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A CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE?

Marloes BEERS & Jenny RAFLIK (dir./eds.)

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The "Elastic" European Ideal in the Netherlands, 1948-1958

Images of a Future Integrated Europe and the Transformation of Dutch Politics[1]

Robin DE BRUIN

I. "Elastic" ideal

Between the congress in The Hague for a united Europe in May 1948, and 1954, when the European Political Community (EPC) and the European Defense Community were withdrawn from the political agenda in Western Europe, many Dutch politicians seemed to expect the quick realization of a united Europe or (after 1950) even a federal Europe. On the 28th of April 1953, a debate was held in the Dutch House of Representatives on the proposal of the Strasbourg Assembly (partly consisting of Members of the Dutch National Parliament) for the EPC. In this debate, an important issue was the question of direct European parliamentary elections; could these be a means to the construction of a European demos, or would these be premature as long as this European demos did not exist? Dutch federalists presented "Europe" as an inevitability; a continuation of the historical process of ever greater national union in Europe that in the 19th century had cleared away *Kleinstaaterei* in Germany. (This inevitability myth paid no attention whatsoever to the disintegration of great European empires like Austria-Hungary.) Judging from the enthusiasm shown, many Dutch politicians, especially politicians from the upcoming generation, not only resigned themselves to this inevitable "Europe," but desired it as well. Hardly any politician openly opposed the integration of Europe, not even the Labour Prime Minister Willem Drees. In 1950, he kept secret his fears that the governmental policy of low wages for the purpose of the postwar economic reconstruction, would be endangered as a consequence of the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).[2]

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1 The author thanks James Kennedy, Piers Ludlow, Ine Megens, Nell Pattij and Anne-Isabelle Richard for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

2 Salzmann, W.H., *Herstel, Wederopbouw en Europese Samenwerking. D.P. Spierenburg en de Buitenlandse Economische Betrekkingen van Nederland 1945-1952*, Den Haag, Sdu uitgevers, 1999, p. 241 and p. 243.

Drees' Labour Party criticized the British Labour Party for its aloofness in regard to the integration of Europe. Kurt Schumacher, the leader of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD), was strongly reproached by Dutch Labour politicians with the postwar "nationalism" of the SPD and for its objections to the Schuman Plan, which Schumacher saw as a Catholic plan for the creation of a capitalistic "Europe".[3] The economic revival of the German Federal Republic was of great importance to the Netherlands, however a subsequent revival of German military force was greatly feared. A German economic revival within a federal Europe would be the solution to this dilemma.

In the Netherlands, the European ideal was justified by a great variety of causes. Jerôme Heldring, a famous Dutch journalist, strikingly spoke about the 'elastic' European ideal.[4] The integration of Europe was pursued by means of a strange brew of socio-economic, moral and pragmatic arguments, and in all political parties different arguments were emphasized. The dominant Dutch political parties all presented "Europe" more or less as a means for achieving their respective ideological aims.

A significant feature of Dutch politics is that in parliamentary elections in the Netherlands no party ever gains an absolute majority. After elections, two or more parties have to form a coalition government. Dutch politics of the late 1940s and 1950s were dominated by the Catholic Party and the Labour Party. The three Protestant parties and the Conservative Liberals were slightly less influential. Communists were the pariahs of afterwar Dutch politics. Especially the Labour Party was hostile to the Communist Party.

This article compares the reasoning in support of European integration by politicians from the Dutch Labour Party on the one hand and the Dutch Orthodox Protestant *Antirevolutionaire Partij* (ARP) on the other, as well as the images of the future "Europe" these politicians imagined. Secondly, this article will deal with the subject of "Europeanization" as a cause for change of Dutch domestic politics.

II. "Europe" in Dutch Politics

In recent years, in the political debate in the Netherlands the European Union has been frequently connected with excessive bureaucracy and squandered money. How different this was in the past, when the European Economic Community (EEC, which came into being

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3 Bruin, R. de, "Het Politieke Compromis als Exportartikel. De PvdA en de Europese Dimensie van het Streven naar Vernieuwing (1948-1954)," *Nieuwste Tijd. Kwartaalschrift voor Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, No. 15, July 2006, pp. 41-49.

