⁷ Johannes didn't come from a communist background, but many Dutch respondents indicated that their parents too instructed them to be very cautious.

This lack of trust amongst communists is considerably less visible in Britain; British communists never experienced betrayal the way their Dutch contemporaries did; trusting the wrong people was never paid for with one's life. In the Netherlands, this lack of trust was reinforced under influence of the Cold War; communists saw a continuation between WWII and the Cold War; no one could be trusted and communists and their children often lived by the motto 'keep yourself to yourself'; children were raised with the notion that they should not talk about certain (political) things to strangers (i.e. non-communists). Although less pronounced, this lack of trust which resulted in certain secrecy was also present in Britain:

I sensed it was better to keep quiet about being communist. I grew up with the notion that you had to be very careful who to tell about us being communist even among our left wing friends. Some of them were very anxious to be accused of being communist. (Dorothy Sheridan)

⁴⁷⁷ Documentary 'Kinderen van Verzetsstrijders'; Netwerk, April 24, 2005. Also available on <http://www.netwerk.tv/node/2930>.

Although communists (and non-communists) generally preferred not to talk about the war to their children whilst they were growing up; six decades after the war some parents are now slowly opening up. Mario's father had only started to talk about his experiences during the war a week before the interview in 2002. Growing up, Mario knew that his Jewish mother and his non-Jewish father who were both active in the communist resistance, had each lost two sisters. He never knew what happened until his father told him the following story. In Mario's words:

It was on his (Mario's father) birthday, he was home in Hoogeveen with his family. My father and grandfather were outside of the house when the SS raided the house and they fled together. The SS officers interrogated and tortured my aunties. One of them was so severely wounded that she died on the spot, the other lost her mind and committed suicide not long after. They had revealed nothing, there was a code in the war; you know someone is active in the resistance and that person knows you are in the resistance too but you don't know anything about what the other person does or have done in the past. I know now that my father redistributed food coupons and helped people to go into hiding. (Mario Blokzijl)

Unlike his father Mario's mother still finds it hard to talk about the war. She was in hiding in *Betondorp*, a neighbourhood in the east of Amsterdam. Her daughter, Mario's sister, recalls a trip she made with her mother in 2001:

My mother told me once she was in hiding in *Betondorp*. I asked her if she wanted to go back to the house where she lived during the war, because she hadn't been back since. Last year we went to *Betondorp* together and I decided to take both my parents to the islands (north of Amsterdam) as well, because they had never been there before. We made it into a pleasant day out. I took them to see other places as well, because I didn't want to make our trip to *Betondorp* too emotionally charged. I didn't want them to feel like it was a mission. The day my mum called me and asked me to take her there, was the day she was ready to face her past. (Ariane Blokzijl)

When Mario was asked the question if he joined any communist organizations like his parents who were members of the CPN, he answered:

It was self-evident I joined the communist youth organisation and later the communist party. There was a sort of moral pressure to join, you knew in your heart it was the right thing to do, that it was important to organize yourself and to fight for the good cause. (Mario Blokzijl)

Other respondents too felt morally obliged to join the party, partly because of the fact so many communists had died fighting for socialism. This sentiment was much more felt in countries that were occupied by the Nazis, like the Netherlands, than in countries that were not, like Britain. Reminding each other of the war and the role of the resistance moved children to join and made adults stay in the party. Traumatic war experiences strengthened peoples' faith in the communist ideology and the idea of a socialist utopia:

My mum met my stepdad in the last year of the war; my mum had helped people escape out of Amsterdam with fake documents. My stepfather's sister worked for the *Joodsche Raad* and had made sure his name disappeared from the list. He got the name Henk Karelse born in Soerabaja. He never told us, but I found out later that his mother had died in a concentration camp. The war had made him an uncompromising communist. He believed everything that came out of Russia and longed for a faith, the idea that after Nazism, after the Holocaust, there was a just society. The SU was heaven on earth. (Peter de Leeuwe)

Many communists who came back from the concentration camps suffered not only physically, but often also mentally. People weren't sure if their loved ones had survived the camps or not. The wait for news, good or bad, was unbearable:

My mother's first husband, Henk Prins, was active in the resistance and was executed. She was arrested herself and deported to a camp. My father (mother's second husband) was involved in the February Strike; he was arrested and deported to a concentration camp as well. My mum came out of the war filled with sorrow. She knew her husband was shot, but she didn't get the proof of his death until 1947. For two whole years she lived with the idea that maybe he was still alive. (Sally Klomp)

Kees who was born during the war has clear memories of the first time he saw his father. His father was arrested after the February strike (end of April 1941); the Germans thought he was part of the communist party leadership and his father and a few other people were transported to Germany and ended up in prison. They were sentenced based on the manifesto *Staakt Staakt Staakt* (Strike Strike Strike), which was a communist party

pamphlet written to encourage the citizens of Amsterdam to go on a general strike to protest against the razzias held by the Nazis in the Amsterdam Jewish neighbourhood. Kees thinks his father was lucky that the Germans thought he was part of the CP leadership, because he went to prison instead of a concentration camp. His father escaped from prison in early 1945 and came through the enemy lines in Zuid-Limburg. The south of the Netherlands was already liberated and the locals gave him so much food, he suffered health problems for the rest of his life.⁴⁷⁸ Kees remembers:

My first memory of him was in 1945, when he was standing in front of the door and the neighbours said to me; 'Kees that's your dad'. My parents never spoke about the war, my mother only told me a few things after my dad died. My mum was part of the group Goulooze in the war (she became a communist during the war) I remember I found a receiver in one of the rooms in our house, my uncle and mother were terrified and told me I was not allowed to talk to anyone about this. My father became ill in the end of the 1960s; Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome. He quit his job as a plumber in 1969 and he moved into a big chicken barn in Ermelo (countryside). He lived in this barn with other communists who wanted to escape Amsterdam for similar reasons. My father became really paranoid and died not much later. (Kees Gnirrep)

Kees' father was officially diagnosed with Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome⁴⁷⁹, but many other communists suffered in silence. In her book *Erkenning. Van oorlogstrauma naar klaagcultuur* Jolande Withuis investigates in what way people's cultural and political background can influence potentially traumatic experiences and how this relates to their responses to violence and chances of survival. She argues that the majority of communist camp survivors, unlike other people persecuted by the Nazis, did not suffer from survivors' guilt, because their political analyses pointed to the real culprits. Fascism was an excrescence of capitalism. Communists did not consider themselves victims and their

⁴⁷⁸ This is also known as 'Refeeding syndrome'.

⁴⁷⁹ In the late 1950s and early 1960s scientists started to study of the long term effects of trauma in survivors of the Holocaust and other war related trauma's. The term concentration camp syndrome was coined in the early 1960s. People who are diagnosed with Concentration Camp Syndrome suffer from extreme anxiety and hyper-vigilance along with various sleep disturbances, like night terrors and nightmares, but also depression and feelings of guilt. One of the first psychologists who did research on this subject was L. Eitinger who published 'Camp survivors in Norway and Israel' in 1964.

conviction helped them to survive; it ‘dissolved feelings of guilt, hatred, powerlessness and fear’. This is why, according to Withuis, depression was not a ‘communist disease’.⁴⁸⁰ It is possible that this idea of communism as a survival strategy was put forward by the party and the NVB as a collective way to deal with war traumata, but the respondents’ testimonies build a different picture of what happened in the privacy of the home. Joop’s father who was described by other respondents as a very active and reliable communist, felt guilty about his brothers’ death. Jan Willem Stutje, author of the Paul de Groot biography describes how De Groot battled with survivors’ guilt from the moment his wife and daughter were arrested in 1943 until he died in 1986.⁴⁸¹ Sally Klomp’s mum was ‘filled with sorrow’ and Kees’ father never recovered from his emotional and physical injuries; he died in Dermal in a rehabilitation center in the beginning of the 1970s. There are many other cases in which parents or other relatives, who, contrary to what Withuis claims, suffered mentally from war trauma. The same conclusion can be drawn from the interviews with the children of resistance fighters in the aforementioned documentary; communist and non-communist war victims suffered equally.⁴⁸²

Carla’s mother, who had given birth to Carla’s oldest sister in 1940, was very active in the resistance. Her husband was in hiding because he was a wanted communist and her father, also a communist, was arrested and deported, but none of this stopped her doing what she thought was the right thing. Carla remembers:

My mum was damaged after the war; she prepared us for a Third World War. She always said; ‘Well when you’ve survived the war nothing else makes sense, there is nothing afterwards’. (Carla van Buuren)

Others, like Mario’s auntie, were so damaged that they didn’t see another way out than suicide:

⁴⁸⁰ J. Withuis, *Erkenning. Van Oorlogstrauma naar Klaagcultuur*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2002, pp. 166-68.

⁴⁸¹ J. Stutje, *De Man Die de Weg Wees*, passim.

⁴⁸² Documentary ‘Kinderen van Verzetsstrijders’, Netwerk, April 24, 2005.

One of my mother's brothers died in a concentration camp, another came back mentally broken and committed suicide after the war. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

Communists did indeed explain WWII from a Marxist point of view and sometimes, especially during the war, communists drew comfort from their political conviction. Fascism was above all seen as a political evil and considered the complete opposite of communism. The international communist fight against fascism predated the WWII and continued until the collapse of communism in 1991. Dutch communists saw the fight against the Nazi occupiers and their role in the resistance as part of the greater fight against fascism, which was ultimately part of the fight against capitalism. Because of their ideology, perhaps more so than their non-communists allies, communists had a strong sense of fighting for the good cause and self sacrifice, but this didn't mean the battle was fought without any doubts or fears. Withuis claims that communists could be characterized by the following traits; assertiveness, political awareness, emotional self control, discipline and a sense of political superiority. Official party literature underpins these traits, but the respondents' testimonies suggest that their parents, although sometimes rigid, were often not unlike other people who tried to cope with war trauma. They put on a brave face to the outside world and even to fellow communists, but within the home the impact of the traumatic experiences was visible and children were very much aware of their parents' suffering, even when their parents weren't vocal about their experiences. A few respondents remember how they tried to compensate for the grief suffered by their parents.

I always wanted to be 'a ray of sunshine' in our house; I wanted to improve my parents' life. I could have moved out when I started university, but I didn't want to abandon my parents (because of what they been through in the war). (Els Wagenaar).

Unlike my sister (who was born in 1940) I didn't experience the war years. I felt I had to make things pleasant, enjoyable. I had to be a 'cheerful' and 'happy' child. That's why I 'happily' joined my mother every time when she had to collect party membership fees. (Carla van Buuren)

The experiences of communist concentration camp survivors must be placed within the larger context of the post-war attitude towards war trauma. The period 1945-1960 was characterized by a general silence about the war. The Dutch were no exception, people all

over former occupied Europe felt uncomfortable talking about the camps and returning survivors, political, religious and Jewish prisoners all felt disappointed and unsatisfied with the lack of support. As Withuis points out, it was illustrative that the Dutch dictionary in these years defined the word 'trauma' as 'a physical injury' and not as an 'emotional shock following a stressful event'.⁴⁸³ These attitudes started to change when the term Concentration Camp Survivor Syndrome was coined in the 1960s. It wasn't until the 1980s that an interest in 'second generation war victims' was developed.⁴⁸⁴

The sacrifices made by communists during the war and the way these efforts were marginalized under influence of the Cold War left a lasting stamp on the post-war history of the communists movements in these countries. When analyzing the effects of the war on communists lives, in particular the impact on their children, it becomes clear that the experiences within the home were fundamentally different from how people behaved outside of the home. This confirms the idea that there was a more general contrast between communists' public and private life, the theory and the actual practice. It is also clear that the role the CPN played in the resistance in general and their parents' war traumata in specific, motivated Dutch respondents to be politically active, a motivation which was absent in England.

'1956'

As discussed in chapter one and two, a violent battle between communists and non-communists occurred in the Netherlands, the week following the Soviet invasion of Hungary on 24 October 1956. Dutch public opinion, in line with the Dutch government which took a very firm standpoint condemning the Soviet Union, was outraged. All over the country communists defended CP buildings against angry mobs who were attacking anything remotely communist. The majority of respondents can remember clearly how their fathers left the house to join fellow communists in their attempt to protect party buildings and houses of prominent communists. The described feeling was a mixture of fear and excitement:

⁴⁸³ J. Withuis, *Erkenning. Van Oorlogstrauma naar Klaagcultuur*, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁴ See: S. Schwartz *et al*, 'Nongenetic Familial Transmission of Psychiatric Disorders? Evidence from Children of Holocaust Survivors', in: *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 35. no 4, December 1994.

We lived close to Paul de Groot. I had a big sword hanging on the wall above my bed; when the violence began, my dad grabbed the sword and took it to the house of Paul de Groot to defend it. (Kees Gnirrep)

I remember it was a very exciting time in 1956. But at a distance. Because we were at home where it was safe in Den Haag. Jules (stepfather) went to Amsterdam (most of the violence took place in Amsterdam) to help. Not that there were no dangers in our city. I was walking on the street not far from the Russian Embassy and all of a sudden I was absorbed by a huge mass of people shouting and protesting against the Soviet invasion of Hungary. It was scary, terrifying and fascinating at the same time. I was confused, I didn't tell anything to my parents about this, I felt I was a traitor. (Peter de Leeuwe)

The anger was not only aimed at party buildings and other communist property, people were in danger too. Even young sons and daughters of communists feared for their lives:

We lived behind the communist party building on the Heemraadssingel in Rotterdam. A lot of party members were inside the building to defend it from the masses. My dad was amongst them. My mum had forbidden me to go to the Heemraadssingel, because there were thousands of people outside of the CP building. My school was in a side street of the Heemraadssingel and of course, I did go and had a look during my lunch break. There were lots of people with bricks in their hands; the building was being pelted with rocks. All of a sudden I heard someone shout: 'there is that commie scum'. That was the only time I was scared; grown ups with bricks in there hands were running after me and I was only 11 years old. Other adults said; 'it isn't her fault, leave the child alone'. I told the whole story when I came home. The party arranged for us to go into hiding. It was too dangerous. If people would find out we lived around the corner from the CPN building, we wouldn't be safe in our house anymore. We stayed with my grandparents for a few nights. I can still see my dad stand there on the stairs, with a huge baseball bat. It was scary, but it didn't leave a lasting fear though. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

Ans wasn't the only respondent whose family had to go into hiding:

The most negative thing I ever experienced was the siege of the Felix building in 1956. We had to go into hiding for a week; we stayed with less known communists. Fortunately nothing happened, but it sure left a massive impression on me. (Alex Geelhoed)

We had to go into hiding in 1956. We fled to my grandmother's, so to speak. I remember we were on our way to my grandmother's; I was sitting on the back of my dad's bicycle and I put my foot in his wheel. My dad fell and had a concussion. We celebrated *Sinterklaas* in the dark that year. We got protection from the party because my dad was a well known parliamentary reporter for *De Waarheid*. (Mario Blokzijl)

The violence stopped as abruptly as it had started; the respondents' lives went back to normal. Some of the children were kept home from school by their parents during the Soviet invasion or the 'Hungarian crisis', a term favoured by communists; not everyone experienced a warm welcome when they returned communist children had to justify the Soviet actions:

People came up to me at school during the Hungarian crisis; pupils and teachers wanted an explanation. Physically I wasn't strong, but I could defend myself with words. Russia was holy for us and because Hungary was fascist in the war, we initially supported the Soviet invasion thinking the old fascists were trying to get rid of communists. (Joop Ijsberg)

Then there was the situation in Hungary. I couldn't go to school for a week, because there was too much aggression. A teacher came round to our house to see whether I was ill. After a week I decided it was time to go back; it wasn't nice, but eventually things went back to normal. (Henk Hulst)

Although it didn't come to an eruption of violence in Britain; respondents do remember the negative implications of the 1956 Soviet invasion. In the first two weeks of November demonstrations against the Soviet invasion were held in London and petitions were presented. Students demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy on 9 November and broke a number of windows of the CPGB building in King Street.⁴⁸⁵

Besides a few minor altercations it is clear that compared to the extreme responds of the Dutch government and Dutch public opinion, the British reaction to the Soviet invasion was relatively mild. Many British communists left the party over Hungary; others decided after long deliberations with fellow members and or their partners to stay. Some respondents remember that their parents started to express doubts after the events of 1956:

⁴⁸⁵ Sir J. Cable, 'Britain and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', in *International Relations*, 1988, 9, pp. 317-28.

I went to work for Unilever and it was the time of the Hungarian uprising. I was working at the Walls sausage factory in Acton and we had a huge number of Hungarian refugees coming to us for work; it was really interesting because these people were journalists and doctors but there were also ex-cons and factory workers. All social classes were turning up at Walls looking for work (I had never seen so many rotten teeth in my life) It was around this time that my father started to get a little wobbly about the whole Soviet Union. (Jacky Lythell)

Jacky, who was 22 in 1956, had already left home and was studying to be a nurse. She was exposed to a very different climate and became more critical of communism; she used to question her father and agreed with him about redistribution and social justice but also told him that she wasn't sure about the Soviet Union. Her father, in spite of his 'wobble', stayed loyal to the Soviet Union which he saw as an utopia with all its collective farms but also its emphasis on arts and culture. Jacky's father didn't leave the party but people who did were often ostracized by the members of the same communist family they had once belonged to. Friendships were ended and children were instructed to ignore certain people and were not longer allowed to play with their children:

I remember in 1956 people who had been friends and comrades left suddenly; they were betrayers. Our doctor who was very active in the Medical Association left the CP, joined the Labour Party and became a councilor. He remained our family doctor, but I know my mother was always very critical of him for leaving the party. But she recognized she should not be. (Dave Cope)

I have very much a sense of the party as an extended family, which was rocked by 1956 when we suddenly stopped seeing the people I thought were our friends, and I didn't understand why. We used to regularly go to Halifax to see the Thompsons and they left in 1956. We stopped seeing them. I didn't realize that had happened. I just remember saying, 'Why don't we ever see the Thompsons any more?' Their son Mark Thompson was the same age as me and we used to play together.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Martin Kettle in: P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 179.

Bob Potter⁴⁸⁷, who was a communist activist but left in the party in 1956, remembers the impact of the Hungarian revolution on the CPGB but also the way it affected his friendships with fellow comrades:

A couple of months afterwards, the Hungarian revolution took over the streets of Budapest – the workers councils rose against the tyrants. Throughout the world the party was tearing itself apart. People who had been comrades for years, now refused to speak to me. I was experiencing, first hand, what happens when one leaves the company of the “true believers”. (Bob Potter)

The official split within the Dutch Communist Party took place in 1958, although a few communists left the party immediately after the events of 1956. Leaving the party was a bigger step for Dutch communists than it was for British communists, because in Dutch society communists were much more socially isolated. This social isolation was bearable within the safety and warmth of the ‘communist family’. Leaving the ‘family’ had a very negative impact especially on the children. For British communists who left the party in 1956 it was a natural step to join the Labour Party:

My parents were party members until Hungary; we believed the lies until then. It was like a religion and then the bubble burst. My parents were very disappointed. I remember some antagonism within their group of friends. Some left and others stayed. I was at university at the time, so I wasn’t very much aware of the impact of 1956 on my parents. My parents became members of the Labour Party (they were always sort of hovering; my father was an agent for the Labour Party when he was already a CPGB member). (Heather Chapman)

On the contrary, the majority of Dutch communists who left the CPN in 1958 didn’t join a more mainstream party like their British contemporaries but they joined *De Bruggroep* which was a small communist group. Consequently Dutch respondents whose parents left the party felt not only ostracized and discriminated by non-communists (because their parents were still considered communist), but also by the communist community they were once part of:

⁴⁸⁷ Bob Potter, who is not a ‘child of the red flag’, left the CPGB in August 1956 because he did not want to spy on fellow CP members who were accused of being Trotskyists. People like Bob who left the Party in 1956 were considered to belong to the same ‘camp’ and were all treated the same by people who remained party members.

My parents left the party in 1958 and joined *De Bruggroup*. The political difference were very notable in our family. I didn't agree with my parents, I physically and emotionally removed myself from them through the *Uilenspiegelclub*. I wasn't allowed to talk to some people anymore. My parents instructed me who I could and couldn't greet in the street. You can't do that to a 12 year old.
(Carla van Buuren)

Margreet Schrevel notes that although the eruption of anti-communism was limited in time, the distrust and aversion felt towards communists existed until the 1960s.⁴⁸⁸ In the following two chapters we will see that because of the severity of this outbreak of anti-communism in the Netherlands, Dutch communists felt, more so than their British contemporaries, that they had to over-act; they had to prove they were very 'normal' and 'nice' people.

Dutch respondents grew up with the notion that communists played a decisive role in the fight against Fascism. After the war the CPN, like CPs in many other countries, emerged as a respectable party with 10 percent of the vote in the 1946 general elections. Communists who had risked their life during the war were considered heroes and praised for their bravery in the immediate post war period. With the dawning of the Cold war this praise changed into hatred almost overnight. Whilst the Dutch people tried to move away from the war years, rebuild their country and restore the economy; communists would seize any opportunity to remind people of the atrocities. It often fell on deaf ears. The communist role in the resistance became the subject of a political battle between communists and non-communists. The Cold War was in many ways a 'real' war complete with stereotypes of the enemy, fear of collaboration and treachery; it caused the communist and non-communist ex-resistance fighters who had shared so much during the war, to disintegrate into two camps.⁴⁸⁹ As became so painfully clear in the weeks after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Dutch communists were held responsible for the atrocities committed by the Soviet Union. Under influence of the Cold War, communists who had survived concentration camps and lost friends and family members in the fight against fascism, were expelled from commemoration initiatives, concentration camp committees and other ex-political

⁴⁸⁸ M. Schrevel, 'Rode luiers, Hollands fabriek', p. 341.

⁴⁸⁹ J. Withuis, *Na het Kamp, Vriendschap en Politieke Strijd*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2005, p. 18.

prisoners' organizations.⁴⁹⁰ They were considered enemies of the resistance, which placed them on the same footing as SS-ers and members of the NSB. This was obviously incredibly painful for the people subject to this expulsion.⁴⁹¹ Heroes became enemies; communists went from respected citizens to the fifth column.

In her book *Na het Kamp, vriendschap en politieke strijd*, Withuis points out that in the early fifties many communists, in retrospect, began to interpret WWII not as a war against a foreign occupier, but as a war against communism, and were convinced that the Cold War was only a continuation of WWII. She notes:

At the height of the Cold War Dutch society only knew two parties; communists and the others. Communists were outside of normality, their good behaviour and huge sacrifices seemed to have been for nothing and mostly forgotten already. Feeling disappointed, insulted and fearful, these emotions soon changed into a feeling being hardened by the situation. Because who would not harden, would not last and would disappear. It was war yet again and they (communists) were illegal again.⁴⁹²

The change in the international political climate played a big part. There was a new enemy and the old one was gradually becoming an ally. Communists concluded that because of this new war, they were not allowed to commemorate the death of their heroes and martyrs. To a certain extent these suspicions were confirmed by the way society was questioning communists' war time efforts and those of the Red Army, whilst at the same time the relationship with West-Germany was being rebuilt.

Conclusion

One can only imagine how difficult it must have been for Dutch communists' children to comprehend how their parents, who fought in the resistance and survived concentration

⁴⁹⁰ According to Pieter Lagrou in *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, the situation in the Netherlands is exceptional when it comes to the way communists were ostracized from commemorative initiatives. In his book he describes the construction of patriotic memories in Western Europe during the period of national recovery after the Second World War. He compares France, Belgium and the Netherlands in the period 1945-1965 and notes that whereas in France and Belgium veterans' movements were organised from the bottom up and served a civil rather than a political purpose, the Dutch government in a bid to create national consensus, monopolized national memory and removed disruptive issues of legacy of the war.

