

THE DUTCH EAST INDIES AND THE REORIENTATION  
OF DUTCH SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, 1929-40\*

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Between 1919 and the German occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940, the Dutch social democratic movement gradually experienced a profound internal transformation. Cautious reformist elements had always been strong in the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij (SDAP--Social Democratic Workers' Party), and with the passage of time their strength continued to increase; left-opposition elements were purged from the party, first in 1909 and again in 1932, so that whatever strength revolutionary Marxist elements might have had within the party was dissipated. Throughout the 1920s, the SDAP leadership slowly and painfully gravitated toward a pragmatic, ethical, and parliamentary socialism which stressed the primacy of law, due process, civil liberties, and political democracy. The change on occasion entailed brutal debate.

When the depression broke in 1929, the SDAP found itself incapable of generating a positive political or economic response. Only in 1934, under pressure from rising levels of unemployment, the threat of fascist movements of the radical right, and competition on the left from various revolutionary groups including the Communist Party, did the party seek a solution in *planisme*.<sup>1</sup> The movement to planisme served a dual purpose. By presenting an antidepression program which provided for a high degree of economic planning within a capitalist framework, the SDAP sought to attract middle-class elements who had traditionally voted for bourgeois parties. At the same time, the party could continue to stress its democratic, parliamentary commitments against the radical left and right. This attempt to break into new constituencies in Dutch society failed, and on the eve of the German occupation the SDAP remained a basically working-class party.

Frustration in Europe was paralleled by failure in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>2</sup> Between the two world wars, the SDAP failed to foster a strong

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<sup>1</sup>In December 1933, the Belgian Labor Party adopted an antidepression program which entailed extensive governmental planning. This Plan van den Arbeid, as it came to be known, was largely the work of Hendrik de Man. For three scholarly accounts of the *planisme* experience in Belgium, see Peter Dodge, *Beyond Marxism: The Faith and Works of Hendrik de Man* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966); Mieke Claeys-Van Haegendoren, *Hendrik de Man: Biografie* (Antwerp-Utrecht: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1972); and Mieke Claeys-Van Haegendoren, *25 jaar Belgische Socialisme. Evolutie van de verhouding van de Belgische Werkliedenpartij tot de parlementaire democratie in België van 1914 tot 1940* (Antwerp: Standaard Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent discussion of the colonial policy of the SDAP during the

social democratic movement in the Indies; social democracy remained the ideology of a relatively small number of European employees, usually white-collar and often part of the official colonial apparatus itself.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the SDAP remained very cool toward the Indonesian nationalist movement which it tended to regard as a bourgeois, antisocialist force. Finally, despite the framing of a formal colonial program in 1930 (see below, pp. 70-76), the Indies were never of central concern to the party leadership. Even at the height of the planisme drive (1934-37), the party's reform proposals for the Indies were quite modest when compared with the program advanced for the Dutch polity. It is the purpose of this paper to trace the development of the SDAP within the context of Dutch politics and to demonstrate how the SDAP's position regarding the Indies--in fact the amount of attention given the matter at all--was dependent on personalities, internal Dutch affairs, and European/global economic developments.

### Opposition Parties in Dutch Society and Politics

From its origins in 1894 until 1939, the SDAP was permanently an opposition party. When it finally entered a cabinet, the 1939 De Geer cabinet--which was in essence a government of national union forced upon parliament by the rapidly deteriorating European situation--the SDAP enjoyed the dubious distinction of being the last major social democratic party in Europe to wield a measure of national-level executive power. At bottom, this impotence derived from the peculiarities of Dutch social structure and political traditions. In the first place, the Netherlands lacked the heavy industrial populations characteristic of Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain. Out of a total population of 7,935,565 in 1930, 3,185,816 persons were registered in the labor force. Of this number, only 1,235,912 were listed in the industrial and craft sector; agriculture accounted for 639,026, transportation for 296,737, and commercial and retail activity 398,718. Another 243,555 persons were employed in the domestic service sector.<sup>4</sup> In effect, industrial labor represented only about one-third of the nation. Even this third, scattered over a broad spectrum of often quite small craft and manufacturing units, was highly fragmented. Only in the Twente textile centers did one find large industrial concentrations. The two key cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, were above all financial and transit centers, not the sites of heavy industry.

Secondly, if in its broad contours the socioeconomic structure of Dutch society was comparable to those of the Scandinavian countries, the same was not true of its ideological tendencies. The Scandinavian societies were religiously homogeneous and contained powerful secular or anticlerical currents. The population of the Netherlands, on the other hand, was 34.4 percent Dutch Reformed, 8 percent Gereformeerde, 36.4 percent Roman Catholic, and 1.4 percent Jewish. Other Christian

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1920s, see Margriet Dutilh, "Het Koloniaal Beginselprogramma van de SDAP, 1919-1930" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leiden, 1971). The Dutilh essay ends with the SDAP colonial congress of 1930.

<sup>3</sup>See *ibid.*, p. 60, for the judgment of Dutilh.

<sup>4</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Rijk in Europa. Jaarcijfers 1940* (The Hague: Landsdrukkerij, 1942), pp. 100-101.

sects accounted for 5.4 percent of the population, while only 14.4 percent were registered in the 1930 census as having no confession.<sup>5</sup> Religious antagonisms and minority fears had led to the formation of clerical parties during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Vertical cleavages according to confession were often powerful enough to impel workers, particularly those of Roman Catholic background, to vote along religious lines.<sup>6</sup> Clerical politics thus compounded the SDAP's difficulty in taking advantage of the implementation of universal suffrage after World War I.

Third, confronted with small productive units, a massive white-collar and retail sector, and politically mobilized religious groups, the SDAP also faced political competition of a rather unusual kind.<sup>7</sup> By the time the depression crisis broke in 1929, the Liberal movement had long since shattered into three separate parties. The Roman Catholic State Party spoke on behalf of the nation's Catholic minority. The Christian Historical Union represented the more latitudinarian elements in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Calvinist bourgeoisie, and, to a certain extent, rural Calvinists in the northern provinces. Its direct rival for Protestant votes was the Antirevolutionary Party, which drew support from the strict membership of the Gereformeerde churches. Unlike the Christian Historical Union, the Antirevolutionary Party tended to be urban and petit bourgeois in its electoral base. In 1917, the Liberal community came to accept the principle that private confessional schools could be subsidized on a parity with state schools. As this understanding, or "pacification" as it came to be known, took effect, a major barrier to clerical-Liberal coalitions was suddenly removed. As neither of the two Protestant parties, nor the right wing of the Roman Catholic State Party, differed dramatically from the rather conservative political and economic views of the Liberals, it became easy for them to form the series of coalitions, excluding the SDAP, which governed the Netherlands during the depression decade.

These coalitions were synthesized and dominated by the towering figure of Hendrik Colijn.<sup>8</sup> The son of a small farmer in Haarlemmermeer, Colijn had risen through the ranks of the colonial administration in the Dutch East Indies, had become deeply involved in land companies, and eventually joined the board of directors of the Batavian Oil Company. Just before World War I, Colijn returned to the Netherlands and entered politics as a protege of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, the titular head of the Antirevolutionary Party. After the war, Colijn emerged as the

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>For a lucid discussion of Dutch society in historical perspective see Johan Goudsblom, *Dutch Society* (New York: Random House, 1967).

<sup>7</sup>There is a growing literature of an Anglo-Dutch character on the development of the Dutch party system. Among the better English language introductions are: Robert Bone, "The Dynamics of Dutch Politics," *Journal of Politics*, XXIV (February 1962), pp. 23-49; Hans Daalder, "Parties and Politics in the Netherlands," *Political Studies*, III (January 1955), pp. 1-16; and Hans Daalder, "The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society," in Robert Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 188-236.

<sup>8</sup>The following discussion of Colijn is based upon Louis de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog*, Vol. I, *Voorspel* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 195-203.

leader of this party. Between August 1929 and August 1939 five coalitions governed the Netherlands, the last four of which he personally headed.<sup>9</sup> The first coalition, headed by Ruys de Beerenbrouck, lasted from August 10, 1929 to May 26, 1933 and was constituted on a purely clerical basis. But Colijn's coalitions, with the notable exception of the June 1937-July 1939 combination, embodied not only these clerical forces, but always included at least one Liberal. Colijn was the prime spokesman for toughness in the colonies and inflexible "law and order" at home. Strongly anticommunist, antisocialist, and quite hostile to the trade union movement in general, his response to the depression crisis was to drive toward balanced budgets, to curtail spending and social services, and to insist on stern adherence to the gold standard. (It was not until 1936, after considerable pain and soul-searching, that the nation finally devalued its currency.) As unemployment spread, the Colijn coalitions responded with austerity budgets and limited public works programs.<sup>10</sup> Despite the magnitude of the crisis, the left-wing forces in Dutch society were unable to radicalize public life to any great degree, and the Colijn regimes simply rode out the storm. The left's failure is clearly shown by the fact that the SDAP received 23.8 percent of the popular vote in the parliamentary election of 1929, 21.4 percent in 1933, and 21.9 percent in 1937.<sup>11</sup>

While the SDAP was frozen in opposition the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV--Netherlands' Trade Union Federation) barely managed to maintain its hard-won position. Between 1930 and 1939, NVV membership fluctuated between 251,000 and a peak of 336,000, achieved in 1933.<sup>12</sup> In 1939, the Protestant Christelijk National Vakverbond had 118,900 members, and the Rooms Katholiek Werklieden Verbond over 186,000.<sup>13</sup> As might be suspected from these figures, the religious fragmentation of the labor movement precluded much effective broad-based trade union action; in fact, the various trade unions generally looked to their related political parties rather than to each other for policy guidelines on problems of a macroeconomic nature.