4 Heldring, J.L., "Het Elastische Europa," *NRC Handelsblad*, 29 July 2004.

on January 1st 1958) was strongly associated with high standards regarding human rights and democracy. In 1970, when asked about the entry of non-democratic countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal into the EEC, a senator from the Conservative Liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, Harm van Riel, answered that he had no objections to NATO membership for non-democratic countries. (At that time, Portugal en Greece were members of NATO. Greece had an associative agreement with the EEC.) According to Van Riel, NATO was no more than a military force, without idealistic aims. But by taking these non-democratic countries into the EEC (he did not mention the two other European Communities: the ECSC and Euratom) their regimes would be supported. Van Riel rejected this. The expression that "if they are taken into the EEC, they will have more to eat and thus they will become more democratic" was widespread, he claimed. He himself regarded this as a false philosophy, as there was no connection between the standard of living and democracy.[5]

But, it was precisely that particular philosophy that had determined the pro-European attitude of many Dutch politicians in the late 1940s and the 1950s, when Europeanization was associated with "lasting peace," "increasing welfare" and "restored democracy" in Western Europe. Of course, the experiences with totalitarianism during the war played a prominent part in the discourse on the integration of Europe. Many politicians believed that only the integration of Europe could prevent a future economic depression similar to that in the 1930s; and totalitarianism in Europe that arose from this crisis.

III. The Labour Party

Dutch politicians regarded the integration of Europe as a condition for a general economic rationalization. They expected that this rationalization would increase production and wages and would reduce prices. Thereby, it would diminish socio-economic inequality. This was considered necessary to prevent mass public attraction to Communist totalitarianism in Western Europe. In 1952, Labour Member of Parliament Geert Ruygers (who was a Catholic) published an article on the essentials of postwar international Labour politics. According to Ruygers, it was an obligation to reduce "life's tragedy" to the absolute minimum. Subsequently, Ruygers discussed the dogmatic path to welfare in the Communist world and presented the path to welfare through the integration of Europe as the democratic alternative that corresponded with postwar civilized conceptions on human rights and democracy. In doing

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5 Tijn, J. van, *Mr. H. van Riel in Gesprek met...*, Amsterdam, Arbeiderspers, 1970, pp. 92-93.

so, he referred to the United Nations Human Rights treaty.[6] So, the integration of Europe, increasing welfare, social justice and anti-totalitarianism (anti-Communism at this time) were strongly connected.

The Dutch Labour Party regarded "Europe" as the middle ground between "planning" and "freedom." According to the Labour Party, the ECSC combined the benefits of economic liberalization and economic planning and thereby was the perfect "third way."[7] The prominent Labour parliamentarian Marinus van der Goes van Naters even labeled the French Christian Democratic "father" of the ECSC, Jean Monnet, as near-Social Democrat.[8]

Some Dutch Labour politicians and supporters believed that the domestic political compromises between Dutch Catholic and Labour politics served as an example for a future "truly democratic" Europe. European integration was seen as an international dimension of the process which in the late 1940s and early 1950s seemed to cause the end of the Dutch religiously segmented ("pillarized") and socially divided society which Labour desired for. Both the French Christian Democrat *Mouvement républicain populaire* and the Social Democrat *Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance* were seen as movements with comparable aims.[9] Consequently, the Dutch Labour Party did not only sharply criticize the German SPD for its postwar "nationalism," but also for its "stubborn Socialism" in German domestic politics. In a meeting with the SPD in 1950, both Dutch Labour Party chairman Koos Vorrink and Van der Goes Naters, chairman of the Labour fraction in the House of Representatives, showed that setting the example for ideological restraint on behalf of Europeanization was their self-imposed task. In the expected Europeanization of political decision-making, some Dutch Labour politicians saw the vindication of Labours post-war domestic policy.[10]

IV. The *Antirevolutionaire Partij*

A peculiar combination of optimism and pessimism dominated the postwar atmosphere in Dutch politics: on the one hand, utopian ideals

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6 Ruygers, G., "In de Maalstroom der Wereldpolitiek," in G. Ruygers (ed.), *Socialisme in de Branding. Een Bundel Opstellen onder Redactie van...*, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1952, pp. 217-259.

7 *De Weg naar Vrijheid. Een Socialistisch Perspectief. Rapport van de Plancommissie van de Partij van de Arbeid*, Derde druk, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1951.

8 Goes van Naters, M. van der, "Plan-Schuman biedt Europa Nieuwe Kansen," *Paraat in een Veranderende Wereld. Orgaan van de Partij van de Arbeid*, 7 May 1960.