⁴⁹¹ J. Withuis, *Na het Kamp, Vriendschap en Politieke Strijd*, p. 146.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

camps, went from national heroes to enemies of the state within a decade. The sheer contrast was enormous. The sacrifices made by communists during the war and the way these efforts were marginalized under influence of the Cold War left a lasting stamp on the post war history of the communist movement in general and on the lives of the Dutch respondents in particular. Although less pronounced, British communist children also noticed this contrast. Looking back on the period 1941-1945 Brian Pollitt, son of CP general secretary Harry Pollitt, recalls that ‘for a number of years, outside hostility for our parents’ politics was muted’ and that “Cinema newsreels then spoke of ‘our Soviet allies’, and not as later during the Cold War, of the ‘Red Menace’”.⁴⁹³ British respondents also grew up with the notion that communists in general and the Red Army in particular were the heroes of WWII, but Britain was not invaded and the fight against fascism was limited to fighting home grown fascists like Mosley and his *Blackshirts*. British society did respect the Soviet army for the part it played in the liberation of occupied Europe, but didn’t consider British communists to be heroes, like their Dutch contemporaries. This combined with the lack of physical abuse and other forms of violence against British communists in 1956, resulted in an altogether less dramatic contrast between the period 1941-1948 and the peak of the Cold War. This is not to say British respondents weren’t confused about their parents’ position within society or that they weren’t subject to victimization. But as Morgan, Cohen & Flinn observed, within an international perspective and particularly compared to the Netherlands, there was a relative mildness in this treatment.⁴⁹⁴ This chapter has also shown that the occupation of the Netherlands and the betrayal of communists by ‘friends’ and colleagues during the war years, contributed to a pervasive feeling of ‘lack of trust’. More so than British respondents, Dutch respondents grew up with the notion that they couldn’t trust anyone outside the (communist) family which reinforced the feeling of social isolation and created problems around intimacy and friendship.

⁴⁹³ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 105.

⁴⁹⁴ K. Morgan *et al*, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991*, p. 9.

Chapter Four

Private Spheres - Communist Home Life

This chapter, *Private spheres*, discusses communist home life and focuses on the respondents' political and cultural upbringing. It explores the more practical ways in which family time was structured, before discussing prescription and aspiration. Questions central to this chapter are; 'Were communist parents inspired by Soviet ideology in the upbringing of their children?' 'What kind of parents did CP members want to be?' and 'Were these aspirations similar or different from those of non-communist working class parents?' This chapter examines the theory and practice of a communist upbringing. I argue that there is a considerable contrast between the communist theory stressed by the party and the actual practice within the communist home. The party had a huge influence on the political aspects of communist lives, yet it had little influence on certain very private aspects of their lives, like the upbringing of their children. Parents themselves, not the party, decided which elements of the communist ideology they wanted to blend into the upbringing of their children. Furthermore the communist family as a whole is discussed and compared to non-communist working class families. Within this context I examine if the Soviet ideology influenced the basic structure of a communist family and in particular the role division between men and women.

Whereas Jolande Withuis, whose study is primarily based on the theory of a communist upbringing propagated by the party as well as the testimonies of (in my view) atypical Stalinist mothers and not as much the actual experiences of communist children, emphasizes how one sided and restricted a communist upbringing was, in this chapter I argue that it was very varied. Two different worlds came together within the communist home; the Soviet culture and communist ideology blended with the British and Dutch culture.

Politics at home

Politics had a central place within the communist home; children remember vividly the debates at the dinner table. Respondents learned to discuss politics and current affairs from an early age onwards. Although these discussions were sometimes heated and almost

always one-sided, both British and Dutch respondents characterize this particular aspect of their upbringing as positive and many emphasize they learned how to debate from their parents. Jill who was born in 1951 and grew up in London remembers:

The talk during dinner was always about politics. I can remember very clearly at the age of 12, sitting round the table having dinner with quite a few other people and Nelson Mandela had just been imprisoned; we were discussing “what are we going to do about it?”, “are we going to ban South African goods or are we going to buy them and then take them back explaining we did not mean to buy South -African goods?”. Every thing was always about politics. My father was quite dominant, I could discuss things more with my mum. If we would watch the news, he would criticize the commentary; he would always express the other side. That made our life very interesting; I mean I feel very privileged, because you see another side to things. You knew about politics. Sometimes it was a bit like “oh my god, stop being negative”, because everything was always a struggle (for other people) to move along, according to my dad. The working class struggle was always predominant in our house. So I think it was a very special childhood. We didn’t sit around the table talking about Eastenders. (Jill McLoughlin)

Mario, who was born in 1950 and grew up in Amsterdam, has similar recollections:

There were a lot of discussions in our house. There was always an opinion. Actually my dad was really ‘the opinion’ at home and I would think about the things he said. If I disagreed I would not tell him, because I would always lose the arguments. I didn’t have enough knowledge yet. From a young age onwards we were informed about international developments. What child talks with his parents about the effects of the Cuba crisis? But I lacked knowledge, so I used to adopt my dad’s views. (Mario Blokzijl)

These two quotations are very illustrative, they do not only reveal the importance of politics within the communist home, they also show that although the communist ideology preaches equality between men and women, in reality most respondents recall it was their father whose political opinion was dominant within the family. Generally mothers were concerned with the children’s well being. They often tried very hard to make sure their children did not stand out:

My dad only really came to life when he was talking about politics. He wasn't interested in anything else. My mother was also passionate but she balanced it with living in England, she wanted me to have trendy clothes and she wanted us to be normal. (Jill McLoughlin)

My father was a real politician, my mother had on the other hand a very normal view on life. She always tried to prevent us from getting into any trouble; she did not want our lives to be influenced by my father's political activities. (Alex Geelhoed)

In spite of Engels' work linking patriarchy to private property⁴⁹⁵, the majority of communist families were not that different from non-communist working class families when it comes to traditional role patterns, although there are quite a few examples of parents who successfully divided the household chores and whose children describe their relationship as very modern.

Many respondents remember there was a lot of talk about equality between the sexes without putting it into practice. Mothers generally looked after their children and the house, whilst fathers went out to work:

However modern my parents were in many senses they took very traditional roles in the household; my mother did all the shopping and cooking. She also made her own curtains and clothes. She did all of these things. That's not to say my father was a lazy sod!!! Not by any means. It was just the way it was. (Harriet Naden)

Joanna Bourke argues that in the first half of the 20th century, married working-class women were generally pleased to define themselves primarily as housewives, even though many continued to work casually or part-time. Communist mothers were no exception; like Harriet's mother, they too felt their identity was that of a mother and housekeeper.⁴⁹⁶ Within this context a fundamental difference occurs; unlike non-communist parents, communists raised their children with the notion that daughters could achieve the same as sons and were given equal opportunities:

⁴⁹⁵ F. Engels, *The origin of the family. Private property and the state*. (Chapter 1) Engels linked the subordination of women historically with the rise of private property and class society. Women's emancipation could only be achieved by the defeat of capitalism and not through the winning of bourgeois rights.

⁴⁹⁶ J. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity*, London: Routledge, 1996 p. 62-3.

My father told me that as a woman I could do whatever I wanted and I believe that. But in their household it was my mother who was doing all the chores whilst my father would sit in his chair discussing capitalism and disarmament etc. My brother and I had tasks to do, my brother was treated the same as me, we were given jobs to do, hoovering, washing up etc. Mum organised the roster, she did all the cooking, washing, shopping and cleaning. I can't remember my dad doing anything at all to be honest. My mother was very traditional and felt this was her role in the family. (Viv Mackay)

Communist mothers were often juggling political activities with their responsibilities as the mother and wife. The idea that communism was all about extra-parliamentary activity and just carrying a membership card and voting was considered insufficient. Members were expected to do a certain amount of political work and sustaining that level of political activity wasn't always feasible for mothers or working women; especially when their husbands were completely reluctant to do any household chores.⁴⁹⁷ The following letter, sent to *The Daily Worker* in 1947 emphasizes the difficulties women had to deal with:

You have some excellent articles in your paper but I have read none so far which describe the so-called communist who exploits his wife to the hilt. Most working class wives work in these days of high prices. I for one work from 8 till 6 and have to shop, wash, sew, clean and cook in my spare time. Today I am left laying the oilcloth while 'He' is out shouting 'Down with serfdom'.⁴⁹⁸

When comparing the British and the Dutch testimonies, it is notable that the level of political activity of Dutch mothers was much higher than that of their British counterparts. In Britain it was often the husband who recruited his wife to the party whereas in the Netherlands the majority of respondents' mothers were already card carrying members when they met their husbands. These women had themselves been raised communist. Many had been members of the CJB or the communist resistance where they first became politically active and many tried to continue doing so once they got married. This is not to say that Dutch women did not struggle to combine motherhood with party responsibilities:

⁴⁹⁷ T. Davis, "What kind of Woman is She?" Women and Communist Party Politics, 1941-1955', in *Feminism Culture and Politics*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982, p. 90.

⁴⁹⁸ *Daily Worker*, May 7, 1947.

It is important, looking back on your life, that you were part of the (communist) movement and hadn't spent all your time cleaning the windows or scrubbing the floors, but: that kitchen had to be clean. So it was really hard, because after doing all the things normal women do, you had to do all your political work.⁴⁹⁹

The position of women in the communist home, reflects the position of women within the communist party. In theory women were seen as equals, but in reality only a few women held high positions within the communist party. According to Elizabeth Wilson, the discrepancy between the Soviet ideal and the 'Western' reality was typical for the wider European communist movement:

The "woman's" point of view in Parliament was by and large a domestic point of view. The left was no better. By the 1950s communist parties all over Europe were emphasizing women's role as wife and mother rather than combating sexual discrimination and in this respect the British Communist Party was typical. Women were caught between the family and socialism; women's problems were the problems of capitalism.⁵⁰⁰

Sue Bruley shares Wilson's point of view and further elaborates on the CPGB's contradictory attitude toward women as members. She points out that there was huge support for the official Comintern line which propagated equality between men and women within communist parties, but at the same time 'there was an implicit acceptance of the traditional role of women in gender defined roles which effectively subordinated them to men, which is illustrated by the encouraging of women members to organize socials and first aid classes'.⁵⁰¹ Bruley adds that this contradiction 'between women as cadres and co-workers of male members versus women as servicing agents to their husbands, "the revolutionaries"' was to become a recurring theme in the development of the party'.⁵⁰² This attitude towards women and women's rights would change in the 1960s and 1970s; under

⁴⁹⁹ Mrs. Gelok interviewed by Jolande Withuis, August 1988 in: *Opoffering en Heroiek*, p. 283.

⁵⁰⁰ E. Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise. Women in Postwar Britain: 1945-1968*, London: Tavistock, 1980, p. 175.

⁵⁰¹ S. Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939*, London: Garland Publishing Inc 1986, p. 90.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

the influence of the cultural changes of the 1960s and the rise of feminism, the progressive theories the respondents grew up with were finally put into practice.

The respondents' experiences are in line with Bruley's findings; traditional role patterns prevailed within communist families. Nevertheless, the fact that men dominated dinner table conversations did not mean that women had nothing to say; women were certainly involved in these conversations and were far from silent. It is true communist women were less likely to be as politically active as their husbands, but unlike many non-communist working class women they certainly were involved in politics and their opinion was respected by their husbands. They knew what was going on in the world and took an interest in international affairs.

When trying to assess other differences between communist and non-communist working class families, the observations of respondents when visiting non-communist friends or relatives are very telling. Marja, who was born in 1948 and grew up in Rotterdam, started dating her husband when she was 18. His parents were social-democrats. She recalls being very surprised when she found out not everyone was used to discussing politics at home:

My husband was 18 when he first started to come to our house. He comes from a PvdA family. He didn't understand the discussions at the dinner table. He hated it, he thought we were fighting. I wasn't fighting though, that was called debating in my book. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

Besides exemplifying this culture of discussion which was present in communist homes, this quotation also discloses a certain moral superiority. Subconsciously respondents grew up with a sense they belonged to an elite who knew more than the wider working classes:

We lived in a special world, bohemian and communist. We thought we were special and different. I think we did feel superior, but not in a nasty way but an improving way; we weren't fascists!! We wanted to improve the world. (Heather Chapman)

When people ask me how it was, growing up in a communist family, I say; exciting, interesting. I was sometimes embarrassed, but I also thought we had good values, we stood for good things. We were better. (Greetje Zoutendijk)

We always had to be busy, never sit still. Work hard. We felt superior to other people. We were the champions of a different world. That's why we had to do things right. Now I think we were quite arrogant, but we didn't notice this back then. (Carla van Buuren)

This aspect of their upbringing is very much in accordance with the principals of Marxism. After all, communists were the people who would educate and lead the working class masses towards the revolution. And the majority of communists were indeed fundamentally different from the rest of the working class in many ways; they were often more educated and more cultured than non-communists:⁵⁰³

Communist party membership, like that of other working-class organizations, only more so, involved a process of cultural upgrading. It 'developed' its cadres in ways that separated them decisively from their fellows – with a distinct diction, a 'scientific' terminology and determination to be politically 'active'.⁵⁰⁴

The party and the home were not separated; respondents remember weekly or monthly political meetings in their homes; there were educational nights where fellow party members would read and discuss Marx and film evenings were also organised in respondents' homes. Sometimes this meant that respondents grew up with lots of different people around them, which they look back on as very exciting:

We had Marxist-Leninist schooling nights at home; there would be 35 to 40 people in our house listening to my stepfather teaching the philosophy of Marxism. I was only a small boy. I used to wake up and I was allowed to sit on someone's lap in my pajamas. I thought it was very interesting and exciting. (Peter de Leeuwe)

But many respondents also remember that their parents were away in the evenings, attending political meetings. From the interviews and other autobiographical sources one can conclude that parents who were communist activists were often absent, because of all their political responsibilities and some children expressed doubts about what came first; the party or the family. In retrospect the majority agreed that their parents tried very hard

⁵⁰³ Chapter five will further elaborate on the theme 'Communists and Education'.

⁵⁰⁴ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 200.

and often succeeded in dividing their time between the children and the party. Whenever possible children would be part of their parents' activities. Respondents were taken to rallies, May Day marches and other demonstrations:

My mum would always go to all the demonstrations and took me for example on the overnight coach (unheated double decker bus) from Liverpool to the Aldermastorn marches in 1960 and 1961. I also remember going to Scarborough to the Labour Party conference for a CP demo. (Dave Cope)

A political upbringing wasn't always just 'exciting and interesting'; some respondents indicate that their parent(s) were overbearing in their political views; even ordinary aspects of a child's life were politicized. Interestingly, in the few cases where a respondent's parent was this overbearing, the respondent rebelled and didn't want to have anything to do with politics:

I was interested in my work (as an artist), I didn't have a political personality. I don't know if that was created by my dad's overbearing personality. I think it probably was a rejection of it. I thought: 'Give me a break'. Everything was political. On my 21st birthday I was given a watch and of course it had to be a Russian watch, and the bloody thing kept going wrong. I thought to myself why does everything need to be like that? (Anonymous)

Everything was about communism in our house. That's why I hated it so much, I resented it. It didn't matter what you were talking about, even if it was about something like a cinnamon biscuit, it somehow always ended in politics. (Hannah de Leeuwe)

These two respondents' fathers were exceptional in their views and can be classed as Stalinists rather than 'ordinary' communists. Politics played a big role in most communist households but the communist ideology generally didn't dominate to such an extent that respondents describe their upbringing as suffocating:

There wasn't a time when politics weren't a part of our life, though I don't remember it having a heavy presence – we were just aware our parents were active. We were never bulldozed into it.⁵⁰⁵ Were politics important in our household? I would say yes and no, politics were taken for granted. But it wasn't a hot house of politics, it did not dominate everything. Obviously, listening to the radio

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with Ann Kane in: P.Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 137.

and watching telly, we talked about what was going on. We learned a lot but it was never rammed down our throats; my parents had lots of other interests they talked about, it wasn't as if politics were their only life. (Dave Cope)

Cultural upbringing

The previously discussed 'elitist' attitude,⁵⁰⁶ is also visible in the way parents instructed their children to distrust not only the news on TV and in mainstream papers, but communists also told their children to be suspicious of (history) books and teachers. Children grew up with this peculiar and confusing sense that they knew more than other people because they read the right books and newspapers and listened to the right people. The name of the Dutch communist newspaper is very illustrative of this general attitude; the paper was called *De Waarheid*, which translates as 'The Truth'. Communists generally never questioned their paper's news coverage and other mainstream newspapers were only read to compare to their own paper:

We were friends with people who were social democrats and they (my parents and other communists who came to our house) use to say 'Oh, they read *Het Parool* (social democratic newspaper)'; in a way they actually meant to say 'So they don't know everything'. (Carla van Buuren)

We used to read *De Waarheid*, but later on when I was a student I started to read the *NRC* as well. I really noticed the differences between the two papers and thought to myself; I have to be careful with what I read. It didn't really open my eyes though, because I compared *De Waarheid* to other papers and not the other way round. (Ben Wellerdieck)

My parents read the *Daily Worker*, but also the *Herald* and the *Guardian*. The *Daily Worker* was their bible though until the bubble burst in 1956. (Heather Chapman)

Surprisingly parents were not particularly concerned with their children's choice of film and literature. A few exceptions left aside, generally communist parents did not restrict their children in any way; they were allowed to read and watch whatever non-communist children were reading and watching:

⁵⁰⁶ Raphael Samuel has extensively discussed 'moral elitism' in his third essay 'Class Politics', in: R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, pp. 184-203.

There was absolutely never any discussion about what I could see or not. I decided what I wanted to see. I used to go to Saturday morning pictures. This was a characteristic of that age, there would be cartoons and Westerns and Adventure stories in the local cinema every Saturday morning. (Pat Devine)

The communist ideology was blended with Western culture. Greetje recalls that her parents took her regularly to film nights organised by the Society *Holland-USSR*, but they also took her to see Cliff Richard and Catharina Valente. Marja, whose parents were in her own words ‘fanatical about politics’, describes her youth:

We used to go ice skating and swimming. We went to the cinema. I collected photo cards of the Blue Diamonds (a popular Dutch guitar duo) and my sister of the Everly Brothers. I liked Elvis and my sister like Cliff (Richards). (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

Communists were ardent readers; respondents remember growing up with lots of different books. Communist books and novels translated from Russian were available through the CP literature secretary who would come to people’s houses but also through communist publishing houses. Withuis claims that communists did not read anything besides communist literature: ‘They (communists) did not read any women’s magazines, comics or newspapers other than *De Waarheid*, the communist family magazine *De Uilenspiegel*, and *Vrouwen voor Vrede en Opbouw* (communist women’s magazine)’. By reading only their own literature and magazines, communists, according to Withuis, isolated themselves even further; ‘reading communist literature confirmed their own values and worldview’ and ‘the gained knowledge from reading communist literature reinforced the elitist attitude that their own “scientific philosophy of life was very different from what other people believed. Money wasn’t wasted on “rubbish” like *Donald Duck*’.⁵⁰⁷ Discussing their uneasy relationship to working-class culture, Samuel claims that ‘communists were apt to think of working class pleasures as degrading. ‘Hollywood films’ were rubbish, popular reading ‘trash’; sport, at least in the early days of the party, was ‘capitalist’ sport, newspapers ‘the capitalist press’, wireless ‘capitalist dope’.⁵⁰⁸ Withuis’ and Samuel’s claims are based on

⁵⁰⁷ J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek*, p. 214.

⁵⁰⁸ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 185.

what was written in the party press, magazines and newspapers, but the reality was not as black and white as both authors suggest. This discrepancy between theory and reality is expressed in the contrast between the official party literature on the subject and oral testimonies and other (auto) biographical sources. In her memoirs, Nan Green who was a dedicated communist activist recalls an anecdote which sheds light on the subject of 'party approved literature'. After coming back from Spain where she had joined the Republic cause during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, she became very active in the communist peace movement (before her party work took her to China as a translator). She describes how the party in 1944 begun to move from its earlier exclusiveness or sectarianism and had begun to see the need for working amongst its neighbours. However;

'Blind faith was still very evident – illustrated by the first visit of the Branch Secretary, who had worked in the Soviet Union before the war as a telephone engineering expert and believed with his whole heart that the Soviet Union and Stalin could do no wrong. He took an affronted step backwards before our bookcase, pointing to a copy of John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*. 'I shouldn't keep that book on my shelves if I were you.' he said. It had been 'put on the Index' (cf. Roman Catholic Church) in the USSR because of its emphasis on the role of Trotsky in 1917. We did not remove the book.⁵⁰⁹

In her memoirs Nan Green makes it clear that although there were people with 'blind faith' like this branch secretary amongst party members, that this was not the norm. She rebelled against his suggestion to remove *Ten Days That Shook the World*; on the contrary, she made sure it was prominently displayed, which 'helped to form discussion groups that met in our tiny flat almost every Sunday to get our minds clear as to what the war was being fought for and what we wanted from our government after the end'.⁵¹⁰ Naturally Nan, who was a mother herself, did not restrict her children in their choice of literature. The same goes for the overall majority of the Dutch and British respondents; as with their choice of film and music, only a small minority of respondents remember being restricted. Literature was not even an issue; generally a mixture of communist and non-communist literature was

⁵⁰⁹ N. Green, *A Chronicle of Small Beer. The Memoirs of Nan Green*, Nottingham: Trent editions, 2004, p. 136.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, p. 137.

around and enjoyed by both parents as well as their children. In many homes children would read politically correct Soviet novels as well as *Donald Duck*.

My sister subscribed to *Donald Duck* and my mum read a women's magazine. We read absolutely everything. I often went to the library and we received the 'Pegasus' books. Yes we were definitely allowed to read anything. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

Without really noticing the huge paradox, respondents would read about stout Soviet workers fighting the working class struggle, sacrificing themselves for the greater good whilst also enjoying a comic about a filthy rich duck who literally swims in his own money and who, in communist eyes, represents the worst excrescence of a capitalist society. Interestingly the few parents who didn't allow their children to read *Donald Duck* didn't do this because the comic wasn't politically correct, but because it was American. Anti-Americanism in the 1950s was widespread among communists *and* non-communists. In Britain there was a big campaign against the American threat to British culture, which was a communist initiative but also supported by people in the Labour party and the National Assembly of Women.⁵¹¹

As in the Netherlands, the British Communist Party addressed the subject of children's books and tried to convince parents to buy their children books with a pro-working class outlook. The *Communist Review* recommended for example the *Red Corner Book*, *Martin's Annual* and *Our Lenin*, which were held up as 'radical alternatives to mainstream children's literature, which was felt to be stocked with negative stereotypes of working class characters and foreigners, glorified middle class values and contained messages designed to perpetuate the existing system'.⁵¹² Communist parents did indeed buy these books recommended by the party, but like in the Netherlands their children were also allowed to read mainstream literature:

I was allowed to read anything; one of the things that I think was typical for communist households was that there was often a wide range of (political) books, but also lots of fiction and there were posters on the wall. (Dave Cope)

⁵¹¹ *Arena; a Magazine of Modern Literature*. Special issue; *The U.S.A. Threat to British Culture*, vol. 2, series 8 June/July, 1951, passim.

⁵¹² T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939*, p. 23.