### The Situation in the Indies

Confronted with serious constraints in the Netherlands, the SDAP faced even more severe problems in the Dutch East Indies, where whites

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<sup>9</sup>The appendix to *ibid.*, pp. 727-31, lists the prime ministers and their cabinets, 1918-40.

<sup>10</sup>For brief discussions of the unemployment problem see Frits de Jong, *Om de plaats van de arbeid* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1956), pp. 240-47; Ger Harmsen and Bob Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de nederlandse vakbeweging* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1975), pp. 172-75; and John Windmuller, *Labor Relations in the Netherlands* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 66-68.

<sup>11</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1933*, p. 42, bound in *Verslag van het veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*, and the *Verslag over het jaar 1937*, p. 38, bound in *Verslag van het vier en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*, contain election data.

<sup>12</sup>Harmsen and Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding*, pp. 430-33.

<sup>13</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Rijk in Europa. Jaarcijfers 1940* (The Hague: Landsdrukkerij, 1942), p. 305.

formed a tiny, highly privileged minority. The 1930 census estimated the population of the Indies at just over 60 million, of whom merely 240,000 were Europeans. Of these, around 32,000 were foreign nationals, while over 208,000 were Dutch, 160,000 of them born in the Indies.<sup>14</sup>

The agrarian sector of Indonesian society was dominated by Dutch land companies throughout the period between the two world wars. On the islands of Java and Madura, 1,278,800 hectares out of a total surface area of 13,217,400 hectares were reserved for plantation agriculture alone in 1939.<sup>15</sup> Similar patterns existed on the Outer Islands as well. As global raw material export markets began to collapse in the aftermath of the 1929 fiscal crisis, Dutch and other European land syndicates quickly started a systematic reduction in production levels. Growing unemployment in the urban sector, particularly a sharply declining demand for coolie labor, cutbacks in estate agriculture, and abrupt declines in market price levels all helped to fill the Javanese countryside with unemployed former urban laborers, landless rural proletarians, and impoverished small-holders. Indeed, S. J. Rutgers argued later than on the eve of World War II the population of rural Java constituted a sea of poverty.<sup>16</sup>

In a colonial environment, highly remunerative jobs naturally went to Europeans. According to the 1930 census, out of a total European population of 240,000, 85,321 were employed.<sup>17</sup> The public service sector, which included the colonial civil service, police, and military, employed over 20,000, followed by oil, minerals, and estate agriculture (18,800), commerce (11,415), free professions and education (11,290), and transport (10,985).<sup>18</sup> By 1939, the Dutch East Indies contained 7,193 units or workshops classified as factories.<sup>19</sup> This classification was quite loose; it stretched from actual manufacturing to crafts, repair shops, and food and raw material processing plants to motion picture theaters. The vast bulk of this sector was European owned and managed. Between the European elite and the Indonesian masses lay a sizeable Chinese petty bourgeoisie. (In 1930, the Indies contained 1,233,000 Chinese out of a total population of over 60 million.<sup>20</sup>)

As one might expect in a colonial zone, the local trade union movement was quite weak. In the depression years there were several trade union federations, but since their memberships were based largely

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<sup>14</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Indisch Verslag 1940* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1940), p. 17. J. van Gelderen estimates that of these 208,000 Dutch nationals only 50,000 were born in Holland, while over 160,000 had been born in the Indies. See his essay, *The Recent Development of Economic Foreign Policy in the Netherlands East Indies* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Indisch Verslag 1940*, pp. 255-56.

<sup>16</sup>S. L. Rutgers, *Het koloniale systeem in de periode tussen de eerste en de tweede wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 1947), pp. 202-11. As a communist social critic, Rutgers was an astute observer of the Indies. This easily overlooked volume is blazing with insight.

<sup>17</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Indisch Verslag 1940*, p. 175.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.      <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 316-17.      <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

on criteria of religion, ethnic background, and race, they did not serve to unify the work force.<sup>21</sup> There were two types of nonaffiliated trade unions, one European, the other Indonesian. There were a total of 111 unions in 1935, a number which declined to 75 by 1939. On the other hand, total trade union membership grew from 72,675 to 109,547 in the same period.<sup>22</sup> Yet the large number of unemployed, the controls exercised by the state, and the severity of the economic crisis forced the employed workers to be very docile. In 1939, only 18 strikes, involving 1,628 strikers, were reported on the island of Java.<sup>23</sup>

The Dutch East Indies were perhaps more important to the Dutch economy than the colonies of Belgium, France, and Great Britain were to their respective metropolises, even though the total percentage of its trade with Holland was less than that of some other colonies with their colonizers. In 1930, the Indies received 9.4 percent of all Dutch exports.<sup>24</sup> By 1939, this figure had risen to 9.9 percent. Meanwhile, in 1932, the Dutch East Indies dispatched 32.76 percent of its total exports to Europe, 11.6 percent to North and South America, and 49.4 percent to points elsewhere in Asia. By 1939, these figures stood at 27.8, 20.9, and 34.8 percent, respectively.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, it can be said that in the years immediately before World War II the Indies filled 21-22 percent of its import needs from the Netherlands, 25 percent from other European suppliers, and 34-40 percent from Asian sources.<sup>26</sup> Between 1937 and 1939, the American share in Indonesian imports rose from 10 to 14 percent.<sup>27</sup>

### Background to the SDAP Colonial Policy

Both the interwar evolution of the SDAP and its general orientation on colonial policy were partially conditioned by developments prior to 1914.<sup>28</sup> In 1897, the SDAP had replaced the Bond as the Dutch section of the Second International. A splinter party with less than a hundred members in 1895, the SDAP had evolved by 1914 into a major party claiming 25,708 members. Between 1897 and 1913, its electorate had grown from 10,260 votes to 144,249,<sup>29</sup> and its parliamentary delegation from two to sixteen members. Like the other European sections of the Second International, the SDAP was torn by the revolutionary/revisionist controversy after the turn of the century. This dispute reached a peak in 1909 when an extraordinary party congress at Deventer

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>These figures are derived from calculating the share of the Dutch East Indies in total Dutch exports on the basis of the data given in the *Rijk in Europa*, volumes for 1932 and 1940, and the *Indisch Verslagen* for 1933 and 1940, respectively.

<sup>25</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Indisch Verslag 1933*, p. 261, contains the 1930 data; *Indisch Verslag 1940*, p. 340, contains data for 1939.

<sup>26</sup>*Indisch Verslag 1940*, p. 339.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>For a systematic discussion of the origins of the SDAP see D. J. Wansink, *Het socialisme op de tweesprong. De Geboorte van de S.D.A.P.* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1939).

<sup>29</sup>*Jaarverslag van den partijsecretaris over 1913*, pp. 1-3, bound in *Verslag van het twintigste gewone congres der S.D.A.P.*

forced the left-opposition leadership out of the party. This action, in turn, resulted in the creation of the Sociaal Democratische Partij as a Marxian, revolutionary alternative to the SDAP.<sup>30</sup> In 1919, this party became the Communist Party of Holland. The member sections of the Second International were, and remained, quite Euro-centric. Colonial programs and colonial policy, apart from often being the subject of lively theoretical debate, were usually not of central concern to European Social Democrats. The SDAP was no exception to this rule. The Belgian, French, German, and British sections of the International did virtually nothing to organize colonial populations along social democratic lines, and the SDAP was equally inactive in the Dutch East Indies.