9 Verkade, W., "Van Doorbraak en Integratie," *Socialisme en Democratie. Maandblad van de Partij van de Arbeid*, Vol. 11, 1954, pp. 551-557.

10 Bruin, R. de, *op. cit.*

were discredited, partly because of the ideologically-driven horrors of the Second World War. At the same time, there was optimism about the possibilities of technological and economic progress. Creating an affluent society was the most frequent reaction in democratic postwar Western Europe to the totalitarianism of the 1930s and 1940s and the totalitarian threat of the Communist world. As Mark Mazower has pointed out, the Second World War had intensified a demand in Western European countries for social solidarity.[11] Alan Milward advanced the thesis that the national political respons to this intensified demand was an important economic driving force for the European integration process.[12] Economic integration provided the conditions and the means for the creation of national welfare states in Western Europe. But the experiences with and fear of totalitarianism also led to a condemnation of the welfare state, as will be shown by the attitude towards European Integration of the Dutch Orthodox Protestant *Antirevolutionaire Partij* ("Anti Revolutionary Party," referring to the French Revolution, especially the "false" notion of sovereignty of the people).

The ARP was founded in the late nineteenth century by Orthodox Protestants. In the second half of the nineteenth century these Orthodox Protestants united in the strive towards denominational primary education at state expense, which was also a struggle against the intrusions of public education. In 1917 this issue was settled. After the introduction of universal suffrage in the national elections of 1922, the ARP never gained more than one-fifth of the votes. Nevertheless, the party had a hold on Dutch politics until 1939, due to effective cooperation with the CatholicParty, the ARP's Protestant sister party *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (CHU) and (to a lesser extent) the Liberal parties. After the liberation from German occupation in 1945 (up to 1958) the Catholic Party and the Labour Party were the driving forces behind several multi-party coalition cabinets. The Catholic Party and the Labour Party were staunch supporters of a rather technocratic welfare policy. In contrast, a large conservative faction within the ARP feared this welfare policy. There were certainly some individuals within the party with more modern, even Keynesian opinions on economy like Jelle Zijlstra, who was the ARP minister for Economic Affairs from 1952 onwards, but they were a minority within the party up to 1957.

The most characteristic feature of Calvinist political thought was the principle of *soevereiniteit in eigen kring*, referred to in English as "sphere sovereignty." Sphere sovereignty implied that the ultimate

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11 Mazower, M., *Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century,* London, Allen Lane/ The Penguin Press, 1998, pp. 302-306.

12 Milward, A.S., *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Routledge, London, 1994 [1992], pp. 31-33 and 134.

sovereignty belongs to God alone and that all earthly sovereignties are subordinate to and derived from God's sovereignty. Therefore, the spheres were autonomous of each other. This implied that the state should not interfere beyond its own sphere, for example in the sphere of religion or family. (Current ideas about "civil society" owe something to this principle.)

State authority (derived from God) was respected within the ARP. The Reformed confession of faith contained the phrase that the state would punish the wicked and protect the pious. To this end, it wielded the "power of the sword" (a reference to Romans 13 in the Bible in which is said that the authority "beareth not the sword in vain"). Despite this respect for state authority, the idea of sphere sovereignty resulted in a permanent struggle against "state idolatry," Machiavellianism and a governmental craving for power. The state had to maintain law and order, but it was not allowed to interfere in a sphere beyond its own. This vision of the state was the cornerstone of (postwar) ARP-politics and for instance led to its reserved stance towards mercantilism and state subsidization in the economy.[13]

During the German occupation, a relatively large part of the ARP party rank-and-file had participated in the organized resistance against the Nazi occupation. In their analysis of National Socialism, they emphasized the statist element of Nazi ideology. According to most of the ARP leaders, totalitarianism naturally followed from statism.

Following from this, the chairman of the ARP, Wiert Pauwel Berghuis, stated in April 1957 that there was only a graduated difference between the hard-boiled totalitarian "Socialism" in the Eastern Bloc and the sneaking statism in the Netherlands "under Labour rule."[14] During a parliamentary debate in October of the same year (1957) the question was raised if state responsibility for the individual's bare necessities of life was not the modern form of neighbourly charity. Sieuwert Bruins Slot, the chairman of the ARP parliamentary fraction, disagreed. He argued that the state was not a community of charity, but a community of justice. Charity was unlimited. If the governmental power of the sword would be covered with the cloak of charity, this would lead to unlimited government interference. It would not be the first time that tyranny and dictatorship had developed under the cover of charity. According to Bruins Slot, the charity of the state would degenerate into

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13 Zwart, R.S., *'Gods Wil in Nederland.' Christelijke Ideologieën en de Vorming van het CDA (1880-1980)*, Kampen, Uitgeverij Kok, 1996.