It becomes clear that politics were the backdrop to the respondents' childhood, but unlike non-communist children, respondents' daily life was coloured by an interest in national and international events, demonstrations, political meetings and discussions. The party instructed parents on what and who to believe and children were taught to see 'the other side' of things. The fact that parents were instructed by the party on how to live their lives did not mean that they were actually putting all of this advice into practice. Communists were often quite rigid in their children's political upbringing, but not so much so with their cultural upbringing. Parents allowed respondents to do whatever non-communist children did. Instead of being deprived, communist children enjoyed a very culturally rich and varied childhood. Jill's words sum it all up; analyzing the impact of her parents' communist convictions on her upbringing, she explained: 'I had a normal childhood with added extra's'.⁵¹³

Prescription and aspirations

In her book *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute* (The Cosmonaut's Dress), Withuis argues that communist children were brought up with the following ideals: emotional control and punctuality. They were expected to live a 'decent' life without alcohol, adultery and personal enrichment but characterized by soberness, self sacrifice, solidarity and little quality family time like birthday parties and *Sinterklaas* (5 December St. Nicolas) celebrations. She claims that fights and other forms of emotional expressions were taboo in communist households because 'when one puts his or her personal life in a political context, one would learn to control primitive expressions (like fights and arguments)'.⁵¹⁴ Mothers were more focused on the outside world than their marriage and motherhood; the political and not the birthday calendar decided their daily schedule.⁵¹⁵ Withuis portrays communist mothers as emotionally detached battle-axes, a picture which is not supported by the respondents' testimonies nor by the communist party literature on the subject of 'a communist upbringing'. The Dutch communist family magazine *De Uilenspiegel* published weekly between 1950 and 1965 and read by the majority of the

⁵¹³ Interview with Jill McLoughlin.

⁵¹⁴ J. Withuis, *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute*, pp. 150-1.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

Dutch respondents and their families, advised parents regularly on their children's upbringing. Instead of dismissing family life as secondary to party work it suggested what 'to do with the children on rainy afternoons and school holidays':

Do creative things with the little ones, like playing with clay, drawing or painting. You can also read them a good book, or take the children out to a museum or an exhibition (for example the Rijksmuseum). Go sight seeing in the city or take a walk on the beach. The Rotterdam port is also highly recommended as something exciting for the children to explore.⁵¹⁶

The same article is also very clear about priorities; 'Mothers who think they are too busy to entertain the children; don't clean the house, don't give the living room a spring clean and don't cook a full meal in the afternoon.'⁵¹⁷ Throughout its existence *De Uilenspiegel* stimulated mothers *and* fathers to spend as much time as possible with their children. This contrasts with Withuis' claims about communist motherhood; she emphasizes that 'the party rated a politically active working mother with her children in a crèche over a full time mother and housewife'.⁵¹⁸

Unfortunately a magazine like *De Uilenspiegel* didn't exist in post-war Britain and family life in the *Daily Worker* and *Country Standard* was often neglected. Therefore it is much harder to find similar examples of party advice on communist upbringing in Britain. Nevertheless from (auto)biographical accounts as well as the respondents' testimonies the conclusion can be drawn that communist parents did indeed spend time with their children:

I loved my dad and I wanted to be like him, he was this romantic character; when I was very small, he used to take me out to London and showed me the bombsites which he painted. He did big oil paintings of bombed buildings. I would come along with my little painting brush and joined my father. (Dorothy Sheridan)

It is important to note that the party did expect its full time activists to sacrifice a lot of time and energy for 'the cause'. Unlike the majority of the respondents' parents who were rank-and-file communists, cadre leaders and other full time party officials did not have much

⁵¹⁶ *De Uilenspiegel*, December 23, 1950.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ J. Withuis, *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute*, p. 151.

time for a private life. In his book *The Communist Technique in Britain* communist cadre leader Bob Darke, who left the party in 1951, describes the demanding nature of his job:

Many times I have heard communists pleading consideration for their family as an excuse for neglecting Party duties. They were told 'If your wife objects, get her into the party. If your children cry, get them into the YCL. If they won't join and they won't keep quiet, then leave them. We've no time for decadent bourgeois morality, Comrade. A communist is above self. A communist has no private life.'⁵¹⁹

Naturally it was up to the person in question to either follow these extraordinary demands or to balance party work with a (fulfilling) family life. The fact that the party said 'jump' did not automatically mean that party members all indeed jumped; generally fathers didn't sacrifice their families for the party, there is not one example of a father who left his family in order to be an exemplary communist; nevertheless even with the best intentions to be a good parent, very active communists found it difficult to free up time to spend with their families. Arthur Excell wasn't able to find the right balance between his political responsibilities and his family, something he later regretted:

Before the war it wasn't so bad; we had so much short time that I had plenty of time with the children and I used to love it. They were young then. We used to go out over the back fields, we had a tent, we'd sleep in the tent. I used to sleep out there with them. We had a wonderful time. And then the war started and all the meetings, the union and all the others, and my whole home life completely disappeared. There was a time when I was out every night I was on the Joint Production Committee for Oxford and the Joint Production Committee for the area, so I was out every night of the week, including Saturdays and Sundays. Mabel, my wife, used to rave. And I was very unfair to her, very unfair to her and the children. And sometimes I've regretted it because I missed all the fun of having children by being out so much. Now I'm trying to grasp every straw I can, with the grandchildren.⁵²⁰

From the respondents' testimonies the conclusion can be drawn that being an active and loyal communist party member did not necessarily equal being a bad parent; there are many cases in which parents did manage to find time to spend with their children:

⁵¹⁹ B. Darke, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, p. 11.

⁵²⁰ A. Excell, 'Morris Motors in the 1940s', in *History Workshop Journal*, 9, Spring 1980, p. 99.

My dad was away a lot, but then again we always did lots of nice things when he was around in the weekends. I never felt politics came first; maybe only during the week but not in the weekends. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

Spock versus Makarenko

Exploring communist parents' aspirations when it comes to their children's upbringing, it is useful to have a closer look at the pedagogical literature that was available at the time. Dr. Benjamin Spock, whose book *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare* published in 1946, became an integral part of Western culture. His ideas influenced millions of parents all over the world in the upbringing of their children. Communists had their own 'Dr. Spock', the Soviet educator Anton Makarenko whose work *A Book for Parents* published in 1954 had a huge impact on the Soviet society. His books on child rearing were translated by communist party publishing houses into English and Dutch and many respondents remember that their parents owned one or more copies of his books:

My parents were influenced by Makarenko's ideas in bringing up children, although my mum was much stricter than my father. I suppose they wanted me to be self-confident, happy and (importantly) able to help others. (Mike Luft)

Makarenko's books were published in editions of millions in countries all over the world, but his readers were predominantly communist and his theories were virtually unknown in the West. In his view a child is first and foremost a part of the family collective, his parents will prepare and his teachers will educate him to become a citizen of the Soviet society; a member of the wider collective. But the family is not a closed-in collective body, like the bourgeois family. It is an organic part of Soviet society.⁵²¹ According to Makarenko, 'a child is a living person, he is by no means a mere ornament to our lives; he is a separate, rich, full blooded life in itself. Judged by its strong emotions, its deep impressionability, the purity and beauty of its efforts of will, a child's life is incomparably richer than that of an adult'.⁵²² Many people will assume the ideal Soviet upbringing was very cold and strict and disciplined and yes, Makarenko emphasizes in his books how important discipline is, but he

⁵²¹ A. S. Makarenko, *A Book for Parents*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, p. 51.

⁵²² Ibid, p. 256.

rates one thing as far more important: love. He is, unlike Dr. Benjamin Spock, incredibly harsh with a child's parents and basically blames them for anything that goes wrong with a child. Spock on the other hand, in his 1946 book *Baby and Childcare*, recognizes that some children are more difficult than others. Both authors focus on love and stability, although Spock is more concerned with the individual whilst Makarenko finds the collective more important. Both think language, interaction and structure are important, although Spock thinks parents should decide for themselves if they want to raise a child in a permissive or strict way.⁵²³ Makarenko is much more black and white, rating strictness over permissiveness, but at the same time he finds beating a child a tragedy, not for the child but for the parent. Children only become fearful of parents who beat them. According to Makarenko in a correctly organised family collective, where parental authority is not ousted by any substitutes, one does not feel the need for 'ugly and immoral disciplinary tricks'. In such a family there is always complete order and the necessary obedience.⁵²⁴ Spock on the other hand, has more understanding for parents who spank their children every now and then.⁵²⁵

When it comes to sex education Dr. Spock is much more liberal than Makarenko. The latter, who speaks in this context of the 'secret of childbirth' and the 'sex problem', thinks it should be primarily teachers and doctors who should enlighten children about sex and procreation. He thinks that by 'revealing of the secret, even when done in the wisest fashion, intensifies the physiological side of love, encourages not sexual feeling but sexual curiosity making it simple and accessible. Sex education should consist in fostering that intimate respect of questions of sex that is known as chastity'.⁵²⁶ On the contrary Dr. Spock is an advocate of sex education at a young age. He thinks it shouldn't just be the teachers or a doctor who educates children about sex and procreation. 'It is common to think that sex education means a lecture at school or a solemn talk by a parent at home. This is taking too narrow a view of the subjects. A child is learning about the 'facts of life' all through his childhood, if not in a good way then in an unwholesome way. Sex is a lot broader than just

⁵²³ B. Spock, *Baby and Childcare*, New York: Duell, Sloane and Pierce, 1945, 3rd impression 3rd edition 1973, p. 21.

⁵²⁴ A.S. Makarenko, *A Book for Parent*, p. 257.

⁵²⁵ B. Spock, *Baby and Childcare*, p. 350.

⁵²⁶ A.S. Makarenko, *A Book for Parents*, p. 297.

how babies are made.’⁵²⁷ Spock gives advice on how to tell young children where babies come from and answers to other sex related questions. He feels that it is alright for young children to see each other naked, although he thinks that parents should keep their toilet and bathroom doors locked.⁵²⁸ Although Spock is very liberal, he is very careful not to advocate experimental sex for adolescents. He feels sexual intimacy should be reserved for the person who an adolescent will love deeply.⁵²⁹

Comparing *Baby and Childcare* with *A Book for Parents*, it is striking that there are more similarities than differences. Love and mutual respect, structure and discipline are key in both books. Spock and Makarenko differ when it comes to the individual versus the collective and Spock initially advocated a child centered viewpoint, whilst Makarenko, who wrote his book from a political perspective, considered a child primarily as part of the collective, but without denying its individuality. So based on all this, were communist children brought up along the lines of Spock or Makarenko’s ideas? A few exceptions left aside, the majority of respondents describe their upbringing as liberal and even very liberal. Their parents who were so often so narrow minded when it came to politics, were on the other hand, very open minded when it came to their children’s upbringing. There was a lot of trust and children, both girls and boys, enjoyed many liberties. Nettie’s memories exemplify communist parents’ values and ideas about their children’s upbringing:

My mum tried to raise us as independent, responsible people. From an early age onwards I learned to make my own decisions, but then you had to be responsible for your own decision. Hitting was not an option in our household. My parents had the rule; you can have a sensible chat with a child. They rather praised their children then punished them. I really liked my upbringing, it was safe there was no shouting everything was pretty harmonious. My parents loved each other. (Nettie van Raat)

When I asked the respondents what in retrospect they considered to be typical about growing up in the communist left, almost everyone used the word solidarity. Their parents tried to teach them the meaning of social justice and respondents grew up aware of their

⁵²⁷ B. Spock, *Baby and Childcare*, p. 388.

⁵²⁸ Ibid, pp. 395.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

surroundings. Very much in accordance with Makarenko and the wider Soviet ideology, communist life was about the community and solidarity with the underdog:

My parents tried to teach us values. You don't live just for yourself. You should interact with the people around you and solidarity were key in our upbringing. I remember during the floods in 1953, my parents wanted me to give some toys away to children who had lost everything. We hardly had any toys. I only had one doll and she was sacred, she was mine, but I did donate some other toys. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

One of the areas of the respondents' upbringing which was fundamentally different from that of their non-communist contemporaries was their parents' openness about sex and sexuality. Sex was allowed, many girls started taking the pill aged 17 and abortion was no taboo, although it wasn't encouraged. Marriage was not always expected and quite a few respondents' parents never married or got married after the first pregnancy. This attitude, which is far more liberal than Dr. Spock, goes completely against Makarenko's ideas and altogether deviates from the general public opinion in 1960s Britain and the Netherlands:

I was allowed to sleep in the same room as Scott and I was also allowed to go on the pill; my parents were very relaxed. They wanted to make sure I didn't do anything to damage my reputation, in a sensible way, but they were certainly very relaxed. I was in my early 20s when I met Scott and for a spell living at home, he came down to stay for the first time and could not believe his eyes when he slept in my room and my father brought him a cup of tea in the morning. (Harriet Naden)

We had a very liberal upbringing; we changed clothes in the living room and ran around naked, whilst my dad was reading the paper. When I had a bath, my mum would bring me cups of coffee and we would have a chat. My boyfriend didn't understand this at all and I didn't understand his family would lock the bathroom. They were so prudish; they expected me to sleep on the sofa when I spent the night at his parents' house. I never did. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

In Britain the pill was introduced in 1961 and a year later in the Netherlands, initially only available for married women; Dorothy's story, which again underlines how sexually liberated communist parents often were, shows it wasn't easy to get a prescription:

When I was eighteen my mother asked me: 'Dorothy, have you had sex yet?' (I remember this conversation well) and I said; 'What do you mean? I have no contraception. I don't want to get pregnant'. So she said; 'Do you want to go on the pill?' and I said 'Yes'. So she went to our GP. It

was very difficult to get the pill for unmarried women at the time. I had it prescribed for “menstrual irregularities”. (Dorothy Sheridan)

In the Netherlands a full scale opinion poll into views on marriage, family and sexuality was carried out in 1965. Its outcome shows clearly that communist parents deviated from the prevailing standards and can be considered as progressive and liberal when it comes to sex and contraception. The poll results showed that 68.8 percent of the interviewees agreed with the statement; ‘A girl should remain a virgin until she marries’. This figure suggests that the majority of the Dutch population considered it unacceptable for unmarried women to use the contraceptive pill. Under influence of the cultural and social changes of the late 1960s these views did change quite rapidly. In 1970 only 17.2 percent of the interviewees agreed with the aforementioned statement.⁵³⁰

Michael Schofield’s research into the sexual behaviour of young (British) people published in 1965 reveals a similar trend; 85 percent of the girls who participated in this survey wanted to remain a virgin until marriage and 64 percent of boys wanted their wives to be a virgin. 69 percent of the female respondents agreed with the following statement; ‘most boys want to marry a virgin’ and 57 percent agreed with; ‘If a girl has sex before marriage she gets a bad reputation’.⁵³¹ These figures underline that in Britain too people tended to frown upon premarital sex. Communist parents on the contrary did not only allow their children to have premarital sex, they also discussed sex and more importantly contraception with their sons and daughters. Schofield’s conclusions emphasize that British communist parents, like their Dutch counterparts, seem fundamentally different in their attitudes towards sex from the rest of society:

Two-thirds of the boys and a quarter of the girls had learnt nothing about sex from their parents. Even those who had discussed sex with their parents had usually first heard about it from another source. The only exception to this was middle-class mothers who were more likely to advice their daughters. Teenagers also reported that parental advice about sex usually concentrated on moral problems and was unspecific and vague.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ C.P. Middendorp, ‘Culturele veranderingen in Nederland, 1965-1970’, in *Intermediair*, March 15, 1974, p. 5.

⁵³¹ M. Schofield, *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People*, London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1965, pp 132-33.

⁵³² *Ibid*, p. 248.

Whereas middle class mothers did tend to give their daughters advice, Scholfield observes that the lack of sex education was exactly where it was most needed; ‘it was the working-class boys who were least likely to learn about sex from their parents and were least likely to receive sex education at school’⁵³³. His inquiries into the use of birth-control methods show that many boys and girls who were sexually active were often not using contraceptives not because they weren’t available but because of social disapproval many of their sexual adventures were unpremeditated and therefore adequate precautions were not taken beforehand.⁵³⁴ Nettie’s father was aware of this problem among young working class youth. He was, like a large number of other Dutch respondents’ parents, a member of the NVSH (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming* which translates into Dutch Society for Sexual Reform)⁵³⁵:

My father was very active in the NVSH. He always provided his fellow factory workers with condoms, because they, like many others, were too scared and embarrassed to go to the shop and buy some. (Nettie van Raat)

It seems the CPGB was also aware of the difficulties (working class) men experienced buying condoms. The *Daily Worker* didn’t have many advertisers so it is remarkable that very visible Durex ads appeared in the paper throughout the 1950s; ‘Durex rubber goods and all surgical birth control appliances sent on by registered post under plain cover. Send for our free price list now’⁵³⁶ which suggests there was a certain openness about contraception in the British communist movement too. In this context it should be noted that within most Western communist parties, birth control was actively promoted from the 1920s onwards. Bruley for example points out that besides the activities of a group of

⁵³³ Ibid, p. 249.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, pp. 248-51.

⁵³⁵ This organisation was founded in 1946 as a continuation of the *Nieuw Malthusiaanse Bond* (New Malthusian League). In the 1950s and 1960s the NVSH provided contraception and sexual health care; the organisation stood for the legalization of abortion, the acceptance of premarital sex and fought against the discrimination of homosexuals. The NVSH still exists today and has numerous consultation bureaus for sexual health all over the country.

⁵³⁶ *Daily Worker*, July 10, 1954, p. 3.

prominent CPGB members who promoted family planning, Marie Stope's⁵³⁷ works and birth control devices often appeared in the advertising columns of *The Communist*.⁵³⁸ From the respondents' recollections it seems that their parents' ideas about child rearing were a mixture between Spock and Makarenko. Unlike the Soviet ideal and more in accordance with Spock, the respondents' parents were very liberal and often opted for a permissive attitude, although they were strict and sometimes black and white with their children when it came to certain (political) values:

My father was not only a difficult, tiresome and heated communist; he was also a very patient father, who taught his little girl to read and who went on walks with her through the city of Den Haag on warm summer nights whilst explaining the solar system or discussing sexuality and procreation.
(Hannah de Leeuwe)

Hannah's father was a very rigid Stalinist, an obedient follower of the communist ideology and in awe of the Soviet Union. In many ways he was an exception compared to other respondents' parents who were not as unquestioning and rigid, therefore the fact that even he took time off from his party duties to be a loving father to his daughter is remarkable and indicates that Withuis' description of communist parenthood is not necessarily the norm; not even for staunch Stalinists.

Conclusion

Samuel observed that, in retrospect, communists had a lot in common with their national culture. This chapter about communist upbringing comes to a similar conclusion. Drawing on the respondents' testimonies, it becomes clear that a communist upbringing was, in reality, not so very different from a non-communist working class upbringing. Respondents were like their non-communist peers raised with love and affection and not culturally deprived, nor emotionally neglected as Withuis claims.

Certain aspects of the respondents' upbringing stand out as different from the norm. Some of these aspects like liberal views on sexuality, many freedoms and a social awareness, are positive; other aspects like political one sidedness and moral elitism can be considered as

⁵³⁷ Marie Stopes was a pioneer in the field of family planning and opened Britain's first birth control clinic in 1921.

⁵³⁸ S. Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism and the Women's Movement in Britain*, p. 71-72.

negative. Respondents' parents were instructed by the party on how to live their lives and how to raise their children, but this chapter has shown that certainly not everything the party suggested was put into practice. When it comes to the cultural, emotional and pedagogical aspects of their children's upbringing, parents mixed Soviet ideals and communist theory with Western values.

Chapter Five

Public Spheres - Neighbourhood, School & Work

This chapter deals with respondents' experiences in non-communists surroundings like their neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. Anchored in the history of the wider working class, I will compare the Dutch and British respondents' testimonies and explore the extent of social isolation experienced by these respondents. This chapter also highlights the very different views on class, education and work; Dutch communists were considerably more rigid in their views than British communists. Joseph Stalin became known for the phrase that 'communists were people of a new kind'⁵³⁹, with different views from those of the rest of the working class. Through the comparison of Dutch and British respondents' testimonies I argue that some of the values, aptly described by Samuel in *The Lost World of British Communism*, which once made British communists stand out from the rest of the working class, had disappeared by the 1960s. Against that I also argue that because of the lack of association with non-communists on a political and economical level, Dutch communists' values did not undergo any fundamental changes in the same period. Communist families were connected with the 'outside world' in many ways; they were confronted with non-communists at work, school, in their neighbourhood, through friends and extended family. Without denying the socially and politically isolated position of the communist movement as a whole, none of the respondents would, in retrospect, use the term social isolation to describe their families' position within society, although everyone has experienced some forms of discrimination growing up. A large number of respondents remember being either singled out at school, at work or in their neighbourhood. I argue that this discriminatory behaviour occurred more often in the Netherlands than in Britain, which is related to the existence of the previously discussed fierce anti-communist tradition in the Netherlands. Whereas Withuis, presents a picture of a very isolated group with very rigid moral codes and values, while also stating that communists were responsible for their own vilification⁵⁴⁰, the majority of the respondents who participated in this project emphasize the often successful attempts of their families to integrate into society. There is no evidence

⁵³⁹ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 188.

⁵⁴⁰ J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek*, passim.

at all that any of the respondent's families willingly maneuvered themselves into social isolation. On the contrary, communists tried very hard to be 'normal' and often encouraged their children to take part in all sorts of activities.

The respondents' experiences seem to be more in line with Raphael Samuel's observations. Samuel is distinctively more positive than Withuis when he describes the British communist community; calling it 'a little private world of our own'.⁵⁴¹ He acknowledged that communists were a 'peculiar' people who were reverted to the status of pariahs as the Cold War drew in, but he also states that in retrospect communists had a lot in common with the national culture.⁵⁴² According to Neal Wood, British communists were, compared to communists of other nations, more moderate in their views and less involved in theoretical matters. He argues that the CPGB had never become a closed group of people, isolated from the rest of society, hesitant to associate with non-communists. He emphasizes how its trade unionists fraternized with other trade unionists and how for its intellectuals, 'bonds of family, school, university, profession, and club' sometimes bridged the gaps that resulted from ideological differences'.⁵⁴³ The British respondents' testimonies confirm this contrast; there are more examples of fruitful (working) relationships between communists and non-communists in Britain than in the Netherlands. Nevertheless it is interesting that whenever authors like Wood or Withuis, discuss the relationship between communists and non-communists, they imply that non-communists were willing to fraternize, which was often not the case. As the Cold War drew on communists were excluded, sometimes legally, but mostly socially.

Neighbourhood

It was most likely that communist children had their first encounter with non-communists on their street or neighbourhood. Communist children growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in working class neighbourhoods like the *Staatsliedenbuurt* in Amsterdam and neighbourhoods in the East-End of London were no exceptions; often there were other communist families living nearby. In certain areas in Amsterdam communists lived 'door-to-door', in other areas there were hardly any. Many respondents delivered the communist

⁵⁴¹ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 13.

⁵⁴² Ibid, p. 14.