During the pre-1914 era, SDAP colonial policy was shaped by Henri van Kol, a reformist social democrat quite hostile to revolutionary ideas.<sup>31</sup> Born in 1852, van Kol was of bourgeois origins and a graduate of the Delft Technical School. Like so many of the Delft graduates, van Kol served as an engineer in the Dutch East Indies colonial bureaucracy. During his student years, he had become a socialist by sentiment and subsequently joined and supported the Sociaal Democratische Bond. After the 1894 split within the Bond, he emerged as one of the original founders of the SDAP. In 1897, he was elected to parliament and for years afterwards served as the SDAP spokesman on colonial policy. For the bulk of his political career, van Kol was not opposed to the possession of colonies per se, and it was only during the aftermath of World War I that he began seriously to support the idea of Indonesian independence. Under van Kol's influence, the SDAP did present demands for administrative and policy reform in the Dutch East Indies, but these demands were of an "ethical" nature and provided for neither socialization, independence, nor actual social democratic organization in the Indies. It is true that after the turn of the century, the Marxist theoretician Pieter Wiedijk attempted to frame a more properly social democratic statement of colonial policy but this effort had scant results;<sup>32</sup> in any event Wiedijk left the SDAP in 1909 to help found the Sociaal Democratische Partij.<sup>33</sup>

The social democratic movement assumed organizational form in the Dutch East Indies only in May 1914 and under circumstances which had nothing to do with SDAP initiatives.<sup>34</sup> In 1912, Henk Sneevliet, the chairman of the Dutch Union of Railway and Tram Personnel, left the SDAP when the party refused to support the 1911 harbor strike in Amsterdam. The SDAP leadership then placed considerable pressure upon

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<sup>30</sup>Willem Ravesteijn, a member of the *De Tribune* circle and one of the founders of the SDP, surveys its origins and subsequent evolution into the Communist Party of Holland in his volume *De wording van het Communisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Van Kampen, 1948).

<sup>31</sup>For a brief survey of van Kol's career as the SDAP colonial expert see my "Marxists and Imperialism: The Indonesian Policy of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers Party, 1894-1914," *Indonesia*, 16 (October 1973), pp. 81-104.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 96-101.      <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup>Ruth McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 14. The following discussion of the creation of the ISDV is based upon McVey's account.

the NVV, of which Sneevliet's federation was a member, to force Sneevliet to resign from his union position. This maneuver was successful and Sneevliet departed for the Indies. While employed by a bourgeois newspaper in Semarang, he became deeply involved in both social democratic journalism and the activities of the Indonesian Railroad Workers' Union. His considerable organizational skills led to the creation of the Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereniging (ISDV). The organization was initially dominated by Dutch social democrats and was naturally quite small. Its membership only passed a hundred people in 1915. Although the majority of its original members were either former or continuing members of the SDAP, the ISDV soon evolved along radical lines. This evolution led, in turn, to the formation of the reformist oriented Indische Sociaal Democratische Partij (ISDP).<sup>35</sup>

Between 1919 and 1929, the SDAP went through a series of internal tensions and transformations. In November 1918, Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the titular head of the SDAP and leader of its parliamentary fraction, called for or at least seemed to call for social revolution.<sup>36</sup> While this call was immediately repudiated by the balance of the party leadership, it did create a breach within the party which was only smoothed over at the party's "unity" congress in 1919. Immediately after the war, the SDAP appointed a socialization commission to develop a series of blueprints and policy guidelines for the socialization of target industries.<sup>37</sup> This was followed in 1923 by a joint SDAP-NVV report on industrial codetermination.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime, Roel Stenhuis, the chairman of the NVV from 1921 to 1928, triggered a long and bitter debate within the SDAP when he attempted to force the transformation of the SDAP into a labor party along British lines.<sup>39</sup> Stenhuis deeply antagonized other NVV officials as well as the SDAP regulars, and he ultimately was forced to resign his post as NVV chairman. Just as this intraparty crisis was passing, a new confrontation began. In 1926, Edo Fimmen, who was then secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, and Pieter Schmidt, who headed the documentation bureau of the NVV, began to publish and edit the newspaper *Eenheid*. *Eenheid* called for an understanding with the communists and cooperation with them. Given the bitterly anticommunist orientation of the SDAP, the Fimmen and Schmidt initiatives immediately unleashed a dispute which did not end until Schmidt and the circle around him were forced to withdraw from the SDAP in 1932, forming the left-socialist Onafhankelijk Socialistische Partij.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup>The November 1918 crisis in the Netherlands is described in great detail by H. J. Scheffer in his volume, *November 1918. Journaal van een revolutie die niet doorging* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1968).

<sup>37</sup>*Het Socialisatievraagstuk. Rapport uitgebracht door de commissie aangewezen uit de S.D.A.P.* (Amsterdam: Ontwikkeling, 1920).

<sup>38</sup>*Bedrijfsorganisatie en medezeggenschap. Rapport uitgebracht door de commissie ingesteld door N.V.V. en S.D.A.P.* (Amsterdam: Ontwikkeling, 1923).

<sup>39</sup>H. F. Cohen's recent monograph, *Om de vernieuwing van het socialisme. De politieke orientatie van de sociaal-democratie, 1919-1930* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1974), pp. 83-158, handles the Stenhuis affair in systematic detail.

<sup>40</sup>For discussions of the left-opposition, see *ibid.*, pp. 159-75, and H. van Hulst, A. Pleysier, and A. Scheffer, *Het roode vaandel volgen wij. Geschiedenis van de S.D.A.P. van 1880-1940* (The Hague: Kruseman, 1969), pp. 168-73, 208-13, and 224-33.



While the confrontation between party leadership and left-opposition completely dominated party life between 1928 and 1932, our concern here is only with its impact upon colonial policy. The left-opposition, and particularly Schmidt and his young colleague, the former communist Jacques de Kadt, argued that the SDAP must demand immediate independence for the Dutch East Indies. This was a demand which the SDAP had never articulated and one which the party leadership bitterly resisted. In sum, the expulsion of the early left-opposition leaders in 1909, the repudiation of Troelstra's revolutionary zeal in 1918, the isolation of the left-opposition in 1926-32, and the growing commitment to legislated social reform, anticommunism, and the primacy of the parliamentary institution all served to strengthen an already "moderate" orientation. At the same time, the party continued to grow. From a membership of 37,000 in 1921 it rose to a pre-World War II peak of 91,000 by 1937.<sup>41</sup> In that year, the SDAP electorate reached 890,000. Meanwhile, NVV membership dipped from 247,000 in 1920 to 184,000 in 1925, and finally stabilized at a level of between 285,000 and 336,000 from 1932 to 1940.<sup>42</sup> Its own conservatism and the nature of its growing domestic constituency meant a generally declining interest in the Dutch East Indies or in the activities and fate of social democrats there.

### Forming a Colonial Policy

Yet, in spite of the SDAP leaders' lack of concern, colonial policy did become an issue within the party just months before the Wall Street financial crisis broke. Prior to World War I, the SDAP had frequently included colonial reform proposals in its election platforms, but lacked a formal colonial program. In 1921, a colonial commission had been formed to draft just such a program. While the commission completed its task in 1926, its proposals were not presented to the party until an extraordinary congress was called in January 1930 for the express purpose of considering a colonial program.<sup>43</sup> The issue had really been forced on the SDAP by two developments: the growing unrest in the Dutch East Indies, marked by the swift evolution of Indonesian communist, Islamic, and nationalist movements, and the simple fact that the left-opposition within the SDAP chose to demand immediate independence for the Dutch East Indies. These developments were accompanied by a generational shift among the party's "colonial experts," which had significant consequences for party policy. Even before his death in an automobile accident in 1925, van Kol had shown signs of adjusting his position on the colonial question. In two essays, *De strijd der S.D.A.P. op koloniaal gebied* and *De Vrijmaking van Nederlandsch Indië*, published in 1920 and 1925 respectively, he had argued that the goal of SDAP colonial policy should be to prepare the Dutch East Indies for eventual independence. His successors' thinking developed in the same

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<sup>41</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1938*, pp. 14-15, bound in *Verslag van het vijf en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*, contains party membership figures for the depression decade.

<sup>42</sup>Harmsen and Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding*, pp. 430-33.

<sup>43</sup>There is a brief summary of SDAP colonial policy from its origins to 1930 in *Toelichting*, esp. p. 7, bound in *Verslag van het koloniaal congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland, gehouden op zaterdag 11 en zondag 12 Januari 1930 te Utrecht*.

direction. The three most important of the younger generation SDAP colonial experts were Charles G. Cramer, Jacob van Gelderen, and J. E. Stokvis.<sup>44</sup>

Charles Cramer was born in the Indies.<sup>45</sup> The son of a doctor, he studied at the Delft Technical School and then returned to his birthplace, where he served for years as a hydraulic engineer in the colonial bureaucracy. During his student days, Cramer had become a social democrat. After the Volksraad was established in Batavia in 1917, he was appointed to it as a social democratic representative. In 1923, he moved to the Netherlands and between 1925 and 1937 served as an SDAP deputy in the Tweede Kamer (the lower house of the Dutch parliament). Stokvis first came to the Indies in 1910 as a journalist.<sup>46</sup> For the next seven years he was editor of the liberal, "ethical" newspaper *De Locomotief*, which was highly critical of the Dutch colonial regime. In 1917, he returned home, joined the SDAP, and worked closely with van Kol on colonial policy. In 1921, he was named to the party's colonial commission and became its secretary, a job he held for many years thereafter. Van Gelderen, born in 1891, was a product of Amsterdam's Jewish community.<sup>47</sup> He received his degree in public administration in 1909 and went to work in the commercial community. Some years later he was appointed to the Statistical Office of the Amsterdam municipal administration. His success in this function led to his being invited to Batavia in 1919 to organize a central statistical office for the colonial regime. In 1928, he became professor of economics at the Batavia Law School. Eventually he returned to the Netherlands, where he served briefly as the head of the crisis bureau in the Ministry of Colonies during the Colijn era. In 1937 he was elected to the Tweede Kamer.