14 Berghuis, W.P., *De Anti-Revolutionaire Partij in de Huidige Situatie. Redevoeringen gehouden op de Vergaderingen van het Partijconvent van 27 april en 26 oktober 1957*, 's-Gravenhage, Anti-Revolutionaire Partijstichting, [1957].

the unwise parental affection of the she-ape that squeezes her young ones to death.[15]

A substantial part of the ARP followers had a working class and lower middle class background and this part was eager to gain some prosperity. But, even the representative of the Protestant trade union within the ARP parliamentary party Cees Hazenbosch[16] rejected the idea of a welfare state that guaranteed full-employment. Should the state accept more responsibility than it could bear, Hazenbosch stated in a speech in March 1957, it would sooner or later be urged to interfere in spheres beyond its own to meet its obligations.[17]

V. The ARP and the Integration of Europe

It was primarily the postwar world order that led to the conclusion of some individuals within the ARP party leadership that the integration of Europe was inevitable. Bruins Slot came to the conclusion that European integration was inevitable when the United Nations Security Council in 1948 condemned the Dutch military intervention in The Dutch East Indies (where the postwar Republic of Indonesia had started a war of independence). As a consequence of this condemnation, the Netherlands had to withdraw from Indonesia. Bruins Slot and other ARP-politicians, who felt that the legal (Dutch) authorities were put aside in Indonesia, interpreted this as a failure of the United Nations and as a disruption of international justice by the new Great Powers, especially the Soviet Union. According to Bruins Slot, only through the integration of Europe could the European countries protect themselves against similar "violations of international justice" in the future.[18]

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15 Bruins Slot, J.A.H.J.S., and C.P. Hazenbosch, *Ons Werk in Nederland en Europa. Redevoering gehouden bij de Algemene Beschouwingen ter Behandeling van de Rijksbegroting 1958 op 19 oktober 1957 door J.A.H.J.S. Bruins Slot en Redevoering gehouden op de Vergadering van het Partijconvent op 26 oktober 1957 door C.P. Hazenbosch*, 's-Gravenhage, Anti-Revolutionaire Partijstichting, [1957].

16 Hazenbosch would be appointed vice chairman of the European Parliamentary Assembly in 1958. In 1961 he would die tragically in a car crash near Bastogne: R de Bruin, "Cees Hazenbosch en de 'Eeuwige beginselen van Gods Woord.' Antirevolutionaire Beginselpolitiek en de Integratie van Europa in de Jaren Vijftig," in G.J. Schutte a.o. (eds.), *Grenzeloos Christelijk-Sociaal. Internationale Activiteiten van de Christelijk-Sociale Beweging. Cahier over de Geschiedenis van de Christelijk-Sociale Beweging* 8, Amsterdam, Aksant, 2009, pp. 52-63.

17 Hazenbosch, C.P., "De Welvaartsstaat," *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde. Maandelijks Orgaan van de Dr Abraham Kuyperstichting ter Bevordering van de Studie der Anti-Revolutionaire Beginselen*, Vol. 27, 1957, pp. 179-185.

18 Heerikhuizen, A. van, *Pioniers van een Verenigd Europa. Bovennationaal Denken in het Nederlandse Parlement (1946-1951)*, Amsterdam, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 185-199: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/heer038pion01_01/; Bruins Slot, J.A.H.J.S., *Bezinning en Uitzicht. De Motieven der Huidige Wereldontwikkeling en*

Bruins Slot was opinionated on the matter but in the ARP as a whole the ideas on the integration of Europe were rather vague up to 1953. The party rank-and-file had great difficulty in accepting the transfer of national sovereignty to "Europe." They understood perfectly well that the party's influence would be minimized on a European level.