⁵⁴³ N. Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1959, p. 24.

newspaper so they were aware of the number of fellow communists living in their neighbourhood:

I grew up in a village with only one street and 200 inhabitants. I had a *Daily Worker* round on Saturdays, I delivered 3 papers; one to the Irish Catholic, one to an elderly guy who was a gardener and someone else who I can't remember. Quite a high representation on a total of 200!. (Stephen Munby)

We had lots of CPN members in our neighbourhood, I knew exactly who were communists because my parents would have a special relationship with these people. Or otherwise I found out through delivering the communist newspaper. Not to say we didn't mix with non-communists! (Anja Brasser)

At the height of the Cold War many people were secretive about their communist sympathies and worried that their neighbours would find out they read a communist newspaper, so the delivery boy/girls had to put the papers in unmarked envelopes:

I delivered the paper in our neighbourhood. In our street we were the only communists. There were a few communist families living not too far from us. It was quite a job, my paper round. I had to deliver 12 papers and had to cycle quite a bit in between. For a while I had to put the papers first in envelopes and there was also a time I first had to fold them into a very small A5 size so I could put them easily through the door. (Hannah de Leeuwe)

I had a paper round; most people had their paper delivered in a brown envelop, because their neighbours were not allowed to know they read the communist newspaper. As if neighbours would not find it strange to see a little boy deliver a big brown envelop each day. Because of my paper round I knew there were more communist families on our street, but I am not sure how many people knew my parents were communists. (Kees Gnirrep)

In the Netherlands around election time it was obvious who voted communist; respondents clearly remember the big signs and posters that were placed in the window. Some children felt embarrassed about this public display of their parents' political conviction and sometimes the posters didn't go down well with the neighbours:

During the election time, we had big posters (my dad designed them) in front of the window, which caused problems with our downstairs' neighbours. The woman ran a dance school and was afraid that her customers would think those posters were hers. She asked my parents to remove them, which I think, they did. (Ben Wellerdieck)

There was a fear of being different:

In the neighbourhood, people knew my parents were communists, because we had big posters in our window. I never had any problems, but I do remember being scared not to fit in. Afraid people would call me names. I didn't like being different. (Greetje Zoutendijk)

My school was very close to our house and during election times, people could see the big posters in our windows so every one knew we were communists. I didn't have any other children from communist families in my class, so I felt like an outsider. (Mario Blokzijl)

The majority of British respondents were spared from this grief for the simple reason that the CPGB was so small there was often no communist candidate, so parents voted Labour instead:

People knew my parents were communists, but then again at the local elections we would run the local Labour party's campaign. My parents would be the Labour agents; to get a Labour councilor in was a challenge enough. (Stephen Munby)

My parents' political ideas weren't obvious. During elections we would often have a Labour poster in the window, because 9 times out of 10 there were no communist candidates. (Harriet Naden)

Nevertheless Nina Temple's case is very similar to that of Dutch respondents. Her father stood for elections in the late 1950s/early 1960s, which caused her some problems:

There were a lot of Cold War attitudes around still, so I used to get lots of, 'Nina go back to Russia' As a child I used to get a lot of taunting from kids on the estate because we had posters and leaflets about my dad around, and it was an extraordinary thing to be a communist.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Nina Temple in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 91.

Nina had some unpleasant experiences, but felt special at the same time, because her father was an active member of the CP and in the public eye. She grew up in St. John's Wood on a council estate, which was a tight knit community where people knew a lot about each other.

Although there was a lot of solidarity between communists and non-communists on inner city council estates like this, it was at the same time hard to escape the occasional anti-communist sentiments. Because of the lack of living space, local community life on inner city housing estates was intense, which translated to intense friendships, but also intense dislike. In their study of family and kinship in the East London working class area Bethnal Green, Peter Willmot and Michael Young discovered that established residents claimed to know everyone in Bethnal Green because they were connected by kinship ties and to a network of other families and through them to a host of friends and acquaintances. Willmot and Young observed that this particular area was not a crowd of individuals 'restless, lonely and rootless, but an orderly community based on family and neighbourhood groupings'.⁵⁴⁵ The second part of their research focuses on a county council housing estate in Greenleigh (Essex) which was at the time of Willmot and Young's project largely working class and where many families from inner city neighbourhoods like Bethnal Green were moved to in the 1940s and 1950s. They found that the atmosphere on the council estate in Greenleigh was very different from the warmth and friendliness of Bethnal Green and that people seemed to be cut off from relatives, suspicious of their neighbours and often lonely.⁵⁴⁶

Willmot and Young were criticized for romanticizing Bethnal Green and later studies into the same subject contradicted some of their conclusions⁵⁴⁷, nevertheless certain key aspects of their research can be applied to the respondents' upbringing and living situation. Based on the respondents' testimonies close friendships with non-communist neighbours were most likely developed in old working class areas like *De Staatsliedenbuurt*, *De Indische buurt* in Amsterdam or Hackney in London. Bob Darke's

⁵⁴⁵ M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, Pelican, 1957, p. 7.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ For example J. Cornwell, *Hard-Earned Lives: Accounts of Health and Illness from East London*, London: Tavistock, 1984.

description of Hackney matches Willmot and Young's observations and is not dissimilar from working class areas in Amsterdam, Den Haag and Rotterdam:

I live in Nisbet House, Homerton, a block of council flats in the Borough of Hackney, where washing is always hanging on the lines on the verandas, and there are bicycles and prams in the tiled hallways and sheds. Such a block of flats in the East End is a world of its own, closer-knit than the luxury flats in the West End where, I imagine, a man can lock his door on his neighbours. But if, in the East End, you can't keep your own business from the neighbours that also means that your circle of friends is all the wider. For example: to the old dears at the foot of the steps that evening, gossiping with arms akimbo, I was not Mr. Darke, the mystery man of Flat Twelve. I was Bob. Bob Darke, Borough Councillor, communist. They knew all about me, my wife Ann, and our two daughters. They called to me 'Evening, Bob. How are things?' ⁵⁴⁸

As we have seen with Nina's experiences, the above close-knit nature of estates like this one in Homerton has a downside too; children living in these kinds of neighbourhoods couldn't hide their parents' political convictions which could make them an easy target for bullies.

Besides Nina, a few other respondents also remember being bullied. Some, like Alex Geelhoed, were called 'dirty commie' by children in the street, whilst others were ignored by their neighbours:

It was obvious at school and in the neighbourhood that we were not in the political mainstream the people living next door blanked us out because we were communists. ⁵⁴⁹

In Bob Potter's ⁵⁵⁰ case, communist sympathies lead to his eviction from the room he rented in a Bed & Breakfast in London. His story is remarkable. Bob had left his homeland Australia in 1951 to go to the WFDY festival in Berlin, a decision which cost him the relationship with his parents. His father was in the Australian army and Bob himself went to Australia's military college in Canberra. At school he openly condemned the war in Korea and was consequently thrown out. His father was far from pleased and their

⁵⁴⁸ B. Darke, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, p. 7-8.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Mike Power in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 170.

⁵⁵⁰ I interviewed Bob in 2008, he is not a cradle communist and is therefore not included in the list of children of communists.

relationship deteriorated further after Bob started to speak publicly on platforms in Adelaide Park (similar to London's Hyde Park corner). Bob told his father he wanted to attend the international youth festival in Berlin, but he needed his father's signature on the passport application. His father, appalled that his son wanted to go to a communist festival, refused to sign the papers but 'gave up' eventually and agreed on the condition he left the house and ceased all contact with the family. He had to agree he would never contact his younger brothers again. His father made it clear he never wanted to see or hear from Bob again. He left the country and after an adventurous journey by boat, Bob eventually ended up in London where he found a job and a place to live:

Unpacking my stuff, for the first time really, I found a little postcard of Stalin, which I think I had received from an old woman at a railway station in East Germany. Anyway, I put this portrait on the mantelpiece in my room. Funnily enough I wasn't even sure yet if I wanted to join the CP or not, but I had collected a few communist books in my travels, although I had yet to read them. I found a job at the Decca record factory. My first wage was five pounds a week. After the first day of work, I came 'home' but I could not get into the house, they had packed all my stuff and put it at the front door. Presumably referring to the photograph of Stalin (and maybe I made some laudatory remarks about communist Czechoslovakia at breakfast?), I was told; 'We are not having any communist agitators in this house'. (Bob Potter)

Bob rang the *Daily worker* and was told to contact John Goss, a communist activist, who took him in. His flat was on the Larkhall Estate, where according to Bob, another 33 party members lived. Bob joined the YCL, which was in his own words 'inevitable'. He got to know all the fellow communists on the estate, visited their homes and delivered party literature. He recalls how much these people would look out for each other. Other respondents also remember how important solidarity was in their families; not only solidarity with other communists, but also solidarity with the non-communist underdog. As mentioned in the previous chapter, respondents were raised with a sense of moral responsibility and a duty to help people in need. Many parents were active in their local community:

Everybody in our street knew we were communists and people respected this. My dad was the neighbourhood oracle; people would ask him for advice about rent, tax forms and financial issues. We had a good relationship with our neighbours; we always sorted out that the street would be

decorated with lights (we provided the power) on 5 May (liberation day) On that day there was always a party tent in the street; people sung and danced, it was great. (Mario Blokzijl)

My father was a very well respected man, very well liked in the village. Our childhood was just endless knocking at the door, usually people coming in wanting to help – problems at the pit they needed sorting out, they'd been ill and weren't given their sick pay, they had a form to fill in and they didn't know how to do it.⁵⁵¹

Communist membership in the Netherlands and to a lesser extent in Britain was concentrated in stable working-class communities. The party was a closely integrated organisation and based on interviewees' observations it appears that CP members were well-integrated members of the community. Communist activists made use of the existing networks in neighbourhoods and were therefore more successful in older working class communities where neighbourliness prevailed. In her 1971 book *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, Jennifer Platt defines working class life in this particular area:

The working class way of life is seen as involving the extended family embedded in a stable and predominantly working class community with great neighbourliness and communal solidarity expressed in networks of social relationships and mutual aid and strong attachments to the local area and its primary groups. In this context people are known and judged as individuals with multiple characteristics rather than as holders of certain jobs or owners of certain possessions.⁵⁵²

This is precisely the kind of community where communist families would prosper. For respondents' parents, when trying to develop personal relationships, it was important that neighbours didn't just judge them based on their political conviction, as communists were portrayed by the media as the enemy within and generally distrusted. Through extensive work in the community, many respondents' parents became known and were respected for their helpfulness and solidarity which enabled them to strike up friendships with non-communists. Alex Geelhoed remembers that a couple of neighbours came up to his mum and said 'you are such decent people; it is hard to believe you are members of the CPN'. This quotation underlines the fact that communists often had to prove themselves before

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Ann Kane in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 137.

⁵⁵² J. Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, Macmillan, 1971, p. 171.

neighbours put aside their prejudices, but respondents and their families weren't always given the opportunity to show their neighbours that they were indeed 'decent people'. Hence the nature of the community had a decisive influence on forging lasting friendships; it was more likely that communists were accepted in a community where people took the time to get to know each other and were socially involved like in Bethnal Green or Hackney than on new suburban (council) estates where people were less likely to fraternize and who tended to be suspicious of their neighbours, or middle class areas where people were judged one another solely based on their profession or on the poster in the front window around election time.

Overall British communists were less likely to be the victim of stigmatization than Dutch communists during the Cold War period because of the previously discussed lack of a fierce tradition of anti-communism in Britain. Interviews indicate that British respondents didn't have to try as hard as their Dutch contemporaries; relationships with non-communist neighbours seemed to be more effortless and more natural, whereas in the Netherlands communists often had to break down invisible walls which were built around them by society especially after the anti-communist eruption of 1956:

We moved from Den Haag to Amsterdam in 1950. Our new neighbourhood, *Transvaal*, was very proletarian, much more than our old neighbourhood. It wasn't a communist bulwark, but there were quite a few communist families living nearby. My mother had a good feeling for relations in our neighbourhood; she did not want us to be known as 'children from a communist family'. She got on with almost all of our neighbours. (Alex Geelhoed)

When we moved to Overschie, this was in November 1956, which had nothing to do with Hungary, I remember our new neighbours were a little apprehensive. They stood on the steps, looking like; 'Oh my goodness, communists, what is going to happen now?' But it soon became clear that we were actually quite a nice family and no barbarians. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

What is interesting about Ans' observations is that the neighbours probably had no idea her family was communist. She translated her new neighbours' questioning glances into a dislike of communists and feared not being accepted. Although this fear was not unfounded, in reality only four out of forty respondents recall being treated badly or

differently because of their political back ground, the majority either got on with their neighbours or didn't really have a lot of contact with people on their street.

School and Education

Another public sphere where communist children associated with non-communist children was in school. Generally communists firmly believed in the importance of education and the subject has always been a major concern of the communist party:

The only permanent, guaranteed solution to the problem of higher education is not only that of providing more universities and teachers, but creating the kind of society which provides ever widening opportunities for everyone to aim at the stars and reach them.⁵⁵³

The majority of the Dutch and British respondents indicate that both boys and girls were stimulated to do well at school. From the mid-1950s onwards, sociologists and historians have published an abundance of studies into the relationship between class and academic achievement.⁵⁵⁴ As early as 1957, Floud and Halsey used the example of the British eleven-plus examination to demonstrate the correlation between social class and educational opportunity. The abandoning of the intelligence test prompted Floud and Halsey to study the social distribution of opportunity before and after the selection procedures for grammar schools changed. Although the authors concluded that there was no significant difference, it is very clear from the data collected by the authors that the percentage of working class children in grammar schools was very small.⁵⁵⁵ Kenneth Newton also points out that the communist parties' 'emphasis on the importance of education contrasts with the more usual working-class attitudes to education'.⁵⁵⁶

More recent studies emphasize that not social class as such, but educational aspirations are the most important variable having direct effects on the education obtained. Within this context, the role of the family is vital. In their 1998 study *The Family and Educational*

⁵⁵³ *Daily Worker*, September 14, 1963.

⁵⁵⁴ See for example G. H. Elder, *Adolescent Achievement and Mobility Aspirations*, London: Chapel Hill, 1962, p. 162-3 and B.C. Rosen, 'Family Structure and Achievement Motivation', in *American Sociological Review*, 1961, 26, p. 574-85.

⁵⁵⁵ J.E. Floud, and A.H. Halsey, 'Intelligence Tests, Social Class and Selection for Secondary Schools', in *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 8, no.1, March, 1957, pp. 33-9.

⁵⁵⁶ K. Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism*, p. 60.

Aspirations, Teachman and Paasch give four main reasons why families should be associated with variations in educational aspirations. Firstly they emphasize that ‘families are sources of genetically determined academic potential’. Secondly they state that ‘families represent micro-social environments that influence how children experience the larger social world’. In this context Teachman and Paasch argue that children who grow up in ‘well organised’ neighbourhoods and go to well financed schools with good teachers are ‘likely to have higher educational aspirations’. Thirdly they think that families ‘provide children with larger social environments that affect how they view education’. Lastly the authors state that children who ‘come from families with greater economic resources are more likely to view college as a viable alternative. They argue that ‘with few economic resources, even academically talented young people may perceive college as beyond their reach and may, therefore, scale downward their educational aspirations’.⁵⁵⁷ Communist parents did not have many economic resources; their children grew up in working class neighbourhoods where the majority of people did not pursue academic careers. Communist children attended ordinary primary schools with teachers who often had little aspirations for their working class pupils. It is interesting that none of these factors caused communist parents or their children to lower their educational aspirations. The ‘family as a micro-social environment’ on the other hand, is very illustrative for communist families. Parents provided their children with literature, they encouraged intellectual activities, like political discussions which according to Teachman and Paasch emphasized the ‘value of academic achievement and spurred educational aspirations’.⁵⁵⁸ The next paragraph will show that communist families were in many respects fundamentally different from the wider working class, which is why they do not fit Teachman and Paasch’s model, or any other model. While communist parents encouraged their children to do well at school, they themselves were often deprived from further education. This didn’t stop them from developing themselves through courses provided by unions and the party, or through self-education:

My father did have a chip on his shoulder about his lack of education. My mother was educated and that was one of the reasons he was attracted to her, but because of this my father felt his own

⁵⁵⁷ J. D. Teachman and K. Paasch, ‘The Family and Educational Aspirations’, in *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 60, no. 3, August, 1998, pp. 704-5.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 705.

inadequacy even though he was a very intelligent man. My father had done a lot of courses through the party; socialist self-education. (Anonymous)

My father was a builder. He wanted to be part of the people (working class), whilst educating himself further. For example, he did a course in journalism to enable himself to write articles for union and party rags. (Els Wagenaar)

Raphael Samuel emphasized that communism had ‘a particular appeal to the self-educating working man’⁵⁵⁹; he refers to the CPGB’s early leaders like Tom Bell and Arthur MacManus as typical autodidacts. Constant methodical study was a communist duty because knowledge meant power. Samuel rightly noted that the CP ‘functioned as a kind of workers’ university’⁵⁶⁰ and Newton adds to this that ‘the pattern of self-education seems to have important implications for political activity, for although education does not determine political outlook, the educated are more likely to participate in the political affairs’⁵⁶¹. Therefore it was vital for the party that workers learned how to write, debate, take notes and speak in public, but with secondary and further education opening up for working class children, education through the party became less needed.

By encouraging education, parents wanted to give their children opportunities they themselves never had. The majority of parents were in favour of higher education. Whilst education became more accessible for the working classes, in the 1950s and early 1960s grammar schools and universities in both the Netherlands and in Britain were still dominated by the middle and upper classes; many respondents recalled having problems fitting in:

There were two schools to which I could go but, my mum wanted me to go to the more academic one. Education was very important to her. The fact was, I didn’t do very well and she later admitted that the head master didn’t really like us, because we came from a council estate. I didn’t feel very comfortable at this school, all the kids in my street went to another school, one that wasn’t so posh and looked much more fun. My school was terribly middle class. (Jill McLoughlin)

⁵⁵⁹ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 191.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 195.

⁵⁶¹ K. Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism*, p. 60.

Pat's case is illustrative for a wider phenomenon. As mentioned before, Floud and Halsey's research results show that only a very small percentage of working class boys attended grammar schools:⁵⁶²

I have vague recollections, once I went to secondary school, of not really bringing friends home from school. That may be partly to do with the fact the school was on the other side of town. In those days at the age of eleven, one would take the 11+ exam which decided which type of state school you would go to. I went to a grammar school which happened to be on the other side of town. Most of the people who would pass the 11+ were middle class; I was the only person from my street and my gang of friends who went to a grammar school. This was undoubtedly due to having grown up in a communist family. Absolutely no question about it. (Pat Devine)

In her book on working class cultures in Britain, Joanna Bourke notes that 'working class scholars found themselves in danger of being estranged from relatives, neighbours and friends'.⁵⁶³ This was not the case for the respondents who went to grammar schools and universities. Bourke quotes Valerie Walkerdine, who in the 1950s had won a scholarship to attend grammar school. Walkerdine describes how she lost her sense of belonging and her sense of safety in this new school. 'I didn't belong in the new place, any more than I now belonged in the old'.⁵⁶⁴ Walkerdine tried to fit in by changing her northern accent, which resulted in her being perceived as an impostor by both her new (middle class) friends from school, as well as her old (working class) friends in her neighbourhood. Unlike Walkerdine, respondents who were attending grammar school weren't ashamed of their background and that is why they did not find themselves estranged from fellow working class friends and neighbours either.

Ann, whose father was a miner, remembers:

I suppose we were unusual as a family in that all three of us (Ann and her two siblings) went to a grammar school. They always felt that education was very important and as communists it was one

⁵⁶² J.E. Floud, and A.H. Halsey, 'Intelligence Tests, Social Class and Selection for Secondary Schools', pp. 33-9.

⁵⁶³ J. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960*, p. 120.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

of the things they were fighting for, for working-class kids to have those opportunities; but we were certainly never made to feel that we were better or different from anybody.⁵⁶⁵

In his 1981 article on the correlation between socio-economic class position and educational achievement in the 1960s and 1970s, Bond notes that teachers project non-supportive attitudes onto working class children and he argues that working class children ‘received inferior treatment from the educational establishment’.⁵⁶⁶ Carla and Henk’s story seems to confirm this theory that teachers held low expectations for working class pupils:

In the last three years of primary school I had such a strange teacher. He was very negative and told us (working class children) we were not going to excel and he wanted to send us all to the ‘huishoudschool’ (a domestic science school). (Carla van Buuren)

Henk did an aptitude test in school. He also noticed that most children from working class backgrounds were, according to the outcome of this test, just about capable to go to a technical or a domestic science school:

I was advised to do something manual. I had to bend this iron wire and it took me about half an hour. I couldn’t hit a nail in the wall, but according to this test I was exceptionally handy. My parents thought it was ridiculous and said: we are sending you to a grammar school. My parents did stimulate me to do well at school and they decided against the advice from the teacher and sent me to a grammar school (lyceum) instead. (Henk Hulst)

Like in Britain, only a very small number of Dutch working class children went to grammar schools. Henk went to a grammar school in the mid-1950s. Between 1950 and 1965 only 15 percent of grammar school pupils came from a working class background.⁵⁶⁷ Within this 15 percent, communist working class children were disproportionately represented. Communist parents were an exception to the rule when it came to disregarding teachers’ academic advice. In a 1961 local study into the factors that influenced male pupils’ choice

⁵⁶⁵ Interview with Ann Kane in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 142.

⁵⁶⁶ G. C. Bond, ‘Social Economic Status and Educational Achievement: A Review Article’, in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4, Winter, 1981, p. 243-4.

⁵⁶⁷ P. Boekholt and E. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland. Vanaf de Middeleeuwen tot aan de Huidige Tijd*, Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1987, p. 260.

of secondary education, de Haan, Bolle and Scheffers established that teachers' advice about a pupil's further education was influenced not by the pupil's IQ but by the parents' socioeconomic status. Because of the lack of unbiased tests, 74 percent of parents 'chose' consistent with the teacher's advice.⁵⁶⁸

It was in school that many respondents had their first negative experiences with their communist background. Unlike in their neighbourhood, in school it was hard to hide their upbringing; especially in those cases where respondents' parents let their political opinions get in the way of their children's education. Sometimes overly opinionated parents contributed to the alienation of their own children. In this context respondents remember that taking the day off on May Day, which wasn't an official bank holiday, was sometimes problematic or embarrassing. It made respondents stand out, something which many of them like the majority of young children or teenagers wanted to avoid:

I didn't have to go to school on May Day. It wasn't an official holiday, but we took the day off. We would go to the children's May Day celebrations and in the evening we joined my parents to see Marcus Bakker (party executive). My dad used to write a letter to school the day before May Day, saying 'On Labour Day we take the day off'. People at school laughed at me, but no one dared to say 'you are not allowed'. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

I experienced problems on May Day, because I had to ask my teacher if I could have the day off. On that day there would be vans with a sound system in our street and I remember being really embarrassed about it. I was only a child and didn't really know yet what it was all about. (Mario Blokzijl)

Surprisingly, bullying in school, according to the respondents, was often instigated by teachers or headmasters. The stories are disconcerting, but it is impossible to say with certainty if these foul acts committed by teachers can be put down as anti-communism or if there were other problems involved.

Ann Kane remembers 1955, the year of a major strike in the area, she and her two siblings were in grammar school. Because the strike went on for a long time, the school had

⁵⁶⁸ D.J. de Haan, H. Bolle and K. Scheffers, *Zaanse Jongens en Schoolkeuze: Onderzoek naar Factoren die de Keuze van Voortgezet Onderwijs in 1961 voor Mannelijke Leerlingen van de 6^e Klasse van het Lager Onderwijs in de Zaanstreek Bepalen*, Zaandam: Ver. Centr. Techn. School Zaandam, 1961, pp. 35 and 43.

decided to give miners' children school dinners. Children had to bring in a letter asking for school dinners and had to stand up in class with it:

I remember in a math's class I was the only person in the class who had brought in this bloody letter asking for school dinners and I remember the math's teacher saying he would have expected some of the others to be asking but not me, because he thought this strike was being organised by the communists. He implied it was all my father's fault, and we shouldn't be getting the free school dinners, and I remember being slightly embarrassed by that.⁵⁶⁹

Other teachers made inappropriate comments.

On the Monday morning after the May Day march I used to come to school with the *Daily Worker* May Day badge and I remember I when I was about nine I came to school with it and Mr. Baggs, the deputy head of my primary school said, 'Oh we're communists are we?'⁵⁷⁰

I wasn't bullied by other kids. Some teacher made some horrible comments and would insinuate things. It would always be PvdA teachers doing this; they said nasty things about communist parents. My parents weren't happy and my dad went to school a couple of times to complain. (Joop IJlsberg)

Communist children were put on the spot by teachers when questions were asked, whose answers could reveal their communist background:

I remember at secondary school, my teacher asked the class 'What newspaper does your family take'. She went round in the class room and at one girl from a very middle class family the teacher joked "Daily Worker?" and the class laughed. So when the teacher came to me I said 'The Morning Star'. (Jill McLoughlin)

Jill wasn't embarrassed about her parents reading a communist paper. On the contrary, she loved being different, but she was never bullied in school because of her background. A question like 'What newspaper do your parents take?' is, in retrospect, rather inappropriate. Mario, who was bullied in school, tried to hide his background. He remembers an incident at school which was quite similar to Jill's experience:

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Ann Kane in P.Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, pp. 140-1.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Michael Rosen in P.Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 53.