It should be noted that in the course of the 1920s the SDAP had made some attempt to strengthen its ties with Indonesian political forces. In 1926, the Indische Club was established in the Netherlands in an attempt to fan social democratic interest in the Indies and to establish contact both with Mohammad Hatta's militantly nationalist Perhimpunan Indonesia in Holland and with Douwes Dekker's Indische Partij in Batavia. In neither case was the Club successful. Its activities stirred little interest in the Indies and the Perhimpunan Indonesia was more attracted by the Dutch Communist Party's demand for immediate Indonesian independence than by the SDAP's gradualism.<sup>48</sup> A further factor undermining rapport between the SDAP and nationalist groups was the SDAP's tendency to argue that such movements generally lacked a social democratic character.

The 1922 and 1925 electoral programs of the SDAP both contained statements calling for movement towards eventual independence of the

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<sup>44</sup>The following biographical sketches are based upon D. M. G. Koch, *Batig slot. Figuren uit het oude Indië* (Amsterdam: De Brug, 1960). Koch was a Dutch social democrat who spent much of his life in the Indies. As such, he was central to the ISDP and had considerable personal contact with Cramer, van Gelderen and Stokvis.

<sup>45</sup>For an outline of Cramer's career, see *ibid.*, pp. 104-9.

<sup>46</sup>Koch discusses Stokvis in *ibid.*, pp. 97-103.

<sup>47</sup>Van Gelderen's career is briefly summarized in *ibid.*, pp. 55-63.

<sup>48</sup>McVey, *The Rise*, p. 233.

Indies, though implying that a lengthy transition period would be necessary. In 1929, however, the left-opposition began to press for inclusion of "immediate" independence as one clause in the party's electoral program. This demand turned the future of the Indies into a major issue at the party congress of that year. Pressure from the left was rendered the more effective because of the policies of the colonial regime, especially the establishment of the Boven Digul penal colony for political prisoners. Accordingly, the party adopted the following resolution with virtually no discussion or debate.

The congress of the S.D.A.P., held in Nijmegen February 16-18, 1929,

1. With complete agreement and warm sympathy greets the longing of the native population of the Dutch East Indies for freedom and independence;
2. Accepts as one of the major duties of the Party the task of supporting in a reasonable way the indigenous popular movement which strives toward the fulfillment of that longing;
3. Judges that liberation of the Indies population from foreign domination can only be reached through the formation of an organization and the creation of forces which are able to lead an independent Indies.
4. Judges that the indigenous popular movement must be insured the necessary freedom to develop itself in public life;
5. Supports the struggle of the Kamer delegation in parliament against the policy of force and restriction of personal freedom through which the government seeks to repress the Indonesian struggle for freedom;
6. Repeats the demand of the Kamer delegation that, apart from the realization of the demands laid out in the Strijdprogram and election program of the Party, the internment camp on the upper Digoel be immediately dismantled, and those interned released and returned to their homes; and that amnesty be given to those who have been punished for their political activity, and those banned and interned as a result of such activity be released;
7. Calls on the Dutch working class to strengthen social democracy by supporting with complete dedication and full force the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies in their difficult and long struggle for freedom and independence.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of this statement of support and sympathy, it is noticeable that the party chairman, Jan Oudegeest, who introduced the resolution on behalf of the Partij Bestuur (PB--the central committee of the SDAP), stressed the difference between the SDAP and its ISDP counterpart on the one hand and the various Indonesian national movements on the other:

[Oudegeest] recalled a discussion in the party secretariat in which the possibility of cooperation between the party and Indonesian organizations here in Holland was examined. We attempted to find each other. The result was that the goal of the party as a class organization differed from that of the Indonesians as a national organization. With respect for both positions we came to the conclusion that we can fight next to each other and not against each other.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>*Verslag van het vier en dertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland, gehouden op zaterdag 16, zondag 17 en maandag 18 Februari 1929 te Nijmegen*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

In the same spirit, Stokvis introduced the colonial clause of the 1929 electoral program by emphasizing the importance of the democratization of the Indies and a rapid movement toward autonomy. "We must develop a democratic Volksraad on the basis of its current structure. Next to democratization of the Volksraad I would like to place in the election program the maintenance of this forum as a general representative body. . . . [Stokvis] warned against the desires of Colijn who wishes for territorial representative bodies and thus a splintering of popular Indonesian influence."<sup>51</sup> On the issue of the transition period leading to eventual independence, Stokvis warned against the use of terms like "extended" or "lengthy," arguing that such language could, or would, be interpreted to mean "immense" or "interminable." This point in Stokvis' presentation seems to have taken Schmidt, the leading party spokesman for the "independence now" position, somewhat by surprise.<sup>52</sup> He expressed his pleasure that Stokvis had spoken as he did, and then proceeded to introduce an amendment to the Stokvis' resolution, calling for immediate independence. As he put it,

The working class cannot expect a single advantage from colonial exploitation. There is therefore no reason to shelve the question of Indonesian independence. Colonial exploitation with its low wages and long hours has a harmful influence on the position of workers in Europe. Above all, the colonies are the reserve areas of capitalism. Without colonial domination, capitalism would lose its power.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of this strong statement, Schmidt eventually yielded to pressure from Oudegeest and agreed to reserve his motion for the coming special colonial congress. The final version of the colonial clause in the SDAP's election program thus read as follows: ". . . development to self-government under native leadership, leading to preparation for independence of the overseas territories. Elimination of the death sentence, corporal punishment, penal sanctions, forced labor, and special privileges. Reestablish the right to strike. Freedom to organize, assemble and of the press. Democratization of the Volksraad and the maintenance of this forum as a general representative body. Broader loan policies. Expansion of state enterprise. A greater Indonesian share in colonial profits."<sup>54</sup>

### The Colonial Congress (1930)

The stage was now set for the first and only colonial congress that the SDAP would ever hold. The discussions, which opened on January 11, 1930, revolved around twelve propositions introduced by the PB as constituting a systematic colonial program. These propositions had been drafted by Stokvis and van Gelderen in 1929 and had been approved by the SDAP colonial commission of which Stokvis was a member. Since van Gelderen was a member of the ISDP as well as of the SDAP, his active participation was in a sense expressive of ISDP support. (In fact, a virtually identical set of propositions had already been approved by the ISDP the previous year; representatives of the Indische Partij had also been consulted on the wording.) As the delegates were seated, the following propositions were presented for their consideration:<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>55</sup>*Verslag van het koloniaal congres*, pp. 46-49, except for Proposition X (see n. 56).

### Proposition I

The development and exploitation of foreign markets and productive territories and the plundering of native peoples there through governmental domination is one of the forms of capitalism, generated by its very origins, essence, and history.

### Proposition II

Recognizing that the development, working and division of the world's natural wealth is in the interest of humanity, social democracy nevertheless rejects governmental domination as a means of promoting this interest.

Her striving toward an international community of free peoples entails the dissolution of the colonial relationship, for without such dissolution such a community cannot exist.

### Proposition III

The way to promote the division of raw materials necessary to the globe is through an international agreement which has the effect of eliminating the contradictions between the importance of an appropriate provision for the economic needs of humanity and the right of each people, prepared to take part in this, to self-determination.

### Proposition IV

As long as foreign power is not withdrawn, it must be exercised with the application of the principle that it leads to national independence.

The exercise of foreign power should be subject to the supervision of the League of Nations, of which the ruling power must be a member.

### Proposition V

The practice of capitalist colonial policy stands in natural opposition to the concept of social democracy.

Just as the mainspring of capitalism in its own national sphere is exclusively the quest for profits, so here it uses the state as its weapon.

It is thus by nature directed toward an extended maintenance of colonial domination.

### Proposition VI

The effects of capitalism in a colony are worse than in its own country because:

- a. The dominated masses, completely or in part bound to a technically primitive productive mode, can neither economically nor socially defend themselves against modern capitalist exploitation;
- b. The masses themselves are usually not aware of the international resource exchange value of their land and of their labor;
- c. In lands with mild climate, rich soil, and primitive productive relationships, the necessities of life for the natives are as a rule easy to satisfy and thus act as a brake on the striving toward a higher standard of living and facilitate exploitation;
- d. The foreign capitalist directs the exploitation of the colony toward the export of capital profits insofar as such are not necessary for the maintenance or expansion of profit sources

- and thus prevents a normal increase of the population's income and its wealth.
- e. A powerful colonial bureaucracy, extremely susceptible to capitalist influence, retards the development of democratic administration and serves to frustrate the proper development of social and governmental reforms;
  - f. Colonial rule sharpens national and racial conflicts and thus impedes normal class formation inside the indigenous community, and damages the fighting capacity of the economically oppressed;
  - g. Colonial domination often has the consequence, through the penetration of a foreign culture, that the great cultural treasures of the natives are regarded as unnecessary;
  - h. Above all, it is in the interest of the capitalist rulers to retard the development of national industry on either a private or a cooperative basis.