The attitude towards state authority and government interference was a decisive element in the realization of the ARP policy on Europe in the 1950s. A first general report on party policy with regard to the integration of Europe was published in 1953. This report stated that government interference in society had increased enormously since the early 1930s (when Dutch politics were still dominated by the centre-right) in an attempt to rescue vital parts of the economy from destruction caused by the economic crisis. But by enlarging the economic space to Western Europe, these economic sectors could do without government protection. Enlarging the economic space to Western Europe would diminish the danger of a future society patronized by "Socialists". For that reason, the ARP should welcome the integration of Europe.[19]

This last conclusion was critized by the small wing of traditionalists within the ARP. However, it was this view that converted the main stream party rank-and-file to "Europeans" between 1953 and October 1957. At the end of that month, during a Party Rally, the aforementioned Hazenbosch held a much acclaimed speech on the economic integration of Europe. After his speech, questions from the audience echoed this type of argumentation. Hazenbosch himself strongly emphasized the ideological consonance with Catholic politics on the role of the state.[20] Indeed, the ARP's view corresponded with that of Norbert Schmelzer, a coming man within the Catholic Party, who had stated that by Europeanization "Socialist" aims could be achieved without "Socialist" means.[21]

Hazenbosch' speech did not end the debate within the ARP about European integration for that matter. In the early 1960s, an influential "radical" left-wing emerged within the ARP. Conducted by, of all people, Berghuis and Bruins Slot, this wing made an attempt to transform the ARP into a radical evangelical party. Leftists within the ARP now regarded "Europe" as basically conservative. Thereby, direct elections for the European Parliament, one of the party's main points for

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onze Roeping daarin, Wageningen, Zomer en Keuning's Uitgeversmaatschappij, [1950], pp. 78-80.

19 The Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism, VU University Amsterdam, Arch. ARP, No. 355, *Europese Integratie. Rapport van het College van Advies van de Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*.

20 Bruins Slot, J.A.H.J.S. and C.P. Hazenbosch, *Ons Werk...*, *op. cit.*

21 Schmelzer, W.K.N., "Socialistische 'Internationale Gemeenschap,'" *Katholiek Staatkundig Maandschrift*, Vol. 7, 1953, pp. 231-239.

consideration in the early 1960s, became less and less attractive. In April 1963, one of the members of the party's committee for foreign affairs raised the question what would happen if direct elections would bring a coalition of the *Union pour la Nouvelle République* and the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (the conservative parties of the French president Charles de Gaulle and the German *Bundeskanzler* Konrad Adenauer) into power in "Europe." A long silence fell, only broken by the sad conclusion of another member that "Europe is not any better."[22]

Eventually, the radical attempt to transform the ARP would fail. The ARP, the Catholic Party and the CHU collaborated on a European level within the European Parliament and the *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*. This collaboration served as a hothouse for national Christian Democrat co-operation.[23] In 1980 these three parties melted into the *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA).

VI. Ideological Restraint

From this comparison between the Labour Party and the Orthodox Protestant Party, some conclusions can be drawn. The experience with the horrors of totalitarianism during the Second World War spawned enthusiasm for the European cause. Nevertheless, the motivation for this enthusiasm varied strongly. The spokesmen of the Dutch Labour Party drew the conclusion that socio-economic justice provided by government interference in the economy could prevent future attraction to totalitarian ideologies. However, within the ARP freedom was conceived as freedom from state power. The conclusion was drawn that the state at which the "Socialists" on a national and a European scale aimed, had all the characteristics of a totalitarian state. Many politicians of the "anti-statist" ARP regarded the integration of Europe as an advancement, but in a different light. As a means to increase welfare without having to create a welfare state, it was the panacea necessary for curing the most important "illness of modernity": the suffocation of the individual and society through excessive government interference.

In the 1950s, most Dutch political parties presented "Europe" more or less as a means for achieving their respective ideological aims, but at the same time the expectation of "Europe" caused ideological restraint in Dutch domestic politics. Compromise became the incantation of the Dutch Labour Party. For the ARP, the acceptation of Europeanization as

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22 National Archives, The Hague, Arch. W.P. Berghuis, No. 293, "Vaste Commissie voor Buitenlandse Aangelegenheden van het College van Advies van de ARP," April 3rd 1963.

23 Napel, H.-M.T.D. ten, *'Een eigen weg'. De Totstandkoming van het CDA (1952-1980)*, Kampen, Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1992, pp. 354-356.

a means to increasing welfare turned out to be a major step in the direction of a national Protestant-Catholic cooperation within the Christian Democratic Party.