I did have a nasty experience with a teacher. He knew what my dad did, but he asked me during a Geography class; So Mario, what does your dad do for a living? (Mario's father was a well known journalist for *De Waarheid*) I answered; He is a journalist. Than he wanted to know what paper my dad worked for. I didn't tell him. I was very angry with this teacher, the way he wanted to expose me. I didn't walk around with an ANJV badge, so most people didn't know I was a communist. (Mario Blokzijl)

Ed's art teacher had a vivid imagination;

In secondary school I had a couple of confrontations with teachers who made comments about the fact I was a communist. I had this arts teacher, I was by the way not very good at drawing so maybe that had something to do with it, but this teacher told us to draw a sail boat. Well I thought to myself 'I can do this', and I drew a sail boat. The teacher looked at my drawing and he saw a hammer and sickle in the sail; what a load of nonsense! Like I would draw such a thing! (Ed de Witte)

The teacher got it wrong in Ed's case, but curiously a few respondents remember being fond of drawing communist scenes. Peter de Leeuwe remembers drawing a street with red flags, hammers and sickles and banners with *Long Live Stalin* on the blackboard at school. Dave Cope, who felt rather isolated as a child in school, used to draw Soviet planes attacking American or Korean planes in art class. None of his classmates who saw his pictures understood where he was coming from, hence the feeling of isolation. These examples are colourful illustrations of how a political upbringing can influence a young child's life. The subject of a child's drawing might seem an innocent difference between communist and non-communist children, but it also reveals a deeper problem. Just like Dave, respondents recall a sense of feeling misunderstood by non-communists:

I felt I was different at school, very strongly. I remember this girl Shirley who was a fellow student. One day I got really mad that nobody cared about current affairs and what was going on in the world and she said, 'Maybe it just puzzles us. We just don't know how to make sense of it'. She said it really nicely, like she was admiring me, but basically she was saying that she looked at the world and it baffled her, and that was the great virtue of Marxism, that it gave you an interpretive key to reading and understanding events.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Jude Bloomfield in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 69.

Jude, in retrospect, values Marxism as a method and her communist upbringing in general because her parents encouraged her to think about current affairs and taught her to have a sense of moral responsibility, nevertheless she also admits feeling an outsider; the things children learned in school were very different from what they learned at home. Children were surprised but also confused when they found out in school not everyone shared their parents' enthusiasm for communism. Their idea of reality was often rather distorted:

I can remember being at school saying to a teacher when I was seven, 'You don't know who John Gollan is?' Of course the teacher didn't know and I was really surprised about that because I thought of him in the same league of importance as Gaitskell; he was a party leader – I didn't realize he was in a very small party.⁵⁷²

Overall respondents wouldn't describe their school time as particularly negative, although the majority remembers certain incidents of feeling sidelined because of their parents' political persuasion:

When I went to the lyceum, one day the head master came in and told our class that there were pen pal addresses in America. So we could write letters to children there. I didn't get an address. I've asked for one, because I was keen, but he said it was for the best if I didn't get one. (Henk Hulst)

Margreet Schrevel points out that the term 'dirty commie' and similar terms of abuse weren't by definition politically charged. She wonders if it wasn't just one of the names children called each other. The story of two respondents⁵⁷³, who are the same age, who grew up in the same neighbourhood and went to the same school, seems to confirm this suspicion. One had never experienced any trouble, whilst the other had plenty of negative experiences. So were there other reasons why children were called 'dirty commie'?⁵⁷⁴ Joop IJlsberg blames the teachers for labeling pupils as 'communists' inspiring other pupils to use this information in a negative way. Henk Hulst sums it all up when he points out that he

⁵⁷² Interview with Martin Kettle in: P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 182.

⁵⁷³ Bob Albrecht and Els Wagenaar grew up in the same neighbourhood and were in the same class, Els had no problems at all whilst Bob felt singled out, which he related to his family's political outlook.

⁵⁷⁴ M. Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands Fabrikaat', p. 342.

was sometimes called ‘communist’ but most of the time ‘four eyes’. It is interesting to see that the respondents who stood up for themselves and were not afraid to talk about their upbringing were least likely to be bullied, whilst the people who tried so very hard to hide their background were often targets:

In my history class I did a talk about Marxism and my teacher who was very right wing, thought I did really well and gave me an A. Around the same time I went to a summer camp Czechoslovakia and when I came back I told my fellow class mates all about my adventures. Not a problem. No one responded negatively. (Els Wagenaar)

My Geography teacher always wanted to discuss communism with me; he loved it. One day I didn’t feel like it and my fellow class mates got really angry with me, they never used to do their geography homework, because I was always debating communism and the teacher never gave the rest of the class any attention. (Kees Gnirrep)

Others took it a step further and bragged about their upbringing and used it to be different and interesting:

I can remember giving smart-arse answers in primary school to questions. Teachers would say we should thank God for milk and I would say ‘No, it comes from the Milk Marketing Board or from cows’. I used to bring a Marxist analysis to bear at school, I think it was just showing off really.⁵⁷⁵

Everyone at school knew I was a communist; I was actually bragging about it. I would tell people about illegal demonstration and police interception (I completely exaggerated) My fellow class mates thought it was really interesting. I used my communist background to distinct myself from the rest. (Ben Wellerdieck)

These more positive attitudes towards a communist upbringing developed as children became older and more (politically) aware. Very young children, as Martin Kettle’s story illustrates, tended to be more confused or completely unaware about their upbringing, but as respondents got older some of them used their communist background to distinguish themselves.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with Alexei Sayle in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 43.

When comparing the Dutch and the British respondents' experiences in school, a fundamental difference occurs. The fact that both Dutch and British communist parents encouraged and sometimes pressured their children to do well at school has already been established and discussed. But for many of the Dutch respondents the reason to do well in school had nothing to do with social elevation. For Dutch communist parents education had, above all, a developmental value; it was important to have knowledge, so children would be able to stand up for themselves and defend the communist ideology whenever this was required. Whereas British communist parents wanted their children to get a good job and do well in life; Dutch communists didn't want their children to out-grow their class, so there was no job prospects. This paradoxical attitude caused many Dutch respondents to drop out of school. They often had no idea why they studied or what they were aiming for. Mario Blokzijl dropped out of the MULO, which was an advanced elementary education, in his third year because according to him: 'I was very lazy and when I was sixteen, I decided to get a job instead'.⁵⁷⁶ Lieuwe Dijkse went to the University of Technology in Wageningen but dropped out after two years; 'I went into the army and when I came back, I thought to myself, I have two hands, I would rather work than go back to university'.⁵⁷⁷

Work and Employment

Many communists valued manual labour over an intellectual or office job. This preference influenced respondents like Lieuwe and Mario in their decision to drop out of school. It is important to note that in this context peer pressure played a significant role. Often respondents met their peers in communist youth organizations, like the ANJV. As discussed in chapter two, the ANJV was an organisation for working youth and respondents who were still in school felt sometimes out of place within this organization. Especially in the 1950s and early 1960s there was a certain pressure within the ANJV to find a (manual) job. The following remark made in 1958 by Peter Boezeman, who was one of the leaders of the communist youth organisation *Uilenspiegelclub*, illustrates the preference of manual labour over intellectual labour:

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Mario Blokzijl, 2002.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Lieuwe Dijkse, 2002.

I was a terrible pupil in school and I am still not a great learner. I would be willing to study geology, but not inside a classroom but with a pickaxe and a shovel outside. I would advise anyone; quit your studies before it's too late.⁵⁷⁸

Thus Dutch respondents were confronted with mixed signals; in their communist youth organisation respondents were told that it is better to quit your studies and find a job; the communist party propagated the importance to stay within one's class and glorified labourers, pitmen, builders and diggers 'without whom the Netherlands would be an uninhabitable desert',⁵⁷⁹ but at the same time respondents' parents encouraged them to do well at school without assisting their children in making career choices.

In contrast, British respondents were often encouraged by their parents to make a career, even if this meant they could not become a member of the communist party:

I effectively dropped out after my A-levels, I did not go to university. My parents were fine with this and suggested I should do something to get a career. They sort of pushed me to become a civil servant, which was remarkable because it meant I was not allowed to be active in a political party. (Harriet Naden)

Alexei Sayle had a similar experience:

In a contradictory way my mum always drummed it into me that my dad had been shafted by the left and they had not really risen, so I always had it bashed it into me that I was going to be materially successful in a way he wasn't, which turned out to be the case. It was made clear to me I wasn't going to be encouraged to join the proletariat and I would rise above all that – there was never any question of me working for a living as it were!⁵⁸⁰

Both Alexei and Harriet have parents who were very loyal communists who were not only committed to their party but they were also incredibly loyal to the Soviet Union, which makes their attitude towards careerism all the more remarkable. Brian Pollitt's story shows that this attitude also exists amongst the highest party officials. After Brian left the army in the mid-1950s, he became a sales representative for Unilever. He was very good at his job

⁵⁷⁸ Archive Uilenspiegelclub, 1953-1959, map 3.

⁵⁷⁹ *De Waarheid*, September 3, 1951.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with Alexei Sayle in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 50.

and after two years he became a management trainee. Brian struggled at times with the contradiction, on the one hand, of pursuing a managerial career at a huge capitalist firm like Unilever and being an active communist on the other. Harry Pollitt, who was the chairman of CPGB at the time, had some unexpected but above all unorthodox advice for his son:

My father learned from me in December 1957 that, albeit on a proper private mileage allowance, I'd used my company car to ferry around stuff for the *Daily Worker* bazaar in Liverpool. He was worried that political activity of this kind could threaten my job. He went further and said that I'd finally 'got my feet under the table', should now 'make a success of (my) life'.⁵⁸¹

Harry Pollitt suggested his son should leave the party, which left Brian in shock, because it meant he had to abandon everything he had ever believed in. Maybe Harry's advice stems from a deep disappointment with the party, since it was a year after the revelations about Stalin's regime, but nevertheless it is remarkable that someone like him can let go of one of the most basic principles of the communist ideology. The fact that Brian, son of the former CPGB General Secretary, is encouraged to make a career, even if this means he has to sacrifice his party membership, seems to suggest that British communists had quite a different and more moderate outlook on the communist ideology than their Dutch contemporaries. It seems the British communist attitude towards class changed drastically in the post-war period. Samuel, who describes the world of British communism in the 1940s, notes 'class, for communists, was an exclusive discrimination. It forbade, or delegitimated, alternative forms of belonging, relegating nationality, religion and race, for example, to the nether regions of "false consciousness".' He continues, 'mobility was a kind of pollutant, stability a source of strength, corporate loyalties, keeping rank, as highly prized as in the armed service or the boarding schools. Class consciousness, in short, was a matter of honour.'⁵⁸² Drawing on the British respondents' accounts, this strict attitude seems to have disappeared.

The importance for Dutch communists to stay within one's class affected not only their children's school careers; it also influenced their own careers. Dutch communists did not view work as a social vehicle. Work was about solidarity, which was more important

⁵⁸¹ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 114.

⁵⁸² R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 172.

than the individual. 'Be part of the workers, don't be in charge' was their motto. Anja, Greetje and Ans all have similar recollections:

My father was a labourer. I always thought it was remarkable he never wanted any promotion. He was convinced it wasn't appropriate as a communist to get higher up. He didn't want to be in charge, but I always thought he had the qualities of a leader. (Anja Brasser)

My father never made a career for himself, it never played a big part in our family, to make a career. My dad was very eager to learn though, he even did his MBA when he was 47, but this was not to get a better job, he did this for himself. (Greetje Zoutendijk)

My dad never tried to get higher up, have a career; be a foreman. He didn't want to rise above other people. I never aimed for a career either. Just work hard, and act normal. Don't be lazy. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

Group solidarity was very important for communists, especially when work was done in shifts and in the case of piece work. 'Don't work harder or less hard than the person who's sitting next to you' was their adage and appreciation for the boss often equaled betrayal of your fellow workers and promotion meant less respect from fellow comrades at work and party members:

My dad refused to work over-hours; he was convinced one had to be able to earn a wage in the official work hours. My dad did not want to become a foreman, he was a carpenter, but didn't want to get higher up. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

My father didn't want to become foreman. He refused to work for capitalists, he didn't want to be in charge of 'capital'. Making a career for yourself was not something we aimed for in our family. But you had to be a role model at work. A sort of Stachanov-worker. (Jan Lensen)

It is interesting that unlike the Dutch communists' view on education, their view on work was very similar to that of the wider working class. Generally there was very little ambition to get 'higher up'. The Dutch working class in the 1950s and 1960s was characterized by a sense of contentment, which is a result of the WWII; people were just quite relieved the war was over and were happy with just basic needs, like a home, a job and enough money

to feed the family. A 1965 survey shows that this attitude was persistent and not only characteristic for the immediate post war period of reconstruction. 126 interviewees, of whom four percent were communists and 44 percent social democrats, who were part of the lowest paid segments of the working classes, answered questions about social aspiration. The report shows that these people had few dreams in life. They were satisfied with very little, although at the same time they felt a sense of social injustice. A large group of workers, nationally about 40 percent, did not view work as a social vehicle. The majority of this group, who were either semi- or unskilled workers, preferred to stay on the same social level as their parents and their fellow workers. The authors concluded that the interviewees compensated insecurities about their life, with solidary relationships with others in similar circumstances.⁵⁸³

Comparing the Dutch and British interviews it is again remarkable that the parents of British respondents do not seem to have the same objections to making a career for oneself. The majority of working parents excelled in their job and moved upwards within a certain profession. This was seen as relatively normal and wasn't particularly frowned upon as long as the promotion and pay rise was within reason. Even though fellow party members did not object, some respondents do recall that their parents found it hard to marry the communist theory with reality at work:

I think my parents saw themselves as workers. My dad was an editor and this was a source of conflict and eventually lost his job because he found it hard to be on the side of the management, he was always on the side of the journalists. He saw himself as a journalist, but obviously the management needed him to be on their side. It was a major problem. (Frank Birch)

Others felt there was a certain contradiction between communist theory and the reality:

My father owned a printing business (which was okay). Another couple of friends of my parents who had a painting and decorating business and lived not very far away from us in quite a big house. They had obviously done pretty well for themselves and I remember my mum and dad said they were 'alright' even though they run a business, so again there was this contradiction. (Viv Mackay)

⁵⁸³ G.L. Durlacher, *De Laagstbetaalden*, Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1965, pp. 57 and 68.

This contradiction was also visible in the Netherlands. The following quote from an interview with a Dutch communist illustrates the difficulties communists had to overcome, trying to implement the communist theory in a capitalist society:

My father, a painter and decorator, was so 'red', he couldn't get a job anywhere... When he started his own business, Party members held this against him and said: now you are an exploiter too... But my dad was extremely principled. When he started his own business he advertised in a newspaper. 'Painter & Decorator, all sorts of paintwork, except for churches, pubs and barracks'⁵⁸⁴

The following respondent's father, who she describes as a pragmatic Stalinist, often lectured her on 'workerism' and the strength and goodness of the ordinary man. He became a civil servant when she was eight years old. She remembers his career:

Dad went up in his profession; he became first of all an instructor, then a manager, then a regional manager. He sort of joined the upper ranks of the area he worked in. There was social mobility and in that sense he was a closet bourgeois. (Anonymous)

The following case shows that the communist attitude towards careerism in Britain was once very similar to that of the Dutch communists, but based on the respondents' accounts, again this attitude seems to have changed in the course of the 1950s. In the late 1940s, a man called Pat Mills worked at Morris Motors in Cowley. He was a very active party member, who was not only very popular and loyal but also an outstanding boxer. In an interview with the History Workshop, Arthur Exell described what happened:

Pat Mills was made a foreman at Morris Motors. We criticised him for it, but he said he could do more good as a foreman. That was his view. We said they would use him, and they did. We had another party member at Radiators who was a foreman, Ginger Everett. But he didn't become a foreman after joining the party. He was a foreman before he joined the party. That's the way we looked at it. We tried to persuade Pat Mills against taking it on. We had a meeting with him at my house. He came to a special meeting and we told him he had to resign as a foreman. He wouldn't do it. So he resigned from the party. It was very upsetting for us all. I remember him crying - in the corner. Pat never got over it really. I think he came back in for a short while. But his whole life had

⁵⁸⁴ D. Ploeger, *Dagelijks Leven in de Vrij-Socialistische Beweging in Groningen, Door Hen Zelf Verteld*, Groningen: Wilbert Dekker, 1979, p. 21.

been upset because of that disagreement/row. He'd been in the party for a long time when it happened, and he'd been a 'good 'un' too. But we couldn't persuade him. He said, 'As a foreman I shall still continue with my party activities and I can do just as much for the party as a foreman as not'. We said he couldn't.⁵⁸⁵

Arthur was right; Pat didn't last long. He was forced to sack a worker on behalf of the management; he in Arthur's words 'realised then he'd gone wrong', because 'once you find yourself being utilized by a boss to get rid of a worker no one is going to trust you'.⁵⁸⁶ Pat quit his job as foreman and rejoined the Party, 'but it was never the same again, never'.⁵⁸⁷ It wasn't always easy for communists to find work, especially during the 1950s when the Cold War 'heated up'. In both countries communists were blacklisted and investigated by the Secret Service; MI5 in Britain and *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (BVD) in the Netherlands. Several respondents felt that their parents were discriminated because of their political conviction:

It would be false to say communists did not experience any discrimination. My dad never really advanced academically, both mum and my dad felt that their academic careers were blocked at a certain point. My dad never got to be a don. A classic case in Cambridge was Morris Dobb (economist), who was a reader but never became professor, which was a total academic scandal. (Stephen Munby)

When I tried to get a job, I experienced problems because of my background. I wanted to work for the PTT (Royal Mail), 'forget it': I wasn't able to work for 'the state'. I couldn't get a job on the council either. And they (employers) were never allowed to tell me why I didn't get the job. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

Ed's grandparents were active communists, but his parents didn't join the party. 'The communist bug skipped a generation' as he puts it. His father experienced quite a few problems with his party background:

⁵⁸⁵ A. Exell, 'Morris Motors in the 1940s', *History Workshop Journal* 9, Spring 1980, p. 103.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, p.104.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

Just my father's last name 'de Witte' caused problems (the 'de Witte' family was a well known communist family in Rotterdam). He applied for a job at Shell after the war, he wasn't hired. After that he was hired at the Rotterdam council (civil servant) but he never got any kind of promotion (whilst all his colleagues did). At a certain point his colleagues thought this was so unfair that they had a word with their superiors. They listened and just before my dad retired he finally got the promotion he deserved. (Ed de Witte)

What is interesting about these recollections is that we can never be sure if 'communism' was really to blame for not getting a job. It is significant that the respondents link these rejections to politics. It enforced a feeling of us and them:

My dad wasn't an easy man to work with. He always told us he was being crossed in his job by the BVD. That was the reason he couldn't get a job. At the time I wasn't sure if that was really true. (Hannah de Leeuwe)

In some cases there was clear evidence of discrimination. Nina Temple's father worked at the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges. When the boss left, Nina's father, Landon, applied for the job:

Because he was in the communist party they weren't going to let him get the promotion he had earned. All sorts of dirty tricks happened, including allegations made against him. A guy in the organisation who was gay was made by MI5 to denounce Landon. Eventually this man arranged a meeting with Landon to tell him he hadn't wanted to do it but they had threatened to expose him. There were still Cold War attitudes at that point and that cast a shadow over the family. Landon was driven out of the job altogether in a very unpleasant way.⁵⁸⁸

Michael Rosen had similar experiences. He worked for the BBC in the 1970s and he felt the director general was determined that, because he was a 'known leftie', he would not get a staff job: 'Even when I was given staff jobs informally by a committee interviewing me, two weeks later I'd get a letter saying I hadn't got the job'.⁵⁸⁹ Much later Michael's suspicions why he never got a staff job were officially confirmed; 'This all came out in

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with Nina Temple in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 91.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with Michael Rosen in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 64.

1984 when the *Observer* showed I had been blacklisted as communist.’⁵⁹⁰ It was not only adults applying for jobs who were investigated. Children couldn’t escape the Cold War paranoia either and suffered the consequences of their parents’ involvement in the CP:

I can remember a rather strange story. In 1966, on the occasion of the engagement of (Princes) Beatrix and Claus (von Amstel), I was ‘Elsje’ in a Midsummer nights dream performed by the Haagsche Comedie. Everyone was screened by the BVD, because Claus and Beatrix were attending the play. They questioned whether I could perform that night or not; they made such a fuss. Like I, whilst playing the character of Elsje, would throw a bomb or something. (Hannah de Leeuwe)

Hannah’s case is remarkable; until she was investigated herself, she had always doubted her father’s claims that he was being crossed in his job by the BVD. She notes; ‘Anyway I did realize afterwards that maybe my dad’s stories about the BVD were true after all.’ There was a real sense of secrecy and respondents often had the feeling they were being watched. Henk Hulst noted that his next door neighbour had a very strange occupation:

He was home every day to see who was entering our house. It was his job. I learned from a very young age that you don’t say anything to anyone. Be careful, keep in check. We knew we were being watched. Yes we were always careful with what we said over the phone. You can call it paranoia, but I wouldn’t call it that. When I moved to another house we discovered a little box on the wall; they said it was for cable TV, but it was clear to me what it was for. Guys came round to check it all the time, until they realized my dad left the party; all of a sudden the box was screwed down. There is clematis growing over it now. (Henk Hulst)

Barbara Loftus and Sally Klomp suspected their phone was tapped, because whenever they picked up there was a ‘click’. Jill McLoughlin, and again Sally Klomp, both remember that letters in the mail were opened and Lieuwe Dijksen recalls that his dad found out he was being followed. The BVD was also after Alex Geelhoed’s father. Years later, his father read his own BVD report and suspected one of his brothers ‘grassed him up’, because the BVD had a lot of information on him which only his close relatives knew about. Communists were not always innocent victims of Cold War attitudes, a number of communist fathers were shop floor activists and consciously jeopardized their jobs by

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

playing parts in (unofficial) strikes. As noted in chapter one, communists in the Netherlands were kept out of trade unions and their own trade union Eenheidsvakcentrale (EVC) was no longer viewed a legal body because it was too closely linked to the CPN (unions had to be independent from political parties), meaning Dutch communist activists were not protected by union membership. British communists on the other hand were allowed to join trade unions and often had key positions within their union. Communist activists were generally seen as troublemakers and many respondents recall that their fathers were regularly on strike. It is interesting to see what kind of impact this had on family life, in particular the relationship between the parents:

He was a notorious communist in Rotterdam often the instigator of strikes. My mother supported him, although not always with lots of joy since she had to deal with the financial consequences of strikes. (Ans de Witte-Mantel)

My dad would always lead the way in most strikes and was often spokesperson. I remember my mother would be angry sometimes and shout at him; 'For crying out loud, do you always have to lead the way? Think about your children'. My mum would be terrified my dad would lose his job, we already had so little money. These were the only times I know of that my mother wouldn't be behind my dad. (Kees Gnirrep)

Because my father was a strike leader, he was constantly fired; no job, no income. But my mum always supported him and made ends meet. She believed in the good cause. (Els Wagenaar)

Many communist mothers were used to work whenever their partner was unemployed. There was often a partnership in the most literal sense of the word; women enabled men to carry out their political beliefs and go on strike. Other women had to work because their husbands were paid by the party which meant an extremely low wage. Mario's father was a journalist for *De Waarheid* and was paid by the party:

My father's salary was very low; my mum had to work as a washer up and seamstress her whole life. She would do her sewing at home; we had one of those huge machines in the living room. She didn't mind she had to work, she believed in the good cause, and didn't mind making sacrifices for it. Solidarity was important. (Mario Blokzijl)

The labour movement never propagated that mothers should go out to work. Until the 1970s it was generally thought that *women* should be given the choice to work but at the same time it was felt that it shouldn't be necessary for *mothers* to have a job. It wasn't unusual for (working class) mothers to work but it was certainly frowned upon. For his research project into cultural changes in the Netherlands between 1965 and 1970 Middendorp found that in 1965, 82.1 percent of interviewees disapproved of working mothers.⁵⁹¹

Within the Marxist theory there is the basic assumption women should be able to work outside of the house, married or not married. But as Withuis points out this theory wasn't always easy to defend in non-socialist countries where the labour movement was fighting for higher wages based on the assumption a worker should be able to support his family. This socialist objection to working mothers was felt by many and often discussed within both the British and the Dutch Party.⁵⁹² Besides this socialist objection some communists also shared society's moral objections to working mothers. The following letter, published in *De Waarheid* of 5 November 1956, written by a communist mother was sent as a reply to a letter written by Mrs. M published the previous week, which condemned working mothers because it was considered inappropriate and unhealthy for children to grow up with an absent mother. It emphasizes the diversity of opinions on the subject:

If Mrs. M. was married to a building site labourer and had to live off 52 guilders unemployment benefits a week during the winter months, maybe then she would understand how many working class families live. We have the prospect of the spring, but don't think it's that much better; my husband has never found a job of 120 guilders a week. The wages are around 80 guilders so we can't afford anything extra. I don't have a washing machine and my husband doesn't have a moped, although he needs to cycle three quarters of an hour twice a day in order to get to work. These items (a washing machine and a moped) would not be luxuries. Believe me; no mother would choose to abandon her family to go to work or because she has lots of time on her hands. The school doctors' reports speak regularly about children who are malnourished. Doesn't that tell you enough about the situation in many Dutch working class families? Going out to work is not always a solution. The solution is getting the money from the people who have the money; the employers. Women should

⁵⁹¹ C.P. Middendorp, 'Culturele Veranderingen in Nederland', p. 5.