#### Proposition VII

These oppressive influences find their limits in countertendencies which capitalism, even in its colonial form, calls into existence.

The increasing establishment of western transportation and business organization inside the ruling community under western administration increases the needs of the ruler for educated indigenous labor and administrative personnel, and thus quickens the adjustment to western productive and power relations.

The unavoidable integration of the colonial territory into world trade will accelerate this development, along with spiritual renewal and a strengthening of the population's power.

With these counterforces colonial capitalism creates the seeds of its own destruction.

#### Proposition VIII

Capitalism leads to international rivalry in the acquisition of even greater colonial possessions, because of the hunt for profits by national capitalists, which are accumulated at the expense of the welfare interests of the working class.

This imperialism leads to an increase in military expenditures, stands in the way of disarmament, and threatens humanity with new catastrophic wars.

#### Proposition IX

On coming to power, social democracy promises a swift dissolution of the colonial relationship, if such still exists.

The implementation of a socialist productive mode, especially in a tropical land where the economic and social relations differ from those in older industrial lands, will find its limits in the particular economic structure.

However, the transfer of foreign and native industries based on western principles into the hands of the indigenous community will create the means that will most quickly lead to the acquisition of a real economic and social power not possible under foreign rule.

#### Proposition X

1. In the first place, the colonial work of social democracy will be directed toward the elimination of foreign rule. All reforms should weaken the colonial relationship and where possible should fuse with the demands of the natives.

2. It recognizes the right of national independence, but notes that the lasting existence of this is only possible if:
  - a. A native administration is formed out of the population itself or at least is generally recognized by the population--without, however, stipulating that a particular form of state or administration be adopted as a precondition;
  - b. This administration has the capacity and is prepared to bear the responsibility which the integration of the nation into international commerce entails.<sup>56</sup>

#### Proposition XI

The struggle of the subjects for national independence, which above all must be conducted with its own forces, implies not only the liberation of nationally and economically oppressed peoples and thus the fulfillment of a social democratic ideal, but is also social democracy's closest ally in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Social democracy must support the national struggle with all her force and with all means she judges useful, and yet maintain her right to judge independently the appropriate means. On this basis she untiringly strives toward cooperation with the national movement.

Within the context of this struggle, social democracy must help develop the evolution of a social democratic movement on indigenous principles. In the meantime, she must also strive toward the elevation and self-awareness of the indigenous working class.

#### Proposition XII

In the application of her doctrines and means of struggle, social democracy must take into account the economic, social, and religious character of the natives and realize that they experience the colonial relationship as a national and racial conflict above all.

The debate at the congress centered around Proposition X, which, in this initial form, seemed to place conditions upon Indonesian independence.

In presenting this program to the congress, the PB circulated a lengthy explanation, which opened with the significant statement that van Kol's work on colonial policy had been largely inspired by ethical and reformist considerations and thus did not embody social democratic principles per se. "It is perhaps best said of van Kol's position, that he followed more of a practical anticapitalist than a principled socialist colonial policy."<sup>57</sup> The explanation included the observation that the rise of Indonesian parties such as the Indische Partij and the Sarekat Islam and the impact of Soviet communism upon Asian societies had persuaded van Kol to support eventual independence for the Indies.<sup>58</sup> While arguing that the SDAP should now support the struggle of national forces within the Dutch East Indies, it warned that the party should never lose sight of the fact that such forces were not of a social democratic character.<sup>59</sup> Calling for a common front against current Dutch policy in the Indies, it clearly stressed that this represented

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>57</sup>*Toelichting*, pp. 3-4. The *toelichting* is bound in the end of the *Verslag van het koloniaal congres*, and has its own pagination, pp. 3-24.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.      <sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

a temporary union of very divergent currents. Finally, the statement emphatically rejected the "independence now" position of the left-opposition: "None of the groups who join in the slogan 'freedom for Indonesia now' can seriously believe in its realization in the near future. With the acceptance of such a slogan our party would probably win the political sympathy of some groups of Indonesians, but it would expose itself in a dangerous political gamble leading to its own disappointment and that of the [native] subjects."<sup>60</sup> Not content with arguing that the Indies were not yet ready for complete independence, the PB also contended that the Dutch working class would suffer should Indonesia become a sovereign state.<sup>61</sup>

Discussion at the congress opened with the rapid approval of a resolution condemning recent police actions and arrests in the Indies aimed against the nationalist movement. Stokvis then stood up to introduce the proposed program. Noting that it was a social democratic and not an Indonesian program, he nonetheless stressed the great importance of cooperation with the nationalist movement.

Between colonial socialists and colonial nationalists there exist many disagreements. The first seek an alternative productive mode and oppose capitalism because it is capitalism. The nationalists oppose the same enemy but with an entirely different viewpoint. For them, the enemy represents the national oppressor.

Both thus stand on common territory against a common enemy, but each has its own goal. This is a basis for cooperation. Both can support each other. At the same time one must always take the differences into account. It is a modest cooperation.<sup>62</sup>

Such cooperation, however, would not involve the use of force. "We want to support the national struggle with those means which, in our judgment, are most effective. These means can also be those of the Indonesian. But one must not demand that we support and approve *all* Indonesian weapons. We have our own vision."<sup>63</sup>

Stokvis briefly outlined the stake Dutch labor had in the Indies and sternly warned against "immediate" independence.<sup>64</sup>

The [Netherlands] wage fund derived from the colonies can be divided into:

1. *Drainage*: the flow of profits from land reclamation and exploitation of the Indonesian worker. The profits from this source may be valued at around 400 million guilders per year. This profit naturally creates employment opportunities; capitalized it amounts to 10-17% of the national wealth.
2. *Market area for Dutch industry*. In 1920, total [Dutch] exports had a value of 1700 million guilders of which 14% went to Indonesia. In 1927, these figures amounted to 1900 million and 7.2%. The textile industry exported 67.1% of its total production to Indonesia in 1922. This figure declined to 55.9% in 1928. . . .
3. *Market area for personal labor skills*. According to van Gelderen . . . 43,500 Europeans hold leading positions in Indonesia. This is

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<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup>*Verslag van het koloniaal congres*, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.



the "top layer." The proportion of these people who have come directly from the Netherlands may be estimated at 40,000.

For an estimate of the meaning to Dutch labor of an *immediate* breaking of colonial ties, I have consulted our able colleague Dr. Tinbergen, who calculates, naturally approximately, a loss of employment for 150,000 Dutch workers, that is to say, about 10% of the total.

As expected, P. J. Schmidt delivered a long and rather sharp critique of the program, directly challenging the Stokvis thesis that the European working class benefited from colonies. "I have never found figures which reflected the advantage to the working class of colonial exploitation."<sup>65</sup> On the contrary, Schmidt contended, the colonial areas constituted a reserve territory which strengthened the position of European capitalism over and against the European working class. "Our point of departure must be that the sooner the colonial relationship dissolves the better the economic position of the workers will be. . . . Under all circumstances we must support anticapitalist forces which strike modern capitalism in the heart."<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, the SDAP should press for immediate and unconditional independence for the Indies and in pursuing this aim should not rule out the use of force.<sup>67</sup>

As the debate wore on, J. Albarda, the leader of the SDAP Tweede Kamer fraction and in a certain sense the titular head of the SDAP, rose to reply to Schmidt. As he had done on previous occasions, Albarda argued that the Dutch working class had a powerful vested interest in the Indies. "The advantage is obvious. You only have to think about the relation of the textile industry to the Indies, which is its great market area. There is further the machine industry which fills important orders for the sugar industry. . . . The interests of the harbor, warehouse and transport workers are tightly connected to the possession of the Indies. Ask Drees if the working class in The Hague has anything to do with the Indies. This is true for many other parts of the land, the areas around Arnhem, the Gooi, the Bloemendaal area. Indies revenue brings purchasing power and prosperity. If this vanished suddenly, there would be an economic crisis."<sup>68</sup> Although Albarda supported the position that the Indies should be led toward eventual independence and rejected schemes for giving the area dominion status, the thrust of his argument was to imply preconditions for that independence and to require sustained economic connections between Holland and its former colony. He stressed also that rapid, unconditional independence could result in American or Japanese seizure of the Indies. "Would Japan and the United States calmly write off their interests in the Indies? Or would they intervene? Then the workers must intervene to prevent a war, says Schmidt. But the American and Japanese workers have not come this far. The Indies would be occupied. The new rule over the Indies would be far worse than the Dutch."<sup>69</sup> In spite of the seemingly wide gap between the positions staked out, the two wings of the party finally accepted a compromise revision of the controversial Proposition X which ran as follows:

1. Social Democracy unconditionally recognizes the right of national independence.

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<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

2. In the first place, her colonial work shall thus be directed toward the elimination of foreign rule. All reforms should weaken the colonial relationship and, where possible, should fuse with the demands of the natives. Colonial work must thus create the possibility to pursue an independent foreign trade policy.