⁵⁹² J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek*, pp. 300-1.

decide for themselves if they want to work or not. But women need to fight together with men for higher wages and fight for crèches and other child care facilities so children don't have to wonder the street any more with a key around their neck. (Mrs. G. v S.B. Haarlem)⁵⁹³

There were ambivalent ideas about motherhood and employment within the communist movement. Many CPN and CPGB publications emphasized the greatness of the Soviet Union by printing stories and photographs of working Soviet women. But these photographs of strong independent hard working and happy mothers were accompanied by stories about great childcare. In Britain and the Netherlands childcare facilities were scarce in the 1950s and 1960s, so on the one hand the reader was informed about the Soviet ideal, but on the other hand the conclusion was drawn that Britain and the Netherlands like most other non-socialist countries were not ready yet for emancipated mothers. Whenever parents could either rely on a babysitter, often a neighbour or grandparents, or when mothers could work part-time, respondents' parents did try to implement the aforementioned Soviet ideal:

My mother worked for the first part of this period (between the age of 8 and 17) as a secretary in a school, she got paid regularly and then she retrained as a teacher. It was necessary but also a choice for my mother to work. Basically I think she earned the money the family lived off. (Pat Devine)

My mother was a typist and continued working when my sister and I were born. She thought that, from a communist viewpoint, women should be able to work. We subscribed to different party magazines and they were full of women from the Soviet Union and from Eastern European countries, who were working. (Frank Schabracq)

Frank's mother was lucky, because her husband who was a dockworker helped her around the house. They had successfully divided the household chores and his parents thought of the traditional roll patterns as bourgeois. Although there are quite a few examples of women who worked full time, the majority of the respondents' mothers only worked whenever their salary was needed to support the family.

⁵⁹³ *De Waarheid*, November 5, 1956, p. 8.

Money and Poverty

On the subject of poverty Newton notes;

Most communist autobiographies and biographies begin with an account of poverty-stricken childhood conditions. Most of the authors are self-educated, skilled workers whose writing is coherent and articulate. Unlike less intelligent and ambitious workers, communists are able to fit their own experience of poverty into an elaborate ideological frame of reference.⁵⁹⁴

Poverty and unemployment were indeed important incentives for respondents' parents or grandparents to join the communist party and many respondents grew up with very little money. Hardship and poverty were considered to be part of the class struggle; the Dutch Communist Party was traditionally the party of the minimum wage earners. Under influence of the economic growth of the 1950s, the working class transformed, having been more or less the same since the turn of the century. British communist working class families transformed together with the rest of the working class. Wages went up and there was more money to spend on luxury items. The majority of British respondents recall that their parents over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s acquired a car, a TV and other items. Overall it seems the economic growth had a more immediate impact on British working class families; until the mid 1960s, the lives of the Dutch respondents were characterized by poverty and hardship.⁵⁹⁵ Compared to other West-European countries, incomes in the Netherlands continued to be very low. Life was fairly sober during the first decade after the war. Purchasing power was often barely sufficient to buy the necessary food and clothes. Many products such as textile, coffee, washing powder and cigarettes were still rationed until the early 1950s. Purchasing power began to grow from 1955 onwards, although this new wealth was spent primarily to buy items like refrigerators and washing machines rather than luxury items like cars or televisions; in 1960 only 20 percent

⁵⁹⁴ K. Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism*, p. 63-4.

⁵⁹⁵ The previously discussed *Geleide loonpolitiek* (centrally directed pay policies) between 1945 and 1963 resulted in very low and stagnant wages, which partly explains the dire financial situation of respondents' families.

of Dutch families owned a TV,⁵⁹⁶ compared to nearly 75 percent in Britain.⁵⁹⁷

Dutch respondents' families struggled to make ends meet, especially in those cases when parents worked for the party, because the wages were extremely low and party fees were very high. Alex remembers:

We were extremely poor; my grandmother had to pay for new shoes if they were needed. The party salary was very low. It wasn't easy for my mum; she often had to work as a cleaner to make some extra money. Whenever the man who collected the health insurance money would knock on our door, she would not open. But I can't say I ever missed out on anything. (Alex Geelhoed)

We were definitely poor; we weren't starving or anything, but we didn't have much. We didn't have a television until late; we always watched telly at our neighbours'. We didn't have a telephone when I was young. We got a car in the mid-sixties, a very old Vauxhall. Then my dad decided, typically, we should have a Trabant instead. Whenever he took the car to work, the whole street was filled with smoke. We rented out rooms to make a little extra money, we had students living with us. The money was used for clothes and other necessities. We really suffered when my dad decided to work for the communist publishing house as a book seller; we had no money at all. (Greetje Zoutendijk)

Overall it is clear that Dutch respondents and their families were financially more deprived than their British counterparts. Whereas the vast majority of Dutch respondents grew up with very little money in the 1950s and 1960s, only three British respondents would class their families as poor. Dutch communists, more so than British, considered being poor as a virtue, although it wasn't a deliberate choice. In the eyes of Dutch communists money stank and 'luxury' was a dirty word. Living a sober and thrifty life wasn't perceived as something negative, it was almost a requirement of being a good communist. Based on the respondents' testimonies, it seems these values were not necessarily shared by British communists. The following two quotes illustrate that they, unlike their Dutch contemporaries, did not reject luxuries. Jill's father was a union representative and a very active communist. She recalls growing up on a council estate in London:

⁵⁹⁶ A. Dieleman, 'De Late Jaren Vijftig of de Vroege Jaren Zestig', in Ger Tillekens (ed.), *Nuchterheid en Nozems. De Opkomst van Jeugdcultuur in de Jaren Vijftig*, Amsterdam: Muiderberg, 1990, pp. 11-30.

⁵⁹⁷ S. Bowden and A. Offer, 'Household Appliances and the Use of Time; the US and Britain Since the 1920s', in *The Economic History Review*, New series vol. 47. no 4, November, 1994, pp 746.

When we lived in this council house, I always felt we had quite a bit of money to spend, we were better off than other people in the neighbourhood. One of the reasons we lived in a council house was that it was a political statement as my parents felt all houses should be council houses. We had a car, nice clothes and had quite a lot done in the house. My mum like nice things and didn't see any reason not to have them. (Jill McCloughlin)

Heather's recollections are very similar; her father was an electrician, who worked his way up and became a manager of an electrical shop before becoming a full time official of the Electrical Trade Union. They lived in a council house because her father felt it was good to set an example for the working people on how to live and what to do. Her father had to support a family of seven so there wasn't a lot of money when Heather grew up, nevertheless there was still money for luxuries:

My mum had a cleaner even when we were poor. We also had a washing machine already in the thirties, but our beautiful carpet had to be turned up side down when it wore out because we didn't have money for a new one. (Heather Chapman)

Viv's parents were also both dedicated communists. Her father had a very different attitude towards money than the average Dutch communist:

My dad was keen on classical music. In the front room he had the best HIFI equipment of the time. Tape recorders, speakers, hundreds of records and he would sit in this room on his own. We were one of the first families on the street who had television. My father always said; 'Nothing but the best for the working classes'. (Viv Mackay)

In the few cases that British respondents' parents were poor, they still had a hankering for luxuries:

My mother was very glamorous, she was small but always wore high heels and Suzie Wong dresses with slits right up her legs. She would always dress up for parties. The dresses must have been gifts, because they (my parents) were so poor they could not have been able to buy them. (Dorothy Sheridan)

These different views on what is appropriate for a communist to purchase are also notable when comparing the *Daily Worker* and *De Waarheid*. The latter, when writing about fashion for example, preferred to focus on sensible clothing instead of reporting on the latest fashion hype in Paris. Dutch communists were in tune with Samuel's statement on the subject; 'party women made a point of wearing "sensible" shoes, a jumper and slacks rather than high heels and taffeta'.⁵⁹⁸ *Daily Worker* articles about fashion indicate that this image was no longer aspired to in the post-war period. An article in *The Daily Worker* of July 1954 for example extensively discusses the newest fashion from the house of Dior; 'Furs are black and white, Mink worked in little shrug stoles with cuffed armhole chinchilla, stages a comeback for those who can afford it. Dior also likes giant barrel muffs in fox or beaver'.⁵⁹⁹ 'For those who can afford it', is an interesting remark which implies that it wouldn't be inappropriate for communists to buy luxury items like designer fur coats if they had the money. A similar article would have never appeared in the Dutch communist newspaper simply because luxury items like that would be deemed unnecessary and inappropriate.

Poverty can make children stand out and can potentially reinforce the sense of social isolation. The majority of the Dutch respondents who came from financially deprived families did not feel they stood out, which was mainly thanks to their mothers' thrifty lifestyle, but do remember the strain of the annual 'donations' to the party on the family budget:

We had to live a very sober and thrifty life. Also for the party because there would always be an Easter and Christmas envelope (for donations to the party). All those envelopes; I forgot about them but its all coming back now. (Loes Narings)

My mum was very efficient and thrifty. She saved money all year for different occasions like Sinterklaas and birthdays. We lived a sober life; I think this was stimulated by the party. They had to rely on the money donated by people like us. There were always envelopes. (Carla van Buuren)

⁵⁹⁸ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 185.

⁵⁹⁹ *Daily Worker*, July 15, 1954, p. 2.

The respondents' experiences back up Neal Wood's findings, who concluded that British communists in the post-war era were more moderate in their outlooks and less engrossed with theoretical questions. Dutch communists were more rigid in their views on money even if this would affect their family's financial situation:

My dad earned very little through the party. He got the same wage as a labourer, but gave up 50 percent to the party fund. My mum had to mend his shirts over and over again. Still, he was the best dressed communist in town. She did so much on her sewing machine. It was unbelievable. She would make new shirts for me out of my dad's old ones. Our financial situation improved when she started working again as a teacher. When my dad became director of the travel agency (Communist travel agency) he refused a director salary, the tax man didn't believe a word my dad said. My dad had principals, even if it was at the expense of other people. We were poor; not that we didn't have any food or anything, but we were just about able to make ends meet. I was always two years behind; if kids my age would get a bicycle, I would get one two years later. I accepted my father giving money back to the party though. Car? TV? No, we had a bicycle. What was considered a luxury; when my mum asked me to go to the baker to buy three pastries. It was also a luxury when we had roasted chicken for Christmas dinner. But then my dad would bring someone from the Christmas congress (CP congress) who would eat the chicken. I remember thinking; 'Goddamn, I was really looking forward to a bit of chicken'. (Henk Hulst)

Friendships and Relationships

Withuis argues that for communists the notion of being different was enforced by the fact that in their world, politics was life's most important dimension and because of this other people were only judged based on their political views. This made friendships with other non-communist people often impossible and it broke family ties. Withuis concluded that 'being different' even impeded communication. She cites Samuel who said that communist had their own particular speech, their own jargon to describe 'what was going on in the world'.⁶⁰⁰ Withuis doesn't mention the fact that Samuel, when he described this special language admitted that 'for all my political enthusiasm, I was somehow never able to master this jargon',⁶⁰¹ which makes one wonder how many people exactly did master this speech. Samuel's personal observations of the communist community are nevertheless in line with Withuis' ideas. He states that 'within the narrow confines of an organisation under

⁶⁰⁰ J. Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek*, p. 189.

⁶⁰¹ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 14.

siege we maintained the simulacrum of a complete society, insulated from alien influences, belligerent towards outsiders, protective of those within'.⁶⁰² In this context it is important to make a distinction between young communist activists, like Samuel, growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, living a life completely dominated by politics and communist parents who brought up children in the 1950s, who had to communicate and build relationships with non-communists in their neighbourhood and through their children's school. So without rejecting Samuel's description of a very closed communist community, it is evident that communist parents in the 1950s, even if they wanted to, could not live their life in a communist bubble. Respondents and their families were part of the communist community, but this didn't mean that non-communist family members, friends and neighbours were ignored or excluded:

The CP functioned as an extended family in the best sense, but our real family was also very important. My mum and dad were certainly a real part of the wider community in which they lived, but were regarded as a little peculiar not because they were communists but because they did not drink! (Mike Luft)

As has been previously mentioned; the majority of communist families had a good relationship with their neighbours. Inevitably respondents and their parents had many communist friends; just like Catholic people would associate with fellow Catholics. But this did not mean friendships with non-communists were ruled out or 'impossible', as Withuis suggests. There is a small number of examples of rigid communist fathers who, because of their overpowering political views, were incapable of befriending non-communists, but the majority of respondents remember that their parents had friends from different political and social backgrounds:

My parents were very sociable; they used to have a New Years party and it was a complete mix: people from my mother's school, a lot of people from my father's magazine and there was a crowd of people from their political life, local people from university etc. Everyone got along just fine. I guess there would have been very few people who were not left wing because you do tend to gravitate towards people who share the same values. (Harriet Naden)

⁶⁰² Ibid.

As a family we didn't only have contact with communists, no way. We were friends with our neighbours and my dad's work mates. I can't remember if a lot of CP members visited us. Most people who came to our house were a-political. (Jan Lensen)

Generally respondents were allowed to befriend 'anyone' and the majority even stressed that their parents didn't put the slightest obstacle in the way when it came to their choice of boy- and girlfriends, although it has to be said; a large minority ended up with a partner from a communist family.⁶⁰³ In these cases respondents had met their future partner in the communist youth organization. One would assume that communist parents favoured a future son or daughter-in-law with a communist background, but somehow, political or social background was not that important. The majority of respondents were given the freedom of choice. Hannah de Leeuwe, whose dad was considered a Stalinist apparatchik, married the son of the local secretary of the VVD (liberal party), Joop IJisberg was dating a Protestant girl and Viv Mackay came home with a boy from a Labour background, without any objection from their parents. On the other hand Protestant, Catholic or liberal parents weren't always particularly happy that their son or daughter came home with a communist:

I had a lot of trouble with the parents of my girlfriends. I don't know how they found out about my dad. Often I received a letter from someone or a telephone call of some guy saying; 'hey, I know what you are up to with my daughter, but I have a little business and your dad is a communist, I advise you to break up with her'. Really! That happened. I was dating the daughter of a teacher, he knew my dad and I can still hear him say: 'That my daughter is seeing the son of such a man!' Or the daughter of the Mayor of Wormer and farmer girls in the neighbourhood! My parents didn't have any problems with me seeing people. (Henk Hulst)

When I was 12 there was a boy in my class who fancied me and I fancied him. Someone must have told him that my dad was a CPN member, because he came gave me the following ultimatum; either I had to say I wasn't a communist or he was going to break up with me. So he broke up. Afterwards he kept on bullying me because I was a communist. I had a friend who was not allowed to attend my birthday party, because we were communists. Everyone was allowed to come to our house, so as a

⁶⁰³ About 40 percent of the Dutch respondents married within their own community, whereas only one of the British respondents had a communist partner, this perhaps the result of Dutch communists' isolated position in the 1950s and early 60s, but is also linked to the fact the majority of Dutch respondents had joined a communist youth organisation(where they could meet their future wife/husband), whereas the percentage of British respondents who had joined the YCL was much lower.

child I was surprised some parents would not allow their children to come to my house. (Anja Brasser)

None of the British respondents shared these experiences, which again suggests that the general attitude towards communists was perhaps milder in Britain than in the Netherlands; British communists seem to be more accepted by society than their Dutch counterparts.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that being a communist in Britain was in many ways less problematic than in the Netherlands. In Britain it was not only less visible when a family member was a communist, but because of the absence of a tradition of fierce anti-communism like in the Netherlands, it was also less frowned upon when people did know the respondents' families' political background. Because of this tradition, Dutch communists did not only feel more socially isolated but also felt they had to break down invisible walls which were built around them by society, whilst in Britain relationships with neighbours and non-communists in school and at work were more natural and effortless.

In school respondents stood out; not because of their communist background, but because they came from working-class families. Both British and Dutch communists firmly believed in the importance of education; their views and aspirations contrasted with those of the wider non-communist working class.

British and Dutch communists did not share the same views on what was deemed as appropriate (for communists) and what wasn't. Within this context we have seen that the limited aspirations for advancement in particular influenced the lives and careers of Dutch respondents. British respondents' testimonies as well as other autobiographical works reveal very different and less rigid views on class, career and money. The discrepancy between the British and Dutch views is partly the result of the more isolated position of the Dutch communist movement; people tend to get more rigid in isolated circumstances, and partly because of the strong hereditary aspects of Dutch communism; unlike the British, Dutch respondents' parents were already raised with the same views and values, which were part of their heritage. Therefore it is easier to contextualize and define the Dutch communist identity than the British; in post war Britain, communists, because they shared most values with the wider working class, do not stand out as much from the rest of the

labour movement which makes it significantly harder to define a ‘typical British communist’.

Epilogue - Looking Back

At the end of each interview, I asked my respondents to reflect on their youth and answer the question; ‘How do you look back on your upbringing?’ Respondents’ answers to this question tended to be quite apologetic and forgiving, underlining that their parents were or are good people who tried their hardest to change society and who were concerned with the underdog, but were unfortunately led by the Soviet Union in their struggle. Most respondents therefore try to make a certain distinction between the communist values they believed in and lived by, versus the atrocities committed by the Soviet Union as well as their parties’ misjudgments:

My parents were amazingly liberal with a tremendous sense of personal freedom and that has passed on. I do have to say about my parents that they were lovely and wonderful people, and my dad still is, they did wonderful things for me but they got it wrong about the Soviet Union.⁶⁰⁴

My parents tried to teach me solidarity. I was very disappointed with communism, all those ideas I grew up with; they didn’t even work in the Soviet Union. That’s a slap in the face. My dad was so terribly disappointed; he had worked for the good cause his whole life. But that feeling of solidarity is something I passed on to my children. I am not very materialistic either, even though I live in a nice house. Don’t be selfish. When I look back I have to say I did enjoy my childhood, I have no regrets whatsoever about being a communist. (Greetje Zoutendijk)

I think that the problem with politics is people; you can’t say that if your ideology is pure, things will work out. Really the history of socialism as with communism has been that these theoretically good ideas have been converted into the most appalling ends and made things worse.⁶⁰⁵

The crazy thing is that I never hated the communist ideology. I thought a lot about what Marx and Lenin actually meant; there was nothing wrong with their ideas, but nothing was left of it because of all the bureaucracy and corruption. I am not embarrassed about my upbringing. I find it hard to talk about it though. I rather emphasize my father’s intellect and his progressive thoughts on sexuality and sexual freedoms. (Hannah de Leeuwe)

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Michael Rosen in P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, pp. 64-5.

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with Alexei Sayle in P.Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, pp. 48.

There were many things about communism I do not agree with, like the party culture. Some horrific things happened. But there were also many things I do agree with. I am still 'left' and I think my upbringing definitely influenced my political thought. (Els Wagenaar)

A few respondents are less forgiving and find it hard to cope with certain features of their upbringing. They look back and judge their parents' political outlook as narrow minded and very black and white. Some felt in hindsight that they grew up with a lie:

I think to myself; 'Goddamn, was I really part of that?', I am very embarrassed. Nothing was true, it was all lies. I was an emotional wreck. Everything that came to the surface about the CPN in 1989... We felt so superior for all those years. I put so much time and effort in it and it was in vain. Before the war the movement was strong and people were doing good things. The war ruined so many things, damaged so many people. Those people continued fighting after the war but they weren't really able to. Everyone was so frustrated. One even more crazy than the other. They all had nightmares and needed help, psychiatric help. And then these people were raising children; which was hard enough but then the Cold War started. (Carla van Buuren)

Many people, parents more so than the respondents themselves, shared Carla's feeling of disappointment and anger after the collapse of communism; anger because they were wrong and disappointment because they felt they had been lied to. The (psychological) impact of the collapse of international communism on the lives of the movement's members (in particular those living in non-socialist countries) has not received much academic attention. Nevertheless we can assume many faithful followers of the communist ideology felt confused, angry or disappointed.

Phil Cohen notes that the CP culture can be seen in a semi-religious context. Considering the level of commitment and faith required from communists, the analogy with religion seems obvious. Cohen believes that this particular analogy might help outsiders understand 'why sincere and intelligent people suspend their critical faculties for so long, both in supporting foreign leaders and regimes that were so evidently not worthy of support, and believing that (British) people would eventually 'see the light' and vote for them.'⁶⁰⁶ This analogy also enables us to imagine the impact of the collapse of communism.

⁶⁰⁶ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 18.

It can be best compared to the sense of loss a faithful Christian would experience when he or she realizes God doesn't exist.

Whereas the majority of parents faced and dealt with the fact that they 'were wrong about the Soviet Union', some parents on the other hand were stubborn and could not admit that mistakes were made by the Soviet Union in general and Stalin in specific:

Communism collapsed but my father was too stubborn to admit it. 'Gorbachov has lost his marbles, and Yeltsin is a crook'. He didn't want to talk about anything; Khrushchev and his revelations about Stalin....Nothing. He still had this faith that the SU was a decent society. (Peter de Leeuwe)

Making peace with one's upbringing and parents' political beliefs is much more difficult when parents, like Peter's stepfather, still believe that the Soviet Union had not made any errors. One respondent considers her mothers' undying loyalty to Stalin and unwillingness to condemn and acknowledge the crimes committed by the Soviet Union to be (almost) the same as denying the Holocaust.⁶⁰⁷

As we have seen in the introduction to part two, respondents' parents can be roughly divided into three groups; Stalinists, communists and bohemian communists. These three groups 'mourned' the collapse of communism in different ways; Stalinists, like Peter's stepfather continued believing in the good of the Soviet Union; communists struggled with a sense of loss and often blamed themselves 'for getting it wrong' whilst the last category found it much easier because they had never been loyal followers of the party in the first place.

Ben Wellerdieck's parents could be classified as bohemian communists. They had a looser interpretation of the communist ideology:

At home, we didn't have much to do with the Soviet Union. Therefore the news or instructions that came out to the Soviet Union didn't really influence my parents' political thoughts. At a certain point the Soviet Union banned abstract painting, my dad (an artist) painted abstract art and never even considered to cease making abstract art because the Soviet Union said so. But it wasn't a reason to turn his back to communism either. The collapse of the Soviet Union didn't affect my parents either; they never left the party but communism as an ideology to them had already fizzled out when the party was discontinued. (Ben Wellerdieck)

⁶⁰⁷ This respondent likes to remain anonymous.

In some cases communism had already fizzled out and parents were only members on paper at the time their party disbanded but generally the impact of the disintegration of communism on parents and children was severe; many respondents were aware of the pain this caused and out of respect for their parents they choose not to talk about it and focus on the good things instead:

It (communism) was only a part of what I grew up with, but the impact the disintegration of communism had on my parents (like other people in the party) was severe. What I took from my childhood was that we cared about other people, I learned it was not all about yourself. (Harriet Naden)

(reflecting on a communist upbringing) I try to be as free of prejudice as I can be. I stay clear of any stereotyping of any groups of people. It makes me sick that some people who call themselves liberals do this. Secondly I guess that my campaigning instinct for the underdog is a result of a communist upbringing. (Viv Mackay)

Viv's story is exemplary for the majority of both British and Dutch respondents. Looking back on (positive aspects) of their communist upbringing respondents mention a readiness to campaign and, although no longer within a communist framework, many would still define themselves as activists. They are generally wary of politics which is a direct result of their political upbringing. Phil Cohen concludes: 'We are wary of "having all the answers", and like many of our generation are less likely to seek the betterment of society through organised political parties'⁶⁰⁸. He is right: today hardly any of the respondents is a member of a political party; which doesn't mean they don't care anymore, they, in Ben Wellerdieck words; 'just can't stand party structures'. Through activities within single issue pressure groups, neighbourhood committees, employees' councils or organizations like Greenpeace or Amnesty International, respondents like Viv, are still fighting for a better society. All respondents would still classify themselves as 'left orientated'; many British respondents vote Labour or Green Party whilst Dutch respondents generally vote *Groenlinks*⁶⁰⁹, *Socialistische Partij*⁶¹⁰ or PvdA. Being concerned with (international)

⁶⁰⁸ P. Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 189.

⁶⁰⁹ Groenlinks was founded in 1989 and is an amalgamation of 4 different parties, one of which was the CPN.

⁶¹⁰ The Socialist Party was founded in 1971 and stemmed from the Maoist movement.

political and social issues, solidarity as well as the importance of voting are aspects respondents took from their upbringing and passed on to their own children:

I have tried to teach my children the meaning of social justice. My son votes for Groen Links, for the first woman on the list. I like that, it makes me proud. (Marja de Zeeuw-Verwaard)

My upbringing taught me if you want to get things done you have to do them by the book. Try to be logical. I have a lot of general knowledge about society. My brother and sisters have the same; we all learned that from my parents. I tried to bring up my children with a certain amount of social skills, sometimes I blame myself I raised to with too much social awareness. People compliment me that my children have a lot of social knowledge; they know what is happening in the world around them. (Sally Klomp)

In terms of values they passed on to me, values I want to pass on to my children; I try to make sure they question things and don't just accept things on face value. I haven't pushed a political line down their throats anymore than my parents did with me. We debate things though. I would be horrified if my children would not feel the need to vote, because there are so many societies where one can not vote. I don't feel they need to be active in a purely political sense, campaigning. I would like to feel they care about things sufficiently to make a point about these things; like the environment, unfair imprisonment etc. I think today there are far more, especially young, people involved in single cause campaigns, or narrow focus politics, rather than being a member of the Labour Party. To me it is important that my children feel they are part of society and that they are capable of changing society if they want or need to. (Harriet Naden)

Within the context of raising their own children, respondents made some interesting remarks. The last question asked during the interview was; 'Do you have the same values as your parents when it comes to the raising of your own children?' The answers to this question are very illuminating; respondents tend to be apologetic and understanding about their parents' choices and their own childhood in general, but through their children's upbringing certain dissatisfactions or disappointments with their own upbringing come to the surface:

My parents were socially involved; they helped other people in need. I always felt my parents were more Christians than real Christians; very socially conscious and responsible towards everybody. I like to think I passed this on to my children. What I resent in a way is that I feel that my upbringing

was emotionally sterile. It was a bit too focused on political issues; this probably affected me in later life. (Frank Birch)

My childhood was very complicated. I think I came out alright though. I could have been very frustrated and blame my parents for everything. I didn't. I think their main idea and view was alright. I took the positive things from my upbringing to pass on to my own children and learned from the things I didn't like about my childhood. I try to give my children a lot of attention. (Henk Hulst)

My own children? I always tried to be very open and honest with my children; I didn't want to be secretive about anything. I raised my children alone, because my husband died in 1971 when I was only 28. In the early seventies topics like education reform and women's rights received a lot of attention and I really tried to involve my children in these matters. (Loes Naring)

Margreet Schrevel concluded based on our respondents' testimonies that the positive values of a communist upbringing outweighed the negative.⁶¹¹ Without denying the difficulties almost all respondents experienced at different stages of their childhood, the same conclusion can be drawn from the British respondents' testimonies; overall only a very small minority looks back in anger. They all agree they had a special and different childhood and certain aspects were contradictory, frustrating, confusing or incomprehensible. But often these difficulties were associated with external factors like the party, the Soviet Union or the international climate; they didn't solely blame their parents for negative experiences.

Whereas respondents elaborated on the positive aspects of their upbringing, when answering the question; 'What were the negative aspects', respondents often hesitated and indicated they couldn't really think of something. Eventually some would mention a lack of emotional attention, parental absence or a parent's overbearing personality. Generally Dutch and British respondents concur with Phil Cohen's conclusion; 'the party did not just take from people, it gave them a great deal as well. It gave them a community, but also a value-base and attitudes, some of which have proved to be enduring'.⁶¹²

⁶¹¹ M. Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands Fabrikaat', p. 347.

⁶¹² Phil Cohen, *Children of the Revolution*, p. 189.

Conclusion

Bob Darke wrote in 1952; ‘There are not English communists, Czech communists, Russian communists. There are only communists’.⁶¹³ Whilst exploring the extent of social and political isolation experienced by British and Dutch communist organizations and their members, this thesis has shown that the history of the international communist movement was not as uniform as Darke and many others have implied. Although centrally controlled by Moscow, national communisms were diverse and were influenced by a nation’s political, economical and cultural characteristics.

The first and most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the previous chapters is that the British communist movement was not as isolated as its Dutch counterpart. This thesis has explored tentative explanations for the discrepancy between the Dutch and British situation before assessing the effects of this isolation on the lives of individual communists. Four variables were employed to trace the most significant differences between the Dutch and British communist movements; differences which were likely to influence the extent of isolation.

We have seen that the birth of both parties was different; Dutch communism originates from a home grown orthodox Marxist tradition whilst the formation of the CPGB was instigated by Lenin. Unlike the Netherlands, Britain had industrialized very early and by the time that large sections of the Dutch working class became influenced by revolutionary ideologies like anarchism and Marxism, the British working class was already firmly anchored in a more moderate socialist tradition. Communism, like anarchism, was unable to get a strong foothold within the British labour movement. On the contrary, despite of its size, the CPN was able to mobilize large non-communist yet revolutionary sections of the working class like the anarcho-syndicalists who were organised within the NAS. Therefore the CPN was, unlike the CPGB, considered as a real threat and was right from its foundation dealt with accordingly, which had an overall isolating effect. Another reason for the fact that the CPGB was not considered a threat is related to the British political culture; its ‘two party’ system based on disproportionate representation made it incredibly hard to survive as a small party. The Dutch political

⁶¹³ B. Darke, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, p. 15.

landscape on the other hand is characterized by segmentation which is exacerbated by a voting system based on proportional representation. Therefore small parties, like the CPN, can still have a lot of influence in the politics of their nation, which is why Dutch authorities were vigilant when it came to Dutch communists and tried to control and undermine the CPN as much as possible.

Besides these two differences between the Dutch and British situation, chapter one has shown that there were two characteristics of Dutch society in particular which can be held responsible for the Dutch communist movement's severe isolation; pillarisation and a fierce tradition of anti-communism. Each and every pillar in Dutch society represented a closed off subculture within society. Communists did not have their own pillar nor were they able to join other pillars' organizations. This not only worsened their already isolated position within society, it also motivated communists to establish their own organizations. Even when its membership declined dramatically under the influence of the Cold War, the communist movement was still being extended. Compared to the Dutch situation, British society was less static and there was more interaction between people from different political or religious persuasions. British communists were never banned from joining unions and were able to establish working relationships with non-communists within unions and on councils. They were able to join non-communist cultural organizations and therefore they didn't share their Dutch contemporaries' incentive to establish new communist organizations. As noted in Part II of this thesis, the contrast between the period 1920-1940 and the post-war period is significant. Whereas the British communist movement catered to the whole family in the first 20 years of its existence: in the post-war period communism no longer offered a complete identity, because many cultural organizations had ceased to exist. Unlike British respondents, who interacted with non-communists within cultural organizations like Woodcraft Folk or sports clubs, Dutch respondents were closed off in their own movement and developed their own specific communist identity. Because of their lack of association with non-communists on a political and cultural level, Dutch communists were more rigid in their views on class, education and work. British communists' values did not stand out as much from the rest of the labour movement and were therefore less isolated than their Dutch contemporaries. Further isolation of the Dutch communist movement was caused by a virulent tradition of

anti-communism. Dutch communists and their children were legally but also socially persecuted which contributed to a very strong us-and-them mentality. From 1919 onwards, when the Central Intelligence Service was established, the CPN and its members were closely monitored. Communist gatherings and demonstrations were regularly dispersed by armed police and generally communists encountered a lot of hostility. We have seen that compared to the rest of Europe, anti-communism in the Netherlands and its government's anti-Soviet attitude was unparalleled and in many ways only comparable to the American situation under McCarthy. Solidarity with fellow communists was a way to survive in a hostile environment and thus anti-communism reinforced the cohesion of the Dutch communist community and the ties between the CPN and the ANJV were strengthened. Anti-communism on this scale was absent in Britain and communists did not have to stand together to survive. Chapter 1 and 2 have illustrated that from 1956 onwards, when both the CPN and the ANJV were still internally united, the CPGB and in particular the YCL became divided. The occupation of the Netherlands and the role of Dutch communists in the resistance in contrast with the severe isolation of the movement in the period 1948-1963 increased the aforementioned us-and-them mentality. The respondents' testimonies illustrate how difficult it was to comprehend how communists turned from heroic resistance fighters to the enemy of the state within a decade.

Drawing on part one's conclusion that the Dutch communist movement was indeed more isolated than its British counterpart, part two of this thesis has looked at the impact of this isolation on the lives of communist children. Furthermore, in search of a communist identity, it has tried to integrate individual accounts into a wider context in order to construct a collective past. Raphael Samuel and Jolande Withuis have both tried to describe 'the communist mentality'; chapters 3, 4 and 5 have illustrated that reality was not as black and white as both authors suggest. Samuel and Withuis have both depicted the communist movement as a little world within a world; like an island, isolated from the rest of the world and Withuis goes even further and claims that communists were responsible for their own vilification. We have seen that although communists isolated themselves politically, socially they tried very hard to integrate. Children were instructed to be 'normal' and overall a communist upbringing was not so very different from a non-communist (working class) upbringing. Through contact and interaction with non-communists at work, in their

neighbourhoods, with friends and extended family the communist community could not be an isolated island. Respondents and their parents wanted to and had to integrate into society, simply because the British and Dutch communist movement was too small to form a self-sufficient bubble.

In the introduction it was mentioned that some people insisted that Samuel did not describe the world of communism but that of Stalinism. Although I agree with Allison Light who points out that many of the Stalinist imperatives were in place long before Stalin had ever been heard of⁶¹⁴, nevertheless my own research does suggest that Samuel isn't describing 'the world of communism' either but the lives of a small hard core group of young communist activists who could indeed live their life whilst being 'insulated from alien influences and belligerent towards outsiders and protective to those within'.⁶¹⁵ When portraying the communist movement and the lives of its members, it is important to make distinctions between cadre and rank-and-file activists who were parents and activists who weren't and above all that in this thesis suggested distinction between Stalinists, communists and bohemian communists. In order to build a complete picture of the communist movement which explores the political and the non-political aspects of communist lives, his thesis has also shown that it is very important to make a distinction between communists' public (political) life and their private (non-political) life. Withuis, who in my view describes 'the mental world of Stalinist women' rather than that of 'communist women', drew from public life as well as official party lines and ignores what happened inside the home and as such produced a partial and one-sided account. On the contrary, this thesis has built up a different picture of the communist movement in Britain and the Netherlands, emphasizing public spheres and private spheres; the political and the non-political; and in doing so it has refuted the image of communists as the 'men and women without faces'.

⁶¹⁴ R. Samuel, *The Lost World*, preface.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

Bibliography

Archival sources

The archival sources were the CPGB/YCL archives at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester, the Working Class Movement Library collection on the British communist movement and the CPN/ANJV archives at the International Institute for Social History

Project interviews

See appendix III for a full list of respondents.

Autobiographies

Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years, an Autobiography of the Sixties*, London: Verso, 2005.

Marcus Bakker, *Wissels, Bespiegelingen Zonder Berouw*, Amsterdam: De Haan, 1983.

Bob Darke, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, London: Penguin Books LTD, 1952.

Nan Green, *A Chronicle of Small Beer. The Memoirs of Nan Green*, Nottingham: Trent editions, 2004.

Douglas Hyde, *I Believed. The Autobiography of a Former British Communist*, London: The Reprint Society, 1950.

A.A. De Jonge, *Stalinistische Herinneringen*, Den Haag: Kruseman, 1984.

Ernie Trory, *Between the Wars. Recollections of a Communist Organizer*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1974.

Ernie Trory, E, *The Imperialist War. Further Recollections of a Communist Organizer*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1977.

Ernie Trory, *War of Liberation. Recollections of a Communist Activist*, Brighton: Crabtree, 1987.

Other books and book chapters (place of publication London or Amsterdam unless otherwise indicated)

Nel van Aalderen, *Wij hebben er geen spijt van. 50 jaar Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond*, Amsterdam: Comité Herdenking 50 jaar ANJV, 1995.

Alan Adler, ed, *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London: Pluto, 1983.

Robin Page Arnot, *Twenty Years. The Policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain from its Foundation*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1940.

John Attfield and Stephen Williams, *The Communist Party of Great Britain and the War*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1984.

Arie Bakker, Jan Brasser, *De CPN in het Verzet*, Zaandam: Uitgave CPN district Zaandam, 1975.

Peter Barberis, John McHugh, Mike Tylsesly, *Encyclopedia of British and Irish Political Organisations*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003.

Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within, the Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party*, London: Merlin Press, 1995.

Tom Bell, *The British Communist Party. A Short History*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937.

P.Boekholt, E.de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de School in Nederland. Vanaf de Middeleeuwen tot aan de Huidige Tijd*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987.

Tamara Blokzijl, *De Duizend Daden, een Geschiedenis van het Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond 1945-1985*, Amsterdam: ANJV, 1985.

Prof. Dr. J. Bosmans, *Staatkundige Vormgeving in Nederland, de Tijd na 1940*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999.

Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1940*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985.

Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

Dunya Breur, *Een Verborgene Herinnering*, Amsterdam: Tiebosch, 1983.

Dunya Breur, *Een Gesprek met Mijn Vader*, Nijmegen: Sun, 2000.

Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960, Gender, Class and Ethnicity*, London: Routledge 1996.

Sue Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939*, London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1986.

Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

John Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis & Conflict: the CPGB 1951-1968*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2003.

Raymond Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, London: Croom Helm, 1977.

Phil Cohen, *Children of the Revolution, Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997.

Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory Britain 1900-1990*, London: Penguin Press, 1996.

Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A history of British Trade Unions since 1889. Volume II 1911-1933*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Jocelyn Cornwell, *Hard-Earned Lives: Accounts of Health and Illness from East London*, London:

- Tavistock, 1984.
- J. Eaden and D. Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- H. Dewar, *Communist Politics in Britain: the CPGB from its Origins to the Second World War*, London: Pluto Press, 1976.
- G.L. Durlacher, *De Laagstbetaalden*, Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1965.
- Deborah Dwork, *Children with a Star, Jewish Youth in Nazi-Europe*, London-New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- L.J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party, its Origins and Development until 1929*, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1966.
- Ronald Fraser, *Blood of Spain. The Experience of Civil War 1936-1939*, London: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Hansje Galesloot & Susan Legêne, *Partij in Verzet. De CPN in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Pegasus, 1986.
- J.J. Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers' Self-Emancipation, 1873-1960*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989.
- Elder Glen H. jr, *Adolescent Achievement and Mobility Aspirations*, Chapel Hill, 1962.
- D.J. de Haan, H. Bolle & K. Scheffers, *Zaanse Jongens en Schoolkeuze: Onderzoek naar Factoren die de Keuze van Voortgezet Onderwijs in 1961 voor Mannelijke Leerlingen van de 6^e Klasse van het Lager Onderwijs in the Zaanstreek Bepalen*, Zaandam: Ver. Centr. Techn. School Zaandam, 1961.
- Ger Harmsen, *Blauwe en Rode Jeugd; een Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Jeugdbeweging tussen 1853 en 1940*, Nijmegen: SUN, 1973.
- Ger Harmsen & Bob Reinalda, *Voor de Bevrijding van de Arbeid. Beknopte Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Vakbeweging*, Nijmegen: SUN, 1975.
- A. Hutt, *The Post-War History of the British Working Class*, London: Gollancz, 1937.
- Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (ed), *Oral History and Public Memories*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
- H. Hermans, J. Carlos Mainer, Jose van Tol-Kamerman, ao, *Een Nederlandse blik op de Spaanse Burgeroorlog*, Utrecht : Instituto Cervantes, 2006.
- Eric Howbawm, *Revolutionaries*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973.
- John McIlrogy, Kevin Morgan, Alan Campbell (ed), *Party People, Communist Lives. Explorations in Biography*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2001.
- A.A. de Jonge, *Het Communisme in Nederland. Het Communism in Nederland: de Geschiedenis*

van een Politieke Partij, Den Haag: Kruseman, 1972.

Judy Kaplan & Linn Shapiro, *Red Diapers Growing up in the Communist Left*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969.

F. King and G. Matthews, *About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Second World War: The Verbatim Record of the Central Committee Meetings of 25 September and 2-3 October 1939*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968.

James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The General Strike 1925-26* (Vol. 2), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968.

Marc Kropman, *Van Bron tot Boek: Apparaat voor de Geschiedschrijving van het Communisme in Nederland*, Amsterdam: IPSO, 1986.

H. Lademacher, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, Utrecht: Het spectrum, 1993.

Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe 1945-1965*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation, Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Los Angeles: University of California press, 1975.

Kenneth Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism*, London: Penguin Press, 1969.

Stuart Macintyre, *Little Moscows, Communism and Working-class Militancy in Interwar Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1980.

Charles More, *Britain in the Twentieth Century*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007.

Kenneth O. Morgan, *Britain since 1945, the people's peace*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War. Ruptures and continuities in British Communist politics 1935-1941*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, Andrew Flinn, *Agents of the Revolution, New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2005.

Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen & Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007.

James C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw. Nederland in the Jaren Zestig*, Amsterdam: Boom, 1995.

Christian Lambert & Maria Penders, *The West new Guinea Debacle: Dutch Decolonization and*

Indonesia, 1945-1962, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002.

Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939, From the Cradle to the Grave*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.

Rimco van der Maar, *Welterusten Mijnheer de President, Nederland en de Vietnam Oorlog 1965-1973*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2007.

Arthur Marwic, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, 1958-1974*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

A. S. Makarenko, *A Book for Parents*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954.

Dietrich Orlow, *Common Destiny, A Comparative History of the Dutch, French and German Social Democratic Parties 1945-1969*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000.

Henry Pelling, *A history of British Trade Unionism* Fifth edition, London: Macmillan Press lits, 1992.

W.F.S. Pelt., *Vrede door Revolutie : de CPN Tijdens het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 1939-1941*, Den Haag: SDU, 1990.

Jennifer Platt, *Social Research in Bethnal Green*, London: Macmillan, 1971.

Derk Ploeger ea, *Dagelijks Leven in de Vrij-socialistische Beweging in Groningen, Door Hen Zelf Verteld*, Groningen: Wilbert Dekker, 1979.

Hans Righart, *De Eindeloze Jaren Zestig, Geschiedenis van een Generatieconflict*, Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1995.

Andrew Roberts, *Hitler & Churchill, Secrets of Leadership*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003.

P. de Rooy, *Crisis in Nederland. Beelden en interviews uit de jaren dertig*, Rijswijk: Elmar, 1981.

Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (ed.), *Communism. National & International*, Helsinki: SHS 1998.

Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, London: Verso, 2006

Margreet Schrevel en Gerrit Voerman., *De Communistische Erfenis. Bibliografie en Bronnen Betreffende de CPN*, Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG, 1997.

Michael Scholfield, *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People*, London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, 1965.

Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Childcare* (1955), 3rd impression 3rd edition, 1973.

Arthur Stam, *De CPN en haar Buitenlandse Kameraden. Proletarisch Internationalisme in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Aspect, 2004.

Jan Willem Stutje, *De Man die de Weg Wees. Leven en Werk van Paul de Groot 1899-1986*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2000.

- Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past. Oral history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Willie Thompson, *The Good Old Cause, British Communism 1920-1991*, London: Pluto Press, 1992.
- Mark Traa, *De Russen Komen! Nederland in de Koude Oorlog*, Amsterdam: Athenaeum Polak & Van Genneep, 2009
- Ger Verrips, *Dwars, Duivels en Dromend; de Geschiedenis van de CPN 1938-1991*, Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1995.
- Gerrit Voerman, *De Meridiaan van Moskou. De CPN en de Communistische Internationale 1919-1930*, Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 2001.
- Elizabeth Wilson, *Only halfway to paradise. Women in Postwar Britain: 1945-1968*, Amsterdam: Tavistock, 1980.
- Jolande Withuis, *Opoffering en Heroiek. De Mentale Wereld van een Communistische Vrouwenorganisatie in Naoorlogs Nederland 1946-1976*, Amsterdam: Boom, 1990.
- Jolande Withuis, *De Jurk van de Kosmonaute: Over Politiek, Cultuur en Psyche*, Amsterdam: Boom, 1995.
- Jolande Withuis, *Erkenning, Van Oorlogstrauma naar Klaagcultuur*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2002.
- Jolande Withuis, *Na het Kamp, Vriendschap en Politieke Strijd*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2005.
- Neil Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals*, London: Victor Collancz Ltd, 1959.
- M. Woodhouse, 'A History of communism in Britain, Marxism and Stalinism in Britain' in: *Essays of the history of Communism in Britain*, London: New Park Publications Ltd, 1975.
- Nigel Young, *An Infantile Disorder? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.
- Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London: Pelican, 1957.