Without more ado, the twelve propositions were then accepted by the congress.<sup>70</sup>

### Political Antecedents of Planisme

Hardly had this colonial policy been formulated when the colonial issue as a whole was pushed into the background by the magnitude of the depression crisis. In 1929, 27,775 laborers were registered as unemployed, a figure which constituted about 6-7 percent of the labor force. By 1931, unemployment had risen to 96,000 (15.3 percent).<sup>71</sup> The crisis continued to deepen, and the level of unemployment rose to a peak of just under 500,000 (33 percent of the labor force) during a number of months in 1936. Throughout the period between 1933 and 1938 about 400,000 were out of work.<sup>72</sup>

The SDAP experienced an internal crisis as well. The spokesmen for a more active colonial policy were expelled from the party shortly after the 1930 congress after a bitter factional fight. In 1932, Schmidt and Jacques de Kadt created their own separate splinter party, the Onafhankelijk Socialistische Partij (Independent Socialist Party).<sup>73</sup>

No sooner had this internal crisis passed than the party leadership was presented with a difficult new colonial issue of considerable political consequence. On February 4, 1933, members of the crew of the cruiser *De Zeven Provinciën* mutinied as the ship was moving through waters northwest of Sumatra.<sup>74</sup> The immediate cause of the mutiny was an announcement that naval salaries would be lowered by 7 percent as of January 1, 1933; a subsequent clarification specified that Indonesian salaries would be cut by 7 percent, while European crewmen's pay would

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<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>71</sup>Centraal Kantoor voor de Statistiek, *Rijk in Europa. Jaarcijfers 1932* (The Hague: Landsdrukkerij, 1933), p. 99.

<sup>72</sup>For a brief discussion of the unemployment problem, see Windmuller, *Labor Relations*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>73</sup>The expulsion of Schmidt and de Kadt did not follow from their position on the Indies, but rather from their refusal to halt publication of *De Fakkel*, a modest newspaper which they edited and from which they launched attacks upon the SDAP's parliamentary delegation, the PB, and the party daily, *Het Volk*. Contending that the liberal capitalist world, along with its colonial holdings, was facing the ultimate crisis, they insisted that social democratic strategy be radicalized and extraparliamentary actions undertaken, measures which the SDAP leadership bitterly opposed. For Schmidt's defense of his position, see the minutes of the Haarlem congress, *Verslag van het seven en dertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland, gehouden op zaterdag 26, zondag 27 en maandag 28 Maart 1932, te Haarlem*, pp. 14-18.

<sup>74</sup>The following account is based upon the recent study by J. C. H. Blom, *De muterij op de Zeven Provinciën* (Bussum: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1975).

be lowered by only 4 percent. The cruiser was quickly invested by military vessels and placed under air reconnaissance. Although the mutineers had telegraphed reports that the imprisoned officers were in good health and expressed their intention to put into port and disembark, a dive-bomber struck the cruiser as it approached the southeastern tip of Sumatra on February 10. The crew immediately surrendered and the ship was boarded. During the six-day period of the mutiny, and especially during its aftermath, the SDAP parliamentary delegation and *Het Volk*, while not endorsing the crewmen's actions, did argue that they were the result of government policy. The SDAP parliamentary delegation, especially F. M. Wibaut in the upper house and Albarda in the Tweede Kamer, strongly denounced the bombing as a totally unjustified use of force. The response of the Defense Ministry was an immediate ban on the circulation of SDAP and NVV publications in military quarters and an announced refusal to employ any member of the SDAP, the NVV, the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, or the Unafhankelijk Socialistische Partij. During the 1933 parliamentary election, the SDAP found itself in an awkward position. The bourgeois parties denounced the mutiny and charged that the SDAP was a party of insurrection and revolution; the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Onafhankelijk Socialistische Partij all strongly endorsed the mutiny and attacked the SDAP for timidity and lack of principle in refusing to join them in this stand. As a result, and in spite of the depression crisis, the SDAP did poorly at the polls: its share of the popular vote fell from 23.8 percent to 21.4 percent.<sup>75</sup>

Stunned by the slump and dismayed by its dim electoral performance, the SDAP struggled to find a new programmatic line. At a meeting of the Party Council, a body which grouped together the SDAP and NVV leadership, Albarda attributed the election disaster partially to the *Zeven Provinciën* affair and partially to the stand the SDAP had taken against rearmament.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the SDAP was failing to attract young voters and was losing the support it had once enjoyed among intellectuals. On June 10, 1933, the PB decided to form a special commission (the *Herzieningscommissie*) to study the strategy and tactics of the SDAP and to recommend possible changes. Moving with unusual speed, the commission produced its report by October of 1933. The main thrust of the report was to recommend program revisions aimed at winning agrarian and middle class support. Colonial policy was peripheral to this task, and probably for this reason no real change in the 1930 program was advocated.<sup>77</sup>

Our commission has discussed the question whether it should be recommended that the paragraph [X] be changed to preclude in the future false presentations of the principles and aims of the party in the area of colonial work. It has unanimously decided not to do so.

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<sup>75</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1933*, p. 42, bound in *Verslag van het veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>76</sup>Van Hulst, Pleysier, and Scheffer, *Het roode vaandel*, pp. 256-57.

<sup>77</sup>*Rapport van de "Herzieningscommissie" der S.D.A.P.* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1933), p. 49.

### The Development of Planisme

The larger significance of the report was that, in spite of its understandable emphasis on defense issues, given the abrupt emergence of the Third Reich in the course of 1933, it signaled a move toward planisme. The commission noted that while it had no mandate to formulate a specific program to move Dutch society toward the realization of a socialist state, there was an urgent need for the completion of such a concrete program in the near future.<sup>78</sup> On February 10, 1934, Albarda proposed to the PB the creation of a scientific bureau, which would work with a new commission to draft the proposed comprehensive program. Albarda's move was endorsed by the 1934 congress, held at Utrecht, as follows:

The congress of the SDAP

judges that the time has come to direct the efforts of the party toward the rationalization of economic life and to call for cooperation with the efforts of all anticapitalist forces to realize, with the SDAP, the implementation of democratic socialism as the way out of social misery; convinced that, although the reports of the socialization commission, as well as the reports on business organization and codetermination and on new organs, give important directions for the transition to socialism, there now exists an urgent need to develop concrete particulars on the first measures to be taken;

calls on the Partij Bestuur to create a scientific bureau, which, in cooperation with a joint commission to be named by the NVV, will develop a plan which begins to make this transition; . . .<sup>79</sup>

On May 4, 1934, the engineer H. Vos was named director of the Scientific Bureau.<sup>80</sup> Under him would serve G. van der Bergh, J. van Gelderen (the bureau's colonial expert), the young economist Jan Tinbergen, who in a later era would be recognized as one of the world's leading econometricians, and the engineer Theodore van der Waerden. At a later date A. W. Ijzerman was added to the group. The SDAP-NVV planning commission was composed of Albarda, W. Drees, J. W. Matthijsen, and Koos Vorrink of the SDAP, and H. J. van Braambeek, J. Brautigam, E. Kupers, and F. van Meurs of the NVV. After an organizational meeting on July 3, 1934, the two groups began their work under great pressure.<sup>81</sup>

The major themes in their draft plan were first presented to a congress of SDAP and NVV leaders on April 22, 1935.<sup>82</sup> Vos, Albarda, and Kuypers were the main speakers. In July, well before the text of the Plan was published, a Centrale Plan Commissie (Central Plan Commission) composed of Albarda, S. de la Bella, E. Kupers, C. van der

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<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>79</sup>*Verslag van het veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland, gehouden op zaterdag 31 Maart, zondag 1 en Maandag 2 April 1934 te Utrecht*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>80</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1934*, p. 55, bound in *Verslag van het een en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>82</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1935*, p. 50, bound in *Verslag van het twee en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

Lende, F. S. Noordhoff, G. van der Veen, Vos, Vorrink, H. B. Wiardi Beckman, and C. Woudenberg (the SDAP secretary) was formed to direct the political agitation for the Plan and coordinate propaganda measures. The Commission immediately placed the weekly news-sheet *Vrijheid, Arbeid, Brood* (Freedom, Work, Bread) under its control, adding as a subtitle the words *Plan van de Arbeid*.<sup>83</sup> (Edited by Meyer Sluyser, a skilled and sophisticated journalist, *Vrijheid, Arbeid, Brood* had been created in 1933 as part of a broad antifascist campaign by the SDAP and NVV in response to the formation of the Third Reich in neighboring Germany and the continuing growth of national socialist currents inside the Netherlands itself.<sup>84</sup>) The aim of the Commission was to link the new Plan program to the broad political struggle that social democracy felt itself facing. In the autumn of 1935, a massive Plan congress, including both SDAP and NVV delegates, was held in Utrecht. In the course of a series of resolutions defining the contours of Plan socialism, the following position on the Indies was adopted.<sup>85</sup>

Vigorous promotion of the standard of living of the native population of Indonesia and expansion of the internal market. Alteration of the economic structure so that the Indonesian community is less dependent upon western cultivation. As crisis policy, the initiation of a public works program and improvement of housing conditions. Help from the Netherlands with the financing of crisis measures. Lasting economic recovery through the promotion of cultivations practiced by the Indonesians; through industrialization, particularly joined with already existing native industry, with help when necessary from investment funds backed by the state; through economic information, good credit organization and producer organization. Improvement and rationalization of the transport system. Promotion of the interests of the Indonesians in the trade policy of the Netherlands.

In the meantime, the Central Plan Commission had hurriedly established the framework for a considerable cadre. By 1936, 659 local Plan commissions had been established in villages, towns, and major cities. Cadre instruction started as early as the autumn of 1935. Speakers were dispatched to work with clusters of local cadres under the general supervision of the SDAP's Instituut voor Arbeidersontwikkeling (Institute for Workers' Development). Between 1935 and the parliamentary elections of 1937, the party launched a massive propaganda drive on behalf of its vaunted Plan, only to meet bitter disappointment once again. In the 1937 poll, the SDAP share of the popular vote registered an increase of less than 0.6 percent.<sup>86</sup>

Partly as a result of this setback, but more as an outcome of growing rivalry between Albarda and the NVV leader de la Bella, the General Council of the SDAP and NVV suddenly voted to halt their joint

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<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>84</sup>For a discussion of the origins of *Vrijheid, Arbeid, Brood* and the role Meyer Sluyser played in editing the forum, see van Hulst, Pleysier, and Scheffer, *Het roode vaandel*, pp. 266-69.

<sup>85</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1935*, p. 55, bound in *Verslag van het twee en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>86</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1937*, p. 38, bound in *Verslag van het vier en veertigste congres der Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

agitation, to dissolve the Central Plan Commission and its local branches, and to halt publication of *Vrijheid, Arbeid, Brood*.<sup>87</sup> It appears that Albarda feared that de la Bella was trying to subordinate the SDAP to the trade union leadership.<sup>88</sup> Since the partnership between the two had always been based on the premise that the NVV would concentrate on pushing the socioeconomic demands of labor while the SDAP fulfilled a more general political mission, the decision to dissolve the joint agitational structure for the Plan served to reemphasize the party's political autonomy. But the result was that, although the Plan van de Arbeid remained an integral part of the SDAP program, the enthusiasm it had generated in the party in 1935-36 waned dramatically and for good.

### Evaluating the Plan

In evaluating the Plan van de Arbeid, one has to bear in mind the extremely difficult circumstances under which it was drawn up. Although it had purged its left wing in 1932, the SDAP was torn from within by bitter debate over the *Zeven Provinciën* affair and over "law and order" issues in general. Between 1933 and 1935, J. E. W. Duijs, for years one of the stalwarts of the SDAP parliamentary delegation, continually charged that the party was insufficiently anticommunist, was supportive of mutiny, violence, and disorder, and was overreacting to fascist currents in the Netherlands.<sup>89</sup> Duijs's attacks were seconded by Professor J. Goudriaan, who even resigned from the party in protest at the leadership's refusal to condemn the mutiny. Henri Polak, veteran labor leader and the author of a regular column in *Het Volk*, strongly protested the shift in accent from anticommunism and antifascism to planisme.<sup>90</sup> Consistently rejecting popular front actions in tandem with communist, syndicalist, or left-socialist groups, but also opposed to the tough "law and order" line taken in both the Netherlands and the Indies by the Colijn regimes, the party leadership sought to restore its credibility, meet the needs of the times, and expand its constituency by building on its tradition of sober institutional innovation.

The Plan van de Arbeid was in part the culmination of a long series of reports issued by the SDAP and NVV since 1920.<sup>91</sup> Although addressed to different issues, all these reports had tried to develop social democratic programs in terms of specific and concrete institu-

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<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>88</sup>There is an extremely interesting discussion of this issue in van Hulst, Pleysier, and Scheffer, *Het roode vaandel*, pp. 283-84.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 256-57. Duijs was finally expelled from the SDAP in 1935, when he refused to sit with the parliamentary delegation.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>91</sup>First came the *Socialisatievraagstuk* (The Socialization Question) in 1920, followed by *Bedrijfsorganisatie en medezeggenschap* (Business Organization and Codetermination) in 1923, *Rapport over bedrijfsleven en verruiming der arbeidsmarkt in Nederland* (Report on the State of Business and the Expansion of the Labor Market in the Netherlands) in 1930, *Nieuwe Organen* (New Institutes) in 1931, *Het landbouw vraagstuk* (The Agrarian Question) in 1933, and the *Rapport van de Herzieningscommissie* (The Report of the Revision Commission) in 1933.

tional proposals for various sectors of the economy. All were based on the assumption that such institutional and structural innovations could and would be realized through acts of parliament. Like its predecessors, the Plan was aimed at both short- and long-term goals. It was intended to combat the economic crisis and also to lay the institutional foundations for the eventual realization of socialism at some later date.

In its overall design, the Plan supported the creation of powerful governmental organs which would plan and direct production in the private sector of the economy, supervise an expansion of housing construction and the transportation infrastructure, and would foster further industrialization. Government control and direction would serve to rationalize production and harmonize it with social needs. Rationalization itself would diminish, or, hopefully, even eliminate business cycles, with their disastrous effects on production and the labor market. Foreign trade was also to be subject to governmental controls to ensure satisfaction of the population's needs. The Plan's immediate priorities were a massive series of public works programs, designed to cut unemployment by half<sup>92</sup> and to revive the economy by stimulating a dramatic increase in public purchasing power.

The last chapter of the Plan dealt with the Indies and was authored by van Gelderen, the colonial expert for the Scientific Bureau, assisted by Cramer, Stokvis, and L. N. Palar. Taken within the context of the entire 312-page volume, the policy statement on the Indies was brief, covering only fourteen pages in all. It was also quite narrowly addressed to strictly socioeconomic problems. There was no mention of democratization of the Volksraad or the colonial civil service. Not a word was said of the political forces in the Indies. Even the proposed economic policies were such as could be carried out immediately and within the existing colonial framework. Such standard socialist policies as the collectivization of agriculture, the formation and strengthening of rural cooperatives, and the creation of state enterprises were mostly mentioned in only a most general sense and often by implication alone. Existing productive modes were the report's real frame of reference.

The main policy areas discussed were agriculture, industrialization, public works, and terms of trade with the Netherlands and Japan. A new course in agricultural policy was described only in the vaguest and most general terms. "Changes in the economic structure must be directed toward an increase in the standard of living, thus an increase of purchasing power on the domestic market, and a termination of the one-sided dependency upon western cultures."<sup>93</sup> While arguing that the cultivation of export crops should be curtailed, the report was obscure on what should take their place. At one point, it seemed to suggest that relief from rural poverty could come only from industrialization and a transformation of the productive infrastructure. Yet industrialization had to be preceded by a strengthening of domestic markets.

The consequences of the crisis have been very serious in Indonesia and have led to an almost total collapse of the "western" busi-

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<sup>92</sup>*Het plan van de arbeid* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1935), p. 53.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 298.

nesses, that is to say cultures and other undertakings run in a European manner which for the most part are aimed at the export market. . . .

The policy to follow in Indonesia is parallel in its broad contours with that which the Plan proposes for the Netherlands. As *crisis policy* the implementation of public works for the reestablishment of the standard of living and an expansion of the capacity of the domestic market is urged.

As *policy for further recovery* it is important, next to a strong promotion of Indonesian cultures, industrialization, and an improvement of transportation, to choose what can partially be done by public works with regard to these factors.