Articles and theses

- George Clement Bond, 'Social Economic Status and Educational Achievement: A Review Article', in: *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* Vol. 12, No. 4, Winter, 1981.
- Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, 'Household appliances and the use of time; the US and Britain since the 1920s', in: *The Economic History Review* Vol. 47, No. 4, November, 1994.
- Sir James Cable, 'Britain and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', in: *International Relations*, 1988.
- David Childs, 'The British Communist Party and the war, 1939-1941: Old Slogans revived', in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12, 1977.
- Tricia Davis, "'What kind of Woman is She?'," Women and Communist Party Politics, 1941-1955',

- in: *Feminism Culture and Politics* (R. Brunt and C. Rowan ed), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982.
- Arjan Dieleman, 'De late jaren vijftig of de vroege jaren zestig', in: Ger Tillekens (ed.), *Nuchterheid en nozems. De Opkomst van Jeugdcultuur in de Jaren Vijftig*, Amsterdam: Muiderberg, 1990.
- Arthur Exell, 'Morris Motors in the 1940s', *History Workshop Journal* 9 Spring 1980, pp. 90-114.
- Reuben Falber, 'The 1968 Czechoslovak Crisis: Inside the British Communist Party', in: *Socialist History Occasional Papers Series no 5*, Preston: Lancashire Community Press, 1996.
- J.E. Floud., & A.H. Halsey, 'Intelligence Tests, Social Class and Selection for Secondary Schools', in: *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 8, No. 1, March, 1957.
- Peter Hennessy and Gail Brownfeld, 'Britain's Cold War Security Purges: The Origins of Positive Vetting', in: *The Historical Journal* vol. 25, no 4, December, 1982.
- Duco Hellema, 'The Relevance and Irrelevance of Dutch Anti-Communism: The Netherlands and the Hungarian Revolution, 1956–1957', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30:1.
- John McIlroy & Alan Campbell, 'Histories of the British Communist Party: a User's Guide', in: *Labour History Review special issue – International Communism*, Volume 68, Number 1, April 2003.
- Maurice Isserman, 'Three Generations: Historians View American Communism', in *Labor History* 26, 1985.
- Karl Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generationen' in: *Kölner Vierteljahreshefte für Soziologie* 7, 1929.
- C.P. Middendorp, 'Culturele Veranderingen in Nederland, 1965-1970', in: *Intermediair*, 15 March 1974, 5.
- Frank E. Myer, 'Dilemmas in the British Peace Movement since World War II' in: *Journal of Peace Research* vol. 10 no. 1/2, 1973.
- Claude Pénnetier and Bernard Pudal, 'Communist Prosopography in France', in: *Agents of the Revolution. New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, Bern: European Academic Publishers, 2005.
- Jacob Poortstra, 'Jeugd en Zedelijkheid na de Oorlog' in: *In Fatsoen Hersteld, Zedelijkheid en Wederopbouw na de Oorlog* (Hansje Galesloot & Margreet Schrevel ed.) Amsterdam: SUA, 1987.
- B.C. Rosen, 'Family Structure and Achievement Motivation' in: *American Sociological Review*, Aug. 1961, 26.
- Margreet Schrevel, 'Romy Schneider' en 'Stalina' Samen in een Club: de Communistische Kinderorganisatie Uilenspiegelclub 1953-1964', in: *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 25, 1999.

Margreet Schrevel, 'Ballerina's Voor de Vrede. De Vereniging Nederland-USSR Importeert Sovjetcultuur 1947-1967' in: *Bijdragen en Medelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 116, 2001.

Margreet Schrevel, 'Rode Luiers, Hollands Fabrikaat. Communistische Gezinnen in de Jaren Vijftig.' in: *Holland; Historisch Tijdschrift* nr. 4, vol 36, 2004.

M. Squires, 'CPGB Membership During the Class Against Class Years', in: *Socialist History* 3, 1993.

Jay D. Teachman and Kathleen Paasch, 'The Family and Educational Aspirations', in: *Journal of Marriage and the Family* vol. 60, No. 3, August, 1998.

Nick Thomas, 'Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain' in: *Twentieth Century British History* Vol. 13, no. 3, 2002.

Andrew Thorpe, 'Comintern 'Control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1943', in: *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 452, June, 1998.

Andrew Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945', in: *The Historical Journal*, 43, 3, 2000.

Mike Waite, 'Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll (and Communism) in the 1960s' in: *Opening the Books Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*, London: Pluto Press, 1995.

Mike Waite, *Young People and Formal Political Activity; a Case Study: Young People and Communist Politics in Britain 1920-1991 Aspects of the History of the YCL*, Mphil thesis July 1992 available at the British Communist Party archive CP/Hist/5.

Michelle Webb, 'The Rise and Fall of the Labour League of Youth', in: *Socialist History* 26, Oram Press, 2004.

Documentaries

Documentary 'Kinderen van Verzetsstrijders'; Netwerk April 24th 2005. Also available on <http://www.netwerk.tv/node/2930>.

Periodicals

The Guardian

The Daily Mirror

The Communist

Challenge Magazine

Cogito

The Daily Worker

Country Standard

Jeugd

Een

Trouw

De Waarheid

Appendix I List of Abbreviations

ANDB	Algemene Nederlandse Diamantsbewerders Bond (General Dutch Diamond workers' union)
ANJV	Algemeen Nederlands Jeugd Verbond (General Dutch Youth League)
BCPV	British Campaign for Peace in Vietnam
BSP	British Socialist Party
BUF	British Union of Fascists
BVD	Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst (Dutch secret service)
CDU	Christelijke Democratische Unie (Christian Democratic Union)
CJB	Communistische Jeugd Beweging (Communist Youth League)
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CNV	Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (Christian National Trade Union Federation)
CPGB	Communist Party Great Britain
CPH-CC	Communistische Partij Holland Centraal Comité (Communist Party Holland Central Committee)
CPN	Communistische Partij Nederland (Dutch Communist Party)
CPSU	Communist Party Soviet Union
EVB	Eenheids Vak Beweging (United Trade Federation)
EVC	Eenheids Vak Centrale (United Trade Office)
FJG	Federatie van Jeugd Groepen (Federation of Youth Groups)
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JKVZV	Jongeren Komitee voor Vrede en Zelfbeschikking voor Vietnam (Youth Committee for Peace and Independence for Vietnam)
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
NAS	Nationaal Arbeiders Secretariaat (National Labour Secretariat)
NJF	Nederlandse Jeugd Federatie (Dutch Youth Federation NJF)
NJG	Nederlandse Jeugd Gemeenschap (Dutch Youth Community)
NSB	Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (National Socialist League)
NUWCM	National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement
NVB	Nederlandse Vrouwen Beweging (Dutch Women's League)
NVC	Nederlandse Vakcentrale (Dutch Trade Union Federation)
NVSH	Nederlandse Vereniging van Sexuele Hervorming (Dutch organisation for Sexual Reform)
NVV	Nederlands Verbond van Vakbewegingen (Dutch League of Trade Unions)
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
PVDA	Partij van den Arbeid (Labour Party)
PSP	Pacifistische Socialistische Partij (Pacifist Socialist Party)
RKWV	Romaans Katholiek Werkliedenverbond (Roman Catholic Trade Union League)
RSA	Radical Student Alliance
SDAP	Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social Democratic Workers Party)

SDB	Sociaal Democratische Bond (Social Democratic League)
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SDP	Sociaal Democratische Partij (Social Democratic Party)
SJ	Socialistische Jeugd (Socialist Youth)
SWSS	South Wales Socialist Society
TUC	Trade Union Congress
VDB	Vrijzinnige Democratische Bond (Liberal Democratic League)
VSC	Vietnam Solidarity Campaign
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth
WSF	Workers' Socialist Federation
YCI	Young Communist International
YCL	Young Communist League
YPVM	Youth for Peace in Vietnam Movement

Appendix II Membership CPN/GPGB & General elections results

Dutch General Elections CPN (*Tweede Kamer Verkiezingen*)⁶¹⁶ / Membership CPN⁶¹⁷

Year	Total	Votes	Votes %	CPN Membership
1909				419
1910				500
1911				515
1912				511
1913				533
1914				525
1915				528
1916				557
1917				713
1918	1,341,744;	SDP 31,010	2.31	1089
1919				1799
1920				2431
1921				2025
1922	2,824,558;	CPH 53,664	1.90	1904
1923				1488
1924				1568
1925	2,738,160;	CPH 36,770	1.34	1562
1926				1500
1927				1200
1928				1400
1929	3,379,503;	CPH ⁶¹⁸ 67,541	1.99	1146
1930				1100
1931				1580
1932				3693
1933	3,721,831;	CPN 118,249	3.18	6155
1934				5708
1935				5840
1936				6200
1937	4,058,047;	CPN 136,036	3.35	10123
1938				10382
1939				10595
1940				9000
1941				2000
1942				1500
1943				
1944				
1945				
1946	4,760,711;	CPN 502,963	10.56	50000
1947				53000

⁶¹⁶ Official Dutch data base of General elections results; *Kiesraad, databank verkiezingsuitslagen*
www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl/Na1918/Verkiezingsuitslagen

⁶¹⁷ A. Stam, *De CPN en Haar Buitenlandse Kameraden*; G. Verrips, *Dwars Duivels en Dromend*, p 551.

⁶¹⁸ CPH Wijnkoop & CPH De Visser

1948	4,931,499;	CPN 381,863	7.74	53000
1949				34000
1950				27392
1951				17000
1952	5,335,456;	CPN 328,612	6.16	17000
1953				17000
1954				17000
1955				15463
1956	5,726,981;	CPN 272,050	4.75	
1957				12858
1958				12317
1959	5,999,530;	CPN 144,542	2.41	11262
1960				11000
1961				11000
1962				11000
1963	6,258,005;	CPN 173,322	2.77	11000
1964				11000
1965				11000
1966				11000
1967	6,879,500;	CPN 248,330	3.61	11000
1968				11000
1969				11000
1970				11000
1971	6,320,012;	CPN 246,594	3.90	11000

British General Elections CPGB⁶¹⁹/ Membership CPGB⁶²⁰

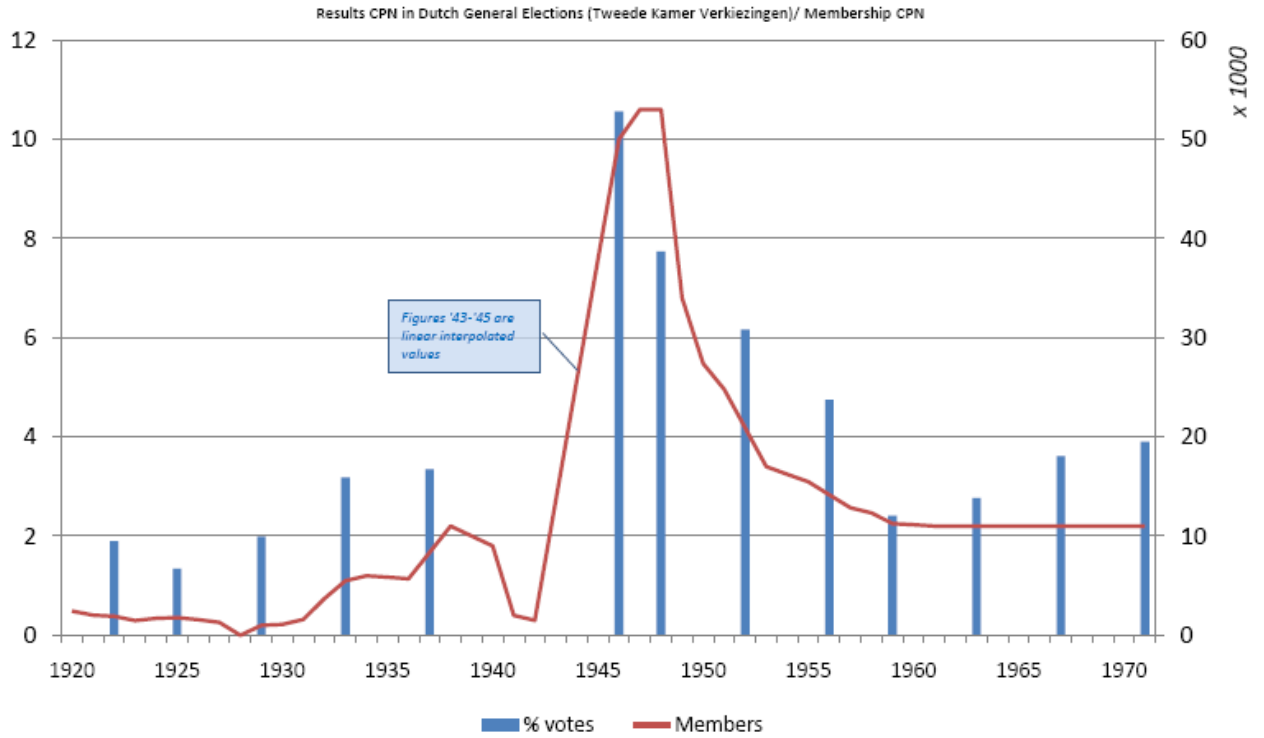
Year	Total Votes	Votes	%	CPGB Membership
1920				5125
1921				4122
1922	20,874,456;	CPGB 30,684	0.2	3678
1923	21,283,061;	CPGB 34,258	0.2	3763
1924	21,730,988;	CPGB 51,176	0.3	3763
1925				4799
1926				8721
1927				7670
1928				5278
1929	28,854,748;	CPGB 47,554	0.2	
1930				2641
1931	29,952,361;	CPGB 69,692	0.3	4362
1932				7300
1933				5500
1934				5407
1935	31,374,449;	CPGB 27,177	0.1	7000

⁶¹⁹ www.election.demon.co.uk/geresults.html

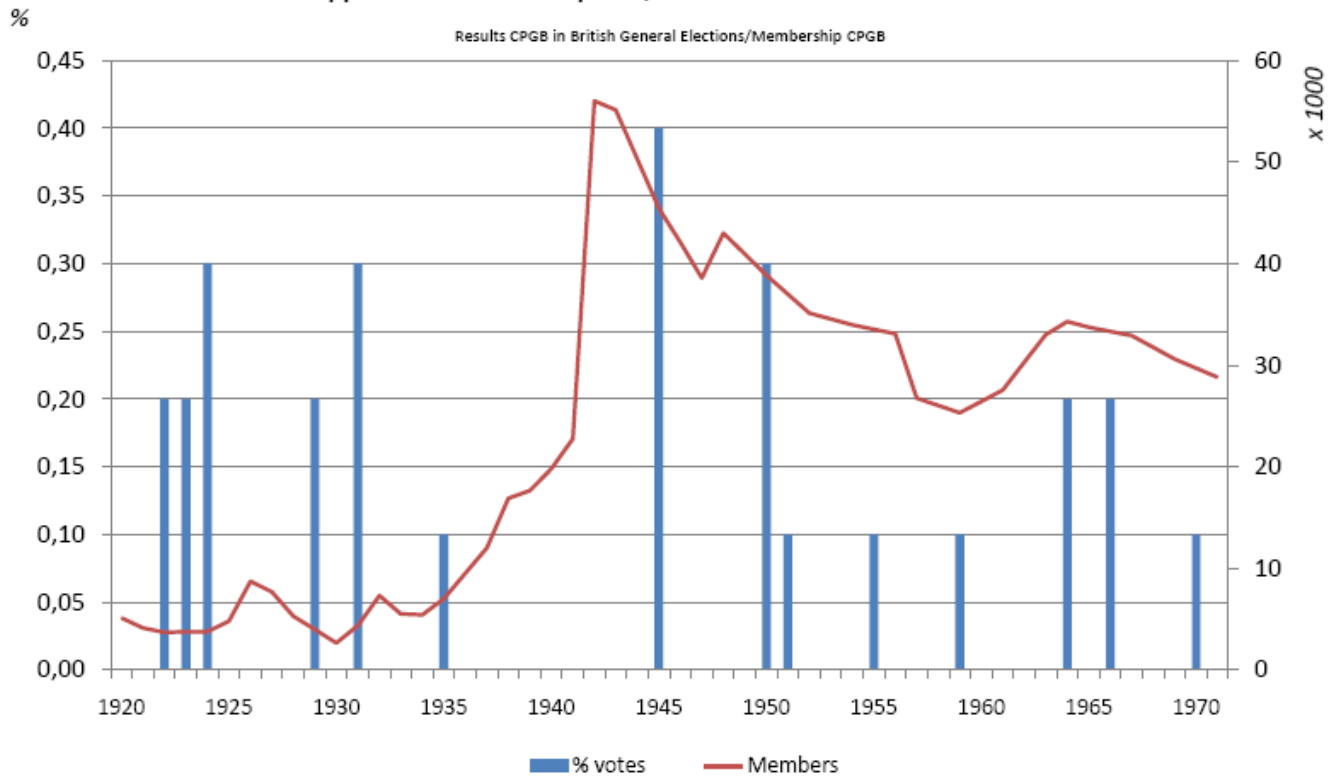
⁶²⁰ 1920-1946 membership figures; A.Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist party of Great Britain, 1920-1945' in *The Historical Journal*, 43, 3, 2000. 1946-1970 membership figures; W. Thompson, *The Good Old Cause*.

1936				9525
1937				12000
1938				16890
1939				17647
1940				19802
1941				22738
1942				56000
1943				55138
1944				
1945	33,240,391;	CPGB 97,945	0.4	45435
1946				42123
1947				38579
1948				43000
1949				
1950	34,412,255;	CPGB 91,765	0.3	38853
1951	34,919,331;	CPGB 21,640	0.1	
1952				35124
1953				
1954				33963
1955	34,852,179;	CPGB 33,144	0.1	
1956				33095
1957				26742
1958				
1959	35,397,304;	CPGB 30,896	0.1	25313
1960				
1961				27541
1962				
1963				33008
1964	35,894,054;	CPGB 46,442	0.2	34281
1965				33734
1966	35,957,245;	CPGB 62,092	0.2	
1967				32916
1968				
1969				30607
1970	39,342,013;	CPGB 37,970	0.1	
1971				28803

Appendix II Membership CPN/CPGB & General Elections results



Appendix II Membership CPN/CPGB & General Elections results



Appendix III List of Respondents;

Dutch respondents:

1. Bob Albrecht (1946) Amsterdam
2. Mario Blokzijl (1950) Amsterdam
3. Anja Brasser (1946) Zaanstreek
4. Carla van Buuren (1945) Amsterdam
5. Alex Geelhoed (1947) Amsterdam
6. Kees Gnirrep (1940) Amsterdam
7. Henk Hulst (1940) Zaanstreek
8. Sally Klomp (1948) Amsterdam
9. Hannah de Leeuwe (1948) Den Haag
10. Peter de Leeuwe (1942) Den Haag
11. Jan Lensen (1937) Amsterdam
12. Ans de Witte-Mantel (1945) Rotterdam
13. Loes Narings (1943) Maastricht
14. Nettie van Raat (1949) Amsterdam
15. Frank Schabracq (1952) Amsterdam
16. Marja Verwaard (1948) Rotterdam
17. Els Wagenaar (1946) Amsterdam
18. Ben Wellerdieck (1946) Amsterdam
19. Ed de Witte (1943) Rotterdam
20. Joop IJisberg (1943) Amsterdam
21. Greetje Zoutendijk (1944) Den Haag
22. Lieuwe Dijkzen (1946) Texel
23. Ariane Blokzijl (1956) Amsterdam

British respondents;

1. Frank Birch (1954) London
2. Heather Chapman (1934) Yorkshire
3. Dave Cope (1951) Liverpool
4. Jill McCloughlin (1951) London
5. Pat Devine (1937) Manchester/London
6. Viv Mackay (1949) London
7. Stephen Munby (1954) Cambridge
8. Harriet Naden (1956) London
9. Barbara Loftus (1946) London
10. Jackie Littell (1934) London/Brighton
11. Mike Luft (1942) Manchester
12. Dorothy Sheridan (1948) Yorkshire

Children of the Revolution:

- 13. Jude Bloomfield (1953) London
- 14. Ann Kane (1942) Yorkshire
- 15. Martin Kettle (1949) Liverpool
- 16. Mike Power (1944) London
- 17. Michael Rosen (1946) London
- 18. Alexei Sayle (1952) Liverpool
- 19. Nina Temple (1956) London

Appendix IV List of Questions Asked During the Interview

Family facts

- Year of birth, education, profession, profession of parents and other family members. Memberships and activities within the Communist movement (of whole family)
- Which family member was the first person to become a member of the movement. Was the choice to become communist a choice that was made by the whole family? Were there political differences within the family (for example about the Soviet intervention in Hungary)

Neighbourhood, living situation

- In what kind of neighbourhood did you grow up, did your family move a lot, was the standard of living important?
- Was the neighbourhood working class or middle class, religious or non-religious, labour or conservative? Did families from different backgrounds get along?
- Were there any other communist families living in the same neighbourhood? And if so; did communist families help each other?

Income and consumption

- One or two breadwinners? Standard of income? Did your mother have a job and if so did she start working before or during her marriage? Was it necessary for your mother to work or was it a free choice?
- Did any of the other family members have a job and if so was he/she contributing to the household?
- Did you have a paper round? How much pocket money?, how much money was there to spend in comparison to other children?
- How were the domestic chores divided? Were they equally shared between members of the household? Did your dad for example do the cooking and washing or were these kind of chores considered women's jobs?
- Did your family save any money? For what? Was there insurance?
- Did your family go on holiday? Camping/hotel, abroad/in the UK, holiday camps?
- What was considered a luxury? And was luxury rejected or embraced? Did the family have a car, television, washing machine or vacuum cleaner?

Education and leisure time

- What kind of school did you attend? Was higher education encouraged?
- Were you bullied in school because of your background? Did you ever have the feeling that your teachers were discriminating you because of your parents political choice?
- Were people in school aware of your communist background? Did your parents instruct you to stand up for yourself or did they tell you to hide the fact you were from a communist family?
- Did your parents bring pressure to bear on the choice of education or job?

- Did you attend any music/dancing lessons or were you a member of a sports club. Which sports were rejected and which sports were accepted?
- Were you allowed to go out? Did you go to the movies and if so were you allowed to see Hollywood productions? Allowed to drink/smoke etc?
- What kind of books (genre/authors) did the family read? What newspaper and magazines?
- Were you a member of the Young Communist League? Can you describe your experiences within the YCL?

‘Network’

- Family members, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, communists?
- School life, friends, parents of school friends. Were you invited to play with non-communist friends? Did the communist parents condemn or accept friendships with non-communists? Were you open about communist background?
- Did any one ever avoid contact with you and vice versa? If so, why?
- Choice of boy/girl friends. Was it important that a potential partner came from a communist family? In the case of a non-communist partner; ‘how did the family of the boy or girl in question respond when their son or daughter came home with a communist?’ Was it important that a partner came from a similar social background? (working class/middle class)

Work

- What kind of work?
- What was the view upon social mobility, being in charge, promotion and having your own company? Rejected, encouraged; any examples of other communists?

Family and values

- How would you describe your parents ideals regarding upbringing and values.
- Did your parents have a copy of ‘The Road to Life’ from Makarenko (the Russian Dr. Spock) and if so, did they follow up his instructions how to raise a child?
- Did you have the feeling the kids came first or was communism and socialism more important to your parents?
- Was living a sober life and collectivism important?
- How important was it to be active in the movement?
- Solidarity; were there gradations?
- Sexuality; abortion, birth-control, homosexuality etc. What were your parents views?
- Did your parents instruct you to be ‘normal’ and fit the mould? What was allowed and what wasn’t.
- Would you use the term social isolation to describe the position of your family? If so, did the family persevere (put up campaign posters in election times, canvassing etc) or did they decide to move somewhere else and start again? Was there room for discussion? Was it possible to question certain policies of the CP?
- If there was social isolation, do you have the feeling that some of your siblings suffered more than others?

- At what age did you leave the house?

Personal interpretations

- Are you still politically active, and if so, in what party?
- How do you look back on your upbringing? Are you more forgiving now as you were 20 years ago?
- Do you have the same values as your parents when comes to bringing up your children?