There exists in Indonesia an even closer connection than in our land between an increase in the standard of living and industrialization. Industrialization always has as a condition the development of the domestic market which must support an increase in the standard of living.<sup>94</sup>

The report's main stress was placed on public works promotion and how it should be financed. The Dutch government should transfer 100 million guilders to the account of the colonial administration, which would then initiate a major series of construction projects.<sup>95</sup> The loan would be handled in such a way as to eliminate a service burden on the existing colonial budget. "We contend that the Indonesian budget at the moment should not and cannot bear the interest and redemption costs of this sum. One possible way to prevent this is for the Netherlands to raise a public loan of this amount with the sum to be transferred to Indonesia as an *interest free* advance. The raising of this loan on the free market will increase the Dutch national debt and the state budget will have to carry the interest and redemption costs for the first few years. Another possibility is that the Indies borrow the sum directly, with the loan guaranteed by the Netherlands, and that the Netherlands pay the interest and redemption costs for the first few years."<sup>96</sup> The funding of public works would create primary employment for 200,000 Indonesians. The report confidently concluded that the resultant demand for goods and services would create an additional 300,000 jobs.<sup>97</sup>

To foster long-term industrialization, the report called in rather general terms for the creation of state-controlled investment funds which would extend capital loans to the private sector. "The sums available do not have to be especially large. . . . In connection with the businesses which these investment funds serve, an administrative form must be selected in which Indonesian interests are strongly represented."<sup>98</sup> A number of target industries were suggested.

The report also urged an improvement of the transportation infrastructure, presumably at state expense, although this was not specifically spelled out. "Beyond the expansion of industry, the *promotion of the transport system* in Indonesia is also possible. Small auto transport, which in Indonesia has a very good future, can be expanded. We further add that in Indonesia a general rationalization of transport is also necessary, above all a rationalization of transport in trams

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<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 298-99.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 305.



and autobuses. Next to highway transport, transport by water, involving small ships for native produce, needs to be promoted."<sup>99</sup>

Virtually one-half of the Indies section of the report dealt with the terms of trade rather than productive forces internal to the colony itself. Noting the growing importance of Japanese trade with the Indies, the report stressed its positive aspects. "The *relationship between Indonesia and Japan* has different aspects which within the context of the Plan can only be handled in a few lines. First, it is a complementary connection. Indonesia is a raw materials land. Japan is developing into an industrial state. Beyond this the relation between the standard of living in Indonesia and Japan lessens the distance between the two. . . . A *good* division of labor between the two lands must be applauded and promoted as an unqualified benefit."<sup>100</sup> At the same time, it cautioned, again in rather general terms, against excessive Japanese economic penetration of the islands. The Indies' trade relations with the Netherlands were seen in the following terms:

In the economic relationship of the Netherlands to Indonesia in terms of each other's exports, the *trade policy regulations* which the Netherlands can adopt play an important role. . . . The Netherlands has a very large *import surplus*, although this has become dramatically smaller. In contrast, Indonesia has an important *export surplus*. In terms of trade policy, the Netherlands ought to strive toward *three-cornered treaties* in which nations from whom our land imports more than it sells take Indonesian produce as compensation for this surplus.<sup>101</sup>

The concluding section of the policy statement contained an interesting evaluation of the impact planisme might have upon the Twente textile complex and its role in the Dutch East Indies. "For textile producers, exports from the Netherlands to Indonesia are of great importance. . . . For employment in the Dutch textile industry [quotas] are important, while it also appears important to us that a complete conquest of the market by Japan be prevented by [imposition of] quotas. Nevertheless, it seems that, with the exception of some special items, the market for Twente is lost in view of developments in the East. Seen from a global perspective Twente does not appear to be the best place to manufacture goods for Indonesia out of American raw materials. A *declining quota* for Twente goods thus ought to be established."<sup>102</sup> In sum, the Central Plan Commission sought to apply the same public works policies to the Indies that it proposed for the Netherlands.

### Related Developments

Subsequent to the publication of the Plan, the Central Plan Commission distributed two important handbooks, *Handboek voor het Plan van de Arbeid* (1936) and *Ons plan na een jaar* (1936). It is indicative of the minimal party concern with the Indies in the late 1930s that neither made any mention of the colony. Similarly, when H. Vos, director of the Scientific Bureau, published a brief essay entitled *De maatschappij verandert* in 1937 (the year the SDAP and NVV dropped their joint agitation for the Plan), he made only a few casual references to the Indies.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 304-5.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 308-9.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 310-11.

It is worth remembering, too, that during the drive for planisme, the SDAP maintained only fleeting contact with political forces in the Indies. After the 1930 colonial congress, the PB appointed a commission to draft a colonial working program.<sup>103</sup> The commission, which consisted of Albarda, Cramer, M. Mendels, J. Oudegeest, P. J. Schmidt, Stokvis, J. L. Vleming, W. Vliegen, N. Vijlbrief, D. J. A. Westerveld, and Daan van der Zee, finally published a working program in 1932, but it played a very minor role in the collective life of the party. In 1931, the SDAP's annual congress condemned the arrest of Sukarno and the harassment of the nationalist movement by colonial security officials.<sup>104</sup> A number of protest demonstrations were held, and Stokvis published a brochure defending Sukarno and denouncing the colonial regime. When Sukarno was released at the end of 1931, the PB dispatched a goodwill telegram.<sup>105</sup> In 1933, the PB moved to create a permanent colonial commission, composed of both NVV and SDAP notables, to provide information on the SDAP's colonial policy in both the Netherlands and the Indies.<sup>106</sup> As a result, a press bureau called Persindo (Persbureau Indonesia) was established in Amsterdam under the directorship of Palar.<sup>107</sup> Persindo was supposed to transmit articles dealing with Dutch social democracy to newspapers in the Indies, and, where necessary, to provide Indonesian translations. In his annual report for 1933, however, the SDAP secretary, C. Woudenberg, noted how scanty the contact was even between the SDAP and the ISDP. "Relations with the ISDP during the past year were only moderate. The contact could have been better. The difficulties with which our party comrades in Indonesia have to deal are very great as a result of the extraordinarily reactionary actions of the government."<sup>108</sup> Within a year, Persindo's services were cut off by colonial security forces. In his annual report for 1935, Woudenberg bitterly observed that:

In the beginning of 1935, however, Persindo dispatches had to be stopped because, on orders from the government, they were no longer permitted by the post office. In the Volksraad and in the two Kamers we asked for an explanation. The General Council of the SDAP and NVV has requested an explanation in writing from the Governor-General, without satisfactory results. However, the issue is still being negotiated.<sup>109</sup>

Dispatches to the Indies were resumed later in 1935, but they came from the Persdienst SDAP and the Persdienst NVV. It was not until 1937 that the colonial regime allowed Persindo to resume transmissions. From

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<sup>103</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1930*, p. 81, bound in *Verslag van het zes en dertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>104</sup>*Verslag van het zes en dertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*, gehouden op zaterdag 4, zondag 5 en maandag 6 April 1931, p. 76.

<sup>105</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1931*, pp. 78-79, bound in *Verslag van het zeven en dertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>106</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1933*, p. 67, bound in *Verslag van het veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67.      <sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>109</sup>*Verslag over het jaar 1935*, p. 71, bound in *Verslag van het twee en veertigste congres der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland*.

then on until the coming of war, the colonial commission's activities revolved almost exclusively around this news bureau.<sup>110</sup>

### Conclusion: The SDAP and the Indies

Confronted by massive unemployment and a series of hostile and highly conservative coalitions headed by Colijn, trapped in permanent opposition and lacking any influence over governmental policy, the SDAP was forced increasingly to concentrate on internal issues as the 1930s wore on. This inwardness was compounded by the emergence of the Third Reich on Holland's eastern frontier and the problems posed by the appearance of National Socialism inside the Netherlands itself. Colonial issues were of even less concern to the SDAP and NVV rank-and-file than previously. Yet despite the indifference, *Het Volk* continued to publish a regular column on the Indies, usually written by Stokvis, throughout the depression decade. The party did maintain a press service for the colony, and when the Plan van de Arbeid was drafted, a modest attempt was made to define the role of the Indies in a new socioeconomic order.

To the extent that the SDAP fell short of the mark, its failings were shared by other European social democratic parties. Social democracy did not emerge as a strong force in the postcolonial Afro-Asian world. Nationalist or communist movements constituted the wave of the future, not social democracy. In the case of the Dutch East Indies, one reason for this situation was undoubtedly the relative indifference of the SDAP toward the nationalist movement. The ISDP, its Indies counterpart, remained a small grouping of largely European office workers, many of whom were employees of the colonial establishment itself. Lacking roots in the Indonesian population, the ISDP also maintained only the most fragile contact with Europe. By the same token, through its refusal to endorse the slogan of immediate independence for Indonesians, the SDAP cut itself off from the broad currents of political life in the colony. However sincere and well-intended the SDAP idea of transition to self-government may have been, to Indonesian activists it certainly must have had a ring of self-interest. It allowed communists both in the Netherlands and in the Indies to charge the party with "social imperialism" with considerable success. Though its Plan van de Arbeid showed the SDAP leadership to be concerned with the social welfare of the Indonesians, the Plan's omission of any attractive political proposals which might have begun the realization of the very "self-governance" the SDAP itself proposed, confirmed the party's inability to build any long-term coherent relationship with the popular movement in the colony.

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<sup>110</sup>See the annual *Jaarverslagen* of the party secretary, 1937-39.